Potomac Torah Study Center

Vol. 9 #28-30, April 8, 15, 22, 2022; 7, 14, 21 Nisan 5782; Metzorah/HaGadol; Pesach

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

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org**. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives. Note: I plan to include some material for Pesach this week and then resume posting April 29 for Acharei Mot.**

In loving memory of beloved sister/ sister-in-law, Maureen (Fisher) Tyson, whose yahrtzeit is Monday (10 Nisan).

This year, Metzora is the last Shabbas parsha before Pesach. After Pesach, the weekly portions continue with Acharei Mot, which is essentially the middle portion of the Torah. In a chiastic structure, the most significant position is the middle. Acharei Mot contains the rituals of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur – certainly a fitting subject that one can consider the central position in the Torah. More on this subject after Pesach. Meanwhile, I plan this issue to cover both Metzora and Pesach – a vacation from posting for me for a couple of weeks. Chag Pesach kasher v'samaich.

Tazria and Metzora are obvious Torah portions to read together, because the first portion introduces tzaraat and the second discusses the process of a person recovering from the affliction so he may re-enter society, become tahor (ritually pure), and participate in religious rituals. For this reason, most commentaries discuss both tzaraat and the remedy together.

Steinsaltz (below) observes that tzaraat is perhaps the most complex subject in Judaism, and that its complexities make the subject a chok, a subject so complex that we cannot find a logical explanation within human knowledge. Similar to the details of the Kosher laws, tzaraat is so complex that the details must have come from Hashem rather than from any human source. The way I relate to tzaraat and to the details of the laws of kashrut is to believe that the reason for the complexity is so every time I eat, and every time I think of the laws of ritual purity, the reason is to understand that these laws come from Hashem. We are to relate to these laws as gifts from our Creator, ways in which He shows His love for us and our fellow humans. Childbirth, contact with or close encounters with death, and special signs on our bodies, clothes, and home – these are all reminders that we live in a world that Hashem created to remind us that He created this place for us and our fellow humans.

In my introduction to the double parsha last year, I discussed Rabbi David Fohrman's insights, including his analysis of the close relationship between the purification process for a metzora and the korban Pesach (the ritual that enabled B'Nai Yisrael to survive without harm the night that Hashem killed the first born of Egypt). This discussion (available in the archives at PotomacTorah.org) illustrates that the key characteristic defining a state of tumah (ritual impurity) is having gone through a near death experience. Some examples of situations that cause tumah include childbirth, tzaraat (in which the skin loses blood and has the appearance of a dead body), and the loss of a potential new life (menstrual period or man's nocturnal emission).

Tazria and Metzora are very relevant as introductions to Pesach for more reasons besides the close relationship between the procedures for recovery from tzaraat and the korban Pesach. The entire section of Sefer Vayikra from chapter 11 through the end of Metzora discusses ritual purity, the requirements to be tahor and thereby eligible to participate in the

korban Pesach, the method of celebrating the holiday during the period of the Mishkan and later the Temple in Jerusalem. (These requirements will become relevant again when we are able to rebuild the Temple, hopefully soon.)

As we prepare for Pesach, we should try to make each Seder a new experience, something to help us feel as if we are going through the Exodus ourselves. Some of these insights can come from new insights of small details. For example, Rabbi Singer picks up an observation by the Kli Yakar. Both the wise and the wicked sons ask their father what the Seder means to him. Why is one wise and the other wicked? According to the Kli Yakar, the wicked son interrupts the Seder to ask his question – thus showing that he is not part of the Seder. The wise son, however, listens and absorbs the story of the Seder, studies it the following day, and only then asks his question. The wise son is involved and makes the Seder enough a part of himself that he continues to study and asks his father when he still has questions during his continued learning. This explanation has opened new depths of meaning for me and hopefully will to you as well.

In addition to some material that I have shared in the past, I am attaching a Dvar Torah by Rabbi Hayyim Angel on the Haggadah. Rabbi Angel generously permitted me to reformat his article so it fits on six rather than nine pages. Hopefully from the material in this E-mail everyone can find new insights to bring to each Seder.

My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, and his wife Elizabeth introduced me to beautiful and inspiring Seders more than 45 years ago. Hannah and I enjoyed Seders with the Cahan family – a large family that included several family members and close friends. With everyone bringing in stories and insights, and everyone singing the traditional texts and songs, the evenings always ended too soon, even when they went on well after midnight. Perhaps Rabbi Rhine expressed best the meaning of the Seder (see below):

> *The Seder is designed to bring us to the starting point of the journey when we accepted the Torah and became a nation. But it is an ongoing journey that we are engaged in, to proceed and progress to the extent that is humanly possible.*

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

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Yehoshua Mayer HaLevi ben Nechama Zelda, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, who need our prayers. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom; Chag Pesach kasher v'samaich,
Hannah & Alan

Lifeline: Pesach: The Meaning of Freedom

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken © 2002

The Meaning of Freedom

"And G-d said to Moshe, 'go to Pharoah, and say to him, "thus says G-d: 'LET MY PEOPLE GO…'"'" [Exodus 7:26]

This is, of course, one of the most famous quotes in the Bible.

It is also one of the most common half-quotes therein.

Verse 7:26 does not, in fact, conclude "let My people go," but "let My people go, and they will serve Me." This, even though Passover is the Festival of Freedom. What are we free to do? To serve G-d! And thus we come upon an entirely different understanding of freedom than the view of modern Western thought.

To be “free,” as commonly understood, is to be free to do whatever one wishes to do. As long as you do not harm another person — thereby interfering with his or her freedom — you can do basically whatever you want. There are no borders, no limitations.

According to this view, of course, even a basic moral code — something which claims to dictate that certain behaviors are “wrong” whether or not they harm anyone — is an obstruction to freedom. For better or for worse, a moral code imposes borders and limitations upon an individual. This gives people a profound motivation to dismiss moral systems, and the underlying First Cause of a moral system. Or, as the scientist Aldous Huxley (“Brave New World”) stated candidly in “Confessions of a Professional Free-Thinker,” in 1966:

> *“I had reasons not to want the world to have meaning, and as a result I assumed the world had no meaning, and I was readily able to find satisfactory grounds for this assumption… For me, as it undoubtedly was for most of my generation, the philosophy of meaninglessness was an instrument of liberation from a certain moral system. We were opposed to morality because it interfered with our freedom.”*

If even a basic moral system is a limitation on freedom, then it follows immediately and logically that a system such as that Commanded by the Torah, with 613 mandatory and prohibited acts, with countless restrictions and sub-restrictions upon behavior, consumption of foods, sexual activity – “you name it, Judaism wants to control it” — is repressive, restrictive, limiting. And this is the vision of Judaism which many of us have.

The Torah itself is uncompromising. Pesach is called “the time of our liberation,” not “the time of exchanging one master for Another.” This is not “basically free, but with other limitations.” No — the Torah calls all these laws and restrictions “freedom,” and even has the chutzpah to claim that what the world calls freedom — that is limited. As Rabbi Yehoshuah ben Levi says in the Chapters of the Fathers 6:2, “there is no free man like the one who is involved with the study of Torah.”

In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote that we have rights, such as the famous “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” If we view this as an ascension from the most basic right (to life), to the ultimate towards which we all strive, if Liberty is supposed to make it possible for us to be happy, than the Torah’s “freedom” seems to serve the purpose very well. Those who visit an active observant Jewish community do not find a restricted, shackled people, but one where sharing, generosity, and happiness are the order of the day. There was actually a Los Angeles Times survey that discovered that residents of religious communities were significantly more likely to describe themselves as “happy.”

Nonetheless, something more than an experiential argument is required. Regardless of the sociological data — how can this be? What is the vision of “freedom” that the Torah gives us?

To answer this question, we must begin by understanding mental bounds. While they are every bit as real as physical ones, they are not so easily perceived.

In the Chapters of the Fathers 4:28, Rabbi Elazar HaKappar says: “jealousy, lust and honor remove a person from the world.” What does this mean? One explanation is that these things color a person’s vision. Instead of dealing with the “real world,” he or she instead sees the world from a distorted perspective. And, of course, this unrealistic perspective limits the person, preventing him or her from doing things which otherwise would be entirely possible and appropriate. The victim is shackled, regardless of his or her self-perception.

Sigmund Freud came close to this concept, saying that a person must continually battle primal urges for lust and power. But Rabbi Elazar HaKappar presents them as items which a person can far more easily set aside. They are the products of the Evil Inclination.

And what are we to do with the Evil Inclination? As the Talmud says, “drag it to the House of Study.” “There is no free man like the one who is involved with the study of Torah.” The study of Torah is the ideal “sublimation” of those urges which otherwise bound a person, shackle him to his drives and animal instincts. In a word, Torah gives a person perspective. It enables a person to step away from the pursuit of lust, power, or jealousy — leaving him or her to pursue happiness instead.

There is yet another matter. We are creatures of accomplishment, creatures of purpose. Just as G-d is Creator, we are naturally driven to emulate G-dly traits, and to create, to do, to accomplish.

It should be obvious, yet it must be said: in order to accomplish, one must have a goal. For accomplishments to have meaning, the goal must have meaning. And if all life is meaningless, then all goals will be lacking ultimate meaning as well.

If we accept this axiom that accomplishments bring true satisfaction, then Huxley, with all of his "freedom," can never achieve happiness. Because meaninglessness was his ultimate belief, he could not imbue his accomplishments with meaning.

This, too, is crucial to freedom, for freedom brings with it the pursuit of happiness.

Torah teaches meaning. Service of G-d imbues the most trivial of acts with sacred purpose. It says that a person can perfect him or herself, and the entire world, and sets out a path towards that destination. And this is why the Torah can claim that its adherents are truly, ultimately, happily free.

This Passover, may we truly celebrate and recognize what we have — the tool for ultimate freedom!

With blessings for a happy and kosher holiday.

https://torah.org/torah-portion/lifeline-5760-passover/

Pesach -- It Isn't Over…

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine *

The Pesach Seder is an annual highlight for the Jewish people. We gather, as family and friends to celebrate a redemption of some 3,300 years ago, a redemption that has made us what we are.

One of the important aspects of the Seder is that we drink four cups of wine or grape juice, a beverage associated with thanksgiving (see Tehillim 116:13). The four cups correspond to the four levels of redemption from the slavery in Mitzrayim, a redemption which Hashem promised and then fulfilled. As the verse (Shimos 6: 6-7) describes the promise of redemption: From the toil, from the service, from the land, to become a treasured nation.

On this special night we have a Mitzvah to recount the details of the crisis in which the Jewish people were in, and then describe the majesty and mastery with which Hashem redeemed us. On this night we see ourselves in our mind's eye as if we personally were redeemed from Mitzrayim at that memorable time. We take it personally.

The concluding part of the Seder is full of song and rich customs of treasured family melodies. There is a Halachic component as well which deserves contemplation. The Shulchan Aruch (481:2) records that a person should be engrossed in the laws and stories relating to the Seder, "Until sleep overtakes him." That statement seems to be more than just "as long as possible." In fact, it sounds like it is an aspect of Tzuras HaMitzvah (the manner in which the Mitzvah should be performed) where the person demonstrates that he has so much more to say, explore, and delve into, but sleep overtook him. In fact, one of our family "customs" is the way the younger children cuddle up in the dining room and try to remain present even as they doze off, way past their bedtime.

It seems to me that coming to the Seder with multiple Haggados full of commentary, and many sheets of Divrei Torah, is a part of properly performing the Mitzvah. Ambitiously showing up to the Seder with much more material than could possibly be discussed in one night is our way of saying, "The story is ongoing. The thanksgiving is endless. The only thing holding me back is that I am human, and eventually sleep will overtake me." It is this eternal legacy that we celebrate on Seder night. It is a legacy that is bigger and greater than the human being.

Interestingly, the four cups of wine or grape juice that are so central to the Seder experience can guide us in appreciating the ongoing journey for us as individuals and as a nation. You see, from the way that Hashem identified the steps for us becoming His treasured nation, we can infer the steps of the journey going forward.

To become a nation, we had to be removed from the negative: From toil, from the service, from the land. Similarly, once we became a nation we strive for the positive: To enter our land, to serve Hashem, to toil with great devotion in that service. On any one night (or day) the human being has limited endurance. But if we try our best "until sleep overtakes us," we symbolize that we are aware that there is more to say and do, and we yearn to do so. Every day, we can declare, as the Kohein Gadol did on Yom Kippur when he read from the Torah, "Even more than I have read just now is written here." (Yoma 68b)

A number of years ago, a friend of mine was studying Mesilas Yesharim. One day, Rebbe passed by and took note of how much progress my friend had made, learning about halfway through the Sefer. A few days later, Rebbe passed by and noticed that my friend was back at the beginning of the Sefer. He asked what happened, and my friend replied, "I got to a point in the Sefer where Rabbi Lutzatto wrote that 'until this point is the task for every person. From here on is the portion of those who strive for that which is extra special.' I decided that since I am a regular person I should stop there."

Rebbe smiled at the sincerity but offered a different perspective. Rebbe said, "You should still study the second section of the Sefer. As human beings we have limitations. But that should not stop you from being aware of the deeper levels of devotion that you can aspire to."

As we prepare for the Seder, we are aware that as human beings there is a limit to what we can do in one night. But we are prepared to do our best – "Until sleep overtakes us" – knowing that the depth and breadth of Torah and the Jewish legacy is endless. Just as Hashem rescued us from the depths of slavery, he allows us to proceed into a deep relationship with Him and with Torah. The Seder is designed to bring us to the starting point of the journey when we accepted the Torah and became a nation. But it is an ongoing journey that we are engaged in, to proceed and progress to the extent that is humanly possible.

Wishing you and yours a wonderful Shabbos and a delightful Pesach!

Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of over 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching. To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are www.care-mediation.com and www.teach613.org; his email is RMRhine@gmail.com. **For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.**

Talking without Conversing: Thoughts for Parashat Metsora

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

Several years ago, I took a taxi to the airport and the driver did not stop talking for the entire ride. Every now and then, I said "umhum" or "yes" but other than these few utterances, I do not think I said a single word. The driver told me of his family's origins, about someone in his family who was ill, about his vacation plans, about traffic problems…and on and on and on.

When we finally arrived at the airport, I paid my fare and opened the door of the taxi to get out. The driver turned to me with a broad smile on his face and he said: "I really enjoyed our conversation this morning. Thanks so much for making my day!" I smiled back, left the cab, and wondered where in the airport I could find a few aspirins.

As I think back on this incident, I realize that a great many people are similar to the taxi driver. They talk at you relentlessly but have no real interest in hearing what you have to say. They don't engage in "conversation" but in monologue. They are happy to have a captive audience.

Some such people may have a personality disorder. Others may be lonely, insecure, egotistical or all of the above. They feel validated when they are talking, and they will keep talking as long as anyone is there to listen. This type of person is almost always annoying to others, but seldom realizes it.

This week's Torah portion deals with the malady of "tsara'at," which our sages understood as a punishment for "lashon hara," negative language. Generally, this refers to words that disparage others. Miriam was punished with "tsara'at" when she spoke ill of her brother Moses.

The word "tsara'at" may be related to the word "tsar" — meaning narrow. It may have the connotation of narrowing/diminishing the value of others. When one diminishes others, the punishment is self-diminishment.

This relates not merely to technical "lashon hara" when one speaks badly of another. It relates to any speech that depreciates the value of others. Thus, a person who talks at you, rather than with you, is thereby undermining your own self-esteem. The talker does not think your comments or feelings are worthy of attention.

We have all had teachers and acquaintances who have talked at us. They have lectured and droned on without the least interest in hearing anything we have to say. But we have also been fortunate in having teachers and acquaintances who have actively engaged us, prodded us to think and to ask and to share our views. These latter people have been our real educators and friends, the ones who have respected us and guided us and helped us to grow.

Some people are talkers who prefer monologue to dialogue. Some teachers are pontificators who expect people to listen to them but do not invite serious interaction with them. Such people, knowingly or unknowingly, diminish and disrespect others.

They probably do not realize that in their self-absorbed diminishing of others, they diminish themselves most of all.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

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

https://www.jewishideas.org/talking-without-conversing-thoughts-parashat-metsora

---

Lessons from Elijah: Thoughts for Shabbat HaGadol

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

When the Talmud asks a question for which no satisfactory answer is evident, it uses the word "teiku" as a way of indicating that we'll have to wait for the coming of Elijah – messianic times – to receive the correct answer. Elijah will resolve our questions and difficulties.

A question is raised: why will we bring our questions to Elijah? After all, the messianic era will include the miraculous resurrection of the dead. That means that Moses will also be among us. Why don't we bring our questions to him, rather than to Elijah? Moses is our ultimate and greatest teacher of Torah.

An answer was offered in the name of Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev. He explained: when Moses died, he ascended to heaven and has remained there all these centuries. But when Elijah ascended to heaven, he still has managed to stay in touch with humanity. Elijah attends our Passover seders; Elijah is present at the circumcision ceremonies of our baby boys; Elijah turns up to help the poor and needy of every generation. While Moses has lost contact with humanity, Elijah has remained closely involved with us. Thus, we bring our questions to him, and not to Moses. Only a sage who is fully aware of and sympathetic to our situation can offer proper religious guidance.

In the haftarah for Shabbat HaGadol, the prophet Malachi tells us that God will send Elijah the prophet who "will turn the heart of the parents to the children and the heart of the children to their parents." Elijah will understand the nature of the "generation gap" – that parents and children are not communicating with each other in a meaningful way.

When we think of the generation gap, we generally imagine this to refer to the children's rebellion from the traditions of their parents. Children feel alienated from the "old ways" and want to break out on their own. Yet, Elijah sees the problem differently. He first will work on turning the heart of parents to their children. He understands that alienation starts not with the children – but with the parents! The older generation doesn't listen carefully enough to the younger generation. Parents may be too busy with work, or too busy with their own social obligations; they don't spend enough quality time with their children. The children receive short, inadequate answers to their questions. The children see their parents say one thing but do another. The children don't rebel from their parents so much as they are driven away by their parents' lack of involvement, concern, demonstration of values and sincerity. So Elijah will first work on parents to reconnect with their children. Afterward, he will work on the children and turn their heart back to their parents.

As we prepare to celebrate Shabbat HaGadol and the Passover festival, let us call to mind the image of Elijah the prophet and his ongoing significance to us. Elijah reminds us how vital it is for religion to stay in touch with reality; for parents to stay in touch with their children; for children to turn their hearts back to the traditions of the older generations.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

https://www.jewishideas.org/lessons-elijah-thoughts-shabbat-hagadol

---

Pesach – The Wisdom To Appreciate

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer * © 2021

The four sons, their questions and the scripted responses, take a place of prominence in the Haggadah. Before we even begin discussing the details of the story, we are instructed that the Seder night is for each and every Jew. We are guided on how to best respond to each Jew according to their individual needs and how best to connect them with the message of the evening.

There are many nuances to their questions and the responses, and many lessons to be learned. One point of much discussion is the inference in the question of the wicked son. He asks “What is this service to you?” The author of the Haggadah tells us that since he has worded his question in the second person, he has excluded himself from the service of the Seder. He is clearly stating that the service is “for you” and not for him. If we consider the question of the wise son he appears to be guilty of the same error. He asks “What are these testimonies, statutes and laws that Hashem, our G-d, has commanded you?” He too states clearly that the commandments were directed to you. Why don’t we say that he too is excluding himself from the Seder?

The Kli Yakar, in his commentary on the Chumash (Shemos 13:14), offers an answer to this question, which I believe defines for us the essence of the message of the Pesach Seder, and what we can take away from the evening. The Kli Yakar notes that the Torah introduces the wise son’s question differently from the wicked son’s. The Torah introduces the wise son’s question by saying “And it will be when your son will ask you tomorrow” (Devarim 6:20). This phrase is absent when discussing the wicked son.

The Kli Yakar explains that herein lies the difference between the two questioners. The wicked son is not wrong in recognizing that his parents understand the meaning of the Seder in a way that he does not. He is correct in asking his parents what meaning they find in the service. However, his timing shows that his intent is evil. He is sitting there at the Seder, while everyone is preparing to engage in the mitzvos of the evening, and he stops. Right then and there he turns to his parents and says, why is this important to you? His wording as he is sitting at the Seder clearly states that despite knowing how important this evening is to his family and to Hashem, it is of no importance to him. He cannot accept to do something because it is important to someone else. The action must be inherently important to him, or he wants no part of it. He cannot act for the sake of the relationship – neither with G-d nor with his parents. For this selfish, short-sighted attitude we tell him that he is on the wrong track in life. So much so, that had he been in Egypt, he would not have been redeemed.

The wise son, however, asks his question tomorrow. At the Seder, he was ready to engage in the experience of the evening because he knows that it is important to Hashem. However, once he has experienced it and still does not

understand it, he wisely seeks to understand. With humility and faith, he comes to his parents and asks to understand why this is important to G-d. He wants to better understand his relationship with G-d and how to connect with G-d.

I heard said in the name of the Dubno Maggid that we see this distinction from the phrasing of their questions, as well. The wicked son asks "What is this service to you?" The wise son, however, asks "What are these testimonies, statutes and laws that Hashem our G-d has commanded you?" The wise son understands what the service is to his parents. It is the service that G-d has commanded. His question is a deeper one – he seeks to understand what meaning it has that G-d should command it.

I believe this message is the core of the Pesach Seder. We gather every year, reviewing the story of our slavery and redemption, to understand that we have a relationship with G-d. This is the initial answer we give to the four questions. We respond saying that we were slaves in Egypt, and had G-d not redeemed us, then we today would still be slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. Therefore, we are gathering here tonight and doing things differently from other nights. No matter how well we know the story, we need to stop and review every year, to recognize that we ourselves were destined to be slaves, and we ourselves were redeemed with the Exodus.

After the fours sons, as we resume the story of our history going back now to the very beginning with Avrohom, we state this message clearly with "And this is that which stood." We have been persecuted and challenged in every generation. Yet, this message of the Pesach Seder is what has stood by us and given us strength throughout each and every generation. The purpose of redemption from Egypt was not only that we should leave Egyptian bondage. G-d was displaying his commitment to our physical and spiritual salvation. He ensured that we survived and thrived, becoming a vast and mighty people even while enslaved in Egypt, and then freed us, carried us, raised us and taught us to become His nation. G-d did this for us then, and He does it for us in every generation. "In every generation they stand upon us to annihilate us, and the Holy One, Blessed is He, saves us from their hands."

The message is clear. G-d loves us and cares about us. Even before we accepted the Torah, G-d is showing His love, care and concern for us, and committing Himself to a relationship with us. The message of the Seder is to recognize and appreciate that love and commitment. A love and commitment which is not only for our ancestors, but is for us, as well. The importance of our mitzvos is far beyond what they accomplish. The importance of our mitzvos is, as the wise son understands, that they fulfill G-d's purpose in His world. How and why they are important to G-d are details. The accomplishment for me is not what my actions achieve, but that I displayed my love and respect for G-d, as He has done for us.

This idea is further illustrated in the verses we expound upon detailing the story of the Exodus. The verses are from the service of the Bikkurim – the first fruits of the harvest which a farmer brings to the Temple. When the farmer arrives and presents his produce, he is instructed to recite these verses. Each year, after harvesting his crop, he brings the first to the Temple and declares aloud how his ancestors were slaves, G-d redeemed them and now he instead finds himself a landowner working his own field. He concludes his declaration saying "And now behold I have brought the first fruits of the land that You have given me, G-d." These verses we are reading at the Seder are verses intended to describe an individual's understanding of G-d's involvement in their personal life and that any and all successes are direct gifts from G-d. An understanding stemming from the recognition that we would be slaves, if not for the fact that G-d wants us to be here. We express this again with "Dayeinu". We begin with the Exodus and culminate with the Temple, recognizing that each step was a gift which was already enough for us to recognize G-d's love for us and kindness to us. We then reiterate and repeat how much more we need to recognize G-d's kindness and love now that G-d has indeed done all of these for us. After explaining the messages of the mitzvos of the evening we then conclude the Maggid section of the Haggadah by stating this principle explicitly. The Seder is not a commemoration of national history. Rather, in each and every generation, no matter how far removed that generation may be from the original event, every Jew is obligated to see themselves as if they left Egypt. Each and every one of us must recognize and appreciate that G-d saved our ancestors from Egyptian slavery in order that we should be free from Egypt today. This is the essence of the Seder – to recognize G-d's relationship with us today.

As the Kli Yakar says of the wise son, our entire understanding of and commitment to Torah and mitzvos is built upon this foundation. We are Jews, committed to G-d and His Torah, because G-d loves us and we love Him and care about what's important to Him - simply because we know it is important to Him. May we all merit to learn the message of the Seder, and thereby merit to bring joy and nachas to our Father in Heaven.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD.

Shemini/Tazria – Parasha Pointers [see note below]

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia *

[ed.: I do not yet have a new Dvar Torah from Rabbi Ovadia. I hope to be able to include Rabbi Ovadia's Torah insights again soon.]]

* Torah VeAhava (now SephardicU.com). Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan (Potomac, MD) and faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school). **New: Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria: https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets**

Metzora: Two Tips I Learned In Yeshiva for Overcoming Lashon Hara (Evil Speech)

By Rabbi Dr. Eli Yoggev *

Parshat Metzora speaks about the healing process of the metzora from their tzara'at skin affliction. The Sages explain that one suffers from this malady due to speaking lashon hara, evil speech, about others. Lashon hara is such a bad thing that it completely transforms the individual for the worse — to the point that their skin starts to show the effects of this negative behavior!

How can we overcome the natural urge to commit this offense? Here are two tips I learned from my days at Mercaz HaRav Yeshiva in Yerushalayim that have helped me over the years.

Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook z"l, the former Rosh Yeshiva of Mercaz HaRav, wanted to ensure his students would not speak disparagingly about each other and that they would set a good example for others with their positive speech. Therefore, he instituted that everyone, even after his passing, learn the laws of lashon hara daily from 1:00 pm to 1:15 pm. This is exactly what I did while I was there and it helped!

Oftentimes, we are not careful about evil speech simply because the prohibition is not on our minds. Learning the laws of lashon hara on a continuous basis, like I did in yeshiva, allows one to be more conscious of this negative behavior. In addition, the more one learns, the easier it is to know what one really can say and which types of speech should be avoided.

Another direction I learned in yeshiva to help avoid evil speech is to increase in love for others. Many times we find ourselves speaking negatively about others simply because we feel negatively about them. Later on in Vayikra, the Torah tells us "Do not gossipmonger among your people" (Lev 19:16). The verse immediately afterwards says "You shall not hate your brother in your heart" (Lev 19:17). This juxtaposition teaches that when you hate somebody in your heart, it is easier to speak badly about them. We were encouraged at Mercaz HaRav to see everybody as our brother and sister because when we do this it's very hard to speak disparagingly about them.

Think about your family, your loved ones, your spouse, or even a candidate that you are very passionate about during a political race. When someone speaks negatively about a person who is very close to us, we do not want to engage in this conversation. Even more so, we oftentimes will defend them at all costs from this negative speech! So imagine if we saw everyone this way, as our brothers and our sisters, with a good eye and in a positive way. How easy would it be for us to withhold ourselves from speaking lashon hara about them! This is what the rabbis at my yeshiva wanted to impress upon us.

So these are my two tips. Learn the laws in a consistent manner. And try to strengthen your love and appreciation for others. The more love we have for others, the harder it will be to speak negatively about them. And the easier it will be for us to lift them up and speak good words about them to others!

Shabbat shalom!

* Associate Rabbi, of Beth Tfiloh Congregation, Baltimore, MD. Alumnus of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah; Ph.D. in Jewish Mysticism and Chasidism, Bar-Ilan University.

https://library.yctorah.org/2022/04/metzora22/

A New "Mah Nishtana"

By Rabbi Moshe Rube *

Only a week plus until we celebrate our freedom. Our redemption from slavery from tyrannical rulers. Our recognition of our God-given birthright to choose our own path as individuals and as a nation through our life journey.

I'm sure you know which holiday I'm talking about.

But I'm also sure I could repeat the same paragraph on July 4th and it would work just as well. Wherever you are on the political spectrum, we can all agree on the basic principle that people and communities should have the freedom to choose their own path.

Now of course I would never mean to make a coarse comparison between American independence and the Jewish Exodus from Egypt. Qualitatively they are different. So many layers of experience go into Passover that are not a part of July 4th and vice versa. To chart out an oversimplified correlation would be an insult to both.

But still there's a conversation to be had, isn't there? Wouldn't that be a timely discussion to have at the Seder of how the Jewish story of freedom relates to and how it historically inspired the founding of America? Does our story have any relationship to the thought of Abraham Lincoln and the outcome of the Civil War? What relevance do both stories have to how we see our Jewish-American identities in 2022?

This week I had the opportunity to sit on a community panel and talk with many young adults of our Birmingham Jewish community. One of the most enlightening moments for me was when we discussed what role Judaism or even religion as a whole has on our modern American lives. I got to hear their perspectives, and I learned two things. One is that this discussion crosses the line between our American and Jewish identities, a line we sometimes bifurcate. And the other is that the conversation about the meaning of being a Jew in America has never been more relevant. It's not just a question that the immigrants had to face when coming off the boat in the early 20th century. It is a lived reality that we confront every day.

But lucky for us, on Passover the whole mitzvah is to converse! (Preferably till dawn until your students or children come to tell you the sun has risen.)

If you need some modern Seder conversation fodder, here's an alternative or supplementary version of the Mah Nishtanah. Feel free to chew over these as you chew over the matzoh.

Mah Nishtana the Jewish experience in 2022 America from being a Jew in 1950's America?

Mah Nishtana the Jewish experience in 2022 America from the experience of our European forefathers from Europe?

Mah Nishtana from the Seder discussion we had last year from the one we had this year?

Mah Nishtana the taste of Matzoh made from a global corporate entity (Manischewitz anyone?) from one baked in the home or local communal oven? (This was the way our Zeidies and Bubbies did it, including my great great grandfather in Milwaukee.)

Maybe you have answers or maybe you don't. Or maybe a new answer will come up based on whom you have at your Seder.

Or maybe you will write your own Mah Nishtana, and if you do feel free to send it to me!

Shabbat Shalom and Happy Almost Passover

* Rabbi, Knesseth Israel Congregation, Birmingham, AL.

Rav Kook Torah
Pesach (Bo): Destroy Chametz, Gain Freedom

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

Freedom of Spirit

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

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

The Foreign Influence of Leaven

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

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

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

Cleansing Ourselves of Foreign Influences

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

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

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

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

http://www.ravkooktorah.org/PESACH58.htm

Words That Heal (Tazria Metzora 5780)

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

At the risk of disclosing a spoiler, I would like to begin this week's Covenant & Conversation by discussing the 2019 film A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood. Tom Hanks plays the beloved American children's television producer/presenter Mister Rogers, a legendary figure to several generations of young Americans, famous for his musical invitation, "Won't You Be My Neighbor?"

What makes the film unusual is that it is an unabashed celebration of the power of human goodness to heal broken hearts. Today such straightforward moral messages tend to be confined to children's films (some of them, as it happens, works of genius). Such is the power and subtlety of the film, however, that one is not tempted to dismiss it as simplistic or naïve.

The plot is based on a true story. A magazine had decided to run a series of short profiles around the theme of heroes. It assigned one of its most gifted journalists to write the vignette about Fred Rogers. The journalist was, however, a troubled soul. He had a badly broken relationship with his father. The two had physically fought at his sister's wedding. The father sought reconciliation, but the journalist refused even to see him.

The jagged edges of his character showed in his journalism. Everything he wrote had a critical undercurrent as if he relished destroying the images of the people he had come to portray. Given his reputation, he wondered why the children's television star had agreed to be interviewed by him. Had Rogers not read any of his writings? Did he not know the obvious risk that the profile would be negative, perhaps devastatingly so? It turned out that not only had Rogers read every article of his that he could get hold of; he was also the only figure who had agreed to be interviewed by him. All the other "heroes" had turned him down.

The journalist goes to meet Rogers, first sitting through the production of an episode of his show, complete with puppets, toy trains and a miniature townscape. It is a moment ripe for big-city cynicism. Yet Rogers, when they meet and talk, defies any conventional stereotype. He turns the questions away from himself and toward the journalist. Almost immediately sensing the core of unhappiness within him, he then turns every negative question into a positive affirmation, and exudes the calmness and quiet, the listening silence, that allows and encourages the journalist to talk about himself.

It is a remarkable experience to watch as Hanks' gentleness, immovable even under pressure, slowly allows the journalist – who had, after all, merely come to write a 400 word profile – to acknowledge his own failings vis-à-vis his father and to give him the emotional strength to forgive him and be reconciled to him in the limited time before he died. Here is a fragment of their conversation that will give you a feel for the tone of the relationship:

> Journalist: *You love people like me.*
>
> Fred Rogers: *What are people like you? I've never met anyone like you in my entire life*.
>
> Journalist: *Broken people.*
>
> Fred Rogers: *I don't think you are broken. I know you are a man of conviction. A person who knows the difference between what is wrong and what is right. Try to remember that your relationship with your father also helped to shape those parts. He helped you become what you are.*

Note how in a few brief sentences, Rogers helps reframe the journalist's self-image, as well as his relationship with his father. The very argumentativeness that led him to fight with his father was something he owed to his father. The film reflects the true story of when the real Fred Rogers met the journalist Tom Junod. Junod, like his character 'Lloyd Vogel' in the film, came to mock but stayed to be inspired. He said about the experience, "What is grace? I'm not certain; all I know is that my heart felt like a spike, and then, in that room, it opened and felt like an umbrella." The film is, as one reviewer put it, "a perfectly pitched and played ode to goodness."[1]

The point of this long introduction is that the film is a rare and compelling illustration of the power of speech to heal or harm. This, according to the Sages, is what Tazria and Metzora are about. Tsara'at, the skin condition whose diagnosis and purification form the heart of the parshiyot, was a punishment for lashon hara, evil speech, and the word metzora, for one suffering from the condition, was, they said, an abridgment of the phrase motzi shem ra, one who speaks slander. The key prooftext they brought was the case of Miriam who spoke badly about Moses, and was struck with tsara'at as a result (Num. 12). Moses alludes to this incident many years later, urging the Israelites to take it to heart:

> *"Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam along the way after you came out of Egypt."*
> Deut. 24:9

Judaism is, I have argued, a religion of words and silences, speaking and listening, communicating and attending. God created the universe by words – "And He said … and there was" – and we create the social universe by words, by the promises with which we bind ourselves to meet our obligations to others. God's revelation at Sinai was of words – "You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a Voice" (Deut. 4:12). Every other ancient religion had its monuments of brick and stone; Jews, exiled, had only words, the Torah they carried with them wherever they went. The supreme mitzvah in Judaism is Shema Yisrael, "Listen, Israel." For God is invisible and we make no icons. We can't see God; we can't smell God; we can't touch God; we can't taste God. All we can do is listen in the hope of hearing God. In Judaism, listening is high religious art.

Or it should be. What Tom Hanks shows us in his portrayal of Fred Rogers is a man who is capable of attending to other people, listening to them, talking gently to them in a way that is powerfully affirming without for a moment being bland or assuming that all is well with the world or with them. The reason this is both interesting and important is that it is hard to know how to listen to God if we do not know how to listen to other people. And how can we expect God to listen to us if we are incapable of listening to others?

This entire issue of speech and its impact on people has become massively amplified by the spread of smartphones and social media and their impact, especially on young people and on the entire tone of the public conversation. Online abuse is the plague of our age. It has happened because of the ease and impersonality of communication. It gives rise to what has been called the disinhibition effect: people feel freer to be cruel and crude than they would be in a face-to-face situation. When you are in the physical presence of someone, it is hard to forget that the other is a living, breathing human being just as you are, with feelings like yours and vulnerabilities like yours. But when you are not, all the poison within you can leak out, with sometimes devastating effects. The number of teenage suicides and attempted suicides has doubled in the past ten years, and most attribute the rise to effects of social media. Rarely have the laws of lashon hara been more timely or necessary.

A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood offers a fascinating commentary on an ancient debate in Judaism, one discussed by Maimonides in the sixth of his Eight Chapters, as to which is greater, the chassid, the saint, the person who is naturally good, or ha-moshel be-nafsho, one who is not naturally saintly at all but who practices self-restraint and suppresses the negative elements in their character. It is precisely this question, whose answer is not obvious, that gives the film its edge.

The Rabbis said some severe things about lashon hara. It is worse than the three cardinal sins – idolatry, adultery, and bloodshed – combined. It kills three people: the one who speaks it, the one of whom it is spoken, and the one who receives it.[2]. Joseph received the hatred of his brothers because he spoke negatively about some of them. The generation that left Egypt was denied the chance of entering the land because they spoke badly about it. One who speaks it is said to be like an atheist.[3]

I believe we need the laws of lashon hara now more than almost ever before. Social media is awash with hate.

The language of politics has become ad hominem and vile. We seem to have forgotten the messages that Tazria and Metzora teach: that evil speech is a plague. It destroys relationships, rides roughshod over people's feelings, debases the public square, turns politics into a jousting match between competing egos and defiles all that is sacred about our common life. It need not be like this.

A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood shows how good speech can heal where evil speech harms.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Ian Freer, Empire, 27 January 2020.
[2] Arachin 16b.
[3] Arachin 15b.

https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/tazria/words-that-heal/

The Inner Rhythm of Tumah: An Essay on Parshat Metzora

By Adin Even-Israel (Steinsaltz)* © Chabad 2022

"Knowledge" refers to the Order of Taharot

This parshah deals primarily with laws of tumah and taharah: tzaraat on people and on houses and the tumah of a zav and a zava1 and of a menstruant woman. Whoever studies these subjects in detail discovers – as Maimonides writes in his introduction to the Order of Taharot – that even if he were to learn the laws of tahara a thousand times, he still would not know them, since they are so complex, complicated, and inter-connected. The principles of the laws are not so complicated, but the details are so intricate that they are almost impossible to absorb.

Commenting on the verse, "There shall be faith in your times, strength, salvation, wisdom, and knowledge,"2 the Talmud states, "'Faith' refers to the Order of Zera'im; 'your times' refers to the Order of Moed; 'strength' refers to the Order of Nashim; 'salvation' refers to the Order of Nezikin; 'wisdom' refers to the Order of Kodashim; 'knowledge' refers to the Order of Taharot."3

According to this interpretation of the verse, there appears to be a progression in the level of difficulty of the respective orders. The first orders, including the Order of Nezikin, are considered relatively easy to learn and understand, while the last two orders are notoriously difficult. This can be seen in the Talmud, where R. Acha asks a question relating to damages, and he is told, "When we get to [Tractate Zevachim] – ask your question there."4 In other words, the difficult questions are reserved for Zevachim, the first tractate in the Order of Kodashim, while the easy questions are asked in Nezikin. Now, in comparison to Taharot, even Kodashim seems simple and uncomplicated. It is virtually impossible to explain all the detailed laws of tumah and taharah, and it is even difficult to map out even a general framework for them.

Why are the orders of Kodashim and Teharot so difficult? The reason is that in the other orders, it is possible to follow the logic that guides the discussion, even without a strong knowledge base. Since the main line of thought is usually straightforward, it is possible to predict what will happen next and what the subject of the next discussion will be. When studying Kodashim, it is impossible to find the path within the maze. Even if one knows what the law is in the case of a guilt offering, for example, one cannot infer from this what the law will be in the case of the sin offering. It is very difficult to point to an inner logic within the various topics. In Taharot, the situation is similar. There exist review books that contain tables and charts explaining the laws of tumah and taharah, and it is plain to see that there is not even one guiding principle within these books, not only for the general categories of tumah, but even for the various details within each unique type of tumah. Thus, for example, there are aspects in which the tumah of a zav is stricter than the tumah of a corpse, whereas in other aspects the tumah of a corpse is stricter than even the tuma of a metzora.

One thing is clear: Tumah has nothing to do with uncleanness, a common misconception. It is not without reason that the concept of tumah does not exist in other languages, and that includes even related languages such as Aramaic. In the Aramaic Targumim, the usual translation for tamei is mesaav, a word that serves as the translation of meluchlach (unclean) as well. Apparently, in Aramaic there is no word that corresponds precisely to the term tamei, and the same is true in English and other languages. In other languages it is always necessary to explain the term tumah with several other words, as it has its own distinctive character that does not exist in those languages.

Throughout history, and especially in recent generations, people have tried to explain that the laws of tumah and taharah are related to hygiene and physical health. These explanations are wrong, both in their general thrust and in their details. Even a superficial analysis of the laws of tumah is enough to demonstrate clearly that these explanations are off the mark.

For example, one might have thought that the metzora is sent outside the camp so that he should not infect others. But a study of the detailed laws reveals that, as Maimonides stated (Commentary on the Mishnah, Nega'im 12:5), there exists

no disease that fits the description of tzaraat in the Talmud and in halachah. Indeed, such a disease would be a scientific impossibility, and thus it is certainly not contagious.

Maimonides' conclusion is that tzaraat is actually a miraculous event. We probably have no idea at all what tzaraat on houses is or what tzaraat on garments is, and even the tzaraat that appears on people cannot be classified as a disease. In fact, our sages explain that, in principle, the nations of the world should never be afflicted with tzaraat, because essentially the whole matter of tzaraat pertains to Jews alone. However, in practice, they, too, get tzaraat, so that they should not say to the Jews: "You are a nation of metzora'im."5

There are also various esoteric explanations regarding tzaraat, and their common denominator is that tzaraat has nothing at all to do with hygiene.

Tuma and tahara – life and death

It is possible perhaps to nevertheless attempt to give a very general explanation for the entire framework of tumah and taharah.

Throughout the Torah, from Genesis onward, the world is divided into two poles: life and death, and correspondingly, good and evil: "life and good," "death and evil."6 These matters are presented to us as the two extremes of existence, and every other element of existence falls on the spectrum between these two poles.

Death is presented in our literature not as a normal, natural phenomenon, but as a result of sin. Jewish thinkers throughout history have written that sin and death therefore are forever intertwined. The connection between them appears, for example, in the following interpretation: On the words "engraved (charut) on the Tablets,"7 our sages expound, "Do not read 'charut' (engraved) but 'cherut' (freedom), for no man is truly free unless the Angel of Death has no power over him…and as a result of their idolatry [at the sin of the Golden Calf] the Angel of Death came upon them."8

Likewise, the relation between tumah and taharah can be explained on the basis of this division. By way of analogy, it can be said that the creation of tumah resembles the production of a magnetic field. A magnetic field is produced when a drastic change occurs in an electric field. One of the ways this can happen is when an electric current that is moving through metal suddenly stops, in which case magnetization occurs. The new phenomenon is produced at the point of change, whether it is change from one extreme to the other or a more limited change. Similarly, tumah is produced when the complete current of life within an entity is stopped, whether in its entirety or in only one respect. Take, for example, the tumah of a corpse. This tumah occurs not because the corpse is not alive, nor because it used to be alive, but because it used to be alive and then this condition suddenly stopped.

What also emerges from the notion of the connection to life and death is a principle that applies throughout the laws of tumah. The stronger the current of life, the more intense the tumah will be if and when that life is stopped and cut off. The more life force that exists in an entity, the more intense the tumah generated by the negation of that life force will be. Conversely, the less life force that is in an entity, or the lower the level of its life, the less the tumah generated by the negation of its life force will be. We may not be able to explain all the minor questions of the laws of tumah and taharah, but this theory at least helps explain the overarching structure of these laws, in a general sense.

According to Taharot, the most severe form of tumah is that of a corpse. This is because when a person dies, the cessation of the current of life is the most drastic cessation of taharah possible. And when the deceased is a Jew, the tumah reaches its maximum height. When the deceased is not a Jew, the essence of his life was not quite so high, so the tumah generated by the cessation of that life is similarly less. This explains the seemingly paradoxical fact that a deceased Jew conveys tumah more than a deceased non-Jew does, and that a deceased human being conveys tumah more than a dead animal does. A deceased Jew conveys tumah more than a non-Jew because the life current that was stopped was on a higher level, and for the same reason, a deceased non-Jew conveys tumah much more than a cow does.

On a related note, not everything that dies conveys tumah. Creatures that we consider to lack a life force even when alive do not become tamei upon their death. According to the Talmud,9 a dead snake does not convey tumah. This is strange, as we usually think of a snake as the lowest animal in the world. Yet a snake does not convey tumah, neither when alive nor when dead. In truth, this should not be so surprising; a dead snake does not convey tumah because its life force is not sufficient enough to generate tumah. Tumah is produced by a fracture, by the tension of the sudden contrast between

complete vitality and death. But when a creature is inherently insignificant, its death, too, is insignificant and does not generate tumah.

The basic concept is that tumah accompanies death or crisis, whether it is big or small; but while the entity is complete and healthy, it does not become tamei.

A simple example of this is the tumah of the menstruant woman. This tumah is connected to the natural destruction of life that is part of the woman's menstrual cycle. This is destruction not of actual life but of the lost potential for fertilization. As a result, the actual unfertilized egg cells that could have developed into new life are destroyed and flushed out of the body, and tumah results. It is still a normal occurrence and not considered an illness, yet it is connected with this same element of destruction – a partial form of death – and this, too, results in tumah.

A similar example is the tumah that results from a seminal emission. Even in the context of marital relations, and even if the relations result in procreation, an inevitable result of seminal emission is loss, a type of death. Each drop of semen contains a huge number of living cells, each cell carrying the potential for life, and the great majority of the cells – even in the best-case scenario of fertilization – are lost.

According to our literature, the white spot of a tzaraat mark indicates that something has died in that part of the body. If one looks at the symptoms of tzaraat that are described in the Torah, it seems that they serve to distinguish between tzaraat and ordinary illness. There are cases where the Torah says, "it is scar tissue from the infection,"10 or, "it is merely scar tissue from the burn,"11 and therefore the mark is tahor. When the symptom is a result of an infection or other medical ailment, it may not be pleasant, but it is not tzaraat. When, however, the condition deprives the person of his life force, it is no longer defined as an illness, but is considered an impure affliction.

A zava experiences an impairment of her body's vitality as well. It is a result of a severe hormonal imbalance that prevents the woman from conceiving a new life, which explains the basis for its tumah.

Receptacles

The intrinsic connection between the concepts of tumah and taharah and the life force of the entity apparently also applies to the distinction between things that are susceptible to tumah and those that are not. In the thirty chapters of Tractate Kelim, there are countless details that can drive a person crazy, but there are also several major principles, one of which is that the more perfect the vessel and the higher its quality, the more susceptible it is to tumah. This progression extends from high-quality metal vessels to low-quality earthenware vessels. If we were to understand tumah per se as a type of defect, this progression would be surprising. It would seem counterintuitive that a perfect and beautiful vessel would be susceptible to tumah, while an inferior or defective vessel would not be. In reality, however, the logic is just the opposite: Sensitivity to tumah requires some level of perfection.

A similar concept can be observed in the tumah of vessels. A metal vessel becomes tamei even if it has no receptacle. A wooden vessel requires a receptacle in order to be considered a utensil; but once it is labeled a utensil, it can become tamei through its outer surface as well; whereas an earthenware vessel cannot become tamei through its outer surface.12

At first glance, this is quite puzzling. Why should an earthenware vessel not become tamei through its outer surface? According to an explanation attributed to the Kotzker Rebbe, an earthenware vessel is a utensil not by virtue of the material from which it is made but only in that it is a receptacle. Therefore, when something tamei touches the vessel's outer surface, the vessel does not itself become tamei, because its material is insignificant. Only when something enters the earthenware vessel's inner space, the part of the vessel that determines its status as a utensil, can the vessel become tamei, because only then does the vessel reach a level where it is even relevant to speak of tumah.

The key of childbirth

The section of the parshah that deals with the metzora is preceded by the section on the tumah of a woman who has just given birth, and this in itself is truly striking. Why should the laws of tumah begin precisely with this form of tumah? After all, other forms of tumah are much more common and no less severe. Why, then, did the Torah choose to begin with the tumah that follows childbirth? Furthermore, in light of our explanation of tumah as a decline in life force, this tumah seems doubly anomalous.

Regarding tumah following childbirth, the Kotzker Rebbe said as follows: According to the Talmud, three keys remain in G d's hand alone and were not entrusted to any emissaries: the key of rain, the key of childbirth, and the key of the revival of the dead.13 Since the key of childbirth is in G d's hand, then apparently His spirit is present during the birth, after which it immediately departs – and this is the source of the tension that generates tumah. The tumah is generated not because the birth is something inherently tamei – on the contrary, it is a time when new life comes into the world – but because the birth involves a gulf between a high and a subsequent low, evoking the gulf between life and death.

The highly charged experience of childbirth and the fall from this high shortly thereafter derive from various aspects of the experience. First of all, the birth itself is an incredible miracle: One life is growing and developing inside another. We often take this for granted; we know how it happens and assume that it is natural. But in truth, the whole phenomenon of pregnancy, in which a woman bears two lives that suddenly separate from each other, is nothing short of miraculous. We hear a sense of wonder in Eve's exclamation of amazement and excitement upon giving birth to the world's first child: "I have acquired a man together with G d!"14 Eve reflects on the birth and exclaims, "Look what happened! I did something together with G d; I made a human being!"

From the physical, physiological standpoint, too, the process of childbirth is very similar to every other circumstance that creates tumah. Pregnancy demands tremendous changes in the way the body functions. Throughout the pregnancy, there is a continuous miracle transpiring in the mother's body, a miracle of creation, to which every other bodily function must adjust. When the process of childbirth begins, all of the body's systems speed up dramatically; massive releases of adrenaline and other hormones advance the labor vigorously, eventually enabling the birth of a child. Then, immediately after the birth, this unique and exceptional process, the miracle of creation, everything stops, not gradually but all at once. The chasm is huge. One moment the world is full of wonder, and the next moment it is already gone. The great disparity is what creates the tumah.

The intensity of this abrupt change is reflected, in a sense, in the phenomenon of post-partum depression. Most women experience a slight, fleeting feeling of sadness after giving birth, but sometimes this feeling turns into severe depression, which can be traumatic for both the mother and her family.

Even after all of this, we must remember and acknowledge that although we may have illuminated one general aspect of the laws of tumah and taharah, we will never truly be able to understand all of the complexities of these laws; questions will always remain. As King Solomon said regarding the laws of the red cow, "I left no wisdom in the world that I did not understand, but when I got to the section on the red cow 'I said, "I will get wisdom," but it was far from me'15"16

FOOTNOTES:

1. A zav or a zava is a person who experienced an abnormal discharge or flow, and is thus rendered tamei; see Leviticus 15.

2. Is. 33:6.

3. Shabbat 31a.

4. Bava Metzia 109b.

5. Genesis Rabba 88:1.

6. Deut. 30:15.

7. Ex. 32:16.

8. Eiruvin 54a.

9. Eiruvin 13b.

10. Lev. 13:23.

11. 13:28.

12. Chullin 24b.

13. Taanit 2a.

14. Gen. 4:1.

15. Eccl. 7:23.

16. Midrash Zuta, Eccl. 7.

* Rabbi Adin Even-Israel (Steinsaltz) (1937-2020), one of the leading rabbis of this century and author of many books, was best known for his monumental translation of and commentary on the Talmud.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5105883/jewish/The-Inner-Rhythm-of-Tumah.htm

---

What Exodus of Egypt Means Today

11th of Nissan, 5721

By Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, z"l, The Lubavitcher Rebbe, 11 Nissan 5721

By the Grace of G d
11th of Nissan, 5721
Brooklyn, New York

To our Brethren Everywhere G d Bless you all!

Greeting and Blessing:

Yetzias Mitzraim, the Exodus (the departure from Egypt). the focal point of the festival of Pesach -· occupies a central place in Jewish life, both on the collective as well as on the individual level. As such it is a source of instruction and inspiration not only in its general theme, but also in every detail and aspect of it.

One of the fundamental features of the Yetzias Mitzraim message is the unlimited Bitochon - the absolute reliance on Divine Providence - which found such poignant expression in the historic event of the Exodus from Egypt. A whole people, men, women and children, several million in number, eagerly leave a well-settled and prosperous country, with all its fleshpots and material blessings, and go out on a long and perilous journey, without provision, but with absolute reliance on the word of God coming through Moshe Rabbenu.

Moreover, they do not follow the well-trodden and shorter route (through the land of the Philistines) which, although possibly entailing war, was yet more logical by far than crossing the vast and desolate desert. For in the fortunes of war there is a chance of victory, and even in defeat there is a chance of escape and survival for many, whereas the chances of survival in the terrible desert without food or water were, by all laws of nature, virtually nil. Nevertheless they follow the obviously "irrational" route solely on the word of Moshe speaking in the name of G d.

Still greater is the wonder considering that this takes place after spending 210 years in a highly agricultural country, where nomadic life was despised, a land of fertile soil, independent of rain and climatic inclemencies, richly irrigated by the faithful Nile River, in short, a land completely secure in its natural resources and natural laws and conditions.

"Since the days of your departure from Egypt" and to the present day, these aspects of Yetzias Mitzraim, namely, the absolute Bitochon in the Divine Providence and its implementation in life, down to the daily conduct in accordance with the Divine precepts, regardless of the dictates of human considerations and natural laws, must be the indispensable companion and guiding light, in the experience of our people as a whole, and in the daily life of the individual Jew in particular, everywhere and at all times.

When the non-Jewish world, and even those of the Jewish world who have strayed from the true Jewish way of life, challenge the observant and practising Jew: You, who like us, live in a materialistic world, in the midst of a highly competitive society, facing a desperate struggle for economic survival, how can you escape subservience to the idolatry of the land (be it the Dollar, or the fear to be “different”, etc.)? How can you adhere to a code of 613 precepts which "burden" your life and limit your competitiveness at every side and turn?

The answer is - Yetzias Mitzraim provides the clue.

And as in the case of Yetzias Mitzraim, when the Jews responded to the Divine call and precepts, disregarding so-called rational considerations, and breaking with the negative past, it turned out that precisely the application of this principle in actual life was the road to their true happiness, and not only spiritually (receiving the Torah and becoming the G d-chosen people and holy nation), but also materially (in coming to the Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey).

So it is also today and always, By virtue of the Divine Law, which is called Toras Chayim, the Law of Life, and the Mitzvos, whereby Jews live, lived and experienced in the daily life, regardless of how the past had been, the Jew attaches himself to the Creator and Master of the World, and liberates himself from all “natural” restrictions and limitations, and attains his true happiness, materially and spiritually.
“Know Him in all your ways.” Jews are enjoined to know and remember and permeate with holiness every aspect of the daily conduct and activities. In so doing the observant Jew may frequently face the abovementioned challenge and test. Therefore, the Jew has been enjoined: “Remember your deliverance from Egypt, every day of your life.” Remembering and identifying oneself with the aspects of Yetzias Mitzraim is a source of limitless strength to make every day meaningful and full of true Yiddish life, and as my father-in-law of saintly memory, has emphasized: The festival of Pesach irradiates not only every day, but every moment of the Jew's life.

With the blessing of a Kosher and Happy Pesach,

/Signed Menachem Schneerson

https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/94/jewish/Lubavitcher-Rebbe-Own-Works.htm

---

The Rebbe’s 120th Birthday

By Rabbi Nochum Mangel *

Next week, Jews around the world will be marking the 120th birthday of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory.

Throughout the years of his leadership, whenever a big deal was made about a personal occasion, such as his birthday, the Rebbe made it clear that it was not about himself but about bettering the world and making it a home for G-d.

At the farbrengen marking the Rebbe’s 70th birthday in 1972, he requested a unique birthday “gift” — that in the coming year, 71 new Chabad institutions would be established around the world.

Indeed, by the time the Rebbe’s 71st birthday arrived, the number of new institutions — including synagogues, community centers, schools, and more — far surpassed the original goal of 71. And it didn’t stop there. For years to come, every time the Rebbe’s birthday came around, it was marked around the world by setting new goals for growth and expansion.

This year, as his 120th birthday on the 11th of Nissan approaches, new initiatives are being undertaken, new institutions are being opened, and new goals are being set.

We continue living with the Rebbe’s teachings and guidance, and we will continue giving him the birthday presents he clearly wanted. His influence lives on, including the drive he instilled in us to constantly do more for all of mankind, making the world ripe for the Final Redemption with the coming of Moshiach — may it happen speedily!

Shabbat shalom.

* Rabbi, Chabad of Greater Dayton, OH

Nissan: Time to Prepare

By Rabbi Yosef Y. Alperowitz ***** © Chabad 2022

Time to Prepare — Do You Know the Answers?

This Shabbos, known as Shabbos Hagadol, is the Shabbos before of Pesach, on which it is customary to recite part of the Pesach Haggadah.

Our Sages teach that when the Jews left Egypt, the young children were the first to acknowledge G-d's miracles. To commemorate this, each year it is the Jewish children who introduce the Seder night with their Four Questions, the Ma Nishtana.

Often, children will study these four questions by heart, and recite them at the Seder table. Now, “by heart” doesn’t just mean “from memory,” but that the children ask these four questions “with the heart” — that is, “from deep inside the heart.” Year after year, when children ask the same questions, over and over again, it shouldn’t just be a matter of rote.

For if that were to be the case, the children would already know the answers from the previous year and wouldn’t understand why we are celebrating Pesach all over again this year. Rather, each Pesach should be seen as a new opportunity to discover better answers and reach a deeper understanding of the meaning of Pesach.

And just as children must come prepared with questions, and with a sincere desire to know the answers, parents are expected to tell their children the answers. This is evident in the name of the text that accompanies the Seder tradition — the Haggadah, which comes from the Hebrew vehigadeta levincha, which means “and you shall tell your child.”

Therefore, the days of Nissan leading up to the festival should be seen as an opportunity to double our efforts in preparation for Peasch, not just in cleaning and preparing the home but also in gaining more insight on the festival in preparation to "telling your child."

* — from *Pearls for the Shabbos Table*

Gut Shabbos,

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
Kehot Publication Society
291 Kingston Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11213

Likutei Divrei Torah

Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah via the Internet

Shabbat Shalom

Volume 28, Issue 28 **Shabbat Hagadol - Parashat Metzora** **5782 B"H**

Covenant and Conversation
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

The Power of Praise - From time to time couples come to see me before their wedding. Sometimes they ask me whether I have any advice to give them as to how to make their marriage strong. In reply I give them a simple suggestion. It is almost magical in its effects. It will make their relationship strong and in other unexpected ways it will transform their lives.

They have to commit themselves to the following ritual. Once a day, usually at the end of the day, they must each praise the other for something the other has done that day, no matter how small: an act, a word, a gesture that was kind or sensitive or generous or thoughtful. The praise must be focused on that one act, not generalised. It must be genuine: it must come from the heart. And the other must learn to accept the praise.

That is all they have to do. It takes at most a minute or two. But it has to be done, not sometimes, but every day. I learned this in a most unexpected way.

I have written before about the late Lena Rustin: one of the most remarkable people I have ever met. She was a speech therapist specialising in helping stammering children. She founded the Michael Palin Centre for Stammering in London, and she had a unique approach to her work. Most speech therapists focus on speaking and breathing techniques, and on the individual child (those she worked with were on average around five years old). Lena did more. She focused on relationships, and worked with parents, not just children.

Her view was that to cure a stammer, she had to do more than help the child to speak fluently. She had to change the entire family environment. Families tend to create an equilibrium. If a child stammers, everyone in the family adjusts to it. Therefore if the child is to lose its stammer, all the relationships within the family will have to be renegotiated. Not only must the child change. So must everyone else.

But change at that basic level is hard. We tend to settle into patterns of behaviour until they become comfortable like a well-worn armchair. How do you create an atmosphere within a family that encourages change and makes it unthreatening? The answer, Lena discovered, was praise. She told the families with which she was working that every day they must catch each member of the family doing something right, and say so, specifically, positively and sincerely. Every member of the family, but especially the parents, had to learn to give and receive praise.

Watching her at work I began to realise that she was creating, within each home, an atmosphere of mutual respect and continuous positive reinforcement. She believed that this would generate self-confidence not just for the stammering child but for all members of the family. The result would be an environment in which people felt safe to change and to help others do so likewise.

I filmed Lena's work for a documentary I made for BBC television on the state of the family in Britain. I also interviewed some of the parents whose children she had worked with. When I asked them whether Lena had helped their child, not only did each of them say 'Yes' but they went on to say that she had helped save their marriage. This was extraordinary. She was, after all, not a marriage guidance counsellor but a speech therapist. Yet so powerful was this one simple ritual that it had massive beneficial side effects, one of which was to transform the relationship between husbands and wives.

I mention this for two reasons, one obvious, the other less so. The obvious reason is that the sages were puzzled about the major theme of Tazria-Metzora, the skin disease known as tsaraat. Why, they wondered, should the Torah focus at such length on such a condition? It is, after all, not a book of medicine, but of law, morality and spirituality.

The answer they gave was that tsaraat was a punishment for lashon hara: evil, hateful or derogatory speech. They cited the case of Miriam who spoke negatively about her brother Moses and was struck by tsaraat for seven days (Num. 12). They also pointed to the incident when at the burning bush Moses spoke negatively about the Israelites and his hand was briefly affected by tsaraat (Ex. 4:1-7).

The sages spoke more dramatically about lashon hara than any other offence. They said that it was as bad as committing all three cardinal sins: idolatry, incest and murder. They said that it kills three people: the one who says it, the one he says it about and the one who listens to it. And in connection with Tazria-Metzora, they said that the punishment fitted the sin. One who speaks lashon hara creates dissension within the camp. Therefore his punishment as a metzora (a person stricken with tsaraat) was to be temporarily banished from the camp.

So far, so clear. Don't gossip (Lev. 19:16). Don't slander. Don't speak badly about people. Judaism has a rigorous and detailed ethics of speech because it believes that "Life and death are in the power of the tongue" (Prov. 18:21). Judaism is a religion of the ear more than the eye; of words rather than images. God created the natural world with words and we create or damage the social world with words. We do not say, "sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never harm me." To the contrary, words can cause emotional injuries that are as painful as physical ones, perhaps more so.

So Lena Rustin's rule of praise is the opposite of lashon hara. It is lashon hatov: good, positive, encouraging speech. According to Maimonides, to speak in praise of people is part of the command to "love your neighbour as yourself." That is straightforward.

But at a deeper level, there is a reason why it is hard to cure people of lashon hara, and harder still to cure them of gossip in general. The American sociologist Samuel Heilman wrote an incisive book, Synagogue Life, about a Modern Orthodox congregation of which, for some years, he was a member. He devotes an entire lengthy chapter to synagogue gossip. Giving and receiving gossip, he says, is more or less constitutive of being part of the community. Not gossiping defines you as an outsider.

Gossip, he says, is part of "a tight system of obligatory exchange." The person who scorns gossip completely, declining to be either donor or recipient, at the very least "risks stigmatisation" and at the worst "excludes himself from a central activity of collective life and sociability." In short, gossip is the lifeblood of community.

Now, not only Heilman but probably every adult member of the community knew full well that gossip is biblically forbidden and that negative speech, lashon hara, is among the gravest of all sins. They also knew the damage caused by someone who gives more gossip than he or she receives. They used the Yiddish word for such a person: a yenta. Yet despite this, argued Heilman, the shul was in no small measure a system for the creation and distribution of gossip.

Synagogue Life was published 20 years before Oxford anthropologist Robin Dunbar's famous book, Grooming, Gossip and the Evolution of

Language.[5] Dunbar's argument is that, in nature, groups are held together by devoting a considerable amount of time to building relationships and alliances. Non-human primates do this by "grooming," stroking and cleaning one another's skin (hence the expression, "If you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours"). But this is very time-consuming and puts a limit on the size of the group.

Humans developed language as a more effective form of grooming. You can only stroke one animal or person at a time, but you can talk to several at a time. The specific form of language that bonds a group together, says Dunbar, is gossip – because this is the way members of the group can learn who to trust and who not to. So gossip is not one form of speech among others. According to Dunbar, it is the most primal of all uses of speech. It is why humans developed language in the first place. Heilman's account of synagogue life fits perfectly into this pattern. Gossip creates community, and community is impossible without gossip.

If this is so, it explains why the prohibitions against gossip and lashon hara are so often honoured in the breach, not the observance. So common is lashon hara that one of the giants of modern Jewry, R. Yisrael Meir ha-Cohen (the Chofetz Chaim) devoted much of his life to combatting it. Yet it persists, as anyone who has ever been part of a human group knows from personal experience. You can know it is wrong, yet you and others do it anyway.

This is why I found Lena Rustin's work to have such profound spiritual implications. Her work had nothing to do with gossip, but without intending to she had discovered one of the most powerful antidotes to lashon hara ever invented. She taught people to develop the habit of speaking well of one another. She taught them to praise, daily, specifically and sincerely. Anyone who uses Lena's technique for a prolonged period will be cured of lashon hara. It is the most effective antidote I know.

What is more, her technique transforms relationships and saves marriages. It heals what lashon hara harms. Evil speech destroys relationships. Good speech mends them. This works not only in marriages and families, but also in communities, organisations and businesses. So: in any relationship that matters to you, deliver praise daily. Seeing and praising the good in people makes them better people, makes you a better person, and strengthens the bond between you. This really is a life-changing idea.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

"This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing, he shall be brought unto the priest" (Leviticus 14:2) In the opening of this week's portion of Metzora, the Torah introduces us to the law commanding a person to go to the priest who determined the nature of his 'plague of leprosy' (nega tzara'at). If the scab was diagnosed as qualifying, the development of the disease required the constant inspection of the priest.

Metzora provides the complex details of the purification process once the disease is over. This ritual requires two kosher birds, a piece of cedar, crimson wool, and a hyssop branch. One bird is slaughtered while the other is ultimately sent away. But this is only the beginning of a purification process that lasts eight days, culminating in a guilt offering brought at the Holy Temple. Only after the entire procedure was concluded could a person be declared ritually clean.

But if this all sounds foreign, complicated and involved, the Biblical concepts appear even stranger when we discover that this "plague of leprosy" is not limited to humans: "God spoke unto Moses and Aaron, saying: 'When you come to the land of Canaan, which I give to you as an inheritance, and I put the plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession, then he that owns the house shall come and tell the priest." (Leviticus 14:33-35).

How are we to understand that the very same malady – nega tzara'at – that describes what is generally referred to as a leprous ailment of a human being, has the power to also afflict the walls of a house? A person is one thing, but a house suffering a plague of leprosy?!

When we examine the text. we find an interesting distinction between these two species of tzara'at. "The plague of leprosy" that strikes people is presented in straight-forward terms: "If a person shall have in the skin a swelling, a scab, or a bright spot, and it be in the skin of his flesh the plague of leprosy." (Leviticus 13:3)

But the plague that strikes houses is introduced by an entirely different concept: "When you come to the land of Canaan, which I am giving to you as an inheritance, I will put the plague of leprosy." (Leviticus 14:34).

Why is the commandment of the plagued house placed in the context of the Land of Israel? If indeed the disease can descend upon houses, why only the houses in the Land of Israel?

A third element to consider are the differences in the visible aspects of these two diseases. Regarding the person himself, the Torah speaks of a white discoloration, but as far as the house is concerned, if a white spot appeared on the wall, nothing would be wrong.

"Then the priest shall command that they empty the house… and he shall look at the plague and behold, if the plague be in the walls and consists of penetrating streaks that are bright green or bright red…." (Leviticus 14:36-37)

We must keep in mind that the translation a "plague of leprosy" is inadequate. Biblical commentaries ranging from the 12th century Ramban to the 19th century Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch claim that nega tzara'at cannot possibly be an illness in the classic sense; for if that were true, why would the Torah assign the 'medical' task of determining illness to a priest? Priests were teachers and keepers of the religious tradition – not doctors or medical experts.

If nega tzara'at is a spiritual illness – a metaphor for the state of the soul – then just as one soul is linked to one body, the souls of the members of a family are linked to the dwelling where they all live together. And the walls of a house certainly reflect the atmosphere engendered by its residents. A house can be either warm or cold, loving or tense. Some houses are ablaze with life, permeating Jewishness and hospitality: mezuzot on the doorposts, candelabra, menoras and Jewish art on the walls, books on Judaism on the shelves, and place-settings for guests always adorning the table.

But in other homes, the silence is so heavy it feels like a living tomb, or the screams of passionate red-hot anger which can be heard outside frighten away any would-be visitor, or the green envy of the residents evident in the gossip they constantly speak causes any guest to feel uncomfortable.

Why should this "disease" be specifically connected to the Land – or more specifically, to the people of Israel?

To find the unique quality of Israel all we have to do is examine the idea of Beit Yisrael, the House of Israel. The nature of a household is that as long as there is mutual love and shared responsibility, then that house will be blessed and its walls won't be struck with a plague of leprosy. To the extent that the covenant of mutual responsibility is embraced by the people, then the house of Israel will be blessed.

We must act toward each other with the same morality, ethics and love present in every blessed family. If not, a nega tzara'at awaits us. And our holy land of Israel is especially sensitive to any moral infraction.

The Person in the Parsha
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

Shabbat HaGadol as Independence Day

I remember well when the age at which one could vote or drink was 21. From my perspective when I was a child, and frankly eager to do these things, it seemed to be an injustice to set the age bar so high. 21 seemed a long way off.

As time progressed, the age for all of these things became lower and lower. By that time, I was well past the age of 21 and was critical of allowing children these privileges prematurely.

That's just one example of how our perspective changes with regard to the age-old question of who is a child and who is an adult. At what age does one pass from the status of a minor into majority?

From the point of view of Jewish religion things seem quite clear. Traditionally, boys become men at age 13. Recognizing that females mature earlier, our rabbis defined age 12 as the age of majority for a girl.

So it is with regard to the performance of mitzvot and other religious functions. A girl celebrates her bat mitzvah at age 12, and boys wear tefillin and are counted as part of a minyan at age 13. Before the age of 13 he is a katan, a minor. Afterwards, he is a gadol.

Gadol can mean adult, or it can mean large or great.

This Shabbat, the last one preceding Passover, is known as Shabbat HaGadol. How are we to translate it? Is it the adult Shabbat, the large Shabbat, or perhaps the great Shabbat? Or does the word gadol mean something entirely different in this context?

Many have a custom to do a preliminary reading of the Passover Haggadah on this Shabbat. Those of us who do so, and I count myself among them, will have an opportunity not just to read the ancient words but to study some commentary upon them. Thus, we will have the opportunity to familiarize ourselves with one of the dozens of haggadot on the market.

I would like to recommend one in particular, called The Royal Table, written by Rabbi Norman Lamm. I recommend this work in its entirety, but I would like to draw your attention to his creative approach to the meaning of the word gadol, and not just in the context of Shabbat HaGadol.

Rabbi Lamm points out that in the Talmud, katan does not always mean minor, nor does gadol invariably connote an adult. In certain contexts, Rabbi Lamm informs us, a person's status is not a question of age but a question of independence. In the words of the Talmud, "A katan who does not rely upon his father's table is a gadol. A gadol who is dependent upon his father is a katan."

This piece of Talmudic wisdom allows us a definition of gadol with entirely new vistas of insight and understanding. A gadol is someone who is self-reliant, who can stand on his own two feet, not just intellectually but in every other sense as well.

Thus, Rabbi Lamm teaches us that this Shabbat is called HaGadol because it marks our independence as a people. It was on this day that we were able to demonstrate to our Egyptian slave masters that we no longer feared them and were about to declare ourselves religiously, culturally, and physically independent.

I find myself taking the implications of Rabbi Lamm's insights much further than he does. Nowadays, we refer to those Torah sages whose authority we revere and to whom we look for guidance as gedolim", the plural of gadol.

I have often struggled with the question, as I am sure many of you do, as to what makes a gadol. Is it just his piety and erudition? Surely these are the necessary prerequisites for the status of gadol.

But reflection upon the great sages of Jewish history reveals that the outstanding Gedolim of the generations had streaks of independence, which they asserted in unique and often courageous ways.

Take Maimonides, the Rambam. His Torah scholarship and personal spirituality were unparalleled. Yet he embarked, quite intentionally, upon many new paths in his life. He undertook significant positions of community leadership, delved into areas of study of which his own teachers never knew, and did not fear to express his independence of thought even when he differed from some of his predecessors.

Or consider Rabbi Moshe Sofer, known as the Chatam Sofer, who is generally thought to have been an ardent traditionalist. Yet he too demonstrated great independence when he formulated his own approach to combating the heretical movements of his time. He invented new ways to fight old battles.

The Chofetz Chaim and Rav Moshe Feinstein, to take two twentieth century gedolim, did not merely mimic their teachers and peers but undertook new approaches, new emphases, and dealt with unprecedented issues relying upon their profound scholarship for sure, but also were confident in their independent judgment. Rav Moshe even committed to writing some of his thoughts about the necessity of a posek, a halachic decisor, not to fear to express his independent thoughts when he was confident that they were correct.

Shabbat HaGadol gives us the opportunity to cherish our independence in so many ways. We must never abandon our Torah and tradition, but we must realize that there is a place for independence when it is appropriate.

Passover is the holiday of freedom and independence. Our sages teach us that no one is as free as he who studies Torah deeply. Independence of thought and creativity are values which are cherished by our tradition, and Passover is the time for us to celebrate those values.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

House With Tzaraas: Blessing or Curse?

Parshas Metzora deals with blemishes that appear on the walls of homes in Eretz Yisrael ("upon a house in the land of your possession") [Vayikra 14:34]. Rashi quotes the famous Medrash that the Torah is informing the Jewish people of "good news." Encountering Tzaraas on the walls of someone's house is a cloud with a silver lining. "The Emorites hid gold treasure in the walls of their houses all forty years that Israel was in the desert, and as a result of the Tzaraas affliction, the Jew will need to break down the walls of his house, and he'll find the hidden treasure."

The Sefas Emes asks, if the Almighty wants to give a person treasure, there are many easier ways than having to break down the walls of his house. So, is it a punishment or a gift? If it is a punishment, let it be a punishment. If it is a present, give it properly, gift-wrapped with a bow on top!

Many years ago, we quoted an amazing insight from the Chidushei HaRim, the grandfather of the Sefas Emes. The Torah says that when Klal Yisrael left Egypt, "And the Children of Israel did according to the word of Moshe and they asked (va'yishalu) the Egyptians for silver vessels and golden vessels and items of clothing." [Shemos 12:35] The Jews left Egypt enriched. The term va'yishalu is peculiar because it literally means borrowing, and everyone knows that the Jewish people were not borrowing these items – they did not ever intend to return them. Then why does the Torah say that they borrowed from the Egyptians?

The Chiddushei HaRim suggests a powerful thought. This is the first time that the Jewish people, as a nation, are coming into wealth. The Torah teaches us a basic principle about money. As we all know, money has the capacity to be a great blessing, but it also has the capacity to be a great curse. Hashem tells the Israelites: You are coming into money for the first time. Do you know how you need to look at money? "Let them ask (va'yishalu)…." Money is always borrowed. Hashem is lending us money. We have stewardship over it. He wants us to use it in the proper way, but we need to know "The money is mine and the gold is mine, the Word of Hashem, Master of Legions." [Chaggai 2:8] It is His money. He is lending it to us. To make this point, Hashem tells the Children of Israel: Listen here, you are going to have money now. For the rest of your history, money is going to be a factor, a big factor. I am telling you, look at money as, "And one man asked for from his fellow man (Va'yishalu ish mei'es ray-eihu)". It is a loan. It is not yours. Do not ever think, "It is my money. I made it." No. It is His money and He is giving me the privilege of taking care of His money. That sets the tone.

This, explains the sefer Milchamos Yehudah, answers the Sefas Emes's question regarding why they needed to find the treasures by tearing down the houses. The Ribono shel Olam is teaching us a second lesson about money: Money can destroy houses. Money can destroy a family. The message is that if a person is not careful, money can cause him to rip apart a home. There is a message in that. The message is that such can be the power of money. It can destroy a person's home.

If someone has any doubt about that, speak to lawyers who deal with estates and how much argument comes about because of money and wills. Money can tear families asunder. The only people who benefit from that are estate attorneys. Sometimes the lawyers' fees exceed the amount of money remaining for the inheritors! This is the symbolism of Hashem giving the Jews the money, but providing them with it in a way that it was necessary to destroy their homes to acquire it

Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

This Shabbat we will experience an exception to a rule. Let me explain.

On the Shabbat prior to Pesach, we have 'Shabbat HaGadol'. This is a reminder of the fact that the Exodus took place on a Thursday, the 15th of Nissan. Five days prior to that, was the Shabbat, on which the Israelites were commanded to set aside a lamb and to prepare it for sacrifice. Now, the Egyptians deified the lamb, and the fact that the Israelites could take their 'god', and set it aside for sacrifice without any fear of punishment indicated that the winds of change were bringing about a new era for our people.

That's what we celebrate on Shabbat HaGadol! But my question is – isn't this an exception? Usually, on our calendar, we celebrate or commemorate events on the anniversary of the date on which they took place. So surely therefore, we should recall what transpired on the 10th of Nisaan – regardless of the day of the week on which it falls. Why is it always marked on the Shabbat before Pesach?

I believe that what took place on the 10th of Nissan is connected to every single Shabbat. You see, on that 10th of Nissan we recognised how privileged we were to have our own traditions. What a unique nation we are, doing things that others do not do. And that is exactly what we do every single Shabbat. Shabbat provides us with a weekly opportunity to celebrate our tradition and to highlight what makes us uniquely Jewish.

Isn't is remarkable therefore, that whilst we correctly prepare for Pesach for 30 whole days and we look forward to it with such anticipation, it is the Shabbat beforehand, which we call Shabbat HaGadol – the 'Great Sabbath', to remind us that as important as our festivals are, Shabbat is even more important. Actually, Shabbat is the greatest of them all.

Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel
Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*

The Awesome Power of Speech in Judaism

In defining the sinner of the name of this week's Parsha, the Talmud (Erchin 15a) defies a Metzora as he or she he speaks evil speech. That same Talmud passage says speaking evil speech is so severe that this person's sins reach directly to God, the person is guilty of being stoned to death (and not only having his or her skin turn leprous), and, finally,. God says that God and such a sinner cannot co-exist in the same world. What is it about this sin that is particularly heinous to God? Why and how are words considered so powerful? What makes the spoken word to important for the Jew?

One of the main differences between man and all other creatures in the world is man's ability to speak. When God created man, calling him *Nefesh Chaya (*Genesis 2:7*)*, a living soul, Onkelos commentary and translation into Aramaic translates this phrase for man's uniqueness as a "*Ruach Memalela*-A Speaking Spirit". Thus, according to this commentary, that which is Godly in each human being is his ability to speak. The symbols called words (written or spoken) have a special power that can often define a particular human being and help him or her attain both positive and negative goals in life. How is this so? The letters of the Aleph Bet, the Hebrew alphabet, and the spoken word are the very building blocks of the universe, as God created the world through speech, in ten specific pronouncements (sayings) (Mishna Avot 5:1).

Jews each morning recount this idea in *Baruch She-amar* prayer (First blessing of the *Pesukai Dezimrah* section of the morning prayers) reciting "Blessed is He who spoke, and the world came into being." Proverb (Proverbs 18:21) tells us that the tongue can control life and death, i.e., through our use of speech. Indeed, many of the most terrible killers in the history of humanity, such as Adolph Hitler did not actually murder anyone with their own hands but used speech to inspire many others to kill. Without the power of speech, it would have been impossible for Hitler to have singlehandedly killed ten million people including six million Jews. It was only by his use and misuse of words and their power to influence others that led to the Holocaust.

The very first sin in history was brought about through the power of speech. Had not the serpent convinced Eve through words to eat of the fruit and then, later, had not Eve convinced Adam with words to similarly sin (Genesis, chapter 3:1-6), the course of human history would have been vastly different, as the punishments of the serpent, woman and man changed their natures forever (Midrash, Tanchuma Beraishit 8). Even saying something that is true, but, nevertheless, improper, can lead to dire consequences through God. When a groom and bride marry, everyone is aware what will transpire between them that evening. However, if someone verbalizes this concept of sex, the Talmud (Shabbat 33a) says that this person will automatically be doomed for an evil fate, even if this decreed reverses a person's good fate that had been sealed for the next seventy years.

The Talmud (Erchin 15a) declares that improper speech is far more severe than improper action and proves it from the Torah story of the ten spies who sinned by improperly speaking evil about the Land of Israel. The consequences of those words and the improper reaction of the people was the punishment denying all the Jewish adults of that generation the opportunity to inherit the Land, and they died in the desert. Yet, when these very same Jews, months earlier, worshipped the Golden Calf, their punishment in committing that sin of action, not mere words, was far less severe than the decree of death. This same concept is echoed in the Midrash (Midrash, Yalkut Shimoni, Tehillim 3:621) which shows through other similar verses that the consequences of improper speech are very often more grievous than the consequences of improper actions.

The Talmud (Erchin 15b) points out that the physiological makeup of the human being demonstrates how much the tongue must be guarded. The other limbs of man's body are exposed and seen by others. The tongue, however, is created hidden from view. In addition, there was a need to surround the tongue with two protective "walls," the mouth and the teeth, to prevent its misuse. Thus, we see how powerful language can be for both the positive of creation of the world as well as the destruction of the world. It seems, from the Torah (Numbers, chapters 22-24), that Bilaam would have actually destroyed the Jewish people with his words, had he succeeded in cursing the people rather than blessing them, since the Torah went to great lengths to show us that God changed his curses to blessings. The Talmud points out (Megillah 28a) that the power of words is so strong that even the curses of simple, "unimportant" people should not be taken lightly.

The Importance Of Speech For The Jew

When David, poet, king, warrior, and musician, wrote about the secret of a long and meaningful life, he did not record that the Jew should keep a particular ritual such as Shabbat or Kashrut, and did not even say the secret lay in being kind to one's fellow man. Rather, he writes (Psalms 34:13-14) that a person should guard his tongue from speaking evil. It is clear that refraining also serves as a catalyst, leading to other righteous acts. In Judaism, there are three cardinal sins that are so heinous that a Jew is commanded to give up one's life rather than violate them (Sanhedrin 74a). They are murder, adultery, and idol worship. And yet, the Jerusalem Talmud (Jerusalem Talmud, Peah 4a) states that while it is true that for these three sins one pays both in this world and the next world, the sin of speaking evil about someone else is so abhorrent, that it is considered as heinous as all three of these cardinal sins combined! This is

not a mere statement of hyperbole, as Maimonide (Maimonides, Hilchot Deot 7:3) quotes this passage as part of Jewish law. The sin using speech is so reprehensible that according to Rambam (Maimonides, Hilchot Deot 7:), a person is required to move from the neighborhood rather than remain when one's neighbors continually speak evil about others.

The Danger Of Improper Speech

In demonstrating how harmful the written or spoken word can be, it has been said that the pen (or the spoken word) is mightier than the sword. However, Judaism does not compare the pen (or tongue) to a sword but, rather, to an arrow (Jeremiah 9:7). Why is this so? How is an arrow different conceptually from a sword? According to the Midrash (Midrash Tehillim 120:4), unlike a sword, an arrow, once released cannot be stopped, while a sword can be retracted until the very last instant, before hitting the target. A spoken word is like the arrow, not the sword, since, once it is uttered, cannot be retrieved. Evil speech is also analogous to an arrow because an arrow, although aimed at one target, can easily go astray and inadvertently hurt an unintended victim. Because of its proximity, a sword almost never misses its intended victim. *Lashon Hara*, evil speech, like the arrow, although intended for one victim, often inadvertently hurts someone else.

The damage caused by speaking evil is often worse and more permanent than a physical blow. While a physical injury may often heal completely, a person will rarely recuperate completely from the effects of evil speech against him or her, even after an extended time. It is for this reason that the punishment for publicly embarrassing someone with words is much more severe than the punishment for physically hurting an individual. Even a murderer who is punished with death by the Jewish court does not lose his share in the World to Come, while one who publicly embarrasses an individual, does indeed lose his or her share in the World to Come, which is a far greater punishment than even the death penalty (Bava Metziah 59a, Maimonides, Hilchot Deot 6:8).

There is a story about a man who had sinned by uttering *Lashon Hara* (speaking evil), and wished to repent, so he went to the Rabbi. He went to the Rabbi told him to get feathers from a pillow. When he returned, the Rabbi told the man to scatter the feathers in the wind and he obeyed. But when the Rabbi told the man he must now gather those same feathers once again, the man said that this was an impossible task, and he could not comply. At that point, the Rabbi pointed out that, like the feathers, once words are uttered and scattered, they cannot be retrieved, and, therefore, there can be no repentance for *Lashon Hara*. This reflects the Jerusalem Talmud's passage (Jerusalem Talmud, Bava Kama 36b), which states that it is possible for man to repent for all sins except *Lashon Hara*.

***This column has been adapted from a series of volumes written by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel "*The Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*" available from Urim and Amazon. For the full article or to review all the footnotes in the original, contact the author at nachum@jewishdestiny.com**

OTS Dvar Torah

The Truly Great Day
Ilana Goldstein Saks

On the eve of yetziat Mitzraim, the exodus from Egypt, Am Yisrael packed its bags, tied its shoes, took up its walking sticks and partook of the korban pesach, the Pascal lamb (Exodus 12:11). They marked their doorways with its blood as a sign of belonging to Hashem's nation. This, together with their readiness to make a hasty exit, made them worthy of God's benevolence, allowing them to be passed-over when Hashem swept through Egypt, smiting her first-born sons (12:7,13). This process of leaving, of Am Yisrael's differentiation from Mitzraim, actually began four days earlier, on the tenth of Nisan – the original Shabbat Hagadol (the Shabbat just before Passover) according to one midrash – when in an act of defiance they collectively set aside so many "sacred" Egyptians lambs, to be sacrificed to the God of Israel (12:3). That night, the line of division was clear, separating between God's oppressed people and the people who had oppressed them.

Almost a millennium later, in a speech destined to become the yearly haftarah for Shabbat HaGadol, the prophet Malachi described a remarkably similar event. His audience was the confused descendants of those original Israelites who were back in the Land of Israel after the destruction of the first Beit Hamikdash, the Temple in Jerusalem, and the Babylonian exile. Unlike their Egyptian-born ancestors they did not feel Hashem's presence. They complained that despite their having rebuilt the Beit Hamikdash, God was not in their midst; that although they heeded the call to return and rebuild, Hashem did not return to rebuild with them. They saw no point in following God, because it seemed that those who didn't were better off (Malachi 3:14-15).

A time is coming, Malachi reassured them, Yom Hashem HaGadol, the Great Day of God, when Hashem will have compassion for those who truly follow him (3:17).

For lo! That day is at hand, burning like an oven. All the arrogant and all the doers of evil shall be straw, and the day that is coming—said the LORD of Hosts—shall burn them to ashes and leave of them neither stock nor boughs. But for you who revere My name a sun of victory shall rise to bring healing. (3:19-20)

One cannot help but notice the parallel to that night back in Egypt – arguably the original template for Yom Hashem; both days of judgement when Hashem punishes some and spares others. In contrast to the event in Egypt, however, in Malachi's vision, God distinguishes not between Am Yisrael and its enemy, but between those who are evil and those who are good (3:18) – sifting out those "who practice sorcery, who commit adultery, who swear falsely, who cheat as laborers of their hire, and who subvert [the cause of] the widow, orphan, and stranger" (3:5) from those who are loyal and fair and kind.

Somewhere between that distant redemption in Egypt and the day that Malachi addressed the people something had changed. Yom Hashem had become an excuse for Am Yisrael to avoid responsibility – their chosenness transformed into a privilege rather than a responsibility. As they became more and more corrupt they would point to the Beit Hamikdash in their midst, and the sacrifices brought within – and the fact that God had brought mighty Egypt to its knees just for them – and be confident that God would always be with them, no matter what (see, for example, Jeremiah 7:1-4, Micha 3:9-11, Amos 3:1-2, Isaiah 1: 10-17). "Woe to you who wish for the day of the Lord!" the prophet Amos warned generations before Malachi. "Why should you want the day of the Lord? It shall be darkness, not light!" (Amos 5:18). The people mistakenly believed that like their experience in Egypt, Yom Hashem would always be in their favor. The prophets tried in vain to teach them that the future Yom Hashem would favor only those who had internalized the messages of that Egyptian experience – to be kind to the downtrodden and faithful to the God who had shown them kindness.

Pesach – particularly the seder – is a holiday about the past, but it is a mistake to think of it as merely a commemoration. As we make our way through the Hagaddah, we first recount the story of leaving Egypt, but past and present quickly blur as we not only declare "in every generation a person is obligated to regard him – or her – self as if he or she had come out of Egypt," but also "not just one alone has risen against us to destroy us, but in every generation they rise against us to destroy us; and the Holy One, blessed be He, saves us from their hand." By the end of the seder, we have segued to the future, as we sing with a mix of longing and revelry (helped along by four glasses of wine) of the building of the Beit Hamikdash, and we imagine celebrating next year – year after year – in a rebuilt Jerusalem.

Ultimately, Pesach is about redemption – past and future. If the story of the exodus is the explanation of redemption past, Malachi's Yom Hashem is a roadmap for achieving the redemption to come.

"Then the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of yore and in the years of old."

Then we will celebrate, once again, in a truly rebuilt Jerusalem.

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org
Rabbi Hershel Schachter
Shabbos Hagadol and Moshiach

The haftorah for Shabbos Hagadol is the concluding parsha in Trei Osor. When Shlomo Hamelech built the first Beis Hamikdosh, he already knew that it would be destroyed. According to the pessukim in Tehillim (106) and Yechezkel (23), Bnei Yisroel were already told right after the cheit hameraglim that the Beis Hamikdosh that they will build in Eretz Yisroel in the future would be destroyed and the nation would be sent into galus. (See the commentary of the Netziv to Parshas Shlach (14:21).) Shlomo Hamelech wrote in Shir Hashirim, regarding the second Beis Hamikdoshwhich will be built after the seventy years of galus Bavel, that if the entire Jewish nation would return en masse to Eretz Yisroel then the new Beis Hamikdosh would be like a metal structure which would not rot away. If, however, the aliyah at the end of the galus Bavel would be weak, then the second Beis Hamikdosh would be like a wooden hut which would rot away. The Gemorah (Yoma) understands this rotting away in a double sense: first, that the Beis Hamikdosh would be destroyed, and second that the Jewish people would rot away because Hashem would not send any more nevi'im.

The aliyah from Bavel in the days of Ezra and Nechemia was so weak it was obvious from the very start that the second Beis Hamikdosh would not last. After the return from galus Bavel there were only three nevi'im: Chaggai, Zecharia, and Malachi. Because the halacha states that one may not build a Beis Hamikdosh without express authorization from a novi, each one of the three nevi'im gave instructions about different aspects of the construction of the Beis Hamikdosh. In this final chapter in the nevuah of Malachi, he warns the people that they better observe the laws in the Torah. The role of the novi is to give mussar and tochacha, and Hashem will not be sending any more nevi'im. Malachi says that he is the last novi until Eliyahu Hanovi who will only come a day before moshiach. At that time there will be a tremendous teshuva movement. We wait every day with baited breath for the appearance of Eliyahu Hanovi which will lead to the yemos Ha'moshiach.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah
by Rabbi Label Lam

One by One

What is different about this night from all other nights? – Haggadah

And you shall tell your child on that day that this is what HASHEM did for me when I went out of Egypt… (Shemos:)

What is the meaning and relevance of that oft repeated question, "What is different about this night from all other nights?" Sometimes it is relegated to a recital, a cute recital, and a chance to involve the youngest children. There is great value in that, but as we grow older the question needs to grow and take root within us.

Here we are approaching Pesach and we have been hosting a family of raccoons in our attic. Actually it's a mother and her babies. The father is not involved at this stage in high functioning raccoon families. As much as we love to entertain guests we realized that this is not a sustainable relationship so we called a pest control guy. He scouted out the situation and proposed a remedy.

He put a trap on the roof of the house at the port of entry and placed inside the trap an irresistible slice of sweet apple pie. He tells us that raccoons eat anything but sweet apple pie is very high on their list of favorite foods. He carefully placed a camera on the roof facing the trap with a motion detector. He would get a signal the moment there would be any action and he would come right over immediately to take the mother to a repatriation center and then he would mercifully scoop up the children and reunite them with their mother and then everyone would be happy, both the Lams and the raccoons. He told us it would take not more than one day for the mother raccoon to exit the vent and enter the trap, but that's not what happened.

A few days went by and I get a call from the pest control guy, Chris. He sent me a few pictures and described exactly what happened. It was more than a highly unusual conclusion. He has been doing this work for many years and this may have been a first. He related the good news that the raccoon is gone. She left on her own. In the pictures he sent you can clearly see that the mother raccoon is staring at the trap and the sweet apple pie and then in the next series of pics she is seen carrying her babies out one by one.

Chris added his expert commentary. His theory is that this mother has been in a trap before. She is not a first time offender. He said, that very often, but not by him, the animals remain in the cage for days before the pest control guy comes back to collect his catch. The animal is panicked and starved in the meantime and if there are babies involved the results are often tragic. He believes that this mother raccoon stared at the pie and the trap and chose to relocate rather than to risk everything for a brief nibble of sweet apple pie. I was amazed by the notion that a raccoon has such a memory of having been in a trap and thereby is able to choose to avoid taking the bait. It made sense to me! All's well that ends well!

Then it occurred to me that this is the story of Pesach. On Seder night we study the classic example of Egypt, remembering how we got trapped as a nation there. A good Jewish parent is deeply concerned lest we get stuck again in another exile and G-d forbid go-lost. The collective memory on "this night" carries a reminder of all the places we've been caught, subject to suffering, and worse.

Therefore we call everyone together, all Jewish families all over the globe, for a team meeting. We are asking practically, "How is this night (this exile) different than all other nights (exiles)?" Woe to the general who fights the last battle. What are we up against now?! Mah nishtana – what must we learn and how must we change and adapt in order that our family and family culture survives?

The sacred obligation on Seder Night to have this discussion is based on a verse that is stated in the singular, "You shall tell your child…" Not children, plural, each child. Even the mother raccoon knows to carefully carry her young brood out individually one by one!

h

BS"D

To: parsha@groups.io
From: cshulman@gmail.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON **METZORA – Shabbos Hagadol** - 5782

parsha@groups.io / www.parsha.net - in our 27th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to http://www.parsha.net and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha+subscribe@groups.io Please also copy me at cshulman@gmail.com A complete archive of previous issues is now available at http://www.parsha.net It is also fully searchable.

---

from: Esplanade Capital <jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com>
date: Apr 7, 2022, 11:31 PM
subject: Rabbi Reisman's Weekly Chumash Shiur
Rabbi Reisman - Shabbos Hagadol - Parshas Metzora 5782

As we prepare for Pesach, Shabbos Parshas Metzora and Shabbos Hagadol the wonderful Shabbos that is now upon us.

4 - **Topic – A Thought for the upcoming Chag Hamatzos which is an explanation of Sheishes Yemai Beraishis and Shivas Yemai Beraishis (A second approach).**

(Ed. Note: Rebbi mentioned this Dvar Torah today which was said by Parshas Beraishis 5782 so I pasted it here).

At Kiddush, Jews the world over say (יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי וַיְכֻלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ, וְכָל-צְבָאָם). That expression is a corruption of the Pesukim. As you all know, (יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי) is the end of 1:31 which states (וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר, יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי) and it is the end of the Parsha. The next Parsha starts 2:1 (וַיְכֻלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ), that begins to tell the story of the 7th day. When we stand up in front of our families and proclaim (יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי וַיְכֻלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ) that is not correct. Imagine, if someone would get up and say in front of his Talmidim, he would be teaching them and he would get up and say Yom Hash'lishi Vayomer Elokim (וְהָיוּ לְמָאוֹרֹת בִּרְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמָיִם). It was the third day and Hashem said let there be heavenly bodies, he would be teaching them incorrectly. It was the 4th day on which Hashem created the sun, the moon and the stars. It says in 1:13 (וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר, יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי) and then in 1:14 (וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים, יְהִי מְאֹרֹת בִּרְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמָיִם). For someone to get up and say (יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי יְהִי מְאֹרֹת בִּרְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמָיִם) would be terrible, it would be Megaleh Panim L'torah Shelo K'halacha. It would be teaching Torah incorrectly. So why do we get up and say (יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי וַיְכֻלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ, וְכָל-צְבָאָם) as if it is one Posuk. It is a Davar Pele!

It is an even bigger Davar Pele because we are told by those who Darshun Simanim, that (יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי וַיְכֻלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם) is Roshei Teives Yud Kei Vav Kei. (יוֹם) is (י), (הַשִּׁשִּׁי) is (ה), (וַיְכֻלּוּ) is (ו) and (הַשָּׁמַיִם) is (ה). So we are saying a Remez to Yud, Kei, Vav, Kei. What kind of Remez to Yud, Kei, Vav, Kei, the Yud & Kei is part of one Parsha of the Torah (וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר, יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי) and (וַיְכֻלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם) is a new Parsha. What is the inherent connection between them as that doesn't fill a Pshat at all?

While we are at it I would like to add a second point that needs explanation which I hope will be explained. I mentioned I believe in a past year (Ed. Note: see Parshas Yisro 5777 where Rebbi spoke out the Bais Halevi in the second piece in Beraishis starting with Vayichal) that sometimes we find that Chazal talk about Shiv'as Yemai Beraishis, the seven days of creation and sometimes Sheishes Yemai Beraishis, the six days of creation. Well is it six days or is it seven days. I understand the six days of the physical creation and Hashem created rest on the 7th day, however, it is interesting that Chazal use both expressions. Sheishes Yemai Beraishis and Shiv'as Yemai Beraishis. I would like to share with you a Yesod which I would hope would explain this.

Over the Yomim Tovim someone sent me a Sefer Chesed L'avraham which collects Divrei Torah from Gedolei Yisrael and in there on Parshas Beraishis on (יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי) these questions are not asked but there is a quote from the Amshinover Rebbe. The Amshinover Rebbe says on (יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי וַיְכֻלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ) that the Tachlis of a person in this world is L'hosif Min Hachol Al Hakodesh. The Tachlis of a person in the world, Hashem created a physical world for six days and then He created a day that has Kedusha, Kedushas Shabbos. We know that we have a Mitzvah of Tosafos Shabbos of adding some minutes or hours of Friday and making them be part of Shabbos. L'hosif Min Hachol Al Hakodesh. He says that is not just an incidental part of the Mitzvos of the Torah it is the Tachlis Habriya, the purpose of the Briya is that a person should come to this world and be Mosif M'chol Al Hakodesh, a person should add from time that is not set aside for Kedusha, time that is Yemai Chol for ordinary things and take some of that time and set it aside for Kedusha, for Davening, for learning and for making it part of Shabbos.

The same thing with the physical things like money. Money is a mundane thing, it is a Davar Chol. When you use it for Kedusha, like Tzedaka, or use it to teach Torah, you use it for Chesed that is Mosif Hachol Al Hakodesh, you take from Chol and you pull it into Kodesh. When you are gifted, Hashem gave you a talent, you have an ability, you are a capable person. You can use it for manufacturing elevators or pocketbooks and that is fine, that is Chol. However, when you use your talents to help a Mosad, to help a Yeshiva, to help people who need help, individuals who need help, so then you are taking your Chol talents and you are using it for Kedusha, you are using it for a Davar Kadosh. Tachlis Ha'adam of the Briya is L'hosif Hachol Al Hakodesh.

We understand (יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי) .(יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי וַיְכֻלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ) is inherently Chol, but when it becomes Shabbos we say that we connect (יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי וַיְכֻלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ). We connect the 6th day, the day of Chol and attach it to Shabbos to make it part of Kedushas Shabbos.

Chazal say that G-d's name is Yud, Kei, Vav, Kei – 4 letters. Shemos 17:16. Olam Hazeh when we don't see Kedusha, Hashem's name is just Yud and Hei. The Vav and Hei are hidden. (יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי) is an ordinary day. (יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי וַיְכֻלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ) We connect the Yud, Kei to the Vav, Kei so then we take it and we are Mosif the Chol Al HaKodesh and make a whole thing. Yud, Kei always has Kedusha but now it has an extra level of Kedusha. Someone who is Mosif Mai'chol Al Hakodesh.

In the 5th Perek of Pirkei Avos we are taught (עשרה דברים נבראו בין השמשות). Halo Davar Hu, it is amazing. I once heard and I don't know if it is a Milsa D'biduchusa or a true Vort that every Erev Shabbos everybody is rushing. Why is everyone rushing? Because on the original Erev Shabbos Hashem went Bein Hash'moshos and told His Malachim hurry up we have 10 more things to create and it is only a few minutes until Shabbos and they created these last 10 things. (עשרה דברים נבראו בין השמשות) and these are some of the greatest things of Kedusha. The (פי הארץ), the (פי האתון), a Giluy of HKB"H's presence in this world and many other things were created (בין השמשות). Not Kavayochel that G-d was in a rush, but HKB"H made that the (בין השמשות), the connecting minutes of the 6th day to the 7th day are days of intense power of Briya, intense energy of creation. A person takes those minutes that

connect Shabbos to Chol and he goes to Shul early and he is there ahead of time, and he is Mavir Sedra or he is learning, or he is helping set up the Shul for Shabbos. He is taking moments of Chol and making them Kodesh, that is the (בין השמשות) when a person can connect. So it is a beautiful idea (יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי וַיְכֻלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם), we declare that there are Sheishes Yemai Beraishis and Shiv'as Yemai Beraishis. We declare that we see Shiv'as Yemai Beraishis, we see the day of Kedusha as being part of the first six days of creation and we look to pull from Kedusha to Chol. We get caught up too much in our Chol.

(Ed. Note: Back to this week's Shiur). We now live in the time of the year where Shkiya is quite late 7:30'ish around here. There are times of the year that we are Mekabeil Shabbos at 4:30. Yet we rush until Shabbos. Why? There are some Shuls that have an early Shabbos and a Zman Shabbos. Why do Shuls have two Zemanim? I will tell you the top secret reason. The reason why Shuls do it is so that an Ehrliche Yid could take one Shabbos and say I want to do something special. I will go to Shul for the early Minyan and I am going to Daven Mincha and be Mekabeil Shabbos nice and early. After Kabbalas Shabbos I will go take a Sefer and I will go and learn and get ready for Shabbos for the hour and a quarter between Plag and Shkiya. Then I will join for Maariv. Therefore, I will be doing Kabbalas Shabbos early which is an ideal. I will be Davening Maariv after Shkiya which is an ideal and I will be able to Chap a' Rein some learning time in between. It is a wonderful idea and a great thing to try. Try it, you will like it and it will be fine. Don't worry. Tell your wife that I will be home at 8:15. I will Daven with a later Maariv but I will go to Shul for the early Mincha. Gevaldig! What an opportunity. It is an opportunity that presents itself when Shabbos is at this time of the year.

5 – Topic – Shabbos Hagadol

What is Shabbos Hagadol? The Michtav M'eliyahu says Hagadol is a time of generosity. Gadol is Chessed. Shabbos Hagadol – it is the Shabbos before Pesach it is the Shabbos of kindness, of generosity. (גְּדֻלָּה) .(לְךָ ר' הַגְּדֻלָּה) is Chessed. (הַגְּדֻלָּה וְהַגְּבוּרָה וְהַתִּפְאֶרֶת). We know the first Simanim of the Sefira are Chessed, Gevurah and Tiferes. So Chessed is Gedulah.

Rashi in Vaeschanan 3:24 on (אֶת-גָּדְלְךָ) says (זו מדת טובך). Gadol is generous. But that is the way it is by Klal Yisrael. Comes Shabbos Hagadol the generosity of Klal Yisrael in helping other Jews being able to afford a proper Pesach. Things are so expensive today. To be able to come up with a financial help for people, to help them make a Bakavadika Yom Tov. Yidden are so kind and so generous, I am sure that you are one of them. Make sure that you are one of them. Let it truly be a Shabbos Hagadol. Wishing one and all an absolutely constructive lead up to Pesach. Hope you are able to rid your homes of all types of Chometz. Chometz She'babayis, Chometz She'baleiv. We should elevate ourselves this Chodesh Nissan to become bigger, better and IY"H closer to HKB"H. A Gutten Shabbos to all!

Excerpted from
CONGREGATION BETH ABRAHAM Bergenfield, NJ
PESACH BULLETIN 5782/2022
Rav Ya'akov Neuburger, Rabbi Rav Tanchum Cohen, Assistant Rabbi Rav Moshe Tvzi Weinberg, Mashpia

KASHERING: WHERE TO START

1. Clean the oven, range, sink and counter tops. Do not use them with anything hot for 24 hours. Clear all kitchen surfaces. One may want to kasher the oven first.
2. Turn on one burner to its highest setting for ten minutes covering it with a chometzdik blech or pot. Repeat for all burners.
3. If there are pans under the burner grates, remove one and cover it with foil, or replace it with a pesachdik pan. If there are no removable pans under the grates simply cover the area with foil. Keeping the foil a safe distance from the fire, with a pesachdik pot on the one prepared burner boil up water. With this water, one can kasher all other parts of the range, including the pans under the other grates. Have a lot of towels ready to limit the mess.
4. Finally kasher the area under the first burner by boiling water on another burner after the area underneath has been kashered.
5. Now one can proceed to kasher the counters and the sink.
6. I have found that it is easiest to use a pesachdike electric kettle to boil water to kasher all surfaces and the sink, as well as the range as described above
[See below - more detailed sections]

FURTHER KITCHEN PREPARATIONS:

1. Baby Bottles – New ones should be purchased as they come into contact with Chometz.
2. Baby high chair - Clean thoroughly. In addition, it is preferable to cover the tray with contact paper or to kasher the tray by pouring boiling water over it (after no hot food had contact with the tray for 24 hrs.), and to avoid placing regular pesachdike dishes on the tray.
3. Towels and tablecloths - Launder them with soap and hot water with fabrics: Towels, Aprons, Tablecloths: Launder them with detergent in a washing machine on the 'hot' setting. Please check each item that no pieces of food remain attached.
4. Water coolers - Replace with a new water bottle. Cold water coolers should be cleaned thoroughly. To kasher the hot tap, run hot water through the tap for ten seconds and pour boiling water from a kettle over the hot water tap.
5. Metal water urns - If they are only used for water , one should kasher the outside by pouring hot water over it. The plastic bottom should be covered with aluminum foil.
6. Crockpots, corning ware, barbecue grills, george foreman grills, melmac, plastic, silverstone, stoneware, teflon, toasters, toaster ovens and warming ovens and drawers all cannot be kashered.

Remember , when shopping for Pesach, please be mindful that sometimes items are misplaced by employees or shoppers. It is wise to always check the item being purchased for the required supervision.

ALL KASHERING MUST BE COMPLETED BY FRIDAY APRIL 15th BY 11:50AM

II. Going away for Pesach

If you will be leaving your home shortly before Pesach and will be away for all of Pesach, you may choose to do the Bedika in your Pesach place and sublet your entire home to our non-Jew for all of Pesach.

If you choose to do so please read the instructions that pertain to you in the next section regarding the sale of Chometz. You need not do any koshering or cleaning or Bedika at all in your home. You will be allowed to access your home very briefly for mail or items that you may have forgotten.

If you are travelling away and have been asked to host a guest during the yom tov, the house must be readied for Pesach. That means that you do not have to kasher anything. Rather you can cover a table and place some water and minimal kosher lepesach items and disposable cups and plates there for your guest's convenience. However Bedika must be done throughout the house, and the closets that have Chometz have to be marked and taped down. This can be done by the guests, the night before Pesach or by their hosts in the neighborhood.

In the event that one's home can be divided into an area for the guests and a separate section or sections, those sections can be sublet to the Gentile if they represent a reasonable lease, i.e. someone would indeed lease those areas alone. In that case alone, one would not be obligated to prepare the leased areas for Pesach and one need not do Bedika there, and that section would be off limits to your guests.

III. Selling the Chometz

Together with these pages is the Power of Attorney form which empowers Rabbi Neuburger and Rabbi Cohen to sell your Chometz or sublet your home on your behalf. Additional copies are available in the shul.

1. Please fill in the document carefully, listing the approximate values for the various categories of Chometz, whenever possible. If uncertain of the value, please overestimate. Please list your office(s) as well.
2. Only Chometz items which contain Chometz, or items which may contain Chometz can be sold. (Selling the Chometz can be used as a tool to avoid researching items as to their contents and edibility.) However, dishes should not be included and any item which clearly does not contain grain or grain derivatives should not be included.
3. Although our sale works for all forms of Chometz, some have a family custom or have personally adopted a custom not to sell rund Chometz and instead to give it away, eat it or burn it. rund Chometz is something which is primarily unquestionable and edible Chometz; this category includes bread, cake, oat or wheat cereal, cookies, pretzels, and rolled oats. Many opinions include beer and whiskey in this category as well. Here is a partial list of frequently asked items that can be sold even according to the stricter opinions: baker's yeast, baking powder, baking soda, pearled barley, corn flakes, duck sauce, flour, ketchup, mayonnaise, mustard, pasta sauce, popcorn, potato chips, pickles, rum, vanilla extract, vinegar.
4. The non-Jewish purchaser of the Chometz must have access to your home during Pesach. If you plan to be away during Pesach, please leave a key with a neighbor. On the Power of Attorney document you will note either this neighbor's phone number or

your own cell phone number.
5. Those of you who will not be home and are leaving it vacant during the entire Pesach and wish to sublet the entire home in order to be free of the
obligation to clean and be Bodek your home, may do so provided the you fulfil the Mitzva of Bedikas Chometz at some other place. Please be sure to complete and return the document to the Rabbi by THURSDAY Morning, April 14th, and be out of your home, preferably, before 7:35pm that evening. In this situation one should perform the mitzvah of Bedikas Chometz in the place where one is staying for Pesach. There may be extenuating circumstances where one cannot leave one's home before Sunday evening or where one cannot perform a bedikah on Sunday night at one's destination. In those situations we will sublet the entire home to the Gentile and exclude one room from the sublease (as indicated in the "Power of Attorney") in which you can perform the mitzvah of bedikas Chometz.
7. The form must be signed by the legal renter/owner and by the legal owner of the Chometz. When these are NOT the same person, both people should be involved in delegating the power of the attorney to the Rabbi and should consult with him.
8. All forms must be completed by personally appointing the Rabbi as your agent. If one is traveling away before Thursday April 14th and is doing bedika at home or in the office prior to that, the beracha is omitted.

IV. Erev Pesach: Thursday Night, April 14th and Friday, April 15th
1. Bedikas Chometz: The search for the Chometz should be done Thursday night, April 14th as soon as possible after 8:17pm, before eating dinner or beginning any other work. The search commences with the blessing that can be found at the beginning of most Hagadot. After completing the search one recites Bitul Chometz, a formula annulling and dispossessing and Chometz of which one is unaware. This Formula should be recited in English, as well if one does not understand Hebrew.
2. Taanis Bechorim - Fast of the First Born takes place this year on Friday April 15. Participating in a seudas mitzvah exempts one in this case from fasting the entire day. Shacharis at __ ___ ___ ___ and __. The shul will be making a seudas mitzvah following each siyum to which you are all invited. Please come.
3. The prohibition of eating Chometz begins on Friday morning, April 15th at 10:43am.
4. Biur Chometz: The burning of the Chometz must be done by 11:50am on Friday morning . From that time on Chometz may no longer remain in your possession. Therefore, following the burning of the Chometz a final "bitul" formula is recited. The formula can be found in most hagados or in a machzor.
REMINDER: ALL KASHERING SHOULD BE COMPLETED AT THIS TIME AS WELL.
5. Melacha Achar Chatzos -Following Chatzos (12:56pm), we should refrain from any work that is prohibited on chol hamoed . Ideally, one should completeall haircuts and shaving before תוצה as well.

V. SEDER PREPARATIONS
CHECKING ROMAINE LETTUCE
Since Romaine lettuce grows open it is prone to insect infestation throughout the head. Small black or green aphids and thrips are commonly found and well camouflaged. Occasionally narrow translucent burrows speckled with black dots are home to worms. Here are step-by-step recommendations for checking the lettuce leaves:
1. Cut off the lettuce base and separate the leaves from one another.
2. Spread each leaf, exposing its curls and crevices, and wash the open leaf under high-pressure running water. Alternatively, a vegetable brush may be used on both sides of the leaf.
3. Check both sides of the leaf against a good source of overhead lighting or on a light box.
CHECKING MATZOS
An important pre-Pesach preparation is to inspect any hand baked matzos that you may have purchased. Any matzos that are curled over such that the top and bottom adhere to each, other should be taken from the box. The curled area should be removed along with an extra inch and should be treated as Chometz. The rest of the vmn can be replaced in the box and enjoyed over Pesach.
It is advisable for women to omit the shehechianu beracha while candle lighting and fulfill it at kiddush.

MEDICATIONS ON Pesach
Harav Schachter Shlit"a has ruled that medications (IN PILL FORM ONLY) that are tasteless can be taken on Pesach (they are considered inedible for canines) One need not research the potential of kitniyos or Chometz
Regarding other medications please read the below carefully.
Any change in medication due to Pesach , even if they contain Chometz , should not be undertaken without consulting with one's physician and the Rav.
• Onewhoisillmayhavemedicationwhichcontainskitniyos.
• Please check to see if the medicine in question appears on the lists that theStar - K/Kollel of Los Angeles publishes. The list will be available in shul and Rav Neuberger and Rav Cohen will have a copy as well.
• IfthemedicationdoesnotappearonthelistonecancalltheBaltimoreVa'adat 401-484-4110.
•
Ifnoinformationisavailable,pleasecallthemanufacturerandmakesureyougetthenameofthe personyouarespeakingwith,inquirewhetherthereisanygrain product involved in any stage of the processing (or any animal derivative - while you are at it). Explain that we need to know with the same degree of concern as for a person with wheat allergies.
• If the medication is reported to contain Chometz or there is some possible grain product in the medication, together with one's physician, pharmacist and the list one can try to identify and procure a replacement medication. If no reasonable replacement available, or if there is no information available , please consult the Rav.

IX. Food Items
OU ALERT: Due to the increasingly common use of Pesach-questionable processing used in the manufacture of sugar the OU is now recommending either to purchase Pesach certified brands or to purchase your Non-Pesach certified sugar before the holiday begins.
– Aluminum foil Products: All disposable foil products do not require Passover supervision.
– Baby Cereal: Powdered rice cereal should be considered Chometz as they are probably produced on Chometz equipment.
– Baby food: Needs to be kosher l'pesach as it may be produced on Chometz equipment. gerber 2nd foods - (4oz Glass Jars Only)
– Baby formula: Enfamil, Similac, Isomil and Prosobee as well as many others may be used on Pesach . They should be purchased before Pesach and should be used with separate dishes as they contain kitniyos.
– Balloons: Balloons may have a powdered coating on the inside and should not be blown up by mouth on Pesach . (Star-K)
– Canned fruits and vegetables: Should carry a kosher l'pesach endorsement.
– Dried fruits: Dried fruits require Pesach certification finger paint: Elmer's and Ross Finger Paints contain wheat starch and should be put away for Pesach .
– Carrots that are certified Kosher are kosher l'pesach as well, evenwithout "P" designation.
– Coffee: All coffees require Pesach certification. The following packaged coffees are Kosher for Pesach without a Pesach symbol. (Partial Listing). Folgers: Instant, Regular , Decaffeinated, Unflavored Nescafe Tasters Choice: Instant, Regular, Unflavored.
– Cleansers: The following is a partial list that do not require a hashgocho on Pesach even if used to clean eating surfaces: Ajax, Cascade, Cheer , Clorox, Dawn, Dynamo, Glass Plus, Ivory, Joy , Mr . Clean, Murphy Oil, Palmolive, Soft Scrub, Spic 'n Span and Tide.
– Frozen fruits: All frozen unsweetened whole fruit without syrup or other additives listed do not require special Pesach supervision.
– Hand Sanitizer: Any without alcohol may be used.
– Ice: All plain water bagged ice may be used.
– Insect and Rodent Traps: May contain Chometz bait which is non-toxic to people and should be sold with the Chometz . This includes Combat Roach System, D-Con Rat & Mouse baits and Black Flag Roach Ender. Raid Ant & Roach Traps do not contain Chometz. All insecticide sprays may be used. (Star-K)
– Juices: Unsweetened "Grade A" concentrated frozen orange and grapefruit juice without any additives may be used on Pesach .
– Lactaid Caplets: May contain Chometz and may not be used on Pesach . Lactaid Milk: May be used on Pesach if purchased from a store with supervision before Pesach .
– Play Dough: As it may contain Chometz, it should be sold with the Chometz.
– Milk: Should have kosher for Pesach certification to avoid milk processed on the same equipment as Chometz items.
– Nuts (almonds, filberts, walnuts): Raw whole, chopped or ground nuts without preservatives or other additives are approved for Pesach .
– Paper towel rolls: The first three full size sheets and the last full size sheet attached to the cardboard should not come into direct contact with food.
– Plastic disposables: Plastic cups, plates and cutlery may be used without Pesach hechsher .
– Quinoa: Can be used, if needed, with kosher for Pesach certification.
– Salt: All non-iodized salt that does not contain dextrose or polysorbates may be used.
– Seltzer, unflavored: Do not require a special Pesach hashgocho
– Spices: Due to recent changes in the spice industry, pure spices require reliable kosher for Pesach certification.

– Sugar: Brown sugar often shares tanks with items that contain Chometz and therefore requires Pesach supervision.
– Tea Bags: Any unflavored and non-herbal tea does not require
– Tea (Herbal): Requires kosher l'pesach indication.
– Vegetables, frozen: Should carry kosher l'pesach indications, as companies sometimes produce vegetable - pasta salads on the same equipment.
– Water: Any spring water that has no additives at all may be used on Pesach .

I. Kashering for Pesach
Kashering ovens/stoves - Before kashering all ovens and cooktop parts, they should be cleaned thoroughly and not be used for 24 hours. Stains that are baked into the surfaces of the oven and resist repeated scrubbing with caustic cleansers can be disregarded.
1. Conventional Ovens: The oven should then be set to the highest temperature for forty minutes. It is preferable to insert a pan of water into the oven for the first few minutes giving it enough time to create some vapor.
2. The racks, as they can rarely be thoroughly cleaned, should either be cleaned in a self- cleaning oven or covered with foil (punching holes through it to allow the air to circulate).
3. This method will not kasher trays in the broiler compartment in the oven. If one does not intend to use the broiler on Pesach, one should thoroughly clean the broiler but there is no need to kasher it. If one intends to use the broiler one should replace the broiler pans with new pesachdik pans and kasher the empty broiler cavity by setting it to broil for forty minutes. Again, it is preferable to insert a pan of water into the oven for the first few minutes - giving it enough time to create some vapor.
4. Self-cleaning ovens can be kashered by removing all visible pieces of food and running it through the shortest self-cleaning cycle with the racks in place. Self cleaning ovens and that which is kashered inside of them or kashered by direct fire do NOT need the 24 hour period of non-use.
5. Continuously cleaning ovens should be treated as regular ovens. However,they have to be cleaned in accordancewith the manufacturer's specification which often preclude caustic or abrasive materials.
6. Gas Cooktop: The grates of the burners should be kashered by putting them in contact with the flame for at least 10 minutes. This can easily be done by putting the Shabbos blech over the grates and turning the burn ers on. (The regular year-long blech can be used for this. Care must be taken not to create too much heat under the blech, which could harm the stove or counter. It is advisable to do one burner at a time.) Alternatively, the grates can be burned out in the stove at 550 degrees for one hour . If there is a pan underneath, the grate should be purged by pouring hot water over it. The stove top should be covered with heavy aluminum foil. (If it is stainless steel it can be purged with hot water .)
7. Electric Cooktop: In a conventional electric cooktop, clean the burners and turn them on to a high heat setting until they are completely glowing, which may take just a few minutes. If there is a pan underneath, the grate should be purged by pouring hot water over it. The stove top should be covered with heavy aluminum foil. (If it is stainless steel it can be purged with hot water.) If there is a pan underneath, the grate should be purged by pouring hot water over it. The stove top should be covered with heavy aluminum foil. (If it is stainless steel it can be purged with hot water.)
8. glass, corning, halogen, or ceran range tops present difficulty. The electric elements of these stove tops can be kashered by turning them on to their highest setting until they come to a glow. However, the unheated area of the glass top cannot be kashered satisfactorily without risking damage to it. One should call the manufacturer of the model and find out which materials can be safely placed over the glass top area between the burners, and how they can be situated safely .
9. Microwave oven: Microwave ovens that have been used for cooking should not be used and thus should not be koshered for pesach. If they have been solely used to warm and defrost food, and if it is important to use them on pesach, then they must be cleaned very well with special attention to the grate over the light. They should not be used for 24 hours. The glass turntable should be removed and replaced with a new surface. A Styrofoam cup, filled with water, should be brought to boil, allowing some steam to gather. The cup should be refilled and moved to another spot and once again bring the water to a boil allowing some steam to gather. The glass window should be covered with a stiff paper or light cardboard.
10. W arming Drawers: Even if they are reconfigured or designed to permit usage on Shabbos and yom tov, they cannot be easily koshered in a non commercial setting and should not be used on pesach.
KASHERING SINKS
1. Enamel, china, porcelain or corian sinks: As they cannot be kashered, the sink and faucets should be cleaned thoroughly and not used with hot items for 24 hours. One should place pesachdik racks and tubs (separate for milk and meat) or some similar inserts inside the sinks.
2. Stainless steel or granite sinks: The sink and metal faucets should be cleaned thoroughly and not used with anything hot for 24 hours. The difficulty of controlling this suggests that the sink not be used at all or that the hot water be disabled for the twenty four hour period. Boiling hot water should be poured over every part of the sink. This water should be boiled in a pesachdik kettle or a kettle that itself has been kashered. The kettle will have to be filled several times to complete the kashering.
KASHERING METAL UTENSILS (e.g., kiddush cups)
1. Metal utensils that have not been used in baking or grilling or frying Chometz may be kashered if they are made of one piece and do not contain any deep nooks or rolled lips that that could harbor waste. The utensils should be cleaned thoroughly, allowing 24 hours without contact to anything hot. Then they should be immersed, one by one, into a pot of water that is maintaining a rolling boil through out the immersion.
2. The custom has been established to kasher a pot before using it for kashering other utensils. This is accomplished through selecting a large pot with a smooth inner surface, cleaning it and leaving it dormant for twenty-four hours. The water in the pot should then bebrought to a boil. Proceed to have the water boil over the sides of the pot, either by adding boiling water carefully or by dropping a hot nail into the boiling water. The water should then be discarded and refilled and brought to a boil to begin kashering.
KASHERING COUNTER TOPS
1. Move Tables: The common practice is to clean tables well and then cover them to the FURTHER KITCHEN PREPARATIONS section.
2. It has long been practiced to cover enamel, corian, plastic and formica counter tops that will be used over the course of Pesach.
3. Fabrics: Towels, Aprons, Tablecloths: Launder them with detergent in a washing machine on the 'hot' setting. Please check each item that no pieces of food remain attached.
4. These counters (enamel, corian, plastic/formica) should be clean and unused with anything hot for twenty four hours and covered with a surface that will not allow moisture through.
5. Granite, marble and other solid stone surfaces (non composite stone) can be kashered and used without any cover. Cracks or seams should be covered well.
6. The kashering should be done after the counter has not been used for anything hot for at least twenty four hours.
7. Boiling water should be generously applied to the surface.
8. Alternatively, these counters alone (Granite, marble and other solid stone), can be kashered with a steamer. The mouth of the steamer wand must be held within ¾ of an inch of the counter surface. Every area must be steamed twice. The second time must be done momentarily after the first while the counter is still very wet from the first application. Whereas steaming is neater, it is very laborious and requires care and patience.

[More excerpts from Beth Abraham Pesach bulletin (e.g. Seder) will be in the Pesach issue IYH.re Seder eTo be continued next week.]

From: Rabbi Sacks <info@rabbisacks.org>
subject: Covenant and Conversation
COVENANT & CONVERSATION
The Power of Shame - METZORA • 5776, 5782
Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Zt"l
On 20 December 2013, a young woman named Justine Sacco was waiting in Heathrow airport before boarding a flight to Africa. To while away the time, she sent a tweet in questionable taste about the hazards of catching AIDS. There was no immediate response, and she boarded the plane unaware of the storm that was about to break. Eleven hours later, upon landing, she discovered that she had become an international cause célèbre. Her tweet, and responses to it, had gone viral. Over the next 11 days she would be googled more than a million times. She was branded a racist and dismissed from her job. Overnight she had become a pariah.[1]
The new social media have brought about a return to an ancient phenomenon, public shaming. Two recent books – Jon Ronson's So You've Been Publicly Shamed and Jennifer Jacquet's Is Shame Necessary?[2] – have discussed it. Jacquet believes it is a good thing. It can be a way of getting public corporations to behave more responsibly, for example. Ronson highlights the dangers. It is one thing to be shamed by the community of which you are a part, quite another by a global network of strangers who know nothing about you or the context in which your act took place. That is more like a lynch mob than the pursuit of justice.

Either way, this gives us a way of understanding the otherwise bewildering phenomenon of tsara'at, the condition dealt with at length in last week's parsha and this one. Tsara'at has been variously translated as leprosy, skin disease, and scaly infection. Yet there are formidable problems in identifying it with any known disease. First, its symptoms do not correspond to Hansen's Disease, otherwise known as leprosy. Second, the tsara'at described in the Torah affects not only human beings but also the walls of houses, furniture, and clothes. There is no known medical condition that has this property. Besides, the Torah is a book about holiness and correct conduct. It is not a medical text. Even if it were, as David Zvi Hoffman points out in his commentary,[3] the procedures to be carried out do not correspond to those that would be done if tsara'at were a contagious disease. Finally, tsara'at as described in the Torah is a condition that brings not sickness but rather impurity, tumah. Health and purity are different things altogether.

The Sages decoded the mystery by relating our parsha to the instances in the Torah in which someone was actually afflicted by tsara'at. It happened to Miriam when she spoke against her brother Moses (Num. 12:1-15). Another example referred to was Moses who, at the Burning Bush, said to God that the Israelites would not believe in him. His hand briefly turned "as leprous as snow" (Ex. 4:7). The Sages regarded tsara'at as a punishment for lashon hara, evil speech, speaking negatively about or denigrating another person. This helped them explain why the symptoms of tsara'at – mould, discolouration – could affect walls, furniture, clothes, and human skin. These were a sequence of warnings or punishments. First God warned the offender by sending a sign of decay to the walls of his house. If the offender repented the condition stopped there. If he failed to do so his furniture was affected, then his clothes, and finally his skin.

How are we to understand this? Why was "evil speech" regarded as so serious an offence that it took these strange phenomena to point to its existence? And why was it punished this way and not another?

It was the anthropologist Ruth Benedict and her book about Japanese culture, The Chrysanthemum and the Sword,[4] that popularised a distinction between two kinds of society: guilt cultures and shame cultures. Ancient Greece, like Japan, was a shame culture. Judaism and the religions influenced by it (most obviously, Calvinism) were guilt cultures. The differences between them are substantial.

In shame cultures, what matters is the judgment of others. Acting morally means conforming to public roles, rules, and expectations. You do what other people expect you to do. You follow society's conventions. If you fail to do so, society punishes you by subjecting you to shame, ridicule, disapproval, humiliation, and ostracism. In guilt cultures what matters is not what other people think but what the voice of conscience tells you. Living morally means acting in accordance with internalised moral imperatives: "You shall" and "You shall not." What matters is what you know to be right and wrong.

People in shame cultures are other-directed. They care about how they appear in the eyes of others, or as we would say today, they care about their "image." People in guilt cultures are inner-directed. They care about what they know about themselves in moments of absolute honesty. Even if your public image is undamaged, if you know you have done wrong it will make you feel uneasy. You will wake up at night, troubled. "O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!" says Shakespeare's Richard III. "My conscience hath a thousand several tongues / And every tongue brings in a several tale /And every tale condemns me for a villain." Shame is public humiliation. Guilt is inner torment.

The emergence of a guilt culture in Judaism flowed from its understanding of the relationship between God and humankind. In Judaism we are not actors on a stage with society as the audience and the judge. We can fool society; we cannot fool God. All pretence and pride, every mask and persona, the cosmetic cultivation of public image are irrelevant: "The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). Shame cultures are collective and conformist. By contrast Judaism, the archetypal guilt culture, emphasises the individual and their relationship with God. What matters is not whether we conform to the culture of the age but whether we do what is good, just, and right.

This makes the law of tsara'at fascinating, because according to the Sages' interpretation, it constitutes one of the rare instances in the Torah of punishment by shame rather than guilt. The appearance of mould or discolouration on the walls of a house was a public signal of private wrongdoing. It was a way of saying to everyone who lived or visited there, "Bad things have been said in this place." Little by little the signals came ever closer to the culprit, appearing next on their bed or chair, then on their clothes, then on their skin, until eventually their found themselves diagnosed as defiled:

And a blighted person, one bearing the disease – their clothing shall be torn, and the hair of their head disarrayed. And they shall cover their upper lips as they cry out, 'Impure! Impure!' They shall be in a state of impurity for as long as they have the disease; they are impure. They shall live apart; outside the camp shall be their dwelling. (Lev. 13:45-46)

These are quintessential expressions of shame. First is the stigma: the public marks of disgrace or dishonour (the torn clothes, unkempt hair). Then comes the ostracism: temporary exclusion from the normal affairs of society. These have nothing to do with illness and everything to do with social disapproval. This is what makes the law of tsara'at so hard to understand at first: it is one of the rare appearances of public shaming in a non-shame, guilt-based culture.[5] It happened, though, not because society had expressed its disapproval but because God was signalling that it should do so.

Why specifically in the case of lashon hara, "evil speech"? Because speech is what holds society together. Anthropologists have argued that language evolved among humans precisely in order to strengthen the bonds between them so that they could co-operate in larger groupings than any other animal. What sustains co-operation is trust. This allows and encourages me to make sacrifices for the group, knowing that others can be relied on to do likewise. This is precisely why lashon hara is so destructive. It undermines trust. It makes people suspicious about one another. It weakens the bonds that hold the group together. If unchecked, lashon hara will destroy any group it attacks: a family, a team, a community, even a nation. Hence its uniquely malicious character: It uses the power of language to weaken the very thing language was brought into being to create, namely, the trust that sustains the social bond.

That is why the punishment for lashon hara was to be temporarily excluded from society by public exposure (the signs that appear on walls, furniture, clothes, and skin), stigmatisation and shame (the torn clothes, etc.) and ostracism (being forced to live outside the camp). It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to punish the malicious gossiper using the normal conventions of law, courts, and the establishment of guilt. This can be done in the case of motsi shem ra, libel or slander, because these are all cases of making a false statement. Lashon hara is more subtle. It is done not by falsehood but by insinuation. There are many ways of harming a person's reputation without actually telling a lie. Someone accused of lashon hara can easily say, "I didn't say it, I didn't mean it, and even if I did, I did not say anything that was untrue." The best way of dealing with people who poison relationships without actually uttering falsehoods is by naming, shaming, and shunning them.

That, according to the Sages, is what tsara'at miraculously did in ancient times. It no longer exists in the form described in the Torah. But the use of the Internet and social media as instruments of public shaming illustrates both the power and the danger of a culture of shame. Only rarely does the Torah invoke it, and in the case of the metzora only by an act of God, not society. Yet the moral of the metzora remains. Malicious gossip, lashon hara, undermines relationships, erodes the social bond, and damages trust. It deserves to be exposed and shamed.

Never speak ill of others, and stay far from those who do.

---

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Rabbi Yochanan Zweig genesis@torah.org to: rabbizweig@torah.org
subject: Rabbi Zweig

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Yaakov Dovid ben Nochum Binyamin, Professor Bierman. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

.. Follow the Leader

And Bnei Yisroel went and did as Hashem had commanded Moshe and Aharon, so they did (Shemos 12:28).

This week is known as Shabbos Hagadol. According to Chazal, this was the Shabbos that Bnei Yisroel set aside a lamb to be brought as a Korban Pesach. Rashi (ad loc) is bothered by the seemingly repetitious conclusion of the possuk. In other words, the beginning of the verse clearly states that Bnei Yisroel did as Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon, therefore why did the Torah find it necessary to conclude with the words "so they did"? Rashi goes on to explain that the words "so they did" is referring to Moshe and Aharon; they too did the mitzvah of Korban Pesach.

Maharal in the Gur Aryeh (Shemos 12:28) wonders; why is it assumed that Moshe and Aharon would not have had to bring a Korban Pesach and thus the Torah had to tell us otherwise?

Additionally, if the Torah meant to tell us that "so they did" is referring to Moshe and Aharon, why doesn't the it expressly state such, leaving no room for confusion?

Very often, when telling our children to do something that we feel will improve their lives greatly (e.g. they should commit to studying Torah an hour a night), they silently wonder (and sometimes not so silently) why we ourselves are not modeling that very same behavior?

Of course they don't realize all the obligations that we are under (work, business meetings, school board meetings, home repairs, etc.), so how can they possibly understand why we aren't able to make that very same commitment to Torah study?

In fact, our kids are actually right. Of course, there are myriads of excuses we can make as to why we ourselves don't do what we are asking our kids to do, but that's exactly what they are – excuses. Of course, when one has many responsibilities there are conflicts that cannot be avoided. But our children aren't fooled, they know when we are serious about an ideal and when we are merely paying lip service to an ideal. Our kids also know that we have unavoidable conflicts, but they will absolutely judge what we consider to be important in our lives by how we choose to spend our free time.

Leadership follows some of the same rules. Obviously a leader has many responsibilities and obligations, after all, that is what leadership is all about – taking responsibility to get things done. Yet some leaders see themselves as above following certain laws that everyone else must adhere to. They forget that they too have a responsibility to follow the rules.

The Torah is teaching us a remarkable lesson about what kind of leaders Moshe and Aharon were. On the night that Bnei Yisroel left Egypt, undoubtedly, there were a multitude of things to do and Moshe and Aharon could easily have been forgiven for not fulfilling the mitzvah of Korban Pesach. But that's not the type of leaders they were – they did exactly what everyone else did. That's what the Torah is telling us by not mentioning their names: They fulfilled the Korban Pesach like everyone else – as ordinary members of Bnei Yisroel about to leave Egypt.

---

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>
to: weekly@ohr.edu
subject: Torah Weekly

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parsha Insights
For the week ending 9 April 2022 / 8 Nissan 5782
Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Parshat Metzora

Fit to Print

"This will be the torah (the law) of the Metzora…" (14:2)

It always fascinates me how exactly the same amount of news takes place every day. The proof for this is that every day the newspapers contain exactly the same number of pages.

In 1887, Adolph Ochs, the new proprietor of the New York Times, coined the phrase, "All the news that's fit to print", which would be better phrased as "All the news that fits, and if it doesn't fit, I'm sure we can add a little bit here and there."

In fact, most of the news that's printed is far from fit to print. The stock in trade of most newspapers is gossip, be it financial gossip or entertainment biz gossip or political gossip or sports gossip, or just plain gossip gossip.

In Jewish Law, gossip, even when true, is prohibited. No word can emerge from our lips before it is vetted to make sure that it's 'fit to print'.

The Chovot HaLevavot explains that when someone speaks slander or gossips, the sins of the victim are transferred to the slanderer, and the Torah and good deeds of the slanderer accrue to the account of the victim. We learn this from a verse in this week's Torah portion: "This will be the torah (law) of the Metzora on the day of his purification…" This means that on the day he purifies himself and repents for speaking slander, his Torah is considered his own again. However, until he does this, the merit of his Torah belongs to his victim.

In Europe before the war, Rabbi Zvi Dovid, the head of the Krakow Beit Din, fell prey to a tide of untrue rumors and gossip. Disparaging comments could be heard from all quarters, the lies even emanated from the local taverns.

That Shabbat, the Rabbi stood up to address the congregation, "King David said in Tehillim, 'Those who sit by the gate talk about me and make up drinking songs of drunkards'." Said Rabbi Zvi Dovid, " Seemingly, King David is only concerned because ruffians that sit by the gate talk slander about him. Would he be any the happier were great rabbis to talk about him thus?"

The Rabbi concluded, "Actually, were Torah scholars to have spoken badly of King David he would have been able to console himself that all their Torah and good deeds would be transferred to 'his account.' In the situation in which I find myself, however, I seriously doubt how much Torah and mitzvahs will accrue to me — so I am losing out in this world and the next."

Source: Iturei Torah

---

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>
to: rav-kook-list@googlegroups.com
subject: [Rav Kook Torah]

Rav Kook Torah
Metzora: The Power of Speech
Rabbi Chanan Morrison

Only in Israel

What is the root cause of the disease of tzara'at as described in the Torah? The Midrash explains that this skin disease is a punishment for gossip and slander. A person suffering from tzara'at is called a מצורע (metzora) because he is מוציא שם רע - he spreads derogatory reports. [1]

Given that tzara'at is brought about by slander, one would expect that all peoples would be afflicted, since even non-Jews are culpable for personal damages. Yet, Maimonides wrote that tzara'at is not a natural phenomenon, but a unique sign found only among the people of Israel. Why should only the Jewish people suffer from this ailment?

Divine Speech

There are two types of speech. There is everyday speech, based on and limited to that which occurs in the physical universe. And there is a higher form of speech, a holy speech that God bestowed upon Israel. This elevated speech does not originate from the physical world. On the contrary, the world originates from it. This is the speech through which God created the world. "Through the word of God, the heavens were made; and through the breath of His mouth, all of their hosts" (Psalms 33:6).

God granted us the power of His speech, the speech that preceded the world, when He gave us the Torah, the blueprint of creation. "He looked in the Torah and created the universe" (Zohar Terumah 161b). The transmission of Divine speech to the Jewish people is alluded to in the verse: "I put my speech in your mouth... to plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth" (Isaiah 51:16).

Redemption of Speech

The Kabbalists explained that the Hebrew name for Passover, Pesach, is a combination of the words peh sach - "the mouth speaks." The redemption from Egypt, which paved the way for the Torah's revelation at Sinai, also redeemed the faculty of speech. For this reason, Passover is commemorated with a mitzvah of speech, the mitzvah to retell the story of the Exodus. And we find that Moses, aware of this aspect of the redemption from Egypt, tried to disqualify himself by protesting, "I am not a man of speech" (Exod. 4:10).

In an essay entitled "The Redemption of Speech," Rav Kook wrote:

"Sometimes we can sense the connection between our speech and the universe. This is the initial step to redeem speech from its exile.

"As the soul is elevated, we become acutely aware of the tremendous power that lies in our faculty of speech. We recognize clearly the tremendous significance of each utterance; the value of our prayers and blessings, the value of our Torah study and of all of our discourse. We learn to perceive the overall impact of speech. We sense the change and great stirring of the world that comes about through speech." (Orot HaKodesh vol. III, p. 285)

Two Mouths

The most striking expression of the difference between these two levels of speech is the remarkable statement of Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai:

"Had I been present at Mount Sinai, I would have requested that God create us with two mouths: one mouth to speak in words of Torah, and one mouth for all of our worldly needs." (Jerusalem Talmud, Berachot 1:2)

We may lack a mouth dedicated exclusively to Torah and prayer, but we can still deepen our awareness of the extraordinary nature of holy speech. At the start of the morning prayers, we recite a wonderful formula as we prepare our kavanah (mental state): "I hereby ready my mouth to thank and praise my Creator." With this short declaration, we ready ourselves to employ our mouths for a totally different form of speech. We prepare ourselves to employ the sublime speech that is rooted in the source of Divine wisdom. Since this discourse comes from the elevated speech which was used to create the universe, our prayers have the ability to influence the world and change its course (Olat Re'iyah vol. I, p. 192).

With this appreciation for the power of holy speech, we may understand why tzara'at only afflicts the Jewish people. Our faculty of elevated speech, based on the Divine speech which transcends the universe, can influence the world for good and for bad. When we misuse this great power, we damage the world and are held responsible. The affliction of tzara'at, and the process of purifying oneself from it, comes to repair this wrong. The verbal communication of other nations, however, comes from the realm of the physical universe. Since it lacks the power of elevated speech, they are not punished for its misuse.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Mo'adei HaRe'iyah, pp. 295-296.)

[1] Vayikra Rabbah 16:1. See Rambam, Laws of Tzara'at 16:15, that one fulfills the mitzvah "Be careful regarding tzara'at" (Deut. 24:8-9) by avoiding gossip.

---

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Torah in Action /Shema Yisrael <parsha@torahinaction.com>

subject: **Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum**

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Metzora

פרשת מצורע תשפ"ב

זאת תהיה תורת המצרע

This shall be the law of the *metzora*. (14:2)

We are under the impression that the barometer which determines the quality of a friendship is time spent together socially, in conversation and the frequency of communication. Conversely, one who has no external relationship, does not visit or go out to lunch/dinner, manifests limited communication, is not much of a friend. *Horav Eliyahu Svei, zl*, cites the *Midrash Mishlei* (12) that sheds a different light on the criteria for meaningful friendship.

Shlomo *Hamelech* says, *Mirmah b'lev choshvei ra, u'l'yoatzei shalom simchah,* "There is deceit in the hearts of those who plot evil, but, for the counselors of peace, there is joy" (12:20). *Chazal* say: "Whoever converses with his friend, eats and drinks with him, but (also) will (occasionally) speak *lashon hora* about him, is called *ra,* evil. [He is not a friend]. If one has nothing to do with his fellow, however, does not go out with him for lunch or dinner, does not engage in conversation, but would never speak negatively of him – he is called *shalom*, peace, by Hashem."

We see from the above *Midrash* that our criteria for defining friendships is unlike that of the Torah. In the Torah's perspective (which becomes ours), *lashon hora* defines relationships. One can spend all the time in the world with a person, take vacations with him, share in family *simchos*, do everything together, but also speak *lashon hora* about one another – he is not a friend. He is *ra,* evil. The friendship is superficial, a relationship of convenience, but, at the end of the day, a sham relationship. If one can speak negatively of his fellow, he is not his friend. Conversely, if one hardly speaks with the other fellow, but would never speak of him in a degrading manner – he is a friend.

זאת תהיה תורת המצרע

This shall be the law of the *metzora*. (14:2)

The *metzora* is one who is ritually contaminated due to a physical manifestation of a spiritually-induced disease, sort of a spiritual leprosy. The term *metzora* is an acronym for *motzi shem ra,* "one who brings forth a bad name" (*Arachin* 15), engages in evil, slanderous, vulgar speech. It is a broad term which applies to one who uses his mouth to disparage and hurt others. It is not, however, always about vulgarity and disparaging; it is about decency and sanctity, recognizing that the power of speech is a gift from G-d, which is meant to distinguish us from animals. Speech should not be deceptive. It should be a form of communication which is respectable and demonstrates that the individual who is speaking is refined. Silence is a form of speech when used appropriately. Silence that ignores is not much worse than speech that negates. Rather than use the word "nice" to describe a Jew's speech, I would use the term "kind." Jewish speech should be kind, meaningful, benevolent. Indeed, it should be *lashon tov*. This is often manifest in the way that we react to someone's success, or the control we exert when things do not go our way, such that frustration and even anger take hold of us. Let us first address the way we react to another's success. Do we pay a compliment? Or do we negate his achievement? Or do we just ignore him and his success?

Our reaction to someone else's success, as mentioned, can be broken down into three forms: the negative reaction, in which one denigrates and finds fault; the indifferent reaction, whereby one simply disregards his fellow's success/good fortune as if it had not occurred; the positive reaction, which includes accolades, compliments, and best wishes for the future. One who ignores his fellow's success is no less jaundiced than his invidious counterpart who is openly negative. Neither one can tolerate another person's success. Pay a compliment – *lashon tov*? Good speech? This is the farthest thing from his mind. Why? It costs nothing to pay a compliment, to be kind, to make someone smile, to empower someone. Yet some of us act as if paying a compliment would diminish our own self-worth. Envy is a powerful deterrent. One whose self-esteem is already low will find himself hard-pressed to say something nice about someone else, for fear that it would compromise his own self-esteem even more.

We all know that most people appreciate a compliment. One who puts time and effort into a project appreciates it when his work is positively recognized. We all like to hear good things about ourselves. Deep down it bothers us when someone who is (supposedly) a good friend ignores our accomplishment. What is it with these people? I gleaned the following idea from a paper written by a respected psychologist. Compliments can trigger

our own insecurities. Recognizing that a fellow has an admirable quality or achievement causes us to focus on ourselves and on our own inadequacies. Why could I not have done that? I am just as smart and capable – yet, here I am and there he is. When we are compelled to pay a compliment, when we express our admiration and esteem to someone else, we introspect as if to say, "I could never have done that. I could never have done it as well. I could never look so good or be as accomplished as you." To be able to laud someone else requires a hefty dose of self-confidence.

Some people see no need to compliment others because they themselves feel self-conscious when they receive compliments. Thus, since they do not appreciate a compliment, why should they bother putting another person in the same uncomfortable position? Such a person views a compliment with suspicion. What does he want from me? Why is he complimenting me? He is about to ask me for a favor, otherwise why would he be flattering me?

Compliments make us vulnerable. When I offer a compliment, I am implying that I took notice and was impressed. By expressing my praise, I put myself in a position which could catalyze my rejection. Does he think I want something from him? Perhaps he wonders what right I have to judge him. Do I think that I am better than he is, that I dole out compliments?

Last is the individual who feels that offering a compliment shifts the balance of power. He fears being perceived as weak. By complimenting someone, am I elevating him over myself? A relationship often involves a power struggle. Am I abdicating my position to him by offering him a compliment?

All of the above are pertinent issues which anyone who is interested in positive personal growth will work through. In conclusion, the inability to render proper recognition of another's achievement is a personal failing which must be counteracted in order to maintain positive relationships and to grow in personal character as *bnei Torah* and as human beings. *Lashon hora* is not only about speaking negatively or ignoring someone; it is about making a consummate effort to think and speak benevolently of others. The greater our focus is on the positive, the less chance exists that we might utter something negative about someone.

Saying something kind not only makes a person feel good, but it can transform the lives of the benefactor as well as his beneficiary. The following story underscores this idea.

The heroine of the story was living in Germany in the late 1930's, when Hitler's anti-Semitic diatribes were becoming more virulent and the Nazis were carrying out threats with impunity. She was living with her husband and two children in a small town, and decided that if they were going to survive, they had to leave the country. Without a visa, however, it was impossible to leave. The good news arrived in the way of information that a small number of visas for Jews was available in the office in Berlin. Her husband could not leave his job, so she decided it was her responsibility to do what she could to save her family. She boarded the train for Berlin with the hope that she would return that night with four visas.

She arrived in Berlin and immediately took a taxi to the address where the visas were to be available. When she reached the designated office, she was greeted by dozens of men and women who were also applying for the precious visas – to no avail. One mean-looking, bored German beaurocrat was sitting at a desk. He refused to acknowledge anyone. Hours passed, and the people suffered in silence. It was foolish to complain. The Germans did not require an excuse or a reason to punish a Jew. Suddenly, after waiting all day, the beaurocrat stood up, looked at the people and, with a loud contempt-filled voice, announced, "No more visas today. Come back tomorrow!"

The thought of going through the same ordeal again pushed some people to the brink, but what could they do? Our heroine had to find a place to spend the night. She was at her wits end, but she had to dig in and try again. Without visas, she and her family's lives were at stake. She found a room for the night, and, bright and early the next day, she presented herself at the office. The line was shorter, because some people had lost patience. She did not have that luxury. She had no idea how many visas were available. Despite the people who had left, a crowd was still waiting.

Hours passed in fear and silence. These people knew what going home without a visa meant. The beaurocrat continued to ignore them as if they did not exist, as he continued with his paperwork. Late in the afternoon, the beaurocrat broke the silence when he stood up and made another loud announcement: "No visas today. Everyone must go home!" The people were crestfallen; the shock too much to bear. They could no longer hold their quiet, and they responded with declarations of anger. Their pent-up emotions were frazzled and, with raw anger, they exploded at the beaurocrat.

The woman who had waited patiently for two days was tired, starved, and emotionally spent. How could she return home empty-handed? It was a death warrant for them all. She was about to join the chorus of despair when she decided to do something else – something that no one would have expected. She went over to the beaurocrat's desk, leaned over and said to him, "I would like to thank you for all your time. I am sure that your job is not easy. I would like to wish you a good day." She then slowly turned around and walked out of the room. She walked down the hall with the little strength she had left, her head held high, knowing that she was returning to despair and possibly worse. Suddenly, she heard a voice calling out to her. She turned around to see the beaurocrat running towards her with a handful of papers, "Here, I have visas for you!" She was saved, because she had controlled her emotions and said something kind to a man who probably did not deserve it. She realized that he must have had a small number of visas about which he had to decide to whom he would give them and whom he would ignore. Whatever he would do would cause a riot. So he ignored everyone. She had no idea what prompted him to act in such an ignoble manner, but she was not about to allow his despicable manner to shape her character. Neither should we. We come across people who are good at bringing out the worst in us. We should not permit their contemptible actions to influence our character.

..In loving memory of Mrs. Fanny (Brunner) Feldman by her family

prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

---

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com>
to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com

The Literary Legacy of Horav Shelomoh Wolbe
Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

There are numerous articles on the laws of Pesach, counting Sefirah, and the mourning period during the omer on the website RabbiKaganoff.com under the headings: Chol Hamoed, Chometz, Eruv Tavshillin, Kitniyos, Marror, Matzoh, Pesach, Sefirah, Sefiras Ha'omer.

The seventeenth yahrzeit of Rav Shelomoh Wolbe, the most published mussar and hashkafah author of our generation, falls on the 17th of Nissan. I would like to share with our readers what I wrote at the time:

Rav Shelomoh Wolbe passed on to the yeshivah shel ma'alah during Chol Hamo'eid Pesach, leaving the following tzava'ah:

"I request and command that I not be eulogized in any format whatsoever. Furthermore, I should not be described by any title or honor, not as a "gaon," and not as a "tzadik," not even by initials such as zt"l."

In keeping with the Rav's wishes, we are providing a brief sketch of his life, followed by a description of part of the rich legacy of writings he left behind, but we are omitting the appropriate hesped.

Born in Berlin shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, Rav Wolbe's early education was in Berlin, in the Frankfurt yeshivah, and then in Rav Botchko's yeshivah in Montreux, Switzerland. In the 1930's, he attended yeshivah in Eastern Europe, spending several years in Mir, Poland, where he became a talmid of the mashgiach, Rav Yerucham Levovitz, and, after Rav Yerucham's passing, of Rav Chatzkal Levenstein, his successor. Throughout Rav Wolbe's life, he viewed himself as a talmid muvhak, a disciple, of Rav Yerucham and as a transmitter of the mussar tradition that traces back to Rav Yisroel Salanter.

THE WAR YEARS

When the Soviet armies overran the town of Mir in the opening weeks of World War II, the yeshivah fled to Lithuania. Rav Wolbe, who was a German national, was forced to separate from the yeshivah and spent the war years in neutral Sweden. While in

Sweden, Rav Wolbe lectured to the local Jewish population, in essence creating what may have been the first kiruv rechokim program in the modern world. He and Rav Wolf Jacobson, who was the rav there, became the Swedish contacts for the Vaad Hatzalah. They created a seminary for young women, who were often the only members of their families that survived the inferno of Europe. During this period of his life, Rav Wolbe authored hashkafah sefarim in both Swedish and German for outreach purposes.

After the war, Rav Wolbe moved to Petach Tikvah, Eretz Yisroel, where he married a daughter of Rav Avraham Grodzinsky, Hy"d, the last mashgiach of Slobodka. Through his rebbitzen, Rav Wolbe was a nephew of Harav Yaakov Kamenetsky, zt"l, and a brother-in-law of Harav Chayim Kreiswurth, zt"l.

AS A MASHGIACH

In 5708\1948, Rav Wolbe joined Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro in opening the Yeshivah Gedolah of Be'er Yaakov. Rav Shapiro was the Rosh Yeshivah, and Rav Wolbe was the mashgiach, a position he held for over 35 years. Later, he served as mashgiach in the Lakewood Yeshivah, in Eretz Yisrael, and he opened Yeshivas Givat Shaul. Rav Wolbe gave "mussar shmoozen," "va'adim" (more informal lectures, usually to smaller groups) and lectures in many public and private forums. He also created batei mussar, where he delivered shmoozen and va'adim to long-standing talmidim, seasoned talmidei chachamim who developed into great gedolim and mussar experts themselves.

Rav Wolbe published the substance of many of his lectures in several sefarim on a wide variety of topics. In each volume, he wrote a forward, explaining the purpose for that particular sefer and the place and context in which he had delivered the original lectures, shmoozen, or va'adim. His name does not appear in any of his sefarim.

DERECH HALIMUD - LEARNING STYLE

Rav Wolbe, himself, points out a key component to much of his teaching: "One must learn how to approach a statement of Chazal – to study the depths of its peshat and to experience it, until the hidden light of Chazal's statement illuminates you" (Alei Shur, pg. 9).

What did he mean? This sounds very confusing.

Often, the simple meaning of Chazal's statement is unclear. Yet, if we review the statement over and over, suddenly we realize a deeper and truer understanding of what Chazal meant. At this point, the meaning of the statement illuminates us – whereas before, it had eluded us.

ALEI SHUR

Rav Wolbe published his first Hebrew work, Alei Shur, to provide today's yeshivah student with a basic guide to assist him in becoming a ben Torah. This book, which the author spent thirteen years writing and revising, clarifies the basic areas to develop for someone to ascend to higher levels in his personal service of Hashem. It swiftly became a classic and is a standard, studied text.

Alei Shur defines a yeshivah as a place where one learns to live, not just to study (pg. 31). Based on sources in Chazal, Rav Wolbe contends that learning Torah with bad midos, such as hate, competition, or jealousy, is not considered learning Torah. Learning Torah must assist in the development of one's midos, or it is without value.

In the same context, Rav Wolbe quotes the Rambam who notes that the word "chaver" carries two different meanings. It means a close friend, but it also means a talmid chacham (see Rambam, Peirush Hamishnayos, Demai 2:3). This is because talmidei chachamim become the only true, close friends, since their bond to others is based on their essence as giving people. Thus, someone intensely involved in learning Torah will be extremely careful that all interactions he has with people are pleasant.

WHY DO WE KEEP MITZVOS

Rav Wolbe points out the following anomalous problem that sometimes afflicts Torah Jews. Many people observe mitzvos because of habit – that is how they grew up – but not because they enjoy observing the mitzvos. If you ask them, "Why do you keep mitzvos?" their true answer is, "Because that's how I was brought up."

Rav Wolbe notes that this is equivalent to asking someone, "Why are you eating lunch?", and he answers, "Because that's how I was educated." This answer is obviously ridiculous. We eat because we are hungry.

Similarly, we should be observing mitzvos because we are hungry for these mitzvos. Therefore, we should perform mitzvos with enthusiasm, because we enjoy them (Alei Shur, Pg. 51).

ALEI SHUR AS A GUIDE

Rav Wolbe felt a yeshivah bachur must develop expertise in four basic areas, aside from the regular Gemara curriculum of the yeshivah.

1. He must know the halacha that affects him. In Rav Wolbe's interpretation, this means he should learn all of Mishnah Berurah.
2. He should know Chumash with Rashi and Ramban. This forms the basis for one's hashkafah on Yiddishkeit.
3. He should know Pirkei Avos, with the commentary of Rabbeinu Yonah. Chazal gave us Mesechta Avos as a basic primer in midos, and Rabbeinu Yonah's commentary on Avos is the best method for internalizing this primer.
4. He should be conversant in Mesilas Yesharim, which Rav Wolbe calls "the dictionary for midos."

Rav Wolbe contends that one who devotes a small amount of his yeshivah learning to each of these pursuits, consistently, will complete all four projects within four years. This assumes, of course, that the person is highly organized. Rav Wolbe believed strongly in being structured. In his own words, "The greater the person is, the more organized is his life" (Alei Shur, Pg. 68).

TEFILLAH

In the second chapter of Alei Shur, Rav Wolbe discusses the importance of tefillah to a human being. "The ability to pray defines a human being. Animals also wage war, construct homes and live social lives. But only mankind can relate to the Ribono shel Olam and daven" (Alei Shur, Pg. 27). Thus, someone who does not pray properly performs daily activities no differently than does an animal. Only one devoted to tefillah demonstrates the uniqueness of the human being.

"Each davening performed with understanding is a qualitatively different experience and has its own unique feeling and quality. It is indeed impossible that two tefillos should be identical — even though the words are identical. One can compare this to riding a train watching a beautiful landscape. Although the scenery may appear the same, the experience is different from moment to moment. At each moment, one sees the scenery from a different perspective.

Similarly, someone davening should constantly see himself and his relationship with Hashem from a different perspective — just as the traveler is looking at the scenery with a different, fresh perspective."

UPS AND DOWNS

Alei Shur even addresses the emotional ups and downs of the typical yeshivah bachur. Chapter 6 consists of a correspondence with a yeshivah bachur going through a difficult time, where he sees no success in his learning — he is not remembering what he learned, nor is he focusing enough to understand the shiur or the sugya.

Rav Wolbe points out that a person goes through cycles. Sometimes a bochur is not learning well, and his davening and midos also suffer. Rav Wolbe notes that the source of this difficulty is usually because he is comparing himself to others. Instead, acknowledging my one's skills and qualities and recognizing my shortcomings is a much better approach. Although I may not remember a sugya as well as others do — if I need to review it many times to retain it, I will have a much greater kinyan on the information than those who absorb the information quickly. (Apparently, Rav Wolbe wrote thousands of such chizuk letters during his lifetime!)

Rav Wolbe focused on his talmidim's needs, both individually and as a group. He directed his topic and the intensity of his delivery to his audience. One talmid, who returned to Yeshivah Be'er Yaakov many years after he had studied there in the '50s, noted that Rav Wolbe's shmooze was less intense. When he asked the mashgiach about this, Rav Wolbe answered: "You belong to a different generation. The generation born before the war received shmoozen that were very intensive experiences. Today's generation cannot tolerate this type of shmooze."

Yet, when Rav Wolbe published the second volume of "Alei Shur," thirty years after the first, he notes that the style of the second volume is more intense — since the audience for these shmoozen were his older, more seasoned talmidim. Thus, there is a vast difference between Volume 1 of Alei Shur, which is general hadracha for a ben Torah, and volume 2, which reflects the result of "workshop va'adim" for developing elevated midos.

A talmid once asked Rav Wolbe how long it takes to prepare a shmooze. He answered: "It takes five years to learn how to give a shmooze, five years to learn how to give a va'ad, and five years to learn how to talk to someone."

This was, indeed, another facet of Rav Wolbe's personality – the ability to empathize with the suffering of another. Someone bringing him a problem could see the intensity and anguish on his face, as he identified with the questioner's difficulty. Recently, someone related that he was unable to discuss a personal matter with Rav Wolbe, because of the latter's weak condition, and, instead, discussed the matter with one of Rav Wolbe's talmidim. He described how he witnessed the same intensity and anguish on the talmid's face that he was familiar with seeing on Rav Wolbe's. Thus, Rav Wolbe had successfully trained a new generation of leaders of mussar for Klal Yisrael.

EDUCATING A GENERATION

Among his many works, Rav Wolbe authored two very important guidebooks: one to teach chassanim how to be good husbands, and the other on the Torah's fundamentals of childrearing. In both instances, the purpose of the sefarim was to teach principles to a larger audience.

Rav Wolbe noted that sometimes people think they are giving their children proper chinuch, but, in reality, just the opposite is happening.

He provides the following examples:

(1) Insisting that a child remain at the Shabbos table, when he is too young to do so. In this instance, although the parents feel that this is important for the child's chinuch, it is totally counterproductive to force a child to do what he is not ready for. The expectations for a child must always be appropriate to his age.
(2) Parents who grew up in impoverished homes often raise their children by spoiling them- to "make up" for their own origins. However, this is counterproductive for the child's needs.
(3) Often parents say, or imply, that their child should achieve what the parents accomplished, or what the parents aspired to accomplish – even when this may not be within the child's capabilities or inclinations. The parents may want their son to be a rosh yeshivah or at least to be involved in full-time learning, but the child's personality is more appropriate to being an elementary school rebbe, an outreach professional, or a frum businessman!
The result is that the child never learns to serve Hashem in his own, unique way. He is being forced to be what he cannot be, and, therefore, will not be successful at it — while, at the same time, he is being hampered from developing to his own, greatest potential. Eventually, he ends up becoming a non-success.
Timing is everything in child-rearing. One should neither start too early nor wait until too late. Also, there must be a tremendous balance between too much involvement in the child's growth and too little.
Rav Wolbe was opposed to hitting children, both by parents and by mechanchim. He had his own original way of explaining the passage from Mishlei (13:24) "Chosech shivto soneh beno," "One who withholds the rod, hates his child." To fully appreciate Rav Wolbe's explanation of this passage and his approach, I refer you to read what he writes, himself. (The book is available in English translation.)
OUTREACH MANUALS
Possibly the most unusual of Rav Wolbe's writings are his books "Bein Sheishes Le'asor" and "Or Lashav," which are based on lectures he gave to non-observant audiences, after the Six Day War.
During the Six Day War, a new teshuvah movement began, as many secular people recognized the miracle of the war. Rav Wolbe asked a shaylah from Rav Chatzkal Levenstein, who was at the time the mashgiach in Yeshivas Ponevitz, whether he should become involved in outreach, in addition to his other responsibilities. Rav Chatzkal ruled that whoever is capable of being involved in kiruv rechokim is obligated to do so, and that Rav Wolbe should be involved to the extent that it did not disturb his responsibilities in the yeshivah.
As a result, Rav Wolbe gave lectures on the basics of Jewish belief at army bases, in secular Kibbutzim and to academic audiences. Rav Wolbe began his first lecture with these words, "You invited me to tell you about Judaism, and why the religious parties often create problems for the general public." (Bear in mind that non-observant audiences in Israel are, unfortunately, often hostile to Torah and observant Jews.)
Another lecture began, "Many ask, is it possible to change halacha to accommodate the modern world, and how can a modern world be run according to halacha?"
Notice that he was unafraid to deal with controversy and felt that he could convince his hostile audience of the beauty of Torah. As a well-known mechanech once told me, "I doubt that there is a ba'al teshuvah today who is not influenced by his teachings."
In these lectures, Rav Wolbe blended halacha and hashkafah in such a way that someone who was totally non-observant would be drawn to the beauty of Yiddishkeit, while, at the same time, someone halachically committed would suddenly gain new insights into his observance of mitzvos. A secondary purpose in publishing these lectures was to teach frum people how they could influence others and be mekareiv rechokim.
Rav Wolbe's scientific knowledge of the world shows through in these lectures, as well as the importance he placed on being able to communicate the beauty of Torah in a sophisticated manner. Indeed, a talmid told me that he once gave a va'ad in the yeshivah on the correct way to write a letter!
BECOMING A "BAR DA'AS"
Personally, I have found one of Rav Wolbe's smaller sefarim to be even more powerful. A few years before his passing, he published a volume entitled "Pirkei Kinyan Da'as," "Chapters on Acquiring Da'as." (I have intentionally not translated the word "da'as," because translating it defeats the purpose of Rav Wolbe's work.) This book is based on seventeen lectures (shmoozen) given over a period of 40 years.
Rav Wolbe notes the following:
To grow as a Torah Jew, a person must have da'as.
Most individuals do not have a natural sense of da'as and need to be taught. Our generation is particularly short on da'as. This can be demonstrated by the following:
1. The rampant problem today of lack of self-confidence, which he contends is a modern phenomenon.
2. People being frozen into indecision by their "feelings."
3. Accepting certain realities that we should endeavor to change, while at the same time attempting to change things that we should accept.
4. Overreaction to frustration.
5. Lack of marital stability.
What is da'as, and how does one achieve it? This is the subject of the sefer, which is a "must read." But then, all of Rav Wolbe's writings are "Must Reads!"
יהא זכרו ברוך

---

https://www.theyeshiva.net/jewish/2392/moshiach-the-leper 2015
Rabbi YY Jacobson
Moshiach the Leper What Shames You Most: The Story of the 4 Lepers In Our Own Lives
The seventh chapter of Kings II (related to the theme of the portions Tazria and Metzora, and often read as the Haftorah of Metzora), tells a fascinating story, about the "four lepers."
The story takes place during the First Temple era when the Syrian Army swept down on the Northern Kingdom of Israel and laid siege to the city of Samaria (Shomron). (Siege was the ultimate strategy in ancient warfare, comparable to a present-day naval blockade. If an invading force could not penetrate the city walls, the enemy would encamp around the walls of the city, cutting off all supplies, especially food and water, and wait until the inhabitants were starved and forced to surrender.)
The city of Samaria was under siege by the Syrian army. The hunger was devastating. "A donkey's head was being sold for food for eighty pieces of silver, and a cup of dove's dung was a meal sold for five pieces of silver." (Kings II 6:25)
The famine was horrendous, people were resorting to cannibalism. One day the king of Israel, Jehoram (Yehoram), was walking along the inner walls of the city when a woman called to him, saying: "Your majesty, please help me." The king answered, "What is the matter?" The woman said, "My neighbor came to me, and said, 'Come, let us eat your [dead] son today, and then tomorrow we will eat my [dead] son.' So we cooked my son, and ate him. But then the next day when I said to her, 'Now let us eat your [dead] son.' But she refused, and has hidden her son from me [in order to have him for herself]."[1]
Jehoram, the king, was a fickle man. He blamed the great Jewish prophet of the time, Elisha (the disciple of Elijah the prophet), for his troubles, and had issued an edict of death against him. Jehoram even followed his soldier to Elisha's quarters, to observe the arrest and execution. But instead of killing him, the king was confronted with a prophecy from Elisha declaring that G-d would provide deliverance for Israel the very next day.
"Then Elisha said, 'Hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord: 'Tomorrow about this time a seah (a particular weight measure) of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel (a small currency), and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.''
"So an officer on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of G-d and said, 'Look, even if the Lord would make windows in heaven [for the rain to come down], could this thing be?' And Elisha said, 'In fact, you shall see it with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it.'" (2 Kings 7:1-2).
The Four Lepers
It is at this point where the narrative shifts from what's happening inside the city walls to a scene outside the city walls—and this is where the haftorah of Tazria-Metzora begins—where four lepers are both starving and quarantined because they are lepers and all lepers were quarantined outside of the city.
"Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, 'Why are we sitting here until we die? If we say, 'We will enter the city,' the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now, therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall only die.'" (2 Kings 7:3-4)
They had at that point three options: 1) They could march back to the city that quarantined them in the first place, and try to get in. But what would be the point? There wasn't any food inside the city. 2) They could march forward where the Syrian Army was encamped. The Syrians had plenty of food. But if the lepers did that, they might be killed on sight, because they were both lepers and from the enemy. 3) They could just sit there outside the walls of the city, and die from starvation without complication.
It was out of this deep distress that they said to each other: "Why just sit here until we die?"
The four lepers chose to get up and march directly to the camp of the Syrian army. In the evening hours, they marched toward the Syrian camp.
The Escape
It was then that something extraordinary occurred.
The Syrian troops imagined that they heard the noise of chariots, the sound of pounding of hundreds of horses' hooves. They were convinced they could hear the clashing of thousands of swords, the vanguard of an enemy army on the offensive. The Syrian army panicked and abandoned their camp, leaving their tents, armor, horses,

chariots, and all their food behind. In their perception, the Jews hired the Egyptian and Hittite armies to attack them. They fled for their lives.

[This miracle reminds us of what occurred on our own watch in June 1967 during the Six-Day War. When it became clear that the Arabs were going to lose, and lose miserably, President Nasser of Egypt and King Hussein of Jordan concocted a story about the Americans and British entering the war on Israel's side. The demoralized Egyptian soldiers, left mountains of shoes in the desert so as to run faster. They couldn't outrun Israeli tanks and so many were captured that the Israelis did not have where to place them].

A Loaded Camp

"And the lepers came to the edge of the camp, and they entered one tent, and they ate and they drank, and they carried off silver and gold and garments and they hid them; then they returned and entered another tent, and they carried items from there also and went and hid them." (Kings II 7:8)

But then they experience a change of heart: "And they said to each other, 'We are not acting properly. Today is a day of good news, and we are being quiet about it. If we wait till the morning light, then we will have sinned. Now, therefore, let us go and tell what we have learned at the King's household." (7:9)

The Good News

The lepers notified the guard at the gate of the city about the news. The gatekeeper had a hard time convincing the king that the Syrians had actually left and were not planning an ambush, but after sending some of his soldiers first, news came back to the monarch that indeed the Syrians have left behind all their belongings and enormous quantities of food.

There was a mad rush. The people ran out of the city to fetch the food of the Syrians. The prophecy of Elisha was fulfilled: A seah of wheat flour and two seah of barley were sold for a minimal shekel.

The king's right-hand man, who had mocked Elisha the day before when the prophet foretold a miraculous deliverance, was assigned to patrol the gates and was trampled to death by the people who were rushing out to buy food at low prices. Elisha's words to him, "you will see it but not eat it," came to fruition. "Now the king had appointed the officer on whose hand he leaned to take charge of the gate. But the people trampled him in the gate, and he died, just as the man of G-d had said." (2 Kings 7:17-18)

Do Something

Like all biblical stories, this one too contains many insights and lessons. Let's focus on three.

Sometimes we feel stuck in life. We find ourselves between a rock and a hardball. All options seem bleak. The worst thing to do in such a situation is to remain in one place. You must stand up and move. You must make a change; do something. Anything. But move forward. Even though you think you are subjecting yourself to further disaster, just making that move can transform your reality and you may discover an unexpected result that can alter your entire situation.

Sometimes you feel stuck in your business, in your marriage, in your personal psychological condition, or in any other paralyzing situation in life. The worst thing you can do is remain in one place and wait to wither away. Move! Reach out and speak to another person. Change your schedule. Start doing something new and different in your life. Open yourself up to new types of projects, people, and experiences. Shock your system. Start biking; go to the gym; join a class, a group, become part of a project. Open yourself up to someone and share that which shames you most. Start learning Torah. Whatever you choose—but ensure it is something new and different. When we change our familiar patterns we open new pathways in our brains, and we generate new energy around us—and that can create opportunities unimaginable before.

Fear Not Opposition

There is another vital message here. Often we are afraid to initiate new projects, undertake new ventures, to ask someone for assistance, since we are scared of what the response might be. If we march ahead, we might experience rejection, and that never feels good. If you are by nature soft and sensitive, getting a "no," feels devastating. Some people never live out their dreams because they are too afraid of the feedback.

The lepers imagined that an entire Syrian army would be waiting for them to attack. Yet when they moved ahead, they realized there was nobody there.

When you are doing the right thing, when you are doing G-d's work, do not worry that much about the perception of others and how they will respond. You march ahead and you might discover that there is no opposition.

A wise man (Reb Gershon of Zhlabin) once said to me: What is the difference between a 20-year old, a 40-year old, and a 60-year old? The 20-year old is self-conscious about his place in the world. He is concerned to make a good impression, to be perceived as an awesome young man. He is very sensitive to how people view him. The 40-year old declares: "I do not care what people think of me. I could not care less how others look at me. I must be true to myself. You like me—good! You don't like me, that's fine too." The 60-year old realizes that no one was ever looking at him.

Redemption from the Lepers

Finally, there is another profound message in this narrative.

The disease of leprosy was the quintessential malady of ancient times. Lepers were the outcasts of society. They were quarantined, isolated, and rejected. They lived alone on the outskirts of the city, separate from the rest of civilization. Yet the Book of Leviticus dedicates two complete portions to them—to their symptoms, their fate, their healing process, and their return to society. Why?

The answer is in the story of the four lepers. We each have a leper within—that dimension of ourselves that makes us feel isolated, ugly, and unworthy. The extraordinary message of this story is that sometimes the news about salvation comes from the four lepers outside the city. If we ignore the lepers around us, we deprive ourselves of our own redemption. And if we ignore the leper within ourselves, we deny ourselves our own liberation.

It is precisely the aspects of your personality that you are most ashamed of that may provide you with the most penetrating insights into your life and mission if you only have the courage to expose them and dig deep into them. If you work with those parts of yourself, if you stare them in the eyes, if you acknowledge them with full honesty and vulnerability, if you share them with others you trust, you may discover how they constitute a springboard for your own moral, emotional and spiritual growth. The "leper" within you might set you free.

Moshiach the Leper

Which may be one way of explaining the perplexing Talmudic statement: "What is the name of Moshiach? The leper!"[2] Why would the Moshiach be given this title? Because that which shames you most may hold the key to your redemption, if you will only muster the courage to embrace it and see it in its most pristine and pure state. What you have been running away from most, what you have tried to quarantine, what you are so deeply ashamed of, carries your deepest light. You need only trace it back to its authentic nature and origin, and then you will discover how this very "leper" is your Moshiach, your prophet and messenger of psychological and spiritual emancipation.

That is why the name given to Moshiach is the "metzorah," the "leper." How will Moshiach heal such an insane world (a "meshugene velt")? He will show that the healing energy was always there. We were just misreading the map—the map of ourselves and of others.

The late Jewish philanthropist Irving Stone spent a lifetime studying greatness, writing novelized biographies of such men as Michelangelo, Vincent van Gogh, Sigmund Freud, and others. Stone was once asked if he had found a thread that runs through the lives of all these exceptional people. He said, "I write about people who sometime in their life have a vision or dream of something that should be accomplished and they go to work. They are beaten over the head, knocked down, vilified, and for years they get nowhere. But every time they're knocked down, they stand up. You cannot destroy these people. And at the end of their lives, they've accomplished some modest part of what they set out to do."[3]

[1] This is the interpretation of Rashi 6:29. Others explain it differently (see Radak and Ralbag).

[2] Sanhedrin 98b

[3] This essay is partially based on Likkutei Sichos vol. 22 Tazria-Metzorah. Vol. 37 Metzora. Sefer Hasichos 5751 Tzaria-Metzorah.

OUR JOURNEY IN THE HAGGADAH: HOW ITS NARRATIVES AND OBSERVANCES ENABLE US TO EXPERIENCE THE EXODUS[*]

by Rabbi Hayyim Angel *

INTRODUCTION

The Haggadah is a compilation of biblical, talmudic and midrashic texts, with several other passages that were added over the centuries.1 Despite its composite nature, the Haggadah in its current form may be understood as containing a fairly coherent structure. It creates a collective effect that enables us to experience the journey of our ancestors. As the Haggadah exhorts us, we must consider ourselves as though we left Egypt, actively identifying with our forebears rather than merely recounting ancient history. The exodus lies at the root of our eternal covenantal relationship with God.

The Haggadah merges laws with narrative. Its text and symbols take us on a journey that begins with freedom, then a descent into slavery, to the exodus, and on into the messianic era. Although we may feel free today, we are in exile as long as the Temple is not rebuilt. Many of our Seder observances remind us of the Temple and we pray for its rebuilding.

The Haggadah also presents an educational agenda. Although most traditions are passed from the older generation to the younger, the older generation must be open to learning from the younger. Often it is their questions that remind us of how much we still must learn and explore.

This essay will use these axioms to outline the journey of the Haggadah, using the text and translation of Rabbi Marc D. Angel's *A Sephardic Passover Haggadah* (Ktav, 1988). This study is not an attempt to uncover the original historical meaning of the Passover symbols or to explain why certain passages were incorporated into the Haggadah. However, perhaps we will approach the inner logic of our current version of the Haggadah and its symbols as they came to be traditionally understood.

THE FIRST FOUR STAGES: FROM FREEDOM INTO SLAVERY

Kaddesh: Wine symbolizes festivity and happiness. Kiddush represents our sanctification of time, another sign of freedom. We recline as we drink the wine, a sign of freedom dating back to Greco-Roman times, when the core observances of the Seder were codified by the rabbis of the Mishnah. Some also have the custom of having others pour the wine for them, which serves as another symbol of luxury and freedom. The Haggadah begins by making us feel free and noble.

Rehatz (or Urhatz): We ritually wash our hands before dipping the *karpas* vegetable into salt water or vinegar. As with the pouring of the wine, some have the custom for others to wash their hands, symbolizing luxury and freedom. Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin (Netziv, 1817–1893, Lithuania) observes that many Jews no longer follow this talmudic practice of washing hands before dipping any food into a liquid. Doing so at the Seder serves as a reminder of the practice in Temple times. We remain in freedom mode for *rehatz*, but we begin to think about the absence of the Temple.

---

[*] This article appeared in *Pesah Reader* (New York: Tebah, 2010), pp. 17-29; reprinted in Angel, *Creating Space between Peshat and Derash* (Jersey City, NJ: Ktav-Sephardic Publication Foundation, 2011), pp. 218-229.

Rabbi Hayyim Angel, National Scholar of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, teaches Tanakh at Yeshiva University. He is the author of many books and articles. Rabbi Angel generously permitted me to modify the font, margins, and spacing to reduce the number of pages and size of the file.

Karpas: Dipping an appetizer is another sign of freedom and nobility that dates back to Greco-Roman times. However, we dip the vegetable into either salt water or vinegar, which came to be interpreted as symbolic of the tears of slavery. In addition, the technical ritual reason behind eating *karpas* resolves a halakhic debate over whether we are required to make a blessing of *Borei peri ha-adamah* over the maror later. On the one hand, we eat maror after matzah and therefore have already washed and recited the blessing of *ha-motzi*. On the other hand, it is unclear whether the maror should be subsumed under the meal covered by the matzah, since it is its own independent mitzvah. Consequently, the *ha-adamah* we recite over the *karpas* absolves us of this doubt, and we are required to keep the maror in mind for this blessing.2 Interpreting this halakhic discussion into symbolic terms: while we are dipping an appetizer as a sign of freedom and luxury, we experience the tears of slavery, and we think about the maror, which the Haggadah explains as a symbol of the bitterness of slavery.3 We are beginning our descent into slavery.

Yahatz: The Haggadah identifies two reasons for eating matzah. One is explicit in the Torah, that our ancestors had to rush out of Egypt during the exodus (Exodus 12:39). However, the Haggadah introduces another element: The Israelites ate matzah while they were yet slaves in Egypt. The Torah's expression *lehem oni*, bread of affliction (Deuteronomy 16:3) lends itself to this midrashic interpretation.

Yahatz focuses exclusively on this slavery aspect of matzah—poor people break their bread and save some for later, not knowing when they will next receive more food (*Berakhot* 39b). By this point, then, we have descended into slavery. At the same time, the other half of this matzah is saved for the *tzafun-afikoman*, which represents the Passover offering and is part of the freedom section of the Seder. Even as we descend into slavery with our ancestors, then. the Haggadah provides a glimpse of the redemption.

To summarize, *kaddesh* begins with our experiencing freedom and luxury. *Rehatz* also is a sign of freedom but raises the specter of there no longer being a Temple. *Karpas* continues the trend of freedom but more overtly gives us a taste of slavery by reminding us of tears and bitterness. *Yahatz* completes the descent into slavery. Even before we begin the *maggid*, then, the Haggadah has enabled us to experience the freedom and nobility of the Patriarchs, the descent to Egypt with Joseph and his brothers, and the enslavement of their descendants.

MAGGID: FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM

A. EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK

At this point in our journey, we are slaves. We begin the primary component of the Haggadah—*maggid*—from this state of slavery.

Ha Lahma Anya: We employ the "bread of affliction" imagery of the matzah, since we are slaves now. This opening passage of *maggid* also connects us to our ancestors: "This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt.…Now we are here enslaved." The passage begins our experience by identifying with the slavery of our ancestors, then moves into our own exile and desire for redemption.

Mah Nishtanah–The Four Children: Before continuing our journey, we shift our focus to education. The Haggadah prizes the spirit of questioning. The wisdom of the wise child is found in questioning, not in knowledge: "What are the testimonies, statutes, and laws which the Lord our God has commanded you?" To create a society of wise children, the Haggadah challenges us to explore and live our traditions.

Avadim Hayinu: We are not simply recounting ancient history. We are a living part of that memory and connect to our ancestors through an acknowledgement that all later generations are indebted to God for the original exodus: "If the Holy One blessed be He had not brought out our ancestors from Egypt, we and our children and grandchildren would yet be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt."

Ma'aseh Be-Ribbi Eliezer: The five rabbis who stayed up all night in B'nei B'rak teach that the more knowledgeable one is, the more exciting this learning becomes. These rabbis allowed their conversation to take flight, losing track of time as they experienced the exodus and actively connected to our texts and traditions.4 This passage venerates our teachers.

Amar Ribbi Elazar: As a complement to the previous paragraph, the lesser scholar Ben Zoma had something valuable to teach the greatest Sages of his generation. Learning moves in both directions, and everyone has something important to contribute to the conversation.

Yakhol Me-Rosh Hodesh: The Haggadah stresses the value of combining education and experience. "The commandment [to discuss the exodus from Egypt] applies specifically to the time when matzah and maror are set before you."

B. THE JOURNEY RESUMES

Now that we have established a proper educational framework, we return to our journey. At the last checkpoint, we were slaves pointing to our bread of affliction, longing for redemption. Each passage in the next section of the Haggadah moves us further ahead in the journey.

Mi-Tehillah Ovedei Avodah Zarah: We quote from the Book of Joshua:

> In olden times, your forefathers—Terah, father of Abraham and father of Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and worshiped other gods. But I took your father Abraham from beyond the Euphrates and led him through the whole land of Canaan and multiplied his offspring. I gave him Isaac, and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I gave Esau the hill country of Seir as his possession, while Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. (Joshua 24:2–4)

To experience the full redemption, halakhah requires us to begin the narrative with negative elements and then move to the redemption (see *Pesahim* 116a). However, the Haggadah surprisingly cuts the story line of this narrative in the middle of the Passover story. The very next verses read:

> Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with [the wonders] that I wrought in their midst, after which I freed you—I freed your fathers—from Egypt, and you came to the Sea. But the Egyptians pursued your fathers to the Sea of Reeds with chariots and horsemen. They cried out to the Lord, and He put darkness between you and the Egyptians; then He brought the Sea upon them, and it covered them. Your own eyes saw what I did to the Egyptians. (Joshua 24:5–7)

Given the direct relevance of these verses to the Passover story, why are they not included in the Haggadah? It appears that the Haggadah does not cite these verses because we are not yet up to that stage in our journey. The Haggadah thus far has brought us only to Egypt.

Hi She-Amedah: The Haggadah again affirms the connection between our ancestors and our contemporary lives. "This promise has held true for our ancestors and for us. Not only one enemy has risen against us; but in every generation enemies rise against us to destroy us. And the Holy One, blessed be He, saves us from their hand." The slavery and exodus are a paradigm for all later history.

Tzei Ve-Lammed: The midrashic expansion is based on Deuteronomy 26, the confession that a farmer would make upon bringing his first fruits:

> My father was a fugitive Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there; but there he became a great and very populous nation. The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labor upon us. We cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our plea and saw our plight, our misery, and our oppression. The Lord freed us from Egypt by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and awesome power, and by signs and portents. (Deuteronomy 26:5–8)

We continue our journey from our arrival in Egypt, where the passage in Joshua had left off. Through a midrashic discussion of the biblical verses, we move from Jacob's descent into Egypt, to the growth of the family into a nation, to the slavery, and then on through the plagues and exodus. By the end of this passage we have been redeemed from Egypt.

Like the passage from Joshua 24, the Haggadah once again cuts off this biblical passage before the end of its story. The next verse reads:

> He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. (Deuteronomy 26:9)

In Temple times, Jews evidently did read that next verse (see Mishnah *Pesahim* 10:4).5 However, the conceptual value of stopping the story is consistent with our experience in the Haggadah. This biblical passage as employed by the Haggadah takes us through our ancestors' exodus from Egypt, so we have not yet arrived in the land of Israel.

Ribbi Yosei Ha-Gelili Omer—Dayyenu: After enumerating the plagues, the Haggadah quotes from *Midrash Psalms* 78, where Sages successively suggest that there were 50, 200, or even 250 plagues at the Red Sea. Psalm 78 is concerned primarily with God's benevolent acts toward Israel, coupled with Israel's ingratitude. Psalm 78 attempts to inspire later generations not to emulate their ancestors with this ingratitude:

> He established a decree in Jacob, ordained a teaching in Israel, charging our fathers to make them known to their children, that a future generation might know—children yet to be born—and in turn tell their children that they might put their confidence in God, and not forget God's great deeds, but observe His commandments, and not be like their fathers, a wayward and defiant generation, a generation whose heart was inconstant, whose spirit was not true to God. (Psalm 78:5–8)

Several midrashim on this Psalm magnify God's miracles even more than in the accounts in Tanakh, including the passage incorporated in the Haggadah that multiplies the plagues at the Red Sea. From this vantage point, our ancestors were even more ungrateful to God. The Haggadah then follows this excerpt with *Dayyenu* to express gratitude over every step of the exodus process. The juxtaposition of these passages conveys the lesson that the psalmist and the midrashic expansions wanted us to learn.

In addition to expressing proper gratitude for God's goodness, *Dayyenu* carries our journey forward. It picks up with the plagues and exodus—precisely where the passage we read from Deuteronomy 26 had left off. It then takes us ahead to the reception of the Torah at Sinai, to the land of Israel, and finally to the Temple: "He gave us the Torah, He led us into the land of Israel, and He built for us the chosen Temple to atone for our sins."

Rabban Gamliel Hayah Omer: Now that we are in the land of Israel and standing at the Temple, we can observe the laws of Passover! We describe the Passover offering during Temple times, matzah and maror, and their significance. It also is noteworthy that the reason given for eating matzah is freedom—unlike the slavery section earlier that focused on bread of affliction (*yahatz-ha lahma anya*). "This matzah which we eat is…because the dough of our ancestors did not have time to leaven before the Holy One blessed be He…redeemed them suddenly."

Be-Khol Dor Va-Dor—Hallel: The primary purpose of the Haggadah is completely spelled out by now. "In each generation a person is obligated to see himself as though he went out of Egypt.…For not only did the

Holy One blessed be He redeem our ancestors, but He also redeemed us along with them.…" Since we have been redeemed along with our ancestors, we recite the first two chapters of the *Hallel* (Psalms 113–114). These Psalms likewise take us from the exodus to entry into Israel. R. Judah Loew of Prague (Maharal, c. 1520–1609) explains that we save the other half of *Hallel* (Psalms 115–118) for after the Grace after Meals, when we pray for our own redemption. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik adds that Psalms 113–114 consist of pure praise, befitting an account of the exodus from Egypt which already has occurred. Psalms 115–118 contain both praise and petition, relevant to our future redemption, for which we long.6

Asher Ge'alanu: Now that we have completed our journey and have chanted the *Hallel* thanking God for redeeming us, we conclude *maggid* with a blessing: "You are blessed, Lord our God…Who has redeemed us and redeemed our ancestors from Egypt and has brought us to this night to eat matzah and maror." For the first time in the Haggadah, we place ourselves before our ancestors, since our experience has become primary. As we express gratitude to God for bringing us to this point and for giving us the commandments, we also petition for the rebuilding of the Temple and ultimate redemption.

THE REMAINDER OF THE SEDER: CELEBRATORY OBSERVANCE IN FREEDOM AND YEARNING FOR THE MESSIANIC REDEMPTION

At this point we observe the laws of Passover. Although there is no Passover offering, we eat the matzah and maror and then the festive meal (*shulhan orekh*). Our eating of the *korekh*, Hillel's wrap of matzah, maror, and haroset together, reenacts a Temple observance (*Pesahim* 115a). Similarly, we use the final piece of matzah (*tzafun*) to symbolize the Passover offering, the last taste we should have in our mouths (*Pesahim* 119b).7 By consuming the second half of the matzah from *yahatz*, we take from the slavery matzah and transform its other half into a symbol of freedom.

After the Grace after Meals (*barekh*), we pray for salvation from our enemies and for the messianic era. By reading the verses "*shefokh hamatekha*, pour out Your wrath" (Psalm 79:6–7), we express the truism that we cannot fully praise God in Hallel until we sigh from enemy oppression and recognize contemporary suffering.8 Many communities customarily open the door at this point for Elijah the Prophet, also expressing hope for redemption. We then recite the remainder of the Hallel which focuses on our redemption, as discussed above. Some of the later songs added to *nirtzah* likewise express these themes of festive singing and redemption.

CONCLUSION

The Haggadah is a composite text that expanded and evolved over the centuries. The symbols, along with traditional explanations for their meanings, similarly developed over time. Our Haggadah—with its core over 1,000 years old—takes us on a remarkable journey that combines narrative and observance into an intellectual and experiential event for people of all ages and backgrounds. In this manner, we travel alongside our ancestors from freedom to slavery to redemption. We are left with a conscious recognition that although we are free and we bless God for that fact, we long for the Temple in Jerusalem. *La-shanah ha-ba'ah be-Yerushalayim, Amen*.

NOTES

[1] Shemuel and Ze'ev Safrai write that most of the core of our Haggadah, including the *Kiddush*, the Four Questions, the Four Children, the midrashic readings, Rabban Gamliel, and the blessing at the end of *maggid* originated in the time of the Mishnah and were set by the ninth century. "This is the bread of affliction" (*ha lahma anya*) and "In each generation" (*be-khol dor va-dor*) hail from the ninth to tenth centuries. Components such as

the story of the five rabbis at B'nei B'rak and Rabbi Elazar; the Midrash about the number of plagues at the Red Sea; *Hallel HaGadol* and *Nishmat*; all existed as earlier texts before their incorporation into the Haggadah. "Pour out Your wrath" (*shefokh hamatekha*) and the custom of hiding the *afikoman* are later additions. All of the above was set by the eleventh century. The only significant additions after the eleventh century are the songs at the end (*Haggadat Hazal* [Jerusalem: Karta, 1998], pp. 70–71).

[2] See *Pesahim* 114b; *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim* 473:6; 475:2.

[3] The symbol of the maror underwent an evolution. Joseph Tabory notes that during the Roman meal, the dipping of lettuce as a first course was the most common appetizer. By the fourth century, the Talmud ruled that the appetizer must be a different vegetable (*karpas*) so that the maror could be eaten for the first time as a mitzvah with a blessing (*The JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008], pp. 23–24).

In *Pesahim* 39a, one Sage explains that we use *hasa* (romaine lettuce, the talmudically preferred maror, even though five different vegetables are suitable) since God pitied (*has*) our ancestors. Another Sage derives additional meaning from the fact that romaine lettuce begins by tasting sweet but then leaves a bitter aftertaste. This sensory process parallels our ancestors' coming to Egypt as nobles and their subsequent enslavement.

[4] Unlike most other rabbinic passages in the Haggadah which are excerpted from the Talmud and midrashic collections, this paragraph is unattested in rabbinic literature outside the Haggadah. See Joseph Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah*, p. 38, for discussion of a parallel in the Tosefta.

[5] Cf. Joseph Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah*, p. 33.

[6] Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Festival of Freedom: Essays on Passover and the Haggadah*, ed. Joel B. Wolowelsky and Reuven Ziegler (New York: Toras HoRav Foundation, 2006), p. 105.

[7] The word *afikoman* derives from the Greek, referring to anything done at the end of a meal, such as eating dessert or playing music or revelry. This was a common after-dinner feature at Greco-Roman meals (cf. J. T. *Pesahim* 37d). The Sages of the Talmud understood that people needed to retain the taste of the Passover offering in their mouths. It was only in the thirteenth century that the matzah we eat at the end of the meal was called the *afikoman* (Joseph Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah*, p. 15).

[8] Shemuel and Ze'ev Safrai enumerate longer lists of related verses that some medieval communities added (*Haggadat Hazal*, pp. 174–175).

****

THE TANACH STUDY CENTER www.tanach.org
In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag
Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Menachem Leibtag

****

UNDERSTANDING MAGGID - A biblical Perspective

[revised 5768]

Expression of Gratitude
or
Recogniton of Destiny

Should Passover be understood as our 'holiday of freedom' - a special time set aside to thank God for taking us out of slavery?

Certainly, the popular song of "avadim hayinu... ata benei chorin" ['We were once slaves, but now we are free'] - seems to state exactly that point.

However, if you *read* your Haggada carefully, you'll notice that those words never appear (in that combination). And if you *study* the Haggada, you'll notice that it states quite the opposite, i.e. that we remain 'servants', but we simply have a new 'boss'!

In the following 'Guide for Maggid', we attempt to arrive at a better understanding of how and why we tell the story of the Exodus - and how that story explains why Passover is such an important holiday. Hopefully, it will ask help make your Seder evening a little more interesting (and life - a bit more meaningful).

THE SOURCE FOR MAGGID in Parshat Bo

Even though we are all familiar with the pasuk "ve-higadta le-bincha..." (Shmot13:8) - the Biblical source for our obligation to recite MAGID - when one reads that pasuk in Chumash, it's not very easy to translate.

[Try it yourself, and you'll immediately notice the difficulty.]

So let's begin our study by taking a careful look at this 'source pasuk' within its context - as it will be very insightful towards understanding what MAGID is all about.

Towards the end of Parshat Bo, Bnei Yisrael have already left Egypt and set up camp in Succot. For food, they have just baked "matzot" from the dough that they had taken with them (in their rush to leave Egypt - see Shmot 12:37-39). After the Torah concludes this narrative, Moshe commands Bnei Yisrael to remember these events in the following manner:

> "And Moshe told the people - Remember this day that you left Egypt, from the House of Slavery, for God has taken you out with a strong hand...
>
> [Then, when you come to the land of Israel...]
>
> Eat matza for seven days... and don't see any chametz..."
>
> (see Shmot 13:3-7)

With this context in mind, note how Moshe concludes these instructions with the following commandment:

> "ve-HIGGADETA le-bincha ba-yom ha-hu leimor" -
>
> And you must TELL your son on that day, saying:
>
> BA'AVUR ZEH -
>
> for the sake of this -
>
> ASA Hashem li BE-TZEITI mi-MITZRAYIM -
>
> God did for me [?] when he took me out of Egypt"
>
> (see Shmot 13:8).

Even though we all know this last pasuk by heart, it is not so easy to translate. In our above transliteration, we have highlighted the difficult words - which we will now discuss:

Let's begin with the meaning of the word 'zeh' [this]. Based on its context (see 13:6-7), 'zeh' most probably refers to the matzot that we eat, for the previous psukim describe the mitzva to eat matza for seven days. Hence, this pasuk implies that we must tell our children: 'for the sake of this matza - God did for me [these miracles ?] - when I left Egypt'.

Indeed, this commandment instructs us to 'remember' this day by telling something to our children; however, it is not very clear what the Torah wants us to explain.

There are two possible directions of interpretation. Either we must explain to our children:

- **Why God took us out of Egypt** - i.e. to eat matza! - Or,
- **Why we eat matza** - because God took us out of Egypt!

Even though we are most familiar with the latter reason, the first interpretation seems to be the simple meaning of the pasuk. As you'd expect, the classical commentators argue in this regard.

Ramban (on 13:8) explains (as most of us understand this pasuk), that we eat matza to remember HOW God took us out of Egypt. However Rashi (and Ibn Ezra) disagree!

In his commentary, Ibn Ezra explains (as 'simple pshat' implies) - that we are commanded to explain to our children that God took us out of Egypt IN ORDER that we can eat matza; implying that God intentionally placed Bnei Yisrael in slavery in order to redeem them - so that we would keep His mitzvot!

Rashi provides a very similar explanation, but widens its scope by stating that God took us out of Egypt in order that we would keep ALL of His mitzvot, such as pesach matza & maror.

> [Chizkuni offers a similar explanation, with a slightly different twist - i.e. in the ZCHUT (in merit) for our readiness to perform the mitzvot of pesach matza & maror for all generations - God redeemed us from Egypt.]

According to Rashi and Ibn Ezra's understanding of this pasuk, the primary mitzvah at the Seder should be not only to explain to our children **what** happened, but also **why** it happened.

In our study of Maggid, we will show how this specific point emerges as a primary theme - but first must consider where that story - that we are commanded to tell over - should begin.

WHERE SHOULD WE BEGIN?

Let's contemplate for a moment where would be the best (or most logical) point to start the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim from. One could entertain several possibilities.

The simplest and most obvious approach would be to begin with Bnei Yisrael's enslavement in Egypt. In fact, this is precisely where Sefer Shmot begins!

On the other hand, one could start a bit earlier with the story of Yosef and his brothers, for that would explain how Bnei Yisrael first came to settle down in Egypt. However, if we continue with that logic, we could go back another generation to the story of Yaakov, or even back to story of Avraham Avinu. [Or maybe even back to the story of Creation!]

This dilemma appears to be the underlying reason behind the Talmudic dispute between Rav and Shmuel. Let's explain:

THE MISHNA in Mesechet PESACHIM

The Mishna in the tenth chapter of Mesechet Pesachim sets some guidelines concerning how to fulfill this obligation 'to tell the story', including one that deals with its format:

> "matchilim bi-gnut u-mesaymim be-shevach" -
>
> - We begin our story with a derogatory comment, and conclude it with praise.

In the Gemara's subsequent discussion (see Pesachim 116a), we find two opinions concerning what this opening comment should be:

- **Rav** - "Mi-tchila ovdei avoda zara..." - At first. our ancestors were idol worshipers..."
- **Shmuel** - "Avadim hayinu..." - We were once slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt..."

At the simplest level, it seems that Rav & Shmuel argue concerning what is considered a more derogatory statement- i.e. the fact that we were once slaves, or the fact that we once idol worshipers. However, this dispute may also relate to a more fundamental question - concerning **where** the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim actually begins - from our slavery in Egypt (Shmuel), or from the time of our forefathers (Rav).

In our study of Maggid, we will show how we actually quote both of these opinions, but not as the starting point of the story, but rather as important statements of purpose.

So where does the story begin?

We will now begin our detailed study MAGGID not only to answer that question, but also in an attempt to better understand HOW we fulfill this mitzva of "sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim" when we read the Haggada.

HOW WE [DON'T] TELL THE STORY IN MAGGID

Even though the primary obligation of the Seder evening is to 'tell the story' of Yetziat Mitzrayim, when we read Maggid at the Seder, it is not very clear where that story actually begins (or ends). To determine when, where, and how we actually fulfill this mitzva, we will examine Maggid - one paragraph at a time.

As we study each paragraph, we will ask ourselves: is this part of the story?

If it is, then we can determine how we tell the story.

If it's not, then we must explain why this paragraph is included in Maggid nonetheless.

'HA LACHMA ANYA'

The opening paragraph of MAGGID - 'ha lachma anya..' is definitely not the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, but rather a quick explanation to the guests about the MATZA on the table. Let's explain why:

In the opening sentence, the leader of the Seder explains how this 'special bread' on the table is what our forefathers ate in Egypt; then he quotes what our forefathers said to one another in Egypt as they prepared to partake in the first Korban Pesach.

"kol dichfin…" - reflects how they invited one another to join a common group to eat the korban Pesach (see Shmot 12:3-6);

"hashta hacha…" reflects their expression of hope that by next year they would no longer be slaves in Egypt, but rather a free people living in the land of Israel.

As we will explain later on, this quote of what our forefathers said to one another in preparation for the very first 'seder' in Jewish History is thematically very important, for at the end of Maggid, we will express our need to feel as though 'we were there' ("bchor dor v'dor…")!

Nonetheless, this section is not the story itself – however, it forms a very meaningful introduction.

[See Further Iyun Section for a discussion of the meaning of "lechem oni". Re: how the matza eaten with the 'korban Pesach' had nothing to do with being in a rush, but rather reflected a '*poor man's bread' ["lechem oni"],* see TSC shiur on Parshat Bo regarding 'two reasons for matza'.]

MAH NISHTANA

Similarly, the 'ma nishtana' is not part of the story. Rather, we want the children to ask questions to ensure that they will take interest in the story that we are about to tell.

As our obligation to tell this story is based on the pasuk "ve-higgadeta le-BINCHA" - and you must tell your children... (see Shmot 13:8), it makes sense that we try to capture their attention before we tell the story. However, as you have surely noticed, this section contains only questions, but no answers.

It should also be noted that these 'four questions' are really one question; i.e. – the **one** question is: 'Why is this night different'? Afterward, the child brings four examples/questions to support his claim that tonight is indeed different.

It is for this reason that we never answer these 'four questions'; Rather, Maggid continues with the answer to the 'one question' – of why this night is special.

'AVADIM HAYINU'

At first glance, the next paragraph: 'avadim hayinu...' seems to begin the story. [In fact, it appears that we have followed Shmuel's opinion (in Pesachim 116a) that we should begin the story with 'avadim hayinu'.]

However, if you take a minute to carefully read this entire paragraph, you'll immediately notice that this paragraph does NOT begin the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. Instead, the 'avadim hayinu' section makes two very important statements, which provide the answer the 'one question' of WHY this night is so special. Hence we explain:

- **WHY** we are obligated to tell this story – for had it not been for this story of how God saved us from Egypt, we would still be slaves till this day;

And, then we explain:

- **WHO** is obligated to tell this story - i.e. 've-afilu kulanu chachamim..' - and even if we [who gather] are all very wise and learned and know the entire Torah, it remains incumbent upon us to tell that story; and the more we elaborate upon it, the better!

From this paragraph, it appears that before we actually tell the story, the Haggada prefers to first discuss some fundamentals relating to the nature of our obligation!

The first statement deals with a fundamental question regarding **why** this story is meaningful to all future generations, even though we will be discussing an event that took place thousands of years earlier.

The second statement comes to counter a possible misunderstanding, based on the source-text of "ve-higgadeta **le-bincha**..." - that this mitzva applies **only** to teaching **children** [i.e. those who never heard this story]. Therefore, before we tell the story, the Haggada must remind us that **everyone** is obligated to discuss the story - even 'know it alls'.

[See Further Iyun section for a more detailed discussion of how to understand this section in light of Devarim 6:20-25.]

MA'ASEH BE-R. ELIEZER...

To prove this second point of the 'avadim hayinu' paragraph (that even ' know it alls' are obligated to tell the story), the next paragraph in MAGGID quotes a story of five great Torah scholars (in fact Tannaim) who gathered for the Seder in Bnei Brak. Even though they certainly knew the story; nonetheless they spent the entire evening (until dawn the next morning) discussing it.

[This reflects a classic format for a Rabbinic statement. First the Rabbis state the obligation [in our case, that everyone is obligated to tell the story - even 'know it alls'] - afterward they support that ruling by quoting a story [in our case, the story of the five scholars who spent the entire evening discussing the story of the Exodus, even though they surely knew it.]

Even though the Haggada does not quote their entire conversation of that evening, the next paragraph does quote one specific discussion. Let's explain why:

AMAR RABBI ELIEZER BEN AZARYA...

The specific discussion that we quote concerns the Biblical source for our **daily** obligation to '**mention'** the story of the Exodus (see Devarim 16:3). In Hebrew, this obligation is commonly referred to as "**zechira**" [to passively remember], in contrast to our 'once a year' obligation at the Seder of **"sippur" -** to actively **tell** the story of the Exodus.

Most likely, the Haggada chose to quote this specific discussion as it relates to the obvious connection between these two mitzvot ("zechira" & "sippur").

One could suggest that the story we tell at the Seder ("sippur") serves as the reference point for our daily mention ("zechira") of the Exodus - when we recite the third 'parshia' of keriyat shema (see Bamidbar 15:41), every morning and evening. To mention this story on a daily basis only becomes meaningful if we first 'tell the story' in full (at least once a year).

We should note as well that the very pasuk: "I am the Lord your God who took you out of the Land of Egypt **to be for you a God**" (Bamidbar 15:41) supports the opinion of Rashi & Ibn Ezra (quoted above) that God took us out of Egypt **in order** that we keep His commandments.

Notice however, that we are still discussing the nature of our obligation - but the story itself has not yet begun!

THE FOUR SONS

The next section of MAGGID - beginning with 'baruch ha-Makom', discusses the Four Sons. Here again, we do not find the actual story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, rather another aspect of 'defining our obligation', as this section discusses **HOW** we should tell the story.

This section reflects the statement in the Mishna: '"l'fi da'ato shel ha-ben, aviv melamdo" - based on the level of the child, the parent should teach [the story]. [See Pesachim 116a.]

Based on this dictum, the Haggada quotes a Mechilta, which offers **four** examples of **how** to tell the story to different types of children - each example based on a pasuk in Chumash (where the father answers his son).

The opening statement of this section: 'baruch ha-Makom...' serves as a 'mini' "birkat ha-Torah" [a blessing recited before Torah study], as we are about to engage in the study of a Mechilta - the Midrash on Sefer Shmot. The quote itself begins with "keneged arba banim dibra Torah..."

[For a deeper understanding of this Mechilta, see the TSC shiur on 'The Four Sons' - tanach.org/special/4sons.doc]

This section certainly teaches us HOW to be a 'dynamic' teacher as we tell this story, and adapt it to the level of our audience. However, note once again that the story has yet to begun!

"YACHOL ME-ROSH CHODESH"

In the next section, beginning with: 'yachol me-rosh chodesh...' we discuss yet another aspect of our 'obligation to tell the story' - this time concerning **WHEN** we are obligated. Here, the Haggada quotes an analytical discourse which arrives at the conclusion that the story must be told on evening of the Seder.

Once again, we find another definition relating to our obligation to tell the story, but we haven't told the story yet!

[In case you'd like to follow the logic behind this discourse: Because the Torah's first command to **remember this day** is recorded in Shmot 12:14, as part of a set of commands given to Moshe on Rosh Chodesh Nisan (see 12:1-2), one might think that the phrase "v'haya ha'yom ha'zeh l'**zikaron**" (in 12:14) refers to Rosh Chodesh [that's the "hava amina"].

However, when Moshe relays these laws to Bnei Yisrael in chapter 13, he informs that they must remember this day that they left Egypt, not eat chametz & eat matza for seven days (see 13:3-7), and then they must tell the story to their children **on that day** "ba'yom ha'hu" (see 13:8) - which may refer to the **day time,** i.e. when they first offer the Korban on the 14th in the afternoon [based on Shmot 12:6 and hence "yachol m'b'od yom..."].

The drasha rejects that possible understanding based on the next phrase in 13:8 - "ba'avur zeh" - where "zeh" in its context must be referring to the matza - hence the story must be told at the same time that we eat matza and the korban Pesach, i.e. on the **evening** of the 15th.]

Once again, we find another definition relating to our obligation to tell the story, but we haven't told the story yet!

[At most Seders, probably at least an hour has gone by, but we haven't even begun to tell the story!]

"MI-TCHILA OVDEI AVODA ZARA..."

After defining the various aspects of our obligation, it appears that MAGGID finally begins telling the story with the paragraph that begins with "mi-tchila ovdei avoda zara..." (apparently following Rav's opinion in Pesachim 116a).

If so, it would seem that we actually begin the story with the story of our forefathers [the Avot] and how Avraham grew up within a family of idol worshipers.

However, if you read this paragraph carefully, you'll notice it isn't a story at all. Instead, the Haggada is making a very important **statement**, and then proves that statement with a text-proof from Yehoshua chapter 24.

To appreciate what's going on, let's take a closer look at this statement and its proof.

The Statement:

"Mi-tchila ovdei avoda zara.hayu.avoteinu, ve-achshav kirvanu ha-Makom le-**avodato**"

At first, our forefathers were servants to strange gods - but now, God has brought us closer to Him - **[in order] to serve Him**!

The Proof:

"And Yehoshua said to the people: 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Your fathers dwelt in the past - beyond the River, even Terach - the father of Avraham, and the father of Nachor - and they **served** other gods.

And I took your father Avraham from beyond the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Yitzchak.

And I gave unto Yitchak Yaakov and Esav; and I gave Esav mount Seir, to possess it; and Yaakov and his children went down into Egypt" (Yehoshua 24:2-4).

This statement should not surprise us, for once again we find the Haggada emphasizing the point (discussed above) that God chose the people of Israel for a purpose - i.e. to **serve** Him!

However, if you study the quoted text-proof, you'll notice that it only proves the first half of our statement, i.e. that we were once idol worshipers, but it doesn't proves the second half - that God brought us close in order to serve Him.

RE-AFFIRMING BRIT SINAI in Sefer Yehoshua

The solution to this problem is very simple. To show how this quote from Yehoshua proves the second point as well, we simply need to read the continuation of Yehoshua chapter 24. In that chapter, after teaching a short 'history lesson' (see 24:2-13), Yehoshua challenges the people saying:

"Now - fear the LORD, and **serve Him** in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt; and **serve ye the LORD.**

And if it seem evil unto you to **serve the LORD**, choose you this day **whom you will serve**; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, **we will serve the LORD**" (Yehoshua 24:14-15).

The entire reason why Yehoshua gathered the people in Shchem and reviewed their history was in order to challenge them with this goal - i.e. their willingness to truly serve God. After all, as Yehoshua explains, it was for this very reason that God chose Avraham Avinu. Thus the proof on the second half of the opening statement comes from the continuation of that chapter!

Note as well how the chapter continues, emphasizing over and over again this same theme:

"And the people answered: 'Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; for the LORD our God, He it is that brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and that did those great signs in our sight...

therefore we also will **serve the LORD**; for He is our God.'

And Yehoshua said unto the people: '**You cannot serve the LORD;** for He is a holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression nor your sins....

And the people said: 'Nay; but **we will serve the LORD**.'

And Joshua said unto the people: 'You are witnesses that **you have chosen God to serve Him.** - And they said: 'We are witnesses.'--

And the people said unto Yehoshua: '**The LORD our God will we serve**, and unto His voice will we hearken.'

So Yehoshua made a **covenant** with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem."

[See Yehoshua 24:16-25!]

Hence, the proof for the entire statement of 'mi-tchila...' is found in the continuation of Yehoshua chapter 24. Most probably, when this section was first composed, the Haggada assumed that its readers were well versed in Tanach, and knew the continuation of that chapter.

[Note as well how psukim that we do quote from Yehoshua (see 24:2-4) form a beautiful summary of Sefer Breishit, as they focus on the key stages of the 'bechira' process.

Should you be looking for something novel to do at your Seder, you could have the participants read from this section. Note as well that Yehoshua 24:5-7 is an excellent (albeit short) review of the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim.]

This background can help us appreciate how this statement of 'mi-tchila' sets the stage for the story that we are about to tell - for it explains why God originally chose Avraham - i.e. to become the forefather of a nation that will serve Him. The next paragraph of MAGGID will explain its connection to the story that we are about to begin.

"BARUCH SHOMER HAVTACHATO"

In the next paragraph we find yet another 'statement' (and not a story) followed by a proof-text, that relates once again to God's original choice of our forefathers. We will now show how this section explains why the story must begin with Avraham.

Statement:

"Baruch shomer havtachato... - Blessed is He who keeps His promise [of redemption] to Am Yisrael, for God had calculated the end [time for redemption] as He had promised Avraham Avinu at brit bein ha-btarim. As God stated:

Proof:

'Know very well that your offspring will be **strangers in a foreign land** which will **oppress and enslave them** for four hundred years. But that nation who will oppress them I will judge, and afterward they will go out with great wealth"

[See Breishit 15:13-18].

In this statement, we thank God for keeping His promise to Avraham Avinu, at “brit bein ha-btarim”, to ultimately redeem Bnei Yisrael from their affliction, after some four hundred years.

At first glance, this statement sounds like yet another expression of gratitude. However, when considering its position in Maggid, one could suggest a very different reason for its mention specifically at this point.

Recall how the previous paragraph explained that God had chosen our forefathers to establish a nation to **serve** Him. In order to become that nation, God entered into a covenant with Avraham Avinu – i.e. "brit bein ha’btarim" - which forecasted the need for Avraham’s offspring to first undergo suffrage in ‘a land not theirs’ in order to become that nation.

In other words, this historical process of slavery, followed by a miraculous redemption, was to serve as a ‘training experience’ that would facilitate the formation of that nation. [See concept of "kur ha'barzel" and its context in Devarim 4:20.]

Hence, this paragraph explains why the story of the Exodus must begin with “brit bein ha’btarim” - for our slavery in Egypt was not accidental, rather it was part of God's master plan. In a certain sense, God put us into Egypt - in order to take us out!

[This does not imply that every event that happened to Am Yisrael was already predetermined since the time of Avarham Avinu. Rather, this overall framework of becoming a nation in someone else's land - followed by oppression and servitude - then followed by redemption - was forecasted. How exactly it would play out, who would be the oppressor, and how intense that oppression would be- was yet to be determined. See Rambam Hilchot Teshuva chapters 5 & 6; see also Seforno's introduction to Sefer Shmot as his commentary on the first chapter.]

As we thank God for fulfilling His promise to Avraham, we are in essence thanking God for His covenant **and its very purpose**, not just for taking us out of Egypt.

Therefore in this section of Maggid, before we tell the story of WHAT happened - we must first explain WHY it happened.

This point is proven in the next paragraph:

"VE-HEE SHE-AMDA"

As we lift our cups and recite the "v'hee sh'amda" - we declare yet another important statement, connecting that covenant and the events of the past with today:

"ve-HEE she-amda la-avoteinu **ve-LANU** "

- And it is THIS [Promise that was part of the COVENANT, i.e. brit bein ha-btarim] which stood for our fathers, AND for us as well. For not only once [in our history] did our enemies try to destroy us; but in EVERY generation we are endangered, but God comes to save us [for the sake of His covenant]."

The word "hee" in this statement obviously refers to the promise ['havtacha'] of brit bein ha-btarim (mentioned in the previous paragraph). This statement is so important that our custom is to raise the cup of wine before reciting this proclamation!

Here we explain that "brit bein ha-btarim" was not merely a 'one-time coupon' promising one major redemption, but rather it defined an eternal relationship between God and His people. The events of Yetziat Mitzrayim are only the initial stage of this everlasting relationship. Therefore, anytime in our history, whenever we are in distress - God will ultimately come to redeem us. However, the reason why God redeems us is in order that we can return to serve Him (that's why He chose us).

This provides us with a deeper understanding of why every generation must tell-over the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. At the Seder, we are not simply thanking God for the 'event' but rather for the entire 'process'. Yetziat Mitzrayim was not simply a 'one-time' act of redemption. Rather, it was a critical stage in an on-going historical process in which God desires that Am Yisrael become His special nation.

As this purpose is eternal, so too the need to remind ourselves on a yearly basis of the key events through which that process began.

This understanding explains why redemption requires spiritual readiness, for in every generation Bnei Yisrael must show their willingness to be faithful to that covenant.

[In our TSC shiur on Parshat Bo, we explained how this concept explains the symbolism of why we must rid ourselves of chametz, prior to and during the time when we thank God for Yetziat Mitzrayim.

This may also explain why we invite Eliyahu ha-navi, when we begin the final section of the Haggada, where we express our hope for our future redemption. According to the final psukim of Sefer Mal'achi (the Haftara for Shabbat ha-Gadol!), Eliyahu will come to help the nation perform proper 'teshuva' - to become worthy for redemption.]

At most Seder's - surely, over an hour has passed; yet we still haven't told the story!]

"TZEY U-LMAD" / "ARAMI OVED AVI"

With this thematic background complete, the Haggada is finally ready to tell the story (for those who are still awake). However, as you may have noticed, we do not tell the story in a straightforward manner.

Take a careful look at the next section of MAGGID, noting how the Haggada takes four psukim from Devarim 26:5-8, and quotes them one word (or phrase) at a time. Each quote is followed by a proof of that phrase, usually from either the story of the Exodus in Sefer Shmot or from a pasuk in Sefer Tehillim.

[To verify this, be sure to first review Devarim 26:1-9 before you continue.]

This section begins with "tzey u-lmad: ma bikesh Lavan...." which is simply a drasha of the opening phrase 'arami oved avi', and then continues all the way until the 'makkot' -the Ten Plagues. In a nutshell, this section constitutes a rather elaborate Midrash on four psukim from 'mikra bikkurim' (Devarim 26:5-8).

The reason why MAGGID chooses this format to tell the story is based once again on a statement in the Mishna in the tenth chapter of Masechet Pesachim: "ve-dorshin me-arami oved avi ad sof ha-parasha" - and then we elaborate on the psukim from 'arami oved avi' until the end of that unit - and that is exactly what the Haggada does!

In other words, the Haggada uses Devarim 26:5-8 - beginning with 'arami oved avi' - as the 'framework' for telling over the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. Even though 'technically' it would suffice to simply quote these psukim, we elaborate upon them instead, in an effort to make the story more interesting and meaningful. [In fact, we are quoting a Sifrei - the Midrash on Sefer Devarim, which most probably was composed for this very purpose.]

From a 'practical' halachic perspective, this is critical to understand - for in this section we finally fulfill our obligation to TELL THE STORY - and hence this section should be treated as the most important part of MAGGID!

[Unfortunately, this section is usually one of the most neglected parts of the Haggada, since we are usually 'out of steam' by the time we reach it. Also, if one is not aware of the elaborate nature of these quotes, it is quite difficult to understand what's going on. Therefore, it's important that we not only pay attention to this section, but we should also be sure at this point to explain the details of the story to those who don't understand these psukim.]

WHY MIKRA BIKKURIM?

It is not by chance that Chazal chose to incorporate a Midrash of "mikra bikkurim" - even though it is rather cryptic - as the method through which we fulfill our obligation of sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim. Let's explain why.

Recall from our shiur on Parshat Ki Tavo, that "mikra bikkurim" (see Devarim 26:1-10) serves as a yearly proclamation whereby every individual thanks God for His fulfillment of the final stage of brit bein ha-btarim.

[This is supported by numerous textual and thematic parallels between the psukim of mikra bikkurim (Devarim 26:1-9), and brit bein ha-btarim (see Breishit 15:7-18). Note as well the use of the word 'yerusha' in 26:1 and in 15:1-8!]

This proclamation constitutes much more than simply thanking God for our 'first fruits'. Rather, it thanks God for the Land (see Devarim 26:3) that He had promised our forefathers (in brit bein ha-btarim / see Breishit 15:18). The 'first fruits' are presented as a 'token of our appreciation' for the fact that God has fulfilled His side of the covenant - as each individual must now declare that he will be faithful to his side of the covenant.

As mikra bikkurim constitutes a biblical 'nusach' ['formula'] through which one thanks God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha-btarim, one could suggest that it was for this reason that the Mishna chose these same psukim as its framework for telling the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim.

[It very well may be that this custom to tell the story at the Sefer with "mikra bikurim" began after the destruction of the Temple (note that the Tosefta of Mesechet Pesachim does not include this custom, while the Mishna (compiled later) does include it! Without the Temple, the individual could no longer recite "mikra bikkurim". However, we can at least remind ourselves of this yearly need to proclaim our allegiance to God's covenant - by quoting from "mikra bikurim" at the Seder!

This may explain why the Haggada only quotes the first four psukim of mikra bikkurim (where it talks about Yetziat Mizraim) but not the pasuk that describes how He bought us into the Promised Land.

Finally, note also the word 'higgadeti' in Devarim 26:3 and compare it with the word 've-higgadeta' in Shmot 13:8!

See also Rambam Hilchot Chametz u-Matza chapter 7, especially halacha 4.]

THE MULTIPLICATION TABLES

When you study the "drashot" of these four psukim, note how the drasha of the final pasuk leads us directly into the Ten Plagues. At this point, the Haggada quotes an additional drasha - by R. Yossi ha-Glili - that there must have been 5 times as many plagues at the Red Sea than were in Egypt [based on the ratio - 'etzba' of the Makkot to 'yad' at Kriyat Yam Suf, i.e. hand/finger = 5/1].

Then R. Eliezer and R. Akiva add multiples of 4x and 5x for each plague - based on Tehillim 88:49.

[Note in the Rambam's nusach of MAGGID, he skips this entire section. This suggests that this Midrash is an additional 'elaboration', but not a necessary part of the story that we must tell. In other words, if you need to skip something, this section is a 'good candidate'.]

DAYENU

Now that the story is finished, it's time for 'praise' -following the format of the Mishna "matchilin bi-gnut u-mesaymim be-shevach' - and we will now explain how DAYENU serves as a special form of HALLEL (praise).

You are probably familiar with all the questions regarding what we say in Dayenu, for example, how could a Jew say, let alone sing, that -'it would have been enough'- even had God not given us the Torah?

And how could a 'zionist' say, let alone sing, that -'it would have been enough'- even if God had not given us the Land of Israel?

However, the answer to all those questions is rather simple, once one understands that each time we say the word "dayenu" - it really implies that 'it would have been enough - **to say Hallel**'.

In other words, we say as follows:

- Had God only taken us out of Egypt and not punished the Egyptians, **it would have been reason enough** to say Hallel
- Had He split the sea, but not given us the 'manna', that alone **would have been reason enough** to say Hallel**...**

... And so on.

With this background, the next paragraph of that poem makes perfect sense:

"`al achat kama vekhama..."

- How much more so is it proper **to thank God** for He has performed **ALL** these acts of kindness ..

He took us out of Egypt, **and** punished them, **and** split the sea, **and** gave us the manna etc.

In essence, this beautiful poem poetically summarizes each significant stage of redemption, from the time of the Exodus until Am Yisrael's conquest of the Land - stating how each single act of God's kindness in that process would be reason enough to say Hallel, now even more so we must say Hallel, for God did all of these things for us.

From this perspective, "dayenu" serves a double purpose. First and foremost, it concludes the story with "shevach" [praise]. and qualifies the Hallel that we are about to sing. However, it could also be understood as a continuation of the story of the Exodus. Let's explain why and how:

Recall that the last "drasha" [elaboration] on the psukim of "arami oved avi" led into a lengthy discussion of the Ten Plagues. To fulfill our obligation at the Seder' to tell the story', we could (and do) finish right here. But the poem of "dayenu" actually continues that story, picking up from the Ten Plagues ["asa bahem shfatim" refers to the Plagues], and continuing through all the significant events in the desert until our arrival in the Land of Israel and building the Temple.

This takes on additional significance, as it concludes in the same manner as the final pasuk of "arami oved avi" - which for

some reason we do not include in our Seder (even though according to the Mishna it appears that we really should)! Recall that according to Devarim 26:9, the proclamation should conclude with: "va'yvi'einu el ha'Makom ha'zeh"

According to Chazal - he brought us to the Bet ha'Mikdash!

"va'yiten lanu et ha'aretz ha'zot" he gave us the land of Israel

Even though we don't elaborate upon this pasuk in our version of Maggid, "dayenu" enables us to include it!

In this manner, the song of "dayneu" serves as both "shevach" [praise] and "sippur" [story] - at the same time!

It is also interesting to note that we find 15 levels of praise in the Dayenu, that most probably correspond to the 15 steps leading to the Bet ha-Mikdash, better known as the 'shir ha-ma'a lot', i.e. the 15 psalms in Tehillim (120-134) / composed for each step.

Finally, note how Dayenu discusses fifteen 'stages' in the redemption process. This beautifully reflects the theme that we have discussed thus far - that we are thanking God for the entire **process** of redemption, and not just for a specific event!

[For a full shiur on the topic of Dayenu, see: www.tanach.org/special/dayenu.txt]

"RABBAN GAMLIEL"

Even though we have completed our story, before continuing with the Hallel, the Haggada wants to make sure that we also fulfill Rabban Gamliel's opinion (in Masechet Pesachim chapter 10) that we have not fulfilled our obligation of "v'higadta l'bincha" unless we have explained the connection between that story and the commandment to eat PESACH, MATZA & MAROR.

[It appears that Ramban Gamliel understands the word "zeh" (in Shmot 13:8) refers to the 'korban Pesach' - probably based on his understanding that the phrase "ha'avoda ha'zot" in 13:5 also relates to 'korban Pesach'. Hence, Raban Gamliel requires that we explain to our children (and whoever is gathered) why we are eating not only matza, but also pesach and maror.]

Rabban Gamliel's statement could also imply that our obligation of eating matza and maror is not complete unless we explain how they connect to the story that we just told. This would explain why it is added at the conclusion of the "sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim" section, as we are about to fulfill our obligation to eat matza, and maror.

[In our times, this section may also be considered a 'fill in' for the KORBAN PESACH itself. During the time of the Bet ha-Mikdash, MAGGID was said while eating the korban pesach. Nowadays, since the korban cannot be offered, we mention pesach, matza, and maror instead of eating the korban. Thus, this section forms an excellent introduction to the Hallel, which in ancient times was recited as the Korban Pesach was offered, and later when it was eaten.]

This section forms the conclusion of "sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim", and sets the stage for our reciting of Hallel - to praise God for our salvation. [See Rambam Hilchot chametz u'matza 7:5, where his concluding remark implies that "haggada" ends here.]

"BE-CHOL DOR VA-DOR"

Considering the integral connection between the events of the Exodus and "brit avot" (discussed above) the statement of:`"be-chol dor va-dor chayav adam lir'ot et atzmo ke-ilu hu yatza mi-Mitzrayim..." takes on additional significance.

Before we say HALLEL, we conclude our story by stating that in every generation - each individual must feel as though HE himself was redeemed from Egypt. As the purpose of this entire historical process of redemption was to prepare Am Yisrael for their national destiny - it becomes imperative that every member of Am Yisrael feels as though they experienced that same 'training mission'.

One could suggest that this closing statement complements the opening statement of MAGGID (in the avadim hayinu paragraph) that had God had not taken us out of Egypt we would still enslaved until this very day. Now that we have told the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, we are supposed to feel as though we ourselves were redeemed.

As stated in Devarim 6:20-25, the events of Yetziat Mitzrayim obligate Am Yisrael to keep not only the mitzvot of Pesach but ALL of the mitzvot of the Torah! [See Sefer Kuzari section 1.]

[Note how the phrase "ve-otanu hotzi mi-sham" that we recite in this section of MAGGID is quoted from Devarim 6:23! Note as well how Chazal most probably arrived at this conclusion based on Moshe Rabeinu's statement in Devarim 5:2-3 (at the very beginning of his main speech) that God's covenant at Har Sinai was made with the new generation, even though they themselves were not born yet!]

LEFICHACH / HALLEL

As an introduction to the first two chapters of HALLEL, we recite 'lefichach...'. Note how this section contrasts 'suffering' with 'redemption' (note the numerous examples). This too may reflect our theme that we thank God for the process, and not just for the event.

The two chapters of Hallel that we recite at this time are also quite meaningful. The reason for 'be-tzeit Yisrael mi-Mitzrayim' is rather obvious. But note the opening words of the first chapter:

"hallelu **AVDEI** Hashem, hallelu et SHEM Hashem..."

In other words, as we are now God's servants ['avdei Hashem'] - and no longer slaves to Pharaoh, it is incumbent upon us to praise our new master.

THE 'SECOND CUP'

We conclude Maggid with the blessing of "ge'ula" [redemption] on the 2nd cup of wine.

As we recite this blessing, note how most fittingly we express our hope that we will become worthy of God's redemption speedily in our own time

A CONCLUDING THOUGHT

Even though much of our above discussion may seem 'technical', our analysis alludes to a deeper concept, that the Seder is not only about 'gratitude' - i.e. thanking God for what happened; but more so - it's about 'destiny' - i.e. recognizing why it happened!

. Let's explain.

Many of us are familiar with a concept called 'hakarat ha-tov' - recognition of gratitude. Simply translated, this means that people should express their gratitude for help (or assistance) provided by others. In relation the Seder, by telling the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim [the Exodus] and reciting afterward the Hallel [praise], we express our gratitude to God for our redemption from slavery in Egypt.

However, if "hakarat ha-tov" is the sole purpose of Maggid, then a very serious question arises when we pay attention to the details of the story that we have just told. Recall (from the paragraph "baruch shomer havtachato...") how we thank God in the Haggada for the fulfillment of His covenant with Avraham - that he would ultimately save Am Yisrael from their bondage. Yet in that very same covenant, God promised not only our redemption, but also our enslavement! [See Breishit 15:13-15.]

If there was a real teenager [or 'chutzpedik'] son at the table, he could ask a very good [but 'cynical'] question:

Why should we thank God for taking us out of Egypt, after all - it was He who put us there in the first place!

To answer this question, I'd like to introduce the concept of 'hakarat ha-ye'ud' [shoresh yod.ayin.daled] - the recognition of destiny [and/or purpose]; in contrast to "hakarat ha-tov".

As we explained above, our obligation to 'tell the story of the Exodus' stems not only from our need to remember **what** happened, but more so - from our need to remember **why** it happened. In other words, we are actually thanking God for both

putting us into slavery **and** for taking us out; or in essence - we thank God for our very relationship with Him, and its purpose - as we must recognize the goal of that process and the purpose of that relationship.

In our shiur, we have both discussed the biblical background that supported this approach, and shown how this understanding helped us appreciate both the content of structure of Maggid.

This point of "hakarat ha-ye'ud" is exactly that we emphasized in our introduction. As our 'ye'ud' - our destiny - is to become a nation that will serve Him, God found it necessary to send us down to Egypt in order that He could redeem us.

This could be the deeper meaning of Rashi's interpretation of the pasuk "ve-higgadeta le-bincha ... ba'avur zeh" - that we must explain to our children that God took us of Egypt **in order** that we keep His mitzvot. [See Rashi & Ibn Ezra 13:8.] Rashi understands that the primary purpose of "magid" is not simply to explain why we are eating matza, but rather to explain to our children why God took us out of Egypt - or in essence, why He has chosen us to become His nation and hence keep His mitzvot.

To complement this thought, we will show how this same theme may relate as well to the very purpose of God's first covenant with Avraham Avinu - "brit bein ha'btarim".

ETHICS & the EXODUS -

Recall that when God first chose Avraham Avinu in Parshat Lech Lecha (see Breishit 12:1-7), He informed him that he would become a great nation and that his offspring would inherit the land, However, only a short time later (in chapter 15), God qualifies that promise by informing Avraham Avinu (at brit bein ha'btraim) that there would be a need for his offspring to become enslaved by another nation BEFORE becoming (and possibly in order to become) God's special nation (see Breishit 15:1-18).

Even though some commentators understand this 'bondage' as a punishment for something that Avraham may have done wrong (see Maharal - Gevurot Hashem); nonetheless, the simple pshat of Breishit chapter 15 is that this covenant was part of God's original plan. This begs for an explanation concerning why this framework of 'slavery' was a necessary part of this process.

> [We should note that according to Seforno (based on Yechezkel 20:1-10), even though God forecasted our slavery, it didn't have to be so severe. Its severity, he explains, was in punishment for Bnei Yisrael's poor behavior in Egypt. (See Seforno's intro to Sefer Shmot and his commentary on Shmot 1:13.) .]

One could suggest that the answer lies in what we find in the mitzvot given to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai, immediately after they leave Egypt.

Recall the numerous commandments that include the special 'reminder' of "v'zacharta ki eved ha'yita b'eretz Mitzraim" - to Remember that you were once a SLAVE [or STRANGER] in Egypt. Just about every time we find this phrase, it is not a 'stand alone' mitzvah, but rather as an additional comment following a law concerning the proper treatment of the 'less-fortunate' - i.e. it serves as an extra incentive to keep some of the most very basic ethical laws of the Torah.

To prove this, simply review the following list of sources in your Chumash, paying careful attention to when and how this phrase is presented, noting both its topic and context:

- Shmot 22:20 & 23:9 (note the type of mitzvot found in numerous laws recorded between these two psukim). Note especially "v'atem y'datem et nefesh ha'ger" in 23:9, that phrase highlights our above assertion.
- Vayikra 19:33-36 (concluding "Kdoshim tihiyu"!)
- Vayikra 20:26! and 25:55! (note the context of Vayikra 25:35-55, noting especially 25:38.)
- Devarim 5:12-15 (shabbos is to allow our servants a chance to rest as well - v'zachrta ki eved hayita...")
- Devarim 16:11-12, in regard to "simchat yom tov"
- Devarim 24:17-18, noting context from 23:16 thru 24:18
- Devarim 24:19-22, continuing same point as above
- Note as well concluding psukim in Devarim 25:13-16

REMEMBER WHAT THEY DID TO YOU

In light of these sources (a 'must read' for those not familiar with these psukim), it becomes clear that part of God's master plan (in the need for our enslavement to Egypt before becoming a nation) was to 'sensitize' us, both as individuals and as a nation, to care for the needs of the oppressed and downtrodden.

God is angered when any nation takes advantage of its vulnerable population (see story of Sedom in Breishit chapters 18-19, noting especially 18:17-21!). In our shiurim on Sefer Breishit, we suggested that this may have been one of the underlying reasons for God's choice of a special nation, a nation that will 'make a Name for God', by setting an example in the eyes of there nations, of ideal manner of how a nation should treat its lower classes, and be sensitive to the needs of its strangers and downtrodden. [Note also Yeshayahu 42:5-6!]

Hence, after Bnei Yisrael leave Egypt, they must receive a special set of laws are Har Sinai that will facilitate their becoming that nation. As they are chosen to become God's model nation (see Devarim 4:5-8), these laws must set reflect a higher standard, to serve as a shining example for other nations to learn from. Note as well how the opening laws of Parshat Mishpatim (which immediately followed the Ten Commandments), begin with special laws for how to treat our own slaves, whether they be Jewish (see Shmot 21:1-11) on non Jewish (see 21:20 & 21:26-27). [Not to mention the laws that follow in 22:20 thru 23:9.]

With this background, one could suggest that the suffering of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt, i.e. their being taken advantage of by a tyrant etc., would help teach Bnei Yisrael what 'not to do' when they form their own nation, after leaving Egypt.

As anyone who is familiar with the prophecies of Yeshayahu and Yirmiyahu (and just about all of the Neviim Acharonim) knows, it was this lack of this sensitivity to the poor and needy that becomes the primary reason behind God's decision to exile Israel from their land, and destroy the Bet Ha'Mikdash.

A YEARLY 'RE-SENSITIZER'

Let's return to the very pasuk from which we learn our obligation to tell the story at MAGID -"v'higadta l'bincha... ba'avur zeh asa Hashem li b'tzeiti m'Mitzraim". If we follow the interpretation of Rashi & Ibn Ezra, then this pasuk is commanding us that we explain to our children that God took us out of Egypt in order that we can fulfill His commandments. Or in essence, God orchestrated all the events forecasted in "brit bein ha'btarim" to help us become that nation. Certainly, this approach fits nicely with our explanation thus far.

Finally, the very pasuk that Chazal chose that we must recite twice a day to 'remember' the Exodus on a daily basis (see Bamidbar 15:41) may allude as well to this very same point: "I am the God who took you out of Egypt IN ORDER to be your God...". In other words, God took us out of an Egypt **in order** that He become our God. Our deeper understanding of the purpose of the events (of the Exodus) can serve as a guide and a reminder to assure that we act in the manner that we assure that we will indeed become God's model nation.

In summary, when we thank God for taking us out of Egypt, we must also remember that one of the reasons for why He put us there - was to sensitize us towards the needs of the oppressed. Should we not internalize that message, the numerous "tochachot" of the Bible warn that God may find it necessary to 'teach us the hard way' once again (see Devarim 28:58-68 and Yirmiyahu 34:8-22).

In this manner, the message of the Seder is not only particular -in relation to the obligations of the Jewish people; but also universal -in relation to their purpose - the betterment of all mankind. Or in the words of Chazal - "ein l'cha ben choriin ele mi sh'osek b'Torah" - 'Who is considered free - one who can dedicate his life to keeping God's laws

Freedom - to dedicate one's life to the service of God, both as an individual and a member of God's special nation - to internalize and eternalize God's message to mankind - that's what the Seder is all about!

chag sameiach, menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. V'ACHSHAV KIRVANU HA'MAKOM L'AVADATO

This key statement of the MAGID section (as discussed in our shiur on MAGID), that God chose the Jewish people in order that they could serve Him (by acting as His model nation) - is proven not only from our quote of Yehoshua 24:1-3, but more so from the remainder of that chapter - a 'must read' for anyone not familiar with that chapter!

For those of you familiar with Sefer Yehoshua, here's an observation that you may appreciate. One could suggest that the gathering, as described in Yehoshua 24:1-27, may have taken place at an earlier time, even though it is recorded in the final chapter of the book. Based on the content of this speech (and challenge) by Yehoshua for the entire nation to serve God - it would have made more sense for this gathering to have taken place soon after the original wave of conquest, and not at the end of his life.

In my opinion, the most logical time for this gathering to have taken place would have been at the same time when Bnei Yisrael first gathered at Har Eival to re-convene their covenant with God, in fulfillment the God's command in Devarim 27:1-8! This covenantal gathering, similar to the original covenantal gathering at Har Sinai (compare w/Shmot 24:3-11) is described in detail in Yehoshua 8:30-35. Note that the city of Shechem - where the events in chapter 24 take place, is located at the foot of Har Eival (where the events in chapter 8:30-35 take place!

Even though the events in chapter 24 should have been recorded after the events in 8:30-35, Sefer Yehoshua preferred to 'save' that speech for its concluding section, because of its thematic and everlasting significance.

If so, then Yehoshua chapter 23 would have been the last gathering of the people with Yehoshua prior to his death (as seems to be simple pshat of the opening psukim of that chapter), while the events described in chapter 24 were 'saved' for the conclusion of the book (even though they took place much earlier). [Note how the story of Yehoshua's death in 24:28-33 is not an integral part of the story in 24:1-27]

Hence, it may not be by chance that the Haggada quotes from this chapter to present its key point - that God chose us, and gave us the special Land, for the purpose that we would be able serve Him. Its thematic importance results in its special placement at the conclusion of Sefer Yehoshua, and similarly, at a key position in MAGID.

B. MAGID & SEFER DEVARIM

For those of you familiar with our Intro shiur to Sefer Devarim (i.e. in regard to the structure of the main speech), it will be easier to appreciate why the Haggada begins its answer to the "ma nishtana" with "avadim hayinu...". [Or basically, Shmuel's opinion for "matchilim b'gnut" in the tenth perek of Mesechet Psachim"/ see 116a.]

Recall how that speech began in chapter 5, where Moshe Rabeinu introduces the laws [the "chukim upmishpatim"] by explaining how they part of the covenant that God had made with Am Yisrael at Har Sinai; while the laws themselves began with the famous psukim of Shema Yisrael that begin in 6:4.

In that context, the question in 6:20 concerns the inevitable question of children relating to the very purpose for keeping all of these laws, while the phrase "avadim hayinu" (see 6:21) is only the first line of a four line answer to our children, that explains why God chose us, and why we are obligated to keep all of His laws (see 6:20-25).

Hence, it is not by chance that the Haggada uses specifically this pasuk to explain why we are obligated to 'tell the story of the Exodus' every year, as that very pasuk begins the Torah's explanation for why we are obligated to keep all of God's laws.

Note as well how the pasuk of "v'otanu hotzi m'sham **lmaan. [for the purpose of]...**" (see 6:22-23) is quoted at the end of MAGID in the "bchol dor v'dor" section - and not by chance!

Recall as well how the final mitzvot of this lengthy speech are found in chapter 26, namely "mikra bikkurim" and "viddui maasrot".

In light of our study of Sefer Devarim and the sources in Sefer Shmot for Maggid (relating to how the experience in Egypt served to sensitize the nation - to act properly once they become sovereign in their own land), one can suggest an additional reason for why Chazal chose Mikra Bikurim - from Devarim chapter 26 - as the official 'formula' by which we tell the story. Note not only how the declaration in 26:5-9 constitutes a thanksgiving to God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha'btarim, but notice also the closing line in 26:11, where once again we are called upon to be sure that the stranger and Levite share in our happiness (for they have no Land of their own, and hence not able to bring their own first fruits).

It should also not surprise us that the next law, "vidduy maasrot" at the end of every three years, emphasizes this very same theme. Simply read its opening statement in 26:12-13, focusing on the need of the farmer to give the necessary tithes to the poor and needy, the orphans, widows, and strangers. Only afterwards does he have the ethical 'right' to pray to God that He should continue to bless the land and its produce - see 26:15! This law forms a beautiful conclusion for many of the earlier laws in the main speech of Sefer Devarim, again a set of laws originally given to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai (see Devarim 5:28).

One could even suggest that reciting these psukim as well may be what the statement in the Mishna in Pesachim refers to when instructing us to read from Arami oved Avi (from Devarim 26:5) until we finish the ENTIRE Parsha. If we read the entire Parshia, the should certainly should include 26:11, and may even allude to 26:12-15 (|"vidduy maaser"), (and in my humble opinion even to the concluding psukim of the entire speech in 26:16-19!). ["v'akmal"]

AVADIM HAYINU & SEFER DEVARIM

To appreciate why MAGGID quotes specifically this pasuk of 'avadim hayinu' to begin its discussion of our obligation to tell the story of the Exodus, we must study its source (and context) in Sefer Devarim.

Recall from our study of Sefer Devarim how Moshe Rabeinu delivers a lengthy speech (chapters 5 thru 26), in which he reviews the numerous laws that Bnei Yisrael must observe once they enter the land (see Devarim 5:1, 5:28, 6:1 etc.). As part of his introductory remarks concerning those mitzvot - Moshe states as follows:

> "Should [or when] your child will ask - What [obligates us] to keep these laws and statutes and commandments that God our Lord has commanded? -
> And you shall tell him - AVADIM HAYINU le-Pharaoh be-Mitzrayim... - We were once slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but God brought us out with a mighty hand..."
> (See Devarim 6:20-21, and its context.)

In other words, Sefer Devarim used the phrase 'avadim hayinu' to introduce its explanation for why Bnei Yisrael are obligated to keep ALL of the mitzvot.

But when we continue to read that explanation in Sefer Devarim, we find the reason **WHY** God took them out:

> "ve-otanu hotzi mi-sham, lema'an havi otanu el ha-aretz..."
> And God took us out **in order** to bring us to the Land that He swore unto our fathers [='brit avot].
> And the LORD commanded us to do all these laws, to fear the LORD our God, for our good...
> And it shall be the just thing to do, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He hath commanded us." [See Devarim 6:22-25.]

Here again, we find that the Torah states explicitly that God took us out of Egypt for a purpose - i.e. **in order** to inherit the

Land and to serve God by keeping His laws.

This statement supports Rashi & Ibn Ezra's interpretation of the pasuk 'ba'avur zeh...' (as we discussed earlier in this shiur), that we are to explain to our children that God took us out of (and put us into) Egypt, in order that we keep His mitzvot.

Therefore, it is very meaningful that the Haggada chose specifically this pasuk of 'avadim hayinu' to introduce its discussion of WHY we are obligated to tell the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim on this special evening.

In fact, one could suggest that this may have been the underlying reasoning behind Shmuel's opinion (in Pesachim 116a). By stating that we begin the story with the pasuk of 'avadim hayinu', Shmuel is simply stating that before we tell the story, we must explain the reason for this obligation - just as we do in MAGGID!

C. BCHOL DOR V'DOR & SEFER DEVARIM

Note as well how the pasuk of "v'otanu hotzi m'sham **lmaan. [for the purpose of]...**" (see 6:22-23) is quoted at the end of MAGID in the "bchol dor v'dor" section - and not by chance!

Recall as well how the final mitzvot of the main speech of Sefer Devarim are found in chapter 26, namely "mikra bikkurim" and "viddui maasrot". In light of our study of Sefer Devarim and the sources in Sefer Shmot for Maggid (relating to how the experience in Egypt served to sensitize the nation - to act properly once they become sovereign in their own land), one can suggest an additional reason for why Chazal chose Mikra Bikurim - from Devarim chapter 26 - as the official 'formula' by which we tell the story. Note not only how the declaration in 26:5-9 constitutes a thanksgiving to God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha'btarim, but notice also the closing line in 26:11, where once again we are called upon to be sure that the stranger and Levite share in our happiness (for they have no Land of their own, and hence not able to bring their own first fruits).

It should also not surprise us that the next law, "vidduy maasrot" at the end of every three years, emphasizes this very same theme. Simply read its opening statement in 26:12-13, focusing on the need of the farmer to give the necessary tithes to the poor and needy, the orphans, widows, and strangers. Only afterwards does he have the ethical 'right' to pray to God that He should continue to bless the land and its produce - see 26:15!

This law forms a beautiful conclusion for many of the earlier laws in the main speech of Sefer Devarim, again a set of laws originally given to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai (see Devarim 5:28).

D. "HA LACHMA ANYA"

This opening paragraph of MAGID is difficult to understand not only due to the Aramaic, but also due to its context and content. Let's begin by explaining the problems.

After breaking the middle matza for YACHATZ - we begin MAGGID with the following statement:

> "ha lachman anya..." - 'This [matza that we are now looking at] resembles the poor man's s bread that our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt.'

First of all, it would make more sense to understand this statement as the completion of YACHATZ (since it refers to the matza that we just broke), and not necessarily the beginning of MAGGID (for it doesn't tell the story). However, even if this section is not an integral part of Maggid, it will form a significant transition between 'yachatz & maggid'- as we shall soon explain.

Secondly, this opening statement leaves us with the impression that we are eating matza at the Seder to remember how Bnei Yisrael ate matza during their slavery. However, Sefer Shmot leaves us with the impression that we eat matza in order to remember the hurried nature in which Bnei Yisrael left Egypt (see Shmot 12:33-40 and subsequently 13:3 & 13:8). In other words, should we be explaining at this time that matza on our table is to remind us of our slavery, or to remind us of our redemption?

The simplest answer would be to explain that 'this is the matza that our forefathers ate in Egypt - **when they brought the very first korban Pesach'**! In other words, we are not stating that this poor man's bread was the 'staple' of the daily diet of our forefathers in Egypt - rather, it is the special bread that God commanded us to eat with the original Korban Pesach (see Shmot 12:8).

Furthermore, the reason for calling this bread "lechem oni" [lit. either bread of affliction or bread of poverty] is obviously based on Devarim 16:3 ["shivat yamim tochal alav matzot lechem oni - ki b'chipazon...."]. However, when studying the context of those psukim (see Devarim 16:1-4), the phrase "lechem oni" can be understood as a description of what matza is, and not necessarily as the reason for the commandment to eat it. [The question is whether 'lechem oni' defines for us WHAT matza is, or explains WHY we eat matza.]

This returns us to our discussion of the two reasons for matza (see TSC shiur on Parshat Bo) - where we explained that the reason for eating matza with the original Korban Pesach in Egypt had nothing to do with the fact that we later rushed out on the next day. Rather, there had to be some intrinsic reason for eating matza (and not chametz) with that korban; either to remind us of our slavery, or to symbolize our need to reject Egyptian culture to be worthy of redemption.

If we continue with our understanding that this is the'matza' that our forefathers ate together with the first Korban Pesach, then the next statement of "kol dichfin" - which otherwise is very difficult to understand - begins to make sense. Let's explain why.

The next statement (right after explaining that this matza used to be eaten by our forefathers) - at first sounds like an invitation:

> "Anyone who is hungry, let him come and eat, anyone who is in need, let him come and join in the Pesach, this year 'here', next year in the Land of Israel; this year - slaves, next year - free men"

It can be understood in one of two ways, either:

- an open invitation for others to join us. - or
- a quote of what our forefathers once said.

These two possibilities are a result of how one understand s the word "v'yifsach" in the phrase "kol ditzrich yete v'yifsach" [anyone who needs, let him come and join our Pesach].

If we take the word "va'yifsach" literally, then this must be an invitation to join in the korban Pesach - and hence, it must be a quote from an earlier time period.

If "va'yifsach" is not translated literally, and hence it refers to the Seder, then this section was composed to be recited as an invitation (to the Seder). But this wouldn't make much sense at this time, since everyone is already sitting down, and considering that we've already made Kiddush and eaten "karpas" - isn't it a bit late to be inviting people!

Let's return therefore to the possibility that "va'yifsach" refers to the actual 'korban Pesach' (which seems to be the simple meaning of this word). If so, then we can easily pinpoint exactly who we are quoting - as it must be from a time when the korban Pesach was offered, but also when we were not yet living in Israel, and still in slavery!. There answer is simple - this must be a quote of what our forefathers said to one another (translated into Aramaic) in preparation for the very first korban Pesach (i.e. the one in Egypt, as described in Shmot 12:1-23).

It can only refer to that very first korban Pesach, for that was the only time in Jewish history when the korban Pesach was offered when we were both (1) in slavery (hoping next year to be free) - and (2) living outside the Land of Israel (hoping be next year in the Land of Israel)! If this interpretation is correct, then the flow of topic makes perfect sense. We break the matza, and explain that this was the same type of bread that our forefathers ate with the first korban Pesach in Egypt, and then we quote what they said to one another in preparation for that special evening - fulfilling what God instructed them in Parshat ha'Chodesh (see Shmot 12:3-8!).

This quote of our forefathers, from the very first Seder in Jewish History, is quite meaningful - for we begin MAGGID by emphasizing the connection between our own Seder and the very first Seder that Am Yisrael kept thousands of years ago (and its purpose). By quoting from the special atmosphere of that very first korban Pesach family gathering, we highlight the continuity of our tradition and our hope for the fulfillment of its goals.

[Note how this would conform to Shmot 12:14, in its context!]

"DA'YENU" - shiur for Pesach & for Yom Atzmaut

How could an observant Jew say, let alone sing, that -'it

would have been enough'- even had God not given us the Torah?

And how could a Zionist say, let alone sing, that -'it would have been enough'- even if God had not given us the Land of Israel?

Nevertheless, every year at the Seder, we all sing the popular song of "dayenu", which seems to convey precisely that message!

In the following shiur, we attempt to answer this question.

INTRODUCTION

"Dayenu" is a very simple, yet beautiful poem - containing fifteen stanzas describing acts of God's kindness - each stanza stating that it would have been 'enough' had God only helped us in one way.

For example, we begin by saying it would have been enough had He only taken us out of Egypt, and not punished the Egyptians. The poem continues stage by stage through the process of redemption from Egypt (until we arrive in the Land of Israel and build the Temple), saying how each stage would have been 'enough', even had God not helped us with the next stage.

However, some of those statements appear very strange, for they include that it 'would have been enough had we not received the Torah', which simply doesn't make sense!

To understand what we are 'really saying' in "dayneu", we must consider its context, as well as it content.

A PREP FOR HALLEL

In the Haggadah, "dayenu" does not 'stand alone'. Rather, we recite (or sing) "dayenu" towards the conclusion of Maggid; after we tell the story of the Exodus, but before we sing the Hallel.

Following the guidelines of the Mishna (in the tenth chapter of Mesechet Pesachim), in Maggid - we tell the story of the Exodus by quoting (and then elaborating upon) the psukim of "arami oved avi" (see Devarim 26:5-8). But that very same Mishna also instructs us to begin the story with a derogatory comment, and conclude it with praise ["matchilin b'gnut - u'msaaymim v'shevach"/ see Pesachim 10:4).

Taking this Mishna into consideration, we find that "dayenu" is recited in Maggid - precisely when we finish telling the story of the Exodus (with the discussion of the Plagues) - and right at the spot where we are supposed to begin our "shevach" [praise].

Therefore, "dayenu" should be understood as a poem that was written as a form of praise, to conform with the guidelines set by the Mishna. This consideration will allow us to explain its full meaning - in a very simple manner:

Within this context, the refrain of "dayenu" has an implicit suffix. In other words, - "dayenu" should not be translated simply as 'it would have been enough'; rather, "dayenu" means '**it would have been enough - to PRAISE God**, i.e. to say Hallel - even if God had only taken us out of Egypt, or only if He had split the Sea, etc.

In this manner, the poem poetically summarizes each significant stage of redemption, from the time of the Exodus until Am Yisrael's conquest of the Land - stating that each single act of God's kindness in that process obligates us to praise Him: e.g.

- Had He only taken us out of Egypt and not punished the Egyptians, **it would have been reason enough** to say Hallel
- Had He split the sea,but not given us the 'manna', that alone **would have been reason enough** to say Hallel**...**

... And so on.

With this background, the next paragraph of that poem makes perfect sense:

"`al achat kama vekhama," - How much more so is it proper to thank God for performing ALL these acts of kindness, as He took us out of Egypt, and punished them, and split the sea, and gave us the manna etc.

"Dayenu" relates a total of fifteen acts of divine kindness, each act alone worthy of praise - even more so we must praise God, for He had performed all of them!

From this perspective, "dayenu" serves a double purpose. First and foremost, it concludes the story with "shevach" [praise]. and qualifies the Hallel that we are about to sing. However, it could also be understood as a continuation of the story of the Exodus. Let's explain why and how:

SIPPUR & SHEVACH

Recall that the last "drasha" [elaboration] on the psukim of "arami oved avi" led into a lengthy discussion of the Ten Plagues. To fulfill our obligation at the Seder' to tell the story', we could (and do) finish right here. But the poem of "dayenu" actually continues that story, picking up from the Ten Plagues ["asa bahem shfatim" refers to the Plagues], and continuing through all the significant events in the desert until our arrival in the Land of Israel. This is also congruent with the last pasuk of "arami oved avi", that includes arriving in Israel (see Devarim 26:9! - "va'yvi'einu el ha'Makom ha'zeh, va'yiten lanu et ha'aretz ha'zot"), which we don't elaborate upon in our version of Maggid, even though according to the Mishna it appears that we really should!

In this manner, "dayneu" is both "shevach" [praise] and "sippur" [story] - at the same time!

The 'HASHKAFA' of DAYENU

According to our explanation thus far, "dayenu" sets the stage for Hallel, as we will now praise God [by singing Hallel] not only in gratitude for taking us out of Egypt, but also in appreciation for each significant stage of the redemptive process. We thank God not only for the Exodus, but also for the 'manna', for shabbat, for coming close to Har Sinai, for the Torah, for the Land of Israel..., and finally for the building of the Bet HaMikdash.

From a certain perspective, this poem may allude to a very profound 'hashkafa' [outlook on life], and a message that is very applicable to our own generation.

Today, there are those who focus at the Seder only on the first stanza of "dayenu," viewing 'freedom from slavery' as the final goal, and hence the ultimate goal of redemption. For them, this first stanza of "dayenu" is 'enough' - and to them, that is the entire meaning of Passover - a holiday of Freedom.

Others focus only upon the last stanza, that without the entire land of Israel in our possession, and without the re-building of the bet-ha'Mikdash, the entire redemptive process is meaningless. In their eyes, Hallel should only be sung when the entire redemption process is complete, and Am Yisrael reaches its final goal.

The beautiful poem of "dayenu" seems to disagree with both approaches. Instead, each significant stage in the process of redemption deserves our recognition and for requires that we praise God for it, even though it is 'not enough'!

It is this hashkafic message, i.e., the understanding and appreciation of each step of the redemptive process, which "dayenu" can teach us. "Ge'ulat Yisra'el" - the redemption of Israel - even in our time, is a process which is comprised of many stages. Every significant step in this process, be it simply sovereignty, or partial borders, or victory in battle; or freedom to study Torah, even without complete redemption, requires our gratitude and praise to Hashem.

For each stage in that process, it is incumbent upon Am Yisrael to recognize that stage and thank Hashem accordingly, while at the same time recognizing that many more stages remain yet unfulfilled - and reminding ourselves of how we need act -to be deserving of that next stage.

"Dayenu" challenges us to find the proper balance.

chag samayach,
menachem

[P.S. - Save this shiur! You can 're-use' it for Yom Atzmaut.

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

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I

GOALS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE LEIL HASEDER

A: "SEDER"

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

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

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

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

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

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

B: TELLING -> IDENTIFYING -> SINGING PRAISE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

C: RELIVING JEWISH HISTORY IN ONE EVENING

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

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

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

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

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

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

D: REASSESSING THE GOAL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II. STRUCTURE OF THE SEDER

A: THE MITZVOT

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

I. Mitzvot unique to the night

A. From the Torah mid'Orayta

1. Eating Matzah 2. Telling the Story : Haggadah

B. From the Rabbis – mid'Rabanan

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

3. Displaying Haroset

4. Hallel (Shirah)

5. Reclining

II. Mitzvot not unique to the night

A.mid'Orayta

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

B.mid'Rabanan

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

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

B: THE FOUR CUPS – FOUR PARTS OF THE SEDER

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

1. KIDDUSH

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

2. MAGGID

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

3. BIRKAT HAMAZON

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

4. HALLEL

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

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

C: MATZAH AND WINE

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

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

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

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

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

D: THE TARGET AUDIENCE OF THE SEDER

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

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

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

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

(3) Using specific objects to teach the child and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

E: BASIC BREAKDOWN OF MAGGID

1. PROVOKING QUESTIONS

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

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

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

2. INTRODUCING THE MITZVAH

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

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

3. MIT'HILAH 'OVDEI 'AVODAH ZARAH…

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

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

4. V'HI SHE'AMDAH

As I pointed out above, this paragraph is a mini-Shirah, inserted at this juncture to widen the scope of our story (as has just been done with the Yehoshua' paragraph) to encompass the entire historical experience of the Jewish people. What we are about to tell is not just a story about Egypt, Pharaoh and our ancestors – it is about Shushan, Haman and our (more recent) ancestors; it is about Berlin, Hitler and our grandparents – it is about being Jewish.

5. TZEI UL'MAD

This next section is one of the two central pieces of the story-telling (see Rambam, Hilkhot Hametz uMatzah 7:5). The rabbis selected this piece of Midrash (mostly from the Sifri) as it analyzes and interprets four of the verses from the Mikra Bikkurim (recited when bringing your first fruits to the Beit HaMikdash – Devarim 26:5-8); there are many explanations as to why they selected this one. I would like to suggest that since the goal of the evening is Shirah, and this is the only section in the Torah where the Exodus narrative is presented in the context of (commanded) Shirah – it is the most appropriate piece to use for describing the Exodus experience.

The "Tzei ul'Mad" section takes us through the ten plagues (and R. Yehudah's acrostic).

6. R. YOSSI HAG'LILI, R. ELAZAR AND R. AKIVA

The three paragraphs which follow are surely the strangest in the Haggadah (besides "Had Gadya"). Not only are the Midrashim a bit hard to "buy into", they also seem to have no place here. Explanation below…

7. DAYYENU

This selection is really made up of two paragraphs – the 14 Dayyenus (which list 15 great "Ma'alot" which God did for us) and the "Al Achat…" which lists them again, without the "if God had done X but not Y…" formula. Again – explanation to follow…

8. RABBAN GAMLIEL

This section is the second of the two core pieces of the Haggadah. Here we explain the symbolism of each of the three central foods at the table (theoretically – these days we have to make do with only two). It is interesting that each of these foods, along with their attendant explanations, represents one of the three types of experiences we go through as a people –

(a) Pesach – chosenness, royalty, protection – i.e. the good times

(c) Maror – persecution, slavery, vulnerability – i.e. the bad times

(b) Matzah – poverty (but freedom), refugees (but alive and unharmed) – i.e. the slow process of building up from Maror back to Pesach.

The two cores of the Haggadah – "Tzei ul'Mad" and "Rabban Gamliel" also seem to be connected with the two obligations that evening – "Tzei ul'Mad" is a direct invitation to study together, to examine, to discuss – i.e. the "adult" mode. "Rabban Gamliel", on the other hand, directs the attention to physical symbols, is only related to verses (no interpretation) and demands only that specific information be transmitted.

One more comment on "Pesach/Matza/Maror" – as we know from later on in the Seder ("Korekh"), Hillel's opinion is that all three must be eaten as one. Perhaps the lesson is that identifying as a Jew cannot be done selectively – our reconfirmation of our membership in Am Yisrael must include a readiness to celebrate when things are good for our people (Pesach), to share in our sorrows (Maror – see Rambam, Hilkhot Teshuvah 3:11) – and to do the hard work to recover from the difficulties we encounter (Matzah).

9. B'KHOL DOR VADOR
This is the turning point, where we step into the story and make it our own. Rambam has an interesting read here – instead of lir'ot et 'atzmo (to view himself), he reads l'har'ot et 'atzmo – to show himself (as if he left Mitzrayim). This is the source for those customs of walking around the table with the Matzah (in a cover) on the person's back (as if leaving) and other "acting out" Minhagim.

10. LEFIKHAKH – GA'AL YISRA'EL

Story turns to Shirah. With the one word – "Lefikhakh", we acknowledge that, since all of these wonderful things have happened to us,

we are duty-bound to thank God for all of it. Note that in the first paragraph, we thank God who did miracles for "our ancestors and us" – whereas in the final paragraph – for "us and our ancestors" – note how the first two paragraphs of the Hallel transform us to center stage.

F: BACK TO THE MIDRASHIM AND DAYYENU

Above, I left two sections unexplained – the three Midrashim of R. Yossi haGlili, R. Elazar and R. Akiva – and the Dayyenu. Since they seem to form a bridge between the two core pieces of the Haggadah – and they seem a bit strange on their own – an explanation is in order.

1. KOL HAMARBEH HAREI ZEH MESHUBACH

In the introductory paragraph of the Haggadah (containing the "short response" to the children) we end off by saying "anyone who adds/increases/does more to tell the story of the Exodus, this is praiseworthy." The question could be raised (I have heard this question in the name of the Netziv) – since we are obligated to be involved with the story all night, how can we "increase" beyond the obligation?

Besides quantity/time, there are two other ways to "increase the story". First of all, a person could increase the praise for God by finding more praiseworthy elements in the story which are "hiding" in the verses. Second, a person could increase the scope of the story by adding his own novel explanations. In these three paragraphs, we find each of these great sages adding their own pieces to the story – increasing the story, if you will. They are also adding to the praise for God – since they are multiplying (through valid Midrashic means) the numbers of miracles God performed for us during the Exodus. These three paragraphs, coming on the heels of the obligatory "Tzei ul'Mad" piece, demonstrate for us how we should take our own place at the Seder – by adding our own novel ideas and by increasing God's praise within the story. Note that, in the tradition of our sages, each of them builds on the previous ones' ideas. Instead of negating and ignoring, we validate our fellows' Torah by adding on to it and including it in our own.

2. SHIREI HAMA'ALAH AND DAYYENU

Now, let's reorient ourselves. Before reciting/singing Dayyenu, we have told the story and discussed it – and, hopefully, followed the lead of R. Yossi haGlili, R. Elazar and R. Akiva by sharing our own input into the story. Now, we look back on all that we have retold – each of these miracles alone is enough to obligate us to thank God and have this thanksgiving feast.

We could just list all of the things which God did for us; however, in order to bring home the point and not to lose sight of all the "little" things which led to the Exodus – and all of the later miracles which led us to the goal of that Exodus (Sinai, Israel, Beit haMikdash) – we detail them out, one by one.

Earlier, I mentioned that the evening allows us to imagine our way through Jewish history. At this point, as we are about to move into Shirah, we imagine ourselves in Yerushalayim, celebrating at the Beit HaMikdash. The Beit HaMikdash had fifteen steps (Ma'alot), ascending from one section to another. On Sukkot, the Levi'im would climb these stairs, singing one of the fifteen "Shirei haMa'alah" on each – until they reached the top (Sukkah 51b). By detailing 15 things for which we give thanks (note that they are easily divisible into three even groups of five – line them up with Pesach, Matzah and Maror!) and referring to these kindnesses as "Ma'alot", we bring ourselves back to the Beit HaMikdash. This prepares us to recite Rabban Gamliel's dictum -which includes the (temporarily) missing Pesach – and to fully identify with those who are redeemed.

III. POSTSCRIPT

There is, of course, so much more to explain about the Seder. I hope that this shiur has proven to be a helpful guide in understanding the basic goals of the evening, the methods through which these goals are achieved and the way in which the individual components of the Seder help to create the experiential matrix of Jewish history, jammed into one evening, leaving us singing thanks to God for every piece of it.

The author is Educational Coordinator of the Jewish Studies Institute of the Yeshiva of Los Angeles

---

Haggadah shel Pesach: An Overview and Explanation of Three Sections from the Haggadah

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I. HA LACHMA 'ANYA

A. The Text

Just before beginning the "question-answer" format of the Seder, we raise the Matzah and make a three-tiered statement:

1) This is the bread of poverty/oppression that our ancestors ate in Egypt.
2) Anyone who is hungry, let him come and eat, anyone who needs to, come and partake in our Pesach (offering?) (celebration?)

3) This year we are here, next year – in Eretz Yisra'el. This year, we are slaves, next year – noblemen.

As can be seen, the first "tier" is a declaration regarding the Matzah – it is the lehem 'oni (see D'varim 16:3) which our ancestors ate in Egypt. The second "tier" is an invitation; and the final piece is a prayer, that next year we should be freemen/noblemen in our Land.

B. Approach #1 – an Explanation of "Yahatz"

Just before beginning the "question-answer" format of the Seder, we raise the Matzah and According to the Rashbam, this declaration is an explanation of the previous action – breaking the Matzah in half. Although we need to have a broken piece of Matzah as part of our three (or two – according to Rambam, Rif and many other Rishonim) Matzot, we could set the table that way before the meal. Instead, we bring three (or two) complete Matzot to the table and break one of them in front of the assemblage (the most likely reason is to further provoke the children's interest). Rashbam explains that we then explain – in the vernacular (Aramaic at that time) – why we broke this Matzah – because it represents the bread of poverty which our ancestors ate. (See further down, in our explanation on Mah Nishtanah, for a further development of this idea.)

One of the difficulties with this approach (besides it being marked as part of "Maggid" in all standard Haggadot) is that this doesn't explain the rest of the paragraph. The declaration regarding the Matzot explains "Yahatz" – but what does that have to do with the rest of the paragraph?

C. Approach #2 – Re-Creation of Mitzrayim

The Rashbam explains that the rest of the paragraph – the invitation and the prayer – are not part of the explanation to the children – rather, this is what the B'nei Yisra'el would say to each other in Egypt – (it is unclear whether he means that they said this that night – see below for a problem with that understanding – or that they would speak to each other that way in general) inviting each other to share their meager meal. The prayer at the end is also a re-creation of the Egypt experience; the B'nei Yisra'el prayed to God that the next year they would be freemen/noblemen in our Land.

The difficulty with this explanation is one of language – unlike the rest of the Haggadah, this paragraph is in Aramaic. If we insist that it be said in Aramaic, it can only be a "re-creation" of our Babylonian exile, with which we have associations with that language (even in the Tanakh). If it is truly to be part of the "fantasy" of the evening (see our shiur on "The Structure of the Seder"), it should be in Hebrew, like the rest of the Haggadah.

D. Approach #3 – The "Apologia" for the Seder.

Before presenting a new approach, I'd like to summarize and expand on the questions we have asked regarding "Ha Lachma'Anya":

Why is the paragraph in Aramaic?
How could we reasonably be inviting someone into our house for a Seder – at that late hour? This question becomes more impactful once we remind ourselves that no one may partake of a Pesach offering without having joined the Havurah of that particular offering in advance; what, then, is the import of yeytei v'yiph'sach – "let him come and partake of the Pesach"?

Why is the prayer at the end presented in a doubled form – here/Eretz Yisra'el, slaves/noblemen? Why not combine the two?

What is the purpose of this paragraph?

As we defined in an earlier shiur, the ultimate goal of the evening is "Shirah" – giving thanks to God for the Exodus which, from the perspective of that evening's fantasy, has just happened. The vehicle for that Shirah is "Hallel", beginning (but not limited to) T'hillim (Psalms) Ch. 113-118. Since this is an evening of Hallel, it is prudent for us to examine some of the factors which "make or break" a successful Hallel experience.

The Gemara in Megillah (14b) discusses the problem of Hallel on Purim – and why it is not said. The Gemara gives three answers:

a) The Megillah is the Hallel (proper treatment of this issue is beyond the scope of this shiur; perhaps next Purim?)

b) Hallel is not recited for a miracle which took place outside of the Land. (The Gemara challenges this by pointing out that the Exodus itself took place outside of the Land – and responds that before we entered the Land with Yehoshua, the entire world was "Hallel-accessible"; it was only after we entered and sanctified the Land that the rest of the world became excluded from that possibility.)

c) Hallel is guided by the opening line: "Give thanks, you servants of God" – the implication being that we are only servants of God, and not (anymore) servants of Pharaoh. In spite of the great salvation of Purim, we were still enslaved to Ahashverosh.

When we think about the ultimate goal of the Exodus – to bring us to Eretz Yisra'el and realize the dream of being a free people, governed only by God's laws, serving as a moral beacon for the rest of the world (see Yeshayah 2) – we must sadly admit that much of that goal has not yet been realized. Even those components which were "real" for a time are not now part of our reality. There is no Beit haMikdash, we continue to be scattered throughout the world and our position as instructors and guides for the world is sorely tarnished by our own ethical and religious weaknesses.

We come to a Seder with only one side of the Exodus experience – the poverty and oppression; the nobility and freedom are still part of an unrealized future and a nostalgic past. There are two roles for the Matzah – as an independent Mitzvah commemorating the refugee experience and as an auxiliary to the regal Pesach offering. The only one which we can honestly point to tonight is the "bread of oppression" – we are very similar to our ancestors in Egypt – before the salvation.

Now we can understand the paragraph. Before beginning our fantasy trip through Jewish history (one symptom of which is conversation around the table in Hebrew), we declare that we are celebrating a "poor" Seder – and we pray that next year, we should be able to do it "the right way".

We make this declaration in the vernacular, as it is the last point of "reality" during the evening.

We ironically invite people in to share our "Pesach" – at once reminding ourselves that the Pesach is missing from the table as the Temple lies in ruins and we are far away from that glory while pointing to the sad situation that we could reasonably have fellow Jews who are hungry and need a place to have their Seder. (This is not close to the dreams we had for our future as we left Egypt). This invitation underscores the pain we feel that our Seder is so incomplete and must be a "fantasy" and removed from our reality if it is to be a celebration at all.

We then point to the two factors making our Hallel (the goal of the evening) incomplete – we are "here" (even those in Eretz Yisra'el say this because the rest of us are not yet home) and we are "slaves" (under foreign rule). As we saw above, these two features get in the way of a complete and proper Hallel.

At this point, we pour the second cup, signifying the redemption which we will reenact – and, God willing, live to experience in "real time".

II. MAH NISHTANAH

The "Four Questions", as they are conventionally known, present us with several difficulties – best expressed with one question: Who is reasonably asking these questions?
If the asker is honestly "clueless" as to the special nature of the evening (as seems to be the case from the nature of the opening question), how does he know that we will later eat bitter herbs and will dip another time?

If, on the other hand, he is familiar with the rituals of the Seder and knows what to expect – then he already knows how this night is different?

Note: We never really answer these questions. Although we do explain why we eat Matzah (much later on – not very effective for a very young questioner), we never explicitly explain why we avoid Hametz (which seems to be the gist of the first "question".) We certainly do explain the meaning of Maror – but, again that is much later. The final two questions (dipping and reclining) are never (explicitly) answered.

I would like to suggest an approach which is grounded in a basic understanding about the evening:

Although the ultimate goal of the evening is "Shirah", achieved by reexperiencing the Exodus (and, through that experience, all of Jewish history) – this can only be accomplished by successfully informing all assembled about those events which we are endeavoring to reenact. After all, it is impossible to imagine life in Egypt without first learning about it: Haggadah (telling the story) is a necessary prerequisite to reexperiencing and thanking God.
As the Mekhilta (quoted in the Haggadah: "The Four Sons") teaches us, the Torah commands us to teach every one of our children – in a way which is appropriate for each. Not only must each child be informed in a way that he can comprehend – but he must also be drawn into the Seder in a way which is effective – as well as getting a response in an appropriate and timely manner for his level of comprehension and attention span.

I would like to suggest that the opening paragraph – Ha Lachma 'Anya – is directed chiefly at the "child who cannot ask". Note that unlike the rest of the Haggadah, this section is not presented in a question-answer format (and, indeed, directly precedes the opening of that format). Note that the entire message of the Seder is summarized in those three lines:

a) This is what we experienced;
b) We welcome everyone to join us;

c) We pray for a completion of the process.

Ha Lachma 'Anya, following this line of thinking, is said in the vernacular because the "child who cannot ask" will not be attracted to something in a foreign tongue.

Now, let's take a look at the Seder from the perspective of the "third son" ("Tam" or "Tipesh"). I will assume that this child, who, in the wording of the Torah, can only say Mah Zot ("What is this"), is so young that he doesn't yet have a sense of memory from previous years (somewhere between 4 and 6 years old). He does, however, have a sense of "conventional behavior" from regular and Shabbat meals.

What does he see? Kiddush (so far, so good); washing (okay – but why no B'rakhah?) – then, instead of the usual bread, father takes out a small vegetable, dips it in something and says the B'rakhah over it. This is a clear departure from the norm. Then, father takes the Matzot, breaks one and announces that it will be hidden until the end of the meal etc. This is decidedly strange and should evoke the question: "What is going on here?" from this child.

[That the child would ask here is premised on a household which encourages questions and which does not smother a child's natural curiosity – food for thought].
Now – a child who asks this type of question would reasonably be afraid of ridicule (from older siblings, perhaps) over such a "dumb" question. Father does the most effective thing here to continue to promote questions – he not only validates the question by attending to it, he also strengthens the question by adding his own information to it. "Not only have we done strange things until now, we will also avoid Hametz, eat bitter herbs etc.".

There aren't four questions – there is one – "Why is this night so different"? The father supports this question (which is answered in the next paragraph) with added information, thus strengthening the child's interest in participating in the education happening around the table.

III. DAYYENU

The section known as Dayyenu is comprised of two parts: The "If…but not" section, in which each stanza ends with Dayyenu and the Al Achat Kamah v'Khamah paragraph which follows it. I would like to pose several questions regarding these two paragraphs: [I strongly suggest following this section with Haggadah in hand].
1) It seems that the Ba'al haHaggadah (author) "stretches" the narrative a bit, including both "bringing us close to Har Sinai" and "giving us the Torah", both "taking care of our needs for forty years in the desert" and "feeding us the Mahn". Why the stretch?
2) Why does this paragraph come immediately before "Rabban Gamliel says…"?

3) What is the meaning of the rarely-used word Ma'alot (kindnesses) in the opening line?

4) An ancillary question: Why do we use the Arami Oved Avi paragraph as the focal text of the Haggadah – and not the narratives in Sh'mot?

5) If this is part of the Exodus narrative, why does it end up at the Beit haMikdash – instead of at Sinai or at the Reed Sea?

6) Why are there two paragraphs of "Dayyenu"?

7) What is the meaning of Dayyenu? Is it even thinkable that we could exist without every one of these events?

In order to understand this, we have to review the point made in the "The Structure of the Seder"shiur – the goal of the evening is to relive all of Jewish history (using the Exodus as the archetype) and to give thanks to God in the form of Shirah.

The central locus of Shirah in our lives is the Beit haMikdash. Not only is our Shirah limited as a result of – and in response to – the destruction of the Temple, but one of the Avodot (worship actions) of the Levi'im performed there is Shirah.

Dayyenu is a form of Shirah – in two parts. The two paragraphs, in the style of "Talmudic" reasoning, establish the motivation for giving such thanks. Each one of these great things which God did for us is enough, on its own, to obligate us to sing praises and thanks to God. In other words, the "Dayyenu" does not mean "it would have been enough for us to exist", it means "it would have been enough reason to give thanks" (Question #7). This is the premise established in the first paragraph. The second paragraph takes this argument to its logical conclusion: How much more so (Al Achat Kamah v'Khamah) that He did all of these things for us – are we obligated to give thanks (Question #6).

As mentioned, the goal of the evening is to relive all of Jewish history – through the prism of the Exodus. Keeping in mind that the goal of the Exodus was to bring us to Eretz Yisra'el and for us to build a House for God in the place where He chooses to make His Name dwell (i.e. Yerushalayim) – it is reasonable that we would want to include all steps leading up to that event in our Shirah of the evening (Question #5).

This explains why we use the Mikra Bikkurim paragraph (Devarim 26) as the springboard for the Haggadah – it is the Torah's example of a later generation of Jews, standing in the Beit Hamikdash and giving thanks to God (the ideal Seder – see above at Ha Lachma 'Anya) and describing the process of the Exodus (Question #4).

The Ba'al haHaggadah wants to evoke the image of the Beit haMikdash (and enhance the "fantasy" of our Seder taking place there) by utilizing Mikdash-associations. The word Ma'alot (lit. "steps") immediately brings the 15 Shirei haMa'alah – the fifteen chapters of T'hillim (120-134) which begin with the title Shir haMa'alot (except #121 – Shir laMa'alot).

According to the Gemara in Sukkah (51b), these fifteen songs of "steps" were sung by the Levi'im as they ascended the fifteen steps from the Women's Courtyard to the Israelite Courtyard in the Beit HaMikdash – during the celebration of Sukkot (which begins on the fifteenth of Tishri). The use of Ma'alot in this context cannot help but evoke the Beit HaMikdash and the beautiful Shirah sung there (Question #3).

As we explained in the "Structure" shiur, the three symbolic foods (Pesach, Matzah and Maror) which Rabban Gamliel maintains must be explained – and which Hillel held must be eaten as one – are representative of the three stages in Jewish history – slavery/oppression (Maror), royalty and chosenness (Pesach) and refugee/transition (Matzah). If you look carefully at the Dayyenu, you will see that there are fifteen events/miracles recalled in that list – which break down very neatly into three groups of five each:

A) Maror (in Egypt): Exodus, plagues, warring with their gods, slaying the firstborn and giving us their money;
B) Matzah (transition): splitting the sea, walking us through, drowning them, giving us our needs, the Mahn;

C) Pesach (special relationship with God): Shabbat, Sinai, Torah, the Land, the Beit haMikdash.

This explains why this section is immediately followed by Rabban Gamliel's statement. Once we have sung all of God's praises for each of these three steps, we explain the association with the foods in front of us (Question #2).

This also explains why some of the items seem to be a bit "stretched"; the Ba'al haHaggadah created a symmetry of these three "groups" in order to highlight (via foreshadowing) the implication of Rabban Gamliel's triumvirate of Jewish historical stages (Question #1).

By doing so, he also created fifteen "steps" from Egypt to the Beit HaMikdash – corresponding to the fifteen steps inside the Beit haMikdash itself. Just as these songs were sung on the holiday of the fifteenth (Sukkot), so we give thanks on the night of the fifteenth (Pesach).

One final note: Since the Korban Pesach is symbolic of our "chosenness", we now understand why the Beit haMikdash is referred to as "Beit haB'hirah" ("the chosen house") – it is reflective of our being chosen by God as He passed over our houses in Egypt.