



30 Days
to the
Pesach Seder

30

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Rabbi Dovid A. Gross

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Rabbi Dovid A. Gross
3718 Shannon Rd.
Cleveland Hts., OH 44118
grossyavne@gmail.com
www.rabbidovidagross.com

Editor & Proofreader: Mrs. Sheila Nashofer
Book & Cover Design: Mrs. Leah Perel Tohn, LP Design



Dedication

Dedicated in honor of our beloved and esteemed parents

Binyomin & Esther Leah Greenberger
Emil & Sarah Braun

May the learning of this *sefer* be a *zechus* for many years of
health, happiness and *nachas* from their children
and grandchildren.

With Love,
Dorie and Ranya







Dedication

This *sefer* was printed in honor of our son

Chaim

on the occasion of his *bar mitzvah*.

We daven that Hashem should give you *siyata d'shmaya*
to continue to grow in *Torah, midos* and *maasim tovim*
and continue to be a source of *nachas*.

David and Chani Gross





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Dovid Aaron Gross





Introduction



Due to the complexity and enormity of the laws of Pesach, *Shulchan Aruch* (429:1) rules that thirty days prior to the holiday one must begin discussing the laws of Pesach. Thus the day one begins studying is the day of Purim. Is this connection just technical, or is there something more significant connecting Purim and Pesach?

The *Gemara* in *Megilla* (6b) cites an argument between two sages if the *Megilla* is read during a leap year in the first *Adar* or in the second *Adar*. One opinion is that its read in the first *Adar* due to the concept that states that a *mitzvah* that comes to one's hand should not be delayed. The second opinion, with which the *halacha* follows, is to read the *Megilla* in the second *Adar*, in order place the redemption of Purim near the redemption of Pesach.

Rav Shlomo Brevda zt"l posed the following question. The *Gemara* in *Rosh Hashana* (32b) discusses whether the *shofar* should be blown during *shacharis* or during *mussaf*. The rationale to blow during *shacharis* would follow the rule that states that zealous individuals perform *mitzvos* as soon as they can. The reasoning to blow during *mussaf* would follow the concept of *berov am hadras Melech*, that the glory of the King is increased with more people. Since there are more individuals present during *mussaf*, the *shofar* should be blown then. The conclusion of the *Gemara* is that the *shofar* should be blown during *shacharis*. Seemingly the rule of performing the *mitzvah* sooner trumps the concept of *b'rov am*. (See the *Gemara* for the reason why we blow the *shofar* during *mussaf*.)

Rav Brevda explained that when a *zariz*, a zealous person performs a *mitzvah* immediately, he's affected by his attitude to the *mitzvah* and is strengthened in his *mitzvah* observance. With *b'rov am*, however, *Hashem* may be greatly honored by the masses but the individuals in those masses are not necessarily affected. The *Gemara* is teaching that individual growth outweighs larger honors for *Hashem*.

With this understanding we can question the *Gemara* in *Megilla*. Why do we celebrate Purim in the second *Adar*? Should we not follow the rule of performing *mitzvos* immediately, which affect the growth of a person and read the *Megilla* in the first *Adar*?

The conclusion must be, answered *Rav Brevda*, that the placement of the redemption of Purim near the redemption of Pesach is actually an even greater opportunity for an individual's spiritual growth. Celebrating and experiencing the miracles of Purim and Pesach thirty days from each other will produce results that cannot be matched if the two holidays were sixty days apart with Purim in the first *Adar* as a *zariz*.

The successful outcome of any spiritual endeavor depends on the amount of preparation that one puts in to it. To truly appreciate and grow from the Pesach Seder one must prepare properly. Beginning to prepare on Purim, has the additional factor of connecting the two holidays. The lessons of the miracles that were the Purim redemption will flow directly into the lessons that are learned from the Pesach redemption. This will result maximize the individual's growth potential from these two holidays.

Over the coming thirty days you will learn *halachos* of the Pesach Seder as well as *divrei Torah* that will enable you to approach the Pesach Seder sufficiently prepared to make the most of this most opportune time for growth.



30 Days
to the
Pesach Seder



DAY

1

י"ד אדר
פורים

Seder Preparations

Wine

1. Wine used for the Seder should preferably be red. There are two reasons given for this: Red wine has more distinction than white wine, based on the verse in *Mishlei* (23) that refers to wine as red. Second, red symbolizes the blood of the Jewish children killed by Pharaoh. (*Orach Chaim* 472:11, *Mishna Berurah* 38)¹
2. There is an additional preference that the wine not be *mevushal* (cooked) nor have sugar added. (ibid. *M.B.* 39)
3. There are some opinions that in order to fulfill the experience of *cheirus*, freedom, when drinking the four cups, the wine must contain enough alcohol to get one drunk.² Others disagree, saying that one may fulfill their obligation with either low-alcohol wine or grape juice.

1. If one prefers white wine, one may mix a little red wine into the white and thereby fulfill the second reason for red wine. This should preferably be done before *Yom Tov*. (See *Sblosim Yom Kodem Hachag* pg. 83 fn 1)

2. *Rav Moshe Heinemann* opines that the wine must contain 4% alcohol. Others say that the alcohol content depends on the effect on each individual (*Rav Boruch Hirschfeld*.)

During the *shalsob regalim* multitudes of Jews converged on the relatively small city of *Yerushalayim*. The crowds in the *Beis Hamikdash* are described as standing shoulder to shoulder, and yet when bowing each had four cubits of open space to prostrate themselves. Physically it seems impossible for these areas to contain the amount of people that they did. How are these phenomenon explained? *Chasam Sofer* explains that holy places are not restricted to the concept of physical space and thus there is always ample room.

This phenomenon applies not only to space, but also to all physical limitations and boundaries. For example, if a *kobein* would eat a bean-sized piece of the *lechem hapanim*, which under normal circumstances would be too small to satisfy him, he would be sated. In the realm of spirituality and holiness space and size are limitless.

At the outset of the Seder we declare, *kol d'chfin yesei v'yeichol* (all who are hungry may come and eat.) How can we invite all people to come and eat? Have we prepared enough food for them? Is there enough space in our homes for them?

Chasam Sofer continues that on the night of the Seder when we assemble to praise *Hashem* for all that He has done for us and strengthen our belief in *Hashem* we consecrate our homes. Just as a *beis hakenesses* where we gather to pray and praise *Hashem* is holy, so too our homes are infused with an equivalent holiness. In these places space and food amounts are not a hindrance, and we can declare that anyone may come and eat.

When *Moshiach* comes, the *batei knesiyos* in the Diaspora will be relocated to *Eretz Yisroel*. We therefore, proclaim *hashata hacha* - this year we are here in our homes that we have consecrated as *batei knesiyos* - *l'shana haba*, next year, this home, should be in *Eretz Yisroel*.

DAY 2

ט"ו אדר
שושן פורים



Charoses



1. *Charoses* should preferably be prepared before *Yom Tov*. Preparing it on *Yom Tov* may entail the forbidden act of *tochen* (chopping into small pieces.) This would necessitate a *shinui* (a change in process) in its preparation.
2. Some people pour the wine into the *charoses* immediately prior to the Seder so that it will be fresh. If Pesach falls on *Shabbos* one should make sure to pour the wine in before *Shabbos* so as not to encounter the forbidden act of *losh* (kneading.) If one forgot one must make a very watery mixture, put the wine in first and then the other ingredients, and mix it with a finger and not a spoon. (See *M.B.* 321:68)

Charoses is a thick mixture that reminds us of the mortar that the Jews used to make bricks in Egypt. One would think that *charoses* should be a bitter or at least a bland tasting food. Why then is it sweetened with cinnamon? Furthermore, why is the bitter *maror* commemorating the slavery sweetened by the *charoses*?

The cinnamon sticks in the *charoses* specifically remind us of the harsh decree enacted by Pharaoh in response to Moshe's demand to let the Jews leave Egypt. Until that day the Egyptians provided the straw necessary to make the mortar. Pharaoh decreed that the Jews would have to collect their own straw and still produce the same number of bricks that they had been producing. This decree lasted six months until the enslavement ended. The *Midrash* teaches that when the Egyptians saw the Jews looking for straw they accused them of being thieves, hit them, and broke their bones. *Ohr Hachaim* surmises that this only happened for one day. If so, where then did they get straw for the remainder of the six months? The *Midrash* answers that *Hashem* brought a wind that carried bundles of straw from *Eretz Yisroel* and deposited them in Egypt for the Jews.

The *charoses* reminds us of the mortar, the bitter slavery. However, the cinnamon reminds us of the straw that *Hashem* miraculously brought to help us during that decree. Thus the *charoses* teaches that even in the bitterness *Hashem* is guiding and helping us. The feeling of *Hashem's* assistance sweetens the bitter *maror*.

DAY 3

ט"ז אדר

Zeroa and Beitza

1. The *zeroa* (shank bone) and *beitza* (egg) are roasted¹ and placed on the *ke'arah* (seder plate.) Preferably they should be prepared before *Yom Tov*. If they had not been prepared, they may be cooked and roasted on *Yom Tov* as long as they are eaten on that day of *Yom Tov*. The custom is not to eat roasted meat at the seder (see page _), therefore the *zeroa* must be eaten the next day, while the *beitza* can be eaten at any time. (473:4)
2. The *zeroa* is a remembrance of the *korban Pesach*. Although any meat may be used, it is preferable to use meat from the foreleg of an animal or the wing of a bird. This represents the “outstretched arm” that *Hashem* used to redeem the Jews from Egypt. (ibid. M.B. 27)
3. The roasted egg represents the *korban Chagiga* that was eaten before the *korban Pesach*. Although the *Chagiga* was meat, an egg is used. In Aramaic the word *be'ah*, egg, can also mean to want. The egg reminds us that *Hashem* wants to redeem us from our present exile. (ibid. 23)

1. Customarily the egg is first cooked and then roasted a bit over a fire.

*H*ashem is described as redeeming the Jews from Egypt with His outstretched arm.

When *Bisya* the daughter of Pharaoh saw the little boat that was carrying *Moshe*, she stretched out her arm to reach it. A miracle occurred and her arm extended to the length of 60 cubits. If the craft was at such a long distance from her, why did she even attempt to stretch out her hand? She wanted to show that she had done everything possible to save the child. If she would ever be accused of not helping she could honestly say that she did her best; she had even stretched her hand to try and reach him. After exhausting all her own effort, *Hashem* performed a miracle to help her accomplish her task.

The Jewish Nation was on the forty-ninth level of impurity, on the brink of falling into spiritual oblivion and *Hashem* took them out with a strong hand. They did not have many *mitzvos* to merit this miracle, but they had a will to change and a strong desire to become better. With the *mitzvos* of *korban Pesach* and *bris mila* they showed their commitment. The lesson of the *zeroa* and the miracle of the outstretched arm of *Hashem* is the product of the lesson of the outstretched arm of *Bisya*.

When one honestly tries their best and makes every effort to move forward, he will receive heavenly assistance to accomplish his goal.

Will and Effort

DAY 4

י"ז אדר



Salt Water



Salt water should preferably be prepared before *Yom Tov*. If it wasn't, it may be prepared on *Yom Tov* in a normal fashion. However, if Pesach falls on *Shabbos* and the salt water had not been prepared before *Shabbos*, then one may only make a small amount of salt water, the amount necessary for the Seder. One must also be careful that it should not be too strong (less than 2/3 salt to 1/3 water.) (ibid. *M.B.* 21)

The Seder table should be set before *Yom Tov* so that the Seder can begin immediately. (472:1)

One should try to use their best and nicest dishes at the Seder table to demonstrate *cheirus*, a state of freedom. (ibid. 2)

In order to pique the children's curiosity, the *karpas* vegetable is dipped in salt water. Vegetables are usually eaten either accompanying bread foods or as an appetizer to whet a person's appetite for the main course. Yet, this vegetable is eaten without bread and long before any *matzah* is introduced. This irregularity will inspire the children to ask questions.

This specific aberration in the Seder offers a deeper understanding into both the past and the future. When *Moshe* first returned from *Midyan*, he informed the Jewish People of their upcoming redemption. The *Midrash* says that *Moshe* then left Egypt reappearing six months later for the actual redemption.

The Jews had fallen to such a low spiritual level that they were despondent and lacking of any desire for holiness or spirituality. Thus, they did not yearn for redemption. When *Moshe* initially came, the spark of holiness in the Jewish Nation was ignited and with his immediate departure their longing for redemption intensified. Only then was he able to return and actually redeem them.

Eating the dipped *karpas* vegetable stimulates the appetite for the main course when it is not yet being served. This reminds us of how the redemption took place in Egypt with our desire aroused, thus enabling the redemption to occur. The same will hold true with the ultimate redemption. In order to merit salvation, we must first awaken and stimulate our desire to be redeemed.

DAY 5

י"ח אדר

Four Cups of Wine

There is a rabbinic obligation to drink four cups of wine in a leaning position to the left side, at specific junctures throughout the Seder. The cups must be at least a *reviis*. According to *Rav Moshe Feinstein* this is 2.9 oz and according to the *Chazon Ish* 5.1 oz. When the Seder is Friday night, according to *Rav Moshe Feinstein*, the first cup¹ must be at least 4.5 oz.

How much must one drink?

1. Preferably the entire cup should be drunk, even if it contains more than a *reviis*.
2. If this is a hardship then one may drink either a majority of the cup or an entire *reviis*, whichever is more.
3. *Bedieved* at least a majority of a *reviis* must be drunk.²

Le'chatchila one should drink the *reviis* at one time (without removing the cup from his mouth.) If he cannot do this, he may drink it in two swallows with a short pause between the two. *Bedieved*, as long as he drank the prescribed amount in under two minutes, he has fulfilled his obligation. (472:9, *M.B.* 27-34)

A new *brocha* is recited on each cup, since each cup is an individual *mitzvah*. (474:1 *Rema*)

There is a fifth cup that is poured but not drunk.³

1. Since *kiddush* on *Shabbos* is a biblical obligation, one must be stringent to drink a larger amount as opposed to the rest of the cups (that are only a rabbinical obligation) where one can be more lenient.
2. Except for the last cup, where in order to recite the after-blessing of *al hagefen* one must drink a full *reviis*.
3. Some *rishonim* maintain that this fifth cup can be drunk on a voluntary basis.

The Torah says that the *Bnai Yisroel* fulfilled the heavenly edict decreed upon them of “being in a land that was not theirs, for four hundred thirty years.” This count began at the *bris bein ha’besarim* and ended at *yetzias Mitzrayim*. The actual oppressive enslavement of the Jews, however, was for only eighty-six of those years. Eighty-six is one-fifth of four hundred thirty. Thus, *Hashem* had mercy on us, and considered it as if we had been enslaved for the full four hundred thirty years. He even punished the Egyptians as if they had enslaved us for that length of time.

To celebrate the four-fifths of the time we were not oppressed, we must drink four cups of wine. Each cup represents another eighty-six years. These cups are an obligation, since every person can relate to praising *Hashem* and celebrating those years. The fifth cup represents the one-fifth of time that we were actually enslaved. We must express our gratitude for the suffering, as well. We realize that in that dreadful time of enslavement, we achieved the characteristics necessary to become *Am Yisroel* and receive the Torah. However, this is a lofty level that not every person can relate to and understand. Therefore, we pour the cup but are not obligated to drink it in celebration.

Gratitude

DAY 6

י"ט אדר

Leaning

To demonstrate *cheirus* (freedom) one is obligated to eat and drink at the Seder in a leaning position. This is accomplished by leaning one's left side, head and body, against something solid.

According to the letter of the law one who ate any of the obligatory foods of the evening, i.e. *matzah*, four cups of wine, without leaning would need to eat them again while leaning.

Ravva is of the opinion that nowadays since people do not eat in this position, there is no obligation to lean. The *halacha* does not follow the *Ravva*, yet his position still has the following ramifications:

- If one did not lean while eating the *afikomen* he would not need¹ to eat a second time.
- If one did not lean while drinking the first cup (and did not have in mind to drink more²), or third and fourth cups, he may not drink them again.
- Many women do not lean at all, relying on the *Ravva*'s position.

If one did not lean eating *matzah* or while drinking the second cup of wine, he must eat the *matzah* or drink the wine again.

1. See *M.B.* that he may not even be allowed to eat a second *afikomen*.

2. See pg 26 in regards to drinking in between cups.

Chazal instituted that one must lean while eating and drinking during the Seder. In times of old this was the manner prominent people. However in our times, it is quite uncomfortable and messy. Why then do we need to continue eating in this manner?

Hashem took the Jews out of Egypt in order to serve Him, not in order to eat and drink. Therefore, on this night we need to demonstrate our priorities. Most of the focus of the evening is on *maggid*, talking words of *Torah* and *hal-lel*, while the eating is usually in a hurried and rushed manner. This way we demonstrate our realization that *Hashem* redeemed us from Egypt in order to perform His *mitzvos*.

However, this is not sufficient. Even when we are actually eating, we do so in a manner that shows what is truly important. If a person sits straight and bends down and lowers himself towards his food, he shows that the food has prominence and he must come close to it. He is a slave to his food. However, when leaning a person must bring the food from the table towards himself. In this manner, he demonstrates that he is more prominent than the food and it must be brought to him. He is free from the shackles of the physical world, and with this freedom he can serve *Hashem* to the best of his ability.

DAY 7

כ' אדר

Drinking Between the Four Cups

The custom is not to drink wine or any intoxicating drinks between the first two cups of wine, lest one become drunk and not able to read the *haggada*. Additionally, one may not drink extra wine so that it should not appear as if he is adding an extra cup to the obligatory four cups. This only poses a problem if he recites a new *brocha* on the extra cup, like he does with the four cups. This is not only problematic with wine. It would apply to any *chamar medina* (important drinks) that one may use for the four cups such as coffee or tea. Thus, if one wishes to drink these beverages, he should have in mind at *kiddush* that the *borei pri hagafen* covers all additional beverages. In this way he would not need a *shehakol* on the coffee and may drink it.

Preferably, all drinks should be drunk before the second cup of wine is poured and the *maggid* has commenced. If necessary, one may drink water during *maggid*.

One may not drink any intoxicating drinks or any *chamar medina* in between the third and fourth cups.¹

1. See *Shaar Tzion* 472:32 who explains why having in mind will not help in this situation.

Kos *yeshuos esah, u'veshem Hashem ekra*, "I will raise a cup of salvation, and call out in the name of *Hashem*." Based on this verse *Chazal* enacted the drinking of four cups of wine. Why was it not sufficient to drink one cup as praise and gratitude for our redemption, as the verse indicates, "I will raise a cup?"

The four cups correspond to the four expressions of redemption expressed by *Hashem*. The first three expressions of redemption, *ve'hotzeisi*, *ve'hitzalti*, and *ve'galti* - I will take you out, save you and redeem you - were fulfilled with the redemption from Egypt. However, the fourth expression *ve'lakachti* - I will take you as a nation - was only fulfilled later with the giving of the *Torah*. Why then, is it one of the expressions of redemption?

Chazal enacted the drinking of four cups to ensure all future generations with the knowledge that the expression of *ve'lakachti* is integral to the redemption. The Jewish nation is only a nation with the *Torah*. Freedom from bondage without the acceptance of the *Torah* is not freedom.

To further enforce this lesson, the *halacha* states that one may drink other liquids between the first and second cups as well as between the second and third, but not between the third and fourth cups. *Ve'lakachti* must always be connected to the first three expressions.

Freedom with Torah

DAY 8

כ"א אדר

Kadesh and Urchatz

Kadesh

One should announce to the participants of the Seder to have in mind all the *mitzvos* of the night during the recitation of the *brocha* of *shebechayanu* (*Siddur Yavetz, Kaf Hachayim* 473:6)

One should also have in mind (or say before beginning kiddush) that he is fulfilling the mitzvah of drinking the first of the four cups of wine. (*M.B.* 473:1)

Urchatz

Since a wet vegetable will be eaten, one must wash their hands. A *brocha* is not recited because there are opinions that in our times we need not wash for wet vegetables or because one need not wash for eating less than a *kzayis*. (473:6, *Biur Halacha*)

Although during the rest of the year we are not necessarily careful to wash for wet vegetables, on Pesach night we want the children to ask questions and therefore we do things that are out of the ordinary. (*S.H.* 69)

If one mistakenly recited a *brocha* he should eat a *kzayis* of the wet vegetable. However, he should still wash again¹ with a *brocha* for the *matzah*. (*Kaf Hachayim* 473:107)

1. Preferably he should touch his shoes or scratch his head before washing the second time, in order to definitely be obligated to wash.

Our sages instituted the drinking of four cups of wine during the Pesach Seder corresponding to the four expressions of redemption that *Hashem* used when talking to *Moshe Rabbeinu* - *ve'hotzeisi, ve'hitzalti, ve'galti, ve'lakachti*. The four cups are not drunk immediately one after another; rather each one is drunk during the performance of a *mitzvah*. Each expression of redemption has a connection with one of the *mitzvos*, and thus each expression corresponds to a specific cup. Additionally, our sages state that in the merit of four things our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt. Each cup and expression also corresponds to one of these merits.

The first expression is "*Ve'hotzeisi*" - "And I will take you out." The *Midrash* describes *Hashem* redeeming the Jews as one who removes a child from its mother's womb. The Jews were so entrenched in the Egyptian idolatry and culture that it was as if they were one body, mother and child. This is what *Hashem* was referring to when He used the term "I will take you out." Though they were so ensconced in Egyptian culture, they still remained distinct in one regard. The Jews were not affected by the adulterous behavior of the Egyptians. In all their years in Egypt, the Jewish Nation as a whole (with the exception of one woman) did not commit acts of adultery or any other forbidden relationships. This enabled *Hashem* to differentiate between the Egyptians and the Jews and thus extract the latter from the filth that was Egypt.

This type of behavior exhibited by the Jews, safeguards and ensures the holiness of the Jewish People. When the holiness of the Jews is intact, they have the ability to consecrate time. They are able to enact holidays and times of joy. Thus, the first cup of wine at *kiddush*, which describes and celebrates the Jewish ability to sanctify holidays and times, corresponds to the expression "And I will take you out," which refers to the holiness of the Jews as seen by their refusal to commit immoral acts.

DAY 9

כ"ב אדר

Karpas and Yachatz

Karpas

One should have in mind that the *brocha* of *borei pri ha'admah* should include the *maror* that will be coming later in the meal. (ibid. *M.B.* 55)

One should eat less than a *kzayis* so that he will surely not need to recite a *brocha acharona*. If he ate a *kzayis*, although there are opinions that he needs a *brocha acharona*, he should not recite one. (473:6, *M.B.* 56)

Some people have the custom to eat the *karpas* in a leaning position.

Yachatz

The middle *matzah* is broken in two by hand. The smaller piece is returned to the *ke'arah*. The reason for this is that *matzah* is called *lechem oni*, poor man's bread. A poor man breaks his bread with his hand and not a knife. A poor man also only eats a piece of bread, not a whole loaf. (ibid 7, *M.B.* 57, *Pri Megadim* 20)

The larger piece is wrapped in a cloth and put away for the *afkoman*. It is wrapped in a cloth as a remembrance of the leftover *matzah* that was wrapped up by the Jews, placed on their shoulders, and carried out of Egypt. (*M.B.* 59)

M*atzah* is one of the focal points of the Seder. Yet its representation seems contradictory. At the outset of the Seder we refer to the *matzah* as poor man's bread consumed by our forefathers as slaves in *Mitzrayim*. However, later in the *Haggada* we declare that we eat the *matzah* to commemorate the hurried fashion that we were redeemed from Egypt. Additionally, *matzah* is eaten in a state of leaning indicating that it portrays freedom.

One of the primary themes of the Seder night is *hakaras hatov*, appreciation. *Maharal* writes that the reason that we do not recite a blessing on fulfilling the commandment of *sipur yetzias mitzrayim* is because it is not an action *mitzvah*. The core of the *mitzvah* of reciting the story of our enslavement and redemption is gratitude. The verbal expression of appreciation is only the manifestation of the thoughts and feelings in our heart and mind. *Mitzvos* that are primarily in the heart do not require a blessing.

When reciting the *haggada* we are *maschil b'genus u'mesayem b'shvach*, we begin with the low state we were in and end with the redemption. *Rambam* explains that one should speak extensively about the slavery as well as the redemption, expounding with his own words and expressions. Appreciation is not a pre-determined script; it must be expressed individually from the heart. To express appreciation properly one must relate and even relive the situation he was in and its resolution.

Thus at the Seder, we do things that relate to slavery as well as those that relate to freedom. This helps us reflect on the situation we were in and how *Hashem* saved us.

Matzah, one of the main commandments of the evening, symbolizes both of these ideas in one. It represents both slavery and redemption. Using it we capsule the feelings and emotions of the evening; we were at the epitome of slavery and were miraculously redeemed.

DAY 10

כ"ג אדר

Maggid

One should have in mind that he is fulfilling the *mitzva* of *sippur yetzias mitzrayim*, retelling the story of the Jews leaving Egypt. (*M.B.* 473:1)

When reciting *Ha Lachma Anya* one should lift the *matzah*. (473:6)

After *Ha Lacham Anya*, the *ke'arah* is either removed from the table or placed at the far end of the table. This is to prompt the children to ask why, and to answer them that we may not eat until we have talked about *yetzias Mitzrayim*. (*ibid.*)¹

1. Some do not have this custom. See *Piskei Teshuvos* 473:28

The last phrase, "*Le'shana habah b'arah d'yisroel...*" in *halachma anya*, is a prayer and supplication that we should merit returning to *Eretz Yisroel*. Why do we begin the Seder with this prayer? It would seem that its proper place would be in *nirtzah* where we ask *Hashem* to bring us back to *Yerushalayim* where we will be able to bring the *korban Pesach*.

This statement sets the tone and theme of the evening. Remembering our enslavement and redemption is the catalyst for strengthening our belief that *Hashem* will redeem us from this exile as well. In Egypt things looked hopeless as we sunk to the depths of impurity - almost reaching the point of no return. Many had even given up on ever leaving the land of Egypt. Yet, at the last moment *Hashem* redeemed us "hurriedly." *Rambam* actually begins the *Haggada* with the statement "*be'vihilu yatzanu m'Mitzrayim*, we left Egypt in a rush."

The exile we are presently enduring may look hopeless. Yet if we learn the lesson of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, our belief in our redemption will be strengthened. Thus, we begin the Seder with the prayer that although this year we are still servants of other nations, we believe that next year we will be redeemed. This statement channels the lessons that we will learn this evening, from a mere historical memory to a practical, timely, and uplifting message.

Message of Hope

DAY 11

כ"ד אדר

Mah Nishtana

The second cup is poured in order to prompt the children to ask why we are drinking another cup before the meal. (473:7)

There are different customs in regards to who asks the *mah nishtana*, the Four Questions. Some have the custom that only one person asks them, while others have the custom that every person asks the questions.¹

1. *Rema* implies that only one person asks, while *Rambam's* comments indicate that everyone asks.

Children play a prominent role at the Seder table and in the *haggada*. At the outset they recite the *mah nishtana* as a response to the various actions done to pique their curiosity. The *haggada* then describes the different types of sons, their different questions and the various answers to each.

In his negotiations with Pharaoh, *Moshe Rabbeinu* stressed the role of the children. He stated, “we will go with our youngsters and our elders, with our sons and our daughters.” Pharaoh countered that only the men may leave.

Pharaoh could not understand why the children are needed if the Jews are going to the desert to serve *Hashem*. *Moshe* explained that the best way to educate children is through personal experience. If we wish there to be a next generation of servants of *Hashem*, we must begin their training as youngsters. When children witness their elders’ attitude to prayer, their excitement and enthusiasm for *mitzvos*, their way of speech and their approach to all *avodas Hashem*, they too will wish to live that way. Only when we go “with our youngsters and our elders,” are we able to properly celebrate with *Hashem*, “*ki chag Hashem lanu*.”

This is the reason that the children have such prominence at the Seder. As we celebrate our status of *avdei Hashem* with our redemption from Egypt, we stress the understanding of ensuring our heritage to the next generation.

DAY 12

כ"ה אדר

Maggid cont'd

After the *Mah Nishtana* the *ke'arah* is returned to its place and the *matzos* are revealed in order to begin reciting the *haggada*. *Matzah* is called *lechem oni*, which *Chazal* interpret to mean, bread over which we discuss many things. Thus, *sippur yetzias Mitzrayim* is said in view of the *matzah*. (ibid.)

One should not lean while saying the *haggada*, rather it should be said solemnly and with reverence. (Ibid. *M.B.* 71)

When one reaches *vehi she'amda* the *matzah* is covered and the cup of wine is raised. (ibid 73)¹

1. The rule is that whenever we lift the cup the *matzos* are covered.

In Egypt, *Bnai Yisroel* were on the forty-ninth level of impurity. If they had stayed another moment in Egypt they would have slipped to the fiftieth level, a level of no return. Not withstanding their almost hopeless spiritual level, *Hashem* redeemed them and they rose to the fiftieth level of holiness with the acceptance of the *Torah*. How did *Bnai Yisroel* accomplish this?

The *haggada* answers this question looking at five sages and sees how a person can transform their life. *Rebbi Eliezer* could not read *shema* or recite *birchas hamazon* until the age of twenty-eight. *Rebbi Tarfon* was fabulously wealthy and instead of being involved in his estate he ignored it and learned *Torah*. *Rebbi Yehoshua* lived in abject poverty overcoming his situation. *Rebbi Akiva* did not succeed in his studies until he was forty years old. Although at the outset he was embarrassed to sit with children learning *aleph-beis*, with the encouragement of his wife he overcame his humiliation and rose to the greatest of heights. *Rebbi Elozar ben Azarya* was eighteen years old. Who would look at such a youngster when choosing a *Nasi*, the leader of the generation? Yet, due to circumstances he was chosen as *Nasi*.

The *haggada* is teaching us a valuable lesson. If you have a hard time understanding how the Jews turned themselves around from the lowest of the low to the highest of the high, look at the five sages who, against all odds, turned their situations around and became *Torah* leaders.

The sages talked about *yetzias Mitzrayim* extensively because they were able to see themselves in the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* and drew *chizuk* to their own lives. When we discuss the hopelessness and the redemption from Egypt, we should draw lessons for our own life situations. No matter how rich or poor, young or old one is, a person has the ability to rise above his situation and be the greatest he can be.

DAY 13

כ"ו אדר

Maggid cont'd

When one reaches the words in the *haggada* of *dam va'eish ve'simros ashan*, the ten plagues and their acronym *detzach ba'adash be'acha*, he pours a little wine from his cup. There are various customs how to do this. Some use their index finger, others their ring finger and still others use their pinky. Some do not use their finger and use a spoon or just spill from the cup. (*Rema* 473:7, *M.B.* 74, *S.H.* 81, *Aruch Hashulchan* 473:24)

The cup is either refilled immediately or before *le'fichoch*.

Chazal teach that when it came time to redeem the Jewish Nation from Egypt, they did not have any merits for redemption. The Jews had sunk to the forty-ninth level of impurity, served idols, and reached the point that the angels questioned the difference between Jew and Egyptian. *Hashem* then gave them two commandments to fulfill: *bris milah* and *korban Pesach*. The blood of these two *mitzvos* served as the merit for salvation.

When *Moshe* told the *Bnai Yisroel* to circumcise they refused. When *Moshe* sacrificed and prepared the *korban Pesach*, *Hashem* caused the fragrance of *Gan Eden* to be attached to the roasting meat and spread throughout the land. When the Jews smelled it they ran to *Moshe* begging to participate, but he told them they must be circumcised. Fainting from desire they gave in and were circumcised.

Thus, the two *mitzvos* that they did were not even done for the sake of the *mitzvah*. They ate the *korban Pesach* because of its aroma and in turn were circumcised. And yet, the fulfillment of these two commandments brought the redemption with all of its miracles. How do two *mitzvos* not nearly done to perfection achieve removal from the terrible situation they had found themselves in?

Chofetz Chaim answers that the power of *mitzvos* are dependent on time and circumstance. When times are good and multitudes of Jews are performing many *mitzvos*, each *mitzvah* is scrutinized and measured to see if it was done with all its details, proper intentions and thoughts. However, when times are dark and few *mitzvos* are being performed, every *mitzvah*, no matter how far from perfection illuminates the world. These two *mitzvos*, performed far from perfection, had the power to bring the redemption.

DAY 14

כ"ז אדר

Pesach, Matzah, Maror

When reciting *Pesach zu*, the leader of the Seder should not pick up the *zeroa* since it is not the *korban Pesach*, rather everyone should look at it as a remembrance.

When reciting *matzah zu*, the leader picks up the middle broken *matzah*. And when saying *maror zeh* he picks up the *maror* from the *ke'arah*. (473:7, M.B. 72)

Rabban Gamliel says that one who does not talk about the three *mitzvos* *Pesach*, *matzah* and *maror* has not fulfilled his obligation.

The *Rishonim* disagree in the understanding of *Rabban Gamliel's* statement. *Ran* explains that preferably one should understand the reasons behind every *mitzvah* performed. *Rabban Gamliel* is stressing that on the night of the Seder one should be extra careful to concentrate on the reasons for the *mitzvos* of *Pesach*, *matzah* and *maror* as he performs them. Accordingly, when eating the *matzah* he should think about our hurried exit from *Mitzrayim*, etc. However, if one does not know the reasons, he still has fulfilled his obligation. When *Rabban Gamliel* stated he has not fulfilled his obligation, he means that he has not done the *mitzvah* in the best way possible.

Rambam argues that *Rabban Gamliel* means that one who does not talk about these *mitzvos* has not fulfilled his obligation of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*, relating the story of leaving *Mitzrayim*. One can spend hours on the *haggada*, the slavery, the plagues, etc, but if he does not talk about *Pesach*, *matzah* and *maror*, he has not fulfilled his obligation of talking about *yetzias Mitzrayim*. Why are these *mitzvos* so integral to this obligation?

When *Hashem* took the Jews out of Egypt it was with the intention that they will become *avdei hashem*, servants of *Hashem*, accepting His *Torah* and keeping its *mitzvos*. If one recites the *haggada* talking all about the miracles, but does not bring the story to its conclusion, he has not fulfilled his obligation. All of the experiences of the night must bring a person to the realization that he must accept the responsibility of keeping *Hashem's mitzvos*, beginning with the *mitzvos* of the Seder night.

DAY 15

כ"ח אדר

Second Cup and Rachtza

Before beginning *lefichoch* the *matzah* is covered and the cup of wine is raised and held until after the *brocha* of *ga'al Yisroel*. (473:7)

After concluding *ga'al Yisroel*, one should have in mind that they are fulfilling the second cup of the four cups, recite *borei pri hagafen* and drink the cup in a leaning position.

Rachtza

There is a custom that the person leading the Seder has water brought to him to wash his hands as a sign of *cheirus*. (See *Seder Ha'aruch*, 75:68)

Preferably, one should not talk about unrelated topics until after *korech*. (475:1)

As previously mentioned and expounded on (Day 8), our sages instituted the drinking of four cups of wine during the Pesach Seder, corresponding to the four expressions of redemption that *Hashem* used when talking to *Moshe Rabbeinu*. Each expression corresponds to a specific cup and a specific merit that our forefathers possessed.

The third expression¹ *Hashem* used was “*Ve’ga’alti*” - “And I will redeem.” Redemption can refer to a slave who is released from bondage. Our sages say that a slave would rather remain a slave, with the “freedom” from the marital and moral restrictions that the *Torah* places on a Jew, than become free and fully Jewish. This is a result of the fact that a slave does not have *yichus*, halachic lineage. He has nothing to live up to and therefore feels no responsibility. The Jews did not change their names, since they realized who their forefathers were. They had something to live up to and consequently were worthy of redemption. This expression corresponds to the second cup drunk after the recitation of the first half of *hallel*. This part of *hallel* describes the Jewish People’s connection to their forefathers and the travails and miracles they experienced.

Yichus

1. Note that the third expression corresponds to the second cup of the four cups.

DAY 16

כ"ט אדר



Motzi Matzah



Men and women are obligated in the *mitzvah* of eating *matzah*.

It is worthy to note that eating *matzah* on the first night of Pesach is a Biblical *mitzvah*. It is the only biblically obligated food *mitzvah* that we currently have and one should do their best to fulfill this *mitzvah* properly.

One should have in mind that they are fulfilling the *mitzvah* of eating *matzah*.

"And they baked the dough that they brought out of Egypt as *matzah* crackers, because they were not *chometz*, because they were chased out of Egypt and they could not delay, and they also did not prepare provisions for themselves."

There are four ways to understand this verse and thus four different reasons why we eat *matzah*.

1. One opinion in the *Gemara* is that Pesach in Egypt was only observed for one day and they were permitted to own *chometz*. Thus, they were permitted to bake *chometz* on the fifteenth of *Nissan* to be eaten the next day. However, since they were rushed out of the land they did not have time to let the dough rise and instead baked *matzah*. (*Ran, Pesachim*)
2. Another opinion in the *Gemara* is that Pesach in Egypt was seven days and they were not allowed to own *chometz* all seven days. Since they were forced out they did not have a chance to bake the *matzah* at home, rather they carried out dough and baked them either on the road or in a place called *Sukkos*. Thus, the *matzah* commemorates the dough that they carried out of Egypt. (*Ramban*)
3. *Seforno* understands the words, "because they were not *chometz*" to mean that the entire Jewish Nation left Egypt and reached *Sukkos*, where they baked the *matzah*, in less than the time that it takes for the dough to become *chometz*. Thus the *matzah* commemorates how quickly the entire nation left Egypt.
4. *Baalei Hatosfos* concur with the opinion that Pesach was for seven days. However, they explain that the second half of the *posuk* beginning with the words "because they were chased etc.", is not referring to the *matzah*. Rather because they were chased out of Egypt they did not have time to prepare provisions and the *matzah* was the only food they had. An entire nation willing to leave a country, following the directives of Hashem and their leaders, is a phenomenal display of *emuna* in Hashem. The *matzah* commemorates this *emuna*.

DAY 17

א' ניסן

Motzi Matzah cont'd

The leader of the Seder picks up all three *matzos* from the *ke'arah* and recites the *brocha* of *hamotzi*. He then sets down the bottom *matzah*¹ and recites the *brocha* of *al achilas matzah* on the top and middle/broken *matzos*. (475:1)

Since there is a doubt upon which *matzah* the *brocha* of *al achilas matzah* applies, the top or the middle, the leader should preferably eat a *kzayis* from each *matzah*. The other people at the table who will receive a small piece from these *matzos* and supplement their *kzayis* with other *matzah* need not eat two *kzeysim*. (M.B. *ibid.* 9)²

The custom is not to dip the *matzah* into salt at the Seder. (*Rema* *ibid.*)

The *matzah* should be eaten in a leaning position in less than the time of *ke'dei achilas pras*. The opinions of *ke'dei achilas pras* range from two to five minutes.

1. If he is using a *matzah* bag and is unable to set down the bottom *matzah*, he should reposition his hands to be holding only the top two *matzos*.

2. Since the largest *shiur* of *kzayis* is more than twice the size of the smallest *shiur* of *kzayis*, that is sufficient for this preference of eating two *kzaysim*, one who eats the larger *shiur* is actually having two *kzaysim*.

"You shall watch the *matzos*."

The *korban Pesach* in *Mitzrayim* had to be designated four days before it's offering. This requirement was not necessary in any subsequent *korbanos Pesach*. Why then was this necessary in Egypt? *Rav Masya ben Cheresb* explained that the time had come for *Hashem* to fulfill His promise to our patriarch *Avrohom* to redeem the Jewish Nation. However, they lacked merit for redemption. One of the *mitzvos Hashem* gave them was the *korban Pesach*.

In order to increase their merits, *Hashem* required that they begin their involvement in this *mitzvah* four days before. The culmination of this preparation would be the sacrifice and eating of this offering on the day that *Hashem* had set aside as one that is primed and conditioned for redemption.

Similarly, the *mitzvah* of *matzah* is one that requires much effort and energy. It must be watched and guarded meticulously so that it should not turn into *chometz*. The *matzah* that is used for the first night of Pesach to fulfill the biblical obligation has even more stringencies that are required to fulfill its task. Although the *mitzvah* is performed in the eating of the *matzah*, its preparation requires advance and meticulous involvement.

The night of Pesach is a time that is auspicious for salvation from all troubles and calamities. Just as in Egypt we needed the involvement in a *mitzvah* to merit redemption, so too for generations we need *mitzvos* to merit salvation. The *mitzvah* of *matzah* and its necessary preparation and involvement serves as a merit for our salvation.

Increased Merits

DAY 18

ב' ניסן



Maror



One should have in mind to fulfill the rabbinical commandment to eat *maror*.

One must eat a *kzayis* of *maror*. If he is eating two types of *maror*, i.e. lettuce and horseradish, the two types may be combined for the *kzayis*. (473:5)

The *maror* is dipped in the *charoses* and then the *charoses* is shaken off so as not to take away from the bitter taste of the *maror*. (475:1)

"And they embittered their lives with hard work, with mortar and bricks, and all hard work in the field, all the work that they worked them with crushing hardness."

Pharoh "sweetly" convinced the Jews to willingly work for him at the outset. He offered them high wages for working and producing at maximum strength. Each Jew worked as hard as he could on that day and the Egyptians kept track of their output. At the end of the day, they enslaved them with the amount they had produced that day as their daily quota. One can work at maximum strength for the first day of a project, or even a few days, but not for long term. In fact if he attempts to continue, his strength will give out and he will weaken, unable to produce at all. Pharoh was not interested in production output; he wanted to break the Jews physically.

Pharoh also wished to break the Jews emotionally. This can be seen from the following examples: He made them build *Pisom* and *Ra'amses*, which continuously sunk into the ground. One who does not get satisfaction from his work, watching it continuously go to waste, can go crazy. Pharoh started them off with the bricks and then moved them to the fields. The beginning of any new job or endeavor is hard until one gets accustomed to the work. Pharoh never let anyone get accustomed to his job in order that everything should remain hard. Just as a Jew would start getting used to the mortar and bricks he would be switched to the field. In the field he would also go from job to job. This would break them mentally. Similarly, he made women perform men's jobs and vice versa, jobs alien to both. A task one is not accustomed to is mentally taxing. Pharoh made small and weak people carry large heavy loads to break them physically, and strong people carry small loads to break them mentally. Pharoh obligated them to do menial and degrading tasks to continuously break their spirit.

When eating the *maror* we should recall the numerous ways of "crushing hardness."

DAY 19

ג' ניסן



Korech



The leader of the Seder takes the bottom *matzah* from the *kearah* to use for *korech*. A *kzayis* of *matzah* and of *maror* are used. (ibid.)

Some have a custom not to dip the *maror* for *korech* in *charoses*. Others do and shake it off like they did earlier with the *maror*. (ibid., *M.B.* 19)

The *korech* is eaten in a leaning position.

The *korban Pesach* and *matzah* are associated with redemption while the *maror* with bitter slavery. Though we commemorate and celebrate both experiences, why would *Hillel* mix and wrap them together?

Who was *Hillel Hazaken*? *Hillel* had been a leader in Babylonia and wished to learn *Torah* from the great scholars of *Eretz Yisroel*, *Shamya* and *Avtalyon*. Humble as *Hillel* was, he did not inform anyone of who he was and his stature. Instead he chose to live a life of poverty and remain unknown. His meager daily earnings as a woodchopper was a small coin, half going to his family's needs and half to pay the entrance fee into the study hall of *Shmaya* and *Avtalyon*. *Hillel* lived this life contently.

One Friday in the depths of the winter, *Hillel* was unable to chop any wood and could not earn any money. Unable to enter the study hall on credit he went up to the roof placed his ear to the skylight and listened to the *Torah* being taught. One can only imagine *Hillel* praying that after all of his efforts to learn *Torah* in the freezing weather, at least it should not snow. Yet *Hashem* brought a heavy snow that covered *Hillel* completely. However, *Hillel* did not complain and continued to listen to the *Torah*.

In the morning the students noticed the figure of *Hillel* blocking the sunlight, brought him inside, and revived him. They then realized the greatness of *Hillel* and eventually he became the *Nasi* of the Jewish People.

What was the catalyst for *Hillel's* rise to greatness? It was the bitter cold and freezing snow that fell on him. Lying under the snow he could have thought that he is going through the worst experience of his life, that it cannot get more bitter. Yet, that bitterness was actually the medium for his ascension to greatness.

Hillel from his personal experiences understood and taught that there is no such thing as absolute *maror*, bitterness. Every bite of *maror* is not only a step closer, but also the catalyst, for the *matzah*, the redemption.

Korech



Shulchan Orech



There are some who have a custom to eat eggs¹ at the Seder. There are various reasons for this custom:

1. It commemorates the *korban Chagiga* that was eaten as the main course of the Seder in the times of the *beis hamikdash*. According to this reason, one should eat the egg on the *ke'arah*. (*Rema* 476:2, M.B. 11)
2. The day of the week that corresponds to the first night of Pesach will also be the same day of the week as *tisha b'av*. Thus an egg, which symbolizes mourning, is eaten. For this reason any egg may be eaten, but the custom is then limited to the first Seder night.
3. The egg is a sign of mourning that we no longer have the *korban Pesach*. This would apply on both Seder nights. (*M.B.* ibid. 13)

The custom, based on the last two reasons, is to pour salt water over the eggs.²

1. There is no need to eat a whole egg.

2. In order not to add a third “dipping” to the Seder night, the salt water is poured over the eggs as opposed to dipping the eggs in salt water. (*Sheloshim Yom Kodem Hachag*, pg. 109, fn 138)

Chasam Sofer writes that the custom to eat eggs on the night of the fifteenth of *Nissan* had been observed throughout the years of slavery in Egypt. During those years the fifteenth of *Nissan* was observed as a day of mourning. It was the day that the *bris bein habesarim* had taken place a few hundred years earlier when *Hashem* told *Avrom* that his children would be strangers in a foreign land, enslaved and oppressed for a total of four hundred years. Thus, during the fulfillment of that prophecy the Jews mourned and ate eggs as an act of mourning.

When *Hashem* sent *Moshe* on *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* to tell the Jews about offering the *korban Pesach* and eating it on the night of the fifteenth, the day changed from one of mourning to celebration and holiday. Yet, the custom of eating the eggs remained recalling the day's original theme.

Eating the eggs one should remember how the day of national mourning turned into the day of redemption and celebration. We yearn for the time when *tisha b'av*, the present day of national mourning, is transformed into a day of celebration as well.

DAY 21

ה' ניסן

Roasted Meat

The custom is not to eat any roasted meat at the Seder, so as not to confuse the meat with a *korban Pesach*. (476:1)

What constitutes roasting?

- Any meat or chicken that is cooked over an open fire or broiled is considered roasted. Meat cooked in a pot without any liquids is also considered roasted for this custom.
- Some people only eat boiled chicken in order satisfy this custom, while other suffice with a sauce or spices on the chicken or meat. (See *Piskei Teshuvos*)

T*udus Ish Romi*, a prominent and influential Jew in Rome, instituted a custom among the Jews of Rome, in which the Jews would roast a lamb on the night of Pesach exactly as it was done in Jerusalem with the *korban Pesach*. *Shimon ben Shetach*, one of the leaders of the generation, sent him a message saying, “If not for the fact that you are an important person, I would excommunicate you for this practice. There is a great danger in imitating sacrifices, for people may mistakenly think that you are offering and eating sacrifices outside the Temple.” Since this was not the case, what exactly was *Tudus* trying to accomplish with this custom?

A philosopher asked *Rebbi Eliezer*, “Your Hashem says, ‘They will build and I will destroy.’ However, look how much we have built without *Hashem* destroying anything.” *Rebbi Eliezer* answered that *Hashem* is referring to plots rather than buildings. The nations of the world will devise many plots to destroy the Jewish Nation and *Hashem* will foil their plans. The philosopher responded, “I swear that what you are saying is true. Every year we sit and devise plots for your destruction and one old man always vetoes our plans.”

The *korban Pesach* teaches us that *Hashem* is exact in all his actions. When He killed the Egyptian firstborn sons, He skipped over the Jewish homes that were situated between Egyptian houses. The Jewish People saw *Hashem*’s Divine providence firsthand.

In his position in Rome, *Tudus* was privy to the many plots and schemes to harm and destroy the Jewish People. He also saw clearly how *Hashem* thwarted these conspiracies. *Tudus* felt that there needed to be some sort of recognition and celebration of these constant salvations. He therefore instituted the custom of imitating the *korban Pesach*, not only to remember the miracles that occurred in Egypt, but also to recognize and appreciate the constant miracles that *Hashem* was performing for the Jews.

Hashem's Hand

DAY 22

ו' ניסן

Tzafun

After the meal is completed the *matzah* that had been set aside for the *afikomen* is eaten. The *afikomen* is a remembrance of the *korban Pesach* that was eaten after one had eaten their fill of the *korban chagiga*. (477:1)

Since the *korban Pesach* was eaten together with *matzah*, preferably one should eat two *kzaysim* for *afikomen*, one representing the *korban Pesach* and the other representing the *matzah* that had been eaten with it. (M.B. *ibid.* 1)

The *matzah* is eaten in a leaning position.

One may not eat anything after the *afikomen* to ensure that its taste remains in his mouth. (478:1)¹

1. See page 72 in regards to drinking after the *afikomen*.

There is a great debate about the possible source for the children “stealing” the *afikomen*. *Chasam Sofer* offered a novel understanding for this custom, accompanied by an important lesson in regards to the Pesach Seder.

When *Rav Shimon Sofer*, *Chasam Sofer*’s son, was seven years old he asked his father (at *yachatz*) what the source is for stealing the *afikomen*. His father did not answer and continued with the Seder. When they completed the Seder hours later, *Chasam Sofer* answered the question. He explained that on the night of Pesach in Egypt the Jews following *Hashem*’s instructions emptied the Egyptian homes of all of their valuables. Some things were given with permission while others were just taken. The dogs in Egypt witnessing this “robbery” should have barked to alert their masters. Yet, *Hashem* kept them quiet and they did not make a sound. To commemorate this great miracle that enabled the Jews to leave Egypt with enormous wealth as *Hashem* had promised, the custom of stealing the *afikomen* was enacted.

Young *Shimon Sofer* asked his father why he didn’t tell him this answer immediately. *Chasam Sofer* replied that the night of Pesach is about *emuna*. *Emuna* dictates that one follows *Hashem*’s command whether he understands it or not. *Chasam Sofer* continued, “I wanted to teach you that you can fulfill the custom of stealing the *afikomen* even if you don’t understand the rationale. Now that you have learned the lesson of *emuna*, I can tell you the reason behind it.”

Serving with Emuna



Chatzos



Rebbi Elozar ben Azarya holds that the *korban Pesach* must be eaten before *chatzos*, midnight. *Rebbi Akiva* argues and allows it to be eaten the entire night. Most *rishonim* follow the opinion of *Rebbi Elozar ben Azarya*.

Afikomen was instituted as a remembrance of the *korban Pesach* and preferably follows the rules of the *korban*. Thus one should be careful to eat the *afikomen* before *chatzos*.

If one sees that he will not be able to eat the *afikomen* before this time he may use the *Avnei Nezer's* solution. He should eat *matzah* before *chatzos* and declare, “if the *halacha* is like *Rebbi Elozar ben Azarya* then this is the *afikomen*, and if the *halacha* is like *Rebbi Akiva* then the *afikomen* that I will eat later in the Seder will be the *afikomen*.” In this way, he may continue eating his meal after chatzos even if his first *afikomen* was genuine. Since after *chatzos* is past the time for eating the *afikomen* there's no longer any prohibition of eating after *afikomen*.¹

When he reaches *tzafun* in the Seder, he eats a second *afikomen*.²

1. See page 72.

2. See *Igros Moshe* (5:38:8) who argues on the premise of the *Avnei Nezer* that after the time for eating *afikomen* has passed one may eat. There were many *Gedolim* who praised the *Avnei Nezer's* solution, while others held that it should only be relied on *bedieved*. (See *Sbloschim Yom Kodem Hachag* pg 112, fn 153)

All agree that at midnight on the Fifteenth of *Nissan* the Jewish nation was redeemed from enslavement but they did not actually leave the land of Egypt until the morning.

What is true freedom? A free man has the ability to accomplish, succeed, receive credit for all that he does and also be held accountable for his failures. The requirement that ensures that freedom is used to its fullest potential is disciplined diligence. Although at first glance it may sound as if laws and restrictions are the antithesis of freedom, it is not so. Successful freedom requires responsibility.

Judaism is a religion that demands extreme discipline, structure and subservience to the words of the *Torah* and its sages, even when one may not fully understand their reasoning. For the Jews in Egypt to be allowed to leave with the goal of becoming the Nation of *Hashem*, they needed to demonstrate that they had the ability to restrain themselves under trying circumstances.

At *chatzos*, *Hashem* struck the Egyptian firstborns leaving every Egyptian home with corpses. Pharaoh ordered *Moshe* to take the Jewish Nation and leave Egypt. Yet, *Moshe* refused to leave telling Pharaoh that *Hashem* had commanded the Jews not to leave their homes until the morning. Although *Pharaoh* had reneged on his word countless times and there was always the risk that by the morning his heart would harden, not one Jew protested *Moshe's* decision. They understood that they must be subservient to *Hashem* and His appointed leaders.

This was one of their introductions to the type of life they would ultimately lead.

DAY 24

ח' ניסן



Barech



The cup used for the wine should be washed out before filling it for *birchas hamazon*. (M.B. 479:1)

The custom is that the leader of the Seder recites the *zimun* (if there are three adult men present) and not a guest. However, if he wishes to give the honor to a guest he may. (ibid.)

After the recitation of *birchas hamazon* the third cup is drunk. One should have in mind that they are fulfilling the mitzvah of drinking the third cup of wine.

A *borei pri hagafen* is recited and the cup is drunk in a leaning position. A *brocha acharona* is not recited.

As previously mentioned and expounded on (Day 8), our sages instituted the drinking of four cups of wine during the Pesach Seder, corresponding to the four expressions of redemption that *Hashem* used when talking to *Moshe Rabbeinu*. Each expression corresponds to a specific cup and a specific merit that our forefathers possessed.

The second expression¹ *Hashem* used was “*Ve’hitzalti*”- “And I will save you.” The term “saving” can refer to one who is being pursued and needs rescuing. *Hashem* saved the Jews from the Egyptians who were running after the Jews to destroy them. Yet, *Hashem* could only save the Jews from the Egyptians as long as the Jews were not “chasing” each other. As long as their unity and friendship remained, *Hashem* could save them from their oppressors. The Jews did not slander each other. There was no discord among them, rather, they lived in harmony with each other. This corresponds to the third cup, drunk after *birchas hamazon*. When one slanders another, it reflects a subconscious desire to get ahead at the expense of the other. Such behavior stems from a lack of faith that *Hashem* can and does provide a person’s every need. Therefore, this expression, describing the Jews’ refusal to slander, corresponds to the third cup drunk after the Grace after Meals, which reflects the same theme of *Hashem*’s providing for our sustenance, as we are dependent on nothing else but Him.

1. Note that the second expression corresponds to the third cup.

DAY 25

ט' ניסן



Hallel



The fourth cup is poured. An additional cup is poured for *kos shel Eliyahu*. This is a demonstration of our belief that just as *Hashem* redeemed us from Egypt, so too He will send *Eliyahu Hanavi* to inform us of the final Redemption. (*Rema* 480:1)

The door is opened and the verses beginning with *shefoch chamoscha* are recited. This demonstrates our belief that the Seder night is *leil shimurim*, a night when *Hashem* vigilantly guards the Jewish Nation.

Some have a custom to say *boruch haba* (to *Eliyahu Hanavi*.) (*Aruch Hashulchan* 480:1)

R*ema* writes that we open the door during this *tefilla* to indicate that it is *leil shimurim*, and to demonstrate our *emuna* in the coming of *Mashiach*. Why then is it the custom at the open door to recite verses asking *Hashem* to pour out his wrath on the nations who do not recognize Him?

The night of Pesach in Egypt was the night that *Hashem* killed the firstborn Egyptians. Although the Jews were commanded not to leave the doorways of their home that night lest they also be killed, the doors themselves remained open. In fact, they all stood at their open doors and watched how *Hashem* killed the Egyptian firstborns and how Pharaoh and his servants came running to *Moshe*, bowing to him, and requesting that he leave Egypt with his people.

The witnessing of this occurrence at the doorways was such a pivotal event in *yetzias Mitzrayim* that the custom evolved to commemorate it. We stand at our open door and pray to *Hashem* that just as we stood at the door watching how He poured His wrath on the Egyptians, we should witness the future redemption as well.

Seeing Salvation

DAY 26

י' ניסן

Hallel cont'd

Hallel is recited beginning from *lo lanu*. *Hallel* is recited sitting and not standing (as it is recited normally during *davening*.) One should not lean, rather sit in an upright position solemnly and with reverence. (*M.B.* 480:1, *Be'er Heitiv* 473:27 quoting *Shela*)

One should try to have three people present in order to say the verses of *hodu* and *ana hashem* responsively as is done in shul. Women and children may constitute this group of three. If one does not have a group, he should only recite *hodu* one time and continue with *yomar na*, *yomru* etc.

There are different customs with which *brocha* to complete *hallel*. Some conclude with the *brocha* recited at the conclusion of *hallel* and others conclude with the *brocha* at the end of *yishtabach*.

Hallel during the Seder is split into two parts. The first and smaller portion is recited before eating the *matzah*, *maror* and *shulchan orech*, while the main *hallel* is recited afterwards.

One of the main foundations of *avodas hashem* is that the *Torah* does not obligate abstinence, rather *Hashem* desires that one live in the physical world and consecrate it. The Jew sanctifies mundane eating and drinking by reciting a blessing before and after consumption. Eating in order to be healthy to continue to perform *mitzvos* transforms the eating itself into a *mitzvah*. At times the food itself is a *mitzvah* to eat like the *matzah* and the *maror*. With this in mind, the Jew is able to serve *Hashem* with all of his actions.

Hashem redeemed the Jewish Nation from Egypt to serve Him through the *Torah* and *mitzvos* that were given at *Har Sinai*. The *mitzvos* of the Seder are intended to put into perspective our obligations to *Hashem*, and how to live our lives as servants of *Hashem*. Integral to this lesson is the understanding that serving *Hashem* is not restricted to purely spiritual pursuits and endeavors like singing *Hashem's* praises in *hallel*. Eating and drinking are also mediums with which to serve *Hashem*. To internalize this lesson, we interrupt the *hallel* not only to eat the *matzah* and *maror*, which are *mitzvos*, but to eat the *Yom Tov* meal of *shulchan orech* as well. This way we demonstrate that in actuality *hallel*, the praise of *Hashem*, is not interrupted at all. The two parts of *hallel*, as well as the eating in the middle, are actually one continuous service of *Hashem*.

Physically Holy

DAY 27

י"א ניסן



Fourth Cup



After the completion of *hallel* the fourth cup is drunk. One should have in mind that they are fulfilling the fourth and final cup of the four cups.

Borei pri hagafen is recited and the cup is drunk in a leaning position.

One should drink a full *reviis* and then recite the *brocha acharaona* of *al hegafen*. This *brocha* covers the third cup of wine as well.

As previously mentioned and expounded on (Day 8), our sages instituted the drinking of four cups of wine during the Pesach Seder, corresponding to the four expressions of redemption that *Hashem* used when talking to *Moshe Rabbeinu*. Each expression corresponds to a specific cup and a specific merit that our forefathers possessed.

“*Ve’lakachti*” - “And I will take you for a nation.” The Jews did not change their language, since they hoped and yearned for redemption. In turn they merited that *Hashem* realized their dream and took them for a nation. This corresponds to the last cup, drunk after the recitation of the second half of *hallel*. This part of *hallel* focuses on the future glory of the Jewish Nation.

The *Midrash* teaches that the chapter of *ahavti* in *hallel* refers to the days of *Moshiach*; the verse *isru chag ba’avosim* refers to *Gog U’magog*; and the verse *Keli atah* is refers to *le’osid lavo*.

Additionally, the verses “*From the straits did I call on Hashem, G-d answered me with expansiveness. The stone that the builders despised has become the cornerstone. This is the day the G-d has made, let us rejoice and be glad on it*” refer to the status change of King Dovid. He went from rejection by his brothers and others to being treated as royalty. So too, the Jewish Nation’s status will change, with the redemption from their exile and oppression.

Future Glory

DAY 28

י"ב ניסן



Nirtzah



We ask *Hashem* to accept our “Seder,” and just as we merited this Seder, we should merit being in Yerushalayim and bringing the *korban Pesach* for next year’s Seder.

There are different “songs” following in the *haggada* that are recited and sung praising *Hashem*.

Many have a custom to recite *Shir Hashirim* after the Seder.

One of the conundrums of the *haggada* is the omission of *Moshe Rabbeinu*. Moshe, the messenger of *Hashem* who performed the plagues and took the Jewish nation out of Egypt, is not mentioned even once in the narrative of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*.

Although not openly mentioned,¹ *Chok Yaakov* writes that the two cooked items on the *ke'arah*, the *zeroa* and the *beitza*, represent *Moshe* and *Aharon*. The reason that *Moshe* and *Aharon* are remembered in a less explicit fashion is so that no one should mistakenly think that Moshe and Aharon themselves performed the miracles and the redemption. We, therefore, recall them in a secondary manner to highlight that everything *Moshe* and *Aharon* did was as messengers of *Hashem*.

The numerical value of the word *nirtzah* is 345, the same as the numerical value of *Moshe*. We conclude the Seder with the word *nirtzah* to pay tribute to *Moshe Rabbeinu*, the messenger of *Hashem* who redeemed the Jewish nation from Egypt.

1. See *Haggada Kemozeh Sholol Rav* pgs 163-167 for various explanations.

DAY 29

י"ג ניסן

After the Seder

A person is obligated to involve himself in the laws of Pesach and relating the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim* until sleep overcomes him. Many *poskim* say that this does not literally mean until he falls asleep. Rather he should stay up as long as one can. If one knows that staying up later will ruin his davening in the morning, one may go to sleep immediately. (481:2)

Since it is *leil shimurim*, a night of protection, one only recites *shema* and *hamapil* before going to sleep. The additional verses of protection that are usually recited as part of the bedtime *shema* are not necessary on the first two nights of Pesach. (*Rema* *ibid.* *M.B.* 4)

In the *haggada* we relate the story of the five great sages - *Rebbi Eliezer, Rebbi Yehoshua, Rebbi Elozar ben Azarya, Rebbi Akiva* and *Rebbi Tarfon* - who remained awake relating the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim* the entire night of the Pesach Seder.

When referring to the night that the Jews left Egypt the *posuk* describes it as “*leil shimurim hu La’Hashem l’hotziam mi’Mitzrayim...shimurim lechol Bnai Yisroel ledorosam*, it is a night of anticipation for *Hashem* to take them out of Egypt... a protection for all of *Bnai Yisroel* for their generations.” The *posuk* is stressing that this night was distinct in that when they were redeemed, and will always be a unique night for the Jewish Nation for generations. *Ramban* explains that for generations the night is sanctified with the *mitzvos* that are performed, i.e. the *korban Pesach*, recalling the miracles *Hashem* had executed, and expressing praise and gratitude to *Hashem*.

These two descriptions of the same evening are actually similar. In Egypt the Jews had remained awake the entire night; the first half of the night they were engaged in the *korban Pesach* and the *mitzvos* of *matzah* and *maror*. The second half of the night they were watching the miracle of *makkas bechoros*, death of the firstborn, in anticipation and preparation of leaving Egypt. On the Seder night, every individual is obligated to view himself as if he left Egypt. These five great sages understood this to mean that one must act in the same manner that the Jews had done. Therefore, at the outset of the night they performed the *mitzvos* of *matzah, maror* and commemorating the *korban Pesach*, just as the Jews had done in Egypt. The rest of the night they spent relating the miracles of the night and the exodus from Egypt.

DAY 30

י"ד ניסן
ערב פסח

Eating & Drinking After the Seder

One may not eat anything after the *afikomen* so that its taste remains in his mouth.

Other than the last two cups of wine, no additional wine may be drunk after the *afikomen* as well. There are three reasons for this prohibition:

1. One should not become intoxicated and unable to fulfill the *mitzvah* of remaining awake discussing *yetzias Mitzrayim*. This would only apply to intoxicating drinks.
2. It should not appear that one is adding cups to the four cups of wine. This would apply to wine and any *chamar medina*.
3. In order to keep the taste of the *matzah* in his mouth. This would apply to any drinks with a strong taste. Water and seltzer would be permitted.

Keeping in mind all of the above it is preferable that one should be stringent like all of the reasons and only drink water or lightly flavored drinks after the Seder. If necessary (especially on the second night), one can drink fruit juices.

This prohibition begins after eating the *afikomen* and continues until the morning.¹

1. *Alos Hashachar* (72 minutes before sunrise.)

E*in Maftirin achar HaPesach Afikomen.* One may not eat any dessert after the *korban Pesach* and *afikomen* in order that its taste remains in his mouth. This *halacha* is the response given earlier in the Seder to the wise son's question. Although the law applies only to the commandments of *korban Pesach* and *afikomen*, its message applies to all the *mitzvos* in the Torah. If one truly wishes to be able to “taste” the pleasure and enthusiasm of *mitzvos*, it is not enough to perform the *mitzvos*; the *mitzvos* must become a part of his life and his very being. In order to comprehend the depth and beauty of the *mitzvah* one must ensure that the taste of the *mitzvah* remains in his mouth after he completes its performance.

This can be accomplished by toiling to understand, learn and perform every detail, as minute as it might seem, of a *mitzvah*. The *mitzvah* will then be exciting and “tasty” with the taste remaining long after the *mitzvah*'s performance and continuing to influence and affect the person.

Both the *korban Pesach* and *matzah* are *mitzvos* that require tremendous toil and detail to be able to be performed properly. They teach us that when one invests his mind and energy into *mitzvos*, their “taste” will remain.

Taste of Mitzvos





Conclusion



The Seder night and its lesson are the culmination of weeks of preparation. Yet, the next morning one may wonder what is the task here on?

The students of the *Volozhin Yeshiva* had a motto that defined their approach to life. They would say in Yiddish, “*mir darf baken matzos*, we must bake matzos.” What was the meaning of this dictum?

During *nirtzah* of the second Seder, the liturgy entitled *va’amartem zevach Pesach* is recited. In describing the destruction of *Sedom* that occurred on Pesach, it states, “*Sedom* was evil and was destroyed with fire, *Lot* was saved and he baked *matzos* at the end of Pesach.” Although we find that *Lot* had baked and served *matzos* to the angels that had come to destroy *Sedom*, the liturgy states that *Lot* also baked *matzos* after the destruction of *Sedom* and his escape.¹ At this point in time *Lot* and his daughters were under the impression that the world had been destroyed as it had been during the flood in *Noach’s* times. One can only imagine their despair and desperation as evidenced by *Lot’s* daughters’ plans for *Lot* to father their children. Yet, the liturgist teaches us that even as *Sedom* is smoldering and the world has been “destroyed”, *Lot* had only one task at hand; it was Pesach and he needed to bake *matzos*.

In the *Yeshiva* of *Volozhin* they applied this lesson to their own lives. There are times that there are fires raging that threaten the destruction of the world at large or specifically the Torah world. They may be the flames of communism, socialism or any other movement or agenda that exists. Yet, we have only one mission; “we need to bake *matzos*.” We need to continue to strengthen our *Torah* learning and mitzvah observance without paying attention to what is occurring around us.

This is the take home lesson of the Seder. All of the ideas and messages that we learned and inculcated into our being, must be channeled into strengthening our *Torah* learning and *mitzvos* observance.

Mir Darf Baken Matzos

1. See *Haggada, Otzer Meforshei Haggada* for other explanations.



Glossary

avodas Hashem – Serving God

avdei Hashem – God’s servants

bedieved – as a second choice (literally, once it was done)

beis hakenesses, batei kenisyos (plural) – synagogue(s)

beis hamikdash – the Holy Temple

bris bein habesarim – covenant between God and Avrohom

brocha acharona – blessing recited after eating

cheirus – freedom

Chazal – the Sages

kzayis – size of an olive, minimal amount to fulfill eating obligations

korban – sacrifice

lechatchila – ideally

lechem haponim – loaves of breads on the table in the *beis hamikdash*

reviis – minimal amount to fulfill drinking obligations

melacha – forbidden action on Shabbos and holidays

mussaf – additional prayer recited on *Shabbos* and festivals

posuk – verse

shacharis – morning prayer

shalsh regalim – the three festivals

yetzias Mitzrayim – exodus from Egypt



Sources

Introduction – Heard from *Rav Breveda*

Day 1 – *Derashos Chasam Sofer, Shabbos HaGadol* pg 236

Day 2 – *Haggada Doresh Tov* pg 404-405

Day 3 – *Haggada Doresh Tov* pg 39-40

Day 4 – *Haggada Talelei Oros* 47-48

Day 5 – *Divrei Yeshayahu, Rav Y. Cheshin, Derush l'bar mitzva* 22

Day 6 – *Haggada Doresh Tov* pg 93-94 quoting *Rav Elyashiv*

Day 7 – *Divrei Yirmiyahu, Shemos* 6:9, *Haggada Doresh Tov* pg 52

Day 8 – *Meshech Chochma, Shemos* 6:7

Day 9 – *Leil Shimurim (Rav Breveda)* pg 106-121

Day 10 – *Haggada Shel Pesach, Rav Elyashiv* pg 76

Day 11 – *Ma'ayan Hashavua, Shemos* pg 147

Day 12 – *Haggada Doresh Tov* pg 112-113

Day 13 – *Sefer Ve'higadetta Shemos* pg 227-228

Day 14 – *Leil Shimurim* 171-173

Day 15 – *Meshech Chochma, Shemos* 6:7

Day 16 – *Haggada Sam Derech, Rav S.Z. Broide*

Day 17 – *Ha'Emek Davar, Shemos* 12:17

Day 18 – *Leil Shimurim* pg 153-155

Day 19 – *Haggada Doresh Tov* pg 456-457

Day 20 – *Haggada Doresh Tov* pg 460

Day 21 – *Sefer Divrei Aggada* pg 484

Day 22 – *Haggada Doresh Tov* pg 71-72

Day 23 – *Meshech Chochma Shemos* 12:3, *Ramban* 12:31

Day 24 – *Meshech Chochma, Shemos* 6:7

Day 25 – *Divrei Yirmiyahu, Shemos* 12:22

Day 26 – *Haggada Talelei Oros* pg 365, *Haggada Kemetzeh Sholol Rov*
pg 318-321

Day 27 – *Meshech Chochma, Shemos* 6:7

Day 28 – *Haggada Kemetzeh Sholol Rov* pg 333-334

Day 29 – *Haggada Talelei Oros* pg 114-115 citing *Abarbanel*

Day 30 – *Pirkei Moed, Rav Gifter*

Conclusion – *Rav Shmaryahu Shulman* in the name of a student of
the *Volozhin Yeshiva*

