

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
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Shlita

Pesach



בס"ד

# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings

## Pesach

### Chametz and Matzah

*Chametz* symbolizes the *yetzer hara* and *matzah* represents the *yetzer tov*. As such, many essential lessons in *avodas Hashem* and methods of overcoming the *yetzer hara* can be derived from the halachos of *chametz* and *matzah*.

One of the halachos regarding baking *matzah* is that the dough must be kneaded during the whole process. *Shulchan Aruch* (459:2) states, לא יניחו העיסה בלא עסק ואפילו רגע אחד, "Don't leave the dough idle, without it being kneaded, not even for a moment." This prevents the dough from becoming *chametz*.

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* said that this hints to the advantage of always being active in *avodas Hashem*. As it states in *Pirkei Avos*, רצה הקב"ה לזכות את ישראל לפיכך הרבה

"Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted Bnei Yisrael to have many merits; therefore He gave them many mitzvos..." Being busy with mitzvos enables a person to always be involved in Hashem's service.

Tzaddikim said, "If you don't have the strength to learn Torah, say *Tehillim*. If you don't have the strength for saying *Tehillim*, give *tzedakah*..." But always do something in *avodas Hashem*.

The Gemara (Brachos 28.) states, "When Reb Zeira was weak from his studies, he would go to the doorway of Reb Noson bar Tuvi's beis medresh. He said, 'When the rabbanim pass, I will stand up for them and receive reward.'"

It is this concept that we are referring to. Always

seek ways to be active in avodas Hashem. Don't let time pass idly. And even when you need to rest, try to do it in a way that you will be earning mitzvos.

Rebbe Zusha of Hanipoli *zt'l* said that there are three lessons that we can learn from children: (1) If a child wants something, he cries until he gets it. (2) A child is happy when his needs are met.<sup>1</sup> (3) A child is always active.

The matzah teaches us several other important lessons:

The letters of מצה and חמץ are almost the same. They both have a *mem* and a *tzaddik*. The difference is that matzah has a *heh* and chametz has a *ches*. The difference between *heh* and *ches* is only that the upper leg of the *heh* is broken. Rebbe Shlomo Dovid of Slonim *zt'l* says that the

broken ה hints at a broken heart and humility.

Also, the close similarity of the letters of חמץ and מצה teach us that it is often difficult to differentiate between *kedushah* and *tumah*, and that is precisely how the *yetzer hara* catches people. The Meor Einayim (ד"ה חמץ תזב) writes, "*Kedushah* is called matzah, and the *kelipah* is called chametz. There's barely a difference between them, except the small drop that differentiates a *ches* from a *heh*. The *yetzer hara* generally doesn't tell a person to do an *aveirah* because he knows many will not take heed. The *yetzer hara* convinces him that an *aveirah* is actually a mitzva." The difference between good and evil is so minute that it is easy to err. This is the tactic of the *yetzer hara*.

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1. Adults are not that way. When they acquire their desires, they immediately fret that they don't have more.

We can also say that the slight difference between the *ches* and the *heh* indicates that all it takes is a drop of improvement, and one can reach very high levels.

The following story teaches this principle:

Reb Eliyahu Dessler zt"l encouraged his students to take on a small *kabbalah* before Pesach. He assured them that even if the *kabbalah* seems insignificant, it can elevate them to very high levels.

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

The *bachur* said that he didn't take on anything. He didn't believe that a small *kabbalah* could make a noticeable difference in his spiritual life.

Rav Dessler told him the following *mashal*:

A person from a third-world country was visiting New York City. He was astounded by the tall skyscrapers. In his hometown, the tallest building was two floors high. He stood outside a skyscraper and looked up in awe.

A passerby noticed him and told him, "There is an observation deck on the top floor. From there, you can see the entire New York City."

"Amazing!" the man replied. "But who has the strength to walk up all those stairs to the top of the building?"

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

The foreigner had never heard of an elevator before, but the man explained briefly how to use one and that by pressing the button of the floor you need, it will deliver you there."

The man entered the building, and went into the elevator, but didn't press any button. The door closed, it turned dark, and he was afraid that he would be locked inside. Panicking, he began hitting random buttons. As it turned out, he pressed the emergency button. The emergency personnel who came to the "rescue" asked him, "Why didn't you press the button of the floor that you wanted?"

He replied, "I wanted to go to the observation deck, and I didn't believe that by pressing a button, I would get there. I thought, 'climbing the stairs would take hours, so how can a simple push of a button get me so high?'"

But, as we know, pushing the correct button would have gotten him to the highest heights. Reb Dessler explained to the *bachur* that people think tiny *kabbalos* are insignificant, but it isn't so.

With each small *kabbalah*, one grows immensely.

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

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

The same concept applies to doing a single good deed. You think it doesn't mean much, but it could elevate you to very high levels.

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

As we wrote, chametz represents the yetzer hara. How does one win over

the yetzer hara? One approach can be derived from the manner we free ourselves from chametz.

*Shulchan Aruch* (Orach Chaim 434:2) states, "At night, immediately after *bedikas chametz*, be *mevatel* the chametz in your heart. Say, 'All chametz that is in my possession...should be like the earth of the ground... and it is good to repeat this bitul in the morning.'"

This is called *bitul chametz*, because in addition to finding and burning the chametz, we annul the chametz in our heart with our words. We tell ourselves that we don't want the chametz; it is meaningless to us.

We can overcome the *yetzer hara* in a similar way. We will explain:

The *Mesilas Yesharim* (ch.15) teaches us that people pursue the pleasures of this world because they think the pleasures are a worthwhile, enjoyable

pursuit. The *Mesilas Yesharim* recommends that we recognize (a) that the pleasures are really nothing at all, (b) the pleasures only last for a moment, and (c) the troubles that can come from them are longstanding and very severe.

He uses food as an example: The pleasure isn't so significant, the pleasure is anyway just for a moment, and the illnesses that can come from eating unhealthy foods can be very severe, *chalilah*.

When one thinks about these matters, he won't pursue the pleasures of this world.

Reb Gad'l Eisner *zt'l* said something similar regarding forbidden thoughts. When one thinks these thoughts are pleasurable, maintaining pure thoughts is a great challenge. But when one recognizes how much he suffers from these thoughts, he can easily push these forbidden thoughts away.

Reb Gad'l taught this lesson with a parable:

Someone was carrying expensive diamonds. Out of the corner of his eyes, he saw thieves walking behind him. He knows that if he runs, the thieves will know he is carrying something precious, and they will chase him. So he continued walking calmly, as though he had nothing to hide, and the thieves left him be.

The *nimshal* is:

The best way to overcome forbidden temptations is by not desiring them. Because if you want those thoughts, you will be tempted to think about them, and you will need to force yourself to run away from those evil thoughts. And when you run away, the bad thoughts chase after you. A wiser approach is to decide in your heart that you don't want these temptations, and then you will easily and effortlessly avoid

thinking the forbidden thoughts.

Chazal say, מבטל בלבו, "annul it in your heart." The Beis Aharon zt'l explains that you should fill your heart with a desire to do good and serve Hashem until all other temptations are *batel* and annulled.

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

Reb Shimshon Pinkus zt'l learned in Yeshivas Chevron (Yerushalayim) and dorned in a rented apartment, which he shared with a few *bachurim*. One year, all the *bachurim* went home to their families for Pesach, and Reb Shimshon Pinkus remained alone in the apartment.

So, that year, *bedikas chametz* was his responsibility.

He studied the halachos well, and he wasn't lax when he did the *bedikas chametz*; it took him several hours.

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

He climbed up and found the roof cluttered. The residents used the roof for storage, and many items were tossed up there. Reb Shimshon realized that to do an effective *bedikas chametz*, he would have to tidy up first.

He knew it would take hours (and this was after performing *bedikas chametz* for several hours in his apartment). Still, he kept reminding himself, "I'm doing the mitzvah of *bedikas chametz*!" That thought gave him the strength to continue.

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

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

The inspiration remained the entire *yom tov*. And after Pesach passed, he kept growing higher and higher.

Reb Shimshon Pinkus said, "If I have any good qualities today, it is from that mitzvah *d'rabbanan* of *bedikas chametz*, which I did with *mesirus nefesh*."<sup>2</sup>

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2. Reb Shimshon Pinkus always considered that particular night of *bedikas chametz* as the day he was born because that was when he became a new person, כקטן שנולד. Chazal say that tzaddikim are

Reb Yeruchem, the *mashgiach* of Mir *zt'l*, said, "If we came to this world just to perform the mitzvah of *biur chametz*, בִּיּוּר חָמֵץ, it would already be worthwhile. This mitzvah imbues us with *kedushah* and *teharah*."

Chametz represents *tumah*, and therefore, when we do *bedikas* and *biur chametz* it is a very special time. We cleanse ourselves and the world from all impurities.

The Bas Ayin (*Drush lePesach, Metzora*) writes, "*Erev Pesach*, when a person does *teshuvah sheleimah* before Hashem, and eradicates all the chametz and evil from his heart, that time is the

greatest *eis ratzon* of the year!"

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

When we burn the chametz, it is an auspicious time for tefillah, because the world is clear, the *tumah* is removed, and our tefillos will be answered.

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*niftar* on the day they were born. And, indeed, Reb Shimshon Pinkus was *niftar* Wednesday, on the 12th of Nisan, and was buried Thursday evening, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, the night of *bedikas chametz* (Pesach, that year, began on Motzei Shabbos).

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

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

The Ateres Yehoshua of Djikev *zt'l* would say the tefillah of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk *zt'l* (printed at the beginning of many *machzorim* and *siddurim*) when he burned his chametz.

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

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

### ***Achilas Matzah***

The Chasam Sofer (*Choshen Mishpat* 196) writes, "The mitzvah of eating matzah Seder night is the only mitzvah through eating that has remained with us in exile. We don't have the mitzvah of eating *korban Pesach* anymore or

eating from the other *korbanos*. We can't eat *terumah* or *maasar sheini* either. Matzah is the only mitzvah we have for eating, and we can only perform it once a year. If this mitzvah will also not be performed correctly, will Hashem be happy with that?"

In a letter, Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l* writes, "You must be careful to eat more than the minimal amount of matzah and *maror*, for if you eat less than the correct amount, you've forfeited the mitzvah. If one has wisdom, how could he not be cautious to perform these mitzvos properly? We cannot perform these mitzvos the entire year, and who can guarantee he will be alive to keep them next year? Isn't it enough that we don't keep the mitzvos of tefilin and *birchas hamazon* properly throughout the year? Why should these mitzvos also be lacking?"

The Tiferes Shlomo writes that the uniqueness

of matzah is that it enters the body. It is a spiritual medication. It removes all the bad from inside us and enables us to be reunited with Hashem.

One year at the Seder, the Kedushas Levi zy'a shouted with his trademark *hislahavus* and fervor, "Ribono shel Olam! Either you come into me, or I will come into you."

Rebbe Berish of Biyala zy'a said, "People ask rabbanim questions how to *kasher* their utensils, but no one asks how to *kasher* their mouth to be a fitting utensil to eat the holy matzos on Pesach."

It says (*Vayikra* 6:9), מצות, תאכל במקום קדוש, "Eat matzah in a holy place." The Tiferes Shlomo teaches this to mean we should make our

mouth a holy place, clean from *lashon hara* and other forbidden speech, and pure from nonkosher foods. Then our mouths will be a ,מקום קדוש, a holy place, a fitting place to eat the matzos.

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

We understand from this that eating matzah on Pesach is like a *chasunah*.

The Maharil writes that we say seven *brachos* before eating the matzah just as we say *sheva brachos* at a *chasunah*.<sup>3</sup> This demonstrates that the mitzvah of eating matzah

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3. There are different ways to count the seven *brachos*. The Vilna Gaon was of the opinion that we should say *אל נטילת ידים* by *ורחץ*. According to his opinion this is the count:

[1] בורא פרי הגפן [2] מוקדש ישראל והזמנים [3] שהחיינו [4] על נטילת ידים [5] בורא פרי האדמה [6] אשר גאלנו [7] בורא פרי הגפן (לכוס שני)

is like a *chasunah*. Even if our sins caused us to be banished from Hashem, *chalilah*, the relationship is reestablished with this mitzvah.

The Midrash says that when Adam HaRishon ate from the Tree of Knowledge, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, *kiveyachol*, divorced him (*geirushin*). As it states, ויגרש את האדם. After he did teshuvah, the marriage, *kiveyachol*, was reinstated.

Similarly, if someone is distant from Hashem because of his sins, the union is reestablished when he eats matzah, for it is like a *chasunah*.

Rebbe Mendel of Riminov *zt'l* teaches that eating *afikomon* is conducive to battling bad *taavos*. The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* (*Haggadah shel Pesach* 56) writes that this is alluded to in the

word אפיקומן. *Chazal* say that אפיקו מיני stands for אפיקו מתקה, bring out sweet foods. (Literally, the *afikomon* is like dessert, as it is eaten at the end of the meal.) The Yismach Yisrael explains, אפיקו מיני מתקה means that this mitzvah will remove our temptations for the sweet pleasures of this world from our systems.<sup>4</sup>

The Beis Avraham *zt'l* generally ate very little, and his rebbetzin would encourage him to eat more. "I made good food for you; why don't you eat it?" she would say.

He would answer דאס מיר אדזעט מיר, which means he is disgusted by food. His sole desire was *ruchniyus*.

But at the Seder, he ate the matzah with relish and gusto. His rebbetzin looked askance at the way he ate the matzah. She said, "Did

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

you become a *baal taavah'nik*? Did you suddenly become so interested in food?"

He commented, "The entire year, I am not interested in food, and you encourage me to eat. Once a year, when I finally have an interest in food, they say that I am a *baal taavah*." The truth is that it is exactly that way. When one holds back from *taavos* the entire year, he experiences great pleasure from eating matzah.<sup>5</sup>

An old custom already stated in the Gemara is that children grab the *afikomon* at the Seder. Once, at Reb Shimon Sofer's Seder, his grandson asked, "Why do children grab the *afikomon*? Doing so gets them into the habit of stealing."

Reb Shimon Sofer didn't answer. He just continued with the Seder. During the meal, he told his grandson, "You asked a good question: Why do we steal the *afikoman*? Why is it encouraged? The Gemara mentions this custom, as it states (*Pesachim* 109), הוֹטְפִין מַצָּה, "we grab the matzos." The Gemara says that this is done to create excitement so that the young children stay awake and hear the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. However, we can still wonder why it is performed in a manner of stealing.

"I never heard an explanation before, and I never thought about it either. But as soon as you asked me, I had an answer. I didn't answer you when you asked because I wanted to teach you that a Yid

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5. The Nesivos Shalom *zy'a* once saw a *bachur* from his yeshiva eating a falafel with immense relish. To rebuke him in a non-confrontational manner, the Nesivos Shalom told him, "The way you are eating reminds me of how the Beis Avraham would eat the matzah on Pesach."

must abide by the Torah, mitzvos, and *minhagim*, even when he doesn't understand the reason. And now I will share my explanation of this custom:

"The *pasuk* states (*Shemos* 11:7), ולכל בני ישראל לא יחרץ כלב, לשונו, 'To all of Bnei Yisrael, no dog will bark.' Chazal (*Pesachim* 113) advise that one should live in a city with dogs, as this protects the residents from theft because dogs bark at thieves. On the night of *yetzias mitzrayim*, the dogs didn't bark. This means thieves were able to steal. At the Seder we steal the *afikoman* to commemorate the miracle that the dogs didn't bark."

### ***Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim***

Once a year, at the Seder, we can perform the unique mitzvah of discussing *yetzias Mitzrayim* with our families. Speaking about *yetzias Mitzrayim* is actually the culmination of the miracles that occurred

in Mitzrayim, as we will explain:

The Ramban (*Bereishis* 6:19), when addressing the measurements of Noach's *teivah*, he comments that the *teivah* was far too small to carry all the animals and a year-long supply of food. The Ramban writes, "There are many species of wild animals. Some of them are very large, like the elephants... And, also the small animals, there are so many of them! And there are endless species of birds. Noach had to bring all of these into the *teivah*, together with their specific foods. Certainly, the *teivah* wasn't large enough. Even ten *teivos* of these dimensions wouldn't be large enough! However, it was a miracle. החזיק מועט את המרובה, a small area held so much."

The Ramban asks that since it anyway took a miracle to contain all the animals with their food supply, the *teivah* could have been even smaller,

and miraculously, there would be space for everything it needed to carry. Why did Hashem instruct Noach to build a relatively large *teivah*?

The Ramban's second answer<sup>6</sup> is that Hashem wants, למעט הנס, to minimize miracles so that they won't be as noticeable. Hashem told Noach to build a large *teivah*, so it won't be so openly wondrous that it was large enough to hold all the animals. Similarly, all miracles that Hashem performs are somewhat concealed.

But with the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim* a new pattern was set in place because Hashem wanted to *increase* the miracles rather than minimize them. As it states (*Shemos* 11:9), ויאמר ה' אל

משה לא ישמע עליכם פרעה למען רבות מופתי בארץ מצרים, "Hashem said to Moshe, 'Pharaoh won't listen to you so that my miracles will multiply in Mitzrayim.'" Hashem desired to perform many miracles at *yetzias Mitzrayim*.

There were ten *makos* in Mitzrayim and more at the Yam Suf, although one miracle would have been sufficient to save the nation. Why didn't Hashem minimize the miracles, as He usually does?

The Dubno Magid *zt'l* answers with an analogy from a baker. He places one or two of his loaves of bread and cakes in the store window, so people passing by on the street will be tempted to come inside to buy. He also has

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6. The Ramban's first answer is that Hashem wanted that Noach to be occupied with building the *teivah* for a long time so that people would hear that a flood was approaching due to their evil deeds. Perhaps that would inspire them to repent. So, Hashem instructed Noach to build a large *teivah* that took 120 years to build.

many cakes and loaves of bread on his store's shelves to sell.

The goods in the store window serve a different purpose than the baked goods on the shelves. The baked goods in the window are to draw people into the store. Therefore, these baked foods need to appear beautiful but don't necessarily have to be tasty. The baked goods on the shelves are for sale, and therefore, they can be somewhat less attractive, but they must taste good.

The Dubno Magid explains that miracles also serve one of two purposes.

Most miracles that Hashem performs are to save the Jewish nation. (For example, the Purim miracle was to save the Jewish nation from Haman's decree.) When Noach and all the animals were saved from the flood, the purpose of the miracle was to preserve the existence of mankind and animals in the world. And

when the objective is to save the world or Klal Yisrael, Hashem minimizes the miracles. It isn't necessary to publicize them.

But the purpose of the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim* was to teach the Jewish nation *emunah* in Hashem. As it states (*Shemos* 6:6-7), ...והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים... "I will take you out of your affliction in Mitzrayim...so you will know that I am Hashem your G-d." And since the purpose is awareness of Hashem, the greater the miracles, and the more numerous, the better because it will engrave into our intellect the awareness of Hashem. Each miracle taught us some more that Hashem created and continues to lead the world.

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

Mitzrayim, it would be counterproductive to harden Pharaoh's heart. But when the purpose is, למען תספר שמי בכל הארץ, that the entire world should know about Hashem and His wonders, it was necessary to harden Pharaoh's heart so that more miracles could take place.

We now understand the significance of telling the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* at the Seder. By doing so, we are achieving the purpose for which the miracles were intended. The miracles were performed specifically for the purpose that we should sit with our children

and discuss Hashem's wonders.

At the Seder, the father wears a *kittel*, representing *tachrichim* shrouds. The Chasan Sofer *zt'l* explains that this reminds the father that he won't live forever. There will be a time when he will be clothed in *tachrichim* and buried in the ground, and then he won't be able to tell his family the *sippur yetzias Mitzrayim*. This realization will inspire him to take advantage of the night, to tell his children about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and to implant in them *emunah* in Hashem.<sup>7</sup>

Rebbe Shmelke of Nickelsburg *zt'l* added that

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7. One year, when the Beis Yisrael of Gur's *zy'a* was taking off his *kittel* after the Seder he said, "Earlier tonight, we put on the *kittel* and now we're taking it off. But there will come a time when we wear a *kittel* and never take it off..."

Reb Shimon Shwab *zt'l* said that when a father speaks to his children moments before his *petirah*, they listen carefully. They will do their best to keep his final wishes. The father puts on a *kittel* because we want the children to listen to his lessons in *emunah* with the same seriousness and earnestness as they would at his final moments.

the *kittel* is worn to help the father envision as though he had already passed away, and for the Seder night, heaven let him return to earth to make the Seder so that he can teach *emunah* to his children. With this thought in mind, he will certainly utilize every minute and perform the mitzvos as best as he can.

There is an ideal to conceal your good deeds from others. No one other than Hashem needs to know of your good deeds.

A handyman came to the home of the Husiatiner Rebbe zt'l to patch up a

couch. The Rebbe showed him that he forgot to fix a hole in the back of the couch. "Rebbe," the handyman countered, "no one looks there."

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

This is because it is easier to do good deeds *l'shem Shamayim* when no one knows about them. Therefore, as a rule, it is a good idea to conceal your good deeds.

But like every rule, there are exceptions to this rule, too.<sup>8</sup> For example, Rebbe Meir of Djikev zy'a (*Imrei*

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8. There was a scholar who wanted to study Torah in concealment, so that his learning would be entirely *l'shem Shamayim*. My grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l advised him against that practice. The Rebbe explained, "When tax auditors come to appraise someone's assets, he will hide all the expensive items of his home, to conceal from the tax auditors that he is earning well. But he won't hide his bread and butter because these are staples that every home must have. Similarly, there's an ideal to hide your good deeds, but studying Torah is a staple. It is something that one simply can't be without. And therefore, there is no reason to conceal it."

*No'am*) says that parents shouldn't conceal their good deeds from their children so that the children will learn to be like their parents.

This is indicated in the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 31:20), מִה רַב מִזֶּה רַב, most of your good deeds, אֲשֶׁר צִפַּנְתָּ לִירְאִיךָ, you should conceal. פְּעֻלַּת לְחוּסִים, but for those who rely on you – your children, נֶגְדַת בְּנֵי אָדָם, do your good deeds in front of them, so that they should learn from you.

On the words, וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ, Onkelus writes, וְתַחֲוִי לְבִנְךָ, "Show your children." Because on this night, parents should show their good deeds to their children so they can learn from them.

When the head of the family breaks the middle matzah in half for *yachatz*,

the larger half of the matzah is wrapped and concealed, and the smaller half is left on the table. This hints that people should conceal most of their good deeds.

But then the children search for the *afikomon*. They find the larger half that was concealed. Because on the Seder night, we want the children to see our concealed good deeds so that they can learn from their parents.<sup>9</sup>

### A Month of *Emunah*

Chazal say, בְּנִסָּן נִגְאָלוּ וּבְנִסָּן בְּנִסָּן, just as we were redeemed from Mitzrayim in the month of Nisan, so will we be redeemed from the present exile in Nisan. Rebbe Menachem Nochum of Boyan-Tchernovitz *zt'l* (ד"ה נִסָּן 5695 *Tiferes Menachem*) explains that this is because in Nisan our *emunah*

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

increases, and in the merit of *emunah* we will be worthy of redemption. As Chazal (*Yalkut Shimoni, Hosheia* 915) say, "In the merit of *emunah* our forefathers were redeemed from Mitzrayim, and in the merit of *emunah* we will be redeemed from the present *galus*."<sup>10</sup>

At the Seder we eat matzah, the *מַיְכֵלָה דְּמִיָּהּ מִנֹּחַח*, food of belief, and we repeat the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* to our children so that they can acquire pure *emunah* in Hashem.<sup>11</sup>

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

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**10.** The Gemara (*Shabbos* 31.) teaches that the word *emunah* (mentioned in *Yeshayah* 33:6) represents *sefer Zeraim*, the tractate of *Mishnayos* that deals with agriculture (such as the laws of giving *trumah* and *maasar*). Therefore, in Nisan, when agricultural activity is at its height, our *emunah* can reach its highest peaks, as well (see *Hamak Davar Shemos* 13:4).

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

"I was in the camps with a friend, and I constantly shared with him words of *emunah* and *bitachon*. I encouraged him to trust that Hashem will save us, and that one day we would be free. But my friend was pessimistic, he feared the worst, and it was hard for him to hear my optimistic outlook.

"Then came the dreaded day. The Germans told us that they are taking us to get showered. We knew they were taking us to the gas chambers. My friend turned to me and said, 'What do you say now?'

"I answered, 'Even now I trust in Hashem. *Hashem תְּשׁוּעַת ה' כְּהֵרֵף עֵינַי*, Hashem can save us in a moment.'

"The Nazi tried to close the door of the gas chamber, but there

questions about *Yetzias Mitzrayim* other times during the year, the father must also answer him<sup>12</sup>. Nevertheless, the holy Torah teaches us that throughout the year, even if you tell your son the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the words won't penetrate the child's heart. The Haggadah teaches, לא אמרתי, אלא בשעה שיש מצה ומרור מונחים, 'the time I want you to speak about *yetzias Mitzrayim* is when you have matzah and *marror* in front of you.' Because on the night of Pesach, the mind is open for

comprehending, the light of wisdom is revealed, and *emunah* and *bitachon* hover over all Jewish people. At this time, when you will answer your son's questions and you will tell him the entire story, your words will certainly enter his ears, and he will truly believe in *yetzias Mitzrayim*. The rest of the year, when there's darkness in the world, the son cannot properly receive the father's words and believe."

Therefore, the Mishnah (*Pesachim* 10:4) says, "If the child isn't wise enough to

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were too many people inside, and the door wouldn't shut. I was heavy, so out of all the people inside, the Nazi pulled me out, so he could close the door. That's how my life was saved."

When he repeated the story each year at the Seder, he would add, "Do you want to know how I had this high level of *bitachon*? It came from my father's Sedarim. He would speak a lot about *emunah* and *bitachon*, and his words were firmly implanted in my heart."

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

ask questions on his own, his father should teach him to ask questions," because it is imperative to teach the children *emunah* specifically at the ideal time of the Seder when the children can internalize the lessons.

The Lechovitzer *zt'l* said, (*Tehillim* 116:10), הֵאֱמַנְתִּי, I believe in Hashem, כִּי אֶדְבַר, because I speak about *emunah*. Therefore, when we speak about *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, it leads us to believe. The Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l* adds that

the mitzvah of *Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim* is *mesugal* for *emunah*. The difference between a *segulah* and a *refuah* is that a *refuah* can be explained scientifically how it works and how it heals, while a *segulah* heals in ways that can't be explained. Performing the mitzvah of *sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim* fills our hearts with *emunah* in inconceivable and supernatural ways.<sup>13</sup>

Chazal teach us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu

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**13.** The Chida *zt'l* writes that we should tell the following story at the Seder.

A woman living in Tzefas was plagued by a *dibuk*. A spirit of a *rasha* attached itself to her *neshamah* and was afflicting her.

The Arizal sent Reb Chaim Vital to heal her.

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

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

The spirit replied, "This woman woke up early in the morning, and she was striking flint stones to make fire, but she was unsuccessful. In frustration, she shouted, 'Let it be for the Satan,'

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

The Tur (*Orach Chaim* 115) explains that we are saying, "Hashem, You are our Father, and a father has a *mitzvah* to teach his children

Torah. Therefore, as a Father, open our hearts and teach us Torah."

Similarly, Reb Yissachar Dov of Belz said, Hashem is our father, so Hashem will teach us the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* to perform the *mitzvah* והגדת לבנך, and when Hashem is the teacher, the lessons will remain firmly rooted in our hearts.<sup>14</sup>

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and because of those words, I had permission to enter her as a *dibuk*."

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

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

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

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

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

**14.** Reb Elyah Lopian *zt"l* heard the following story in Kelm from

We see from all this that the Seder is the "peak time" for attaining *emunah*. However, the highest point of *emunah* is on the final days of Pesach. The first days of Pesach gradually build up our *emunah* until we reach the climax and peak on the last days.

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* (p.93:) writes, "The six days of Pesach are a preparation

for the seventh day, the primary day of Pesach. It is the most perfect day, the day they said *shirah*."

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk *zt'l* said that one could attain *emunah sheleimah* on the night of Shevi'i shel Pesach. On this night we should also strengthen our belief in *tzaddikim*, as it states (*Shemos* 14:31), וַיִּאֱמְנוּ בִּה' וּבַמֶּשֶׁה,

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a *talmid chacham* whose grandfather was the author of *Malbushei Yom Tov*.

One year, before beginning the Seder, the Malbushei Yom Tov sat in his place for a few minutes with intense emotion and then said, "Just as we are making the Seder now with our family, so too, the entire city is making the Seder exactly in the same manner – with matzah and *marror*, etc. The entire country is making the Seder this way, and also the entire world. Do you know where we saw this Seder? We saw it by our fathers. They saw it from their fathers, and the chain goes all the way back to the generations of the *rishonim*, the *emoraim*, the *tanaim*, until the people who left Mitzrayim and received the Torah. Hashem told the generation that received the Torah (*Shemos* 19:4), אַתֶּם רִאִיתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לַמִּצְרַיִם "You saw what I did to Mitzrayim." Rashi writes, 'It isn't a tradition that you received, it isn't just words that I am telling you. It isn't a testimony. Rather, you saw what I did in Mitzrayim.'" In this manner, he expressed to his family that it can be said that we are commemorating what we, as a nation saw when we left Mitzrayim. It isn't a story we read in a book or heard from a stranger. There is a direct line, a *mesorah* from *Yetzias Mitzrayim* until today.

"They believed in Hashem and in Moshe."

### Belief in Hashem Alone

We say in the *Haggadah*, כנגד ארבע בנים דברה תורה, אחד חכם וואחד רשע, "The Torah speaks of four sons: One is a *chacham*, and one is a *rasha*..."

Notice that about the *chacham* the *Hagaddah* states וא"ו, אחד חכם, without a prefix, and about the *rasha*, there's the וא"ו prefix, אחד רשע. אחד hints to the one Hashem.

"and one" means that he believes in Hashem *and* in something else, too.

For example, when someone asks the *rasha*, "How will you manage your future expenses?" he replies, "Hashem will help. And also, I plan to do this and that..." This person believes in Hashem, but not exclusively. It is ואחד, also Hashem. It isn't אחד, exclusively Hashem. The *chacham* recognizes that אחד; everything is from Hashem alone.<sup>15</sup>

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### 15. Consider the following *mashal*:

Witnesses testified to the guilt of a person accused of murder. The defense attorney said, "My client didn't commit the crime. The true murderer will be entering into the courtroom in less than five minutes, and he will admit in front of the judge and the jury that he committed the crime."

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

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

"That's true," the defense attorney said, "however, what happened in this courtroom over the past ten minutes proves that the

On Pesach we seek to acquire the awareness of *אחד* that everything is from the One Hashem.

The Maharal (*Gevuras Hashem* 60) writes, "All mitzvos of the *korban pesach* are about *אחדות*, oneness... [For example, it states (*Shemos* 12:9)], על כרעיו ועל קרבו, '[roast the *korban pesach* all at once], together with its legs and innards...' This is because it is improper for

this *korban* to be divided into sections. Something that's cut into sections isn't one. Everything about this *korban* is about oneness.

Another example of *אחדות* is the halachah of *בבית אחד יאכל* (12:46), 'You shall eat the *korban pesach* in one house.' The *korban* can't be divided and eaten in two different places (see *Pesachim* 86.). This demonstrates oneness.

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witnesses are false. As you saw, everyone in this courtroom was looking towards the door, including the witnesses who claimed my client committed the crime. Now, if they witnessed the crime, and are certain that my client committed the murder, why were they looking to the door? It should have been obvious to them that no one will be coming. But they continually looked at the door, which proves they are false witnesses, and they never saw the crime."

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

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

And it states, שה תמים בן שנה, 'An unblemished lamb, within its first year' (12:5). It must be in its first year. If it were two years old, it wouldn't be one.

And specifically, a שה (goat or sheep) is sacrificed, and not an עגל, calf. Due to its delicate nature, a שה, sheep or goat, is entirely one. As Chazal say, 'When a sheep injures one limb, its entire body feels it.' The reason for that is because a שה is very delicate; it doesn't have a heavy nature like oxen... Therefore, when one of its limbs is injured, the entire sheep feels the pain [which makes it 'one'].

And it states (*Shemos* 12:9), אל תאכלו ממנו נא ובשל מבושל כי אם, צלי אש, 'You shall not eat it partially roasted or cooked in water; only roasted over fire.' This is because when something is cooked in water or any other liquid,

the meat particles expand. Roasting, on the other hand, removes the juices from the meat, making it firm and solid. Roasted meat, therefore, demonstrates Oneness, and it is proper that the *korban* should be one for the One Hashem.

Also, it states (*Shemos* 12:46) עצם לא תשברו בו, 'You shall not break a bone in it,' for this would be dividing the bone in two... In short, the *korban Pesach* should be one because it teaches us that Hashem is One. The Jewish nation received this mitzvah because Hashem is One, and Hashem chose the Jewish nation because the Jewish nation is one."

Pesach, we attain awareness that ה' אחד, and we rely on Hashem alone. We do not trust in ואחד, Hashem, and something else, c"v.<sup>16</sup>

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16. We say in the *Haggadah*: מעשה בר' אליעזר ור' יהושע ור' אלעזר בן עזריה ור' עקיבא ור' טרפון שהיו מסבין בבני ברק... עד שבאו תלמידיהם ואמרו להם רבותינו, הגיע זמן קריאת

**Hashgachah Pratis**

Matzos are round, which signifies an ongoing cycle. This is people's general opinion of the world; they think everything runs on a cycle, not by *hashgachah pratis*.<sup>17</sup> By יחז, we break the round

matzah to remind ourselves that things don't run on their own. Everything happens by Hashem's decree.

The first *Ani Maamin* states, אני מאמין באמונה שלימה שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא ... עֲשָׂה וְעוֹשֶׂה וְיַעֲשֶׂה לְכָל הַמַּעֲשִׂים, this expresses

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,שמע של שחרית, "Reb Eliezer, Reb Yehoshua, Reb Elazar ben Azaryah, Reb Akiva, and Reb Tarfon were reclining [at the Seder] in Bnei Brak...until their students came and said, 'Our teachers, the time to read Shema of *shacharis* has arrived.'"

On the Seder (1) שאינו יודע לשאול (2) חכם (3) רשע (4) תם. is *roshei teivos* שחרית" ה' אחד. night we seek to instill in our children the awareness that.

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

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

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

The Bnei Yissaschar told the chassidim who were with him, "This Yid took the four children of the *Haggadah* and turned them into *kriyas Shema*." Our goal is to take children of all levels and to bring them the awareness of ה' אחד.

**17.** *Rashi* (*Bereishis* 25:30) writes that Yaakov was cooking lentils because they are round, which represents the cycle of the world.

our belief that Hashem did, does, and will do everything that occurs in the world. The top matzah represents our belief in עשה, did – that everything that happened in the past was from Hashem. The middle matzah represents עושה, does – that everything that is happening now is by His will. The bottom matzah represents our belief in יעשה, will do – that everything that will happen in the future will be from Hashem.

We break the middle matzah because it is hardest to believe that even the present is by Hashem's decree. It is easier to believe that the past was from Hashem and that what will occur in the future is from Hashem. Hardest is to recognize that even the present is from Hashem. We break this matzah to remind us that the past, the future, and even the present are controlled solely by Hashem's decree, and nothing happens by chance.

The *Haggadah* states, וירעו אתנו המצרים כמה שנאמר... וישמעו ה' את קולנו כמה שנאמר... ויוציאנו... ביד The words חזקה... כמה שנאמר... are repeated again and again.

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

It states (*Shemos* 13:3), היום אתם יוצאים בחודש האביב, "Today you are leaving, in the month of Aviv."

Rashi asks, "Don't we know which month they left Mitzrayim? Rashi answers that Moshe told them: Take note of the *chesed* Hashem is performing for you: He is redeeming you from Mitzrayim when the weather is comfortable, not

too hot or too cold, and there is no rain."

The joy of *yetzias Mitzrayim* is so great that it seems odd that the weather should be mentioned.

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

He will respond, "Did you not hear what I'm telling you? My life was saved! The weather is irrelevant!"

Nevertheless, the Torah tells us to take note of the

comfortable weather the Yidden enjoyed when they left Mitzrayim.

This is because even the weather on the day of *yetzias Mitzrayim* wasn't by chance. It was by Hashem's decree. Because everything, down to the smallest detail, is from Hashem, we should take note of even the most minor details.<sup>18</sup>

The Yidden in Mitzrayim ate matzah. As we say, *הא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתנא בארעא דמצרים*, "This is the bread of affliction that our forefathers ate in Mitzrayim."

When they left Mitzrayim, they ate matzah again. As we say, *מצה זו שאנו אוכלים... על שום שלא הספיק בצקם של*

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18. It states (*Bereishis* 45:23), *ולאביו שלח כזאת עשרה חמרים נשאים מטוב מצרים*, "Yosef sent his father ten donkeys..." The Maharal (*Gevuras Hashem* 10) explains that donkeys don't know what they are carrying, nor do they know the reason they carry their load. Yosef sent his father ten donkeys to hint to him that his ten brothers aren't responsible for selling him to Mitzrayim. Like donkeys, they didn't know what they were doing. They thought they were acting on their own, but they were really playing out Hashem's plan.

אבותינו להחמין, "Why do we eat matzah...? Because our forefathers didn't have time to let their dough rise."

The Yidden in Mitzrayim were probably looking forward to when they would be free and eat fresh bread. But Hashem's will always prevail. Hashem wanted them to eat matzah, so their circumstances, slavery, or freedom, couldn't change that.

We recline when we drink the four cups of wine and eat the matzah as a sign of our freedom. However, we don't recline when we eat *maror* because *maror* symbolizes the bitter *galus* in Mitzrayim.

*Korach* is in between and is comprised of both matzah and *maror*. The Poskim debate whether we should recline by *korach* or not, and the custom is to recline when eating *korach*.

But why? Doesn't *korach* include *maror*?

The Tiferes Shlomo answers that it is because the *marror* is wrapped in matzah, the food of *emunah* (מיכלא דמיהמנותא). When we have *emunah* that everything is for the good, even while we endure the bitterness of *galus*, we feel like free men.

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

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

The Torah tells us that at *kriyas Yam Suf*, the nation attained perfection in *emunah*, as it states, ויאמינו בה, "They believed in Hashem."

But this means that until then, their *emunah* wasn't complete. What was lacking in their *emunah*?

The Drashos HaRan (*Drush* 11) explains that the Jewish nation struggled with two questions.

(1) They didn't tell Pharaoh that they were leaving Mitzrayim for good. Instead, they told him that they were going for three days and would return. Why didn't they tell Pharaoh the truth, that they were leaving forever? The question is especially difficult, considering that at that time, Pharaoh was willing to send them out forever.

(2) They had asked the Mitzrim to lend them clothing and gold and silver utensils. Why didn't they demand that they gift those items to them? If they had demanded, the Mitzrim would have acquiesced after all the makos they received.

But when they stood at the seashore and the Mitzrim chased after them, everything became clear. Hashem wanted that the Mitzrim to chase after them and then to drown them in the sea, and the two factors, (1) that they said they would return in three days and (2) that they said they were merely borrowing the items, caused Pharaoh and the Mitzrim to chase after them. Had Pharaoh known initially that they were leaving forever and had the Mitzrim known initially that they were giving them their items forever, they wouldn't chase after the nation.

Hashem arranged it this way so the Mitzrim would chase after them and then be drowned in the Yam Suf.

Now, everything made sense, ויאמינו בה', and they believed in Hashem.

Our goal, however is to believe in Hashem without asking any questions

whatsoever. Even when things don't make sense to us, we must believe in Hashem. This is the level of *emunah* we seek to attain in Pesach, primarily on the seventh and eighth days of Pesach.

### The Holiness of the Seder

The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* once said to his grandson, Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l*:

"Eliyahu HaNavi attends the Seder of every Yid, and there are great tzaddikim who actually see him." And then, the Sar Shalom raised his head to heaven and said, "But a greater level is when one doesn't see but *believes* that Eliyahu comes to his Seder."

Every year, after saying *שפך חמתי*, the Noda BeYehudah would escort Eliyahu HaNavi *z'l* out of his house down the stairs to the street. The Chidushei HaRim praised this deed immensely and said, "The

Noda b'Yehuda didn't actually see Eliyahu Hanavi. But he believed that he was there. And believing is greater than seeing."

Eliyahu HaNavi is not the only one who comes to the Seder. Hashem is also present.

In the *Haggadah*, we say that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim, *ובמורא גדול זה גילוי*, *שכינה*, with His *Shechinah* revealed. This happens again each year at the Seder. The *Shechinah* is present.

Mishnayos Pesachim teaches the order of the Seder. The first step is (*Pesachim* 10:2), *מוזג לו כוס ראשון*, "They pour him the first cup of wine [to say Kiddush..." Notice the word *לו*, "for him."

The next Mishnah states (10:3), *הביאו לפניו מטבל בחזרת...*, "They bring before him the karpes, and he dips the vegetable. They bring

before him matzah and *marror*." This time, note that it states לפניו, "Before him." This is different than לו, "for him," written in the previous Mishnah.

The Tiferes Shlomo explains that לפניו means "before Hashem." Because when we sit at the Seder we are seated in front of Hashem. Once we begin the Seder it is לפניו, before Hashem.

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

The Belzer Rebbes would clap their hands before saying *Mah Nishtanah*. As it states (*Shemos* 28:35), וישמע קולו בבאו אל, הקדש "His sound shall be heard when he enters the sanctuary." And when we are at the Seder, it is like we are in the Beis HaMikdash.

Reb Shimon Shkop *zt'l* would do a *taanis dibur* at

the Seder. He explained that Hashem is at the Seder, as it says (*Shemos* 12:12), ועברתי, "I shall go through the land of Mitzrayim - I, and not an angel" And when the King is present, it isn't proper for the people at the table to engage in idle talk.

The Shlah HaKadosh (quoted in *Mishnah Berurah* 473:71) states that we shouldn't read *magid* reclining on our left side (הסיבה). We can explain that this, too, is because the *Shechinah* is present. It isn't proper to lean when seated before Hashem. (This is similar to the halachah that one doesn't recline at the Seder when his rebbe is present.)

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 12:) states, "Whoever prays for his needs in Aramaic, the *malachim* don't help him [elevate his tefillos before Hakadosh Baruch Hu] because *malachim* do not understand this language. But [when one visits the ill, he may daven in Aramaic] because the *Shechinah* is

with the ill person, as it states (*Tehillim* 41:4), ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי, "Hashem will preserve him on his ill-bed."

When you visit the sick, Hashem is present, and you can speak directly to Hashem. You don't need *malachim* to raise the tefillos to Hashem, so you may speak in Aramaic. The Arugas HaBosem *zt'l* explains that the same occurs at the Seder. We begin the Seder with ה'א להמא עניא, in Aramaic. The Arugas HaBosem *zt'l* explains that this is because Hashem is present at the Seder, so we can speak in Aramaic.

The Seder ends with ה'א גדיא, also in Aramaic. This hints that Hashem is present from the beginning

of the Seder until the end. (And this is one of the reasons tefillah is so powerful at the Seder. It is a tefillah directly to Hashem.)<sup>19</sup>

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

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

*Shulchan Aruch* (472:2) states, יסדר שולחנו בכלים נאים לפי כוחו, "One should set the table with beautiful utensils, according to his abilities." The Mishnah Berurah explains that beautiful utensils on the

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

table express the freedom we attained on that night.

The Magen Avraham (472:2) adds that the Maharil used to loan money to goyim and receive valuable utensils as collateral. Throughout the year, he didn't use those utensils. But he would take them out to use them to adorn his Seder table.

The Magen Avraham questions how he was permitted to use the gentiles' utensils; why wasn't it considered theft? The Magen Avraham answers, "Since the Maharil used them solely one day a year, the goyim weren't *makpid*." They didn't mind that their utensils were used for just one night, so it wasn't theft.<sup>20</sup>

But there is another question, raised by the Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (*Drashos*

*Shabbos HaGadol* vol.2 p.255). We are obligated to *tovel* all food utensils that we acquire from gentiles before using them. So, how could the Maharil use the Goyishe dishes?

Let us clarify that this isn't a halachic question because one isn't obligated to *tovel borrowed* utensils, only utensils that were acquired (either a purchase or a gift) from goyim. Nevertheless, the Chasam Sofer understands that a great *tumah* is present on gentile-owned utensils, and that the food that goes into them becomes contaminated. As the Chasam Sofer writes, יש בו סכנה וטומאה עצומה של לחמם טמא, "There is a danger, and a powerful *tumah*" when one eats on gentile utensils. Why wasn't the Maharil concerned about this

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

impurity? Why did he use those utensils at the Seder?

The Chasam Sofer replies that there was no concern at the Seder. There is so much *kedushah* on this night that the tumah of the non-Jewish utensils disappears. It becomes nullified by the great *kedushah* of the night.

It seems that the Maharil had another deep intention in borrowing and using the collateral items he collected from non-Jews. It wasn't solely to adorn his Seder table, rather, it was a commemoration of what happened in Mitzrayim. When the Jewish nation left Mitzrayim (*Shemos* 12:35), "וישאלו ממצרים כלי כסף וכל זהב," they borrowed from the Egyptians silver and gold utensils."

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

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

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

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

This *tumah* couldn't be removed by immersion in a mikvah because the utensils were borrowed (not acquired), so there was



The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* says we don't have to worry about that. Even if many people come to our home, there will be food for everyone, and there will be enough space. Because when we make a Seder, our homes become holy, and wherever there's holiness, there is abundance and plenty.

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

Chazal also say, עומדים צפופים ומשתחוים רווחים, it was crowded in the Beis HaMikdash, but everyone had plenty of room to bow down. How did this happen? It was because where there's *kedushah*, there is space.

Similarly, Chazal say that there was always sufficient לחם הפנים for all the *kohanim*. When many

*kohanim* were present, each *kohen* received a morsel of the breads, but that small amount was sufficient to satiate the *kohanim*. The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that this is because where there's holiness, there is sustenance.

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

"Chazal (*Megillah* 29.) say, 'In the future, the batei midrashim and the batei knesiyos will move to Eretz Yisrael.' Our houses will also move to Eretz Yisrael. This is the meaning of the words, השתא הכא לשנה הבאה, בארעה דישראל, 'We are here now. Next year *this house* will be in Eretz Yisrael'".<sup>22</sup>

### The Levels we can Attain

Until recently, there lived an elderly chassid in Bnei Brak who remembered the Alexander Rebbe's Seder. He related that when the Alexander Rebbe came to the Seder, his face was white from fear. The Rebbe was quiet for a few moments and then proclaimed, "If someone doesn't believe that he can rise from the lowest level

to the highest level on the Seder night, he is the *rasha* of the *Haggadah*!"

The *rasha* of the *Hagaddah* says, מזה העבודה הזאת לכם. The *Haggadah* clarifies that the issue with the *rasha's* question is that he says, לכם, "for you, and not for me." He thinks the Seder is for tzaddikim and not for him. He doesn't believe that he can rise to high levels through the holiness of the Seder.

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 116.) says about the Seder, מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח, "We begin with disgrace and conclude with praise." The *Yismach Yisrael zt'l* says that this pattern repeats itself each year at the Seder. Even a person who was at a lowly level at the beginning of the Seder,

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**22.** Interestingly, the Chasam Sofer writes that the miracle of a small area being sufficient for many people was seen in his day. He doesn't say where he saw this, but it is told that he was referring to his own Yeshiva in Pressburg. The physical size of the yeshiva wasn't large enough to hold the many students. A miracle occurred and there was room for everyone.

when he concludes the Seder, he is in a much higher place.

It states (*Shemos* 19:4), ואשא אתכם על כנפי נשרים, "I carried you on the wings of eagles." Why does it mention specifically a non-kosher bird? This hints that even someone impure with sin becomes pure on this night when he celebrates the Seder.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, the Chasam Sofer (*Drashos* בתחילתו תק"ף) writes, "Just as one is

obligated to imagine that he left Mitzrayim, so must one imagine that he was an idol worshiper and now, on this night, Hashem brought him close to serve Him. He should think that he will begin to serve Hashem with the mitzvos of this night."

This *yom tov* is called פסח, which means to jump because on this night, we jump up to levels we couldn't reach the entire year.<sup>24</sup>

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

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

**24.** Rebbe Shlomo Karliner *zy'a* taught, זבח פסח הוא לה' means when a person, זבח, slaughters his *yetzer hara* (by not following in the *yetzer hara's* ways), פסח הוא לה', he jumps up all the way up to Hashem's throne.

The Chareidim teaches that when the *malachim* see the high levels Yidden reach, they ask, "Why do they deserve this? How did they reach the *Kisei haKavod* so easily?" The answer is that Hashem

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

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

When the Imrei Emes grew up, he still remembered his father's explanation for the *kittel*. He was certain that his father wasn't just joking with him. The Imrei Emes understood that his father was hinting that Pesach, at the Seder, we reach great heights, we become like new. And we must be careful to retain this

cleanliness. We shouldn't tarnish our souls again.

There are two levels: *kedushah* and *taharah*. Generally, *taharah* should come first because first one purifies himself from *tumah* and *aveiros*, and then he can become *kadosh*, holy before Hashem. At the Seder, the first two *simanim*<sup>25</sup> are קדש ורחץ, which can be translated, "Make yourself holy and purify yourself." The ו"ו of רחץ implies that this is the order: *Kedushah* comes first, and then comes *taharah* (purity). This isn't the order we generally follow.

But this is the order the *malachim* follow. As we say in *Shacharis*, וכולם פותחים את פיהם בקדושה ובטהרה, "They all

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knows how difficult it is for a Yid to choose good in this lowly world where there are so many temptations. Due to the challenges, a Yid can reach very high levels, very quickly.

**25.** Customarily, we recite the fifteen *simanim* before performing the mitzvos of the night. The holy *sefarim* tell us that there is a holiness in just saying these words (see *Yesod v' Shoresh HaAvodah*).

open their mouths with *kedushah* and *taharah*."

The order קדש ורחץ indicates that at the Seder, we reach the level of *malachim*.<sup>26</sup>

We actually reach levels higher than the *malachim* on this night because at the Seder, we become a חלק אלוהי, one with Hashem. To

prove this, we bring a lesson from the Maharal.

The Maharal asks, how were the Yidden saved from the *makos*? When the *makos* came to Mitzrayim, they technically had the potential to harm everyone living there - even the Yidden.

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

Chassidim once heard Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* silently repeat to himself the *simanim* of the Seder (קדש ורחץ כרפס יחץ etc) before he began the Seder. Chassidim explain that he was reminding himself of all the wonderful steps of the Seder, so he could keep each step properly. This is because sometimes a person reaches נרצה and he regrets that they didn't take better advantage of the holy Seder with all its mitzvos, *segulos*, holiness, and bounties. Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* wanted to make certain that he takes advantage of all the mitzvos of this holy night.

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

The Maharal explains that Hashem gave the *malachim* the task of performing the first nine *makos*, and to protect the Jewish nation, Hashem raised the Yidden above the *malachim*.

The tenth plague, *makas bechoros*, was performed by Hashem, Himself. As we say in the *Haggadah*, ועברתי בארץ מצרים אני ולא מלאך, "I passed through Eretz Mitzrayim; it was I and not an angel."

Raising the Yidden higher than *malachim* wouldn't be enough since this *makah* came from a higher place, from Hashem, Himself. So what protected the Jewish nation from this plague? The Maharal answers: Hashem elevated the Yidden up to His level. They became a חלק אלוהי ממעל, *kivayachol*, united with Hashem, and thereby they were saved.

Every year, on this night, Hashem raises the Jewish nation to that high level.

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

Each part of the Seder is *mesugal* for growth in another area. We will use the *Mah Nishtanah* as an example. The Vayaged Moshe writes (in the name of kabbalah *sefarim*) that asking *Mah Nishtanah* is *mesugal* to have an open heart to understand Torah. "Therefore, I made it the custom in my house that whoever comes to me for the Seder should say *Mah Nishtanah*, and I daven for them that they should have a heart open for Torah. And after everyone says *Mah Nishtanah*, I say it as well."<sup>27</sup>

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

Similarly, each part of the Seder has the potential to raise people from the lowest levels to the highest. May we merit this.

### A Seder for Everyone

We try our best to conduct the Seder like the great tzaddikim of the past, but we must know that it is precious to Hashem no

matter how it goes. We are inspired when we hear stories of tzaddikim and the beautiful Sedarim they conducted. We strive to reach their levels, but we know that Hashem is happy with our Seders, too.

Shortly after the Ksav Sofer's *chasunah*, the Ksav Sofer's sisters were telling

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“Yes.”

“And what answer did you get?”

“עבדים היינו.”

“Did you ask the *Mah Nishnatah* last year?”

“We did.”

“And what answer did you get last year?”

“The same, עבדים היינו.”

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

The children tried to explain in various ways.

Reb Shlomo Zalman said, “When I was eight years old, I was walking home from the Kosel together with my father and we met Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt'l*. He asked me the same question I just asked you: 'If you asked *Mah Nishtanah* last year, why did you ask it again this year? The difference is that when Reb Yosef Chaim asked me this question, I cried, and when I asked you this question, you tried to answer me in various ways...”

the young bride, Rebbetzin Chavah Leah, about their father's (the Chasam Sofer *zt'l*) wondrous Seder. They told her that it was literally impossible to look at the Chasam Sofer's face during the Seder due to his shining countenance at that time.

Rebbetzin Chavah Leah didn't believe them. She thought it was "Hungarian imaginations." (She was from Poland, and in those days, Yidden of each country considered themselves wiser than the Yidden of the other country.) However, at the Seder, she tried to look at her father-in-law's face, but she couldn't.

The Avnei Nezer was a son-in-law of the Rebbe of Kotzk *zt'l*. The Avnei Nezer said, "My father-in-law always appeared like a *malach*, but at the Seder, he appeared like a *saraf* (a higher form of *malach*). At the Seder, the Rebbe of Kotzk

seemed elevated in ways we didn't see even on Yom Kippur. During the second half of the Seder, sparks of fire came out of his mouth." (אביר הרועים ע"ג, שט"ד).

The Shlah HaKadosh writes that there were chassidim who kissed the matzos when they lifted them at the Seder.

The Rebbe of Riminov *zt'l* said that if he weren't embarrassed, he would shake the matzos in *beis medresh* with *נענועים* as we do with the *lulav* and *esrog*.

We aren't on these levels, and our love for the mitzvos doesn't compare to the love of the great tzaddikim. Nevertheless, the Torah was given to everyone, including simple people like ourselves. The Torah speaks to us when it states (*Shemos* 12:18), *בערב האכלו*, "In the evening you shall eat matzos," and Hashem is happy with our mitzvah of matzah, too.<sup>28</sup>

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28. The Rokeiach (*Pesach*, 291) writes that when one eats matzah

The final *siman* of the Seder is *nirtzeh*, which means "It was accepted and desired." We are confident that after we completed the Seder, Hashem is happy with it and accepts it, no matter how it appeared.

Everyone's dream is that the Seder should be beautiful, the children well behaved, the atmosphere happy and uplifting, but, alas, it isn't always so. We must know that Hashem is happy with our Seder exactly as it was.

A renowned *mechanech* and *tzaddik* from Yerushalayim invited a few of his students to his home for the Seder. When they entered his home, the students were shocked to find a very not *yom-tovdig* atmosphere. They were

sure they would find a *yom-tovdig* and orderly home. As it states in *Shulchan Aruch* (472:1), יהא שולחנו ערוך מבעוד יום כדי לאכל כשתחשך, "The table should be set from the daytime so you can start the Seder immediately when night falls." But they found this home turned over, and there was no sign that it was the Seder night.

(It wasn't the children who were guilty of messing up the house. Unfortunately, this renowned *mechanech* never had children. His wife was emotionally unwell, and things like this would happen in his home.)

The *bachurim* were taken aback.

Their host calmly told them, "When you go to a home, and you find the

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during the seven days of Pesach, he becomes a partner with Hashem in Creation. As it states, מצות יאכל שבעת הימים (*Shemos* 13:7). It is written שבעת הימים with an extra ה"א, hinting to the seven days of Creation. For keeping this mitzvah, we become a partner in the creation of the world, which was completed in seven days.

table set, the children dressed in their *yom tov* clothing, good aromas wafting out from the kitchen, you think you see freedom, the חרות of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. I say that you are seeing slavery and not freedom because these people are enslaved to this perfect situation. If a minor detail falls out of place, the family doesn't know how to handle it. But in this home, we celebrate true freedom because we accept Hashem's will, whatever it is. If this is what Hashem wants, this is the best for us."

Reb Shmuel of Karov was poor but tried to keep what is written in *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yorah Deiah* 255:1) "A person should always refrain from asking for *tzedakah*. He should live in constraint (יגלגל עצמו בצער) rather than ask for financial aid. As the Gemara (*Pesachim* 112.) says, עשה שבתך חול ואל תצטרך לבריות, it is better to eat simple foods on Shabbos, as though it were a

weekday, than to ask people for financial assistance." Therefore, despite his poverty, he never asked for financial aid.

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

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

A delivery of *yom tov* food arrived at Reb Shmuel's door moments before Pesach. Reb Shmuel was extremely happy because he had everything he needed for *yom tov* without asking for help.

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

On the second night of Pesach, Reb Shmuel was very tired, so he lay down before the Seder. He woke up late, and as he was cautious about eating the *afikomon* before *chatzos*, he had to rush through the Seder. Having run through the Seder without proper *kavanah*, he felt that the second Seder wasn't good at all.

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

The explanation is that the second Seder was conducted with humility and a broken heart, and

that was what made the second Seder so special.

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

The custom of Reb Ber'tze, a chassid of Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zt'l*, was to set the table for the Seder himself. But one year, when he came home, he saw that the table was messy, and the matzos and the wine were shattered on the floor.

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

to the edge, everything came crashing down on the floor. It's all your fault!"

Reb Ber'tze knew that if he became angry, the atmosphere of the entire night would be ruined. Reb Ber'tze calmed down and replied, "This was Hashem's plan. It isn't my fault, and it isn't yours. This is what Hashem wanted." Reb Ber'tze appeased his wife, and they celebrated the Seder with joy.

The following day, Rebbe Ber'tze davened Shacharis in the beis medresh of Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zt'l*. Rebbe Asher had *ruach hakodesh* and saw the Seders of many tzaddikim. *Yom tov* morning, he would discuss what he saw, and this year too, he spoke of the Seders tzaddikim conducted the previous night and the impact these Sedorim had

in heaven. Then he said, "But the Seder of Reb Ber'tze was greater than all others. No one reached the heights he attained."

He remained happy despite his upset Seder table and sour wife. How did he do that? Because he believed that everything is from Hashem. We learn from this story that everyone can make a very special Seder, not just the greatest tzaddikim. Secondly, we learn the importance of accepting Hashem's will, even when it isn't what we want.

There are four sons in the *Haggadah*. Rebbe Hirsh Rimonver said, "In my opinion, the שאינו יודע לשאול is best off from all of them." Because this son doesn't ask any questions. He accepts everything with *emunah* that this is how it has to be.<sup>29</sup>

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29. Every year, before the Seder, the married children of Reb Zalman Brizel *zt'l* would come with their families wish their father

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

### Annual Salvations

The *Haggadah* says, בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים, "In every generation, one must consider himself as if he left Mitzrayim." The Sfas Emes *zt'l* says that one must think this way because this is exactly what is happening. Every year, on Pesach, we become free, and we leave our problems behind. The Sfas Emes writes, "According to the extent one believes that

he's leaving his troubles, so will it be."

This is also implied in the *brachah* we say at the end of *magid*, ברוך... אשר גאלנו, וגאל את אבותינו, "Blessed is Hashem...Who redeemed us and our forefathers..." We express that Hashem saved us, too. The Apter Rav *zy'a* writes, "When one says, אשר גאלנו וגאל את אבותינו, and believes that Hashem is redeeming us, he will be saved from all kinds of trouble."

This is also implied in the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 12:42), ליל שמרים הוא לה' להוציאם מארץ מצרים... לדורותם, "It is a night of anticipation for Hashem to take them out of Mitzrayim...for their generations." The *Beis Aharon zt'l* says לדורותם, "for

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and grandfather a *gut yom tov*. One year, one of the grandchildren accidentally threw down all the matzos on the floor. Instead of becoming angry, Reb Zalman Brizel was happy. He explained, "Hashem gave me grandchildren. Isn't that a reason to be happy?"

There is always a lot of good in our lives. And when we focus on the good we have, we don't get upset when things aren't perfect.

their generations," indicates that in every generation, Hashem takes us out of Mitzrayim and away from our problems. It also states, להוציאם, "to take them out," in the future tense. This tells us that in every generation, we leave Mitzrayim. In every generation, we leave the hardships we are enduring.

The Meor Einayim (*Tzav*) writes, "At the Yam Suf the prosecuting *malachim* claimed that the Yidden also worshiped *avodah zarah*. If so, it is indeed a question; why was the Jewish nation saved? The answer is that the Yidden in Mitzrayim conducted the entire Seder precisely as we make our Seders today. They told the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* [that will happen in the future] because they trusted that Hashem would certainly take them out of Mitzrayim. This emunah drew down Hashem's kindness, and they were redeemed.

Chazal say בניסן נגאלו ובניסן עתידין ליגאל, we were redeemed in Nisan, and we will be redeemed in Nisan. There is *galus* of the nation and *galus* of the individual. The individual *galus* is the *yesurim* that a Yid suffers. Due to the *chesed* we draw down in Nisan [with the Seder and with all the other mitzvos we perform in Nisan], we will be redeemed from our individual hardships just as the nation was redeemed in Nisan."

### **Biur Chametz**

There are many mitzvos that we perform during this month and there are many salvations that can come as a result. One example of such a mitzvah is *biur chametz*, to burn the *chametz* on *erev Pesach*.

The Russian czar placed a terrible *gezeirah* on the Jewish nation many years ago, and the only solution they found was to bribe one of the high-ranking

ministers in the government.

A communal activist spoke with many rabbanim and urged them to influence their followers to donate money that would be used for the bribe. Most rabbanim recognized the need and spoke to their communities. However, Rebbe Aharon of Chernobyl *zt'l* refused to solicit his community. The activist then spoke to Rebbe Yitzchak of Skver *zt'l* (Rebbe Aharon's brother) and asked him to persuade his brother to participate in this fundraising program. The Skverer Rebbe agreed and explained to his brother why it was important, but Rebbe Aharon still refused to participate.

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

## The Letter

The Arizal taught the wondrous secrets about the *makos*, but few people understood it, as it was intentionally written in a very concise and concealed manner. Reb Shamshon Ostropoli *zt'l hy'd* revealed the Arizal's intention in a letter. He writes in the letter the following:

"Our master, the holy one [the Arizal], wrote these wondrous ideas in a concealed way, and no one knows how to decipher it. Many *gedolim* asked me to explain what the Arizal is saying here, and I didn't tell them. Because of my love for you, I will reveal the secret of this matter, according to how it was revealed to me in a dream at night." Then Reb Shamshon explains the lesson of the Arizal, and concludes, "After these matters were revealed to me [in the dream], heaven told me that whoever studies this awesome secret as I wrote it here, even just

once a year, primarily when he studies it on *erev Pesach*, he will certainly be guarded the entire year from all troubles, unnatural deaths, and tragedies. His enemies won't rule over him, they will fall before him, and wherever he turns, he will experience success."

At first glance, it seems to be too difficult for the average student to understand, but it is actually quite simple to understand, and he will see awesome wonders of the Torah, and he will see how every word of the Torah fits so perfectly and has so much meaning. In addition, he will benefit from the wonderful promise that the letter guarantees.

The Rav of Erloy *zt'l* used to speak about a certain time during the Holocaust when his life was in great danger. It was Elul, and he reminded himself that he hadn't yet studied Reb Shamshon

Ostropoli's letter that year. He immediately studied the letter, and with Hashem's help, he was saved from the Nazis.

The Erloy Rav said that his grandfather, the Hisorerus HaTeshuvah, would study that letter each year. When he was ninety-four years old, he didn't get around to learning the letter, and that was the year he was *niftar*.

### Matzah and Marror

The *roshei teivos* of מצ"ה spell out מכל צרה הצילני, "Save me from all troubles."

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

Reb Tzvi Kintzlicher *zt'l*, the Rav of Seban, Romania (until he moved to Yerushalayim in 5709), was experiencing severe stomach pains. The doctors in Klausenberg told him that he required emergency surgery. The Rav of Seban told the doctors that he wanted to be home for Pesach, and he would return right after Pesach for the operation.

The doctors agreed on condition that he doesn't eat anything difficult to digest. He can only have light foods, like fruits and milk. He certainly wasn't permitted to eat matzah.

Reb Tzvi was planning on following these orders, but at the Seder, he decided to eat matzah soaked in milk. While eating the matzah, he felt some healing in his stomach. He ate matzah on the second night of Pesach too, and by the time he finished eating that *kezayis*, his stomach pains were better.

On Shabbos after Pesach, he stood up on the *bimah* of his *beis medresh* and told his congregation that he was leaving for a serious operation. "Pray for me because I don't know what will be."

When he returned to Klausenberg, the doctors said, "Which professor did you go to?" They were stunned. The illness was gone.

He told them that he was cured through the mitzvah of eating matzah, the *מִכְלִיָּה דְאַסוּתָא* healing food."

One of the doctors said, "A great miracle happened to you. But I've always known, and I've seen it several times, that everything we doctors know is nothing when Hashem desires differently."

*מַצָּה* is comprised of three letters: *מ צ ה*. When each of these three letters is spelled out in full, it looks

like this: מ"ם צדי"ק ה"א. The added letters (all letters besides the primary letters (מצ"ה)) are called the מילוי, filler letters. The Sar Shalom of Belz zt'l said that if you take the מילוי of מצה it spells, אקדי"ם, "I will come first..." The Sar Shalom said that some tefillos aren't answered immediately, however, the tefillos on Pesach, אקדים, will be answered instantly.

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

מרת is *gematriya*, death, implying that by eating *maror*, one annuls death and all hardships and troubles. So, even if eating *maror* tastes bitter at first, it sweetens everything.

Reb Akiva Eiger zt'l writes, "Even *maror* [which was horseradish in his country] should be eaten with the correct *shiur*. Every day we say, בכל נפשך, to serve Hashem with all our soul, with *mesirus*

*nefesh*, so why shouldn't we endure this little bit of hardship [of eating horseradish]? I promise that when one eats *maror* with *simchah*, he will almost not feel the sharpness of the *maror*."

We eat a *kezayis maror*, which, the holy *sefarim* write, is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. A hint to that is the Chazal (*Eirwoin* 18:, *Rashi Bereishis* 8:11) which states, יהיו מזונותי מרורין כזית. This phrase can also be read, יהא מזונותי, my *parnassah* comes מרורין כזית, from the *kezayis maror* I eat at the Seder.

## Magid

Before beginning to recite *magid*, many people say the following portion from the Zohar:

"Every person who tells the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* joyously, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is happy with the story he is telling. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gathers all the *malachim* in heaven and says, 'Come and listen to

the praises My children are saying about Me. They are happy with My redemption!' The *malachim* listen and the *malachim* praise Hakadosh Baruch Hu for the miracles and for His holy nation that He has on earth who are happy with His redemption. Therefore, we must praise Hashem and tell this story. Our words go up to heaven, and all the *malachim* gather and praise Hakadosh Baruch Hu. This brings honor to Hashem above and below."

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

## Shevi'i shel Pesach

Another auspicious time to merit salvations is Shevi'i shel Pesach, the last two days of Pesach.

The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* taught that the word אָזִי from אִזִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל hints to the two days a year that we read the *shirah*. The letter ז"י is the numerical value of seven, alluding to Shevi'i shel Pesach, and אִלֵּי is translated as "to study" and refers to Shabbos *parashas Beshalach* when we read and study about *kriyas Yam Suf*.

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

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* writes, "The שִׁירַת הַיָּם (Oz *Yashir*) has everything in it, what was and what will be. All redemptions are found inside the *shirah*. If a person says it with all his heart, with *mesirus nefesh*,

according to his level, everything will be amended, for his body and for his *neshamah*."

Certainly, on Shevi'i shel Pesach when we celebrate *kriyas Yam Suf* and we read it in the Torah, many *yeshuos* will sprout.

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 21:6) asks why the words, ויבקע הים, weren't used to describe the splitting of the sea. Instead, it states, ויבקע המים, that the water split? The Midrash answers to teach us that all waters in the world split. All around the world, wherever there was a body of water, it split.

What was the purpose of this miracle? The Yam Suf split so the nation could pass through, but why did all the waters in the world split?

The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* explains that water represents *tzaros* and *yesurim*, as it states (*Tehillim* 69:2), הושיעני אלוקים כי באו מים עד,

נפש, "Save me, Hashem, for the waters have reached the soul." Hashem split all water of the world to indicate that Hashem put into the nature of the world that on Shevi'i shel Pesach Hashem saves us from our troubles, and this nature exists until today.

The Ateres Tzvi writes, "When the sea split, it unlocked salvations for all future generations – for the individual and for the Jewish nation. Even if the gates of *parnassah* or the gates of *shidduchim* are closed, one can pray at this special *eis ratzon* by *kriyas Yam Suf*, and Hashem will save Bnei Yisrael."

The Midrash states, Nachshon ben Aminadov was the first to jump into the Yam Suf. The water reached his nostrils. He shouted, הושיעני כי באו מים עד, נפש, "Save me, Hashem, for the waters have reached the soul," and then the sea split.

The sea split in the merit of the nation's *mesirus nefesh*. Therefore, the Reishis Chachmah (*Shaar Ahavah* 8:6) says that the lesson of this *yom tov* is to serve Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*, and then miracles will happen.

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

Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev *zy'a* teaches:

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

When the Jewish nation stood at the shores of the Yam Suf and the Mitzrim were quickly catching up to them, Moshe Rabbeinu *davened* for Klal Yisrael's salvation. Hashem said to Moshe (14:15), מה תצעק אלי דבר, אל בני ישראל ויסעו "Why are you shouting to Me? Tell

Bnei Yisrael to travel onward."

The Or HaChaim asks:

(1) Why shouldn't Moshe daven? It was an עת צרה, a time of distress. What should a person do at such times other than daven to Hashem?

(2) The Or HaChaim writes:

"Another question: It states, דבר אל בני ישראל ויסעו, 'Tell Bnei Yisrael that they should travel.' Where should they travel to if the Mitzrim are behind them and the sea is in front of them?"

The Or HaChaim's answer is based on the following lesson from Chazal (*Zohar* vol.2 p.170:), "When Yisrael stood at the Yam Suf, and Hashem wanted to split the sea for them, the *malach Rahav* (who is the *malach* over Mitzrayim) said to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, 'Master of the world, why do you want to punish the Mitzrim and to split the

sea for the Yidden? Both the Yidden and the Mitzrim are guilty before You! You do everything according to truth and justice, and at this time, these people worship idols, and those people worship idols! These people commit *arayos*, adultery, and so do those! These people kill, and so do they!" And therefore, it was hard for Hakadosh Baruch Hu to split the sea for them."

*Tefillah* alone wasn't enough. The *malach Rahav*

and the attribute of *din* claimed that it wasn't just and correct to save the Jewish nation and destroy the Mitzrim. They needed a merit to make them worthy of the miracle. This was accomplished when they traveled into the sea with *emunah* and *bitachon*. That tipped the scale in favor of the Yidden, and they were worthy of *kriyas Yam Suf*. Their *mesirus nefesh* saved them.<sup>30</sup>

A somewhat similar lesson is taught by the Pela

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**30.** The Avnei Nezer asks, Hashem told the Jewish nation to do *milah* and *korban Pesach*, so they would be worthy of yetzias Mitzrayim. So, why didn't Hashem give them another mitzvah to perform when they were at the Yam Suf. The *malachim* were prosecuting that they don't deserve to be saved, so Hashem could have given them a mitzvah, which would have made them worthy of salvation.

He answers that no other merits were needed, since they had *mesirus nefesh*.

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

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

Yoetz (*Elef HaMagen, Bishalach*). He bases his lesson on the *rasha* of the *Haggadah* who asks (*Shemos* 12:26), מַה הָעֲבוּדָה, הֲזֹאת לָכֶם, "Why do you do this work?" The *Pela Yoetz* explains that the *rasha* is asking why are you so *machmir* on Pesach? Why do you go beyond the letter of the law? Why isn't it

sufficient to keep the basic halachah?"

We answer the *rasha*, אֵילֵינוּ, "If you were in Mitzrayim you wouldn't be redeemed." The *Pela Yoetz* explains:

At *kriyas Yam Suf*, he *malachim* said, "Also Yidden worship *avodah zarah*!"<sup>31</sup> So,

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

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

The Sefas Emes (*Pesach* 5632) teaches:

Chazal tell us, "Even a maidservant at the Yam Suf saw more than Yechezkel ben Buzi." This shows us the specialness of a *Yid* who serves Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*. In a moment, he is elevated from the lowest level to the highest.

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

**31.** It states, לקחת לו גוי מקרב גוי, "to save a nation from the midst of a nation." The Jewish nation wasn't noticeably different than the

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

What indeed saved the Jewish nation?

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

"The *malachim* say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu: 'Ribono shel Olam, You write in the Torah (*Devarim* 10:17) אשר לא ישא פנים, 'Who does not show favor,' that Your judgment is fair and true, and that You don't

change the rules of judgment just because you favor someone. [If someone is guilty, he will be punished, there is no way out.] Yet You also write in the Torah (*Bamidbar* 6:26), ישא פניו אליך, 'May Hashem lift His countenance for you,' which means Hashem judges the Jewish nation with kindness [and even when they are guilty, he finds a way to make them virtuous in judgment].'

"Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, 'Shouldn't I judge them favorably? I write in the Torah (*Devarim* 8:10), ואכלת, ושבעת וברכת, 'You will eat, be satisfied, and you will bless,' that *birchas hamazon* is said only after one is satiated. But they are *machmir* and they bless me

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Mitzrim. It wasn't so clear that they should be saved and not the Egyptians.

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

even after eating just a *kezayis* or a *kebeitzah!*"

We see that in the merit of the Jewish nation being *machmir*, Hashem judges them favorably. This merit saved them at the Yam Suf. They were *machmir* with chametz, so although they didn't deserve to be saved, Hashem favored them and split the sea before them.

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

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

What did Hashem do? The Midrash says, "Hashem

placed His right hand beside Moshe's right hand, and the sea split."

The Or HaChaim explains that the entire creation is obligated to serve the Jewish nation. This is because the Jewish nation received the Torah, and the Torah was written before the world was created.

The sea claimed that the Jewish nation didn't receive the Torah yet, so it felt it didn't need to obey and go against its nature and split. Hashem placed His right hand next to Moshe's to show that Moshe has the merit of Torah. Hashem's right hand represents Torah as it states (*Devarim* 33:2), מִיְמֵינוּ אֵשׁ דָּת, "From Hashem's right hand, He presented the fiery Torah..." and then the sea split. The merit of Torah comes before the world, and the entire world must bend and obey the will of the Torah and those who study it.

It states (Shemos 14:27) וישב הים לפנות בקר לאיתנו "The sea went back in the morning to its strength." The letters לאיתנו can also spell לתנאו, to the *tnay*, to the condition that Hashem made with the sea. Hashem made a condition with the sea that it must split before the Jewish nation. The Or HaChaim explains that this condition wasn't only made with the sea. It was made with all creations, and they are therefore obligated to do the will of those who study and keep the Torah.

The Or Hachaim writes, התנה ה' על כל מעשה בראשית להיות כפופים לתורה ועמליה ולעשות כל אשר יגורו עליהם, "Hashem made a condition with all creation that they must be submissive to Torah and to those who toil in it, to do whatever [the Jewish nation] decrees on them." And therefore, the sea split before Bnei Yisrael.

### Salvations through Tefillah

The Gemara (*Brachos 4:*) says, "Who is a *ben Olam HaBa*? One who says *Shemonah Esrei* immediately after the *brachah* גאל ישראל." Rashi explains that if someone doesn't say *Shemonah Esrei* immediately after saying this *brachah*, "It can be compared to the king's friend who knocks at the king's door, [and when the king opens the door], he sees that [his friend] left. So if the friend leaves, the king leaves, too. Rather, a person should appease Hashem with the praises of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and then Hashem will be close to him. And when Hashem is nearby, he should ask for his needs."

This also tells us that the night of the Seder is an ideal time for tefillah. When we praise Hashem for *yetzias Mitzrayim*, Hashem is near us, and wants to hear our requests.<sup>32</sup>

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32. The Rema (*Darkei Moshe*) writes that when we tell the story of

And we shouldn't be stingy with our requests. We should ask for great things. As it states (*Tehillim* 81:11), אנכי ה' אלקיך המעלך מארץ, מצרים הרחב פיך ואמלאהו, "I am Hashem your G-d who took you out of Mitzrayim, open your mouth wide [and ask for a lot], and I will fill it."<sup>33</sup>

An innkeeper was very late in paying his rent, and the *poritz* warned him that if he didn't pay the debt

soon, he would be thrown in together with his family into the dungeon.

The worried innkeeper went to the Apter Rav *zy'a* for Shabbos HaGadol to receive a *brachah*.

*Erev Shabbos*, the *gabai* told him that the Rebbe couldn't receive him. The innkeeper thought he would speak with the Rebbe on *motzei Shabbos*, but as it turned out, he didn't have to talk with the

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

**33.** Why does the *pasuk* say, הרחב פיך, widen your mouth? It should have said, פתח פיך, open your mouth.

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

Chazal say, "If your teacher is like a *malach*, learn Torah from him. But if he isn't like a *malach*, don't learn Torah from him." In what way should a teacher resemble a *malach*? One thing we know about *malachim* is that they are happy because they serve Hashem with song. A teacher should be like the *malachim*; he should be happy. Such a person is fitting to be a teacher of Torah.

Rebbe on *motzei Shabbos*. He received his answer Shabbos afternoon when the Apter Rav gave his Shabbos HaGadol *drashah*.

The Apter Rav began the *drashah* with an intense halachic conversation, which this simple Yid couldn't follow.

Then the Rebbe began discussing the *Haggadah*. He said, "When we get to וַיִּצְעַק אֱלֹהִים it's an extraordinary moment for *tefillah*. If one needs *parnassah*, *refuah*, or if a Yid is renting an inn from a *poritz*, and he doesn't have money to pay the rent, and the *poritz* threatens to throw him and his family into the dungeon, and he shouts at this point to Hashem and begs for salvation, Hashem will save him."

The innkeeper was certain the Rebbe was referring to him, and he understood that his solution was to daven to Hashem when he says וַיִּצְעַק in the *Hagaddah*.

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

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

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

The goy brought in two barrels filled with gold coins. He said, "I allow you to keep one barrel for yourself. Eventually, I will

settle down in another country and send you a letter to tell you my address where you can bring me the other barrel with gold coins."

He turned around and left.

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

The goy never returned. He never sent a letter. So, both barrels filled with gold coins became theirs.

After Pesach, they traveled to the city to buy new clothes. They didn't have to dress in rags any longer. They went to the Apter Rav to thank him for the miracle he performed. He told them, "It wasn't my miracle. You don't have to thank me. You drew the miracle on your own through your וניצעק."

We know several people who had their *yeshuos*

when they prayed to Hashem on this holy night. Some of them shouted to Hashem at this *eis ratzon* of וניצעק, and others davened at other times on this sacred night, and they received their *yeshuah*.

I know the following story firsthand:

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

It was the custom in the Gerer yeshiva that before *yom tov* the *bachurim* would *gezezen* [take leave] from the Gerrer Rebbe, the Lev Simchah *zy'a*, before going home. The Rebbe would call them *kasha fregers* ("question askers") because they were returning home to ask the Four Questions from their fathers. When these three older *bachurim* came to the Gerrer Rebbe,

he told them, "This year, ask your father why you aren't engaged yet."

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

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

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

They stopped crying and moping, and they celebrated the rest of the Seder joyously.

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

A month later, in *Chodesh Iyar*, one of them was engaged. Sivan, the second son, was engaged, and by *Tamuz*, the third son was engaged too.

Here's another story. It happened to an extraordinary *Yerushalmi* couple who was childless for eleven years. For *Pesach*, they would go either to his parents or her parents. One year he told his wife, "This year, we're staying home."

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

A person had a problem with his legs, and he was often in excruciating pain. To stabilize the condition somewhat, he often had to go to the hospital or a doctor's clinic for a shot. This went on for years. One *Pesach*, he was celebrating the Seder in his brothers' house. When they came to *ונצק* he left the room and

poured his heart out to Hashem. On *Motzei Yom Tov* he received a shot for his leg, and he never needed another one. He was cured.

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

"In תשע"ז we sat down joyously for the Seder together with my brother-in-law and his family. But there was one matter that marred our joy. My brother-in-law's five-year-old son was born with a cleft lip, and he couldn't talk. He had many corrective surgeries, but he still couldn't speak. All he could manage to get out of his mouth were sounds. Every sound he made was like a dagger in his parent's hearts. To make matters worse, the cheder recently told the parents that the child couldn't continue learning there because he was unable to participate in the classroom.

"When we reached הזמננו להזכיר ענייננו, we remembered the *vort* from the Beis Aharon: כל דכפין, whatever a person needs, ייתי ויפסק, he should have פה סח (a speaking mouth) and pray to Hashem for salvation, because with prayer all our needs can be fulfilled. So we davened that this young boy should be healed; that he should have a פה סח to be able to speak and learn Torah.

"After the Seder was completed, the father of the child said to his wife, את פתח לו, implying "now, you should pray to open his mouth." They said *Tehillim* with tears the entire night. In the morning, a miracle occurred. Their son started talking. He spoke so much that it was like he was making up for the lost time...

"I used to wonder: What is the source from *rishonim* that we should daven at the Seder? I was bothered by this question, because the Seder doesn't seem to be a time for prayer. But

then I saw (שׁוֹרֵת דְּבָרַי יֵצֵיב אֲבוֹן) (הַעֲזוֹר סוֹ"ס פ"ג) that our three daily *tefillos* (*Shacharis, Minchah, Maariv*) were established by the *avos* on the first day of Pesach! Furthermore, someone showed me the *Likutei Moharan* (ר"א) that the *Targum* (*Eichah* 2) states that on Pesach it is people's custom to shout during the tefillah. As it states, קוֹל נִתְּנוּ, 'They shouted in the Beis HaMikdash like on a holiday.' And the *Targum* explains, כִּקְלַ עַמָּא, 'Like the loud voices of the nation when they pray on Pesach.' What better time is there for tefillah than at the Seder, the day the *avos* established tefillah?"

There is a custom to eat an egg at the start of *shulchan aruch*. The Meiri

teaches that *beitzah* is often pronounced בְּעִי which also means "to request." This is yet another indication that the tefillos at the Seder will be answered.<sup>34</sup>

The Ahavas Shalom *zt'l* teaches that people lack *parnassah* because they pray to Hashem for *parnassah* on Rosh Hashanah, but they don't realize the need to also pray on Pesach and Shavuos. It states (*Bereishis* 21:25-26), וְהוֹכַח אַבְרָהָם אֶת אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ, עַל אֲדוֹת בְּאֵר הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר גִּזְלוּ עַבְדֵי אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ. The Ahavas Shalom explains that אַבְרָהָם signifies *tzaddikim* and אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ symbolizes the King of the world - Hakadosh Baruch Hu. *Tzaddikim* ask Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "Why are the wellsprings of Hashem's bounty being stolen from us and taken

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

by the slaves – the nations of the world?"

Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, וגם אתה לא הגדת לי וגם אנכי. The word לא שמעתי בלתי היום. The word הגדת is from the word מגיד. Hashem is saying, "At the Seder when you say *magid* you didn't pray to Me. וגם אנכי also on Shavuos when we read אנכי ה' אלקיך, I didn't hear your prayers. בלתי היום, I only hear your prayers on Rosh Hashanah (which is called *hayom*).

And when we pray, let us not forget to daven that Moshiach should come speedily in our days. Rebbe Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch *zy'a* said that people think that all they lack is Moshiach. But in Mitzrayim, they understood that waiting for salvation isn't sufficient. They had to daven, and the *geulah* came because of their ונצעק.

A chassid of Rebbe Yechiel Yehoshua of Biala *zt'l* waited many years for children. When the Rebbe went for מים שלנו, to draw

water for baking matzos, the chassid went over to the Rebbe of Biala and requested a *brachah* for children. The Rebbe advised him to daven for children right before *Mah Nishtanah*. This is because the Mishnah states, כאן הבן שואל, can be translated, "This is the place to request for children."

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

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

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

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

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

A *dayan* didn't have children for four years after his wedding. In Elul, he was giving his weekly *shiur* on *Or HaChaim Hakadosh*, and he was looking for the *vort* from the Or HaChaim regarding bearing children. He thought that it was in *parashas* כי תבוא, by the discussion of ארמי אורבד אבי, which we read at the Seder,

and then when he didn't find the Or HaChaim there, he remembered that it is in *parashas Bo*, on the words והגדת לבנך. He read the Or HaChaim in *parashas Bo* to his *shiur*, and it says that by speaking about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, one merits children.

Ten months later, his first child was born.

### ***Chumros***

There is an ideal to strive to perform the *mitzvos* according to all opinions, and when there is a *machlokes*, to follow the more stringent view. However, many *tzaddikim* say that this strict approach isn't ideal for the later generations because there is no limit to perfection, and if we seek excellence in *avodas Hashem*, we will always be left feeling that we didn't do enough. This might cause us to be frustrated with the *mitzvos* instead of being happy with them. Therefore,

many tzaddikim recommended that we keep the mitzvos according to the standard halachah, and that is sufficient.

Rebbe Simchah Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* also taught that one doesn't have to be *machmir* with the mitzvos more than what is the accepted halachah. However, he said chametz on Pesach is an exception. One should be *machmir* and go beyond the letter of the law, so he can be extra certain that he is chametz-free on Pesach.

But even when we take on *chumros* on Pesach, it is important to keep them with joy and without nervousness and worry. Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa *zt'l* said that the *chumros* we keep on Pesach decorate the *kallah* (the *Shechinah*) with jewelry and ornaments. So that is the atmosphere we should seek to create when we follow the *chumros*. When one adorns a *kallah* for her *chasunah* there's an atmosphere of joy and

excitement in the air. We should similarly be happy as we keep the *chumros* of Pesach.

Even according to halachah there are more *chumros* regarding chametz than any other *aveirah*. For example, on Pesach, if a small drop of chametz falls into a large pot cooking on the fire, everything becomes forbidden. It doesn't help that the drop of chametz is *batel* in 1/60.

Another stringency is that it is forbidden to own chametz. Even seeing or keeping chametz in one's domain is prohibited. These are stringencies we don't find with other halachos.

Why is chametz so severe?

The Radvaz (*chelek 3 siman 977, teshuvah shniyah*) writes, "According to *pschat* (the basic level of Torah), I didn't have an explanation why the laws of chametz are so stringent. Therefore, I turn

to the Midrashim for an explanation. Chazal tell us that chametz on Pesach represents the *yetzer hara*.<sup>35</sup> One must banish the *yetzer hara* from himself and search for it in all corners of his mind. Even the smallest drop must be eradicated. This explanation is correct.”

Chametz signifies the *yetzer hara*, and therefore the house must be completely chametz-free, and we must not eat chametz for the duration of the entire *yom tov*.

### Family Traditions

One isn't obligated to take on all the *chumros* on Pesach, but one is obligated to follow the *chumros* and the customs that are his family's tradition. This is based on the *pasuk* (*Mishlei*

1:8), אל תמוש תורת אמן, "Don't forsake the Torah of your mother," and Chazal explain that this means we must abide by the customs and *chumros* we receive from our parents.

A chasan wasn't planning on wearing a *streimel* after his *chasunah*, and Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zy'a* asked him about that. The *chasan* replied, "Clothes don't mean anything to me. A *shtreimel*...a hat... They are the same to me. What's inside the person is what's important."

The Rebbe replied, "The Gemara (*Gittin* 60:) says, לא כרת הקב"ה ברית עם ישראל אלא בשביל דברים שבעל פה, 'Hakadosh Baruch Hu made a *bris* with Bnei Yisrael because of the Oral Torah.' Yidden accepted the oral Torah,

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

and this creates the bond between Hashem and the Jewish nation. But what is the Oral Torah today? You might say that it is the Mishnah and the Gemara, but these are already written down. So, they are like the written Torah. Today, the *minhagim* are the Oral Torah. Customs are therefore important. Because of them, Hakadosh Baruch Hu makes a *bris* with the Jewish people."

One of the reasons customs are so important is because when one begins departing from them, there is no knowing how far he might fall. It states (*Devarim* 1:44), בשעיר עד חרמה. The Slonimer tzaddikim explained, "To veer away from a family custom, even by a hairsbreadth (בשעיר), leads to עד חרמה, destruction

because he might end up entirely falling away from *Yiddishkeit*.<sup>36</sup>

### Differentiating between *Chumros* and *Halachah*

A student of the Noda B'Yehudah's left the path of Torah and became a priest. The Noda b'Yehudah very much wanted to bring him back to *Yiddishkeit*.

After some inquiries, the Noda B'Yehudah heard that each day, at a particular hour, the priest sits on his porch and greets the passersby. The Noda B'Yehudah decided to pass his home at that hour and greet the priest. If the priest returns his greeting, that would be a sign that there's hope. But if he doesn't return his greeting, that would be a sign that he

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36. The *Haggadah* therefore calls the *rasha* a כופר בעיקר, a non-believing Jew. As we explained, the *rasha* doesn't want any safeguards; he doesn't want to keep the *churmos* of his family. But without these safeguards, one can fall to low levels, until he becomes a non-believer.

isn't interested in having anything to do with Yiddishkeit.

When the Noda B'Yehudah passed the priest's home, the priest greeted him first. The Noda B'Yehudah answered his greeting in a friendly manner, and they shared a few words. Then the Noda B'Yehudah continued on his way. When the Noda B'Yehudah got home, he asked one of his students to invite the priest to his home. The priest arrived soon afterward.

The Noda B'Yehudah came straight to the point. "Why did you leave the path of Torah?"

The priest replied that it all began one Pesach when he was lenient with a certain *chumrah*. At that time, he was learning in the Noda B'Yehudah's yeshiva in Prague and ate *teig* (meals) in the homes of generous families who took in yeshiva students for meals.

"One Pesach, I was a guest of a family in Prague, and the head of the household sent me to you because a wheat kernel was found in one of the pots, and the question was whether the food cooked in that pot may be eaten.

"You ruled that according to halachah, the food is kosher. But, nevertheless, you recommended that we shouldn't eat it because of the *chumrah* of chametz. I told them your *psak*, and the family immediately decided to be *machmir* and wanted to throw out the food, as you suggested. But I wasn't as strong. I told the family that I wanted to follow the more lenient view.

"I ate the food with relish but soon regretted what I did. I couldn't believe that I fell to the level of eating questionable food on Pesach. I felt like a *rasha*.

"That was my turning point. My low esteem caused me to drop to even lower levels. I fell from level to level until, as you can see, I became a priest. This is my story."

The Noda B'Yehudah replied, "but I told you that the food was kosher. It was just a *chumrah*. Because you didn't keep a *chumrah*, you fell so far? Listen to me, regret all your past sins and return to Hashem."

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

Reb Meshulem Igra *zt'l* was extremely cautious with the prohibition of chametz. Every year, he baked matzos himself with extreme care and only ate those matzos. Even those matzos he only ate at the Seder. He didn't eat matzah the rest of Pesach, as a precaution against eating chametz.

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

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

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

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

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* repeated this story and expressed his admiration and wonder that Reb Meshulam Igra was able to pass this difficult test. He didn't become angry with the maid (or his wife for not being more on top of things). He believed that this was *bashert*, and therefore there was no reason to be angry. He realized that his stringencies were a *chumrah*, while becoming angry and insulting others are Torah prohibitions.

Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer's son became angry with the maid because she put pieces of matzah in the soup (rendering the soup *gebroks*). Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer told his son, "Now you can eat this matzah too." He was teaching his son that getting angry and insulting others is worse than *gebroks*.

A *chasan*, just a couple of weeks after his *chasunah*, found a wheat kernel in the bowl of soup his mother-in-law served at the Seder.

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

But the son-in-law felt that he couldn't eat in this home anymore. He stood up, took his mortified wife with him, and left. He went straight to the house of Reb Shmuel Salant *zt'l*, the Rav of Yerushalayim, to tell him what happened. He was certain Reb Shmuel Salant would agree that he did the right thing.

Reb Shmuel Salant took the *chasan's streimel* off his head and shook it vigorously. A few wheat kernels fell out. The custom in Yerushalayim was to throw wheat kernels at the *chasan* after his *aliyah* on the Shabbos before the *chasunah*. Reb Shmuel

Salant understood that the wheat kernel probably fell from his *streimel* into the soup.

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

The *chasan's* mistake was that, in his zeal, he didn't consider the shame and humiliation he was causing his in-laws and his new wife. If he had thought about that, he would have behaved differently.

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

Reb Binyamin *zt'l* stopped them. He said, "The *rebbetzin* worked hard to prepare the meal. She

will be upset if we rush through the meal and don't enjoy it. All the *chumros* we have at the Seder are worthless if it will cause another Yid distress."

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

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

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

The Zvhiller tzaddikim were also very cautious not to eat *gebros*. Once, a guest in Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil's home was eating *gebros*. Members of Reb Shlomke's family wanted to stop him, but Rebbe Shlomke signaled to them not to say anything.

The Rebbe explained, "In heaven, you will not be asked whether you ate *gebros* or not. Instead, you will be asked whether you guarded your eyes, and whether you guarded your tongue from hurting another Yid."<sup>37</sup>

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

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