

TorahFax

Rabbi Zalmen Marozov

Monday, Nissan 5, 5783 (Hakhel Year) / March 27, 2023

Next week, Wednesday night, April 5, will start the Pesach (Passover) holiday, celebrating our liberation from Egyptian slavery and bondage. Jews were in Egypt for 210 years before being liberated.

When Yaakov and his family moved to Egypt, they were only seventy people. When they came out of Egypt, 210 years later, they numbered a few million.

In Israel the holiday is celebrated seven days and only one Seder. In the Diaspora, we celebrate Pesach for eight days and perform two Sedarim. The additional Seder and additional day of holiday celebrated in the Diaspora is a tradition which goes back over 2000 years.

Q. Why is it preferable to use round Shmurah Matzah for the "Seder plate?"

A. The Torah refers to the matzah which the Jewish people baked when leaving Egypt as "ugot Matzot." The word "ugot" commonly represents something round.

Q. What is the difference between Shmurah matzah and regular matzah?

A. In order for matzot to be kosher for Pesach the flour has to be carefully guarded not to come into contact with water. Once it does come into contact, it has to be baked within 18 minutes. The shmurah matzah is baked from flour which was guarded from coming in contact with water from the time of harvest, much before it

was made into flour. It's a higher degree of carefulness to observe the mitzvah of matzah.

Q. Were all Jews liberated from Egypt at the time of the Exodus?

A. According to our sages only one fifth of the Jews were liberated at the time of the Exodus. The other four fifths died during the plague of Darkness. The reason they were not liberated was because they didn't want to leave Egypt. They preferred to stay in Egypt, for which G-d punished them.

Q. What is the significance of the hard-boiled egg on the Seder plate?

A. A mourner, who, G-d forbid, lost a parent etc., eats a hard-boiled egg at their first meal after the funeral. The egg at the Seder reminds us that, although we are celebrating our freedom, yet, at the same time we mourn the loss of our Beth Hamikdash (Holy Temple).

Just as at a wedding ceremony, the groom breaks a glass to remember the destruction of the Holy Temple, so too, at the Seder, we are reminded of our great loss – the destruction of the Temple. May it be rebuilt speedily in our days, with the coming of Moshiach. Amen.

Q. Why is it important to eat the Afikoman matzah before midnight?

A. The matzah eaten for the Afikoman represents the Passover sacrifice at the time of the Temple. The meat of the sacrifice had to be eaten before midnight, thus, we eat the Afikoman before midnight.

Tuesday, Nissan 6, 5783 (Hakhel Year) / March 28, 2023

The Seder traditions and customs date back thousands of years. The Pesach Seder is our link with our glorious history. Should one of our ancestors from 1000 years ago drop in on us at the Seder, they would feel very much at home and would be very proud. In fact, they would participate in our Seder just as they did in theirs in ancient times.

Tradition is what kept our people and nation together for thousands of years. It is very important to expose our children to our beautiful Jewish traditions and hopefully they will do the same and pass it on to their children as well.

For the Seder we need three matzot. At the beginning of the Seder, before reciting the Hagadah, we break the middle matzah in two. The larger piece is wrapped in a cloth or napkin and hidden so it can be eaten later at the end of the meal. This piece of matzah is called "Afikoman." The smaller matzah is placed back between the two whole matzot and is left there during the recitation of the Hagadah.

Q. What is the significance of the three matzot on the Seder Plate?

A. 1) They represent the three categories of the Jewish people: Kohen, Levi and Yisrael.

2) They also represent the three patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Q. Why do we break the middle matzah?

A. The Torah refers to matzah as "Lechem oni" - "bread of poverty." A poor man when he has a loaf of bread will always think about the next meal. He fears that he may not have anything to eat later, so before he eats his meal, he usually breaks off a piece and saves it for later. Thus, we leave the smaller piece on the table and

recite the story of the Exodus over it – representing the bread of poverty, the bread of the poor person, which the Jewish people ate in Egypt.

Q. What is the reason for "wrapping" the Afikoman and "hiding" it?

A. The Torah tells us that at the time of the Exodus Jews were so rushed to leave Egypt that they didn't have time to bake their dough into bread. Instead, they "took their dough before it became leavened, and they bound it up in their clothes upon their shoulders." By wrapping the Afikoman, we recall the fact that the dough was "bound in their clothes."

Q. Why do matzot have holes in them?

A. After the dough is rolled into a matzah, holes are punctured in them, to prevent the dough from rising. It is an additional precaution to make sure that it doesn't rise and thus having the potential of becoming leavened (chametz), which is forbidden on Pesach.

Thursday, Nissan 8, 5783 (Hakhel Year) / March 30, 2023

Q. The traditional festival greeting is, "Chag Sameach" – which translates to, Happy holiday. Why is the traditional Pesach greeting, "Chag Kasher VeSameach" – which means, "Have a kosher and happy holiday." A Jewish home should be kosher always. Why this special wish for Pesach?

A. A Jewish home has to be kosher all year round. However, the laws of Pesach are very strict and the prohibitions for Pesach are many. Even foods which are kosher all year long may not be kosher for Pesach (Passover). Thus, we need to make an extra effort to be sure that our home is kosher for Pesach. Not only are we not

allowed to eat foods which are prohibited on Pesach, but we are also not allowed to have them in our possession during the holiday.

With all the effort we make to clean our home for Pesach and buy only kosher for Pesach products, we still can use a special blessing that no accidents or oversight will happen and that everything will indeed be kosher for Pesach. This is the reason we wish each other a Chag Kasher VeSameach – A kosher and happy holiday.

Q. Why is there an extra special effort made to collect and distribute more charity to supply the Pesach needs of the poor and needy, more than for other holidays?

A. In the beginning of the Seder, we recite the following passage, "This (the matzah) is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry, let them come and eat." We cannot enjoy our Seder, when we know that someone out there doesn't have the means to make a Seder. Pesach provisions are more expensive than usual. Everybody is required to drink four cups of wine, eat matzah and enjoy a Seder with a festive meal. Thus, we make an extra effort to supply the needy with their Pesach needs.

Before Pesach, a poor man asked the town Rabbi if he could fulfill his obligation of the Four Cups by drinking milk instead of wine because he didn't have the money to buy wine for the Seders.

"The question you asked will need a lot of research", replied the Rabbi, "and since I don't have the time now before Pesach, here is twenty five rubles to buy your needs for the holiday".

After he left, the Rabbi's students asked. "Why did you give him so much? Five rubles would have been enough to buy wine."

"From his question, whether he can use milk for the Four Cups, I realized that he also had no meat for the Seder! For if he had meat how can he drink milk after meat! Now, if he has no meat for the Seder, he surely has no meat for the rest of the holiday meals. What's more, his family must be missing many other necessities as well. I gave him twenty five rubles and hope it's enough...!"

Friday, Nissan 9, 5783 (Hakhel Year) / March 31, 2023

Please remember to sell your Chametz by Wednesday morning at the latest. The earlier the better, so as not to forget. If you need my help, please fill out the form which was sent to you and please return it by Monday.

It is also very important to contribute to charities which help people with their Pesach needs. For us to enjoy the holiday, we have to see to it that the less fortunate should enjoy theirs too. In Egypt we all suffered together, and no one should be left out when we celebrate our collective freedom.

This Shabbat, the Shabbat before Pesach, is called, "Shabbat Hagadol" – "The Great Shabbat."

There are a few reasons why the Shabbat before Pesach is called, "The Great Shabbat." One reason is that on the Shabbat before the Exodus from Egypt, which took place on Thursday, Jews experienced a great miracle, when the first-born Egyptians, realizing that they will be afflicted, fought with Pharaoh's men to let the Jewish people out of Egypt.

The Torah portion for this Shabbat is Parshat Tzav. This Parsha describes many of the sacrifices which were offered in the Holy Temple. One of them was the "Korban Toda" - "Thanksgiving offering". Korban Toda is brought by an individual as thanks

to G-d for saving them of one of the following four categories: 1) When one is freed from prison; 2) Recovered from a serious illness; 3) After a sea voyage; 4) Traveled safely through the desert.

Since the destruction of the Temple, there are no sacrifices, we recite the special blessing of "HaGomel" at the Torah, to thank G-d for delivering us from one of the above situations.

Offering thanks to G-d for the good He does for us is basic to Judaism. We recite Psalm 100: "A Psalm of Thanksgiving," each day (except for Shabbat and holidays) during the daily morning service. This reminds us to appreciate the miracles which G-d performs for us daily, which He veiled in what we call nature.

Sunday is the 11th of Nissan, it marks the 121th birthday of the Lubavitcher Rebbe - Rabbi M. M. Schneerson, of blessed memory. Although the Rebbe is not with us physically, his love for every Jew is still felt just as strongly and vibrantly as before through his dedicated emissaries in every corner of the globe. Through the many activities he instituted and through his educational networks which bring the light of Torah to every corner of the world. May his memory bring blessings to us all.

Our sages tell us that just as the first redemption, which was from the Egyptian exile, took place in the month of Nissan, so too, the final redemption through Moshiach will also be in Nissan. We pray that it be speedily in our days. May it be in this month of Nissan. Amen.