

NEFESH SHIMSHON



DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM
THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה.
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM ON PESACH

Seder Night

A few points about Seder night:

1.

We all know that the *Pesach Seder* is something special and awesome. But not everyone realizes that the awesomeness of the *Seder* begins with the *Maariv* prayer, which contains within it the whole *Seder*, as explained in *Kabbalah*. This is why we recite *Hallel* not just at the *Seder* but also in *Maariv*.

Like everything, half depends on our own efforts, and half on *tefilah*. For instance, *Chazal* enumerated various *mitzvos* that have a *segulah* for a person to have to male children, but these *segulos* are to be accompanied by *tefilah*. So it is here as well; making the *Pesach Seder* is half of it, and *tefilah* is the other half.

2.

Pesach night is called *Leil Shimurim*, the night of guarding, because it needs special guarding and protection.

How so?

It says in *Sefer Hade'ah*, written by the author

of *Leshem Shevo v'Achlamah*,¹ that when *Hashem* wanted to take the Jewish people out of Egypt, there was a great *kitrug*, a great opposition to this, in heaven. It was argued in heaven that to let the Jewish people leave Egypt just like that, [without being worthy of it,] would go against the main goal of Creation. There is a reason why evil must exist in the world. It is so free choice will exist, and so too the trait of judgment, *midas hadin*, must exist. Taking the Jewish people out of *Mitzrayim* in their current state would negate all that.

So what did *Hashem* do?

A great *chesed* was needed, so *Hashem* recreated the world from its very beginning, and the power of *chesed* increased greatly, and also the revelation of the *Shechinah*. But also the force of evil increased greatly, because everything was renewed.

This is why *chametz* is forbidden, [because the force of evil is strong at this time,] and this is also why the *talmidim* of R. Akiva were held to be guilty

¹ Section 2, *Derush* 5.

[of a minor sin] and therefore died [during the period immediately following Pesach]. This is a hard time [and therefore needs guarding and protection].

There were many tragedies that happened to Jews on *Seder* night, which is *leil shimurim*, the night that needs special guarding and protection. There were the infamous blood libels.

Based on the preceding explanation, I would suggest that this time is blessed by an awesome *chesed*, but when a person is found guilty of something, *chas v'shalom*, the door is open for powerful evil, too.

It comes out that *Seder* night really needs to be guarded well. We need to guard ourselves from anger and from getting impatient about little things that happen, which is especially common at moments of *kedushah*.

3.

Regarding *Seder* night, there is a special emphasis on the *chipazon*, the hastiness, of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

What great haste took place?

Usually we start small, and slowly build up to big things, to high spiritual levels. But on *Seder* night, it says in the *Seforim Hakedoshim* that there is a very high level of spiritual illumination. It comes to us before the lower levels [that gradually build up during *Sefiras Ha'omer*].

This is why we ask מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות – “Why is this night different from all other nights?”

When a person experiences moments of

kedushah, he might feel that he can't really connect to it, because he is “not on that level” etc. This feeling is usually false. But on *Seder* night, this is indeed what is happening. The Jewish people were not worthy of the awesome spiritual illumination of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. *Hashem* bestowed spiritual greatness on them “hastily,” before they gradually ascended the requisite steps.

4.

The *Brisker Rov* wrote that the *Hallel* recited on Pesach night is really a form of *shirah*, song, and is different from the regular *Hallel* of the eighteen days on which full *Hallel* is recited.

Based on this, I would suggest the following idea, and I believe in it so strongly that I would almost say it applies *Halachically*. Although a lack of *kavanah* does not usually invalidate the prayers we recite, it is different with the *Hallel* of Pesach night. Because this *Hallel* is not a *kriah*, it is not a recitation of the requisite chapters of *Tehillim*; it is rather a form of song. And for this reason, it must have *kavanah*, because without *kavanah*, it simply is not *shirah*.

The rule that *kavanah* is an absolute obligation does not usually apply, but this night is all about song, as it says:

הַשִּׁיר יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כְּלֵיל הַתְּקֵדֶשׁ חָג - The song shall be for you, like the night of the holy festival.²

We should all try to be part of this great song. ●

² *Yeshayahu* 30:29.

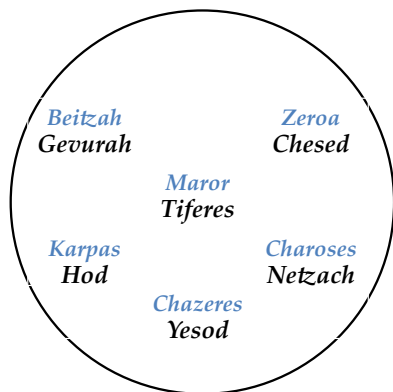


The Seder Plate Explained

Top *matzah* – *Chochmah*

Middle *matzah* – *Binah*

Bottom *matzah* – *Daas*



The plate – *Malchus*

The Seder plate has ten parts, and they divide into groups of three.

The first group is the three *matzos*.

The second group is *Zeroa*, *Beitzah*, *Maror*, on the upper section of the plate.

The third group is *Charoses*, *Karpas*, *Chazeres* on the lower section of the plate.

The plate itself is the tenth part.

These ten parts correspond to the ten *Sefiros*, upon which *Hashem* established the world. They also correspond to the form of the human body (as explained in *Pasach Eliyahu*.)

Our *avodah* on this night is to build the human being anew, by means of these ten items, which symbolize the structure of a human being. We will now explain the place and significance of each of these items, and how it relates to our *avodas Hashem* and self-perfection.

Three Matzos

The three *matzos* allude to the three *midos* (*Sefiros*) of *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daas*. These three relate to the head of the human being.

Chochmah is knowing that G-d exists and that He created the world. *Binah* is

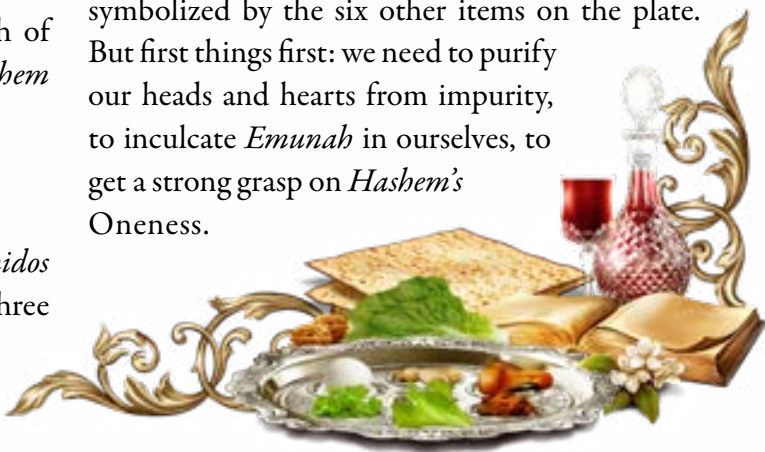
understanding the inner significance of this knowledge, what it requires of us. *Daas* denotes connection. It is connecting this knowledge and understanding to ourselves, and using it and practicing it in daily life.

Matzah is the main thing on Pesach. The holiday is called *chag hamatzos*. The *Zohar* refers to *Matzah* as *Nahama d'Mehemnusa* or *Nahama d'Asusa* – the bread of faith or the bread of healing. There is no *chametz* or *se'or* in *Matzah*, as these elements allude to the *Yetzer Hara* and enslavement to it.

When the Jewish people were in *Mitzrayim*, they were enslaved to Pharaoh, and then they were freed from his control. We, too, need to “leave Egypt.” We need to throw off the yoke of *chametz*. We need to free the body from enslavement to materiality. We need to heal the body from its spiritual illnesses, and come to true faith in *Hashem*. We need to acquire *Emunah*.

When we eat the *Matzos* we need to internalize this *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daas*. We need to bring into ourselves knowledge of the truth, understanding of it, and application of it to ourselves. All this takes place in the head. This is why these three *midos* are called *mochin*, “brain traits,” in the terminology of *Kabbalah*. They are the conceptual aspect of *kedushah*.

We need to bring all this down into the main part of the body, and this is accomplished by the other parts of the *Seder* plate, which are the six *midos* symbolized by the six other items on the plate. But first things first: we need to purify our heads and hearts from impurity, to inculcate *Emunah* in ourselves, to get a strong grasp on *Hashem's* Oneness.



Because otherwise, what we do with the other parts of the body won't help.

Zeroa, Beitzah, Maror

These three items are on the upper section of the *Seder* plate, and they correspond to the *midos* of *Chesed*, *Gevurah* and *Tiferes*. They allude to the upper half of the human body, i.e., the two arms and the torso down to the waist.

The characteristic of these three *simanim* (as opposed to the three *simanim* on the lower section of the *Seder* plate) is that they represent Biblically-ordained *mitzvos*. The *Zeroa* represents *Korban Pesach*, the *Beitzah* represents *Korban Chagigah*, and there is the *Maror* (which in principle is a Biblical *mitzvah*). This is why they are on the upper section of the *Seder* plate. They bring down upper influences, *hashpa'os*, from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

These three *simanim* give expression to, on the right side, a person's spiritual life, on the left side, his natural life, and in the middle, the *nisyonos* of life. We will now explain this in more detail.

Zeroa is Chesed, Beitzah is Gevurah

Zeroa corresponds to *Korban Pesach*. A *korban* means taking an animal, a live being, and burning it on the *Mizbeach* (after slaughtering it, of course). The significance of offering a *korban* is to connect the human being, also a living being, to *Hashem*. The *korban* unifies the person and *Hashem*. It brings them closer to one another.

Korban Pesach is a powerful expression of this. Pharaoh attempted to sever the relationship between the Jewish people and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, and as a counterpoint to this, the entire people offered a *Korban Pesach*, to connect themselves to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

The connection between Heaven and Earth is expressed in two different ways. There is *Chesed*, which is a limitless, unbounded influx of goodness, and there is *Gevurah*, which places limitations on the downpour of *Chesed*.

Spiritual matters are generally associated with

Chesed, because a spiritual gift has no fixed limit or bounds. But a physical gift has fixed dimensions. It is limited, so it is coming from *Gevurah*.

Through the *Korban Pesach*, a spiritual influx of understanding, of *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daas*, came to a person. This was a gift without limits and bounds, so it came from the trait of *Chesed*. This is why we place the *Zeroa* on the right side of the *Seder* plate, which is the side that always expresses *Midas Hachesed*.

On the left side of the *Seder* plate there is the *Beitzah*. It corresponds to the *midah* of *Gevurah*. This is because the *Beitzah*, which is an egg, is round, and this shape expresses limits and bounds. A circle is limited by its circumference. This is in contrast to a straight line, which extends infinitely. This is why the *Chesed* on the right side is alluded to by an outstretched *Zeroa* "arm", which represents a straight line and expresses infinite extension. And on the left side, the *Gevurah* is alluded to by the *Beitzah*, whose shape expresses limitation.

The *Beitzah* represents the *Korban Chagigah*, because the *Beitzah*, which is an egg, contains within it the essence of full physical life. A chick, a complete living being, is formed from it.

There is no better food than an egg, as *Chazal* say, "Anything the size of an egg, an egg is better than it."¹ The *Korban Chagigah* was offered on *Erev Pesach* for the express purpose of eating its meat [so that the *Korban Pesach* could be eaten after it, in a state of satiety – על השובע].

This teaches us to connect all *gashmiyus*, all physical matters, to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. Even when a person wants to eat meat, i.e., he desires *gashmiyus*, he should do it through a *korban*. In other words, he should know and realize that also the physical comes from *Hashem*.

Maror is Tiferes

At the center of the *Seder* plate is the *Maror*, between the *Zeroa* and the *Beitzah*. The *Maror*

¹ *Berachos* 44b.

corresponds to the *midah* of *Tiferes*.

Tiferes is a type of beauty that has many colors and hues. It is impressive and moving. *Chesed* and *Gevurah* are specific, individual traits, each with its own special beauty and hue. But *Tiferes* unifies and synthesizes these two traits. It is a wondrous combination of *Chesed* with *Gevurah*. And indeed we find the *Maror* in the center of the *Seder* plate.

Hashem bestows so much goodness on His creations. If we think about it, we will realize that one of the most beautiful among them is the phenomenon called *Maror*, i.e., the “bitter” things in life. These are the *nisyonos* and difficulties that we so often encounter during the course of life.

This “bitterness” is *Gevurah* (*din*, “judgement”) that is tempered by *Chesed*. It is a combination of the two. Its purpose is to connect us to *Hashem*. If *Hashem* would just constantly shower us with only good things, we would be in great danger of drifting away from Him. וַיִּשְׁמַן יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּבְעַט – “Yeshurun grew fat, and he rebelled.”² But when a person gets a taste of *Maror*, when he experiences poverty and suffering, he draws close to *Hashem*.

This is why *Maror* represents the trait of *Tiferes*. *Hashem* is totally gracious and merciful, and because of His great desire to bestow goodness on us, He holds us to judgment, He acts with the *midah* of *Gevurah*, of *din*. And it is all for our spiritual good. The beautiful integration of the two distinct hues of *Chesed* and *Gevurah* is called *Tiferes*.

Charoses, Karpas, Chazeres

The lower section of the *Seder* plate contains *Charoses*, *Karpas* and *Chazeres*. They correspond to the traits of *Netzach*, *Hod* and *Yesod*. They are the lower section of the *Sefiros*. These three items are Rabbinic *mitzvos*. There is no Biblical obligation to dip the *Maror* in *Charoses*. Neither is there to eat *Karpas*. Or to eat *Korech*, for which the *Chazeres* is used.

The Biblically-ordained *mitzvos* are influxes of

kedushah that *Hashem* bestows on a person. This is not really the person’s own *avodas Hashem*. Whereas the Rabbinical *mitzvos* and the *minhagim* are things that a person adds on his own, on top of his basic Biblical obligations. This is a *kedushah* that comes from the person. It is self-sanctification. Here lies the true beauty and loveliness of a Jew.

Also with these three items, spiritual life is represented on the right side, natural life on the left, and *nisyonos* in the middle. But here, in the lower section of the *Seder* plate, these things come from us.

Charoses is Netzach

The purpose of the *Charoses* is to sweeten the *Maror*. The *Maror*, the “bitterness,” does not come from *Hashem* as a goal unto itself. We rather need the benefit that emerges from it, the moral and spiritual lesson we learn from it. This constitutes a person’s *avodah*: to improve himself and return to *Hashem* as a result of the *Maror* sent to him from Above. This is why we place the *Charoses* on the right side. It sweetens the *Maror*.

Karpas is Hod

There are two ways to understand *Emunah*. The simple understanding is that there obviously is a Master to the world. If you see a nice house, you know it must have an owner. This understanding of *Emunah* leads us to live a life of *avodas Hashem* by utilizing whatever capabilities we know we have.

This is indeed a legitimate level of understanding – *mochin*, as it is called in early Torah sources – but it is called a “small” level of understanding. Because even a child can grasp this concept. Nevertheless, it is an important principle, and we need to internalize it.

There is a much more profound understanding of *Emunah*, and it is to realize that everything is in *Hashem’s* hands, to do good and to do the opposite, and that He can turn the whole universe into nothingness with one word of His mouth, and that there is nothing else besides Him.

This understanding of *Hashem’s* profound Oneness is on a different level altogether. It is called

² Devarim 32:15.

a “great” level of understanding. It is not something that comes naturally; we must work hard to attain it. Not all of us are capable of understanding that any person can become a *gadol* like the Rashba, if *Hashem* wants him to be.

But one thing is clear: to get to the “great” level of understanding, you need to start from the beginning, which is the “small” level of understanding. The simple knowledge that *Hashem* is the Master of the world.

Karpas expresses the “small” level of understanding. Understanding and realizing *Hashem* in the framework of our regular lives. It is natural to live with this “small,” limited level of understanding.

Chazal say that the reason we eat *Karpas* is so the “children” will ask.³ This is exactly what we were saying. *Karpas* is to inculcate in us the “small” level of understanding.

Chazeres is Yesod

The *Chazeres* is in fact *Maror*, but it is the *Maror* that is used for the *Korech*, not the *Maror* which is a Biblical obligation. It is something we add on our own.

This *Maror* does not signify the “bitterness” that Heaven sends to a person, but rather the “bitterness” that a person creates on his own. It is the *nisyonos* that a person brings himself to, and by overcoming them, he connects to *Hashem*. This expresses the *midah* of *Yesod*, the trait that connects Heaven and Earth.

This was the *midah* of *Yosef Hatzaddik*. He was in the impurity of Egypt, in the home of that wicked woman who was as earthly as could be. She was ultimately Egyptian. In that place and at that time, *Yosef* brought down, from the *Kisei Hakavod*, the image of *Yaakov Avinu* [whose likeness is engraved on the *Kisei Hakavod*]. In other words, he brought Heaven down to Earth, and withstood the *nisayon*. This expresses *Yesod*.

³ *Pesachim* 114, Rashi ad loc.

The Plate is Malchus

There is one more part, the tenth part, which is actually the main and most important component of all. It is the *Seder* plate itself. This is the collective force that takes all the individual elements and puts them together into a unified whole.

To illustrate the point, let’s talk about a table. Ostensibly, it is composed of five parts: four legs and a flat surface on top. But there is really another element, which is the general form of “table.” It unifies all the disparate parts and makes them into one, thus actualizing them.

The *Seder* plate corresponds to the last *Sefirah*, which is *Malchus*, “kingship.” This *Sefirah* is the practical expression of the King’s forces.

Every person contains within himself various traits and forces, some revealed and some hidden, and the trait of *Malchus* creates the situation where all these traits come to practical expression as a unified and wondrously perfected whole.

This is how it is with the *Seder* plate. There are *Matzos*, *Zeroa*, *Beitzah*, etc. When they are scattered and unconnected, they lack practical expression. The *Seder* plate, which is *Malchus*, unifies all these forces into a perfect whole and gives them practical expression. If the aspects of *Chochmah*, *Binah*, *Daas*, *Chesed*, *Gevurah* etc all stand on their own, separately, they don’t have any true significance. Only the unification of all the traits creates the full and perfected form of the human being.

And the end goal of the *avodah* of *Seder* night is to build the form of the human being. To unify all the forces in a person and make from them one edifice that contains everything within it. When each item stands on its own, this is not a human being. It is not *adam*. A person whose components are not unified cannot fulfill his purpose.

On this night, we need to build the form of *adam*. To unify all the forces and elements within us, the revealed and the hidden, and build from them one complete and perfected human being, and present him as a gift of tribute to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. This is the purpose of the *Seder* plate; it is *Malchus*, it is the whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. ●

The Avodah of the Seder

The Very First Step

We don't find any holiday or *mitzvah* in the Torah whose purpose is to mark the existence of G-d. This is because G-d's existence is self-explanatory. It is the most basic and the most obvious fact.

So what is the Torah about, then?

Our relationship with G-d.

Being Jewish is all about our relationship with *Hashem*. By way of metaphor, everything that takes place between husband and wife is about the nature of their relationship, not to demonstrate whether the marriage exists. Obviously, they are married.

It is the same with G-d. The entire world testifies to His existence. There is no object in the world that could even be here if not for the infinite and all-powerful G-d Who created it.

However, the relationship between Creator and created is really something that needs to be clarified. Because according to reason and nature, such a relationship should not even exist. How can that which is infinite connect to that which is limited? How would such a relationship work? It is even more puzzling to contemplate how such a relationship could be characterized by love and care and concern.

The answer is that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is Omnipotent. He can do anything and everything. He is *kol yachol*, so He can even do the impossible. This is why we need Torah, and this is what *mitzvos* come to express. It is all about the relationship.

This is why the first principle in Torah is *Emunah*, faith. *Moshe Rabbeinu* hesitated to go and lead the Jewish people out of Egypt, saying **והם לא יאמינו** – “They won't believe me,” and if there isn't *Emunah*,

then the whole thing doesn't even begin.

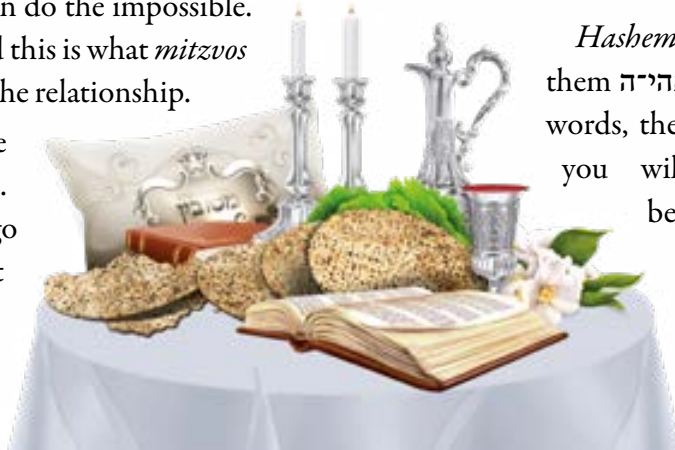
Moshe was supposed to go and tell them that “the G-d of your forefathers sent me,” and that “I [*Hashem*] surely saw what was done to you,” and these are very difficult claims to make, for the reason we explained above. But *Hashem* assured Moshe that they are a believing people, and indeed it is written **ויאמן העם** – “The people believed.”

This is the spark of light from which everything began. The relationship with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is the essential nature of the Jew, and this is only by means of *Emunah*.

Then the question came up: **מה שמו** – “What is His Name?” By way of allegory, if you see someone take out a knife and cut a person up, you would ask: Who is he? What is his name? Is his name Adolf Hitler, or is this Dr. Goldfarb? In other words, who is doing it and what is he doing? Is it an act of cruelty or an act of compassion? Because if the person holding the knife is a Nazi, we know what he is trying to do. And if the person holding the scalpel is an expert surgeon, we also know what he is trying to do.

So the question that came up in *Mitzrayim* was “What is His Name?” i.e., what is happening here? Why are we suffering? Why are they throwing our children into the Nile? Is this a punishment or is there some other explanation?

Hashem's answer was to tell them **אֶהְיֶה**, “I will be.” In other words, the day will come when you will understand. Just believe in Me. **אֶהְיֶה** is a Name of *Hashem*, and the faith it expresses is the foundation of everything.



Chametz

This underlies the prohibition on *chametz*. This prohibition relates to *Emunah*. Because refraining from *chametz* means changing one's way of life. It means ceasing to subsist on natural food, and eating from *Hashem's* table instead. It means eating clean food, pure food, *mitzvah* food.

Now, a person might say this isn't for me. It's too hard; I am not an angel. I want to hide the *chametz* in the freezer for seven days, but not to burn it forever.

This is why the prohibition on *chametz* is related to *Emunah*. It takes some faith to carry it out. You have to believe that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is with you and gives you the strength to make a true change.

For this reason, *biur chametz*, getting rid of *chametz*, is the beginning of it all. This is where the light of *Emunah* begins to shine. To believe that you can live without the regular life routine you followed until now.

Three Generations

There are three generations that famously sinned, and they are the generation of Enosh, the generation of the *Mabul* and the generation that built the Tower of Bavel. The primary sin of Enosh's generation was idolatry, of the *Mabul* was *arayos*, and of *Migdal Bavel* was bloodshed.

These three sins are the antithesis of the three things on which the world stands, which are Torah, *avodah* and *gemilus chasadim*, and they, respectively, correspond to the three *midos* of the intellect: *chochmah*, *binah* and *daas*.

The sin of the generation of Enosh was *avodah zarah*. They lacked *chochmah*, i.e., they lacked the basic knowledge that everything is from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. They thought that there must be some intermediary between G-d and man. It can't be that *Hashem* really does everything Himself, because *Hashem* in His lofty essence can't have a direct relationship with what goes on down here on earth.

The antidote to this is Torah. We learn from the

Torah, more than from anything else, about *Hashem* and His ways. *Chazal* say that the whole Torah is names of *Hashem*. So when we learn Torah, we are learning about *Hashem*.

The second generation was that of the *Mabul*. They engaged in forbidden gender relationships. Someone who transgresses the prohibition on *arayos* does not understand the true nature of the relationship between husband and wife, which is a relationship of *kedushah* and of *yichud*, privacy and exclusivity. By the same token, he does not understand the relationship between *Hashem* and His people, a relationship that has the same character.

It is written *וואהבת לרעך כמוך*, "You shall love your Friend as yourself," and *Chazal* say that this refers to loving *Hashem*. The word *רע* also means one's spouse. It says in the beginning of the second chapter of *Maseches Kiddushin* that a man should not betroth a woman before seeing her, as it says *וואהבת לרעך כמוך*. And it says in *Sefer Tomer Devorah* that the *Shechinah* will surely not dwell with a man before he takes a wife.

On a simple level, this is because it is the same trait. If a person doesn't have it toward his fellow human beings, he doesn't have it toward *Hashem* either. He thus lacks the necessary receptacle to receive the presence of the *Shechinah*.

If he thinks that the relationship between man and woman is one of pleasure, rather than *kedushah*, by the same token he has no relationship with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, which is a relationship based on *avodah*. The nature of this relationship is expressed above all in the *Amidah* prayer, which is characterized by *yichud* with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, by being standing in the presence of *Hashem*, to the exclusion of everything else. The *Amidah* is the main section of *Tefilah*, and all its *halachos* revolve around *yichud*.

The generation of the *Mabul* repudiated this type of relationship both regarding their fellow human beings and regarding *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

The third generation is the one that built the

Tower of Bavel. They were a generation of murderers. At their head stood Nimrod. They accomplished their feat by unifying for the very purpose of being unified. They attributed importance only to the public as a whole, and the common goal of the public was supreme. An individual's life meant nothing to them at all.

This generation's approach bore a striking resemblance to Communism, and the cruelty of the Communists is unsurpassed. They killed more people than the Nazis.

Chazal say about the generation that built the Tower of Bavel that when a brick slipped from the hands of someone high up on the scaffold, and it fell and broke, everyone would mourn its loss, saying it is so hard to replace it! But when a person fell, they didn't care. They considered only the common goal to be important. Individuals had no significance in their eyes.

This is the diametric opposite of *gemilus chasadim*.

Three Mitzvos

We have spoken of three points: Torah and its antithesis, *avodah* and its antithesis, *gemilus chasadim* and its antithesis.

Corresponding to these, we have three key *mitzvos* at the *Pesach Seder*.

Matzah corresponds to correct knowledge, *chochmah*.

The Four Cups corresponds to having a proper relationship, with love and excitement.

The telling of the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is recounting how *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* came down

to save and rescue us, each one of us.

The simple awareness we attain on *Pesach* night is what a child understands when we show him what *Hashem* did when He took us out of *Mitzrayim*. This is basic belief in G-d, to which the entire world is one great testimony.

The first high awareness we attain has to do with nature. We understand that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* rules over the natural world. *Parnassah* doesn't come from working. It is only from *Hashem*. This awareness comes to us through the *kedushah* of the day. Our cessation from work on *Yom Tov* corresponds to this ascendance over the natural world. A non-Jew is not even allowed to cease from work, [because he lives a natural life in the natural world].

There is a *mitzvah* that expresses the initial, simple level of awareness that we mentioned before. This *mitzvah* is *karpas*. Thus the child asks, in the four questions, why *kiddush hayom* comes before *karpas*?

The second higher level of awareness is awareness of our relationship with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. The first high level of awareness is not so surprising. It only makes sense that if there is a G-d Who created the world, He rules over it and controls it. The natural world just makes a false impression, that's all. It is not so hard to understand this. But our relationship with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is something that defies logic. How can you connect infinity to that which is limited? The answer is that this connection is made by the *mitzvos*. This is a matter of love.

And the inner soul of the *mitzvos* is *Tefilah*, which is the inner soul of the *Pesach Seder*. ●





Honoring His Rebbeim

As much as Rav Shimshon strove to honor each and every Jew, and especially *talmidei chachamim*, nothing compared to the reverence that he accorded his *rebbeim*, and the profound *yirah* that characterized his every interaction with them.

Following a serious injury, Rav Shimshon lay in bed recuperating in his father-in-law's house with his leg encased in a thick cast from his thigh down to his ankle, and his entire body racked in pain. While struggling to learn from a *sefer* and ignore the pain, he was astounded to find his *rebbe*, Rav Yisrael Eliyahu Weintraub, standing in the doorway of his room, having come to perform the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim*.

The weight of the thick cast prevented him from moving his body without help, yet Rav Shimshon refused to forgo the *mitzvah* of rising in honor of his *rebbe* and quickly summoned his young son, who was playing in the next room, to assist him. The project entailed dragging two chairs into the room – one which was approximately the height of the bed, and the second which was slightly lower, and to help his father move his aching limb from the bed onto the taller chair and then to lower one, so he could slowly rise to his full height.

Rav Yisrael Eliyahu's sincere objections could not dissuade his *talmid* from fulfilling what he saw as his obligation. Before the *rebbe's* admiring eyes, and despite an excruciating injury, Rav Shimshon spent several minutes rising to his full height to honor his teacher and mentor.

And when Rav Yisrael Eliyahu once lay sleeping in the hospital following a complex surgery, his *talmid* sat devotedly at his bedside for many long hours, ready and eager to serve him as soon as he awakened.

What is Bitul Torah?

"I will tell you a story," he once said, "from which we can learn about fear of *bitul Torah*." The story was

about one of his *rebbeim*, Harav Hagaon R. Yisrael Eliyahu Weintraub zt"l. But since the story mentioned study of *Kabbalah*, Rav Shimshon refrained from mentioning him by name.

He did mention that the Steipler testified about this *Rav* that he is truly one of the *Gedolei Hador*. He also mentioned that this *talmid chacham* (i.e., Rav Weintraub) once recounted to him offhandedly that "when we were still young men, there was not a night that we didn't dream in *divrei Torah*."

In any case, Rav Weintraub and his special group of *talmidei chachamim* who learned from him, and who would gather regularly in his home to learn the writings of the *Kadmonim* ("early Torah sources"), once traveled together to Tzefas, and the whole way there they were engaged only in learning.

"I was the driver." This is how Rav Shimshon in his humility explained his participation in the event. "We got there," he recounted, "and among other places, we went into the *beis midrash* of the Arizal. That is where the *Rav* gave a *shiur*" (assumedly, the *shiur* was on the teachings of the Arizal) "that was tremendously uplifting to all the participants.

"And on the way back, out of the three hours that the drive took, in which everyone was fully involved in learning the same as in *beis midrash*, one of the participants took the opportunity to tell stories for about half an hour, about the faith and spiritual strength of Jews in the Holocaust, which he himself went through in his youth.

"The whole time besides that, as I said, everyone was engaged only in learning.

"The next day, I visited the home of my *rebbe*, and when I asked him, 'Nu, how was the trip yesterday?' I noticed a pained expression on his face. I was a little taken aback, and I asked, 'Why? What was it?' and he answered, 'Because during the drive, a half hour of *devarim beteilim* was mixed in!'

He tried to console himself by the fact that they

were talking about *Emunah*, but even so, he could not calm down because he was so pained by the *bitul Torah*. He finished off by saying that if so, 'The whole trip was not worth it.'

"It must be emphasized," concluded Rav Shimshon, "that he did not say it as a comment to others, to teach them a lesson in *Mussar* and correct behavior. He was simply expressing his pain over his own personal failing in the area of *bitul Torah*, that he listened to stories of *Emunah* and *chizuk* instead of learning. It was simply his natural reaction to what had happened."

No Percentage

Rav Shimshon's first acquaintance with his dear friend Rav Ezriel Tauber *zt"l* began when he knocked one day on the door in Monsey and presented himself as follows: "My name is Pincus. I live in Ofakim, in southern *Eretz Yisrael*" (hiding the fact that he was the *Rav* there) "and there is a Torah institution in the town of Yerucham whose *talmidim* learn in shacks, in impoverished conditions.

"I am their *shaliach*, but I am not a paid *shaliach*. I am also not one of the *Rabbanim* there. I don't get a salary or a percentage. My connection with the place is only that I was once on the staff there, and I feel very bad for them. I heard that you hold Torah learning in very high esteem. Maybe you want to have a *chelek* in it?"

At a later point, Rav Tauber described his impression from that meeting:

"I liked what I heard so much! No one ever presented himself to me before like that, with such sincerity and simplicity. It's not my business, I don't stand to gain anything from the place, such and such is the situation, and it's pitiful... right then and there I answered him that I want to see the place. And when I came to *Eretz Yisrael*, he took me to see the institution he was talking about, and I was very impressed. This is how I got to know Yerucham, and a *yeshivah* and other institutions were built there."

A Critical \$2,000

There was a rare occasion that Rav Shimshon not only acquiesced to accept a sum of money as payment, but actually requested it. Rav Ezriel Tauber, who shared a close relationship with Rav Shimshon and was aware of the phenomenal *kochos* and efforts that he invested in his lectures, always tried to compensate him somehow for his efforts, aware that paying him would also constitute supporting an impoverished *talmid chacham*.

So he once handed Rav Shimshon an envelope filled with \$2,000 in cash, hoping that, for once, he would agree to accept it. Yet, as he'd already learned to expect, Rav Shimshon stubbornly declined.

Less than twenty-four hours passed before Rav Tauber's phone rang. "Is there any way you can still send me the money?" he asked meekly. "Send you the money?!" Rav Tauber was overjoyed. "I'd be thrilled to! But... what changed?"

It wasn't long before the secret was out. Shortly after ending his speech at the *Shalheves* retreat, Rav Shimshon had boarded a plane to South Africa where he learned of an excellent *shidduch* that was on the verge of dissolving due to a disagreement over a paltry \$2,000. While Rav Shimshon never gave such sums (or any sum) of money the slightest thought, this \$2,000 suddenly became crucial, determining the fate and future of a Jewish couple.

Without wasting a moment, he made the transatlantic call to the astounded Rav Ezriel Tauber and asked, "Look, you offered me money, and now I'm willing to take it..."

"For yourself?" Rav Ezriel pressed, unable to quell his burning curiosity and strongly suspecting the answer.

"Well... the truth is, it's for a *shidduch*..."

In no time, a bank check was written for a sum of \$2,000 and dispatched to South Africa, laying the foundations of another beautiful Jewish home and Jewish generations. ●