

"וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבָנֶיךָ"

(שמות י"ג:ח')

הגדה של פסח

תשע"ט Ezra Girls



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An Introductory Message

To our dearest Madrichot, Chanichot and extended Ezra family,

Welcome to the first ever Ezra girls Haggada. It is so exciting to see the madrichot, chanichot and all parts of the Ezra family contributing to this impressive publication.

On Pesach, Hashem brought us out of the confines of Mitzrayim, a country whose very name comes from the root *metzar* meaning constriction, to the spiritual freedom of being able to serve Him. Rav Dessler explains that Pesach is called 'zeman cheiruseinu'- the time of our freedom. But Pesach as the time of our freedom was not an event which happened solely in the past! The Jewish calendar is like a spiral and when we come around to the same point each year, we can tap into the tremendous koach which is present at that time. Instead of celebrating an event that happened in the past, let's make Pesach a reality and harness the power of freedom, which we receive every year anew, in our own fight for our spiritual freedom against the yetzer hara.

How are we able to achieve true freedom? We are told that only people who are occupied with the Torah are truly free; by learning it, living it and applying it a person comes to be called a ben Torah and is then truly free.

This yom tov let's seize the opportunity that Hashem has given us. Choose a mida or a mitzva to learn about or work on with a friend, a madricha or by yourself. Use this Pesach to enable us to reach heights of freedom we would never ordinarily be able to reach.

Wishing you all a chag kosher vesameach

Elianna xxx

A Night to Dream

By Pearl Jaffe

When was the first Seder night?

We would expect it to be the year after Yetziyas Mitzrayim - as a celebration and commemoration of what took place. Yet, בני were told to sit round the night before they left, before they had even become free and have their first Seder by eating the Korban Pesach.

What was the logic behind this?

It's like a couple celebrating their first anniversary a year before they are married. There was nothing yet for them to commemorate, celebrate or tell over?!

I heard a powerful answer from Charlie Harary that, if applied, can totally transform our experience of the Seder. Before בני became free, there was a crucial pre-requisite. They first had to imagine, picture and experience what it meant to sit at a Seder as free people, showing how powerful the energy of imagination can be. Usually, imagination doesn't go well with mitzvos. It can be distracting and so we try to control it, but tonight is different. Tonight, it is crucial to view ourselves as is we are leaving Mitzrayim. This doesn't apply regarding any other yom tov... we aren't told to sit in the succah as if we are in the dessert, or read the megillah as if we were there now.

Why with Pesach is there an explicit emphasis to view ourselves as if we are experiencing geulah now?

We may no longer be enslaved in the physical Mitzrayim but the root of the word Mitzrayim is מצר meaning a confinement. And confined we certainly are. We, and those around us are sometimes guilty of enslaving

ourselves through confining our own capabilities. Paroh, the Greeks, the Romans, the Spanish, the Nazis may no longer be enforcing decrees on us but we place limitations on ourselves with two destructive words - I can't. We don't believe in how great we are and so we are stuck, we are stuck in connecting to ourselves, to others and to Hashem. We aren't truly free. Tonight is a time to redeem ourselves. Tonight we MUST use our imagination. We have to follow the road map out that bnei yisroel took thousands of years ago and apply it to ourselves!

The first step which was a prerequisite then and is for us now, is to first imagine, with no limits, what it means to be free and only then can we leave Mitzrayim.... imagine what it would look like to not speak loшон harah, to have kavanah in tefilla, to appreciate tznius, to have a positive relationship with my parents, grandparents, siblings, friends... and once we have done that we have to RUN... just as our ancestors ran as fast as they could out of physical Mitzrayim. There is no time to waste or it will become chometz. It starts tomorrow morning or the power of the mind will dissipate.

One explanation for the 4 cups of wine is that they symbolize the 4 times the kos is mentioned in the story of the dreams of the butler and the baker. How is that Yosef knew to interpret the dream of the butler positively and the bakers negatively? What was the difference in the dreams that resulted in such different outcomes?

One opinion is that in the dream of the baker, the baker was passive. There was a basket on his head and birds ate from it. But in the dream of the butler, the butler played an active role. He himself took the grapes, made them into wine and gave them to Pharaoh. The dream of the butler was interpreted positively because he was active in it. The dreams we had for ourselves tonight are guaranteed to be interpreted for the good if we too are proactive about them and start moving as

soon as we've had our dreams.

May the power of Pesach enable us to find the space and clarity to dream the best dreams possible and act on them instantly so that we too can become truly free people just as our ancestors began to on the very first Seder night in history.

Wishing you a great yom tov!!

שבת הגדול

By **Becky Richman**

The Shabbos before Pesach presumably has a message to us about greatness, therefore it is called Shabbos Hagadol. Furthermore, in some way it has to relate to Pesach. I would like to suggest the following explanation.

There are two theories to explain history and why events unfold as they do. The first is the Great Man Theory; a singular great person in the right time and right place is able to act as a catalyst for major historical events. Ghandi single handily evicted the British from the Raj, created India and Pakistan and has effected history for 70 years. Stalin was such a force. Einstein in his quiet way forever changed our world. People are able to bring about events for good or bad through force of personality, intellect and creativity.

Alternatively, there is the theory of trends and movements as the great force in history. For example, advances in technology and science and led to ever great manufacturing efficiency. The industrial Revolution wasn't the result of any one person but a movement. The concept of Lebensraum directly caused World War II and Serbian nationalism led to World War I.

Both of these theories have their proponents but I believe that history is the result of the interaction between man and G-d. G-d has a goal and man's actions interact with them. This can be compared to a chess novice playing a grand master - the ultimate conclusion is foregone; the chess master will win no matter what the novice does. But each move of the novice causes the grand master to a different gambit to achieve check mate.

So too, G-d directs us to His goal no matter what we do, He incorpo

rates our actions into his plan. G-d wanted the children of Jacob to mature into nation in Egypt, but left to us how to get there. Did it have to be with the sale of Joseph? No, but G-d incorporated the actions of Joseph and his brothers into his plan. As Jews we realise that we interact with G-d in many ways, we determine which day is Rosh Chodesh and G-d's holiness descends on that day. We determine that a particular animal is no longer mundane, but a sacrifice and is Holy. Our speech (lashon hara) can cause a physical wound on our bodies - clearly a sign that what we say is used by Hashem to cause a physical change. What makes Saturday into Shabbos; again a combination of my not working, my sanctifying and Hashem's holiness which come altogether and change a plain Saturday into Shabbos Kodesh. This concept of man and G-d interacting was a great chiddush and a lesson that Klal Yisroel had to learn as they formed into a nation. My individual actions and those of the nation interact with Hashem to sanctify days and events,

חג המצות

By Kayla Hollander

The Torah calls Pesach "Chag Hamatzos." But we call it "Pesach." Why is this so? Rabbi Reuven Lauffer brings a beautiful explanation in the name of Rav Chaim Volozhiner.

The word Matzos and the word Mitzvos are spelled exactly the same in Hebrew. Thus "Chag HaMatzos" can be read "Chag HaMitzvos," meaning that by leaving Egypt and receiving the Torah, the Jewish People now have the opportunity to earn great reward by doing the Mitzvos.

Pesach, on the other hand, means Passover: Hashem "passed over" the houses of the Bnei Yisrael. By calling it Pesach, we emphasize the good that Hashem has done for us.

Our Sages teach us not to serve Hashem with an eye to the reward; rather we should serve Him out of a sense of love and gratitude. By calling it Pesach we de-emphasize the reward that each Mitzva brings, and instead focus on the good that Hashem has done for us.

קדש

By Michal Geller

This year the Seder night falls on Shabbos, therefore the kiddush we say is different to usual. We say during Kiddush:

The heaven and the earth were finished - **"וַיִּכְלֹ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ"**.

There is a deep message we can take from this possuk. A story is told of a resident of the Holy Land who came down with pneumonia at a time when penicillin was locally unavailable. The doctors persisted in their efforts to secure a permit for importing the life-saving medication, but without success. The patients condition deteriorated until the doctors told him he had only 4 days left to live. The sick man asked to be carried to the house of the Chazzan Ish. "Rabbi" he sobbed, "I only have four days left to live". "Four days is a world of a time" said the Chazzan Ish. "In the first four days Hashem created heaven and earth, the firmament, the grass, and trees, and the luminaries . Do you think He can't bring you penicillin in four days?". Indeed, the permit was secured and the penicillin was imported in time to save the man's life

The penicillin can be compared to our redemption. If we daven hard enough and keep Hashem's Torah and mitzvos, our redemption is right there waiting for us. Kiddush is a special time to have our geulah in mind, and may be be zocher to the coming of Mashiach very soon.

ורחץ

By Chava Brocha Waldman

Of all the 15 steps in the Seder, Urchatz is the only one to begin with a vav that links it to the step before, Kadesh. None of the other parts of the entire Seder are combined with a vav meaning that there must be something to learn from behind all of this. However, Kadesh and Urchatz seem to be out of order (and yes, we normally make kiddush before we wash but this is just because of Halacha). There is a concept of **סור** **מרע ועשי טוב** (remove the bad and then do good) this concept teaches us that if one is a bad person and wants to become better, they must first remove the bad in their life and only then should they do the good. Kadesh symbolises the **עשי טוב** (making Kiddush is doing something positive) while urchatz represents the **סור מרע** because we wash to remove both the physical and spiritual dirt from our hands. Therefore, these two things are seemingly out of order – we should wash and remove the bad and then make kiddush and do the good?

Why instead do we make kiddush and only then do we wash our hands?

The answer is, because although now we have the concept of '**סור מרע** ' **ועשי טוב** this was not how our geula from Egypt happened. There we were, at the depths of impurity, right on the 49th level of impurity where had we fallen any lower, we would not have been able to be redeemed. Nevertheless, Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim. We see then that Hashem removed us from Mitzrayim before we were clean. According to the concept of **סור מרע**, Hashem should have waited until we had removed all of our impurity before He did the **ועשי טוב** and took us out of Mitzrayim. Because the **עשי טוב** comes before the **סור מרע** it shows Hashem's chessed and in order to emulate this we make kiddush before we wash.

כרפס

By Gali Shaya

Why do we dip a vegetable in salt water, seems a bit strange, what is the significance of this?

Gemara Pesachim answers with perhaps the six most clichéd words of the Seder night; "so that the children will ask." In just a few minutes, the youngest child present will get up and be expected to ask questions about the Seder, to set the stage for the Sipur Yitziat Mitzrayim which will follow. We try to make it easy for him by giving him a freebie - an easy question that anyone paying attention thus far would ask: "Why?" Why are we sitting around, dipping vegetable in salt water? **"שבכל** **" - הלילות אין אנו מטבילים..."** - We never do this, so what makes tonight so special?

While this is certainly one way to encourage the children to ask questions, we must ask ourselves if this is really worth all of the difficulty which Karpas causes us. This stage of the Seder forces all involved to make a beracha now to also cover another vegetable that will be eaten hours later, it wastes precious minutes which could be spent telling divrei Torah during Magid, and, perhaps the most inconvenient consequence, it forces everyone to get up off of their chairs and wash their hands. Surely there are easier ways to get a child to ask "why"?

I believe that there are certainly better ways to encourage a child to ask **"שבכל הלילות אין אנו מטבילים..."** but this is exactly the point - the sheer inconvenience. When the Jews of Egypt's enslavement became more difficult, they were forced to work longer and more trying hours, and were eventually moved to separate cities of slaves. Imagine how difficult it must have been to remain a servant of Hashem there. She'ibud Mitzrayim was well before our nation received the Torah, but even the

most rudimentary commandments that they had already received must not have been easy to keep with the pressure of work and the despair of enslavement upon them.

Yet, our forefathers managed to do the impossible - they stayed strong. Rashi on Shemot explains that they named their children Jewish names, and even continued to circumcise their sons, even when this became dangerous. Their mesirut nefesh to remain Jewish could be one of the main factors that caused them to merit their redemption.

Looking to a more recent she'ibud, when the Germans wiped out over six million of our brethren, one need not look far to find examples of righteous Jews who went the extra mile to ensure that they and their descendants remain part of the faith. There were those who accomplished this through smuggling kosher food into the Ghetto to ensure their children didn't have to resort to eating non-Kosher in those difficult times. Others managed to smuggle a pair of tefillin into the concentration camps, to keep one symbol that their Judaism was still alive.

I believe that as we all rearrange ourselves to wash our hands and make the misplaced blessing on karpas, we are not only doing this so that the youngest will ask. It is also the most subtle reminder of these heroes among the fallen, whose efforts resulted in our continuity and our eternally strong faith - doing their most to ensure that decades later we would still be sitting together to participate in the Seder. In commemoration of their mesirut nefesh, we do our own symbolic mesirut nefesh, making a blessing in their merit and eating a vegetable drowning in the tears of those who didn't survive to join us at the Seder table.

A recurring theme of the Pesach Seder is the idea that we are still in an Egypt of sorts. In the past decade, being a practicing Jew in the Diaspora has become increasingly dangerous. Bomb threats against shuls,

muggings of clearly religious Jews, attempted legislation against shechita (ironic, as our ritual slaughtering is second only to vegetarianism in its humane treatment of animals). In 2015, Israeli journalist Zvika Klein, put on a kippah and walked around various parts of Paris, filming how people reacted to his open Jewishness. He received negative reactions in nearly every borough which he passed through. We may no longer be in Egypt, but she'ibud Mitzrayim is certainly still upon us.

How do we escape this?

We must remember the message of karpas - the pain, tears and suffering that caused our people to remain strong until now - and remain strong in our Yiddishkeit. We cannot let societal pressure or physical danger stop us from following in our faith - we must not let the pain and tears of previous generations go to waste. As we sit down to eat the karpas tonight, let us remember how we've gotten to where we are today, and try to envision and actualize what is necessary to ensure that in another seventy years, the next generations will be able to do the same.

May we all merit an end to our suffering, and a complete fulfillment of Leshana Haba BiYerushalayim Habenuyah.

Chag Kasher V'Sameach!

כרפס

By Miri Klass

The Ben Ish Chai asks: Why do we dip twice on this night?

His answer explains that the **גלות** began with dipping just as the **גאולה** began with it too. The **גלות** began when the other **שבטים** dipped Yosef's coat into blood in order to fabricate his death – they had baseless hatred for Yosef. For this reason the first dipping is into bitter salt water to remind us of the tears of the **גלות**. Our second dipping however, parallels the dipping during the beginning of **גאולה** - the **בני ישראל** were instructed to dip hyssop into blood and mark their doorposts to prevent Hashem from taking the life of the firstborn in that house. The hyssop had to be in a bunch, with many branches together showing that the **גלות** had to be rectified by acting as one with **אחדות**. We can learn from here too that just like the hyssop that displayed the reason for the **גאולה** of **יציאת מצרים**, if we want the coming of Moshiach and the conclusion of our current **גלות**, we need to come together and be **כאיש אחד בלב אחד**.

יחץ

By Kayla Samuels

At Yachatz, we take the middle matzah and break it in half. The smaller half remains between the two complete matzos and is the 'poor man's bread' over which the story of our slavery is said. This is because we were poor people, eating only a small part of our bread, needing to save the rest in case there was none the next day.

Then we take the larger piece, break it into five pieces and put it in a cloth. This will be the Afikoman.

Then we take the larger piece and put it in a cloth. This will be the Afikoman. Some briefly place the Afikoman portion on their shoulders in memory of the Biblical verse that Israel left Egypt carrying their matzos on their shoulders. Then they set it aside.

מגיד

By Ilana Maierovitz

In his hometown of Radin, the **הפץ היים** went to see a doctor during an especially difficult time for the Jewish people there. They were suffering from many pogroms and men, women and children were being slaughtered mercilessly. The doctor asked the **הפץ היים** how Hashem could allow such things to happen to His people. Before the **הפץ היים** could respond, the doctor confessed that he was starting to lose faith that Hashem even existed at all.

The **הפץ היים** responded, "are you sure that you really are a doctor?" Startled at the relevance of the question, the doctor announced that he certainly was. "How do I know?" retorted the **הפץ היים**. "I have this certificate attesting to my qualifications right here," replied the doctor, pointing to the framed diploma on the wall.

The **הפץ היים** read the diploma and said, "this diploma is thirty years old. How do I know about your qualifications today?" Flabbergasted at the line of questioning, the doctor declared "I don't need to take a new examination every day. Once is enough to prove my skills, and since then, everybody knows that I am a doctor even without this certificate on my wall!"

A smile out up on the **הפץ היים**'s face as he said to the doctor in a gentle voice "you should know, the same is true with us. Before Hashem gave us the **תורה**, He showed us many signs and wonders. He performed many miracles and everyone knew that he was G-d. Today, thousands of years later, He too does not need to prove himself anew every day. The Jews, after experiencing miracle after miracle, were able to testify at Sinai that Hashem was the king of the world. He proved

Himself then, and the memory of those events has not left the Jewish people for even one generation. We cannot know why Hashem is letting these terrible things happen to His people, but we can know for sure that He is here, and this is all part of His master plan."

מגיד

By Emily Mocton

"All who are hungry - come and eat. All who are needy - come join the Passover celebration."

The Haggadah is asking which of two categories we fall under: Are we here because we are **hungry**, or are we here because we are **needy**?

"Need" is defined as "awareness of a lack."

Freedom is not simply something that's "nice" to have; rather it is a necessity to our very being. As much as we need food to exist, we need freedom to live. Just as a man starving in the desert scrambles for even the slightest morsel of food, we should be searching for ideas of personal freedom! Slavery is not just being ordered around by a guard with a whip. Even a life outside of prison can really be a life of horrendous slavery. Not "knowing" what to do with one's life is just as much slavery as not being "allowed" to do it.

Making poor choices and becoming dependent on desires is another form of slavery. Many forces pull on a person's body and cloud the desires of the soul. If a person loses sight of what is truly meaningful, he/she no longer experiences true freedom.

Imagine that you have no material possessions. Zero. Ask yourself: "Now what is the quality of my life?" This will tell you if your soul is really free from the desires of your body.

Or, as the Haggadah says, ask a more immediate question: "Why am I at the Passover table? Am I hungry and want to get the Haggadah over with so we can get to the meal? If you have ever worked on a very meaningful project that had you so engrossed you completely forgot

about eating, then you know what it is like to be aware you need to eat without being hungry. Your body needs food; your car needs gas. But hunger is a desire that controls you.

Or ... are you at the Pesach table because you are needy? Do you recognize a lack freedom and therefore wish to participate in the Seder that is a lesson in freedom? The answer will tell you whether your body or your soul is in charge! We can let our body pull us so that our drive is to eat, or let our soul take control and strive for freedom. If you come to the Pesach table because you are hungry, then you have made the choice of following your body. Who is in control — your stomach or your soul?

If you came for the meal, then skip the Haggadah and go straight to the chicken soup! Or, take the Haggadah seriously as a guide-book to finding freedom. Make a decision!

This choice is not only for Passover. It's a choice we can make every day of our lives. Look to yourself and determine what is driving you, your stomach or your mind. Your eyes or your heart.

The most important step is to decide. Today, many young people find it difficult to choose a spouse, a career, a roommate — and certainly a life direction. "Choosing" is one of life's greatest pleasures. Right or wrong decisions bring success or failure. But for those who make no decisions, there is simply nothing. The Haggadah urges us: Start choosing **today!**

The contrast between the open miracles of Pesach and the hidden miracle of Purim is clear.

Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein brings a Gemara, which says מִיִּסְמַךְ "מיסמך" גאולה לגאולה עדיפא - it is important to place together one redemption (Purim) with another (Pesach). (Megilla 6b)

Why is it important Purim is next to Pesach? So crucial, in fact, that we override concerns that in a leap year, perhaps Purim should be in Adar Rishon - since usually we do mitzvos at the earliest possible opportunity. But no - it is more important Purim is next to Pesach, hence it is in Adar Sheni. Why is this?

The juxtaposition of Purim and Pesach highlight the fact that these two redemptions are connected. The hidden redemption of Purim *completes* the message of the geula we commemorate on Pesach.

Purim is a different kind of miracle. It is hidden, there was no splitting of the sea or crumbling of the walls of Yericho. This is also why Esther is compared to אילת השחר - a morning star. The miracle was like a morning star - barely visible but still there - it was orchestrated over many years, resulting in a dramatic "v'nahafoch hu".

We knew that Hashem could split the Yam Suf and take us out of Mitzrayim "במרא גדל ובאותות ומופתים" - but when we saw that He also was involved in everyday events and also governs the details of our *everyday* lives, we learnt something new and we gained clarity hence, ליהודים היתה אורה, for Klal Yisrael, there was light!

ארבע לשונות גאולה

By Rut Klajman

The Pesukim say in Parshas Veira (Shemos 6:6):

וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סְבִלַת מִצְרַיִם וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעַבְדֵיהֶם וְגֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם בְּזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָה וּבְשִׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים.
וְלִקַּחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהֵייתִי לְכֶם לְאֱלֹהִים...."

- ◇ "I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt" — this means exactly what it says.
- ◇ "I shall rescue you from their service" — this refers to the splitting of the sea.
- ◇ "I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments" — this refers to the battle with Amalek at Refidim, which was won when Moshe climbed to the top of a hill and stretched-out his arms.
- ◇ "I shall take you to Me for a people" — this refers to the events following the sin of the Golden Calf.

The Maharal explains that these 4 expressions of redemption are 4 stages referring to the three types of suffering the Jews went through - followed by another level of redemption.

The first level of exile was the Jews being strangers in a foreign land that they did not own.

The second level of exile was when the Jews were enslaved.

The third level of exile was when the Jews endured oppressive slave

labour.

The first expression of redemption refers to the third level of exile. Hashem says He will take the Jews out from the burden of Mitzrayim. The second expression refers to the second level of exile and Hashem promises that He will save the Jews from being enslaved. The third expression refers to the first level of exile- Hashem says He will redeem us from the land of Mitzrayim. However now the Jews are just like any other nation, not being enslaved and being free people however nothing very special.

The last expression Hashem uses ensures the Jews that they will become a special people as Hashem is taking them for Him as a people.

The maggid of Dubner explains that by putting the redemption in 4 stages, Hashem is showing the Jewish people that the process may take a while (our sages say it took 1 year) but the end goal is clear, they will become a free nation and the people of Hashem.

The journey towards complete redemption is written in 4 stages enabling us to see how much Hashem did for the Jews in Mitzrayim- how much Hashem did for us. It also highlights that each part of the redemption is different and special and this makes it more rich and meaningful for us.

Ideas based on Torah.org, and with thanks to Sam Thurgood.

מעשה ברבי אליעזר

(From The Children's Haggadah, RKP 1963)

Of Rabbi Eliezer a story is told,
Of Rabbi Yehoshua, that scholar of old,
Elazar ben Azariah, Akiva the sage,
And Tarphon, for wisdom renowned in his age.

In Bene Berak they at Seder dined well,
And the whole long night through the old tale did retell,
How G-d in His power humbled Egypt's great might,
And brought out our people from darkness to light.

Whilst they were held rapt by the wondrous old story, Dark night
passed away and dawn came in its glory, Then entered their pupils,
"Our Rabbis" they say, "'tis time for Shema, for behold it is day!"



Q: Why do we suddenly mention our Rabbonim sharing the story of Yetziyas Mitzrayim?

A: Rabbi Uri Pillichowski shares an insight. This section is included to teach us how the Seder should run. These five great sages stayed up all night learning and discussing with enthusiasm and passion. Up until we mention מעשה ברבי אליעזר during the Seder, we seem to focus more on the process of the Seder: Kaddish, Urchatz, and so on. Upon reaching this point we are reminded of the Mitzvah to discuss the גאולה and the נסים with vigour and excitement.

מעשה ברבי אליעזר

By Miri Klass

The well-known story of Rabbi Eliezer and his fellow Rabbonim in בני ברק shows the epitome of love for Hashem where they stayed up all night discussing יצית מצרים.

But what can we learn from this?

Rav Galinsky tells a משל of a professor who came to the rosh yeshiva of a yeshiva in ירושלים asking how the bochrim of the yeshiva didn't get back pain from their swaying during their davening. The rosh yeshiva replied questioning whether the professor's jaw gets tired whilst eating a meal? The professor replied 'no' explaining that when he eats he enjoys it and leaves no space for pain. The rosh yeshiva explained that it is that same love that prevents his bochrim from feeling any discomfort whilst davening. The same is displayed in the story of the Rabbonim in בני ברק – their love and endless passion for Torah prevented any tiredness from coming to them. Their enthusiasm meant that they had the energy to keep going and going until sunrise and furthermore until their students arrived to remind them to say Shema. We can try and replicate this in our lives too by reaching a level of excitement at which there are no distractions, one where Torah and Yiddishkayt are the centre of our lives.

הא לחמא עניה

By Tzofi Freilich

Q Why do we break our matza in half?

A: We do this and break our matza in half like a poor person breaks a piece of food in half to save the other half for another time, as we are acting like poor people. At this point in the Seder we remember people who are poor and welcome them to our Seder table.



הא לחמא עניה

By Elisheva Schreiber

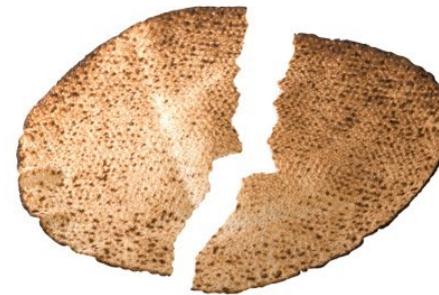
Pesach is a time not only to commemorate the geulah that בני' experienced in Mitzrayim but also celebrating the knowledge that ה' saved us from any troubles till today.

Rav Dovid Ashear gives a beautiful משל illustrating this:

There was once a king who was travelling his land, in search of a suitable wife to be his queen. As he was passing a village, he chanced upon a woman who he immediately felt was the right one. His advisors were opposed, feeling that this simple peasant was not fitting to be a queen. The King was adamant that he was only interested in this lady. He proposed to her and she accepted. She then took the King to her home and introduced the King to her family. They suggested that they prepare a meal, but the King was very reluctant to delay. He wanted to take her back home with him straight away. The family pleaded to wait for the meal and the King gave in and agreed. A few minutes later, the King eagerly asked to begin the meal, and he was told that the meal was not yet ready.

As the rolls were finally in the oven, the King said he could not wait any longer. He rushed into the kitchen and pulled them out of the oven while they were still half baked. They sat down to eat and before long they were on the way to the palace.

Some time later, the King and Queen had a disagreement. The King said to his wife, "Remember that you were just a peasant – everything you have is because of me." The Queen went to the cupboard and pulled out one half baked loaf. "What you say is true but look at this – and



remember how desperate you were to marry me!"

The נמשל applies to us on Seder night. It is true that many times in this golus we have upset and disappointed ה'. However, we remind ה' tonight of the half-baked matzah, of how eager ה' was to take us out of Mitzrayim. In this way, the mitzvah of Matzah shows the special relationship that בני' have with ה'.

הא לחמא עניה

By Tanya Rowe

Why do we invite people to come to our Seder table only at the beginning of maggid, in **הא לחמא עניה** - "this is the bread of affliction"?

Chazal instituted this blessing to quash the fears of the poor guests of the people who are already at the table. They would feel guilty for eating and retracting from their host family who they would believe to also be poor when seeing the bread of the poor man. We therefore say to our guests who are feeling uncomfortable "**כל דפכין ייתי ויכל**" - "all the hungry guests are welcome to eat in comfort. Alternatively however we do not want them feeling uncomfortable sitting at the table of a rich man, so we therefore remind them here that we are equals and also once slaves in Egypt by saying "**השתה עבדי**" - we are all really slaves in Egypt. This makes sure that all guests feel comfortable at the Seder table and can contribute anything that have to say and can gain the proper experience of **יציאת מצריים** without having to worry that they don't fit in. Therefore the majority of this passage is in Aramaic for that was the most common language spoken at the time. This allowed more people to understand and therefore be able to take up on this invitation.

We also acknowledge that there is a mitzvah to eat matzah and we do not want to bar a single Jew from taking part in such a mitzvah so we invite all Jews into joining in our Seder.

We also invite people to join us for the korban Pesach when we say "**כל דפכין**", which was said when the korban Pesach was shechted. We invite people over as the Mishna argued over whether it should be shechted for one or for a group of people and that we want others to join us for the mitzvah of remembering the korban - **זכר לקורבן**.

Have an amazing Pesach.

מה נשתנה

By Deborah Fruchter

During the Seder night we constantly discuss freedom and slavery even though the night is celebrating freedom. The Abarbanel says that the main question of the **מה נשתנה** is, why do we talk is about slavery and freedom.

Why are we not only focusing on freedom?

The answer can be found in the fact that the next paragraph of the Haggadah talks about how we were once slaves. From here, we see that the whole idea of Pesach is not just the fact that we were freed by G-d - but the fact that we went from being slaves to being free in one single moment.

עבדים היינו

By Devorah Moise

In Avadim Hayinu we talk about Hashem liberating us from slavery in Egypt, through awesome miracles, such as the splitting of the sea and the ten plagues.

Why was it necessary to do liberate us in such a way? We could have been liberated due to political negotiations rather than a miraculous rescue.

However, if that happened we would have been eternally indebted to the Egyptians who 'released' us or enslaved to our own egos.

There is a Gemara in Pesachim which says:

“בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאלו הוא יצא ממצרים”
 “In every generation, a person is required to view himself as if he went out of Egypt.”

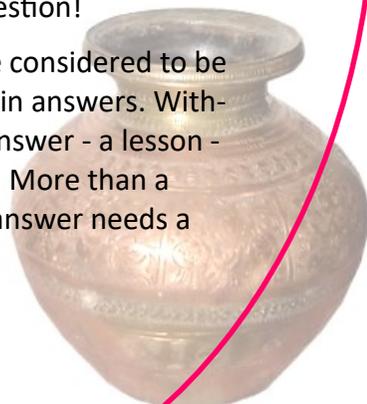
But it is very difficult to comprehend what our ancestors went through thousands of years ago. Thankfully, we cannot understand what it means to be enslaved in a physical sense; nevertheless, that is not to say that we are free either. We are slaves to our own egos, fears and self-doubts which prevent us from achieving our potential. We too can be free when we overcome what holds us back.

There is nothing more irrelevant than an answer without a question.

מה נשתנה must be asked in Q&A format, according to halacha. Children ask their father the 4 questions. If there are no children present, a man's wife should ask him; if he is not married, he asks himself these questions.

We learn from this Halacha that in order to learn and understand the world around us, we must comprehend the world as a question!

Questions in Torah learning are considered to be **vessels** which are able to contain answers. Without an appropriate vessel, an answer - a lesson - cannot possibly be maintained! More than a question needs an answer, an answer needs a question!



עבדים היינו

By Channi Goldin

What would it be like If you had gone up to the Paroh 3,300 years ago and asked him "King of Egypt, who do you think is more likely to be around in 33 centuries from now: your powerful nation or the Jews? He would have just laughed at you and thought you were mad.

Paroh was the leader of the most powerful empire of the ancient times. On the other hand, the Jews they were the most powerless of all slaves: no freedom, no rights, and no dignity. What's more, we even know what the Egyptians thought of the Jews, because the oldest reference to the Jews, outside Tanach, is on a tablet of stone engraved by an Egyptian that says: "the Israelites are laid waste, her seed is no more." The ancient Egyptians thought that the Jews were finished. So how was it that this tiny people were able to survive while the mighty empire of Paroh began to decline and ultimately disappeared?

The answer is that the Egyptians and the Jews were both civilizations that asked the deepest question any one of us can ask:.

How can we survive the short span of years that we call life and achieve immortality?

The Egyptians gave one answer: We achieve immortality by building huge buildings and monuments of stone that outlive us. In a sense they were correct as the buildings are still here today but the civilizations that bought them forth and their values disappeared long ago

The Jews however said the way to be immortal is not to build monuments of stone, All you need to do is engrave the values on the heart of your children and they on theirs and so on across the centuries of time.

As we say in Shema, "ושננתם לבנך ודברת בם" - the Jews built living monuments. And how did they do this? They did this by handing their story on to the next generation. And that's what we do on Pesach. We give the next generation the gift of the Jewish story and this ritual turned

out to be longer lasting than the mightiest empires.

So pause this Sedar night, just before you are about to begin, and realize that you too are part of this miracle, the endless story of the Jewish people seeking freedom in the Promised Land.

I hope all my incredible madrichot and all my friends from Ezra have the best Pesach...**חג שמח!**

(Based on Rabbi Sacks' writings)

ברוך המקום

By **Abbi Sheldon**

Baruch Hamakom means "blessed is the place". We refer to G-d as "the place" and by referring to G-d as "the place" we are saying that G-d is not in the world but the world is G-d.

If you say G-d is in the world then you are restricting him to a location but if you say G-d is the world it means he is the most important and he is everywhere.

This is the wise son he understands that G-d is always right there.

The second son, the evil son, says "blessed is he". This son refers to G-d by a third person pronoun. He is excluding himself, looking at Judaism from cold distance.

The simple son mentions G-d giving the Torah to the Jewish people. He feels the power of the G-d and the history of the Jews.

The fourth son says "blessed is he" this son doesn't know how to ask and he uses the same phrase as the evil son.

ברוך שומר הבטחתו לישראל

By **Yael Schreiber**

ארבעה בנים

By Adina Segal

The simple son asks.... what is this?

When your child asks you a simple question like, "why does a magnet stick to metal?" What are you going to say? Or how about this one: "why doesn't it ever snow in summer?" Most of us who are omniscient in the eyes of our children find ourselves running for cover when these types of "cute" questions arise. "I'll be right back," we sheepishly assure them, as we are suddenly reminded of an urgent call that has to be made. "Why don't you turn on the discovery channel....?"

You know why we don't have a lot of answers for our kids/ because we did what we now secretly hope they will soon learn to do - -we stopped asking questions. What a tragedy. We Have sacrificed our youthful curiosity, our simplicity, if you will, on the altar of Intellectual sophistication.

Inside each and every one of us lives a child of wisdom.. we sense that there is more to Judaism that meets the eye. That what distinguishes a statute from an ordinance is more than just Jewish legal jargon, but rather a deeper set of ideas and spiritual constructs. That what separates one holiday from the next is not just the taste of seasonal delicacies, but distinctive opportunities for expanded consciousness. That under the rubric of Judaism is to be found something not only profound and insightful, but deeply personal and meaningful.

Inside us all there is a voice that wants the privilege of a fully panoramic view of Judaism - - to comprehend each facet of the Seder and how every nuance relates to the message of freedom, and the meaning of being a Jew. Listen to that voice. Refuse to sit there and just go through the motions. Be wise! Think, inquire and ask questions. Of Passover and it's meaning for starters, and of Judaism and what it says about life as

an encore.

If the wisest person in the world was at your Seder and you could only ask two questions - - one about Judaism and one about life - - what would those questions be?

Pesach sameach!

והיא שעמדה

By Yael Netzer

"והיא שעמדה לאבותנו ולנו"

"And this is what stood for our fathers and for us".

Many sages have different explanations as to what is the "it" that the בעל ההגדה is referring to, which stood for כלל ישראל for generations. I would like to suggest a different explanation by asking another question.

Three times a day we start our שמונה עשרה with "אלוקינו ואלוקי" - "Our G-D and the G-D of our fathers". In תחנון and וידוי we say "אבותנו" - "Our G-D and the G-D of our fathers". In both cases we first mention ourselves and only afterwards we acknowledge our fathers. Why in our instance the order is different, we first mention "our fathers" and then "for us"?

To answer both questions, we need to look at the central theme of Seder night, namely "והגדת לבנך" - "and you should tell your son". The main mitzvah of the Hagada is to pass on from father to son the story of יציאת מצרים. The רמב"ן explains that passing the torch from one generation to the next is central to Torah values and the מצווה we perform.

This is what is referred to in the "והיא", "it". It is the מסורה, the tradition passed on "to our fathers" and then "to us". This is what stood for כלל ישראל throughout history, the unbroken chain of tradition being passed from one generation to the next.

Sitting at the Seder we need to realize that we are the link in the chain, passing on the tradition from our parents and grandparents to the next generation, and try learn from them and embrace their teachings and values.

והיא שעמדה

By Eliana Wolf

In והיא שעמדה we say about ה' saving us and how we merited this saving. But truly how did we, the Jewish people merit this saving if we were on the 49th level of impurity? And how do we merit being saved from every exile?

The first part of the answer is understanding that for every exile we face we go through the same stages: first we are strangers in a land, next we are oppressed, then we come out with great wealth and finally ה' judges and punishes that nation.

So the next part of the answer based on ideas from the מדרש is that our salvation was in the merit of two types of דם.

The first type is the blood of ברית מילה. This is such an important דם for the מצוה of pesach because without it one could not eat the קרבן פסח.

The second type of דם is that of the קרבן פסח. This blood acts as a reminder of אברהם walking through the ברית בין הבשרים.

Both these explanations for our salvation are based on merits from אברהם אבינו as we ourselves did not have the merit to be taken out.

What we can learn from this is that each and every one of us was saved and will be saved from our exiles not due to our own superiority and greatness but each Jew for the same reason because of our forefathers. Therefore we must understand that we must always work on ourselves but ultimately our salvation is from ה' in the merit of our forefathers none of us alone have the merit or capability to be our own saviours.

חג שמח

והיא שעמדה

By Miri Grossnass

"And it is this [covenant] that has stood for our Forefathers and us. For not just one enemy has stood against us to wipe us out. But in every generation there have been those who have stood against us to wipe us out, and the Holy One Blessed Be He saves us from their hands."

This passage from the Haggadah has given hope to Jews over the centuries, particularly in times of oppression and difficult times.

"Vehi" - "and it is this", refers to the promise Hashem made to Avraham to take Klal Yisrael out of Egypt. Many meforshim offer possible interpretations. One explanation is that the Torah is alluded to in the word Vehi as each Hebrew letter refers to a different part of our written and oral law:

Vav = numerical value 6, refers to the six tractates of Mishna.

Hei = numerical value of 5, stands for the five books of Chumash.

Yud = numerical value 10, stands for the Aseres Hadibros.

Aleph = numerical value 1, stands for the one Hashem..

This explanation implies that it is the Torah, and our connection with it, that has always saved us from our enemies.

Every Jew has an internal spark. Our enemies can try and extinguish this spark. They might enslave us as Pharoah did, they might try and annihilate us physically as Hitler did, they might try and take away our Jewish identity as Stalin did, but they can never take away our hope and the Jewish spark within us. By keeping the Jewish traditions and learning about who we are, we keep this flame alight. Just like a flame does not get extinguished when we light another spark, when our soul is a vibrant

flame, we can light other sparks.

What has kept the Jews going over the centuries despite anti-Semitism in every generation?

Does Jewish History defy rational explanation?

In practically every generation, the Jews have been physically threatened. What in your view is the greatest "enemy" to being Jewish today? How can we fight this enemy?

A people is usually defined by a common language and geographical boundaries. The Jews until recently had neither of these. G-d dispersed the Jewish people and sent us into exile all over the globe. But He also gave us a portable written and oral tradition. The wisdom of the Torah, our Guide for Living a Jewish Life wherever we may be, has preserved us as a people.

The Oxford University historian Cecil Roth writes in his book "The History of the Jews" [Schocken 1961, pp. 423-424]:

Today, the Jewish people has in it still those elements of strength and of endurance which enabled it to surmount all the crises of its past, surviving thus the most powerful empires of antiquity.

From a reading of Jewish history, we see that the continuation of Yiddishkeit is certainly not casual. We have endured through the power of a certain ideal, based upon the recognition of the influence of a Higher Power in human affairs. Time after time in his history, moreover, we have been saved from disaster in a manner which cannot be described in any way other than "providential". We will always be the Jewish nation no matter what, and throughout the generations Hashem will always save us.

צא ולמד

By Aviva Rosenthal

There are many questions one can ask on the lines of צא ולמד.

The words צא ולמד translate to mean, "go out and learn", where are we supposed to be going to?

What exactly is לבן doing in the Haggadah, shouldn't we be focusing on the evil in the pesach story namely Pharaoh?

It says "ולבן בקש לעקר את הכל" - לבן wanted to uproot everything", but where do we find that he ever wanted to do that?

Why not mention Esuv as he actually wanted to destroy everyone. He tried to kill יעקב before he had any children, unlike לבן?

Finally, why does this verse say "אבי אבד ארמי" - we would obviously all think this person was לבן, so why not just say it explicitly?

When we look in the Torah at the Posukim that discuss יעקב and לבן, even though לבן doesn't like יעקב he still tries everything to make him stay with him. He gets יעקב to work for him and arranges for him to get married. Even once he works the full 14 years לבן still wants יעקב to stay. Why did לבן want יעקב to stay with him for so long, was his shepherding skills that first class?

The answer is that לבן wanted to change the way יעקב lived and thought. He hated the fact that HE WAS יעקב, the moral one who lives with the lifestyle of emulating Hashem. The best antidote to such moral behaviour is if לבן brings him into his family and in time he will relax his standards.

That's why it says that we have to, "go out and learn"- in other words, a person really needs to temporarily exit the discussion of leaving Egypt and learn the Posukim of what happened between יעקב and לבן. Once we've done that, we can sum up their whole relationship in 3 words – אבי אבד ארמי - an Aramean sought to destroy my forefather.

The Kli Yakar explains that we call him specifically an Aramean and not by his name לבן, as this represents the culture that לבן tried to brain-wash יעקב with. He wanted to influence יעקב with this alien way of life and make him change as a person. That is why we

say "ולבן בקש לעקר את הכל" - Lavan tried to uproot/destroy everything", as he tried to get יעקב to adopt his way of living, he relaxed version which was so opposite to יעקב's character.

It is for this reason we don't mention עשו's plans to kill יעקב, for we're not dealing here with the physical aspect of יעקב's life, but rather the spiritual destruction of יעקב's being which לבן tried to achieve. Thankfully, יעקב managed to keep his spiritual level even when staying with לבן. However, the future generations couldn't have this assurance. לבן represents any type of influence against the Jewish people. This is why before we talk about the Bnei Yisroel going down to Egypt we talk about לבן. לבן tried to destroy יעקב and then he went down to Egypt, showing that with the same power to withstand לבן's temptation would be used in Egypt. Ultimately the Jewish people would be tested in the same way but would come out the other side as strong united people.

צא ולמד

By Mimi Steinberger

”צא ולמד מה ביקש לבן הארמי לעשות ליעקב אבינו,
שפרעה לא גזר אלא על הזכרים, ולבן בקש לעקור את
הכל”

The **ברכת חיים** asks, why does the **בעל ההגדה** try to tone down the wickedness of Pharaoh (who only(!) decreed against the males), by mentioning Lavan, who wanted to destroy all of Klal Yisrael??

This actually emphasizes the great miracle of leaving Mitzrayim, he answers! How?!

Hashem promised Avraham Avinu that his children would never be destroyed so therefore Lavan's plot was always doomed – you can't destroy Klal Yisrael! So it wasn't such a big deal that *his* plan was foiled.

But Pharaoh was wiser, he decreed only against the males, so some of us would remain, but **still** Hashem foiled his plan!!

ונצעק אל ה'

By Ariella Lewin

ונצעק אל ה'...ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבודה

“And we cried out to Hashem....and the children of Israel groaned because of the labour”

Although the verse in our paragraph states explicitly that we cried out to Hashem the verse cited from **שמות** does not say this at all, rather it says that we “groaned because of the labour”.

This reveals to us an extraordinary feature of prayer, namely that **בני ישראל** had no conscious intention to pray as they were groaning, they were simply groaning from the hard work, Hashem took their groans and accepted them as prayers.

Indeed, in the elucidation (clarification) of the next phrase in our verse “and Hashem heard their voice”, the **הגדה** cites the **פסוק** “And G-D heard their groaning and G-D remembered His covenant with Avraham, with Yitzchak, and with Yaakov”.

Why do we need to quote the entire **פסוק**? Seemingly, it is only the first half of the **פסוק** (Hashem hearing their groaning) that is relevant. What is added by quoting the second half that mentions Hashem remembering the covenant with our forefathers?

The Maaseh Nissim explains that this extended quotation is further confirmation of the fact that our groaning was not done with the intention of praying, but merely as an expression of our suffering from the hard work. That is why, when the **פסוק** states that Hashem heard our groans, it further adds that He remembered His covenant. In the absence of our actual prayer, our groans brought about Divine mercy only by we were

descended from Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, with whom Hashem has made a covenant.

That said, we should remember that our פסוק does say ונצעק אל ה' – we cried out to Hashem. This seems to imply that somehow we were praying!

How is this reconciled with the verse that implies that we were merely groaning from the hard work?

The covenant between Hashem and the אבות represents the fact that, by virtue of their deeds, the אבות instilled within their descendants a fundamental and an unbreakable connection with Hashem. This connection may sometimes lie very deeply embedded within בני ישראל, but it is always there. An expression of this connection is the way Hashem heard בני ישראל when they were groaning from the hard work. Even though they themselves were only conscious of their groaning as an expression of their suffering, there as a certain aspect of their suffering, that was an expression of their inner core as a תפילה to Hashem.

ביד חזקה ובזרע נטויה

By Rikki Yellon

ביד חזקה ובזרע נטויה - "With a strong hand and an outstretch arm"

These two descriptions feature predominantly in describing the redemption from Egypt. But what does it really mean and what do they add to our understanding of the exodus from Egypt?

ביד חזקה - R' Yechiel Heller explains that a strong hand refers to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. This was a display of strength against Pharaoh as it removed his ability to use his free will.

בזרע נטויה - Hashem extended himself beyond the laws of nature, to perform the Makot, and act in a miraculous way.

Wishing you a chag kasher v'sameach

עשר מכות

By Sarah Landau

In Exodus 10:13 we read "No Man saw his brother, nor did anyone rise from his place" which is referring to the nature of the plague of darkness which was placed on the Egyptians by the hand of Hashem. We can learn so much from Torah, so what can we learn from this? The darkness described is comparable to a spiritual darkness which can plague us all. On so many occasions we can be guilty of being unable to see our brother, how often we can go through life concentrating so much on our self enhancement that we can become blind to the actions of our brothers. We are sometimes guilty of not being able to see the needs of our brothers, all of the souls created, just the same as we were, in the image of Hashem, this is such a sad thing.

If we only tried to pierce this darkness with the light of true Torah teachings we may be able to see that our responsibilities lie not just with ourselves but with those around us. The concepts of Chesed, Tzedakah and Rachamim to name but a few, push us to see those around us, realise their needs and cater for them. The second half of the passuk directs our attention back onto ourselves. By explaining how nobody rose from their place, we are able to reflect on the parts of our character which tell us how we are sometimes guilty of becoming complacent in the level we have reached be it mentally, morally or spiritually. We are all able to continuously rise from our place, constantly reaching to a greater level and a higher achievement. The moment we stop reaching for a higher level is the moment we become engulfed in our own darkness, this is a way to stop and resolve our complacency. There is always a next step, a new level and a greater stage to rise to and it is our yetzer hora, constantly whispering inside of us which strives to make us feel that we have

reached an adequate level.

It is our yetzer tov, however, that strives and struggles to tell us that we are capable of being more than what we are. Hashem, in his infinite wisdom, plagued the Egyptians with physical darkness to teach their leader a lesson. Hashem uses spiritual darkness to teach us a lesson too – pay attention to your brother and never, ever stop growing.

דצ"ר עד"ש באח"ב

By Chava Levin

דינו

By Faigy Schreiber

דינו - "It would have been enough for us!"

Dayenu is a song about being grateful to Hashem for all the gifts he gave the Jewish people, such as taking them out of slavery, giving them the Torah and Shabbos. Had Hashem only given one of the gifts, it would have still been enough. This is to show how great our appreciation should be for all of them. *Dayenu* appears in the Haggadah after the telling of the story of the leaving Mitzrayim and just before the explanation of Passover, matzah and the maror.

There is a question asked, in the song '*Dayenu*', we seem to be saying that if Hashem had split the sea for us and had not crossed us through on dry land, it would have been enough. We also say "if He had drowned our oppressors in it, and had not supplied our needs in the desert for forty years — *Dayenu*, it would have sufficed!" This is interesting — how could it be enough? We would not be alive! So, what does '*Dayenu*' — 'it would have been enough for us' mean?

The *malbim* explains that the reading of **דינו** has an important purpose, once we have reached this point in the *seder*, having already discussed our life in *mitzrayim*, and all the slavery that we went through. The next appropriate step is to thank Hashem for redeeming us by singing *hallel*. But before we sing *hallel*, we want to be sure that we truly appreciate what Hashem did for us. Our thanks must not be empty or meaningless. *Dayenu* serves as a purpose of reminding us how much Hashem did for us, we thank Hashem for each one of these steps individually.

פסח

By Faigy Schreiber

The Ramchal, Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato, writes that the mitzvos of Pesach, Matza and Maror represent the 3 steps Klal Yisrael took in their progression from serving avodah zarah to serving only Hashem.

1. **Pesach** - the first step for Klal Yisrael was to withdraw from avodah zarah, shown by their sacrificing of the lamb, the korban pesach, which was a G-d to the Egyptians.
2. **Matza** - the second step for Klal Yisrael was separating from their yetzer hora. This is symbolized through matza, since it lacks a rising agent - it lacks chometz, which is a symbol for the yetzer hora.
3. **Maror** - the third step was cleansing themselves from any aveiros, impurities, that they may have aquired. This is represented through the Maror which acts as a cleansing agent for our aveiros.

4.

The sefer HaChinuch writes that the korban pesach represents two types of freedom, namely, spiritual freedom and physical freedom. How so?

The spiritual freedom is shown through the killing of the lamb, the Egyptian avodah zarah. Physical freedom is expressed through the sprinkling of the blood of the lamb, on our doorposts.

The reason for the korban pesach is given in the Hagada, "שפסח" "הקדוש ברוך הוא על בתי אבותנו" - "since Hashem skipped over the houses of our forefathers".

What is the significance of this?

Rav Moshe Feinstein says we often don't appreciate the guiding hand of

Hashem in our day-to-day life, until we experience a near tragedy from which we escape. For example, being saved from a fatal car crash is a cause for gratitude. Whereas, if we have an uneventful journey, we don't usually express gratitude. In Mitzrayim, during makkos bechoros, Hashem skipped over the houses of the Jews. Those who lived in Egypt itself would have realized the miracle of their salvation when they saw their neighbours suffer - they would have seen that their houses were skipped over and their lives were spared. However, those living in Goshen may not have felt the extent of their miraculous salvation, that Hashem had passed over their houses.

This shows us how we should show our appreciation and thank Hashem every day - not only when we see open miracles.

פסח

By Joelle Deutsch

Rabbi Gamliel says that one who does not say "Pesach, Matzah, Maror" has not fulfilled his obligation. However, there are a few questions that arise when trying to interpret this. Firstly, it seems as though the order to the phrase "Pesach, Matzah, Maror" is incorrect, and doesn't follow chronology, as historically the Maror, the bitterness Klal Yisroel endured, came first, and only then do Pesach and Matzah follow, those symbolising freedom and liberation from slavery.



Secondly, exactly what obligation is Rabbi Gamliel referring to? We know there are to mitzvos to fulfil on Seder night, such as drinking the four cups of wine, and eating Matzah, so what obligation do we not fulfil, if we do not say these three things?

In response to the first question, we can suggest that perhaps until the Bnei Yisrael completely left their state of bitterness, and were freed from Mitzrayim, they didn't actually realise how bad things had gotten. Only upon exiting Mitzrayim, did the horrific nature of the suffering they had endured, become apparent to them. Therefore, only when they were free, could they fully appreciate how bad things had been, and Hashem's compassion for allowing them to leave.

As far as the obligation of the Seder night that Rabbi Gamliel refers to, we must try to understand this phrase a little differently. Rather than seeing this as an obligation, we must see it as a debt. We cannot completely discharge our debt of gratitude to Hashem, until we actually

mention these items clearly. When we only go through the motions at the Seder and we do not internalize its message; or worse, if we go through the Seder and do not fully sense a feeling of Hakoras Hatov, then we have fulfilled our mitzvah, but not our obligation of true expression of appreciation to HKBH for having brought us from a state of slavery, to a state of freedom, in order that we can serve Him.

מצה

By Tzofiya Roediger

What is the Matzah and what does it recall?

There must be more significance to the Matzah and a larger explanation than the simple, common answer, that Matzah is eaten to remind us that when the Jewish people left Egypt, the bread didn't have time to rise. How can such a moment in history relate to our lives today?

Matzah represents the essentials – without the yeast or the puffing up. Matzah is pulling back and seeing what real freedom really is. What do you really need? What is most essential in life? We're chasing a lot of luxuries that aren't essential. When you know what the essentials are, you pull back from the ego. Not totally – because we can eat regular bread the rest of the year. You can enjoy the extras if you know what your bottom line is. Real freedom is knowing your bottom line.

The Haggadah says: What is the reason for Matzah? "There was insufficient time for our ancestors' dough to become leavened."

This is to make us aware of the luxury's we have in our daily lives. It takes approximately 18 minutes for dough to rise. They were in such a rush they didn't have 18 minutes, yet we in our daily lives get bread, wholemeal bread, white bread and loads of other baked goods that need much longer than 18 minutes to rise.

Perhaps one of the purposes of Matzah is to remind us, that we can get so caught up with the luxuries in life we forget about the freedom we have. For 8 days we should be reminded that real freedom, after years of slavery was a simple bread baked for 18 minutes. We are reminded on what is essential in our lives and how many extras we have.

בכל דור ודור

By Libby Gordon

When you ask someone what the greatest miracle of Pesach is, they will usually answer the splitting of the sea or Yetzias Mitzrayim.

But if you think about it, really the greatest miracle is that we're still here today celebrating Pesach. Mark Twain, a non-Jewish philosopher, said "it doesn't make sense the Jewish people make up less than 1 percent of the human population. They shouldn't be heard of, but they have contributed to art, sciences, literature...The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendour, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

Like it says in Vehi Sheomda,

”שְׁלֹא אָחַד בְּלִבָּד, עָמַד עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ. אֲלֵא שְׁבָכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר, עוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ. וְהַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְצִילֵנוּ מֵיָדָם”

”For not only one arose and tried to destroy us, rather in every generation they try to destroy us, and Hashem saves us from their hands.”

It doesn't make sense that the Jewish people are still here, it is a miracle, if this miracle is visible to someone who is not Jewish it must be a great thing. So as you say Vehi Sheomda on Seder night think about what a great neis it is that we are still here today.

מרור

By Yael Schreiber

We take a kezayis of maror and dip it into charoses, which resembles the mud from which we built bricks. But if the purpose of the charoses is to remind us of the bitterness of slavery, why do we find that charoses has a sweet taste?!

Rav Shimon Shwab writes a fundamental lesson here. The difficulty of Golus and the bitterness of persecution can be sweet. One only needs to develop the taste buds of bitachon.

Our forefathers in Mitzrayim "dipped" their troubles, their meriris, into the sweet taste of bitachon, showing absolute trust and dependency in Hashem. This is the sort of bitachon of those who we refer to in the Amidah as "...הבוטחים בשמך באמת...", who have absolute bitachon "b'emes". We may wonder, how can I possibly achieve absolute bitachon? This is the level of exceptional Tzaddikim! Hence, the next words we say are "ושים חלקנו עמהם" - place our portion with theirs - let us share a part of their exceptional trust in Hashem so that we don't need to fear anything. This is a high madreiga, which one has to daven to reach! As Dovid Hamelech davened and said, "Hashem answered me and **He saved me from all my fears**" (Tehillim 34:5). This is what bitachon is all about. One who has bitachon fears nothing, and davening for bitachon is part of the avodah to achieve this madreiga.

When we have full trust in Hashem, when we know that our lives are in His hands alone, everything is sweet. As the Chazon Ish explains, bitachon isn't the belief that our hopes will be fulfilled, rather, it is a firm conviction in hashgacha pratit, the knowledge that Hashem is watching over us, that whatever happens in life is from Him, and is, therefore, good.

The Chofetz Chaim compares punishments from Hashem to a bitter

medicine. The patient trusts that the doctor will make the bitter medicine tolerable for him. As it says in Tehillim:

"רבים מקאובים לרשע והבוטח בה' יסובבנו" - "Many are the pains of the wicked, but as for him who trusts in Hashem, kindness will encompass him" (Tehillim 32:10). The kindness will encompass "him"/"it" - the kindness will surround the wicked person's *troubles*, like a sweet coating. Even the rasha will see his troubles as chesed, if he only has bitachon! (Yalkut Shemoni)

Let us take the message of Pesach, of Hashem's eternal love and protection over Klal Yisrael, and with bitachon bemes, whatever we encounter should be sweet in our eyes, knowing it is all sent from Above.

Good yom tov!

כורך

By Tammy Aremband

Why do we first eat matzah on its own, then we eat marror on its own, and then we eat them together? Should we not either eat the matzah and the marror together or just have them separately. Why do we have to eat it all twice?

One answer given to this question is that we all have strengths and weaknesses. Matzah symbolises the positivity and strength of the Jewish people when they left Egypt. The marror however represents the bitter times in Egypt where we may have shown weakness and been negative.

We all have within ourselves strengths and weaknesses that we have to battle with. We all have the yetzer tov that takes over when things are going well and the yetzer hara that overcomes us when things are not going so well. We all have this constant battle inside ourselves, of these positive and negative energies.

At the Seder we initially eat the two parts separately as this allows us to focus on each energy. Whilst eating the matzah we can focus on strengthening our positive energy and whilst eating the marror we concentrate on how we can weaken our negative energy. But eventually you will come to realise that you can't have one energy without the other. You must use your strength and positive energy to influence your negative energy rather than destroy it. You can turn negative traits such as anger and jealousy into positive traits such as passion and ambition. If you never allow the two to mix you will continue to have a constant battle inside of you. The marror on its own is bitter but when encased in the matzah the taste is influenced and it becomes less bitter. We must first experience them on their own to understand just how amazing it is when they both come together.

שלחן עורך

By Tamara Segal

Shulchan Orech is the part of the Seder where we have the meal. We have a normal yom tov meal except for the challah which is replaced with matza. We also have a beitzta, an egg. The Seder night experience is a contrast between slavery and freedom. This too shows itself in Shulchan Orech which is the main meal of the Seder. During the meal, we eat the finest foods on the finest crockery. This is a sign of freedom. However we start off with an egg in sat water which is a sign of mourning to remind us of the slavery of Mitrayim and the destruction of the Beit Mamikdosh.

In Vahei Sheomdah it says that in every generation our enemies will rise up and try to destroy us. According to the Chasam Sofer, most foods the longer you cook them, the softer they become, but with eggs, the longer you cook them, the harder they become. The same thing with the Jews. The harder our enemies attack and try to destroy us the stronger and more united we become.

So when you sit around your seder table this year and you are up to Shulchan Orech, remember that like an egg, we become stronger through our suffering and that has made us the people we are today.

The הגדה Quiz

How well do YOU know the הגדה?



Which number appears most frequently in the הגדה ?

- A) 4
- B) 16
- C) 600,000

The recipe for Charoses is:

- A) dates, wine, walnuts and apples
- B) avocado, bananas, coconut and pine nuts
- C) sesame seeds, honey, pepper and cloves



Which is NOT part of the seder plate?

- A)
- B) 16
- C) 600,000

The first time that Klal Yisrael ate matzah was:

- A) After leaving Mitzrayim in a hurry, with no time for their bread to rise
- B) The night before they left Mitzrayim, at the first Seder night
- C) in 1818, when Manischewitz opened a small matzah bakery in Cincinnati, Ohio



How much wine should be drunk at each of the Four Cups?

- A) 5 cc (one teaspoon)
- B) 98 cc (3.3 ounces)
- C) 250 cc (8.4 ounces)
- D) 946 cc (one quart)



How many Jews were living in Mitzrayim, prior to the onset of the makkos?

- A) 15 million
- B) 3 million
- C) 600,000

What food may be used for Marmor?

- A) "red horseradish" from the jar
- B) lettuce
- C) cayenne peppers



The miracle of the plague of Borod was:

- A) it was summertime
- B) the frozen hail was also on fire
- C) the hail was as big as soccer balls

Of the Four Sons, which is regarded as the most problematic:

- A) the wise son
- B) the evil son
- C) the son who doesn't know how to ask
- C) the simple son



At the Seder, who is supposed to ask the four questions of נמה נשתנה?

- A) the family elder
- B) the Seder leader
- C) no preference
- D) the youngest child present

How many times do we wash our hands on Seder night?

- A) 1
- B) 4
- C) 3
- D) 2



Quiz partly taken from aish.com

צפון

By Kayla Hollander

The Afikomen is hidden away during Yachatz (division ceremony) at the beginning of the Seder. Many families have the custom to allow the children to steal the Afikomen.

If we are trying to teach our children about Torah, how can we teach them to steal?!

The Afikomen represents the future redemption which is hidden from us, explains Rabbi Milevsky. Matzah, which must be eaten only after eating an appetizer to make us hungry, represents a passion for truth. Eliyahu HaNavi, whom we symbolically welcome with a fifth cup of wine on Seder-night, "will return the heart of the parents to the children and the children to the parents." The "gap" that prevents one generation from relating to a previous one is our biggest problem. When a generation takes the potential they have been given, and misappropriates it by not applying it to Torah - which is the one thing that can help us bridge the gap between all past generations - they are stealing the hope for our future. We want our children to steal the Afikomen instead; they should crave the "quest" for Torah, represented by the matzah of the Afikomen, so that our final hidden redemption can be revealed.

צפון

By Eliana Malkiel

Earlier on in the Seder, the leader broke a matzah in half and the larger piece (afikoman) has now been hidden. During Tzafon, the afikoman is found and eaten. What is the significance of this stage in the Seder?

Since Yachatz, we have had one half of the broken matzah on the table. This represents our incompleteness as spiritual beings, and the idea that our life's mission is to improve and grow; until we have undergone growth, we are as incomplete as a broken matzah. Tzafon, then, symbolises our search for meaning, answers, and self-growth. As children scramble with excitement to find the afikoman, we can reflect on the enthusiasm that we should have in our everyday lives to find opportunities to grow and complete ourselves, bit by bit. The afikoman symbolises the Torah and truth which we must search for in this life - sometimes it may seem hidden, but we can never stop seeking it. The Seder is known to have a question-and-answer format, and perhaps the afikoman is another symbol of this. The smaller broken piece of matzah is like an unanswered question, and during Tzafon, we search for the other half - the afikoman - to complete the full matzah, to answer the 'question', and to gain an understanding of the enthusiasm and determination that we must have in our search to improve ourselves.

Based on an idea from Rabbi Shimon Apisdorf.

שפך חמתך

By Miri Peters

Why is it customary to open the door at this point in the Seder?

The Birchas Abraham says that opening the door for Eliyahu Hanavi is demonstrating our firm belief in the coming of **משיח**. This being the night not only of the redemption of Egypt, but our future redemption as well, we take this opportunity to show our faith that our deliverance is near. We hope that in the merit of our **אמונה** we will indeed be privileged to quickly see our hopes realised.

The Maharal explains that this Minhag and the Minhag of pouring a cup of wine for Eliyahu Hanavi at this point, are instruction tools through which we transmit to our children that before **משיח** comes to deliver us from our exile, He will be preceded by Eliyahu Hanavi. This principle is significant in that it prevents us from straying after a false **משיח**. These practices are done at this particular point in the Seder because we are about to begin the second part of Hallel. It is here that we praise Hashem and beseech Him to bring about future redemption. The opening of the door and pouring of the cup symbolises the entrance of Eliyahu Hanavi as a precursor to Hallel which alludes to the coming of **משיח**.

הלל

By Sara Landau

The Seder is drawing to a close. The younger kids are sleeping and an atmosphere of sleepy contentment permeates the room.

At the beginning of the Seder, we were alert and eager to begin. As the Seder progressed, our hunger kept us awake. After the meal though, we became a bit more tired. Now it's the second part of Hallel, and everyone is exhausted. Why is the Seder so long? Why is Hallel even necessary? We've spent the entire night recounting the wonders of Yetzias Mitzrayim, praising Hashem; even after we ate, we continued to praise Him! So why do we need Hallel at all? Furthermore, we're sleep deprived and we're satiated to the point that we feel tired. Surely, it would be ideal to do Hallel earlier, at a point where we're more awake, and in the optimum condition to praise Hashem?

A man was once intending to move away from his homeland in order to conduct business. Before he did so, he approached the Chafetz Chaim and asked him for a bracha that his business should be successful. The Chafetz Chaim inquired as to whether he was earning a living in his current location, and the man replied that he was, but he wanted to move in order to enable him to earn *more* money and become wealthy. The Chafetz Chaim then asked him why on Succos, when we say 'ana Hashem hoshia na', we shake our lulavim in all directions, but when we say 'ana Hashem hatzlicha na', we don't? The man didn't know, so the Chafetz Chaim explained that when someone is desperate because he doesn't have the means to feed his family, he will go to all four corners of the earth to seek salvation. If, however, he merely seeks to become wealthy, all he needs to do is stay in place and pray for Hashem to help him succeed (and do his hishtadlus too).

We divide Hallel into two parts, the first, before the meal, and the

Second, after the meal. Levush explains that the first part talks about Yetzias Mitzrayim, and is therefore suitable to say along with the Haggadah which also talks about Yetzias Mitzrayim. The second part of Hallel is about the other exiles and the future and final redemption. We therefore postpone saying it until after the meal. This explains part of the original question, but not all...

So we understand a bit more why Hallel is necessary; it discusses something different to what we were discussing at Maggid. We understand why it's not together with the previous part of Hallel, but we still haven't explained why we say it at a point where our bodies and minds are not in the best condition to be sincerely praising Hashem.

One answer is found in the story told earlier. When a person is doing well and when they're successful, when they're not desperate for a salvation, all they will do is stay in place and request that Hashem should continue to help them. When a person needs salvation, they can and will do everything they are able to in order to get it. They will invest their utmost into whatever resources they require, whether it's money, time, energy, or something else. When they daven, they will cry out with all their strength and beseech Hashem to send them a yeshua fast. They will take time to daven and they will truly feel Hashem in front of them; they know with every fibre of their being that He is the only One who can save them.

At the end of the Seder, we're exhausted beyond belief. Our bodies are telling us that we need to rest. But that is precisely *why* we stay awake!

We daven to prosper – for money, health, anything that we feel will maximise our comfort in this world. But we're still in galus. We should be desperate for our salvation to come now! Many of us lose sight of our end goal – the geula – and focus instead on the smaller elements of the bigger picture, the physicality instead of the spirituality. (Of

course, both are important. That's why we have so many brachos in she-moneh esre, asking for all kinds of things). We're so exhausted spiritually that we become accustomed to wanting the geula without putting much thought into *why* we actually want it and *why* we actually need it.

That's why Hallel comes at the end of the Seder. When we push ourselves to want the geula, we will do anything to get it. At the point that our physical energy is depleted, we survive off our spiritual energy store. Like the makkos and the yam suf, like the entire Pesach story, all of which transcended the laws of nature. When we thrive on spirituality, we become above and beyond physicality. Most people need to work on wanting the geula. And once we work on wanting it, we actually will want it; we will realise how much we need it. At that point, our weariness becomes irrelevant. We will do whatever it takes to beg Hashem, to praise Hashem and to thank Hashem. And then it not only stops being difficult to push past our exhaustion; we forget about our exhaustion when we focus on the grand scheme of things!

הלל

By Adina Gluck

מה אשיב

“אנה ה' כי אני עבדך, אני עבדך בן אמתך פתחת למוסריי”

Rav Shlomo Brevda זצ"ל explained this Pasuk beautifully, with an insight as to what a servant truly is.

“A worker in a factory has a desire to complete his work as soon as he can. If he has a little fever, he will immediately go to the doctor in the hope of getting a note to exempt him from work; he would look for any other excuse that would absolve him of his work duties. A servant, on the other hand, is not able to excuse himself of his responsibilities even under the most difficult situations. And if, indeed, he attempts to be absent from work one day, he will receive a severe punishment regardless of how valid his excuse may be.”

Rav Brevda continued and said “in reality, there are two types of servants. One who was born into a regular or maybe even a wealthy home but due to unfortunate circumstances was forced to become a servant. Such a servant will be constantly looking to change his situation and reverse his circumstances until he is able to, once again, enjoy freedom.”

“The second type of servant was born into a family that has been servants for generations. He does not find his labour despicable because it is part of this upbringing and integral to his existence. Furthermore, he does not find his work demeaning. Quite the contrary, he feels content in the knowledge, that he need not worry about he will be sustained tomorrow or the day after. This type of servant will not search for a means to escape. Even if the master opens the door, he will remain with him.”

“This indeed, is what Dovid Hamelech is teaching us. ‘Please Hashem!

For I am Your servant! And what type of servant am I? I am a servant, the son of Your maidservant. A servant who is a child of slaves and who knows nothing but servitude; for this type of a servant You, Hashem open up my chain. Please open the gate and allow me some freedom, but You need not worry that I will ever run away because my servitude is innate and ingrained and is the ultimate source of my joy!”

נרצה

By Gabriella Levy (Leeds)

חד גדיא

"...and along came the shochet".

Reb Yaakov Galinski z"l (1921-2015) relates a wonderful story about the holy Rav Yisroel Salanter z"l (1810-1883). Once on his travels Rav Yisroel arrived at an inn. The inn-keeper approached him somewhat agitated and asked him if he was a shochet. He replied that he was well versed in the laws of shechita. The inn-keeper was relieved explaining that he had a calf that needed shechting for his guests but that the local shochet was ill.

Then Rav Yisroel asked the inn-keeper if he could lend him 10 roubles for the next leg of his journey. The inn-keeper said that he was unable to lend him any money since not only was it a substantial amount but that he hardly knew him and how could he really trust him to pay him back.

Rav Yisroel put his hand in his pocket and showed him that he actually was not short of money for the remainder of his journey but wanted to teach the inn-keeper an important lesson. To lend him money the inn-keeper was distrustful but to rely on him saying he was a shochet, upon which many severe laws of treifus hang, he was willing to accept without question!

Reb Yaakov Galinski says that this gives a whole new meaning to "and along came the shochet"! We are quick to believe someone is a shochet but reluctant to lend the very same person money and thereby fulfil an act of chesed!