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Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Pesach



לזכות רפואה שלמה: מלכה בת רחל, מיכאל בן שולמית, יעקב משה בן דבורה שירה, ואברהם יהודה בן שרה רבקה.

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Torah Wellsprings

Pesach

Bedikas and Biur Chametz

Reb Shimshon Pinkas *zt'l* learned in Yeshivas Chevron (Yerushalayim) and dorned in a rented apartment, which he shared with a few bachurim. For the Pesach break, all the bachurim went home to their families, and Reb Shimshon Pinkas stayed by himself in the apartment. So, that year, *bedikas chametz* was his responsibility.

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

Then he remembered that he has to check the roof. The roof wasn't only his responsibility, as it was the property of everyone who lived in the apartment building. But Reb Shimshon Pinkus knew that a persons' nature is to rely on others to get a job done, and he

realized that if he didn't check the roof, it was likely that no one would.

He found the roof cluttered. The apartment building residents used the roof as storage, and many items were tossed there, and nothing was organized. Reb Shimshon realized that he would have to make things orderly before he could begin performing *bedikas chametz*.

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

Just before morning, he completed the *bedikas chametz*.

He thought he would be tired at the Seder, but it was the opposite. He enjoyed each word of the Haggadah; he never had such a good experience. He couldn't fall asleep after the Seder was over; he felt so inspired. So, he remained awake all night, studying until the morning about *yetzias Mitzrayim*.

The inspiration remained with him throughout the entire holiday. And even after Pesach passed, he continued growing, higher and higher.

Reb Shimshon Pinkas says that he merited this because he was so cautious about doing *bedikas chametz* with *mesirus nefesh*.

He said, "If I have any good qualities today, it's because of that mitzvah *d'rabbanan* of *bedikas chametz*, which I performed with *mesirus nefesh*."¹

Bedikas chametz and Biur chametz are exceptional times because, at these times, we are cleaning the atmosphere, and ourselves, from all impurities, because chametz represents *tumah*.²

1. Reb Shimshon Pinkus always considered that special night of *bedikas chametz* as the day he was born, because that is when he became a new person, *בְּקֵץ שְׁנוֹתָיו*. Chazal say that tzaddikim are *niftar* on the day they were born. And, indeed, Reb Shimshon Pinkus was *niftar* Wednesday, on the 12th of Nisan, and he was buried Thursday evening, on the 13th of Nisan, the night of *bedikas chametz* (because Pesach, that year, began on Motzei Shabbos).

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

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

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

The Bas Ayin (*Drush lePesach, Metzora*) writes, "*Erev Pesach* is when a person does *teshuvah sheleimah* before Hashem and eradicates all the chametz and all the bad in his heart, it is the greataest *eis ratzon* of the year..."³

Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l* wrote in a letter, "When the Jewish people lived in their land, *erev Pesach* was a joyous holiday, because everyone brought the *korban Pesach* and said *Hallel*, etc. Even today, *erev Pesach* should be similar.

We should be busy with mitzvos all day long, burning the chametz, and preparing for the Seder..."

When we burn the *chametz*, it is a good time for *tefillah*, because the world is clear, the *tumah* is removed, and our *tefillas* will be answered.

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

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

3. The Bas Ayin adds, "When it is the sixth hour [of the morning] when the *chametz*, which represents the *yetzer hara*, is removed, and the time for מצה begins, the ה' of מצה is open [at its upper corner], which represents that whoever wants to come in with *teshuvah*, can come through there."

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

The Russian czar placed a terrible *gezeirah* on the Jewish nation. The only solution (according to the rules of nature) was to generously bribe one of the head ministers because this minister could abolish the decree.

The communal activist spoke to many rabbanim and urged them to influence their followers to donate money for the bribe. Most rabbanim recognized the need, and they spoke to their communities. However, Rebbe Aharon of Chernobyl *zt'l* didn't want to speak to his community.

Rebbe Aharon of Chernobyl had many chassidim, and their financial support would

certainly help them reach the amount they needed for the bribe, but Rebbe Aharon refused to participate.

The activist spoke to Rebbe Yitzchak of Skver *zt'l*, and asked him to influence his brother, Rebbe Aharon, to participate in this fundraising program. The Skverer Rebbe spoke to his older brother, and explained why this was so important, but even then, Rebbe Aharon didn't participate.

Erev Pesach, as Rebbe Aharon Chernobyler was about to burn his *chametz*, he said, "Some say we can annul harsh decrees with money. But that isn't correct. However, when we burn the *chametz* *erev Pesach*, we can annul all harsh decrees."

Magid

The Chida *zt'l* says that we should tell the following story at the Seder:

A woman in Tzefas was once plagued by a *dibuk*. A spirit of a *rasha* had attached itself to her *neshamah* and was afflicting her. The Arizal sent Reb Chaim Vital to heal her.

When Reb Chaim Vital came into the room, the spirit immediately turned to the wall, explaining that he didn't have permission to look at the *Shechinah*.

Reb Chaim Vital asked the spirit why he had permission to afflict this woman.

The spirit replied, "This woman woke up early in the morning, and she was striking flint stones to make fire, but she wasn't succeeding. In frustration, she shouted, 'Let it be for the Satan,' and because of those words, I had permission to become a *dibuk*."

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

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

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

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

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

This story teaches us that *emunah* has many levels. Sometimes we believe, but it is without clarity, without certainty. The month of Nisan, and especially during Pesach, and even more so, at the

Seder, we should be thinking and talking about *emunah*, because these are days when we have a greater potential for attaining clarity in *emunah*.

The Lechovitzer *zt'l* said, האמנתי I believe in Hashem, כי אדבר, because I speak about *emunah* (*Tehillim* 116:10). And the Baal HaTanya says that in a *sefer Torah*, the letter ך of אהך is written large, and it looks like a large hammer. This is to hint that we must hammer into our heads the *emunah* of ה' אהך. We do this throughout the year, but there is a special benefit when we have these thoughts and discussions of *emunah* during Nisan, even more so on Pesach, and especially at the Seder,

because each thought of *emunah* that is expressed at these times become deeply engraved into our heart and mind.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 31.) makes an association between *emunah* and agriculture.⁴ Therefore, in the month Nisan, when agriculture is at its peak, and the crops are full-grown, our *emunah* can reach its' heights, as well (see *Hamak Davar Shemos* 13:4).

Chazal say, בניסן נגאלו ובניסן, עתידין לנאל, that as we were redeemed from Mitzrayim in Nisan, we will be redeemed from the present exile in Nisan. Rebbe Menachem Nochum of Boyan Tchernovitz *zt'l* (ד"ה ניסן תרצ"ה) (Tiferes Menachem) explains that this is because

4. It states (*Yeshayah* 33:6) אמנות עתיד, and the Gemara (*Shabbos* 31.) says אמנות זה סדר זרעים, that when the *pasuk* writes אמנות it is alluding to *sefer* אמנות in Mishnayos, the tractate that discusses the *halachos* related to agriculture (such as the laws of giving *trumah* and *maasar*). This is our source that there is a connection between *emunah* and agriculture, and therefore, in Nisan, when agriculture is at its fullest height, our *emunah* can reach its peaks, as well.

our *emunah* is stronger in Nisan. And it is the increase in *emunah* that will bring our redemption. As Chazal (*Yalkut Shimoni, Hosheia* תקי"ט) say, בזכות האמונה נגאלו אבותינו ממצרים, ובזכות האמונה עתידין להגאל, "In the merit of the *emunah* our forefathers were redeemed from Mitzrayim, and in the merit of *emunah*, we will be redeemed from the present *galus*."

So, every day of the year, one can hammer *emunah* into his mind by speaking and thinking about *emunah*. However, this is accomplished more easily in Nisan, which is the month of *emunah*, the month we will be redeemed.

This is even more true when we sit by the Seder. The mitzvah of *yetzias Mitzrayim* is *mesugal* to implant *emunah* into our hearts.

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

"Eliyahu HaNavi attends the Seder of every Yid, and there are great tzaddikim who actually see him." Then, the Sar Shalom raised his head to heaven and said, "But an even higher level is when one believes that Eliyahu comes to our Seder."

After saying שך המתק, the Noda BeYehudah would escort Eliyahu HaNavi *z'l* out of his house, and he would walk with him down the stairs, to the street. The Chidushei HaRim praised this immensely and said, "The Noda b'Yehuda didn't actually see Eliyahu Hanavi. But he believed that he was there. And believing is even greater than *giluy Eliyahu*, actually seeing Eliyahu HaNavi.

The difference between a *segulah* and a *refuah* is that a *refuah* can be explained scientifically, whereas a *segulah* is a remedy that doesn't have a logical explanation. If you use the *segulah*, you will be

healed, but it can't be explained why and how that happens. The Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l* says that the mitzvah of *Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, to speak about the Exodus at the Seder, is a *segulah* for *emunah*. This means that it isn't only logical - that by talking about *yetzias Mitzrayim* we will believe in Hashem more - it is also a *segulah*. Performing this *mitzvah* implants *emunah* on our hearts in ways that we can't explain.

Some *meforshim* say that the mitzvah of *והגדת לבנך* isn't only for the Seder. Whenever a child asks his father a question related to *yetzias Mitzrayim* -any day of the year, the father has the mitzvah *והגדת לבנך*, to teach his son about *yetzias Mitzrayim*. But we want the children to ask questions related to *yetzias Mitzrayim* specifically at the Seder, as the Mishnah (*Pesachim* 10:4) says, *ואם אין דעת אביו מלמדו*, "If the child isn't wise enough to ask questions, his father

should teach him to ask questions," because this night is *mesugal* for implanting *emunah* in their hearts. We want to have the opportunity to plant *emunah* in our children's hearts, in ways that we can't do all year long.

As the *Ohev Yisrael* writes, "The truth is that even if a child asks his father these questions other times during the year, the father must also answer him... Nevertheless, the holy Torah teaches us that throughout the year, even if you tell your son the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the words will not settle on the child's heart... The Haggadah teaches, *לא אמרתי, אלא בשעה שיש מצה ומרור מונחים לפניך*, 'The time that I want you to speak about *yetzias Mitzrayim* is when you have matzah and marror before you.' Because on the night of Pesach, when the mind is open, the light of wisdom is revealed, and *emunah* and *bitachon* hover over all Jewish people. At

this time, when you will answer your son's questions, and you will tell him the entire story, your words will certainly enter his ears, and he will truly believe in *yetzias Mitzrayim*. But the rest of the year, when there's darkness in the world, the son isn't able to properly accept his father's words and to believe."

At the Seder we have the mitzvah of *והגדת לבנך*, to tell our children the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. This is our annual opportunity for transmitting *emunah* to the next generation. Due to the holiness of the night and the holiness of the mitzvah, our words have a deep effect on the children's *neshamah*.

Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zt'l* explained it this way:

Hashem keeps the entire Torah (as Chazal tell us). This means He also keeps the mitzvah of *והגדת*

לבנך. He tells His children the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. We are Hashem's children. So as we are at the Seder, Hashem is teaching us *emunah*. This means, He opens our hearts so we can grasp the meaning of the wonderful miracles that occurred. And when Hashem is the teacher, our perception of what is being taught is one hundred percent accurate.

Rebbe Yissachar Dov based his lesson on the *Tur* (*Orach Chaim* 115), which explains the *brachah* of *Shemonah Esrei*, *השיבו אבינו*, *לתורתך*, "Return us, our Father, to Your Torah." In most *brachos*, we don't address Hashem as being *אבינו*, our Father. Why is this *brachah* different?

The *Tur* explains that we are saying, "Hashem, You are our Father, and a father has a *mitzvah* to teach his children Torah. Therefore, Dear Father, open our hearts and teach us Torah."

Similarly, Reb Yissachar Dov of Belz said, Hashem is our Father, and we request that He teach us the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, until it is firmly placed and etched on our hearts.

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

"I was in the camps with a friend, and I repeatedly spoke to him about *emunah* and *bitachon*. I encouraged him to trust that Hashem will save us, and we will be free. But it was hard for my friend to hear this. He was pessimistic, and he suspected that the worst would happen.

"Then came the dreaded day, when the Germans told us that they are taking us to shower. We knew that this meant the gas chambers. My friend said

to me, 'What do you say now?'

"I told him, 'Even now I trust in Hashem. תשובה ה' כהרף עין, Hashem can save us in a moment.'

"I was in the gas chamber, standing near the door. The evil Nazi tried to close the door, but it wouldn't close. The Nazi wanted me to go further into the chamber so he could shut the door, but that was impossible. There were many people in the gas chamber, and there was no place to go. I'm heavy, so the Nazi chose to pull me out in order to close the door. That's how my life was saved..."

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

The Kittel

A *kittel* represents *tachrichim*, shrouds. The Chasan Sofer *zt'l* explains that we want the father to remember that he won't always be in this world. There will be a time for his burial, and then he won't be able to tell his family about *sippur yetzias Mitzrayim*. This will inspire him to take advantage of the night, tell his children about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and teach them *emunah*.⁵

Rebbe Shmelke of Nickelsburg *zt'l* said that the *kittel* reminds the father to use his time well at the Seder. He should imagine that he already passed away and is dressed in shrouds and buried in the earth. For the Seder night, Heaven let him return to

make the Seder so he can teach *emunah* to his children. With this thought in mind, he will undoubtedly be diligent with his time, and he will perform the mitzvos as best as he can.

Reb Shimon Shwab *zt'l* said that a father wears a *kittel* at the Seder because we want the children to pay attention to the lessons in *emunah* that he teaches them. When a father speaks to his children moments before his *petirah*, the children listen very well, and they try their best to fulfill his final wishes. Therefore, the father puts on a *kittel*, the clothing of shrouds, at the Seder so that they should take heed to his lessons in *emunah* with the same seriousness and earnestness.⁶

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

6. The Maharal (*Hagaddah shel Pesach*, ענין לבישת הקיטל) compares the *kittel* to

But don't let the kittel that resembles shrouds draw you into a melancholy mood. It is yom tov, and you should be happy. The ideal way to tell the story of yetzias Mitzrayim is amidst joy.

Before beginning *magid*, many people say the portion of Zohar that discusses the joyous way in which we should say *magid*. We quote:

"Every person who tells the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* and is happy with it... he is happy with his Master, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu is happy with the story he is saying. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gathers all the *malachim* in heaven, and Hashem says, 'Come and listen to My praises that My children are saying. They are happy with My redemption!' The

malachim listen and the *malachim* see that the Yidden are happy with the redemption... The *malachim* praise Hakadosh Baruch Hu for the miracles and for His holy nation that He has on earth, who are happy with His redemption... Just as a king's power increases when his subjects praise him and express their gratitude to him, Bnei Yisrael give strength to their Master [when they speak about *yetzias Mitzrayim*]. Therefore, we must praise Hashem and tell this story... His words go up to heaven and all the *malachim* gather and praise Hakadosh Baruch Hu. This brings honor to Hashem above and below."

The *Zohar* emphasizes that we should say the *magid* with joy. The Yesod Yosef (85) writes, "Whoever

the white clothes that the *cohen gadol* wore on Yom Kippur, when he entered the *kodesh kadoshim*.

Taking this a step further, this means that when we make the Seder, it is like we are entering the *kodesh kadoshim*

says the...Haggadah with happiness, without any anger, without laziness, and without feeling that it's a chore, *chas veshalom*... the *Shechinah* spreads out its wings on him to save him in all places and in all travels, and he merits miracles..."⁷

יחי

Fortunate are those who conceal their good deeds from others. No one has to know that you studied Torah for five hours straight, or that you helped an older person carry bags, and so on.

But there is an exception. Rebbe Meir of Djikev zy'a (*Imrei No'am*) says that parents should sometimes let their children know about their good deeds, so

their children can learn from them. As it states (*Tehillim* 31:20), *מה רב טובך, אשר צפנת לי ואיך*, you should conceal. *פעלת לחוסים בך*, but for those who rely on you - your children, *נגד בני אדם*, do your good deeds in front of them so they can learn from you.

On the words, *והגדת לבנך*, Onkelus writes, *והחוי לבנך*, "Show your children." Because on this night, parents should show their qualities to their children, so they can learn from their ways.

When the head of the family breaks the middle matzah in half for *yachatz*, the larger half of the matzah is wrapped and hidden, and the smaller half is left on the table. This hints that people should conceal most

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

of their good deeds. But then the children search for the *afikomon*. They find even the larger half that was concealed. Because on the Seder night, we want that the children should find even the concealed deeds, so they can learn from their parents.⁸

A New Pattern for Miracles

The Ramban Torah tells us the dimensions of Noah's *teivah*, and the Ramban (*Bereishis* 6:19)

clarifies that it was still far too small to hold all the animals and all the food for a year. It was only through a miracle that there was room for them all.⁹

The Ramban asks, if a miracle was going to happen, why did Hashem say that the *teivah* be made with fairly large dimensions? The *teivah* could have been even smaller, and because of the miracle, there would be room!

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

9. The Ramban writes, "As we know, there are many species of wild animals, and some of them are very large, like the elephants... And, also the small animals, there are so many of them! As for the birds, there are endless species. Chazal (*Chulin* 63) write, 'In the east, there are 120 species of the non-kosher *אי* bird... And there are countless kosher birds. Noah had to bring all of these into the *teivah*, so they will bear offspring like themselves [so the species won't be extinct after the *mabul*]. Additionally, they needed to bring into the *teivah* food for all of them, that will last a year, for all of them. You understand that the *teivah* wasn't large enough - and even ten *teivos* of these dimensions wouldn't be large enough!

One of the Ramban's answers is as follows:

"[Hashem wanted that] the *teivah* be large so the miracle shouldn't be so noticeable (למעט בנם). And this is how it is with all the miracles stated in the Torah and *navi*. People do as much as they can, and the rest is in Hashem's hand."

Hashem wants למעט הנם, to minimize miracles so that they won't be so noticeable.

But it seems that by the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim* a new pattern was set in the way that Hashem wanted to *increase* the miracles. As it states (*Shemos* 11:9), ויאמר ה' אל משה לא ישמע עליכם, פרעה למען רבות מופתי בארץ מצרים, "Hashem said to Moshe, 'Pharaoh won't listen to you so I can do many miracles in Mitzrayim.'" Hashem could have saved Bnei Yisrael with one plague. But there were ten makos, and more at the Yam Suf. Why didn't Hashem minimize the

miracles, as He usually does?

The Dubno Magid *zt'l* answers with an analogy:

A baker places some of his breads and cakes in the store window, so people walking down the street, passing by his store, will be tempted to come inside. He also has cakes and breads on the shelves of his store to sell.

The baked goods in the store window are not serving the same purpose as the baked goods on the shelves, and therefore there are differences between them. The baked goods in the window need to appear beautiful, and they don't necessarily need to taste good because their purpose is to draw people into the store. The baked goods on the shelves can be less attractive, but they need to taste good because their purpose is to be sold and eaten.

The Dubno Magid explains that miracles can also serve two different purposes, and depending on the purpose, will define how they will appear.

Most of the miracles that Hashem performs is to save the Jewish nation, or to save the world. For example, the miracle of Purim was to save the Jewish nation from Haman and his decree. When Noach and all the animals were saved, miraculously, from the flood, the purpose was to preserve the world, with all its animals. And when the purpose is to save the world, or to save Klal Yisrael, Hashem chooses to minimize the miracles, so they won't be as noticeable.

However, the miracles of yetzias Mitzrayim weren't only to save Bnei Yisrael. They were to teach us emunah in Hashem. As it states (*Shemos* 6:6-7), והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים... יערתם כי אני, אלוקים, "I will take you out of your affliction in

Mitzrayim... so you will know that I am Hashem." And since the purpose was to know Hashem, Hashem chose to bring many miracles. Each miracle that was shown clearly taught us that Hashem created and continues to run the world.

The Pri HaAretz (beginning of *parashas Bo*) adds that this explains why Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart. If the goal was to free the nation, it is counterproductive to harden Pharaoh's heart. But when the purpose is, למען תספר שמי בכל הארץ, so the entire world will know about Hashem and His wonders, it was necessary to harden Pharaoh's heart, so more miracles could occur.

Belief in Hashem Alone

We say in the *Haggadah*, כנגד ארבע בנים דברה תורה, אחד חכם, ואחד רשע "The Torah speaks about four sons: One is a

chacham, and one is a rasha..."¹⁰

Notice that in reference to the chacham, the wise son, the *Haggadah* states אחד אחד, without a ויא"ו, and about the rasha there's the ויא"ו

prefix, as it states ואחד רשע, with a ויא"ו at the beginning of the word. אחד, which means one, hints to the one, Hashem. ואחד means that he believes in Hashem "and" he believes in something else, too.

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

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

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

The Bnei Yissaschar said to the chassidim who were with him, "This Yid took the four children of the Haggadah and made them into *kriyas Shema*."

There is indeed an association between the Haggadah, the four sons, and Shema. We say in the Haggadah: מעשה בר' אליעזר ור' יהושע ור' אלעזר בן עזריה ור' עקיבא ור' טרפון שהיו מסבין בבני ברק... עד שבאו תלמידיהם ואמרו להם רבותינו, "הגיע זמן קריאת שמע של שחרית, A story of Reb Eliezer, Reb Yehoshua, Reb Elazar ben Azaryah, Reb Akiva, and Reb Tarfon were reclining [at the Seder] in Bnei Brak...until their students came and said, 'Our teachers, the time to read Shema of Shacharis, of the morning, has come.'"

(1) שאינו יודע לשאול (2) ח'כם (3) ר'שע is *roshei teivos* for the four children: שחרית (4) ת'ם. ה' אחד.

For example, when someone asks him, "How will you manage the upcoming expenses?" he will reply, "Hashem will help. And I plan to do this,

and I plan to do that..." This person believes in Hashem, but not exclusively. It is וואהר, and also Hashem. It isn't אהר, exclusively Hashem.¹¹

11. Consider the following *mashal*:

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

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

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

"That's true," the defense attorney said, "however, what happened in this courtroom over the past ten minutes proves that the witnesses are false. As you saw, everyone in this courtroom was looking towards the door, including the witnesses who claimed my client committed the crime. Now, if they witnessed the crime, and they are certain that my client committed the murder, why were they looking to the door? Why did they want to know who would be coming in? It should be obvious to them that no one is coming in. But they were continually looking at the door. That's my proof that they are false witnesses, and they never saw the crime..."

However, the judge reached an opposite conclusion. He said, "It's true, everyone was looking to the door, including the witnesses, but I noticed that the accused didn't look towards the door, not

The Maharal (*Gevuras Hashem* 60) writes, "All mitzvos of the *korban pesach* are about אחדות, oneness... [For example, it states (*Shemos* 12:9)], על כרעיו ועל קרבו, '[roast the *korban pesach* all at once], together with its feet, together with the innards...' This is because it isn't proper that this *korban* should be divided into sections... Something that's cut into sections isn't one... Everything about this *korban* is about oneness.

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

"And it states, שה תמים בן שנה, 'A perfect sheep, one-year-old...' (12:5). It must be 'one'. If it was two years old, it wouldn't be one...

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

"And, it states, אל תאכלו ממנו גא ובשל מבושל כי אם צלי אש, 'Don't eat it half-baked or

even once. It's obvious that he committed the crime, and he knew that no one was coming."

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

cooked only roasted on the fire...' (12:9) ... This is because when something is cooked in water or in any other liquid, some meat particles will separate [and it won't be one]. But roasting the meat takes out its juices, and the meat becomes firm and solid... Roasted meat therefore demonstrates oneness, and it is proper that the *korban* should be one for the One Hashem...

"Also, it states, עֲצֵם לֹא תִשְׁבֵּר בו, 'Don't break the bones,' for this would be dividing the bone in two... In short, the *korban pesach* should be one because it teaches us that Hashem is One. The Jewish nation has this mitzvah because Hashem is One, and this is the reason Hashem chose the Jewish nation because the Jewish nation is one..."

So, the lesson of the *korban Pesach* is that Hashem is אחד, one. For our subject, this means we should turn to Hashem alone and trust solely in

Him. It shouldn't be ואחר, Hashem and something else.

Hashgachah Pratis

We find it surprising that it is called Seder. Seder means order, but the miracles we commemorate this night – the ten *makos*, *yetzias Mitzrayim*, etc. – seem very distant from the standard order (*Seder*) of the world.

But this is because we think that generally, the world follows the rules of nature, and sometimes Hashem changes the rules of nature and brings miracles. However, the truth is, even when the world is run according to the laws of nature, it is entirely run by Hashem's hand. Nothing happens by itself. When we realize that, we will have a hard time finding a difference between miracles and nature, as they are one and the same. They are both

Hashem leading the world according to His will.

Therefore, on this night, when we increase our *emunah*, we discover that there is only one *Seder*, order, to the world. The order of the world is Hashem's will.

Matzos are round, which symbolizes a cycle, an order.¹² By יהץ we break the round matzah to remind ourselves that things don't run on their own cycle. Everything runs by Hashem's decree.

The first *Ani Maamin* states, אני מאמין באמונה שלימה שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא ... עֲשָׂה וְעוֹשֶׂה, "I believe with a complete faith that the Creator, blessed be His name...did, does, and will do all deeds." The top matzah represents our belief in עֲשָׂה— that everything that happened *was* from Hashem. The middle matzah represents

עוֹשֶׂה — everything happening now is according to His will. The bottom matzah represents our belief in עֲשָׂה— everything that will happen in the future will be from Hashem. We break the middle matzah because it is hardest to believe that even the current events are by Hashem's decree.

The *Haggadah* states, וירעו אתנו המצרים כמה שנאמר... וישמע ה' את קולנו כמה שנאמר... ויוציאנו... ביד חזקה... "The Mitzrim afflicted us, as it says... Hashem heard our prayers, as it says... Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim...with an outstretched arm, as it says..."

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* translates this as follows, "The Mitzrim afflicted us, כמה שנאמר, because Hashem said so. We went out of Mitzrayim, כמה שנאמר, because Hashem said so."

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

Everything happens by Hashem's decree. The hardships and the salvation, the significant matters, and the trivial, are all, *כמה שנאמר*, as Hashem has said and decreed.

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

Rashi asks, "Don't we know when they left?"

Moshe was telling them: Take note of the *chesed* Hashem performed for you: He redeemed you when the weather is comfortable; when it isn't too hot or too cold, and there is no rain."

It seems odd that the weather should be mentioned. The joy of the redemption is so great; did they really think about the weather?

To understand the question, imagine that a

Holocaust survivor is telling you that he jumped out the window of a moving train headed towards the concentration camps, which is how he saved his life. And you ask him, "How was the weather that day?"

He will respond, "Don't you understand what I'm telling you? My life was saved! The weather is irrelevant!"

Nevertheless, the Torah tells us to note the comfortable weather the Yidden enjoyed when they left Mitzrayim.

This is because the weather on the day of *yetzias Mitzrayim* wasn't by chance. It was also by Hashem's decree. Because everything, down to the most minor details, is from Hashem, and we should take note of and appreciate all the details.¹³

13. It states (*Bereishis 45:23*), ולאביו שלח כזאת עשרה חמרים נשאים ממוזב מצרים, "Yosef sent his father ten donkeys..." The Maharal (*Gevuras Hashem 10*)

Everything is for the Good

Everyone's dream and aspiration is that the Seder should be beautiful, that the children should behave, that the atmosphere be happy and uplifting but, alas, it isn't always so.

We must know that these challenges are also from Hashem, and we have

to learn how to accept them.

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

explains that donkeys don't know what they are carrying, nor do they know why they are carrying it. Yosef sent his father ten donkeys to hint to his father that his ten brothers aren't responsible for selling him to Mitzrayim. Like donkeys, they didn't know what they were doing. They thought they were acting on their own, but they were really playing out Hashem's plan.

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

When they left Mitzrayim, they ate matzah again. As we say, *מצה*, "Why do we eat matzah...? It's because our forefathers didn't have time to let their dough rise..."

This shows us that everything is in Hashem's hands. If Hashem wants that they should eat matzah, the situation won't change it. As slaves they ate matzos and as free men they ate matzah again.

Perhaps they were looking forward for the time when they will be free and they can eat fresh breads. But Hashem's will always prevail.

yom-tovdig and orderly. As it states in *Shulchan Aruch* (472:1), יהא שולחנו ערוך מבעוד יום כרי, לאכל בשתחשך, "The table should be set in the daytime so you can start the meal [immediately] when it is nighttime..." But they found this home topsy-turvy. There was no sign that it was Seder night.

(It wasn't the children who were guilty of messing up this home because, unfortunately, this renowned *mechanech* never had children. Rather, his wife wasn't emotionally well, and things like this would happen in his home.)

The *bachurim* were taken aback.

Their host told them, "When you go to other people's home, and you find the table set, the house clean and orderly, the children dressed in their *yom tov* clothing, good smells are wafting out from the kitchen, you think that you are seeing "freedom." You think that this is a good example of the חרית of

yetzias Mitzrayim. I, however, say you are seeing slavery, and not freedom because they are enslaved to this perfection. Because if any minor detail isn't in order, the family wouldn't know how to handle it. But in this home, we celebrate true freedom because we accept Hashem's will. If this is what Hashem wants, this is good for us. And that is true freedom."

Reb Ber'tze, a chassid of Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zt'l*, once came home on the Seder night, expecting to find his table set and prepared for the Seder. After all, before leaving to shul, Reb Ber'tze set the table for the Seder himself. But when he came home, he saw the table was messy, and the matzos and the wine, which he previously set out on the table, were now shattered on the floor.

He also found his wife in bed, moping. She said, "Why did you put the wine and the matzos so close to

the edge of the table? When I passed by the table, my apron got caught on the tablecloth, and since you placed everything so close to the edge, everything crashed to the ground. It's all your fault!"

This was a great test. If Reb Ber'tze got angry now, the atmosphere of the entire night would be ruined. But Reb Ber'tze replied, "It isn't my fault, and neither is it yours. This was Hashem's plan." And Reb Ber'tze celebrated the Seder with joy.

The following day, in beis medresh, Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zt'l* was discussing the wonderful Sedarim that Yidden conducted the previous night. Through ruach hakodesh, he was

able to see the impact in heaven that the Sedarim of others had. And then he said, "But the Seder of Reb Ber'tze was greater than all others. No one reached the heights he attained."

It was because he remained happy despite his overturned Seder table and upset wife. And this is because he believed that everything is from Hashem.

There are four sons in the *Haggadah*. Rebbe Hirsh Rimonver said, "In my opinion, the שאינו יודע לשאול is best off from all of them." Because this son doesn't ask any questions. He accepts everything that happens to him with *emunah* that this is how it has to be.¹⁴

14. Every year, before the Seder, the married children of Reb Zalman Brizel *zt'l* would come with their families to Reb Zalman's home to say *gut yom tov* before going to their own homes to make the Seder. One year, one of the grandchildren accidentally threw down all the matzos, and they broke. Reb Zalman Brizel was happy. He said, "Hashem gave me grandchildren. Isn't that a reason to be happy?"

Before Hashem

In the *Haggadah*, we say, "[Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim] 'with a great fear.' This is referring to the revelation of the *Shechinah*."

This great revelation wasn't only by *yetzias Mitzrayim*. Every year, at the Seder, the *Shechinah* is present.

In *masechta Pesachim*, the Mishnayos presents the order of the Seder. It states there (10:2), מווגו לו כוס ראשון, "They pour for him the first cup of wine..."

The next Mishnah states (10:3), הביאו לפניו מצה וחזרת, "They bring before him matzah and *marror*..."

Also, in reference to *karpas*, the Mishnah (10:3), states הביאו לפניו מטבל, "They brought before him, and he dips it..." The Tiferes

Shlomo takes note of a slight change in the language, between לו (stated in Mishnah 10:2) and לפניו (stated in Mishnah 10:3). The translation of לו is "for him." The translation of לפניו is "before him."

The Tiferes Shlomo explains that לפניו means "before Hashem." Because when we sit at the Seder, we are seated before Hashem. Hashem is present at our Seder.

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

Reb Shimon Shkop *zt'l* would have a *taanis dibur* at the Seder. He explained, Hashem, Himself is at the Seder. As it says, ועברתי בארץ, "I came to the land of Mitzrayim, I and not an angel..." And it

Because there is always a lot of good in our lives. And when we focus on them, we aren't upset when things aren't perfect in other ways.

isn't proper to speak before the King.

The Shlah HaKadosh (quoted in *Mishnah Berurah* 473:71) states that we shouldn't read *magid* while leaning to the side (הסיבה). We can explain that this too is because the *Shechinah* is present. (Similar to the halachah that one doesn't recline at the Seder in the presence of his rebbe.)

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 12) states that one shouldn't daven in Aramaic because the *malachim* don't understand that language, and the *malachim* won't be able to elevate the *tefillos* before Hashem. However, when visiting the sick, one may daven in Aramaic. What's the difference?

Chazal explain that the *Shechinah* is with the patient. As it states (*Tehillim* 41), "ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי, Hashem

supports him on his sick-bed." Hashem is present, you are speaking directly to Hashem, so you can speak in Aramaic.

Towards the beginning of the Seder, we say, הוא לחמא ענייא. The words are in Aramaic. The Arugas HaBosem *zt'l* explains that Hashem is at the Seder, so we can speak in Aramaic.

The Seder ends with הרי גרייא, also written in Aramaic. This hints that Hashem is present from the beginning of the Seder until the end.¹⁵

The Levels We Can Attain at the Seder

Shortly after the Ksav Sofer's *chasunah*, the Ksav Sofer's sisters were telling the young bride, Rebbetzin Chavah Leah, about their father's (the Chasam Sofer *zt'l*) wondrous Seder. They told her that it is literally

15. We understand from this that the Seder night is an ideal time for *tefillah*. The *Shechinah* is present, and all our *tefillos* to Him will be answered.

impossible to look at the Chasam Sofer's face at the Seder because his countenance shines so brightly.

Rebbetzin Chavah Leah didn't believe them. She thought it was "Hungarian imaginations." But at the Seder she tried to look at her father-in-law's face, and she couldn't.

The Avnei Nezer said, "My father-in-law (the Rebbe of Kotzk *zt'l*) always appeared like a *malach*, but at the Seder, he appeared like a *saraf* (an even higher angel). On the night of the Seder, the Rebbe of Kotzk seemed elevated in a way that we didn't see him, even on Yom Kippur.... During the second half of the Seder, sparks of fire came out of his mouth..." (אביר הרועים ע"ג, (שב"ד

On this night, we become like the malachim. The following is our proof:

The first two *simanim* of the Seder are קדש ורחץ.¹⁶ The translation can be, "make yourself holy and purify yourself." *Kedushah* (holiness) comes before *taharah* (purity).

This isn't the order we usually follow. Generally, a Yid must first purify himself (from *tumah* and from *aveiros*) and then he can become holy. The unusual order of קדש ורחץ (holiness first, and then purity) is the order *malachim* use. As we say in *Shacharis*, וכולם פותחים את פיהם בקדושה ובטהרה, "They all open their mouths with *kedushah* and *taharah*..."

The order of קדש ורחץ indicates that at the Seder, we reach the level of *malachim*.¹⁷

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

17. Rebbe Yochanan Rachmistrifka *zy'a* taught: קדש ורחץ, if a person wants to sanctify and purify himself, the path is כרפס, which is

We actually reach even higher levels than the *malachim*, on this night. At the Seder, we become a חלק אחד עם ה' one with Hashem. To prove this, we repeat a lesson from the holy Maharal.

The Maharal asks, how were the Yidden saved from the *makos*? When the *makos* came to Mitzrayim, technically, it could harm

everyone living there – even the Yidden. What saved the Jewish nation?

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

The tenth plague, *makas bechoros*, was performed by Hashem, Himself. As we

roshei teivos for ס'גור פ'ה ר'שאון פ'ה ב'לל ר'שאון פ'ה, the first rule is to keep the mouth shut. By avoiding forbidden speech, one is able to attain holiness and purity. יחזן מגיד means that when you do speak, say only half of what you were planning to say.

Chassidim once heard Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz ז"ל silently repeat to himself the *simanim* of the Seder (קדש ורחץ כרפס יחזן etc), before he began the Seder. Chassidim explain that he was reminding himself of all the wonderful steps of the Seder, so he could keep each step properly. Sometimes a person reaches נרצה and he regrets that they had so many special opportunities at the Seder that he didn't take full advantage of. Therefore, before starting the Seder, Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz ז"l reminded himself of the order of the night. This reminder would inspire him to take advantage of all the mitzvos of this holy night.

The order of the Seder, קדש ורחץ etc. are called *simanim*. When someone claims a lost object, he had to give evidence of ownership (*simanim*) and then he can get back the lost object. Throughout the year, due to sins, a person can lose his holiness. When he does the *simanim* of the Seder, he gets his *kedushah* back.

say in the *Hagaddah*, ועברתי, *I passed through Eretz Mitzrayim; it was I and not an angel...*"

It wouldn't be enough to raise the Yidden above the *malachim*, since this *makah* came from a higher place, from Hashem, Himself. What protected the Jewish nation from this plague? The Maharal teaches: Hashem elevated the Yidden up to His level. They became a *חלק אלוהי ממעלה*, *kivayachol*, united with Hashem, and thereby they were saved.

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

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

The Holiness of the Night

This section will discuss the immense *kedushah* that

permeates our homes, on Pesach, at the Seder.

We begin our discussion with a *halachah* in *Shulchan Aruch* (472:2), which states, יסדר שולחנו בכלים נאים לפי כוחו, "One should set the table with beautiful utensils, according to his abilities." The Mishnah Berurah explains that beautiful utensils on the table express freedom, which we attained this night.

The Magen Avraham (472:2) writes that the Maharil used to loan money to goyim, and they would give him precious utensils as collateral. He didn't use those utensils throughout the year, but Pesach, he used them at his Seder, as this increased the atmosphere of *חירות* in his home.

This arouses a couple of questions. One is theft. Is it permitted to use such collateral for your own needs?

About this question, the Magen Avraham writes, "Since the Maharil used them only one day a year, the goyim weren't *makpid*." They didn't mind if he borrows and uses their utensils for a night. There was no theft.¹⁸

But there is another question, raised by the Chasam Sofer zt'l (*Drashos Shabbos HaGadol* vol.2 p.255). The utensils weren't ever *toveled* in the *mikvah*. How could the Maharil use them?

According to *halachah*, one is only required to *tovel* utensils that were purchased or acquired from gentiles, and these utensils were still the property of the gentiles. Nevertheless, there is a great *tumah* on the gentile utensils, and the food that goes into them become

contaminated. As the Chasam Sofer writes, יש בו סכנה וטומאה עצומה של לחם טמא, "There is a danger, and a powerful *tumah*" when one eats with gentile utensils. Why wasn't the Maharil concerned about this impurity?

The Chasam Sofer replies that there is a lot of *kedushah* on this night, and therefore, the *tumah* of the non-Jewish utensils disappears.

To explain this some more, we will elaborate a bit:

The Chasam Sofer compares the Maharil's borrowing the gentile utensils to what happened in *Mitzayim*. As it states (*Shemos* 12:36), וישאלו ממצרים כלי, "Bnei Yisrael borrowed from *Mitzrayim* silver and gold utensils..."

18. Others (Chok Yaakov and Mishnah Berurah) answer that the Maharil put those utensils on a side table in his dining room, but he didn't actually use them.

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

The Chasam Sofer explains that Egyptians were eager to give them their utensils, and even more than what they asked for because deep down, they knew that this could contaminate the Jewish nation.

The Chasam Sofer clarifies that the Egyptians weren't so wise as to know that their utensils generate tumah for the Jewish nation, but their mazal and malach in heaven knew, which influenced them, subconsciously, to be eager to give their utensils to the Jewish nation.

We also understand why the Jewish nation was hesitant and didn't really

want to borrow anything (see Brachos 9.). The Chasam Sofer explains that they were afraid of the tumah of the goyishe keilim.

As we explained, this is a tumah that can't be rectified with a mikvah because the utensils were borrowed and not purchased. There is no mitzvah to tovel them, so mikvah wouldn't help. They were left with a grave impurity and with no way to rectify it.

But the Yidden had nothing to fear. As the Chasam Sofer explains, "Because of the immense *kedushah* that Hashem bestowed on the Jewish nation on that night... the *tumah* become annulled... in the *kedushah*." There was so much *kedushah* on the night of Pesach that it purified the utensils so that the Jewish nation was not affected by the *tumah*.¹⁹

19. The Chasam Sofer explains that the Jewish nation didn't deserve this high level of *kedushah*, but Hashem wanted to keep

The Chasam Sofer adds that this immense *kedushah* reoccurs in every generation. "And therefore, every Seder night, it is permitted to use the utensils that were taken as collateral from the goyim [as the Maharil would do], because due to the *hislahavos* people have when they tell the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the *tumah* of the *keilim* won't harm us, even if the utensils weren't *toveled*."

In another location, the Chasam Sofer (*drashos Shabbos HaGadol* תקס"ב ד"ה כי תבאו), elaborates once again on the immense holiness that enters into our homes, on this night.

At the Seder, we say, כל
 ,דבפני ייתי ויכול, "Whoever is
 hungry, come and eat."
 What will we do if many

poor people take us up on that offer? How will we have food for all the guests? And where will we put them?

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* says we don't have to worry about that. Even if many people come to our homes, there will be enough food, and there will be enough space. Because when we conduct a Seder, our homes become holy as though we live in Eretz Yisrael. And wherever there's holiness, there is abundance and plenty of room.

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

His promise that He made with Avraham Avinu, that the Jewish nation will leave with immense wealth. Therefore, Hashem told them to borrow the utensils, and they became purified by the great holiness of the night.

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

Similarly, Chazal say that there was always sufficient לחם הפנים for all the *kohanim*. If there were many *kohanim*, each *kohen* received but a morsel of the breads. But that bit was sufficient, and it satiated them. The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that this is because where there's holiness, there is sustenance.

The Chasam Sofer writes, "With these ideas, I explain, הא לחמא עניא די אכלו, 'This is the bread of poverty our forefathers ate in Mitzrayim with hunger and suffering.' [And we are still poor] and we are still eating the same poor-man's bread... Nevertheless, כל דכפין ייתי ויכל כל דצריך ייתי ויפסח, 'Whoever is hungry, come

and eat with us.' There will be enough. As Chazal say, 'The entire nation can eat the same *korban Pesach*.' Our apartments and homes will become spacious, and there will be room for all the guests. This is perfectly logical because as we tell Hashem's wonders and miracles our house becomes like a miniature Eretz Yisrael. Chazal (*Megillah* 29.) say, 'In the future, the batei midrashim and the batei knesiyos will move to Eretz Yisrael.' Our houses will also move to Eretz Yisrael. This is the meaning of the words, השתא הכא לשנה הבאה בארץ ישראל, 'We are here now. Next year *this house* will be in Eretz Yisrael'..." and therefore a dimension of Eretz Yisrael already exists at the Seder, and there will be enough room and food for everyone."

Chumros

One can find in *mussar sefarim* the ideal to be *machmir* with mitzvos. This means striving to keep the

mitzvos according to all opinions, and when there is a difference of halachic opinions, follow the more stringent view. Furthermore, it means to create for oneself safeguards and precautions, to be certain that one doesn't come even close to committing an *aveirah*, *chalilah*.

However, many tzaddikim say that this rigorous approach isn't appropriate for the later generations. They recommend that we keep the mitzvos according to the standard view and standard halachah, as it is written in *Shulchan Aruch* and in other *poskim*, and that is sufficient.

Rebbe Simchah Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* taught that one doesn't have to be *machmir* throughout the year, but Pesach is an exception. When it comes to chametz, one should be *machmir* (stringent), so he can be confident that he is chametz-free on Pesach.

Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa *zt'l* said that the *chumros* we have on Pesach decorates the *kallah* (the *Shechinah*) with jewelry and ornaments.

But even when we take on *chumros* on Pesach, it is important to keep them with joy and without nervousness. Rebbe Bunim calls the *chumros* "ornaments for the *kallah*," and when one adorns a *kallah* for her *chasunah*, there's an atmosphere of joy and excitement. There should be a similar happy ambiance in our homes, as we keep our *chumros*.

The *rasha* of the *Haggadah* asks, "מה העבודה הזאת לכם," "Why do you do this work?" The *Pela Yoetz* (*Elef HaMagen*, *Bishalach*) explains that the *rasha* asks why Yidden are so *machmir* on Pesach. He says, "Why isn't it sufficient to keep the basic halachah, which requires minimal effort?"

We answer the *rasha*, "אילו היה שם לא היה נגאל," "Had you

been in Mitzrayim, and you would have followed the approach of keeping the bare minimum of the mitzvos, without being *machmir*, you would still be in Mitzrayim. You wouldn't be redeemed. We were redeemed from Mitzrayim because Klal Yisrael practiced *chumros*."

The Pela Yoetz explains:

When the Yidden were at the Yam Suf, the *malachim* in heaven said, "Also Yidden worship *avodah zarah*! They are like the Egyptians!²⁰ Why should a miracle save the Yidden while the Mitzrim drown in the sea?"

So, what saved the Jewish nation?

The Pela Yoetz answers that Klal Yisrael kept *chumros* to be safeguarded from chametz, and that merit saved them. Hashem said to the prosecuting *malachim*, "The Yidden are so cautious with my halachos; they deserve to be saved."

To explain, the Pela Yoetz quotes the following Gemara (*Brachos* 20:):

"The *malachim* say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu: 'Ribono shel Olam, You wrote in the Torah (*Devarim* 10:17) אשר לא ישא פנים, that Your judgment is fair and true, and You don't change the rules of judgment just because you favor someone. So, why do you favor, in judgment, the Jewish

20. Similarly, it states לקחת לו גוי מקרב גוי, "to save a nation from the midst of a nation." The Jewish nation wasn't noticeably different than the Mitzrim. It wasn't so clear that they should be saved and not the Egyptians.

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

nation? As it states (*Bamidbar* 6:26), *ישא ה' פניו אליך*, and this means Hashem acts with the Jewish nation with kindness in His judgment, beyond the letter of the law.'

"Hakadosh Baruch He replies, 'Shouldn't I judge them favorably? I wrote in the Torah (*Devarim* 8:10), *ואכלה ושבעת וברכתה*, that they are obligated to bless Me with *birchas hamazon* only when they eat and are satiated. But they are *machmir*, and they bless me even after just eating a *kezayis* or a *kebeitzah!*"

In the merit of the Jewish nation being *machmir*, Hashem judges them favorably. So, our *chumros* and extra caution with Hashem's halachos saved us. The Mitzrim drowned in the sea, and Hashem saved His beloved nation.

We tell the *rasha*, "You want to keep the halachos without any *chumros*? If you had done so in

Mitzrayim, you wouldn't have merited redemption."

Family Traditions

It states (*Mishlei* 1:8), *אל תרוש תורה אמך*, "Don't abandon the Torah of your mother." Chazal explain that this means we must abide by the customs we received from our parents. If your parents have a *Pesach chumrah* (or other *chumros* regarding any of the mitzvos of the Torah), you might be obligated, according to halachah, to keep this *chumrah*. It might have begun as a *chumrah* for your parents or generations earlier, but after you received the tradition, this becomes your obligation.

To understand the importance of upholding *chumros* and customs, we state here a critical lesson taught to us by the tzaddikim of Belz *zy'a*.

A chasan (a young groom) wasn't planning on wearing a *streimel* after his *chasunah*. Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz

zy'a asked him about that. The *chasan* replied, "Clothes don't mean anything to me. A *shtreimel*...a hat... they're the same to me. What's inside the person is what's important."

The Rebbe replied, "The Gemara (*Gittin* 60:) says that at *mattan Torah*, Hashem made a *bris*, a pact, with the Jewish nation, specifically because the Jewish nation will study and keep the oral Torah.²¹ Today, in a way, there isn't an oral Torah. The Gemara and the Mishnayos are all written. Therefore, in our generation, the oral Torah is the customs, the *minhagim*. Customs are therefore important. Because of them, Hakadosh Baruch Hu makes a *bris* with the Jewish people."

One of the reasons keeping to tradition and

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

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

For these reasons, keeping the family's

21. The words of the Gemara are as follows: לא כרת הקב"ה ברית עם ישראל אלא בשביל דברים שבעל פה שנאמר (שמות ל"ד כ"ו) כי על פי הדברים האלה כרתו אתך ברית ואת ישראל

chumros and customs is so essential.

Differentiating between *Chumros* and Halachah

One of the Noda B'Yehudah's students left the path of Torah and eventually became a priest. The Noda b'Yehudah contemplated how he can bring him back.

After making some inquiries, the Noda B'Yehudah heard that every day, at a particular hour, the priest sits on his porch, and he greets the passersby. The Noda B'Yehudah decided that he would pass his home at that hour, and he would greet the priest. If the priest returns the greeting, that means there's hope. But if he doesn't return his greeting, that will be a sign that he isn't interested in having anything to do with Yiddishkeit anymore.

When the Noda B'Yehudah passed the priest's home, the priest

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

The Noda B'Yehudah came straight to the point. He asked his former student, "Why did you leave the path of Torah?"

The priest/post-student replied that it was because of a *chumrah* that he didn't keep. He felt so bad about transgressing this *chumrah*, until he fell to lower levels, ultimately resulting with the drastic step of leaving Yiddishkeit.

This is his story. It happened when he learned in the Noda B'Yehudah's yeshiva in Prague and ate *teig* (meals) at the generous families of the city who

took in yeshiva students for meals.

"One Pesach, I was a guest by a family in Prague, and the head of the household sent me to you. A wheat kernel was found in one of the pots, and the question was whether we could eat the food.

"You said that according to halachah, the food is kosher. Nevertheless, you recommended that we shouldn't eat it, because of the *chumrah* of chametz. I returned with your message, and the family immediately decided that they would be *machmir*, and they would throw out the food, as you recommended. But I wasn't as strong. I told the family that I want to follow the more lenient view, and they served me from this food.

"The food was delicious; I ate it with relish. But soon afterward, I regretted what I did. I couldn't believe that I fell to the level of eating

questionable food on Pesach. I felt like a *rasha*, and probably the family with who I was eating saw me as a *rasha*, too.

"This was my turning point. My low esteem caused me to drop to even lower levels. That is my story."

The Noda B'Yehudah told him, "But the food was kosher. I told you so. It was just a *chumrah*. Because you didn't keep a *chumrah*, you fell so far? Therefore, from now on, regret all your sins and return to Hashem."

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

This story teaches us that we must know what is halachah and what is a *chumrah*. Confusing them can lead to unnecessary regret, which can lead to far worse *aveiros*.

Reb Meshulem Igra *zt'l* only ate matzah by the Seder, as a precaution from

chametz. And at the Seder, he only ate the matzos that he baked himself, with extreme caution.

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

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

When she came home, she found her husband in happy spirits. "He probably doesn't know yet," she thought. With tears in her

eyes, she told her husband that the maid mistakenly gave away his matzos.

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

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

Because when one knows clearly what is halachah and what is a *chumrah*, he knows how to react in such situations.

Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer's son once got angry with

the maid because the maid placed pieces of matzah in the soup (rendering the soup *gebroks*). Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer said to his son, "Now you can eat this matzah too." He was telling his son that getting angry and insulting others is worse than *gebroks*.

A *chasan*, only a couple of weeks after his *chasunah*, was at his father-in-law's home for the Seder. He was served a bowl of soup, and he found a wheat kernel in his plate.

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

But the son-in-law felt that he couldn't eat in this home anymore. He stood up, took along his embarrassed wife, and went to the house of Reb Shmuel Salant *zt'l*, to tell him what happened. He was sure that Reb Shmuel Salant would tell him that

he did the right thing for leaving the Seder.

But Reb Shmuel Salant immediately understood what happened. He took the *chasan's streimel* off of his head and shook it vigorously. Some wheat kernels fell out.

Because it used to be the custom to throw wheat kernels on a *chasan*, on the Shabbos before his *chasunah*. Reb Shmuel Salant understood that the wheat kernel that fell into the soup probably fell from his *streimel*.

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

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

One year, at the Seder of Reb Binyamin Rabinowitz *zt'l* (*dayan* of the Eidah haChareidis, Yerushalayim) the meal of *Shulchan Orach* began twenty minutes before *chatzos*. His children were serving the meal quickly so that they could reach *afikomom* before *chatzos*.

Reb Binyamin *zt'l* said, "The *rebbetzin* worked hard to prepare the meal. She might be upset if we rush through the meal and don't enjoy what she prepared."

Reb Binyamin added, "All the *chumros* we have at the Seder are not worth anything if it will cause another Yid distress."

Reb Shlomo Frishtik was confronted with a dilemma: His father ate machine matzos, and he and his new wife would be going to his father for the Seder. However, his wife was the daughter of Reb Gedalyah Moshe, and the granddaughter of Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l*. The

Zvhiller tzaddikim were careful to eat only hand-made matzos. What should he do? If he eats hand-made matzos in his father's home, his father might be insulted. But perhaps he should honor his new wife and her prestigious lineage and take along hand-matzos.

He asked people for advice, and they advised him to pose this question to Rebbe Shlomke.

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

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

but Rebbe Shlomke signaled to them not to keep quiet.

The Rebbe explained, "In heaven, you will not be asked whether you ate *gebroks* or not. You will be asked whether you guarded your eyes, and whether you guarded your tongue against hurting another Yid."²²

Rebbe Yochanon Twersky of Tolne (Yerushalayim) *zy'a* was extremely careful not to eat *gebroks*, as this was the strict *minhag* of the *tzaddikim* of Chernobyl for many generations. Once, on *chol hamoed*, the 19th of Nissan, the Rebbe lead a *tish* in honor of Rebbe

Aharon of Karlin's *yahrtzeit*. There was a *litoishe* man at this *tish*, eating *gebroks*. He was dipping his matzah into the soup. The *chassidim* around him rebuked him harshly. He was embarrassed, and he immediately pushed his soup away.

The Rebbe asked his *gabbai* to bring him another bowl of soup. The *gabbai* was about to go into the kitchen to get it, but the Rebbe said, "No. I want to have the soup that that Yid left over and pushed to the middle of the table." The Rebbe said this to spare this Yid from shame. The Rebbe explained, "When people embarrassed this Yid for eating *gebroks*, it

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

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

created a *kitrug* on my family and me. I want to eat his soup, to appease him, and to save him from shame."

Matzah

Tzaddikim waited the entire year with anticipation and longing for the Seder night, when they could eat matzah. We aren't on this high level, nevertheless, the Torah was given to everyone, including simple people like us. The Torah requires *בֶּעֶרֶב תֹאכְלוּ מַצּוֹת*, "On this [Seder]night eat matzos." The Torah is talking to us, too. And Hashem is happy with our mitzvah of matzah, so we should also strive to eat it in the best manner we can.

The Chasam Sofer (*Choshen Mishpat* 196) states, "The mitzvah of eating matzah on the Seder night is the only mitzvah of eating that has remained. We don't have the mitzvah of eating the *korban Pesach* anymore, or to eat other

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

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

The Shlah HaKadosh writes that there are chassidim who would kiss

the matzos when they lifted them at the Seder.

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

The Rokeiach (*Pesach*, 291) writes that when one eats matzah during the seven days of Pesach, he becomes a partner with Hashem in Creation. As it states, *מצות* *יאכל שבועת הימים* (*Shemos* 13:7). It is written *שבועת הימים* with an extra *ה"א*, hinting to the seven days of Creation. By keeping this mitzvah, we become partners in the creation of the world, which was created in seven days.

The Tiferes Shlomo writes that the uniqueness of matzah is that it enters the body. Therefore, it is like a spiritual remedy. It removes all the bad that is inside him and enables him to be reunited with Hashem.

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

The *roshei teivos* of *מצ"ה* spell *מ"כ ל צ"ר ה צ"לני*, "Save me from all troubles."

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

It says, *מצות האכל במקום קדוש*, "Eat matzah in a holy place" (*Vayikra* 6:9). The Tiferes Shlomo asks, what is that holy place? The mouth. One should make his mouth a *מקום קדוש*, a holy place, fitting to eat the matzah. We do so by undertaking to refrain from speaking *lashon hara* and

other forms of forbidden speech, and by not consuming non-kosher foods.

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

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

We derive from this that eating matzah on Pesach is like a *chasunah*.²³

The Maharil explains that we recite seven *brachos* before eating the matzah, just as *sheva brachos* are said at a *chasunah*.

The Vilna Gaon lists the seven *brachos* that are said before we eat matzah. (The Vilna Gaon was of the opinion that we should say על נטילת ידים ורחץ. In his opinion, this is the count):

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

According to the Levush, (471:2) the two *brachos* on the matzah are the final two *brachos* of the *sheva brachos*.

Reb Tzvi Kintzlicher *zt'l*, the Rav of Seban, Romania (until he moved to

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

Similarly, if someone is distant from Hashem because of his sins, the union is reestablished when he eats matzah.

Yerushalayim in 5709), was having severe stomach pains, and doctors in Klausenberg told him that he requires emergency surgery. The Rav told the doctors that he wants to be home for Pesach, after which time he would immediately return for the operation.

The doctors agreed but warned him not to eat anything difficult to digest. He can only have light foods, like fruits and milk. He wasn't permitted to eat matzah.

Reb Tzvi was planning on following these rules, but at the Seder, he decided to eat matzah soaked in milk. While eating the matzah he felt something positive happening to his stomach. He ate matzah on the second night of Pesach too, and by the time he finished eating that *kezayis*, he didn't have any stomach pains at all.

On Shabbos after Pesach, he stood at the

bimah of his *beis medresh* and told his congregation that he was leaving for a serious operation. "Pray for me, because who knows if I will survive..."

When he returned to Klausenberg, the doctors saw that he was better. "Which doctor did you go to?" they asked, stunned.

He told them that he was cured with the mitzvah of eating matzah, the *מכילה* *דאסותא*, healing food."

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

מרור

Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l* writes, "Even *maror* [which was horseradish in his country] one should eat the proper amount. Every day we say *בבל נפוך*, to serve Hashem with all our soul,

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

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

מרור is *gematriya* מות, death, implying that by eating *maror*, one annuls all hardships and troubles. So, although eating *maror* may be bitter at first, it makes everything sweet.

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

בורך

We recline when we drink the four cups of wine and when we eat the matzah to demonstrate our freedom because we were freed from Mitzrayim. We don't recline when we eat *maror*, because *maror* symbolizes *galus*.

However, when we eat *korach*, which is *maror* sandwiched with matzah, we do recline. The Tiferes Shlomo asks, since there is *maror* in *Korach*, and the *marur* represents the *galus*, why do we recline?

He answers, when the *maror* is wrapped in matzah, which is called *meichla dehemenu*, the bread of *emunah*, one knows that even the *maror* and the *galus* is ultimately kindness. He can recline because he knows that even the *maror* is for his benefit.

אפיקומן

Rebbe Mendel of Riminov *zt'l* teaches that

eating *afikomom* is conducive for annulling bad *taavos*. The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* (*Haggadah shel Pesach* 56) writes that this is alluded to in the word אפיקומן. *Chazal* say that אפיקומן stands for מניי מתיקה, bring out sweet foods. (Literally, the *afikomom* is like dessert, as it is eaten at the end of the meal.) The Yismach Yisrael explains, מניי מתיקה means that this mitzvah will remove our temptations for the sweet pleasures of this world.²⁴

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

He would answer, דאם, אדו'עט מיר, which means he is

disgusted by food. His sole desire was *ruchniyus*.

But at the Seder, he would eat the matzah with immense relish. His rebbetzin looked askance at the way he ate the matzah. She said, "Did you become a *baal taavah'nik*? Did you suddenly become so interested in food?"

He said, "The entire year, I am not interested in food, and you encourage me to eat. Once a year, when I finally have an interest in food, they say that I am a *baal taavah*. The truth is that it is precisely that way. When one holds back from *taavos* the entire year, he can eat the matzah with immense *taavah*.²⁵

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

25. The Nesivos Shalom *zy'a* once saw a bachur of his yeshiva eating a pita-falafel with immense relish. To rebuke him in a round-about way, the Nesivos Shalom told him, "The way you are

There's an old custom – already stated in the Gemara – that children grab the *afikomon* at the Seder. Once, at Reb Shimon Sofer's Seder, his grandson asked him, "Why do children grab the *afikomon*? It teaches children to steal."

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

"I never heard an explanation before, and I never thought about it either. But as soon as you asked me, I had an answer. I didn't answer you immediately when you asked because I wanted to teach you that a Yid must abide by the Torah, mitzvos, and the *minhagim*, even when we don't know the reason. And now I will tell you my explanation for this custom:

"The *pasuk* states (*Shemos* 11:7), *ולכל בני ישראל לא יחרץ כלב*, 'for all of Bnei Yisrael, no dog barked...' Chazal (*Pesachim* 113) say that dogs bark when there's a thief. Chazal, therefore, advise that one should live in a city where there are dogs, as this protects the residents from burglars. On the night of *yetzias mitzrayim*, the dogs didn't bark. This means thieves were able to steal on that night, as the

eating reminded me of how the Beis Avraham would eat the matzah on Pesach."

dogs weren't preventing them. At the Seder we steal the *afikoman* to commemorate that miracle when the dogs didn't bark..."

Lessons from the Matzah

Matzah teaches us many lessons. *Shulchan Aruch* (459:2) states, לא יניחו העיסה בלא, "Don't leave the dough idle - even for a moment - without kneading the dough..." This is because as long as the dough is kneaded, it won't become chametz, but when it is left alone, it can become chametz.

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* said that this alludes to the virtue of always being active, to always do something for *avodas Hashem*.

As *tzaddikim* say, "If you don't have the strength to learn Torah, say *Tehillim*. If you don't have strength for saying *Tehillim*, give *tzedakah*..."

As we say at the beginning of *Pirkei Avos*, רצה הקב"ה לזכות את ישראל לפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצוות, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted Bnei Yisrael to have many merits, therefore He gave them a large Torah with many mitzvos..." With its 613 mitzvos, the Torah enables a person always to be involved in Hashem's service, no matter where he is, and no matter what is happening in his life.

Rebbe Zusha of Anipoli *zt'l* said that there are three lessons we should learn from children: (1) If you want something, continue crying until you get it. (2) When your needs are met, be happy. (3) Always be active.

The matzah teaches us several other lessons:

The letters of מצה and חמץ are almost the same. The only difference is in the ה' and the ה. The *heh* is broken. Rebbe Shlomo Dovid of Slonim *zt'l* says that the

broken ה hints to a broken heart and to humility.

The close similarity between the letters of חמץ and מצה tells us that it is often hard to differentiate between kedushah and tumah, and that is how the yetzer hara ensnares people. As the Meor Einayim (ר"ה חמץ תזאו) writes, "*Kedushah* is called matzah, and the *kelipah* is called chametz. There's barely a difference between them, other than the small drop that differentiates a *ches* from a *heh*... This is because the *yetzer hara* generally doesn't tell a person to do an *aveirah* because who will listen to him? Rather, the *yetzer hara* tells him that an *aveirah* is a mitzvah..." The *yetzer hara* convinces him that an *aveirah* is a mitzvah, and that is the great test.

We can also say that the small difference between the ה and ה' indicates that with a drop of good, one can reach very high levels. We shouldn't underestimate the value of

one good deed or one *kaballah tovah*.

The following story demonstrates this principle:

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

The *bachur* said that he didn't take on anything. Reb Dessler told him the following *mashal*:

Many years ago, someone from a third-world country came to New York City and was astounded by the tall skyscrapers. He never saw anything like it. Someone told him, "On the top floor of the empire state building there's an observation deck. From there you can see the entire city of New York."

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

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

The foreigner never heard of an elevator before, so this person explained to him briefly that you go into a room, press the button of the floor you want to get to, and the elevator brings you there."

The man was astounded. There were so many things he didn't know, coming from a third-world country. He got to the Empire State Building, went into the elevator, but didn't press any button. The door closed, it turned dark, and he was afraid that he was being locked inside. Panicking, he randomly started pressing buttons. As it turned out, he pushed the emergency button. Emergency personnel came rushing and freed him from the elevator. They asked him, "Why didn't you press the button to the floor you wanted to go?"

He replied, "I wanted to go to the highest floor, and I didn't believe that by pressing a button, I would get there. I thought, 'How can pressing a button raise me to such heights? Even walking the stairs would take hours. How could a push of a button with my finger bring me up so high?'"

But, as we know, a push of the button would have raised him to the highest heights. Reb Dessler explained to the *bachur* that people think tiny *kabbalos* are insignificant, but they are not. With each small *kabbalah*, one grows immensely.

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* compared this to two people walking towards an escalator, with one of them taking one more step than his fellow man. That one step made all the difference because with that one step, he got onto the escalator, and he was brought to the next floor, while his friend,

who didn't take that last step, remained below.

This is the power of a *kabbalah tovah*. It is a small step that brings us up very high. This is alluded to with the slight difference between the *heh* and the *ches*. It is the small things that make all the difference.

Bitul Chametz

The Mesilas Yesharim (ch.15) explains that people pursue this world's pleasures because they think that pleasures are a worthwhile and enjoyable pursuit. But the Mesilas Yesharim recommends that we recognize (a) that the pleasures are really nothing at all, (b) the imaginable pleasure lasts only for a moment, (c) and the troubles that can come from them are longstanding and very severe.

He uses food as an example: The pleasure is for a moment, and the illnesses that can come from eating unhealthy

foods can be very severe, *chalilah*.

When one thinks about these matters often, he won't want to pursue this world's pleasures excessively.

As long as a person thinks that this world's pleasures are worthwhile, ideal pursuits, he will have a great battle to abstain from them. But when one understands the vanity of these pleasures and the problems they can lead to, it will be easy for him to not be enticed by them.

Reb Gad'l Eisner *zt'l* said something similar regarding banishing forbidden thoughts. It is a great challenge to keep the mind pure and not think what one shouldn't. However, the battle lasts only as long as he thinks that the forbidden thoughts are pleasurable. But when one realizes how bad they are and how much he suffers from them, it will

be easy to push those forbidden thoughts away.

Reb Gad'l taught this lesson with a parable:

Someone was carrying expensive diamonds. Out of the corner of his eyes, he saw that the city's renowned thieves were walking behind him. If he starts to run, the thieves will know that he is carrying something precious, and they will chase after him. He, therefore, walks calmly, as though he has nothing to hide, and the thieves let him be.

The *nimshal* is:

The best way to overcome forbidden temptations is by not wanting them. Because if you want those thoughts (only you wish to refrain from thinking about them because they are forbidden), you will need to run away from those thoughts, and the bad thoughts will chase after you. A wiser approach is to decide in your heart

that you don't want these temptations, and then you will easily and effortlessly push away the forbidden thoughts.

The mitzvah of *bitul chametz* alludes to this concept. *Bitul* means that one decides in his heart that he doesn't want *chametz*. He considers the *chametz* as כַּעֲפֻרַת דָּאֲרֵעָא, like the dust of the earth. When one has this attitude towards forbidden thoughts and towards all sins, it becomes easy for him to overcome the *yetzer hara*.

Chazal say, מַבְטֵל בְּלִבּוֹ, "annul it in your heart." The Beis Aharon *zt'l* explains, if your heart yearns to do good, that annuls all the *chametz* and all the bad. You want good, and the bad can't entice you.

Reb Shmshon Ostropoli's *zt'l hy'd* Letter

Reb Shmshon Ostropoli *zt'l hy'd* wrote an in-depth,

kabbalistic letter about the secrets of the *makos*. He concluded his letter with the following promise:

“Whoever studies this awesome and wonderful secret...even just once a year, and especially if he studies it on *erev Pesach*, he is guaranteed that he will be saved throughout the year from all troubles, unnatural deaths, etc. His enemies won't rule over him, whoever hates him will fall, and he will have success in all his endeavors.”

Although the letter is kabbalistic, it is not so hard to understand. If one reads it slowly, it can be understood. He will see awesome wonders of the Torah, and he will benefit from the wonderful promise and *segulah* the letter promises.

The Rav of Erloy *zt'l* would talk about a time during the Holocaust when his life was in great danger. It was already Elul, and he reminded himself that he

hadn't yet studied Reb Shamshon Ostropoli's letter that year. He immediately studied the letter, and with Hashem's help, he was saved from the Nazis.

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

Tefillah

At the time when we praise Hashem for the miracle of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, Hashem is near, and it is a great *eis ratzon* for our *tefillos* to be answered. Why is it that every morning and evening, we praise Hashem for saving us from Mitzrayim in the *brachah* **גַּאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל**, and only then it is an ideal time for saying *Shemonah Esrei*.

As the Gemara (*Brachos* 4:) says, "Who is a *ben Olam*

HaBa? Someone who says *Shemonah Esrei* immediately after the *brachah* גאול ישראל."

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

Hashem loves the praises of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. When we discuss *yetzias*

Mitzrayim, Hashem comes near us, and He wants to hear our requests.

The peak of our praises to Hashem for *yetzias Mitzrayim* takes place at the Seder.²⁶ Therefore, we understand that the *tefillos* that we say at the Seder are very effective. Hashem is near, and our *tefillos* and requests will surely be answered.

We shouldn't be stingy with our requests. We should ask for great things. As it states (*Tehillim* 91:11), אנכי ה' אלקיך המעלך מארץ מצרים הרחב, פיה ואמלאהו, "I am Hashem your G-d who took you out of *Mitzrayim*, open your mouth wide [and ask for a lot], and I will fulfill your requests."²⁷

26. The Rema (*Darkei Moshe*) writes that when we tell the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* at the Seder, it is like a *tefillah*, because we are praising Hashem. He says that this is the reason we wash our hands for ורחץ, because "just like we wash our hands before we daven" we also wash our hands before we say Hashem's praises, which is a form of *tefillah*.

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

There was once an innkeeper who was very late in paying his rent. The *poritz* warned him that he would throw him and his entire family into the dungeon if he didn't pay the debt.

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

On *Erev Shabbos*, the *gabai* told him that the Rebbe couldn't receive him, so the innkeeper assumed that he would speak to the Rebbe on *motzei Shabbos*. But as it turned out, he didn't have to speak to the Rebbe on *motzei Shabbos*, because he

received his answer Shabbos afternoon, when the Apter Rav gave his Shabbos HaGadol *drashah*.

The Apter Rav began the *drashah* with an intense halachic conversation which the innkeeper didn't understand.

Then the Rebbe began discussing the *Haggadah*. He said, "When we get to וְיִצְעַק אֱלֹהִים it's an extraordinary moment for *tefillah*. If one needs *parnassah*, or a *refuah*, or if one works for a *poritz* and doesn't have money to pay the rent, and the *poritz* is threatening to throw him out on the street or into the dungeon, and a Yid shouts out at this point in the

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

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

Haggadah, and begs for salvation, Hashem will save him."

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

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

When they reached ויזעק during the *seder* the innkeeper began to shout and pray, and his wife shouted and prayed along with him.

Shortly after they finished davening in this manner, there was a knock on their door. It was a non-Jewish acquaintance, who told them that he had just killed his wife, and he

needed to escape before the police arrest him. "I have to store my money somewhere, so I'm bringing it to you. I know I can trust you because you are Yidden, and Yidden are trustworthy."

The gentile brought in two barrels filled with gold coins and said, "I allow you to keep one barrel for yourself. Eventually, I will settle in another country, and I will send you a letter to tell you my address, where you can bring me the other barrel filled with gold coins."

He then turned about and left.

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

The goy never returned, and he never sent a letter. So, both barrels of gold became theirs.

After Pesach, they traveled to the city to buy new clothes because now they didn't have to dress in rags anymore. They also went to the Apter Rav to thank him for the miracle he performed. He told them, "You don't have to thank me. You brought about the miracle on your own, through your וניצק."

We know of several people who had their *yeshuos* when they prayed to Hashem on this holy night. Some of them cried out to Hashem during the *eis ratzon* of וניצק, and others davened at other times on this holy night, and they received their *yeshuah*.

I know the following story first-hand:

There was once a family that was having a hard time finding *shidduchim* for their older sons. One was twenty-five, one was twenty-seven, and one was thirty. They all had fully grown beards and weren't engaged yet.

They all learned in the Gerrer yeshiva. The custom in that yeshiva that before *yom tov* the *bachurim* would *gezegen* [take leave] from the Gerrer Rebbe, the Leiv Simchah *zy'a*, before going home. The Rebbe would call them *kasha fregers* ("question askers") because they were returning home to ask the Four Questions from their fathers. When these three older *bachurim* came to the Gerrer Rebbe, he told them, "This year, ask your father why you aren't engaged yet."

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

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

Their mother said, "It's *yom tov*. It isn't the right time to cry."

They knew she was right. They stopped thinking about their plight, and they joyously celebrated the rest of the Seder.

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

Chodesh Iyar, one of them was engaged. Sivan the second son was engaged, and by Tamuz the third son was engaged.

Here's another story. It happened to a very special Yerushalmi couple who were childless for eleven years. For Pesach, they would go either to his parents or to hers, but one year he told his wife, "This time, we're staying home."

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

There was once a person who had a problem with his legs, and he was often in excruciating pain. Periodically, he would go to the hospital or the doctor's clinic for a shot to stabilize the condition somewhat. This was going on for years. One Pesach, he was celebrating the Seder in his brothers' house. When they came to *וּנְצַעַק* he left the room and poured his heart out to Hashem. *Motzei Yom Tov* he received a shot for his leg, and he never needed another one. He was cured.

I will share a letter that I received from a member of our *chaburah*, from Beis Shemesh.

"In *השע"ז*, after we finished with all our preparations for Pesach, we sat down joyously for the Seder together with my brother-in-law and his family. There was only one thing that marred our joy. My brother-in-law's five-year-old son was born with a cleft lip, and he couldn't

speak. He had many corrective surgeries, but he still wasn't able to talk. All he could say was sounds. Every sound he made was like a dagger in his parent's heart. To make matters worse, the cheder recently told him that the child couldn't continue learning there because he wasn't able to speak.

"When we reached **הא** **להמא עניא**, we remembered the *vort* from the Beis Aharon: **כל דכפינ**, whatever a person needs, **ייתי ויפסה**, he should have **פה סה** (a speaking mouth) and pray to Hashem for salvation, because with prayer, all our needs can be fulfilled. We then prayed that this boy should be healed and that he should have a **פה סה**, to be able to speak and learn Torah like all people.

"After the Seder was completed, the father of this boy said to his wife, **אה**, **פתח לו**, implying "now, you should pray and open his mouth." They said *Tehillim* with tears in their eyes the

entire night. In the morning, a miracle occurred. Their son was able to speak. He spoke so much as if he was making up for the lost time...

"I used to wonder: What is the source from *rishonim* that we should daven at the Seder? I was bothered by this question, because the Seder doesn't seem to be a time of prayer. But then I saw **שו"ת דברי יציב אבן העזר** (ס"ר"ס פ"ג *tefillos* (*Shacharis, Minchah, Maariv*) were established by the *avos* on the first day of *Pesach*! Furthermore, someone showed me the *Likutei Moharan* (ר"א) that the *Targum* (*Eichah* 2) states that on *Pesach* some people have a custom to shout during the *tefillah*. As it states, **קול נתנו בבית ה' כיום מועד**, "They shouted in the Beis HaMikdash as they did on a holiday." The *Targum* explains, **בקל עמא דמצלין בהנא**, **דפסהא**, "Like the loud voices of the nation when they pray on *Pesach*." Therefore, what better time is there

for *tefillah* than at the Seder, the day that the *avos* established *tefillah*?"

מ"ם has three letters: מ' ה' ו'. When each of these three letters is spelled out in full, it looks like this: מ"ם ה"ה ו"ו. The added letters (all letters besides the first letters (מ"ם ה"ה ו"ו)) are called the מילוי, filler letters. The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* said that if you take the מילוי of מ"ם it spells, "אקדים" "I will come first..." The Sar Shalom said that that this hints that some *tefillos* aren't answered immediately, but the *tefillos* of Pesach, אקדים, will be answered immediately.

There is a custom to eat an egg by *shulchan aruch*. The Meiri teaches that *beitzah* is often pronounced, בעי which also means "to request." This is yet another

hint that the *tefillos* said at the Seder will be answered.²⁸

The Ahavas Shalom *zt'l* teaches that people lack *parnassah* because they pray to Hashem for *parnassah* on Rosh Hashanah, but they don't realize that they need to pray to Hashem on Pesach and Shavuos as well.

It states (*Bereishis* 21:25-26), והוכח אברהם את אבימלך על אדות באר המים אשר גולו עבדי אבימלך. The Ahavas Shalom explains that אברהם represents *tzaddikim* and אבימלך symbolizes the King of the world - Hakadosh Baruch Hu. *Tzaddikim* ask Hashem, "Why are the wellsprings of Hashem's bounty being stolen from us and taken by the slaves - the nations of the world?"

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

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

The Seder is a special time for *tefillah*, and when we pray, let us not forget the most important prayer: that Moshiach should come and save us from this bitter *galus*. Rebbe Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch *zy'a* said, people today think that all they lack is that Moshiach should come. But in Mitzrayim, they understood that waiting for the salvation wasn't sufficient. They understood that they had to daven, and

the *geulah* came because of their ונצעק.

מה נשתנה

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

Quoting kabbalah *sefarim*, the ויגד משה writes that asking *Mah Nishtanah* is *mesugal* to have a heart that is open to Torah. "Therefore, I made it the custom in my house that whoever comes to me for the Seder should say *Mah Nishtanah*, and I daven for them that they should have a heart open to Torah. And after everyone says, מה נשתנה, I say it, as well."²⁹

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

"Yes."

"And what answer did you get?"

"עבדים היינו"

"Did you ask the *Mah Nishnatah* last year?"

"We did."

"And what answer did you get last year?"

"The same, "עבדים היינו."

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

The children tried to explain in various ways.

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

A chassid of Rebbe Yechiel Yehoshua of Biala *zt'l* waited many years for children. When the Rebbe went for *מים שלנו* to draw water for making matzos, the chassid went over to the Rebbe and requested a *brachah* for children. The Rebbe advised him to daven for children right before *Mah Nishtanah*.

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

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

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

I know of a *yungerman* who didn't have children for many years. One of today's *tzaddikim* advised him to study Hagadah shel Pesach, which he did. He studied it with the *rishonim*, and soon

Nirtzeh

Nirtzeh means "It is accepted and desired." We are confident that after we went through the Seder, Hashem is happy with it.

But what if we didn't have such a great Seder? Can we still say *נרצה*, that Hashem is happy with it?

We will answer with a story that happened to Reb Shmuel of Karov *zt'l*, a

student of the Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l*.

Reb Shmuel of Karov was poor, but he never asked people to help him. As it states in *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yorah Deiah* 255:1) "A person should always keep away from asking for *tzedakah*. He should rather live in distress (*יגלגל עצמו בצער*) than ask for financial help. As the Gemara (*Pesachim* 112.) says, *עשה שבתך חול ואל תצטרך*, *לבריות*, it is better to eat simple foods on Shabbos,

afterwards he came to tell that Hashem performed a miracle for them. The Rebbe was also surprised that the *segulah* worked so quickly.

It states, *והגדה לבנך*. The Or HaChaim HaKadosh teaches, telling the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* is *mesugal* that one day you will be able to tell the story to your own children.

There was a *dayan* who didn't have children for four years after his wedding. In Elul, he was giving his weekly shiur on *Or HaChaim Hakadosh*, and he was looking for the *vort* from the Or HaChaim regarding bearing children. He thought that it was in *parashas* *כי תבוא*, by the discussion of *ארמי אובר אבי*, which we read at the Seder, and then when he didn't find the Or HaChaim there, he reminded himself that it is in *parashas Bo*, on the words *והגדה לבנך*. He read the Or Hachaim in *parashas Bo* to his *shiur*, and it says that by speaking about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, one merits children.

Ten months later he bore his first child.

as though it were a weekday, than to ask people for financial aid."

But Pesach was approaching, and he didn't have matzah and the necessary four cups of wine. He hoped that he wouldn't have to make an exception this time.

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

Reb Shlomo Konkuli did so, and a delivery of *yom tov* food arrived at Reb Shmuel's door, just moments before Pesach.

Reb Shmuel was extremely happy because he now had everything he needed for *yom tov*, and he didn't have to ask for help.

That night, Reb Shmuel had a very happy Seder. Reb Shmuel thought that in his entire life, he never had such a good Seder.

The second night of Pesach, Reb Shmuel was very tired, so he lay down before the Seder. He woke up later than he expected. As he was careful to eat the *afikomon* before *chatzos*, he had to rush through the Seder.

When he thought about the second Seder, he felt that it wasn't a good Seder at all.

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

He conducted the second Seder with humility and with a broken heart, which made the second Seder extraordinary.

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

The Seder is for Everyone

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* (*Pesach* p.85:) writes, "The Seder isn't only for people who are on high, lofty levels. The Seder is for every Yid, whichever level he is on. And one must believe this..."

Not very long ago, there was an elderly Yid in Bnei Brak who still remembered going to the Yismach Yisrael's Seder, in Alexander.

He tells that many chassidim came to the Alexander Rebbe's Seder, and they wore special-made *kitels*, that had large pockets to hold the matzos and wine.

He remembers the Alexander Rebbe coming into the *tish*, and his face was white from fear of Hashem. The Rebbe was quiet for a few moments, and then he said in a loud voice, "If someone doesn't believe that on the Seder night he can rise from the lowest level to the highest level, he is the *rasha* of the *Haggadah!*"³⁰

30. As the *sefarim* write, the *rasha* of the *Hagaddah* says, *מה העבודה*, *הואת לכם*, and the *Haggadah* clarifies that the *rasha's* problem is that he says, *לכם ולא לי*, "for you, and not for me." He thinks the Seder is for *tzaddikim*, and he doesn't believe that his Seder could be

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 116.) says, מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח, "We begin with the disgrace and conclude with the praise." The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* says that this pattern repeats itself each year at the Seder. Even if one was on a low level at the beginning of the Seder, he is at a higher place when he concludes the Seder.

It states (*Shemos* 19:4), ואשא, אתכם על כנפי נשרים, "I carried you on the wings of eagles..." Why does it mention specifically a non-kosher bird? This hints that someone who is impure with sins becomes pure on

this night by celebrating the Seder.

Similarly, the Chasam Sofer (*Drashos* בתחילתו תק"ף) writes, "Just as one is obligated to imagine that he left Mitzrayim, so must one imagine that he was once an idol worshiper and now, on this night, Hashem brought him close, to serve Him. He should think that he is beginning to serve Hashem with the mitzvos of the night."

This is the translation of פסח, to jump up to levels we couldn't reach the entire year.³¹

worthy and special to Hashem. And he doesn't believe that he can rise up to high levels, in the merit of the Seder.

31. Rebbe Shlomo Karliner *zy'a* taught, 'זבה פסח הוא לר' means when a person, זבה, slaughters his *yetzer hara* (by not listening to the *yetzer hara's* requests), פסח הוא לה', he jumps up all the way up to Hashem's throne.

The Chareidim teaches that when the *malachim* see the high levels Yidden reach, they ask, "Why do they deserve this? How did they reach the *Kisei haKavod* so easily?" The answer is, Hashem knows how difficult it is for a Yid to choose good in this lowly world that has so many temptations. Due to the challenges, his good deeds

As a child, the Imrei Emes *zy'a* asked his father, the Sfas Emes *zt'l*, why we wear a *kittel* at the Seder. The Sfas Emes answered, "On *Yom Tov* we wear nicer clothing than usual, and we don't want them to get ruined. So, we put on a *kittel* to protect the clothing."

When the Imrei Emes was an adult, he still remembered his father's explanation for the *kittel*, and he was certain that his father wasn't just joking with him.

The Imrei Emes understood that his father was hinting that Pesach, at the Seder, we reach great

heights; we become like new. And we must be careful to retain this cleanliness. We shouldn't tarnish our souls again.

Annual Salvations

The Meor Einayim (*Tzav*) teaches that the Seder and all the other mitzvos we do on Pesach draw down Hashem's chessed, and this saves us and helps us throughout the year. He writes, "At the Yam Suf the *malachim* persecuted us and said that also the Yidden worshiped *avodah zarah*. If so, it is indeed difficult; why were they saved? The answer is, the Yidden in Mitzrayim made the entire

are spectacular, and enable a Yid to reach very high levels, so quickly.

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

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

Seder exactly as we make our Seders today.³² They told the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, because they trusted that Hashem would certainly take them out of Mitzrayim. This drew down Hashem's kindness, and they were redeemed... Chazal say בניסן נגאלו ובניסן עתידין בניסן, ליגאל, that we were redeemed in Nisan, and we will be redeemed in Nisan. Because there is *galus* for the nation, and there is a *galus* for the individual. The individual's *galus* is his *yesurim* and

hardships that each Yid suffers. But because of the *chesed* that we draw down in Nisan, we will be redeemed from those hardships."

As the *Haggadah* says, בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים, "In every generation, one is obligated to consider himself like he is leaving Mitzrayim." The *Sfas Emes zt'l* says that one must imagine this because this is exactly what is happening each year.

32. The following is a story that Reb Elyah Lopian *zt'l* heard in Kelm from a *talmid chacham*, and the *talmid chacham* said that it happened to his grandfather, the Malbushei Yom Tov for the Seder. Before the *Haggadah*, the Malbushei Yom Tov sat in his place for a few minutes with great emotion. Then he said, "Just as we are making the Seder now with our family, so too is the entire city is making the Seder, exactly in the same manner, with *matzah* and *maror*, etc. The entire country is making the Seder this way, and also the entire world. Do you know where we saw this Seder? We saw it by our fathers. They saw it from their fathers, going all the way back to the generations of the *rishonim*, *emoraim*, *tanaim*, until the people who left Mitzrayim and received the Torah. Hashem said to them generation that received the Torah (*Shemos* 19:4), אתם ראיתם אשר עשיתי למצרים, "You saw what I did in Mitzrayim." Rashi writes, 'It isn't a tradition that you received, it isn't just words that I am telling you. It isn't a testimony. Rather, you saw what I did in Mitzrayim.'

Pesach, we leave our problems behind us, and we become free from our hardships.

The Sfas Emes adds, "According to the extent one believes that he's leaving Mitzrayim, so will it happen."

As the Apter Rav *zy'a* writes, "When one says the *brachah*, 'אשר גאלנו וגאל את אבותינו, 'Who redeemed *us* and who redeemed our forefathers...' and he believes that Hashem continues to redeem us, even in the present, he will be saved from all kinds of trouble."

It states (*Shemos* 12:42), ליל שמרים הוא לה' להוציאם מארץ מצרים... לדורותם, "This night is awaited for by Hashem to take them out of Mitzrayim, in all generations." The Beis Aharon *zt'l* says that this *pasuk* indicates that in "all generations," Hashem takes us out of Mitzrayim. And, it states, להוציאם, "to take them out," and it is written in the future tense. This is

telling us that in every generation, we leave Mitzrayim. This means, in every generation, we leave the hardships that we are enduring.

Shevi'i shel Pesach and Emunah

Rebbe Mendel Riminover *zt'l* writes, "I heard from a student of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk *zt'l* who said in the name of his teacher, Rebbe Elimelech, that the most ideal time to attain emunah sheleimah is the night of the seventh day of Pesach. At this time, also strengthen your connection with holy *tzaddikim* because that will help you attain emunah sheleimah. This is because about this day it states (*Shemos* 14:31), ויאמינו בה' ובמשה, "They believed in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant."

Regarding *kriyas Yam Suf* it states, ויאמינו בה', "They believed in Hashem." So, apparently, they attained emunah at *kriyas Yam Suf*,

and beforehand, their emunah wasn't perfect.

The Drashos HaRan (Drush 11) explains that the Jewish nation had two questions that disturbed their emunah: (1) Why did they tell Pharaoh that they are leaving for only three days? They should have told him the truth; they are leaving forever. (Especially after makkas bechoros when Pharaoh was ready to send them out for good.) Using tricks and saying "We are going only for three days" when planning to leave for longer is generally done by people who are afraid and aren't entirely in control.

(2) Why did they tell the Egyptians that they want to borrow their clothing, gold and silver utensils, etc. They should have said that they are taking them. (They had a right to take it, since they worked for the Mitzrim for so many years.) Saying that you want to borrow when you want to keep it is also done by those who don't have full power and have

no other way to get the money.

These were their two questions, which made their emunah incomplete.

But then they saw kriyas Yam Suf, and they understood that it was all so Pharaoh and his army will chase the Jewish nation and drown in the sea. Pharaoh wouldn't have chased after them had the Jewish nation told Pharaoh that they are leaving and never coming back. It was the fact that they said that they are going only for three days, and now he discovered that they were going for longer, which spurred Pharaoh to chase them.

Furthermore, the Egyptians wouldn't be interested in chasing after them if the nation asked them to give them their gold and silver ornaments. But since they told them that they were only borrowing it, and now it seemed that they aren't

coming back, this roused their anger, and they went to retrieve their wealth. These two "untruths" enabled the great miracle of kriyas Yam Suf to occur, with it the destruction of the Mitzrim.

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

Our goal, however, is to trust and to believe in Hashem without asking any questions at all, even when things don't make sense to us, because we know that we are in good hands, and everything is the best it can be.

Shevi'i shel Pesach is a very special time. The Beis Aharon zt'l (p.93:) writes, "The six days of Pesach are

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

The Beis Aharon zt'l writes, "The שירת הים (Oz Yashir) has everything in it: what was and what will be. All redemptions and all concepts are found inside the shirah. If a person says it with all his heart, with mesirus nefesh, according to his level, everything will be amended, for his body and his soul."³³

Salvations on Shevi'i shel Pesach

The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l says: The miracles of kriyas Yam Suf are commemorated twice a

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

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

year: on Shevi'i shel Pesach, which is the day the miracle occurred, and when we read parashas בשלח on Shabbos Shirah. This is hinted at in the word או (of או ישר), because אל"ף means teaching, and refers to parashas Bishalach, when we read and study in the Torah about kriyas Yam Suf. The ו hints to the seventh day of Pesach. The Chozeh writes that every year, on these two occasions, Hashem sends bounty and immense compassion to the Jewish nation.

The Midrash (Shemos Rabba 21:6) asks, it should have stated, ויבקע הים, the sea split. Why does it state, ויבקע המים, that the water split? This teaches us that all waters in the world split.

What was the purpose of this miracle? The Yam Suf split so that the nation could pass through. Why did all the waters in the world have to split?

The Sar Shalom of Belz zt'l explains that this teaches us that until today, the waters split, and salvations

come to Bnei Yisrael. Particularly salvations that are associated with kriyas Yam Suf, such as shidduchim and parnassah.

The Ateres Tzvi writes, "When the sea split, it unlocked salvations for all future generations – for individuals and the community. Even if the gates of parnassah or the gates of shidduchim are chas veshalom closed, one should pray at this special eis ratzon by kriyas Yam Suf... and Hashem will save Bnei Yisrael when they shout to him."

The Holiday of Mesirus Nefesh

The Midrash states, Nachshon ben Aminadov was the first to jump into the Yam Suf. The water reached his nostrils. He shouted, הושיעני כי באו מים עד נפש, "Save me because the water is smothering my soul," and that is when the sea split.

Tzaddikim say that the lesson of this yom tov is to serve Hashem with mesirus

nefesh (as they did by the Yam Suf), and then miracles will happen to you. They entered the Yam Suf with mesirus nefesh, believing that Hashem would save them, which drew down the miracles.

The Tzemech Tzedek zt'l said: "Shvi'i shel Pesach is Rosh Hashanah for mesirus nefesh."

Also, the Reishis Chachmah (Shaar Ahavah 8:6) writes that the lesson of Shevi'i shel Pesach is to have mesirus nefesh, and then miracles will occur.

Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev zy'a teaches:

When a person serves Hashem beyond his natural

limits - as this happened when they entered the sea with self-sacrifice - Hashem will act with him beyond the rules of nature, and Hashem will perform miracles for him.³⁴

The Or HaChaim Hakadosh (Shemos 14:14) writes, "Hashem said to Moshe, *מה תצעק אלי*, 'Why are you praying to me? I also want to perform a miracle [and to split the sea], but they aren't worthy. Middas hadin is preventing... The counsel is that the nation should enter the sea even before it splits, with bitachon that I will perform a miracle for them. This will generate the miracle, and the sea will split."

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

He answers, no other merits were needed, since they had the merit of mesirus nefesh.

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CHAG PESACH KASHER SAMEACH!

חג פסח קasher שמעך!



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