

concerning the preparation of the *Korban*. However, why does the *Mishnah* not include the question concerning reclining during the meal?

The Satmar Rebbe explains that reclining during the meal is an act of nobility. It is an act in which a free person, who rules over his domain, partakes. We, therefore, recline during the Seder to remember the freedom we experienced when we left Egypt and the great miracles that G-d performed for us in conjunction with our freedom. At the time of the existence of the *Bet Hamikdash*, when the nation of Israel governed over themselves, there was no need to detail what freedom means. Freedom was part and parcel of the life of the members of the nation of Israel. They had the *Bet Hamikdash*, and they were able to bring *Korbanot*. The nation vividly felt freedom. Therefore, the mere fact that people ate reclining at the Seder was enough to remind people that they were celebrating freedom. No question that would lead to deep discussion about freedom was needed. Hence, the *Mishnah* contains no question concerning reclining.

However, nowadays, when we are in exile, a question about why we recline is more than appropriate. Why, the child asks, do we recline? What good did the freedom of our forefathers do for us? We are currently sitting in exile, with no Temple, no *Korban*. Why do we bother commemorating a freedom that seemingly has no relevance to our lives, in this day and age?

The answer, we recite in the following passage of *Abadim Hayinu*. "If G-d had not taken us out of Egypt, we, our children, and their children would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt." The *Ohr Hahayim* explains that during the time they were enslaved in Egypt, the nation of Israel experienced a massive spiritual decline. They sank so low that there was almost no hope of recovery. The nation barely missed this threshold. The reason why they sank so low was because they had not yet received the Torah. Once the nation was redeemed, they were given the Torah, which has since then acted as a spiritual booster. It is now impossible to sink so low that we would no longer be worthy to be G-d's people. Had G-d not liberated our forefathers, not just by physically taking them out of slavery in Egypt, but by giving them spiritual freedom when they were presented with the Torah, we could have been enslaved to the physical drudgery of this world. Had we not tasted freedom in the days of our ancestors, we would have no chance at obtaining freedom in this day and age. A commemoration of a freedom first tasted long ago is needed, and we therefore recline.

The Satmar Rebbe is sending us a clear lesson. We may live in democratic societies. We may have prosperity. We may have the ability to practice our religion freely. Yet, we are not free. We are still in exile. We still lack the spiritual setting we need to be truly free. We need a reminder of what freedom is, because we have never experienced it.

*L'Shanah Ha'Ba'ah B'Yerushalayim* – Next Year in Jerusalem – as a free nation! (Rabbi Yehudah Prero)

## *A New Praise*

One of the unique aspects of the Seder is that we interrupt the saying of the *Hallel* with a meal. Why is that? The *Netziv* explains as follows: The purpose of going out of Egypt was to receive the Torah. With the Torah we gain the ability to serve Hashem not only through "spiritual" means, such as Torah study and prayer, but through "physical" *Misvot* as well, such as marriage, enjoying *Shabbat*, eating *matzah*, *maror*, and the Pesah offering. We eat in the *middle* of *Hallel* in order to praise Hashem for sanctifying and elevating our physical existence. Even "mundane" things like eating are elevated when we do them in the service of Hashem. (Rabbi Mordechai Perlmán)

# SPECIAL PESAH SECTION



## *Pesah Laws and Customs*

a) ***Siyum Bechorot*** - All adult first born males must fast on the day of Pesah Eve to commemorate the fact that no Jew died when the Egyptian first-born were killed on Pesah night. Being that it is a lenient fast, they are permitted to participate in the meal of a *misvah*, such as *siyum*, which means completion of a book or tractate of Torah. The first-born must attend personally in order to be able to eat that day. This year, the fast & *siyum* will take place on Wednesday, April 5.

b) **Searching for *hamess*** - *Bedikat Hamess* - after weeks of cleaning for Pesah, we complete our preparations by checking for *hamess* in all our possessions, including homes, stores and cars. This year we begin searching on Tuesday night, April 4, at **7:53 p.m.** We may not eat dinner or do work before we finish the *Bedikah*, and we must make the blessing "*Al Bi'ur Hamess*" beforehand. We use a single-wick candle or flashlight to search for *hamess*, and it is a custom to place ten pieces of bread around the house before the search - to retrieve during the search. Afterwards, we nullify all leaven that may have been missed by saying "*Kal Hamira*" (found in the Haggadah).

c) **Burning the *hamess*** - It is a *misvah* to burn any leftover *hamess* by **11:17 a.m.** on Wednesday morning, April 5. Make sure the *hamess* is completely burned (use cooking oil or other flammable liquids for a better flame, but BE CAREFUL!) and then throw the ashes away.

e) **Reminder** - The days of *Omer* begin on the second day of Pesah, and no haircuts are allowed for 34 days; make sure to take all haircuts before Pesah, by Wed., April 5.

f) **The Seder** - On Saturday and Sunday evening we reach the climax of all our preparations by celebrating the Seder. The emphasis is on the children, making sure they all understand and appreciate the Exodus from Egypt. All questions and discussions dealing with our freedom should be encouraged. Follow the Haggadah regarding the four cups of wine, the *matzah shemurah*, the *maror*, etc.

g) **The first days** - Thursday and Friday, April 6 & 7, are the first two days of Pesah. All work is, of course, forbidden; only cooking and carrying, when necessary, are permitted. The holiday should be enjoyed as a day of thankfulness to Hashem. On the first day before *musaf*, we begin the prayer for dew (*morid hatal*) in place of the prayer for rain. Please make special note of it, because if one forgets, he must repeat the entire *amidah*.

h) **Candlelighting** - Remember to light candles Wednesday night, Thursday night and Friday night, April 5, 6 & 7, and Tuesday night and Wednesday night April 11 & 12. The candlelighting blessing for the holiday candles is "*Lehadlik ner shel yom tob*."

i) **Erub Tabshilin** - We may not cook from one day of the holiday for another day of the holiday or for Shabbat. By making an *Erub Tabshilin*, cooking from Friday for Shabbat becomes permissible. This year we must make an *Erub Tabshilin* on Wed. April 5. We take a hard-boiled egg and a piece of matzah and we say the blessing and the proclamation found below. (This is considered as if we began cooking from before the holiday for

Shabbat.) It is a *misvah* to eat the *Erub* on Shabbat.

#### Erub Blessing and Proclamation

ברוך אתה ה', אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִצְוַת עֶרֶב.  
בְּדִין עִירֻבָּא יְהֵא שְׂרָא לָנָא לְאַפְּמֵי וּלְבִשּׁוּלֵי וּלְאַטְמוּנֵי וּלְתַקּוּנֵי וּלְאַדְלוּקֵי שְׂרָגָא וּלְמַעֲבָד  
כָּל צְרָכָנָא מִיּוֹם טוֹב לְשַׁבָּת.

"With this *Erub* it should be permissible for us to bake, cook, light fires and prepare from the holiday for Shabbat."

j) **Hol Hamo'ed** - The next four days are *Hol Hamo'ed* - the intermediate days of the holiday, Shabbat, April 8 through Tuesday, April 11. No *tefillin* are worn on those days, and special prayers are said, including *musaf* and half-*hallel*, and the Torah is read every day. *Ya'aleh Veyabo* is said all eight days in the *amidah* and *bircat hamazon*. Many forms of work are prohibited on those days, so please consult before you make your plans to work.

k) **The last days** - Beginning Tuesday evening, April 11, Wednesday April 12 and Thursday April 13, are the last two days of Pesah. The same laws apply as for the first two days. The seventh day of Pesah was the day that the Jews miraculously crossed the sea and were finally safe from their enemies. To commemorate this, we have a special reading early in the morning, followed by first *minyan*. This will be on Wed. morning, April 12, at **3:30 a.m.** and *minyan* at **5:23 a.m.** Regular *minyan* will be as usual at **8:30 and 9:00 a.m.**

l) **Holiday ends** - The holiday is over on Thursday night, April 13, at **8:12 p.m.** Until that time, all Pesah laws are in effect. You may use your sold *hamess* at **9:12 p.m.** Make sure to buy *hamess* only from stores owned by gentiles, or from stores that had their *hamess* sold properly.

### Seeds of Eternity

Many people observe the Pesah Seder regardless of their affiliation or observance of other *misvot*. Jews who build no *Sukkah*, who don't know when Shabuot is, faithfully assemble year after year to tell about the going out of Egypt. Recounting the Exodus is a *misvah* deeply rooted in the consciousness of even the 'least' conscientious Jew. Why?

The answer lies in the very first Pesah seder in history.

After a full year in the desert, the Jewish People celebrated the Pesah festival. They offered the Pascal lamb and ate *matzah* and *maror*. But when it came time to tell the Pesah story, whom did they tell? To whom did they recount the acts, the wonders, the Strong Hand and Outstretched Arm? Everybody was there! Everyone saw it with their own eyes! Even babies in their mothers' womb reached prophetic awareness during the splitting of the Red Sea!

Only one person - Moshe *Rabenu* - had children who did not personally experience the going out of Egypt. Moshe's children, Gershon and Eliezer, were in Midian at the time of the Exodus. Moshe, therefore, was the first person in history to pass on the Pesah tradition to children who didn't know about it first-hand. He was the first to plant the seed of redemption in the heart of a new generation.

Moshe *Rabenu* excelled in the ability to imbue his actions with lasting significance. With his 'golden touch,' he impacted eternity with every undertaking. He led us out of Egypt, never again to become a slave nation. The Torah he taught us echoes across eons. And had Moshe been the one to lead us into the Land of Israel, we never would have been exiled from it.

Because Moshe *Rabenu* inaugurated '*Sippur Yesiat Mitzrayim*' it remains a *misvah* forever rooted in the hearts of the entire Jewish People. (Rabbi Reuven Subar)

### Search Party

As the holiday of Pesah approaches, we become ever so careful to halachically (according to Jewish law) sensitize our homes and rid them of every trace and vestige of *hamess*. This is the season when normally docile housewives (and husbands) assume a more aggressive posture with their families in laying down tough rules about what foods can be eaten in which rooms. We all get caught up on some level with Pesah fever. After all, the Torah proscribes a Jew's relationship to *hamess* on three different levels: (1) eating (2) owning (3) and deriving benefit and pleasure from it. It stands to reason that some of the Pesah "madness" in preparing one's home is to be expected and perhaps even justified.

The *Zohar*, however, teaches us that the *yesser hara* (evil inclination) within us is compared to *hamess*, and just as we assiduously seek out and destroy all of our physical *hamess*, we must similarly eliminate from within ourselves all attitudes and characteristics that distance us from Torah.

Do we carefully measure the words we utter to our friends and loved ones with the same care and attention that we give to the scouring of our ovens? Do we allow the illuminating lessons of Torah to direct our lives in the same way as we direct our lit candles towards the dark cracks and crevices in our homes during the *Bedikat Hamess*?

The *Shulhan Aruch* teaches us that the search for *hamess* must extend even to our pockets. Do we check our pockets to determine that the dollars that fill them have been earned with honesty and full adherence to Jewish law? The evil inclination is a tough adversary. To be equal to his challenge one must be constantly vigilant. This can be accomplished through diligent and regular Torah study.

The *halachah* tells us that dough can be kneaded for hours without *hamess* setting in. As long as the dough is being worked, the *hamess* process is impeded. But the moment our efforts with the dough are relaxed, the *hamess* process begins. Likewise, the Jew attempting to purge the *hamess* from within himself knows that there's no accommodation with the evil inclination. The moment that we relax our efforts in the service of Hashem, we have lost a strategic battle with the *yesser hara*. Let's hope that as we celebrate Pesah this year, we, as well as our food, will be kosher for Pesah. (Rabbi Shlomo Freundlich)

### Freedom

One of the highlights for children at the Seder is the recitation of *Mah Nishtanah*, the Four Questions. The Four Questions have their origin in a *Mishnah*. When reading this text, one will notice that the one of the four questions in the *Mishnah* is not asked at the Seder. During the existence of the *Bet Hamikdash*, the nation of Israel used to consume the *Korban Pesah*, the special Paschal offering. The *Korban Pesah* could only be eaten roasted, not stewed nor boiled. It is for this reason that, as the *Mishnah* states, during the time of the *Bet Hamikdash* the child asked a question about how the offering was eaten. Nowadays, when we do not eat the *Korban Pesah*, there is obviously no reason for a child to ask a question about something he does not observe.

The Satmar Rebbe, however, is troubled by the question that we do ask instead of the question about the *Korban Pesah*. The child asks: On all other nights, we eat both sitting up straight and reclining, yet on this night we eat while reclining. This difference in how we conduct ourselves during the meal is a difference that is not solely apparent nowadays. At the time of the existence of the Temple, people ate their Pesah meal and *Korban* reclining as well. Granted, we know why we no longer ask the question

Here then is the "catch twenty-two" situation of our ancestors in Egypt awaiting liberation. One moment too early and they lack the finishing touches of the forging furnace. One moment too late and they are beyond redemption.

Only the Divine Creator of time was capable of the perfect timing that was needed. Just as the climactic plague of the Death of the First Born took place exactly at midnight for reasons known only to G-d, the Exodus began at exactly the moment that we too can understand as being perfectly chosen as not too early and not too late.

So when we eat our matzah we are reliving that experience of perfect timing that is so vital for us to remember in so many aspects of our national and individual lives. How often have Jews in their long exile felt a sense of impatience for the ultimate redemption for which the Exodus from Egypt was but a preview? The eating of matzah on Pesah reminded them that there is a Divine plan in the length of our exile and that when Heaven determines that we have learned all that was necessary from our suffering, our redemption will not be a moment late in coming.

How often has the individual Jew reached the brink of despair as he waited for his personal salvation in terms of a mate, of children, of good health, of financial and physical security? Matzah reminded him too that the *Mitzrayim* (the Hebrew name for Egypt which literally translated means "straits") constrictions in his life have their purpose and there is a perfect Divine schedule for when his own Exodus will arrive. (Rabbi Mendel Weinbach)

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### *Recipe of Faith*

"He would combine [the Paschal lamb, the matzah and the *maror*] and eat them together" (*Haggadah*)

Rabbi Shlomo Kluger of Brodi asked: Why did Hillel choose to combine the matzah and bitter herbs together?

He answered: The *Mishnah* states: One who approaches his home town, hears the sound of wailing, and prays, "May it be Your will that these [cries] are not from the members of my household," has prayed in vain. As the commentators explain, uttering a prayer about something that is already a reality is a contradiction in terms.

How then should one react in such a situation? The *Talmud* (*Berachot* 60a) cites the case of Hillel: Hillel the Elder was approaching his home town when he heard the sound of wailing coming from the city [from the direction of his home]. He said, "I am certain that this is not coming from my house." Regarding a person [with such implicit trust in Hashem], the verse states, "One whose heart trusts firmly in Hashem need never fear evil tidings!" (*Tehillim* 112:7).

Through Hillel's exemplary behavior, the *Talmud* teaches us how we should act in similar circumstances. And yet it says in *Humash* that even Ya'akov *Abinu* feared his brother Esav, and said, "How can I be sure that Hashem's promise to protect me is still in force? Haven't I sinned in the meantime, and perhaps become unworthy of His aid? How could Hillel have been so sure? How can any of us be sure?

The answer is that Hillel knew something about the members of his family. He knew that if some calamity befell them, G-d forbid, they would not scream and wail. He had already taught them that – no matter what – everything is for the good. One must accept all that comes with love and faith in the Master of the World.

It is known that *maror* alludes to bondage and suffering, while matzah alludes to freedom and redemption. Since Hillel embodied the ability to see Hashem's loving-kindness in everything, and he knew that ultimately all is for the good, it is therefore clear why Hillel was especially suited to combine the bitter herbs and the matzah in one sandwich! (The Palace Gates *Haggadah*)

### *The Chosen People*

The Klausenberger Rebbe was taken as part of a slave-labor group from Auschwitz to Warsaw to dismantle the bombed-out buildings. The work was done at a furious pace and consisted of carrying heavy boulders and beams. Many people died of exhaustion.

One day, while the Rebbe and his fellow prisoners were working on top of a building, a tremendous torrent of rain came down on them. Nevertheless, the Nazis drove them mercilessly to continue their work. One of the poor, exhausted, and completely drenched victims exclaimed in pain to the Rebbe, "Are you going to continue to say 'You [G-d] have chosen us' — and rejoice that we are the chosen nation?"

The Klausenberger Rebbe answered, "Until this day I did not say 'You have chosen us' with the proper devotion. But from today, when I say, 'You have chosen us from among the nations,' I will say it with much more fervor. I'll be infinitely ecstatic."

When the Rebbe saw the astonished look on the man's face, he explained to him, "If it weren't for the fact that G-d has chosen us, then I would also be like the Nazis. It's better for me to be in my situation than to be one of them, G-d forbid. Happy is my lot!"

The Klausenberger Rebbe related further, "In Warsaw there was a Jew from Lithuania with us whose situation was much better than ours because he was an expert in metalworking, which made him very important to the SS. He was allowed to go around freely, and was given extra food.

One day this man sneaked into my cabin and said, 'I came to discuss with you a point in Jewish law. In my work, I have to violate Shabbat by transgressing Torah prohibitions. I think it is better to be transferred to the group that has to carry the heavy logs and boulders, which is not a Torah prohibition but a Rabbinical decree.'

When I asked him how he was going to accomplish this, he said, 'I have already made preparations to burn my hands with scalding water so that I will be unable to continue my delicate work. Then they will have to transfer me to the other work groups.'

"One has to realize," continued the rebbe, "that carrying the boulders meant certain death. Many were not able to hold out for more than a few days. In vain, I tried to convince him not to put himself into such danger. But he insisted that he did not want to transgress so many Torah prohibitions. With great difficulty I was able to persuade him that as a metalworker he was able to save the lives of many other Jews. Only then did he relent. Certainly seeing such a Jew strengthened in us the joy of 'You have chosen us.'" (Rabbi Gershon Weiss)

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### *A Lesson Learned*

"Go and ascertain what Laban the Aramean intended to do to Yaakov our Patriarch" (*Hagaddah Shel Pesah*)

The instruction given by the author of the *Hagaddah* to go and learn from the story of Laban requires that we ask "What is the great lesson that he expects us to learn?" Furthermore, he does not give us an answer. Instead we are presented with a recital of the history of Ya'akov *Abinu* from his days living with Laban until he descended to Egypt with his family. What do I learn from that well-known series of events?

Rabbi Don Yitzhak Abarbanel zt"l points out that Laban did not perpetrate any acts of destruction upon Ya'akov and his family - all of his evil was in his mind. It was only through an analysis of his words that we understood his wicked intentions. It was through the kind intervention of G-d that the destruction was prevented. The promise to Abraham *Abinu* - that his offspring would live and prosper through the special providence of Hashem - was the factor that saved Ya'akov from harm and that same *Hashgahah* - protection - has protected Jews throughout history.

The Vilna Gaon takes this point one step further. The thing we must “Go out” to learn is that Hashem does miracles for us – even though we are not aware of His intervention on our behalf. There are “Ten Mentions” - *zechiot* - that a Jew should remember to say every day. They include the Exodus from Egypt, the Shabbat and what Hashem did to Miriam when she spoke *Lashon Hara* about her brother Moshe *Rabenu*. One of the things we must keep on our minds daily is “What Balak and Bilaam attempted to do to us when we were in the desert.” Why is this on the list with other more outstanding events with obvious lessons?

The story of Bilaam is one of a gentile prophet hired by a King to curse the Jews. The King, Balak, saw that military might could not stand up to the Jews and so he devised a plan to fight fire with fire. The Jews were known for the power of their mouths - prayer - and so he hired one who was known for the power of his mouth - cursing. The one thing he did not take into consideration was G-d’s Divine intervention for His beloved Chosen People. Every curse turned out to be a blessing. The Jews never met Balak and they were not privy to his failed attempts. G-d’s miracle on their behalf was unbeknownst to them – just as Ya’akov’s rescue from Laban by G-d was without his knowledge of what Laban was really thinking. This is the lesson of our history.

In every generation they rise up against us to destroy us. Sometimes it is an open display of hatred and actions that physically attempt to wipe us out. At other times it is wicked plans that we never discover because Hashem in His mercy derails the enemy’s efforts and scuttles his plans without making headlines. “Go out and learn” to be thankful to G-d for all that He does to protect us from annihilation in every generation whether we see it or not. (Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

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### *Forget Your Belt*

Every year around early July, Eitan Aronovitch and his family in the Har Nof neighborhood of Jerusalem prepare for a large feast. The kitchen bustles with activity as the finishing touches are added to the succulent spread. All are dressed impeccably; a holiday spirit is in the air. By all appearances this is a normal pre-holiday scene. But something is strangely missing: belts. No one is wearing belts! There is not a belt to found anywhere in the home. They are preparing to celebrate “The Holiday of the Belt”.

Eitan Aronovitch was one of the hostages from the Air France flight hijacked in the summer of 1976 and brought to Entebbe. The Jewish passengers were immediately separated and shepherded into a different room in the airport. They spent their nights on the cold, hard floor. Eitan removed his glasses and his belt to afford himself minimal comfort while he slept.

Suddenly, the door crashed open! Everyone woke up with a frightful jolt. “Israel Defense Forces! Everyone out! GO! GO! GO!” Eitan, in a panic, groped through the dark and found his glasses. “Where’s my belt?” “Forget the belt!” shouted a soldier. “The plane is leaving.” Eitan raced out and joined the flight to freedom.

When Eitan returned home, he asked his Rabbi how to appropriately celebrate his appreciation of G-d’s Divine Providence and obvious miracle. The Rabbi explained the parallel to our celebration on Pesah of the Exodus from Egypt. Pesah is known as the “Holiday of the Matzot” because, as the Torah describes, the Jews were in such a hurry to leave they did not have sufficient time for the dough to rise. Thus, we eat matzah, unleavened bread. In the same way we use matzot to celebrate our swift salvation, so, too, Eitan was instructed to celebrate the swiftness of his rescue with an absence of belts.

The month of *Nissan* is intrinsically a time of redemption, and the *Mashiah*’s arrival, which is due to occur in *Nissan*, will mirror the exodus from Egypt in its suddenness. We will be called upon to drop our possessions and greet him wherever he may be.

The illustrious Chassidic legend, Rabbi Nachum of Chernobyl, was spending the evening at an inn and awoke at midnight to recite *Tikun Hassot*. The innkeeper, frightened by the impassioned crying, ran in asking for an explanation. “I am mourning the destruction of the Holy Temple and am praying for the *Mashiah* to come.” The innkeeper’s wife wanted the Rabbi to stop; they had just finished paying for their farm and livestock and had no desire to leave it all behind to go to Jerusalem. Rabbi Nachum reminded her that the Cossacks could come at any time and confiscate all of their possessions, so she might as well look forward to redemption. “Rabbi,” she responded, “you may continue to pray for the *Mashiah*. Just tell him to come and bring the Cossacks to Jerusalem!”

We recite at the beginning and end of our Seder, “Next year in Jerusalem!” but are we REALLY waiting for the *Mashiah* to come? Are we ready to leave everything behind? When the door bursts open and it’s time to go, let us be sure not to miss the plane while we grope for our belts. (Rabbi Moshe Peretz Gilden)

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### *The Matzah Message*

“The Matzah that we eat for what reason? Because the dough of our forefathers did not have time to become leavened before the King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He, revealed Himself to them and redeemed them.”

We can easily understand the other features of the Seder. The bitter herbs of *maror* recall the bitterness of our bondage. The four cups of wine and the reclining are expressions of freedom from that bondage. But why is it so significant to highlight the speed with which this liberation was effected?

A charming incident, which took place in Jerusalem a number of decades ago, may help us unravel this mystery of the matzah.

All the guests at the wedding excitedly awaited the big moment. The officiating Rabbi, a Sage renowned both for his Torah knowledge and practical wisdom, had concluded the opening blessings over a cup of wine and it was now the *hatan*’s turn to put a ring on the *kallah*’s extended finger and say the magic words which would make them man and wife. This particular *hatan* was a bit more nervous than other grooms and he let the ring fall from his hand. As he bent down to pick it up, the father of the bride, who was apparently not very pleased with the match, muttered something about this perhaps being a Heavenly sign that the wedding should not take place.

The Rabbi quickly defused a potentially explosive situation by declaring: “Yes, it is indeed a sign from Heaven.”

As the *hatan*, *kallah* and their parents and witnesses looked at him in bewilderment the Rabbi continued: “It is a sign from Heaven that when he first took out the ring the time had not yet come for the marriage to begin. Now the time has finally come!”

The experience of Jews in Egypt was a preparation for their future role as the holy nation that would receive the Torah. Exile in a foreign land and the sufferings of backbreaking labor were the bricks that built the “forging furnace” of a nation which would learn to so abhor the moral corruption which had been imposed on them in Egypt that it would be enabled to go on to become a “light unto the nations.”

But if you stay too long in the forging furnace you can be destroyed. Our Sages tell us that there are fifty levels of spiritual corruption and our ancestors, in their physical and spiritual bondage had already reached the forty-ninth level. One moment longer in Egypt and they would have sunk to that fiftieth level from which there is no redemption.