

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
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Pesach



Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Torah Wellsprings - Pesach

Lessons from Chametz and Matzah

One of the halachos of baking matzah is (Shulchan Aruch 459:2), לא יניחו העיסה בלא עסק ואפילו, רגע אחד, Don't leave the dough idle without working it – even for a moment." Working with the dough prevents it from becoming chametz. The Satmar Rebbe zt'l said that this halacha hints at the virtue of always being active in *avodas Hashem*.

The Divrei Chaim of Tzanz zt'l would say, "If you don't have the strength to learn Torah, say *Tehillim*; if you don't have the strength to say *Tehillim*, give *tzedakah*..." But always be active and do something in *avodas Hashem*.

The Gemara (Brachos 28.) tells us that when Reb Zeira was fatigued from his studies, he would sit at the doorway of Reb Noson bar Tuvi's beis medrash. He said, "When the rabbanim pass, I will stand up for them and will receive reward."

This is the concept we are referring to, to always be active in *avodas Hashem*. Don't let time pass idly. When you need to rest, do so in a way that will earn you mitzvos.

Rebbe Zusha of Honipoli zt'l said that we can learn three lessons from children: (1) When a child wants something, he cries until he gets it. (2) A child is happy when he gets what he wants. [Adults are not that way; When they get their desires, they are soon unsatisfied again because they want something else.] (3) A child is always active. We, too, must strive to always be engaged in Hashem's service.

The matzah teaches us several other important lessons:

The letters מצה and חמץ are nearly identical; both have a *mem* and a *tzaddik*. The only difference is that matzah has a *heh*, while chametz has a *ches*. The difference between the *heh* and the *ches* is also minor. The

difference between them is that the *heh*'s right leg is broken while the leg of the *ches* is solid. Rebbe Shlomo Dovid of Slonim zt'l pointed out that the broken ה hints at a broken heart, humility. This is the defining factor that makes one holy to Hashem.

Additionally, the similarity of the letters חמץ and מצה tells us that it is often difficult to differentiate between *kedushah* and *tumah*. The Meor Einayim (Tzav חמץ ד"ה) 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*. The *yetzer hara* generally doesn't tell a person to do an *aveirah* because who will listen to him? Instead, the *yetzer hara* tries to convince his victims that an *aveirah* is a mitzvah..." The difference between good and sin is often slight and difficult to distinguish, and therefore, it is easy to err.

We can add that the small difference between the *ches* and the *heh* indicates that all it takes is a drop of improvement, and one can reach very high levels.

The following story illustrates this principle:

Reb Eliyahu Dessler zt'l encouraged his students to take on a small *kabbalah* before Pesach. He assured them that even a small *kabbalah* would elevate them to very high levels.

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

The *bachur* replied that he didn't take on anything. He didn't believe that a small *kabbalah* could make a big difference.

Reb Dessler told him the following *mashal*:

A person from a developing country came to New York City and was astounded

by the tall skyscrapers he encountered. In his hometown, the tallest buildings were two stories high, and here he saw buildings a hundred stories high, etc. He stood outside a skyscraper and looked up in amazement.

A passerby told him, "On the top floor, there's an observation deck; from there, you can see the entire city of New York."

"Amazing!" the man replied. "I would love to go up there, but I don't have the strength to walk up all those steps!"

"You don't have to take the stairs," the man replied. "You can use the elevator."

The foreigner had never heard of an elevator before, so the man 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 entered the building and went into the elevator but didn't press any buttons. The door closed, it turned dark, and he was afraid that he would be locked inside. Panicking, he started pressing random buttons. As it turned out, he hit the emergency button. Emergency personnel rushed over and freed him from the elevator. They asked him, "Which floor did you want to go to, and why didn't you press the button?"

He replied that he couldn't believe something as simple as pushing a button could get him so high up. Walking the stairs would take hours; how could he get there by simply pressing a button?

But, as we know, a push of a button could raise a person to the highest heights. Reb Dessler explained to the *bachur* that people think tiny *kabbalos* are insignificant, but they aren't. With each small *kabbalah*, one grows immensely.

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* compared it to two people walking towards an escalator, and one of them took one step more than his fellow man. That one step made all the difference because he got onto the escalator

and was brought to the next floor, while his friend, who didn't take that step forward, remained below.

This is the uniqueness of a *kabbalah tovah*. It is a small step that brings us very high.

These ideas are alluded to by the small difference between the *heh* and the *ches*. It is the small things that make a big difference.

The Mesilas Yesharim (ch.15) teaches that people pursue the pleasures of this world because they think those pleasures are worthwhile and enjoyable. However, the Mesilas Yesharim recommends that we recognize (a) that the pleasures are really nothing at all, (b) the pleasure only lasts for a moment, and (c) the troubles that can stem from them are longstanding and severe.

He uses food as an example: The pleasure isn't so significant, lasting only for a moment (until he swallows), and the illnesses that can come from unhealthy eating habits can be very severe, *chalilah*.

When one thinks about these matters, he won't want to pursue the pleasures of this world.

Reb Gad'l Eisner *zt'l* said something similar regarding forbidden thoughts. When one thinks that these thoughts are pleasurable, it is a great challenge to maintain pure thoughts. But when one recognizes how much he suffers from these thoughts, it is easy for him to push these forbidden thoughts away.

Reb Gad'l shared the following parable:

A person was carrying expensive diamonds, and from the corner of his eyes, he noticed thieves following him. He knows that if he runs, the thieves will know that he is carrying something precious, and they will certainly chase after him. He, therefore, chose to walk calmly as though he had nothing to hide, and the thieves let him be.

The *nimshal* is how to overcome forbidden thoughts. You can fight them off and run away from them, but then the yetzer hara

will chase you and push the forbidden thoughts on you. A wiser approach is to decide in your heart that you don't want these temptations, and then you will quickly and effortlessly stop thinking about them.

This lesson is hinted at in the mitzvah of bitul chametz, which means to annul the chametz in your heart. *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 434:2)* states, "At night, immediately after *bedikas chametz* be *mevatel* the chametz in your heart and say, 'All chametz that is in my possession should be like the earth of the ground.'"

This is called *bitul chametz* because, in addition to finding and burning the chametz, we annul the chametz in our hearts and with our words. We tell ourselves that we don't want the chametz; it is worthless and meaningless to us.

We can overcome the *yetzer hara* using the same tactic. We tell ourselves we don't want the temptations that the *yetzer hara* is peddling, and that makes it easy to overcome and pass the tests.

Chazal say, מבטל בלבו, "Annul chametz in your heart." The Beis Aharon *zt'l* explains that you should fill your heart with a desire to do good and to serve Hashem until all other temptations are *batel* and annulled.

Bedikas and Biur Chametz

Reb Shimshon Pinkus *zt'l* learned in Yeshivas Chevron (Yerushalayim). One year, all his roommates (with whom he shared a rented apartment) went home for Pesach, and only he remained, so *bedikas chametz* was his responsibility that year.

He studied the halachos well and did a thorough *bedika* that lasted several hours.

Then he remembered that he hadn't gone up to check the roof. The roof was used by all residents of the apartment building, but Reb Shimshon Pinkus knew that people's nature is to rely on others, and if he didn't check the roof, no one likely would.

He climbed up and found the roof cluttered. The residents used the roof for storage, and many items were tossed up there. Reb Shimshon realized that to do an effective *bedikas chametz*, he would have to tidy up first.

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

That year, he completed the *bedikas chametz* just before daybreak.

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

The inspiration remained the entire *yom tov*. And after Pesach passed, he kept growing higher and higher.

Reb Shimshon Pinkus said, "If I have any good qualities today, it is from that mitzvah *d'rabbanan* of *bedikas chametz*, which I did with *mesirus nefesh*."¹

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, בקטן שנוולד. 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 Motzai Shabbos).

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

Reb Yeruchem, the *mashgiach* of Mir *zt'l*, said, "If we came to this world just to perform the mitzvah of *biur chametz*, ביור, it would already be worthwhile. This mitzvah imbues us with *kedushah* and *taharah*."

The Bas Ayin (*Drush lePesach, Metzora*) writes, "Erev Pesach, when a person does *teshuvah sheleimah* before Hashem, and eradicates all the chametz and evil from his heart, is the greatest *eis ratzon* of the year!"

Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l* writes 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 in that spirit... We should be busy with mitzvos all day, burning the chametz, preparing for the Seder..."

When we burn the chametz, it is an auspicious time for tefillah because the world becomes clear, the *tumah* is removed, and our tefillos will be answered.

The Ateres Yehoshua of Djikev *zt'l* would recite the tefillah of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk *zt'l* (printed at the beginning of many *machzorim* and *siddurim*) while 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.

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

Chametz represents *tumah*; therefore, when we do bedikas and biur chametz, it is a very special time. We cleanse ourselves and the world from all impurities.

Matzah

We discussed *tumah* in regards to *chametz*; now let's discuss the opposite, the holy mitzvah of eating matzah.

The Chasam Sofer (*Choshen Mishpat* 196) writes, "The mitzvah of eating matzah on the Seder night is the only mitzvah to do with eating that has remained with us in exile. We don't have the mitzvah of eating the *korban Pesach* or the mitzvah of eating the other *korbanos*. We can't eat *terumah* or *maasar sheini* [in our days] either. Matzah is the only mitzvah we have for eating, and we can only perform this mitzvah once a year. If this mitzvah is not performed correctly, will Hashem be happy with that?"

In a letter, Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l* warns us to eat the right amount. He writes, "You must be careful to eat more than the minimal amount of matzah and *maror*, for if you eat less than the minimum 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 to keep them next year? Isn't it enough that we don't keep the mitzvos of tefillin and *birchas hamazon* properly throughout the year? Why should these mitzvos also be lacking?"

One year at the Seder, before eating the matzah, the Kedushas Levi *zy'a* shouted with his trademark *hislahavus*, "Ribono shel Olam! Either you come into me, or I will come into you." The explanation is that when one eats matzah, he is bringing G-dliness into himself.

Preparing the Mouth for Matzah

Being that matzah is so holy, we must turn our mouths into proper and clean utensils for this mitzvah. What a shame it

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

would be if one speaks lashon hara and then eats the matzah.

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

It says (*Vayikra* 6:9), מצות תאכל במקום קדוש, "Eat matzah in a holy place." The Tiferes Shlomo teaches that this means we should make our mouths a holy place, clean from *lashon hara* and other forbidden speech, and also pure from nonkosher foods. Then our mouths will be a מקום קדוש, a holy place, a fitting place to eat the matzos.

The Tiferes Shlomo writes that matzah is a spiritual medication. It removes all the bad inside us and enables us to be united with Hashem.

Rebbe Mendel of Riminov *zt'l* teaches that eating *afikoman* is conducive to 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 אפיקו מיני מתיקה, bringing out sweet foods. The Yismach Yisrael explains אפיקו מיני מתיקה means that this mitzvah will take out our temptations for the sweet pleasures of this world.²

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

He would answer, דאס אדזעט מיר, "I am disgusted by food." His sole desire was *ruchniyus*.

But at the Seder, he ate 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, this is the pattern: When one holds back from *taavos* the entire year, he can eat the matzah with immense *taavah*.³

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

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

The Maharil writes that this is why we say seven *brachos* before eating the matzah. It is similar to the *sheva brachos* we say at a *chasunah*.

After Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge, it states (*Bereishis* 3:24) ויגרש את האדם, "[Hashem] banished Adam..." The Midrash explains that ויגרש means divorce. Hakadosh Baruch Hu, *kiveyachol*, divorced Adam (*geirushin*). When Adam did teshuvah, the marriage, *kiveyachol*, was re-established. As we explained, eating matzah is a *chasunah*. So, if someone became distant from Hashem due to *aveiros*, the union is reestablished when he eats matzah.

Once, at Reb Shimon Sofer's Seder, his grandson asked him, "Why do children steal the *afikoman*? Is it proper to educate children to steal?"

Reb Shimon Sofer didn't answer. He continued with the Seder. During the meal, he told his grandson, "You asked a good

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

3. The Nesivos Shalom *zy'a* once saw a *bachur* of his yeshiva eating a pita-falafel with immense relish. The Nesivos Shalom rebuked him and said, "The way you eat reminds me of how the Beis Avraham would eat the matzah on Pesach."

question: Why do we steal the *afikoman*? Why is it encouraged? The Gemara mentions this custom, as it states (*Pesachim* 109), הוטפין מנזה, "We grab the matzos..." The Gemara says this is to keep the young children awake so 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 never thought about it. But as soon as you asked me, I had an answer. I didn't answer you when you asked because I wanted to teach you that a Yid must abide by the Torah and mitzvos and the *minhagim*, even when we don't know the reason. And now, I will give you my explanation for this custom:

"The *pasuk* states (*Shemos* 11:7), ולכל בני ישראל, לא יחרץ כלב לשונו, 'To all of Bnei Yisrael, no dog will bark...' Chazal (*Pesachim* 113) advise that one should live in a city where there are dogs, as this protects the residents from theft because dogs bark at thieves. However, on the night of *yetzias mitzrayim*, the dogs didn't bark. This means thieves were able to steal. At the Seder, we steal the *afikoman* to commemorate the miracle that the dogs didn't bark."

Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim

Noach's *teivah* was large. It was 300 amos long, 50 amos wide, and 30 amos high. It needed to be large to contain all the animals.

Nevertheless, the Ramban (*Bereishis* 6:19) says that it was still a miracle that it held all the animals. He writes, "There are many species of wild animals. Some of them are very large, like the elephants... And also, there are endless small animals. There are so many of them! And there are endless species of birds... Noach had to bring all of these into the *teivah*, and he also had to bring their foods into the *teivah*... The *teivah* certainly wasn't large enough. Even ten *teivos* of these

dimensions wouldn't be large enough! It was a miracle. ההזיק מועט את המרובה, a small area held so much."

The Ramban asks that since Hashem performed a miracle anyway, Hashem could have told Noach to build an even smaller *teivah*, and there would be room for everything it needed to carry. So why did Hashem tell Noach to make a *teivah* with large dimensions?

The Ramban's second answer is as follows:⁴

"[Hashem wanted] the *teivah* to be large so the miracle shouldn't be so obvious. And this is how it is with all the miracles recorded in the Torah and *navi*."

This is a principle in how Hashem performs miracles. It is Hashem's will למעט הנס to minimize miracles so that they won't be as noticeable.

But the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim* are an exception to this rule. At this time, 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 that my miracles will multiply in Mitzrayim.'" Hashem desired to do many miracles at *yetzias Mitzrayim*.

There were ten *makos* in Mitzrayim and many more at the Yam Suf, although, technically, one miracle would have been sufficient. Why did Hashem perform so many miracles? Why didn't Hashem minimize the miracles, as He usually does?

The Dubno Magid *zt'l* answers with an analogy of a baker. A baker places one or two of his breads and cakes in the store window, so people passing by will be tempted to come inside and buy. He also

4. The Ramban's first answer is that Hashem wanted Noach to be occupied in building the *teivah* for a long time (120 years) so people would hear that a flood was approaching because of their bad deeds. Perhaps this would inspire them to do *teshuvah*.

has many cakes and breads on the shelves to sell.

The goods in the store window serve a different purpose than the baked goods on the shelves. The baked goods in the window draw people into the store; therefore, they need to appear beautiful and don't necessarily have to taste so good. On the other hand, the baked goods on the shelves are for eating. Therefore, they can be less attractive, but they must taste good.

So, we see that the purpose determines the criteria.

The Dubno Magid explains that miracles can also be for one of two purposes.

Most miracles are to save the world or to save the Jewish nation. For example, the Purim miracle was to save the Jewish nation from Haman's decree. The miracle of the teivah was to save Noah, his family, and the other creatures from the flood.

The miracles of yetzias Mitzrayim, however, weren't only to save the Jewish nation. The purpose was to reveal to the Jewish nation that there is Hashem, as it states (*Shemos* 6:6-7), והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים... וידעתם כי אני ה' אלקיכם "I will take you out of your affliction in Mitzrayim...so that you will know that I am Hashem your G-d."

When the purpose is salvation, Hashem chooses to minimize the miracles. When the purpose of the miracles is to reveal Hashem's presence in the world, Hashem prefers to do many great miracles. Each miracle taught us some more that Hashem created the world and leads it with *hashgachah pratis*.

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 from Mitzrayim, there is no reason to harden Pharaoh's heart. But when the purpose is למען תספר שמי בכל הארץ, so the entire world will know about Hashem, it was necessary to harden Pharaoh's heart, so more miracles could take place.

We now understand that there is a special significance to telling the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* at the Seder. When we do so, we are completing the purpose for which the miracles were intended. The miracles weren't solely to free us. Primarily, they were so we can tell our children the miracles that Hashem performed for us.

At the Seder, the father wears a *kittel*, which represents *tachrichim*, shrouds. The Chasan Sofer *zt'l* explains that we want the father to remember that he won't live forever. There will be a time when he will be dressed in *tachrichim* and buried in the ground, and then he won't be able to tell his family about *yetzias Mitzrayim*. This realization will inspire him to take advantage of the night, to tell his children about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and to implant in them *emunah* in Hashem.⁵

Rebbe Shmelke of Nickelsburg *zt'l* said that the *kittel* is to help the father imagine that he had already passed away, and in honor of the Seder night, heaven let him return to earth to make the Seder so that he can teach *emunah* to his children. With this thought in mind, he will certainly perform the mitzvah of sipur yetzias Mitzrayim properly.

5. One year after the seder, when the Beis Yisrael of Gur's *zy'a* removed 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."

Reb Shimon Shwab *zt'l* said that when a father speaks to his children moments before his *petirah*, the children listen very well, and they try their best to keep his final wishes. At the seder, the father puts on a *kittel* because he wants the children to listen carefully to what he tells them at the Seder, with the same awe and earnestness that they will have during his final moments in life.

There is an ideal of concealing one's good deeds from others. No one other than Hashem needs to know all the good things one does.⁶ This is because it is easier to do good deeds *l'shem Shamayim* when no one knows about it. But like every rule, there are exceptions.⁷ Rebbe Meir of Dzikov *zy'a* (*Imrei No'am*) says that parents shouldn't conceal their good deeds from their children, so they can learn to emulate their ways.

This is indicated in the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 31:20), אשר צפנת, מזה רב טובך, ליראיך, you should conceal. פעלת לחוסים בך, but for those who rely on you - your children, נגד בני אדם, perform your good deeds in front of them so that they can learn from you.

On the words והגדת לבנך, Onkelus writes, ותחוי לבנך, "Show your children." Because on this night, parents should show their good deeds to their children so that they can learn from them.

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

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

Emunah

The Ohev Yisrael writes, "The truth is, even if a child asks his father questions about *yetzias Mitzrayim* other times during the year, the father must also answer him.⁹ Nevertheless, the holy Torah teaches us that throughout the year, even if you tell your son the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the words won't settle on the child's heart... The Haggadah teaches, לא אמרתי אלא בשעה שיש מצה, ומרור מונחים לפניך, 'the time I want you to speak about *yetzias Mitzrayim* is when you have matzah and *maror* in front of you.' This is because, on the night of Pesach, the mind is open for comprehending...and the light of wisdom is revealed, and *emunah* and *bitachon* hover over all Jewish people. At this time, when you answer your son's questions and tell him the entire story, your words will certainly enter his ears, and he will truly believe in *yetzias Mitzrayim*. The rest of the year, when there's darkness in the world,

6. A handyman once came to the home of the Husiatiner Rebbe *zt'l* to patch up a couch. But he didn't patch up the back side of the couch. When the Rebbe showed him that he had forgotten to fix a hole in the back of the couch, the handyman replied, "Rebbe! No one looks there."

The Husiatiner replied, "We were taught that the places where no one looks need to be the best."

7. There was a scholar who wanted to study Torah in concealment so that he could learn entirely *l'shem Shamayim*, but my grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l*, told him he shouldn't conceal the learning of Torah. The Rebbe explained, "When tax auditors come to appraise someone's earnings, he will hide all the expensive items of his home to conceal them from the authorities. He doesn't want them to suspect that he is earning well. But he won't hide his bread and butter because these are staples every home needs. Similarly, it's ideal to hide your good deeds, but Torah study is a staple. It is something that one simply can't be without. And therefore, there is no reason to conceal it."

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. Some *meforshim* say that the mitzvah of telling the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* isn't solely at the Seder. Whenever a child asks his father a question related to *yetzias Mitzrayim*, any day of the year, the father has the mitzvah of *v'higadita l'vincha*, to teach his son about *yetzias Mitzrayim*.

the son isn't able to properly receive the father's words and to believe."

Therefore, the Mishnah (*Pesachim* 10:4) says, "If the child isn't wise enough to ask questions on his own, his father should teach him to ask questions." We want to teach the children about *emunah* and *yetzias Mitzrayim* at this ideal time of the Seder because it is when the children can internalize the lessons.

It is logical that when we discuss *yetzias Mitzrayim* and words of *emunah*, it will implant *emunah* in the heart of the listeners. However, it also places *emunah* into the heart of the speaker, as the Lechovitzer *zt'l* said (*Tehillim* 116:10), האמנתי, I believe in Hashem, כי אדבר, because I speak about *emunah*. Therefore, when we talk about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, both the speaker and the listeners improve their *emunah* in Hashem.

But it goes beyond just logic. The Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l* says that the mitzvah of *Sipur*

Yetzias Mitzrayim is *mesugal* for *emunah*. A *segulah* is something that can't be explained logically. For example, a *segulah* for a *refuah* is a treatment that cures, but it can't be explained how it cures. It is a fact, it heals, but it can't be explained how or why it does so. Telling the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* is *mesugal* for *emunah*. It is also logical, as we explained, but it is also a *segulah*. Speaking about *yetzias Mitzrayim* is *mesugal* for *emunah*.¹⁰

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* explained one aspect of the *emunah* that comes to our hearts at the Seder.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 6., 7.) says, מנין שהקב"ה מתפלל... מנין שהקב"ה מניח תפילין "How do we know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu davens...? How do we know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu wears tefillin..." Chazal explain that Hakadosh Baruch Hu keeps all the mitzvos of the Torah. This means that Hashem also performs the mitzvah והגדת לבנך to tell His

10. 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*."

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

A *dibuk*, a spirit of a *rasha*, came into a woman in Tzefas and afflicted 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 and explained that he didn't have permission to look at the *Shechinah*.

Reb Chaim Vital asked the spirit why he was granted 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 enter her and be her *dibuk*."

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

The spirit replied, "It is primarily 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," she replied, "and if occasionally I have other thoughts, I regret them." She started to cry.

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

children about yetzias Mitzrayim. We are Hashem's children, Hashem tells us the story of yetzias Mitzrayim, and we can be certain that when Hashem is the speaker, His words of emunah and the belief in *yetzias Mitzrayim* will firmly be implanted in our heart.¹¹

Chazal say, בניסן נגאלו ובניסן עתידין לגאל, that we were redeemed from Mitzrayim in Nisan, and we will be redeemed from the present galus in Nisan. Rebbe Menachem Nochum of Boyan-Tchernovitz zt'l (Tiferes Menachem

ד"ה ניסן 5695) explains that this is because of our *emunah* which increases this month. Chazal (*Yalkut Shimoni, Hosheia 915*) say, "In the merit of *emunah* our forefathers were redeemed from Mitzrayim, and in the merit of *emunah* we will be redeemed from the present galus." At the Seder, we eat matzah, the *מַיְכֵלָה דְּמִיָּה מְנוּחָה*, food of belief, and we tell the *sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* to our children. Our *emunah* increases this month, and in this merit, we will be redeemed this month.¹²

11. We say in *Shemonah Esrei*, השיבנו אבינו לתורתך, "Return us, our Father, to Your Torah." In most *brachos*, we don't address Hashem as "our Father." Why do we do so in this *brachah*?

The Tur (*Orach Chaim 115*) explains that we are saying, "Hashem, You are our Father, and every father has a *mitzvah* to teach his children Torah. You keep the entire Torah, and therefore, as a Father, You have a *mitzvah* to teach us Torah. So, I plead that You open our hearts so we can learn and understand Your Torah."

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l adds that Hashem also performs the *mitzvah* of והגדת לבנך, to teach His children the story of yetzias Mitzrayim. And when Hashem is our teacher, the lessons will be firmly implanted in our hearts.

Reb Elyah Lopian zt'l heard the following story in Kelm from a *talmid chacham* whose grandfather was the author of *Malbushei Yom Tov*.

One year, before beginning the Seder, the Malbushei Yom Tov sat in his place for a few minutes with intense emotion and said, "Just as we are making the Seder with our family, so is the entire city making the Seder, exactly in the same manner - with matzah and *maror*, and so on. 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, and they saw it from their fathers. The chain goes back generations, to the *Rishonim, Amoraim, Tanaim*, all the way to the people who left Mitzrayim and received the Torah. Hashem said to the generation that received the Torah (*Shemos 19:4*), אתם ראיתם אשר עשיתי למצרים, "You saw what I did to Mitzrayim." Rashi writes, 'It isn't a tradition that you received, it isn't just words that I am telling you... You saw what I did in Mitzrayim.'"

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

"I was in the camps with a friend, and I would repeatedly speak to him about *emunah* and *bitachon*. I encouraged him to trust that Hashem will save us, and one day we will be free. But my friend was pessimistic, he feared the worst, and it was hard for him to hear my optimistic predictions.

"Then came the dreaded day. The Germans told us that they were taking us to get showered. We knew they were taking us to the gas chambers. My friend said to me, 'What do you say now?'

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

"The Nazi tried to close the door of the gas chamber, but there were too many people inside, and the door couldn't shut. I'm heavy, so out of all those people, the Nazi pulled me out, so he could close the door. That's how my life was saved."

When he told the 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."

We see from all this that the Seder is definitely the “peak time” for attaining *emunah*. However, the highest point of *emunah* is actually during the final days of Pesach. The first days of Pesach gradually build up our *emunah* until we reach the climax and peak on the last days.

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 perfect day, the day the Yidden said *Shirah*."

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk *zt'l* said that one can attain *emunah sheleimah* on the night of Shevi'i shel Pesach. On this night, we should also strengthen our belief in *tzaddikim*, as it states (*Shemos* 14:31), ויאמינו בה, ובמושה, "They believed in Hashem and in Moshe."

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*..."

Notice that about the *chacham* the *Hagaddah* states אחד חכם, without a ויא, and about the *rasha*, there's the ויא prefix, as it states ויאחד רשע, with a ויא at the beginning of the word. אחד hints to the one, Hashem. ואחד "and one" means that he believes in Hashem and he believes in something else, too.

For example, when someone asks the *rasha*, “How will you have *parnassah*?” he replies, “Hashem will help. And also, I plan to do this, and I plan to do that...” This person believes in Hashem, but not exclusively. It is ויאחד, also *Hashem*. The *chacham* recognizes אחד that everything is from Hashem alone.

The Maharal (*Gevuras Hashem* 60) writes, "All mitzvos of the *korban pesach* are about oneness..."

It states (*Shemos* 12:9), "[Roast the *korban pesach* all at once], together with its legs and innards..." The Maharal explains

that it is roasted as one piece because the message of the *korban Pesach* is about oneness.

"[Another example is that] it states (12:46), בבית אחד יאכל, 'You shall eat the *korban pesach* in one house.' It is forbidden to divide the *korban* into two parts and to eat it in two places (see *Pesachim* 86.). This demonstrates oneness.

The sheep (or lamb) had to be in the first year of its life, as it states (*Shemos* 12:5) שנה תמים, "An unblemished lamb, within its first year..." (12:5). The Maharal explains "If it was two years old, it wouldn't be one."

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

"And, it states (*Shemos* 12:9), אל תאכלו ממונו נא, ובשל מבושל כי אם צלי אש, 'You shall not eat it partially roasted or cooked in water; only roasted over fire...' ... This is because when something is cooked...meat particles will separate [and it won't be one]. But when one roasts meat, the juices come out, 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 (*Shemos* 12:46) ועצם לא תשברו בו, 'You shall not break a bone in it,' for this would be dividing the bone into two. To summarize, the *korban Pesach* should be one because it teaches us that Hashem is One, and He chose the Jewish nation because it is one..."

We say in the *Haggadah* that the students came to their teachers and said, רבותינו, הגיע זמן, קריאת שמע של שחרית, "Our teachers, the time to read *Shma* of *shacharis* has arrived." The *Shma* is where we proclaim אחד, the oneness of Hashem, and שחרית is *roshei teivos*: (1)

ה' יודע לשאול (2) חכם (3) רשע (4) תם the four sons of the Seder. On the Seder night, we seek to instill in our children the awareness that ה' אחד.

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 Shma. Why should אחד in the Haggadah be different?"

The Bnei Yissaschar commented to the chassidim who were with him, "This Yid took the four children of the *Haggadah* and turned them into *kriyas Shma*." Because our goal is to take children of all levels and bring them awareness of ה' אחד.

Belief in *Hashgachah Pratis*

Matzos are round, which symbolizes an ongoing cycle.¹³ This is people's general perception of the world; they think everything runs on a cycle, not by *hashgachah pratis*. By יחץ, we break the round matzah to remind ourselves that things don't run on their own; everything happens by Hashem's decree.

The first *Ani Maamin* states, אני מאמין באמונה, עשה ועושה ועושה ועושה לכל שלימה שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא ... עשה ועושה ועושה ועושה, an expression that we believe that Hashem did, does, and will do everything that occurs in the world. The top matzah represents our belief in עשה, did – that everything that happened in the past was from Hashem. The middle matzah represents עושה, does – that everything that happens

now is by His will. The bottom matzah represents our belief in ועושה, will do – that everything that will happen in the future comes from Hashem.

We break the middle matzah because it is hardest to believe that even the present is by Hashem's decree.

It is easier for people to believe that the past was from Hashem and that the future will be from Hashem. But they struggle to recognize that even the present is from Hashem. So we break the middle matzah to remind ourselves that even the present is led with *hashgachah pratis*.

The *Haggadah* states, וירעו אתנו המצרים כמה שנאמר... וישמע ה' את קולנו כמה שנאמר... ויוציאנו... ביד כמה שנאמר... חזקה... כמה שנאמר... The words שנאמר are repeated numerous times.

The *Chidushei HaRim zt'l* translates it as follows, "The Mitzrim afflicted us, כמה שנאמר because Hashem said so. We went out of Mitzrayim, כמה שנאמר because Hashem said so." Everything that happened was by Hashem's decree. The hardship, the salvation, the significant, and the trivial are all כמה שנאמר, as Hashem decreed it.

It states (*Shemos* 13:3), היום אתם יוצאים בחודש, האביב, "Today you are leaving, in the month of Aviv." Rashi asks, "Don't we know when they left? Moshe told them: Take note of the *chesed* Hashem performed for you: He redeemed you from Mitzrayim when the weather is comfortable, when it isn't too hot or cold, and there is no rain."

However, the joy of *yetzias Mitzrayim* is so great that it seems odd that the weather should be mentioned.

To understand the question, imagine a Holocaust survivor telling you that he jumped out the window of a speeding train headed towards the concentration camps, and that is how he saved his life. And then

13. Rashi (*Bereishis* 25:30) writes that Yaakov was cooking lentils because they are round, representing the world's cycle.

you ask him, "How was the weather that day?"

He will respond, "Did you hear what I'm telling you? My life was saved! The weather is irrelevant!"

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

This is because even the weather on the day of *yetzias Mitzrayim* wasn't by chance – it was by Hashem's decree. This is because everything, down to the smallest detail, is from Hashem, and we should note even the most minor details.¹⁴

The Yidden in Mitzrayim ate matzah, as we say, *הא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתנא בארעא דמצרים*, "This is the bread of affliction that our parents ate in Mitzrayim." And when they left Mitzrayim, they were eating matzah again, as we say, *מצה זו שאנו אוכלים... על שום שלא*, "Why do we eat matzah...? It's because our forefathers didn't have time to let their dough rise..."

The nation in Mitzrayim thought that when they became free men, they would no longer eat the bread of affliction, but on the day they were redeemed, they, once again, ate matzos! This taught them that Hashem's will always prevails. If Hashem wants them to eat matzah, nothing can change that.

The belief that Everything is for the Good

There is a debate among the poskim whether to recline while eating *korach* (the matzah and maror sandwich), and the accepted opinion is that we do recline.

But why should we recline? Isn't there *maror* there?

The Tiferes Shlomo answers that the *maror* is wrapped in matzah, the food of *emunah* (מיכלא דמיהמנותא). When we have *emunah* that even the bitterness of *galus* is good, we feel like free men, and we recline.

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

The Torah tells us that at *kriyas Yam Suf*, the nation attained perfection in *emunah*, as it states, *ויאמינו בה*, "They believed in Hashem." But this means that until then, their *emunah* wasn't perfect. So what was their *emunah* lacking?

Drashos HaRan (*Drush 11*) explains that the Jewish nation had two questions.

(1) They didn't tell Pharaoh they were leaving Mitzrayim forever. Instead, Hashem instructed them to ask permission to go for three days, and then they would return. Why didn't they tell Pharaoh the truth that they were leaving forever? The question is especially difficult, considering that at this time, Pharaoh was willing to let them go forever.

(2) They asked the Mitzrim to lend them clothing and gold and silver utensils. Why didn't they demand that they give it to them? Why were they instructed to borrow? The Mitzrim would have given them whatever they asked after all the makos they endured.

But when they stood at the seashore, and the Mitzrim chased after them, everything was understood. Hashem wanted the

¹⁴ It states (*Bereishis 45:23*), *ולאביו שלח כזאת עשרה חמרים נשאים מטוב מצרים*, "Yosef sent his father ten donkeys..." The Mahara! (*Gevuras Hashem 10*) explains that donkeys don't know what they are carrying or 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.

Mitzrim to pursue them so that the sea would split before the Jewish nation and the Mitzrim would drown. This only happened because (1) the Jewish nation said they would return in three days, and (2) they said they were merely borrowing the items. Had Pharaoh known initially that they were leaving forever and had the Mitzrim agreed to give away their belongings, they wouldn't chase after the nation.

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

Our goal, however, is to believe in Hashem even before things become clear. This is the level of *emunah* we strive to attain, especially on Pesach.

The Holiness of the Seder

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

"Eliyahu HaNavi comes to the Seder of every Yid, and there are great tzaddikim who see him. But an even greater level is when one doesn't see Eliyahu, but he *believes* that Eliyahu is there, at the Seder."

Every year, after saying שפך המתך, the Noda b'Yehudah would escort Eliyahu HaNavi *z'l* out of his house, down the stairs, and into the street. The Chidushei HaRim praised this deed immensely and said, "The Noda b'Yehuda didn't actually see Eliyahu Hanavi, but he believed that he was there. And believing is a higher level than seeing."

Eliyahu HaNavi is not the only one who comes to the Seder. Hashem is also present.

In the *Haggadah*, we say that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim, ובמורא גדול זה גילוי, when His *Shechinah* became revealed in

Mitzrayim. This happens again each year at the Seder. The *Shechinah* is present.

Mishnayos Pesachim tells us the order of the Seder. The first step is (*Pesachim* 10:2), מזוגו לו כוס ראשון, "They pour for him the first cup of wine [to say Kiddush..." Notice the word לו, "for him."

The following Mishnah states (10:3), הביאו לפניו מטבל בחזרת... הביאו לפניו מצה וחזרת, "They bring before him [the karpas]] and he dips the vegetable. They bring before him matzah and *maror*..." This time, note that it states לפניו, "before him." This differs from לו, "for him," written in the previous Mishnah.

The Tiferes Shlomo explains that לפניו means "before Hashem." When we sit at the Seder, we are seated before Hashem. Once we begin the Seder it is לפניו, before Hashem. About the cup of kiddush, it states מזוגו לו because the Seder has not yet started, so it isn't לפניו yet.

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.

The Belzer Rebbes would clap their hands before saying *Mah Nishtanah* as it states (*Shemos* 28:35), ושמע קולו בבאו אל הקדש, "The sound shall be heard when he enters the sanctuary..." So, when we are at the Seder, it is like we are in the Beis HaMikdash.¹⁵

Reb Shimon Shkop *zt'l* would have a *taanis dibur* at the Seder. He explained that Hashem is at the Seder, as it says (*Shemos* 12:12), ועברתי בארץ מצרים – אני ולא מלאך, "I shall go through the land of Mitzrayim – I, and not an angel." And when the King is before you, it isn't proper for the people at the table to speak idly.

15. The Maharal (*Hagaddah shel Pesach*, ענין לבישת הקיטל) compares the *kittel* to the white garment the *kohen 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*.

The Shlah HaKadosh (quoted in *Mishnah Berurah* 473:71) states that we shouldn't read *magid* reclining on our left side (הסיבה). We can explain that this, too, is because the *Shechinah* is present, and it isn't proper to lean when seated before Hashem. (This is similar to the halachah that one doesn't recline at the Seder when his rebbe is present.)

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 12:) states, "Whoever prays for his needs in Aramaic, the *malachim* don't help him [to elevate his tefillos before Hakadosh Baruch Hu] because *malachim* do not understand this language. But [when one visits the ill, he may daven in Aramaic] because the *Shechinah* is with the ill person, as it states (*Tehillim* 41:4), ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי, "Hashem will preserve him on his ill-bed."

When you visit the ill, Hashem is present, and you can speak directly to Hashem. You don't need *malachim* to raise the tefillos to Hashem so you may speak in Aramaic. The Arugas HaBosem *zt'l* explains that the same occurs at the Seder. We begin the Seder with הוא לחמא עניי, in Aramaic. The Arugas HaBosem *zt'l* explains that this is because Hashem is present at the Seder, so we can speak in Aramaic.

The Seder ends with הו גדיא, also in Aramaic. This hints that Hashem is present from the beginning of the Seder until the end. (And this is one of the reasons tefillah is so powerful at the Seder. It is a tefillah directly before Hashem.)

Shulchan Aruch (472:2) states, יסדר שולחנו, בגלים 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 are an expression of the freedom we attained on this night.

The Magen Avraham (472:2) adds that the Maharil used to lend money to goyim and receive valuable utensils as collateral.

Throughout the year, he didn't use those utensils. But he would take them out to use them at his Seder because there is a custom to adorn the Seder table with valuable utensils.

The Magen Avraham asks why he was permitted to use the gentiles' utensils and why it wasn't considered theft. The Magen Avraham answers, "Since the Maharil used them solely one day a year, the goyim weren't *makpid*." They wouldn't mind if he used their utensils for just one night, so it wasn't theft.¹⁶

But there is another question raised by the Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (*Drashos Shabbos HaGadol* vol.2 p.255). We must *tovel* all food utensils we acquire from gentiles before we use them. So, how could the Maharil use the Goyishe dishes?

Let us clarify that this isn't a halachic question because according to halachah, one isn't obligated to *tovel* *borrowed* utensils, only utensils that were acquired (either a purchase or a gift) from goyim. Nevertheless, the Chasam Sofer understands that there is a great *tumah* on the gentile utensils, and the food that goes in them becomes contaminated. As the Chasam Sofer writes, יש בו סכנה וטומאה, עצומה של לחמם טמא, "There is a danger, and a powerful *tumah*" when one eats on gentile utensils. So why wasn't the Maharil concerned about this impurity? Why did he use gentile food utensils at the Seder?

The Chasam Sofer replies that there was no concern at the Seder. There is so much *kedushah* on this night that the *tumah* of the non-Jewish utensils disappears. It becomes negated in the great *kedushah* of the night.

When the Jewish nation left Mitzrayim (*Shemos* 12:35), וישאלו ממצרים כלי כסף וכל זהב, "they borrowed from the Egyptians silver and gold utensils..."

16. Others (*Chok Yaakov* and *Mishnah Berurah*) answer that the Maharil put those utensils on a sideboard in his dining room to decorate the room but didn't actually use them.

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

The Chasam Sofer explains that the Egyptians were eager to give their utensils because they subconsciously understood they could contaminate the Jewish nation with their dishes.

(The Chasam Sofer clarifies that the Mitzrim weren't so wise to know that their utensils would generate *tumah* for the Jewish nation, but their *mazal* and *malach* in heaven knew, and unknowingly, this inspired them to be eager to give them their dishes.)

The Jewish nation was hesitant; they didn't want to borrow anything at all (see *Brachos* 9.). Moshe Rabbeinu had to convince them to borrow these utensils. The Chasam Sofer explains that their hesitance stemmed from their fear of becoming *tamei* from the *goyishe keilim*.

This *tumah* couldn't be removed by immersion in a mikvah because the utensils were borrowed (not acquired), so there was no obligation to *tovel* them. This left them with contaminated *goyishe* utensils without the possibility of purifying them. They were left with a great impurity and 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, it purified the utensils, and the Jewish nation was not affected by the *tumah*.¹⁷

The Chasam Sofer adds that this immense *kedushah* reoccurs in every generation. "Therefore, every Seder night, it is permitted

to use the utensils that were taken as collateral from the *goyim* [as the Maharil did], 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*."

This source teaches us about the immense *kedushah* of the Seder night.

At the Seder we say, כל דכפין ייתי ויכיל, "Whoever is hungry, come and eat." What will we do if many poor people accept our offer and come to our home? How will we have enough food for everyone? And where will we put them all?

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (*drashos Shabbos HaGadol* תקס"ב ד"ה כי תבאו) says we don't have to worry about that. Even if many people come to our home, there will be food and room for everyone because when we make a Seder, our homes become holy, and wherever there's holiness, there is abundance and plenty of space.

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 room.

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*. When many *kohanim* were present, each *kohen* received a morsel of bread, but it was adequate, and the *kohanim* were satiated from that small amount. The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that this is because where there's holiness, there is sustenance.

17. The Chasam Sofer explains that the Jewish nation didn't deserve this high level of *kedushah*, but Hashem wanted to keep His promise that He made with Avraham Avinu that the Jewish nation would leave with immense wealth. Therefore, Hashem told them to borrow the utensils, and He purified them with the great holiness of the night.

The Chasam Sofer writes, "With these ideas, I explain, כהא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתנא, '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 poor man's bread... Nevertheless, כל דכפין ייתי, 'Whoever is hungry, come and eat with us.' Don't worry. There will be enough. This is 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 because when we tell Hashem's wonders and miracles, our houses become 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 בארעא דישראל, 'We are here now. Next year *this house* will be in Eretz Yisrael...' There is an atmosphere of Eretz Yisrael at the Seder, so there will be space and enough food for everyone."¹⁸

Levels we can Attain

The following was repeated from an elderly Yid living in Bnei Brak who, in his

youth, merited being at the Alexander Rebbe's seder:

The Rebbe came to the Seder, white from fear. The Rebbe was quiet for a few moments, and then he said with hislahavus, "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*!"¹⁹

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

It states (*Shemos* 19:4), ואשא אתכם על כנפי נשרים, "I carried you on the wings of eagles." We specifically mention a non-kosher bird to hint that if someone is *tamai* with sins, he will become pure on this night when he celebrates the Seder.

The Chasam Sofer (*Drashos*) teaches that on this night, just as we must imagine that we were slaves and we became free, similarly, we must imagine that we were idol-worshippers, and on this night, Hashem chose us to be His nation.²⁰

18. Interestingly, the Chasam Sofer writes that the miracle of a small area being large enough for many people was seen in his day. He doesn't write where he saw this, but it is said that he was referring to his own Yeshiva in Pressburg. The physical dimensions of the yeshiva weren't large enough to hold the many students. A miracle occurred, and there was room for everyone.

19. The *rasha* of the *Hagaddah* says, מזה העבודה הזאת 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 not for him. He doesn't believe that he can rise to high levels in the merit of the Seder.

20. This *yom tov* is called פסח, which means to jump because on this night, we jump up to levels we couldn't reach the entire year.

Many use a radish or a potato for *karpas*. Radishes and potatoes both grow in the ground. This suggests that even those who are symbolically beneath the ground and on a very low level 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."

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, that Hashem knows how

As a child, the Imrei Emes *zy'a* asked his father, the Sfas Emes *zt'l*, "Why do 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*. He was certain that his father wasn't just telling a joke. His father was hinting that on Pesach, at the Seder, we reach great heights and become like new. And we must be careful to retain this cleanliness. We shouldn't tarnish our souls again.

There are two levels that one can attain, *kedushah* and *taharah*. Generally, *taharah* should come before *kedushah* because first, one cleans away the bad, and then he can become holy. At the Seder, the first two *simanim*²¹ are קדש ורחץ, which can be translated as, "make yourself holy and purify yourself." The ווא of ורחץ implies that this is the order,

kedushah comes first, and then comes *taharah*. This isn't the order we generally follow.

But this 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 קדש ורחץ indicates that at the Seder, we reach the level of *malachim*.²²

In fact, on this night, we reach levels above the *malachim* because, at the Seder, we become a חלק אלוהי ממועל, one with Hashem. To prove this, we bring a lesson from the Maharal.

The Maharal asks, how were the Yidden saved from the *makos*? When the *makos* came to Mitzrayim, they had the potential to harm everyone living there - even the Yidden. The Maharal explains that Hashem gave the *malachim* the task of performing the first nine *makos*, and in order to protect the Jewish nation, Hashem raised the Yidden above the *malachim*.

difficult it is for a Yid to choose good in this lowly world where there are so many temptations. Due to the challenges, a Yid can reach very high levels very quickly.

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

21. Customarily, we recite the fifteen *simanim* before performing the mitzvos of the night. The holy *sefarim* teach us that there is a holiness in saying these words (see *Yesod v' Shoresch HaAvodah*).

22. Rebbe Yochanan of Rachmistrivka *zy'a* taught: קדש ורחץ, if a person wants to sanctify and purify himself, the path is ברפס, which is *roshei teivos* for כגור פה סגור, the first rule is to keep the mouth shut. By avoiding forbidden speech, one can attain holiness and purity. יחץ מגיד means that when you do speak, say only half of what you planned to say.

Chassidim once heard Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* silently repeat to himself the *simanim* of the Seder (קדש ורחץ ברפס יחץ etc.) before he began the Seder. Chassidim explain that he was reminding himself of all the wonderful steps of the Seder so that he could keep each step properly. This is because sometimes a person reaches גרצה and he regrets that he didn't take better advantage of the holy Seder with all its mitzvos, *segulos*, holiness, and bounties. Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* wanted to make sure that he took advantage of all the mitzvos of this holy night, so at the beginning of the Seder, he reviewed what was coming up, so he could perform the mitzvos properly.

The order of the Seder, קדש ורחץ, etc., are called *simanim*. When someone claims a lost object, he must give evidence of ownership (*simanim*), and then he can take back the lost object. Throughout the year, due to sins, a person loses his holiness. When he does the *simanim* of the Seder, he gets his *kedushah* back. What was lost is returned to him.

The tenth plague, *makas bechoros*, was performed by Hashem, Himself. As we say in the *Hagaddah*, ועברתי בארץ מצרים אני ולא מלאך, "I passed through Eretz Mitzrayim; it was I and not an angel."

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

Every year, on this night, Hashem raises 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, *kiveyachol*.

Each part of the Seder is *mesugal* for growth. The *Mah Nishtanah* is an example. The Veyaged Moshe writes (in the name of kabbalah *sefarim*) that asking *Mah Nishtanah* is *mesugal* to have an open heart for 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 that is open for Torah. And after everyone says *Mah Nishtanah*, I also say the *Mah Nishtanah*."²³ Similarly, each part of the Seder has the potential to raise people from the lowest levels to the highest.

A Seder for Everyone

We are inspired when we read stories of *tzaddikim* regarding the wonderful Sedarim they made, and we strive to reach their levels, but we know that Hashem is happy with our Sedarim, too.

The Ksav Sofer's *zt'l* Rebbetzin, Chavah Leah, heard from her sisters-in-law to expect an extraordinary Seder when she goes to her father-in-law, the Chasam Sofer, because his face glows brightly, and it is impossible to look at his face.

Rebbetzin Chavah Leah thought they were fantasizing. "*Ungarisher dimyonos*, Hungarian imaginations," she thought.

But at the Seder, she tried to look at her father-in-law's face, and couldn't. The Chasam Sofer's face shone so brightly.

23. Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *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?"

"It was the same answer, עבדים היינו."

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

The children tried to explain in various ways.

Reb Shlomo Zalman commented, "When I was eight years old, I was walking home from the Kosel with my father, and we met Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt'l*. He asked me the same question 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 different ways...'"

The Avnei Nezer *zt'l* said, "My father-in-law, the Kotzker *zt'l*, always appeared like a *malach*, but at the Seder, he appeared like a *saraf* (a higher form of *malach*).... At the Seder, the Kotzker appeared elevated in ways we didn't see even on Yom Kippur. During the second half of the Seder, sparks of fire came out of his mouth." (Abir HaRoim).

The Shlah HaKadosh writes that there were chassidim who kissed 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 נענועים as we do with the *lulav* and esrog.

Perhaps we aren't on these high levels; nevertheless, the Torah was given to everyone, and to us the Torah says (*Shemos* 12:18), בערב תאכלו מצות, "In the evening you shall eat matzos." Hashem is happy with our mitzvah of matzah, and our Seder, too.²⁴

The final *siman* of the Seder is *nirtzah*, which means "It was accepted and desired." We are confident that after we went through the Seder, Hashem is happy with it, and He accepted it.

Everyone aspires that his Seder should be beautiful, the children should behave, and the atmosphere be happy and uplifting, but, alas, it isn't always so. We must know that Hashem is happy with our Seder precisely as it was.

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 non *yom-tovdig* atmosphere. They were sure that they would find a *yom-tovdig* and orderly home. As stated in *Shulchan Aruch* (472:1), יהא שולחנו ערוך מבעוד יום

כדי לאכל כשתחשך, "The table should be set in the daytime so you can start the meal [immediately] when it is nighttime." But they found this home turned over, and there was no sign that it was the Seder night.

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

Their host told them, "When you go to other people's homes, and you find the table set, the children dressed in their *yom tov* clothing, good smells are wafting out from the kitchen, you think you see freedom. I say you are seeing slavery because these people are enslaved to this perfect situation. If a minor detail isn't in order, the family doesn't know how to handle it. But in this home, we celebrate true freedom because we accept Hashem's will, whatever it is. If this is what Hashem wants, this is good for us."

Reb Shmuel of Karov was poor, but he tried to keep what is written in *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yorah Deiah* 255:1) that "a person should always refrain from asking for *tzedakah*. He should live in constraint (יגלגל עצמו בצער) rather than ask for financial aid. As the Gemara (*Pesachim* 112.) says, עשה שבתך חול ואל תצטרך לבריות, it is better to eat simple foods on Shabbos, as though it were a weekday, than to ask people for financial aid." Therefore, despite his poverty, he never asked for financial aid.

But one year, Pesach was approaching, and he didn't have matzah and wine. He hoped 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

²⁴ 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 שבעת הימים (*Shemos* 13:7). It is written שבעת הימים with an extra ם"ה, implying to the seven days of Creation. For keeping this mitzvah, we become a partner in the creation of the world, which was done in seven days.

Konskuli z'l (a wealthy person) came to the Chozeh of Lublin for a *brachah*, the Chozeh told him to send food to Reb Shmuel.

A delivery of *yom tov* food arrived at Reb Shmuel's door moments before Pesach. Reb Shmuel was extremely happy because he had everything he needed for *yom tov*, and he didn't have to ask for help.

That night, Reb Shmuel had a joyous Seder like never before.

On the second night of Pesach, Reb Shmuel was very tired, so he lay down before the Seder. He woke up late and had to rush through the Seder to eat the *afikoman* before chatzos.

He thought the second Seder wasn't good 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 like that one."

The explanation is that he conducted the second Seder with humility and a broken heart, which made the second Seder extraordinary.

The lesson is that we can never know what is most precious to Hashem. At times, a Seder we thought wasn't good is wonderful in Hashem's eyes. And when we think we had a good Seder, Hashem may have a different opinion. All we can do is try our best and believe that *נרצה*, it was pleasing and accepted by Hashem.

The custom of Reb Ber'tze, a chassid of Rebbe Asher of Stolin zt'l, was to set the

table for the Seder himself. But one year, when he came home, he saw that the table was messy, and the matzos and the wine were shattered on the floor.

His wife was in bed, moping. She complained, "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 floor. It's all your fault!"

Reb Ber'tze replied, "It wasn't my fault, and it wasn't your fault. This is what Hashem wanted." And Reb Ber'tze and his rebbetzin celebrated the Seder with joy.

The following day, Rebbe Ber'tze davened Shacharis in the beis medresh of Rebbe Asher of Stolin zt'l. Rebbe Asher, with his *ruach hakodesh*, discussed the Sedarim of many tzaddikim and how special they were, and then he said, "But the Seder of Reb Ber'tze was greater than all the others. No one reached the heights he attained."

It was because he remained happy despite what occurred. We learn from this story that everyone can make a very special Seder, not just the greatest tzaddikim. Secondly, we learn the importance of accepting Hashem's will, even when it isn't what we want. Sometimes things happen at the Seder that aren't what we hoped for, and when we accept them in the right spirit, it is very special in Hashem's eyes.

There are four sons in the *Haggadah*. Rebbe Hirsh Rimanover said, "In my opinion, the *שאינו יודע לשאול* is the best off from all of them." Because this son doesn't ask any questions, he accepts everything with *emunah* that this is how it has to be.²⁵

25. Every year, before the Seder, the married children of Reb Zalman Brizel zt'l would come with their families to wish him a *gut yom tov*. One year, one of the grandchildren accidentally threw down all the matzos. Reb Zalman Brizel was happy, not upset. He explained, "Hashem gave me grandchildren. Isn't that a reason to be happy?"

In short, we must remember the lesson stated in *Beis Aharon* (Pesach p.85:). He writes, "The Seder isn't solely for people on high, lofty levels. The Seder is for every Yid, whichever level he is on. And one must believe this..."

Salvations on erev Pesach

The Russian czar once decreed a terrible *gezeirah* on the Jewish nation, and a Jewish activist determined that the only solution (according to the rules of nature) was to bribe one of the high-ranking ministers in the government. So the activist spoke with rabbanim and asked them to influence their followers to donate money for the bribe.

Most rabbanim participated in this fundraising mission, but Rebbe Aharon Chernobler *zt'l* refused to ask his community to give money. Rebbe Aharon had a very large following, and if he participated in the fundraising, it could bring in a lot of money, but he didn't think it was necessary.

The activist spoke with Rebbe Itzikel of Skver *zt'l* (Rebbe Aharon's brother) and asked him to influence his brother to participate in this fundraising campaign. The Skverer Rebbe spoke with Reb Aharon and explained why giving money for this purpose is essential, but even then, Rebbe Aharon didn't participate.

Erev Pesach, when Rebbe Aharon Chernobler went outside to burn his *chametz*, he said, "Some say we can annul harsh decrees with money, but that isn't correct.

When we burn the *chametz erev Pesach*, we annul all harsh decrees."

Reb Shamshon Ostropole *zt'l* wrote a letter and advised that people should read it on *erev Pesach*. He said that whoever reads and studies this letter will have salvations.

He writes in the letter the following:

"Our master, the holy [Arizal], wrote the following wondrous ideas in a concealed manner, and no one knows how to decipher them. Many *gedolim* asked me to explain what the Arizal was saying here, and I didn't tell them. But because of my love for you, I will reveal the secret of this matter, according to how it was revealed to me in a dream at night." Reb Shamshon explains the concealed lesson of the Arizal and concludes, "After these matters were revealed to me, heaven told me that whoever studies this awesome secret as I wrote it here, even just once a year, primarily when he studies it on *erev Pesach*, he will certainly be guarded the entire year against all troubles, unnatural deaths, and tragedies. His enemies won't rule over him, they will fall before him, and wherever he turns, he will enjoy success."²⁶

Miracles at the Seder

The *roshei teivos* of מצ"ה spell מִיכֵל צָרָה הַצִּילֵנִי, "Save me from all troubles."

The *Zohar* calls *matzah*, מִיכֵלִיָּה דְאִסּוּתָא, 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 a prophecy because by eating *matzah*, one

There is always a lot of good in our lives. And when we focus on the good we have, we can always be happy.

26. Once, in Elul, during the terror of the Holocaust, the Rav of Erloy *zt'l* reminded himself that he hadn't yet studied the letter of Reb Shamshon Ostropola. So he immediately studied the letter and was saved from the grave dangers he was in.

The Erloy Rav 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 reviewing the letter, and that was the year he was *niftar*.

merits *emunah*, and *emunah* is a cure for the brain to think correctly."

Reb Tzvi Kintzlicher *zt'l*, the Rav of Seban, Romania (later he moved to Yerushalayim in 5709), suffered from severe stomach pains. The doctors in Klausenberg told him that they needed to operate immediately. The Rav of Seban told the doctors that he wanted to be home for Pesach, and would return right after Pesach for the operation.

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

Reb Tzvi planned to follow instructions, but at the Seder, he decided to eat matzah soaked in milk.

While eating the matzah, he felt something positive happening in his stomach. He ate matzah on the second night of Pesach too, and by the time he finished eating the *kezayis*, he didn't have any stomach pains at all.

On Shabbos after Pesach, he told his congregation that he was leaving for a serious operation. "Pray for me because I don't know what will be."

When he returned to Klausenberg, the doctors said, "Which doctor did you go to? The disease is gone!"

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

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

מ"צ"ה has three letters: *מ. צ. ה*. When each of these three letters is spelled out in full, it looks like this: *מ. מ. צ. צ. ד. י. ק. ה. ה. א*. The added letters (all letters besides the primary letters of *מ"צ"ה*) are

called the *מילוי*, filler letters. The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* said that if you take the *מילוי* of *מ"צ"ה* it spells *אקדי"ם*, "I will come first..." The Sar Shalom noted that this hints that some tefillos aren't answered immediately, but the tefillos on Pesach *אקדי"ם*, will be answered immediately.

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

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

There was a time that the *maror* available was horseradish, and it was difficult to eat a *kizayis* of it. Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l* writes, "Even when it comes to *maror*, one should eat the proper amount. Every day we say, *בכל נפשך*, that it's a mitzvah to serve Hashem with all our soul, with *mesirus nefesh*, so why shouldn't we endure this little bit of hardship [of eating horseradish]? I promise, when one eats *maror* with *simchah*, he will almost not feel the sharpness of the *maror*."

Eating the *kezayis maror* is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. Chazal (*Eiruv* 18:, *Rashi Bereishis* 8:11) say, *יהיו מזונתי מרורין בזית*. This phrase can also be read, *יהא מזונתי*, my *parnassah* comes *מרורין* *בזית*, from the *kezayis maror* that I eat at the Seder.

The Zohar urges us to say *magid* with joy, as it states, "Every person who tells the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* with joy...Hakadosh Baruch Hu is happy with the story he tells. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gathers all of the *malachim* in heaven and says, 'Come and listen to the praises My children are saying about Me. They are happy with My 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..."¹²⁷

27. The Zohar adds, "Therefore, we must praise Hashem and tell this story. Our words go up to heaven,

The Yesod Yosef (85) writes, "Whoever says the Haggadah with happiness, without anger, without laziness, and without feeling that it's a chore, *chas veshalom*...the *Shechinah* spreads out its wings on him to save him everywhere, and in all his travels, and he merits miracles..."

The *Haggadah* says, בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות, "In every generation, one must consider it as if he left Mitzrayim." The Sfas Emes *zt'l* says one must think this because this is precisely what happens. Every year, on Pesach, we become free and leave our problems behind us. The Sfas Emes writes, "According to the extent one believes that he's leaving his troubles, so will it be."

This is also implied in the *brachah* that we say at the end of *magid*, ברוך... אשר גאלנו וגאל את, "Bless Hashem...Who redeemed us and Who redeemed our forefathers..." We express that Hashem saved us, too. The Apter Rav *zy'a* writes, "When one says אשר גאלנו וגאל את, and he believes that Hashem is also redeeming us, he will be saved from all kinds of trouble."

This is also implied in the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 12:42), ליל שמרים הוא לה' להוציאם מארץ מצרים... לדורותם, "It is a night of anticipation for Hashem to take them out of Mitzrayim...for their generations." The Beis Aharon *zt'l* says לדורותם, "for their generations," indicates that in every generation, Hashem takes us out of Mitzrayim and saves us from our problems. It also states, להוציאם, "to take them out," and it is written in the future tense. This tells us that in every generation, we leave Mitzrayim. We leave the hardships we are enduring.

The Meor Einayim (*Tzav*) writes, "At the Yam Suf, the *malachim* prosecuted and said that also the Yidden worshiped *avodah zarah*. If so, it is indeed a question; why was the Jewish nation saved? The answer is that the Yidden in Mitzrayim conducted the entire Seder exactly as we do today. They told the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* because they trusted that Hashem would certainly take them out of Mitzrayim. These matters drew down Hashem's kindness, and they were redeemed... Chazal say בניסן נגאלו ובניסן עתידין ליגאל, we were redeemed in Nisan, and we will be redeemed in Nisan. This is because there is *galus* for the nation, and there is *galus* for the individual. The individual's *galus* is his *yesurim* that a Yid suffers. Due to the *chesed* we draw down in Nisan, we will be redeemed from hardships."

The Gemara (*Brachos* 4:) says, "Who is a *ben Olam HaBa*? One who prays *Shemonah Esrei* immediately after the *brachah* of גאל ישראל." Rashi explains that if someone doesn't start *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, sees that his friend has 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."

This teaches us that the night of the Seder is an ideal time for *tefillah*. When we praise Hashem for *yetzias Mitzrayim*, Hashem is near to us and listens to our requests.²⁸

And we shouldn't be stingy with our requests. We should ask for great things. As it states (*Tehillim* 81:11), אנכי ה' אלקיך המעלך מארץ,

and all the *malachim* gather and praise Hakadosh Baruch Hu. This brings honor to Hashem above and below."

28. 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*.

מצרים הרחב פיך ואמלאהו, "I am Hashem your G-d, who took you out of Mitzrayim, open your mouth wide [ask for a lot], and I will fill it."²⁹

An innkeeper fell behind with his rent payment, and the *poritz* warned him that if he didn't pay the debt soon, he and his family would be thrown into the dungeon.

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

Erev Shabbos, the *gabbai* told him that the Rebbe couldn't receive him. The innkeeper hoped he could speak to the Rebbe on *motzei Shabbos*, but as it turned out, he didn't have to talk to the Rebbe on *motzei Shabbos*; he received his answer Shabbos afternoon at the Apter Rav's Shabbos HaGadol *drashah*.

The Apter Rav began the *drashah* with a deep halachic discussion, which this simple Yid didn't understand.

Then the Rebbe turned to the *Haggadah*. He said, "When we get to וַיִּצְעַק אֵל ה' it's a very special moment for *tefillah*. If one needs *parnassah*, *refuah*, or if a Yid rents an inn from a *poritz* and doesn't have money to pay the rent, and the *poritz* threatens to throw him and his family into the dungeon, and he shouts at this point to Hashem 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 shout out to Hashem when he got to וַיִּצְעַק in the *Hagaddah*.

When Shabbos was over, he didn't wait to speak with the Rebbe. He had already received the counsel he needed. He came

home, and his wife asked him what the Rebbe said. He told her that she would soon find out.

At the Seder, when they reached וַיִּצְעַק, the innkeeper shouted and prayed, 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 goy whom they knew. He told them that he had killed his wife and must escape before the police arrested 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."

The goy brought in two barrels filled with gold coins. He said, "You can keep one barrel for yourself. Eventually, I will settle down in another country. I will send you a letter with my address so you can send me one barrel with gold coins."

After saying this message and depositing the money, he left.

The Yid and his family continued the Seder with joy. Hashem had answered their *tefillas* and sent them the money they needed to pay the *poritz*...and much more.

The goy never returned and never sent a letter. So, both barrels filled with gold coins became theirs.

After Pesach, they traveled to the city to buy new clothes. They didn't need to dress in rags anymore. Then they went to the Apter Rav to thank him for the miracle he had performed. He told them, "It wasn't my miracle, and you don't have to thank me.

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

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 Rebbe 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 because they serve Hashem with song. A teacher should be similar to the *malachim*; he should be happy. Such a person is fitting to be a teacher of the Torah.

You drew down the miracle on your own through your וַיַּצַּעק.¹³⁰

Rebbe Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch *zy'a* said people think that all they lack is that Moshiach should come. But in Mitzrayim, they understood that waiting for salvation isn't sufficient. They had to daven, as well, and the *geulah* came when they were וַיַּצַּעק.

I am sharing here a letter that I received from a member of our *chaburah* from Beis Shemesh.

"In תשע"ז, we sat down joyously for the Seder together with my brother-in-law and his family, but there was one issue that marred our joy. My brother-in-law's five-year-old son was born with a cleft lip, and after many operations, he still couldn't talk. All he could say was sounds. Every sound he made was like a dagger in his parents' hearts. The cheder recently informed the parents that the child couldn't continue learning there because he couldn't talk.

"When we reached הָאָ לַחֲמָא עֵינָא, we remembered a *vort* from the Beis Aharon: כָּל

30. We know of several people who had their *yeshuos* when they prayed to Hashem on this holy night. Some of them shouted to Hashem at this *eis ratzon* of וַיַּצַּעק, and others davened at other times on this sacred night, and they received their *yeshuah*.

I know the following story firsthand:

A family of Gerer chasidim was having a hard time finding *shidduchim* for their three older sons, ages twenty-five, twenty-seven, and thirty. They all had fully grown beards and weren't engaged yet.

It was the custom in the Gerer yeshiva that before *yom tov*, the *bachurim* would *gezegen* [take leave] from the Gerrer Rebbe, the Lev 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 he intended 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 am I not yet engaged?"

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

The mother stopped them. She said, "It's *yom tov*. It isn't proper to cry now."

They stopped crying and celebrated the rest of the Seder joyously.

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

During *Chodesh Iyar*, one of them got 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 her parents, but one year he told his wife, "This time, we're staying home."

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

A person had a problem with his legs, and he was often in excruciating pain. He often had to go to the hospital or a 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 got to וַיַּצַּעק he left the room and poured his heart out to Hashem. *Motzei Yom Tov*, he received a shot in his leg, and he never needed another one. He was cured.

דכפין, whatever a person needs, ייתי ויפסה, he should have פה סח (a speaking mouth) and pray to Hashem for a salvation because with prayer all our needs can be fulfilled. We davened that this young boy should be healed, that he should have a פה סח to be able to speak and learn Torah. After the Seder was completed, the father of this boy said to his wife, את פתח לו, implying, "now, you should pray to open his mouth." They said *Tehillim* with tears the entire night. In the morning, a miracle occurred. Their son was able to speak. He spoke so much; it was like 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 for prayer. But then I saw שו"ת דברי יציב אבן העזר סו"ס (פ"ג) that our three daily *tefillos* (*Shacharis*, *Minchah*, *Maariv*) were established by the *avos* on the first day of Pesach! Furthermore, someone showed me the *Likutei Moharan* that the *Targum* (*Eichah* 2) states that on Pesach, it is people's custom to shout during the *tefillah*, as it states, קול נתנו בבית ה' כיום מועד, 'They shouted in the Beis HaMikdash like on a holiday.' And the *Targum* explains, כקל עמא דמצלין בהוא דפסחא, 'Like the loud voices of the nation when they pray on Pesach.' What better time is there for *tefillah* than at the Seder, the day the *avos* established *tefillah*?"

There is a custom to eat an egg at the start of *shulchan aruch*. The Meiri teaches that *beitzah* is often pronounced בעי, which can mean "to request." This is yet another indication that *tefillos* at the Seder are answered.³¹

It states (*Bereishis* 21:25-26), והוכח אברהם את, אבימלך על אדות באר המים אשר גזלו עבדי אבימלך. The Ahavas Shalom *zt'l* explains that אברהם signifies *tzaddikim* and אבימלך symbolizes the King of the world, Hakadosh Baruch

Hu. *Tzaddikim* ask Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "Why is Hashem's bounty (באר המים) being stolen from us (אשר גזלו) and taken by the slaves, by the nations of the world?"

Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, וגם אתה לא הגדת לי וגם אנכי לא שמעתי בלתי היום. The word הגדת is from the word מגיד. Hashem says, "At the Seder, when you say *magid*, you didn't daven to Me. וגם אנכי also on Shavuos when we read אנכי ה' אלקיך, I didn't hear your prayers. בלתי היום, I only hear your prayers on Rosh Hashanah (which is called *hayom*). And this isn't sufficient. Your *tefillos* on Pesach and Shavuos are also required.

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 baking matzos, the chassid went over to the Rebbe of Biala and requested a *brachah* for children. The Rebbe advised him to daven for children right before *Mah Nishtanah*. This is because the Mishnah states, כאן הבן שואל, can be translated as, "This is the place to request for children."

But the chassid, wanting to attend the Rebbe's Seder after he finished his own, rushed through his Seder and 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 daven 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 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

31. 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 forth warmth— our enthusiasm and joy — and then we will merit it.

the *rishonim* and soon afterward, came to inform the Rebbe that Hashem performed a miracle for them. The Rebbe was also surprised that the *segulah* worked so quickly.

It states (Shemos 13:8), והגדת לבנך. The Or HaChaim HaKadosh teaches that 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 אובד*, *אבי*, which we read at the Seder, and then when he didn't find the Or HaChaim there, he remembered that it is in *parashas Bo*, on the words *והגדת לבנך*. So he read the Or HaChaim in *parashas Bo* to his *shiur*, where it says that by speaking about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, one merits children.

Ten months later, he had his first child.

Salvations on Shevi'i shel Pesach

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 21:6) asks, it should have stated, *ויבקע הים*, that the sea split. Why does it say, *ויבקע המים*, that the water split? This teaches us that all waters in the world split. All around the world, wherever there was a body of water, it split.

The question arises, what was the purpose of this miracle? The Yam Suf split to allow the Yidden to pass through, but why did all the waters in the world split?

The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* explains that water represents *tzaros* and *yesurim*, as it states (*Tehillim* 69:2), *הושיעני אלוקים כי באו מים עד נפש*, "Save me, Hashem, for the waters have reached the soul." Hashem split all water of the world, indicating that on Shevi'i shel Pesach, Hashem saves us from all our troubles. This continues until this day.

The Ateres Tzvi writes, "When the sea split, it unlocked salvations for all future

generations – for the individual and the Jewish community in general. Even if the gates of *parnassah* or *shidduchim* are closed, one can pray at this special *eis ratzon* by *kriyas Yam Suf* and Hashem will help him."

The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* taught that the word *אז* from *אז ישיר* hints at the two days a year that we read the *shirah*. The letter *ז* is the numerical value of seven, alluding to Shevi'i shel Pesach, and *אל"ף* means to study and refers to Shabbos *parashas Beshalach* when we read and learn about *kriyas Yam Suf*. The Chozeh teaches that every year, on these two occasions, Hashem sends bounty and immense compassion to the Jewish nation.

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

The Midrash states that Nachshon ben Aminadov was the first to jump into the Yam Suf. When the water reached his nostrils, he shouted, *הושיעני כי באו מים עד נפש*, "Save me, Hashem, for the waters have reached the soul," and then the sea split.

So, the sea split in the merit of *mesirus nefesh*, and therefore, the Reishis Chachmah (*Shaar Ahavah* 8:6) says the lesson of this *yom tov* is to serve Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*, and then miracles will happen.

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

Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev *zy'a* teaches:

When a person serves Hashem beyond his natural limits, Hashem will reciprocate and act with him beyond the rules of nature, and Hashem will perform miracles for him.

Chumros

Rebbe Simchah Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* taught that one doesn't have to be *machmir*

with the mitzvos more than what is the accepted halachah. However, he said, Pesach is an exception. One should be *machmir* and go beyond the letter of the law to be chametz-free on Pesach.

But even when we take on *chumros* on Pesach, it is essential to keep them joyfully and without worry. Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* said that the *chumros* we keep on Pesach decorate the *kallah* (the *Shechinah*) with jewelry and ornaments. When one adorns a *kallah* for her *chasunah*, there's an atmosphere of joy and excitement in the air. We should have a similar happy ambiance as we keep the *chumros* of Pesach.

One isn't obligated to take on all the *chumros* on Pesach, but one is compelled to follow the *chumros* and the traditions of his family. This is based on the *pasuk* (*Mishlei* 1:8), אל תמוש תורת אבך, "Don't forsake the Torah of your mother," and Chazal explain that this means we must abide by the customs and *chumros* we received from our parents.

There was a *chasan* who wasn't planning on wearing a *shtreimel* after his *chasunah*. Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zy'a* asked him about that. The *chasan* replied, "Clothing doesn't mean anything to me. A *shtreimel* is a hat... They are the same, as far as I'm concerned. It's what's inside the person that matters."

The Rebbe replied, "The Gemara (*Gittin* 60:) says, לא כרת הקב"ה ברית עם ישראל אלא בשביל, דברים שבעל פה, 'Hakadosh Baruch Hu made a *bris* with Bnei Yisrael because of the Oral Torah.' What is the Oral Torah today? The Mishnah and the Gemara were already written down, so they are like the written Torah. Today, *minhagim* are the Oral Torah. Thus, they are important. Because of them, Hakadosh Baruch Hu makes a *bris* with the Jewish people."

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, because he might end up entirely falling away from *Yiddishkeit*.³²

Differentiating between *Chumros* and Halachah

A student of the Noda b'Yehudah's left the path of Torah and became a priest, *r'l*. The Noda b'Yehudah contemplated how he could bring him back. After making some inquiries, the Noda b'Yehudah heard that each day, at a particular hour, the priest sits on his porch and greets the passersby. So the Noda b'Yehudah decided to pass his home at that hour and greet the priest. If the priest returns his greeting, that would be a sign that there's hope. But if he doesn't return his greeting, it will indicate that he isn't interested in having anything to do with *Yiddishkeit*.

When the Noda b'Yehudah passed the priest's home, the priest greeted him first. The Noda b'Yehudah answered his greeting in a friendly manner, and they shared a few words before The Noda b'Yehudah continued on his way. Realizing there was hope, immediately when he came home, he asked one of his students to invite the priest to his home.

The priest arrived shortly afterward.

"Why did you leave the path of Torah?" the Noda b'Yehudah asked.

The priest replied that when he was learning in the Noda b'Yehudah's yeshiva, he ate teig, meals, at the home of generous people in Prague who took in the yeshiva students for meals.

32. The *Haggadah*, therefore, calls the *rasha* a כופר בעיקר, a non-believing Jew. The *rasha* doesn't want any safeguards. He doesn't want to keep the *chumros* of his family. This is the reason he says, מזה העבודה הזאת לכם. We can explain that he is asking why people are so *machmir*. But without these safeguards, one can fall to low levels until he becomes a non-believer.

At one meal, during Pesach, there was a halachic shaalah on one of the foods because a wheat kernel was found in the pot. The family asked me to bring the question to the Noda b'Yehudah. You ruled that according to halachah, the food is kosher. Nevertheless, you recommended that we shouldn't eat it because of the *chumrah* of chametz. I went home and told them your *psak*. The family immediately decided to be *machmir* and throw out the food, as you suggested. But I told the family I wanted to follow the more lenient view.

"I ate the food and soon regretted what I did. I couldn't believe I fell to the level of eating questionable food on Pesach. I felt like a *rasha*. That was my turning point. I fell from level to level until, as you can see, I became a priest. This is my story."

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

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

Every year, Reb Meshulem Igra *zt'l* baked his matzos with extreme care and ate exclusively from those matzos and only at the Seder. He didn't eat matzah the rest of Pesach as a precaution from eating chametz.

Once, *erev Pesach*, Reb Meshulam Igra's children were hungry, and the maid was looking for something to 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 Meshulem 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 home just in time for the Seder. She didn't want to be home when her husband discovered his matzos were gone 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. Then, 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 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 his wife for not being more on top of things). He believed this was *bashert*, so there was no reason to be angry. He realized his stringencies were a *chumrah* while becoming angry and insulting others are Torah prohibitions.

Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer's son once became angry with his maid because she put matzah in the soup (rendering the soup and the matzah *gebroks*). Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer rebuked his son and said, "Now you can eat this matzah too." He was teaching his son that getting angry and insulting others is worse than *gebroks*.³³

33. A *chasan*, just a couple of weeks after his *chasunah*, was at his in-laws for the Seder, and when he was served a bowl of soup, he found a wheat kernel in the bowl.

"We can't eat in this house," the son-in-law immediately told his wife.

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

But the son-in-law took his mortified wife and left the house, and he went straight to the home of Reb Shmuel Salant *zt'l*, the Rav of Yerushalayim. He was certain Reb Shmuel Salant would agree that he did the right thing.



Without a word, Reb Shmuel Salant took the *chasan's shtreimel* off his head and shook it. Some wheat kernels fell out. The custom in Yerushalayim was to throw wheat kernels on the *chasan* when he had his *aliyah* on the Shabbos before the *chasunah*. Reb Shmuel Salant understood that the wheat kernel probably fell from his *shtreimel* into the soup.

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

The *chasan's* 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 behaved more diplomatically.

One year, at the Seder of Reb Binyamin Rabinowitz *zt'l* (*dayan* of the Eidah haChareidis, Yerushalayim) *shulchan orach* began twenty minutes before *chatzos*. So his children began serving the meal very quickly, so they could eat the *afikoman* before *chatzos*.

Reb Binyamin *zt'l* stopped them. He said, "The *rebbetzin* worked hard to prepare the meal. She will be upset if we rush through the meal and don't enjoy it. All the *chumros* we have at the Seder are not worth anything if it will cause another Yid distress."

Reb Shlomo Frishtik married the daughter of Rebbe Gedalyah Moshe of Zvhil. Before the first Pesach as a married couple, Reb Shlomo wondered whether he should eat machine matzos in his father's home or whether to honor his wife's family from the Zvhil dynasty, who were very cautious about eating solely hand-matzos.

He asked talmidei chachamim for advice, and they advised him to pose this question to his wife's grandfather, Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l*.

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

Once, a guest in Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil's home ate *gebros*. Members of Reb Shlomke's family wanted to stop him, but Rebbe Shlomke signaled to them that they shouldn't say anything.

The Rebbe explained, "In heaven, you will not be asked whether you ate *gebros* or not. You will be asked whether you guarded your eyes and tongue...."

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 his mouth, and that is what purifies.

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