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Kosher Wine for Passover



Rabbi Yechezkel Landau was the chief Rabbi of Prague. At the time, a Hebrew teacher who had a daughter to marry off also lived in Prague. Unfortunately, he couldn't afford the wedding expenses and dowry for his daughter. So, with his wife's blessings, he went to seek his fortune in another city. There, a wealthy man hired him to teach his children. For three years the teacher saved every penny he earned, until finally before Pesah he had enough to make a wedding for his daughter.

Offered to Act as a Mashgiach

Wanting to save the travel expenses back to Prague, the teacher found a wine merchant who was transporting a large shipment of wine to Prague for Pesah. In exchange for a ride back to Prague, the teacher offered to act as a mashgiah for the wine, so that the Rabbi of Prague would give the merchant the kosher for Pesah certificate. The wine merchant agreed.

When Friday came they stopped off at an inn to spend Shabbat. The teacher had a serious problem. "Where will I hide my money over Shabbat," he thought. He decided to hide the money between the barrels of wine. After Shabbat, he went out to the wagon and looked for the money. It was gone! Rethinking his terrible

situation, he realized that the only one who might have seen him put the money away was the wine merchant. He approached the merchant and said, "I left my wallet containing all of my savings between the wine barrels before Shabbat. Now it is all gone. Did you perhaps take it?"

"How dare you accuse me of stealing!" the wine merchant roared. Realizing that arguing with the merchant will accomplish nothing, the teacher let the matter rest until he arrived in Prague.

Told His Sad Story to Rabbi Yechezkel Landau

As soon as he came to Prague, the teacher ran to Rabbi Yechezkel Landau and told him the whole story. Rabbi Yechezkel calmed him down and told him that with G-d's help he hoped to solve the problem.

"I want you to wait in the next room," Rabbi Landau told him. "The wine merchant will surely be here soon to ask me for the kosher for Pesah certificate so that he can sell his wine in Prague. Then I shall see what I can do."

Shortly afterwards, the wine merchant came to Rabbi Landau. He told the Rabbi, "This year my wine is especially kosher. It has been supervised by one of your former students. As always, I would like to get your kosher for Pesah certificate."

"This year I can't give you the certificate," said Rabbi Landau to the wine merchant. "The teacher was here and told me that the money which he hid between the wine barrels before Shabbat was stolen."

"Are You Suspecting Me of Being a Thief?"

"Rabbi, are you suspecting me of being a thief?" the merchant protested.

"Of course not," answered Rabbi Landau, "but that's exactly the problem! If you didn't take the money, then obviously there must have been someone else snooping around the wine barrels without any supervision. In that case, I cannot be sure that the wine is still kosher."

The merchant turned white. He had invested everything in this wine business, and without the Rabbi's certification he would be ruined. "Rabbi," the merchant said embarrassedly, "I confess. I took the money! No one else had access to the wine but me and the teacher. I will return his money immediately."

"It's not so simple," answered Rabbi Landau. "How can I be sure that you are not just saying this so that you shouldn't lose the business?"

The merchant begged the Rabbi to believe him. "I will do anything to repent."

"In that case," Rabbi Landau told him, "I will give you the certificate only on the condition that in addition to paying back the teacher's money, you will also share the profits of this year's sale with him. This way, you will compensate him for all the aggravation you caused."

The merchant agreed. Rabbi Landau then called the teacher from the next room and gave him the good news. The teacher not only received his lost money, but also did very well as a partner with the wine merchant.

Reprinted from the Pesach 5782 email of Rabbi David Bibi's Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

The Special Seder in Berditchev

One year, after the Seder of Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev, Rav Levi Yitzchok went to sleep. He had conducted a beautiful Seder with all his Talmidim around the table. He fell into a deep sleep and dreamt a strange dream. In the dream, Eliyahu HaNavi was talking with the Malachim, giving them an account of the Seder that he saw in people's homes. He described the excitement of the children as their eyes were looking at the Kos Shel Eliyahu, the cup for Eliyahu, to see if he came to visit them.

One of the Malachim asked, "But which was the most Chashuv, significant Seder that you visited? Was it Rav Levi Yitzchok's?"

Eliyahu responded, "The truth is, Rav Levi Yitzchok's Seder was full of interesting discussions on the Hagadah, but it cannot be compared to the Seder of Chaim the water carrier."

Jumped Out of Bed with a Start

At that, Rav Levi Yitzchok woke up with a start, and jumped out of bed. He had to speak with this water carrier named Chaim right away! He sent one of his students to seek out Chaim.

Eventually, the student found Chaim the water carrier in a run-down hut at the edge of the town, and brought him, in a daze and barely awake, to Rav Levi Yitzchok's house.

Rav Levi Yitzchok welcomed the puzzled man, and offered him a seat. Then he asked, "Tell me, my good Chaim, what happened last night at your Seder?"

Ashamed, and looking down at his worn-out shoes, Chaim answered, "What kind of a Seder could an ignorant, tired, fellow like me have? Yesterday, the day before Pesach, was a very hard day. All the houses were being cleaned, and water

was in great demand. I walked backwards and forwards all day, trying to supply everyone with enough water. I worked away without even a moment to rest.

“At the end of the day, I arrived home, completely exhausted. My wife Rachel was just lighting the candles for Yom Tov, and I asked her to let me rest a little, and I fell into a deep sleep. When I woke up, it was nearly dawn. Of course, I quickly woke up Rachel. There was no time now to read the whole Haggadah, so we drank the four cups of wine, ate the Matzah and some Maror, and with whatever time I had left, I pleaded with Hashem, ‘Ribono Shel Olam! Please forgive me, I’m a simple, ignorant man.

Lead Us Again into Freedom

“I know is that You saved us in the past from the cruel hands of the Egyptians, and You took us out of slavery to freedom. And now we are all in Galus again, and I ask You with all my heart to lead us again into freedom!”

Having finished his story, the water carrier waited, sure that the great Rav Levi Yitzchok would reprimand him for not making a proper Seder. But instead, Rav Levi Yitzchok put his hand on Chaim’s shoulder, and turned to his students and said, “It is extremely important to follow the order of the Seder, but now we know why this man’s Seder was the most pleasing to Eliyahu HaNavi.” Chaim, a simple Yid, in his one-sentence Seder, found favor in the eyes of Hashem, because of the depth of his sincerity, and his commitment to do the best that he could!

Reprinted from the Pesach 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Wionzeler’s Torah U’Tefilah

Where will We Get Our Matzos From?

Rav Dovid Bleicher, the Rosh Yeshiva of Novardok, would go around the surrounding towns to gather food for the bachurim in his Yeshiva. Before Pesach, he would go around collecting flour for matzos. After he received what was needed, he stored it in the attic of the Yeshiva.

A heavy rain came and broke through the roof making all the flour turn into chametz. The bachurim were now concerned where they would get kosher matzah from.

The Rosh Yeshiva got up to speak saying he has 4 questions. "Who commanded us to eat matzah on pesach?"

"Hashem!"

"Who helped me gather the flour for the matzah?"

"Hashem!"

"Who brought the hail that broke the roof?"

"Hashem!"

"Who sent the rain to make the flour into chametz?"

"Hashem!"

"So, for sure He will also send new flour for matzah!"

The day of bedikas chametz, a rich person came to town and gave a big donation. It was enough to pay for matzah for the whole Yeshiva!

Reprinted from the Pesach 5782 email of The Spring Hill Times.

Respecting Chol Hamo'ed

Adapted from the teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l

By: A. Ben-Ami illustrations by: Henny Paneth



“Hi Shimmy, Hi Yitzy! Happy Chol Hamo’ed!” The Greenbaum boys, who were just coming back from shul, looked up to see their neighbor, Stevey Risnik getting out of the back seat of his parents’ car, wearing a t-shirt, baseball cap, and large backpack.

“Gut mo’ed, Stevey,” both boys responded with a smile.

“So where did you guys go today?” Stevey asked.

“We went to shul to learn,” said Shimmy. “What about you?”

“Learning???” asked Stevey, aghast. “On Chol Hamo’ed?”

“Yeah, why not?” Yitzzy asked, perplexed. “And besides, today Anshel Holtzbacher sponsored Avos uBanim. He gave out amazing prizes and he even brought the Horki Rebbe to speak to all of the children.”

Getting an Autograph from the World-Famous Frisbee Thrower

“But it’s Chol Hamo’ed!” Stevey replied. “You’re supposed to go on trips! Today we went to Sea Monster World! I got to see the sharks, whales, and dolphins put on an amazing show together - they danced to music in the water! Tomorrow we’re going to the Chometz factory, and the next day my father got us tickets to the World Frisbee Championship! We’ve got box seats and I’m going to get my frisbee autographed by Yvon Shtunk, the world-famous frisbee thrower!”

“Wait, you’re going to a chometz factory on Pesach?” Shimmy asked in surprise.

“Yeah, what’s wrong with that?” asked Stevey. “It’s not like we’re going to eat it. But the whole place smells delicious and they’re having a special show about how amazing chometz is. They even have this catchy song all about eating chometz and it plays on the speakers throughout the whole tour. It’s the closest thing to eating chometz that you can do on Pesach!”

Bad Advice from the Greenbaum Boys

The Greenbaum boys thought that this was the silliest thing they ever heard, and it was probably ossur too, but they continued listening politely as Stevey continued. “My family always makes sure to go on the very best and most exciting trips on Chol Hamo’ed so that the holiday isn’t boring. Why don’t you come with us tomorrow? It’s chometz like you’ve never experienced it. It’s much more exciting than going to a learning group - this is vacation time, not a time to learn Torah!”

“That’s not what the Horki Rebbe said today,” said Shimmy. “In fact, he talked about the Gemara which states that ‘someone who doesn’t respect the Yomim Tovim, it’s as if they did Avodah Zarah’. And the best way to respect Yom Tov is by learning Torah.”

“Now that doesn’t make any sense,” said Stevey. “How is learning all day respecting the holiday? I would think wildly fun trips are the way to do that.”

“Well,” said Yitzzy. “The Rebbe said that Yomim Tovim are a way to recharge our ‘ruchniyus batteries’. The whole year all sorts of things keep us busy, like dentist appointments and shopping - and adults have to go to work. But now we can’t do any of those things, so it’s a chance for us to reconnect with Hashem by spending time learning his Torah.”

“That doesn’t mean it can’t be enjoyable,” added Shimmy, holding up the big box in his hand. “Look, Yitzy and I won a camera at the raffle after learning today! And tomorrow, the Holtzbachers arranged for us to go on a trip to the nearby forest with the Horki Rebbe, who is going to show us all of the amazing things that Hashem created. There are all sorts of incredible plants and animals there and each one is so fascinating. They even have trees which produce the fancy expensive wood that they used to build the Aron Kodesh in the Horki Beis Midrash.”

Stevey’s eyes opened wide. “I heard they have frogs in the forest. Is that true?”

“Yep!” said Yitzy. “And you can see the baby tadpoles swimming in the ponds there! Last year the Horki Rebbe explained how important those frogs are to the forest and its animals. They eat mosquitos so there are less of them to bite us, they are food for some birds, and the tadpoles actually filter the water to keep it clean! And that’s just a tiny bit of the incredible ways you can see Hashem’s wonders in a walk through the forest!”

“Hmmm,” thought Stevey. “That sounds even more interesting than the chometz factory. Do you think the Rabbi would mind if I came along?”

“Of course not!” both boys said graciously.

“Thanks!” Stevey said. “I’m curious to learn more about how you respect Chol Hamo’ed! I want to do that too!”

Have a Wonderful Yom Tov!

Reprinted from the Pesach 5782 email of Toras Avigdor Junior.

Pesach in Istanbul

Rav Gamliel Rabbinowitz relates a story. The Pasuk in Parashas Bo (12:42) says that the night of Pesach is Leil Shimurim, a night of protection from the harmful elements, and Rashi explains that it is protected from that time and onward against harmful spirits, as the Pasuk says (12:23), Hashem will not allow the destroyer to destroy.

Many years ago in Turkey, there was a sultan in the capitol city of Istanbul, who was a good and benevolent ruler. He showed kindness to all the citizens of the country. Even the Jews in the country benefited with a life of peace and tranquility, since he loved Israel and he appreciated the Jews and their contributions to society, in all areas, which added to the success of the kingdom.

The Rav of the city of Istanbul at that time was called Chacham Bashi, who was a Tzadik, a Gaon, and exceptional in Torah. He was wise and clever, and he

trained his community to conduct themselves simply, with good Middos and respect for others. The sultan valued him greatly, as he was aware of his virtues, and he increasingly asked him for advice with all matters. His advice was always accurate, and his wisdom and understanding constantly helped the sultan.



However, as in all kingdoms, one of the sultan's officers in Istanbul was a sworn enemy of the Jews. It was contemptuous to him how good the king treated the Jews. He boiled with rage every time he saw the king bestow honor on the Chief Rabbi of Istanbul. He made all kinds of attempts to cause trouble for the Jews, and he even tried to influence the heart of the king with this. He told the king all sorts of false accusations and lies about the Jews, as is common in the world to degrade the Jews, and he tried to convince him to persecute them and hate them.

The Devious Plan of the Anti-Semitic Officer

But the sultan was no fool, and he knew quite well that the officer was only speaking through jealousy and hatred, and he gave no substance to his words. One day, the officer came up with a daring idea. He secretly dug a tunnel that connected his home to the king's palace, and it opened directly by the private room of the exalted sultan. When he finished digging, he dressed up like Muhammed, Yimach Shemo.

He put on a white and shiny robe, put an ancient turban on his head, adorned himself with a white beard, and with an ancient sword in his right hand, he revealed himself to the sultan in the middle of the night. He woke him from his sleep, and

introduced himself as a messenger from Allah, who commanded him from heaven that he should immediately evict all the Jews from his land, because they were deniers of Islam, and if he was brazen enough to go against his mission, they would exact vengeance from him!

The Devious Escape from the Sultan's Bedroom

In order that he not reveal his ruse, when he concluded his speech, he commanded the sultan to turn on his other side and to close his eyes, as a living person is not allowed to see him go up to heaven in a burst of fire. This is how he escaped back in the tunnel which brought him back to his house. The sultan, who was a devout Muslim, tended to believe this awesome vision.

However, even so, his heart was not able to evict an entire nation who had not done anything wrong, and he took no action. This repeated itself every night, until one evening, when the patience of 'Muhammed' wore out, and he threatened him that this would be the last warning. If he did not evict all the Jews from the streets of Turkey by the next evening, he would be killed by the sword for his heresy!

This happened on the night of Erev Pesach, and the next night when the ultimatum would expire, would be the night of the Seder! The next morning, the sultan urgently invited the great Chacham Bashi to come to the palace. With great distress, he told him the entire incident.

The Sultan's Fear for His Life

"I know that today is Erev Pesach on the Jewish calendar," the sultan said, "and it is a great day for the Jews. However, I very much fear for my life, and I am forced to fulfill this decree!"

The Rav requested two hours, so that the Jews would have enough time to burn their Chomeitz, and in the meantime he would seek advice for the matter. The Rav left the sultan's palace with a broken heart, and he did not know how to come up with a solution.

He thought, 'First, I must hurry to burn the Chomeitz before the time for burning passes.' On the way, he met an old man with a dignified countenance. He had a glorious white beard, and he was illuminated with the light of holiness. He was a respected 'collector' from the holy city of Yerushalayim, one of the thirty-six hidden Tzadikim in the generation.

After they greeted each other with 'Shalom', the collector noticed that the Rav was wrapped in sadness and worry. When he asked him why this was, the Rav told him about the harsh decree that befell the Jews of Turkey just on that day. They were about to be evicted immediately!

The collector said to him, "Remove the worry from your heart. Go to the sultan and tell him that everything is nonsense, and it was just a certain officer that

was playing a trick on him, and appearing as a prophet and threatening his life.” He then whispered in his ear about the secret tunnel.

Chacham Bashi hurried to the sultan’s palace, and together they searched and carefully investigated the sultan’s room, and they found the hidden tunnel! The Rav advised the sultan to place a group of soldiers that night, hidden in a corner of the room, and when the culprit comes out from his secret tunnel, they should grab him, and catch him in the act.

At midnight that night, the night of Guarding from Harmful Spirits, when the fake ‘Muhammed’ reveled himself to the sultan, the guards of the watch fell upon him, and apprehended him. The king then exposed his real face and punished him accordingly, and the Yidden of Turkey celebrated being saved from distress to relief!

Reprinted from the Acharon Shel Pesach 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’Tefilah

Responding with Ahavas Chinom



Rav Frand relates that Rav Avraham Yitzchok HaKohein Kook, zt”l, the first Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisroel in modern times, was an outstanding genius, but he was a controversial figure. Certain people took issue with many of his ideas and positions.

Rav Kook was once speaking somewhere, and one of the zealots started yelling at him in the middle of his Drashah. The outburst did not faze Rav Kook. He

continued with his Drashah, but it was certainly an embarrassment for this Torah giant.

Later that same year, by Pesach time, Rav Kook distributed Maos Chitim, Tzedakah for Yom Tov, to those who needed. He gave his Gabai a list of the poor people that should be distributed to, and this very person who had so inappropriately embarrassed the Chief Rabbi earlier that year, was on the list to receive Tzedakah!

The Gabai told Rav Kook, “I refuse to give him the money! How could you give such a person money after what he did to you?”

Rav Kook responded to him, “If you do not deliver the money to him, then I will!” The Rav explained, “Chazal say that the Bais HaMikdash was destroyed because of Sinas Chinam, unjustified hatred of another Jew, and if the Bais HaMikdash was destroyed because of Sinas Chinam, the only way it will be rebuilt is with Ahavas Chinam, unjustified love of another Jew. Ahavas Chinam means that you like the person for no reason, just like Sinas Chinam means that you hate the person for no reason.

The Concept of Ahavas Chinam

When one Jew loves another Jew for ‘no reason,’ that is not really Ahavas Chinam, because there is a Mitzvah to love your fellow Jew like yourself. I need to love every Jew according to Torah law. The fact that I love another Jew cannot be called Ahavas Chinam.

That is an Ahavah that we are bound to from the time of Har Sinai! What then, is Ahavas Chinam? It is when a person insults you and embarrasses you, and you have every justification in the world to put him on your ‘enemies’ list, and to totally ignore him, and nevertheless, you show him love and compassion, and give him money when he is in need. That is Ahavas Chinam!”

Reprinted from the Pesach 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Wionzeler's Torah U'Tefilah

Baron Rothschild and the Bobover Rebbe

Rav Elimelech Biderman once said a story. Baron Rothschild once invited Rav Shlomo Halberstam, the first Bobover Rebbe, zt”l, to visit his beautiful mansion. The Bobover Rebbe came, and Baron Rothschild showed him around his home.

“And here is the Pesach suite,” Baron Rothschild happily showed him. “Chomeitz never comes in here. It’s Pesachdik all year round.”

The Bobover Rebbe wasn't impressed.

Baron Rothschild asked, "Isn't it important to be careful from Chomeitz?"

"Of course," the Rebbe replied.

"So why aren't you impressed with my Pesach suite?"

Give Away all the Money in the World in Order to Perform a Mitzvah

The Bobover Rebbe replied, "It's true that you are wealthier than my grandfather, the Divrei Chaim of Sanz, zt"l, but when it comes to Mitzvos, my grandfather was wealthier than you. He would give all the money in the world to do a Mitzvah. My grandfather didn't have a Pesach suite, so apparently, it isn't a Hiddur, and therefore, it isn't necessary."

The Bobover Rebbe explained that the point of the Torah isn't to escape challenges. The Torah desires the challenge, the struggle. Hashem wants us to clean the house and get rid of the Chomeitz. If one makes Avodas Hashem too easy, for example, by moving into a Chomeitz-free environment for Pesach, he misses the point of the Torah.

A Lesson from the Mitzvah of Matzah Itself

An example of this principle, the Bobover Rebbe added, is seen from the Mitzvah of Matzah itself. Matzah is made from flour and water, ingredients that could potentially tum into Chomeitz if one isn't careful. But good Yidden bake the Matzos quickly, before it rises, and then they use it for the Mitzvah of Matzah.

If one would make Matzah from rice flour or from corn flour, ingredients that can never become Chomeitz, he wouldn't have Matzah. This demonstrates that Hashem desires the struggles, and that we should serve Hashem as best we can in those situations!

Reprinted from the Acharon Shel Pesach 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah