

The **PESACH** Handbook

Published by Ohr Somayach - Tanenbaum College • Pesach 5771 / 2011



The Greatest Miracle *Page 2*
by Rav Mendel Weinbach
Another perspective of the Exodus and the Splitting of the Sea.

Leaving the Mitzraim Within Us *Page 3*
by Rav Yitzchok Breitowitz
Pesach commemorates the dramatic exodus of the Jews from Egypt after a sojourn of 210 years.

The Four Sons *Page 5*
Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb
An analysis of who exactly the Four Sons really are.

Into the Light *Page 7*
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair
The essence of the Passover story is a journey from slavery into freedom, from darkness into light.

Seeds of Eternity
by Rabbi Reuven Subar
The First Seder in History *Page 10*

Up to the Brim
by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer
What is the point of Elijah's Cup; what exactly is its function? *Page 9*

The Laws of the PESACH SEDER
by Rabbi Mordechai Becher
A bare-bones guide to conducting the Seder. *Page 12*

Hagaddah Insights *Page 16*

The Greatest Miracle

BY RAV MENDEL WEINBACH

Another perspective of the Exodus and the Splitting of the Sea

What was the greatest of the miracles which we read about in the Torah's account of the Exodus from Egypt? Was it the plethora of supernatural plagues – anywhere from 10 to 250 according to the Sages quoted in the Haggadah – visited upon the Egyptians?

Was it the fact that millions of former slaves marched out, in broad daylight, from a land from which no single slave had ever escaped?

Was it the splitting of the sea which allowed a pursued people to cross on dry land while their pursuers drowned?

All of these were indeed great miracles, but if we wish to identify the greatest miracle of all we must turn to the passage in which G-d informs Moshe "I shall strengthen the heart of Pharaoh and he will pursue them." (*Shmot* 14:4)

In his commentary on this passage Ramban points out that there was a need to harden the heart of the Egyptian ruler because he had been so intimidated by the plagues that he was glad to see Moshe take the people out of the land and had no interest in pursuing them. In the Divine plan that "I will be glorified through Pharaoh and his entire army" it was necessary to virtually coerce this wicked ruler to race to his own destruction. In a later passage (14:17) that describes the scene at the sea, there is a repetition of this "strengthening of the heart of Egypt and they will come after them."

This Heavenly intervention in the decision of Pharaoh and his army was necessary because they saw the sea split and the Israelites crossing on dry land in its midst. How could they then have had the courage to pursue them in order to harm them? None of the miracles that occurred could compare to this, for theirs was an act of insanity brought about by G-d's hardening their hearts to enter the sea.

What makes this miracle of Heavenly intervention stand out from the rest?

It is our fundamental belief that "everything is deter-

mined by Heaven except fear of Heaven." The Creator of man endowed him with free will and it is therefore his freedom to choose good or evil which makes him susceptible to retribution.

There is, however, one exception!

"The heart of the king," says King Shlomo, the wisest of men, "is in the hand of G-d; He can direct it to wherever He wishes." (*Mishlei* 21:1)

In his personal affairs the ruler may also have free will, but if his decision affects a nation or the world he becomes a mere puppet in the Divine plan.

History is filled with examples ranging from the sudden change of heart of Esav who threatened to destroy the Jewish people by murdering his brother Yaakov, to the insanity of the Nazis opening a second front in Russia which brought an end to the Third Reich. In between these world-shaking turnabouts is the madness of Pharaoh rushing into the sea.

Of course water turning into blood and the rest of the ten plagues are miracles, but they are really nothing more than a dramatic demonstration of the Creator's control over His creation. But when the Creator shows that even in that sphere of life in which man is given control, that power can be taken from him and he is orchestrated for self-destruction, Pharaoh's self-destruction becomes the greatest miracle of all!

This is why Pharaoh's self-destruction is the greatest miracle of all.

An important lesson can be learned from the above-mentioned observation of King Shlomo and the historical vindications of his wisdom. Everyone is wondering what the new people coming to power in Arab lands will be like in regard to Israel and how their decisions will affect the entire world. This is the time to remember that their hearts, like those of the ones they removed from power, are in the hands of G-d. We can only pray that G-d will direct those hearts to seek peace for the benefit of Israel and the entire world.

Leaving the Mitzraim Within Us

*Pesach
commemorates
the dramatic
exodus of the
Jews from Egypt
after a sojourn
of 210 years.*

BY
RAV
YITZCHAK
BREITOWITZ

The centrality of this experience in Jewish life cannot be overstated. There is a Mitzvah to recount and remember the Exodus every day of the year, morning and evening. In Friday night kiddush we declare “*zecher l’yetziat mitzrayim*” (“in commemoration of the Exodus from Egypt”). The annual Pesach Seder is the most beloved and celebrated Jewish ritual in America. For over three thousand years it has been a primary vehicle for the transmission of our history, our values, and our heritage to our children. As a multimedia pedagogical experience it has yet to be surpassed.

Certainly even Jews of minimal commitment and knowledge are conversant with the basic contours of the Exodus story. Yet there is an aspect of remembering the Exodus that is often overlooked. Slavery takes many forms. There is indeed the obvious slavery of physical persecution and oppression. But there are more subtle forms as well. One can be externally free and nevertheless enslaved to an evil within oneself. Power, envy, intolerance, hatred, cruelty, selfishness, despair, and apathy are all chains that can shackle, cripple, or disable the human spirit far more than the lashings of the harshest taskmaster. Especially where Jews have political freedom, it is often the internal Mitzrayim that poses the greatest threat. It is easier to take the Jew out of Mitzrayim than to take Mitzrayim out of the Jew.

A great Chassidic teacher once explained that the time-honored rituals of the Seder serve not only to commemorate our freedom from the Biblical Mitzrayim, but as a means to achieve redemption from the personal

Mitzrayim within each and every one of us.

Let us focus briefly on seven selected aspects:

(1) **The Use of Questions:** The Talmud makes clear that the narrative of the Haggadah must be preceded by questions. (This is of course the “*Ma Nishtana*”.) Even if one is celebrating Pesach alone, these questions must be articulated. Thus, step one to achieving spiritual freedom: Be willing to ask honest questions. Don’t close the door. Be a seeker of wisdom.

(2) **Growing from Adversity:** The halacha requires that one begin the Haggadah narrative not with the redemption but with the account of slavery and adversity. This reminds us that even in adversity, failure, or disappointment, there lie the seeds of hope and regeneration; that often our greatest growth arises not from our successes, but from our failures and mistakes if we are courageous and perceptive enough to learn from them.

(3) **Maror:** Eating bitter herbs highlights the need to honestly recognize and confront these destructive aspects of behavior that are bitter and enslaving.

(4) **Four cups of wine/reclining:** This calls upon us to recognize that notwithstanding the maror — enslavers — we have the innate capacity and spiritual greatness (with G-d’s help) to become liberated. Awareness of our faults must be coupled with an equal awareness of our potential for self-improvement, goodness, and nobility of character.

(5) **Matza:** All flour mixed with water will become chametz if left unattended for eighteen minutes. If baked before that time, however, what would have become chametz is Matza instead. This

continued on page four

teaches us the need for decisive action. Far too often we are momentarily inspired to make positive changes in our lives, but by failing to concretize that resolution into action we allow the inspiration to dissipate.

(6) **Paschal Lamb:** Of all the many sacrifices this was the only one that could be brought only in collaboration with other people. A single individual standing alone could not bring the Korban Pesach. In all our attempts to reach G-dliness, we must link ourselves to the total Jewish Community in love and concern.

(7) **Intergenerational Communication:** Ultimately, Judaism survives not through schools or synagogues, but through families — parent to child, child to parent

— the established, indispensable formula for growth developed in the Haggadah.

Be an honest searcher, recognize the redemptive potential even in adversity, honestly and courageously confront your faults, believe in your potential for spiritual greatness, be willing to take decisive action, inculcate within yourself a sense of love and compassion for K'lal Yisrael, foster the bonds of intergenerational communication with your parents, your children, or both. These seven steps may not change the world, but they will certainly enable each of us to achieve the “*cheirut hanefesh*” (freedom of the soul) which is at the core of the Exodus experience.

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BY RABBI DR DOVID GOTTLIEB

The Four Sons

An Analysis of Who Exactly the Four Sons Really Are

The Torah refers to four sons: One wise, one wicked, one simple and one who does not know how to ask a question. What does the wise son say? “What are the testimonials, statutes and laws Hashem our G-d commanded you?”

You should tell him about the laws of Pesach, that one may eat no dessert after eating the Pesach offering.

What does the wicked son say? “What does this drudgery mean to you?” To you and not to him. Since he excludes himself from the community, he has denied a basic principle of Judaism. You should blunt his teeth by saying to him: “It is for the sake of this that Hashem did for me when I left Egypt. For me and not for him. If he was there he would not have been redeemed.”

What does the simple son say? “What’s this?” You should say to him, “With a strong hand Hashem took me out of Egypt, from the house of servitude.” And the one who does not know how to ask, you start for him, as the Torah says: “And you should tell your son on that day, saying ‘It is for the sake of this that Hashem did for me when I left Egypt.’”

The passage of the four sons raises many questions: The wise and wicked sons seem to be opposites, but then, why isn't the wise son called 'the good son?'

Is the simple son the opposite of the one who does not know how to ask? If so, how are they opposites?

The simple son's question - "What's this?" - is as simple as can be. Who, then, is the son who does not even know how to ask? A little baby?

The wicked son is told: "It is because of this that Hashem did 'for me' when I went out of Egypt - for me and **not** for him - had he been there he would not have

been redeemed." Why is the wicked son answered in third person?

The verse used to answer the wicked son is the same verse used to answer the one who does not know how to ask. Why?

The sons divide into two pairs - the wise and the simple on one side, and the wicked and the one who does not know how to ask on the other.

The simple son wants to learn. He looks up to the wise son and emulates him. When he hears the wise son asking questions, he also wants to ask. His question 'What's this?' lacks the sophistication of the

continued on page six

wise son's question, but it reflects the same sincere desire to learn and understand.

The one who does not know how to ask admires the wicked son. He desires to show the same ironic contempt for the Torah, but unlike the wicked son he lacks the requisite cleverness. Not trusting himself to attack as effectively as his mentor, he remains silent.

The wicked son's 'question' is merely rhetorical - it deserves no response at all. Yet, the one who does not know how to ask is sitting at the table listening to the wicked son's remarks. He's in danger of being influenced. Therefore, our response to the wicked son is to say to the one who doesn't even know how to ask: "Don't be influenced by his smug cynicism. Had *he* been in Egypt, he would not have been redeemed. He is cutting himself off from the eternity of the Jewish people."

This difference in approach is described in the book of Proverbs (26:4,5): "Do not answer the fool according to his foolishness, lest you become equal to him. Answer the fool according to his foolishness, lest he be wise in his own eyes." This seems like a contradiction: Should we answer the fool or not?

The answer is that there are two types of fools. One type of fool already 'knows' everything. For him, discussion is merely an opportunity to show off his 'superior' knowledge. There is no point in answering him, because he will never admit a fault. On the contrary, our attempts to educate him will meet with ridicule. As he rejects our insights one after another, the fruitlessness of our efforts makes *us* appear foolish.

But there is another type of fool: One aware of his limitations. His views are wrong and foolish, but he's not completely closed to instruction. If we open the lines of communication we can have an impact on

him. If we don't reach out to him, he'll eventually start to think: "I've held these views for so long, and no one has ever contradicted me - so, I must be right!"

There is a profound message here for our times. We are all confronted with people who scoff at the Torah. We often have to decide if and how to respond. The book of Proverbs teaches us that our primary responsibility is to improve the critic by our response. If that is impossible, then responding is a waste of time. But if it is possible, then we must not wait for his initiation. We must reach out to him and start the dialogue.

Notice, however, that the wicked son is at the Seder! We do not exclude him or reject him personally. Only discussion is avoided, since discussion has no point. The inclusion of the wicked son at the Seder expresses our conviction that no Jew is ever irretrievably lost. We hope our stern response will shake his proud self-confidence to the point where real discussion becomes possible.

"Who is wise? He who learns from every person (*Pirkei Avos* 4:1)." Indeed, the classical title for a Torah scholar is '*Talmid Chacham*' - a wise student.

What is the idea behind this definition? In order to learn from others, one needs two crucial insights. First, "I am lacking. There is much that I do not know." And second, "Others possess the knowledge which I need."

Now we can appreciate why the Haggadah juxtaposes the wise and the wicked sons. The central failure in the wicked son is his close-mindedness. The heart of his evil is the supreme foolishness to think that his understanding is perfect. Thus he is the diametrical opposite of the wise son who is completely open to the instruction of others.

THE PESACH HANDBOOK

Published by Ohr Somayach Institutions - Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180 Israel • info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu • Tel: 972-2-581-0315 Fax: 972-2-581-2890

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General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman Compiled by: Rabbi Richard Jacobs Concept: Yehuda Goldman Design: Eliezer Shapiro

Into the LIGHT

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

CHARLIE BROWN PERPLEXED

Imagine you're a cartoon artist. The character you're drawing has a question on his mind. You draw his furrowed brow. Small drops of perspiration start to leap from his forehead, depicting his mental gymnastics as he wrestles with the question. Suddenly the answer pops into his head. How do you draw this? You draw a light-bulb coming on in his head. The cartoon convention for a person discovering the answer to a question is a light-bulb. It's not by coincidence. A question is like darkness. A question means you're "in the dark." An answer is like a revealing light. The answer "dawns" on you. All the world sees knowledge as light. And the lack of knowledge as darkness.

THIS IS A QUESTION?

There's a famous Jewish joke which goes: "Why do Jews always answer one question with another?" "I don't know, why do they?" Jews have always asked questions. Mark Twain spoke of the Jew's "aggressive and inquisitive mind." The basic linguistic structure of the Talmud is *shakla v'tarya*, the "give and take" of question and answer. More than any other festival, Passover is a time of questions and answers. If there's one image that symbolizes the Passover Seder meal, it must be the

youngest child summoning up all of his or her courage and asking "Ma Nishtana?" "Why is this night different from all other nights?" — the Four Questions.

Look in the Haggadah — the universal Jewish text which tells the story of the Exodus — however, and you'll find many more than just four questions: "The wise son, what does he say? 'What are the testimonies, decrees and ordinances which Hashem, our G-d, has commanded you?' The wicked son, what does he say? 'Of what purpose is this work to you?' The simple son, what does he say? 'What is this?' ... "Rabbi Yossi, the Galilean said: 'How does one derive that the Egyptians were struck... with fifty plagues at the sea?' " ...Matza — Why do we eat this unleavened bread? ...Maror — Why do we eat this bitter herb?" ...Who knows one? Who knows two? three? four? etc."

Asking and answering is the essence of the Seder. In fact, two Torah scholars making the Seder together are still obliged to ask each other these same questions. More. A lone Torah scholar would ask and answer those questions to himself. It must be, then, that the methodology of question and answer reveals something essential about the Passover experience.

FEELING THE DARKNESS

"And there was evening, and there was morning, one day." (Genesis 1:5) The Torah teaches us that night precedes

continued on page eight

INTO THE LIGHT *continued from page seven*

day. First came evening and only then morning. What is the message of this process? Why should night precede day?

This is a world which starts in deficiency, in night. In this world, perfection can only come after imperfection. Morning can only come after evening. Light can only come after dark. In the existence beyond this world, perfection can exist without a preceding imperfection. That is a world of truth. A world of light. A world of total revelation. But in this world we can only approach perfection by a journey from the imperfect. Thus, in this world, our view of perfection is something which is always preceded by imperfection. Absence leads to presence. Emptiness becomes filled. Night becomes day.

HOW BRIGHT IS LIGHT?

"And there was evening, and there was morning, one day." This is a relative world. Only to the extent that there was evening can there be morning. When a person emerges from a darkened room, he squints and hides his eyes from the sunlight. His perception of the light is a function of his perception of the darkness. When we begin at the bottom, the top seems higher when we get there. In a sense, when we start at the bottom the top *is* higher, for in our struggle, we have endowed the summit with all the elevation of our climb. True elevation only comes with a climb from a low place.

The lowest place in the world three thousand years ago was Egypt. Egypt was the epitome of spiritual impurity. Egypt was the most spiritually poisonous place in the world. The mystics talk of 49 gates of

spiritual corruption. The Jews in Egypt had reached that 49th gate, the spiritual nadir. The word for spiritual impurity — *tuma* — connotes constriction, being sealed off. The opposite of *tuma* is *tahara*. *Tahara* comes from the same root as the word for light and shining. When we talk of the Exodus as being a journey from darkness into light, this is not mere poetic sentiment. The Exodus was an escape from a literal darkness of the soul into the light.

FORM AND CONTENT

The essence of the Passover story is a journey from slavery into freedom, from darkness into light. As the Haggadah says, *"Originally our ancestors were idol worshippers, but now the Omnipresent has brought us near to Him."* The Seder is designed for us to experience the Exodus to the maximum degree. Our aim is to feel as though we ourselves were actually leaving Egypt. The great Sages who formulated the Haggadah wanted us to experience that journey from darkness into light not just in the content of the words of the Haggadah, but in its very form and style. They constructed the Haggadah as a paradigm for the Exodus itself. Slavery to freedom. Darkness into light. Question into answer. The light bulb comes on.

Sources:

- Maharal
- Pachad Yitzchak
- Thanks to Rabbi Mordechai Kreitenberg

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Up to the Brim

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

If I try very hard, I can still conjure up that childhood feeling of awe as my father began the lengthy job of filling up Elijah's Cup at our Seder table. Nearly a whole bottle of wine was used to fill up the oversized silver goblet and, in my childish eyes, it was by far the most impressive moment of the night. Imagine, almost a whole bottle! Who was going to drink all that wine?

As a child I eagerly drank up my father's explanation that on Pesach night Elijah the Prophet goes from house to house and drinks up all the cups of wine from all the houses where a Seder is taking place. When I was younger I never really stopped to wonder what Elijah had to do with the Seder and why he had to drink all that wine. In fact, it never occurred to me that perhaps the wine wasn't drunk by Elijah at all. As I got older and I stayed up until the end of Seder, I had a somewhat rude awakening (pun intended) when I saw the wine being poured back into the bottle. It transpired that Elijah didn't drink the wine after all.

And that got me thinking. What is the point of Elijah's Cup; what exactly is its function?

Pesach is the time of Redemption and the Rabbis describe Elijah as being the Angel of Redemption. We believe that in the same way that we were redeemed from Egypt, so too will we be redeemed from our present lengthy exile. Tradition teaches that it is Elijah who will announce the coming of the Mashiach, and the cup is prepared as a sign of our desire that he should come as speedily as he can to do so. Our Sages tell of a certain Rabbi in Talmudic times who met Elijah and asked him when the Mashiach would come. Elijah told him that he would come immediately. When he didn't materialize the Rabbi was very upset, and the next time he met Elijah he berated him for not having

been accurate in his assessment. Elijah, after hearing him out, explained to him that he had meant every word. But, ultimately, it was entirely up to us whether the Mashiach comes or not. If we truly want him to come he will come without delay. And if we are not too enthusiastic about the idea, well, Elijah will have to wait until we change our minds.

So what can we do to change the state of affairs? There is an anecdote that might help us attain a better perspective. Once the famed Chassidic Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, sent one of his followers to open the door after filling Elijah's Cup on Seder night. However the man was frozen to the spot and couldn't do it. When he was asked why, he said that he was scared stiff as he was absolutely certain that Elijah the Prophet must be waiting outside the door of such a pious and august person as the Rebbe, just waiting to be invited in. Answered Rabbi Menachem Mendel "You're wrong! Elijah the Prophet enters through the heart, not the door!"

And it is in exactly the same way that we can allow Elijah to appear and proclaim to everyone that the Mashiach is on his way. This Seder night, as we all fill up our cups for Elijah the Prophet, let's fill them right up to the very top. Let's turn Elijah's Cup into the symbol of all our hopes and aspirations for the future brimming over with optimism that this year we can make all the difference. Like the Rebbe from Kotzk, let us open our hearts to allow Elijah to enter into our lives.

And, who knows? Perhaps, if we do so there won't be any need to pour the wine back into the bottle this Pesach after the Seder.

And Next Year in Jerusalem will become a reality rather than just a song.

Seeds of Eternity

The First Seder in History

BY RABBI REUVEN SUBAR

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

The answer lies in the very first Pesach Seder in history.

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

Only one person - *Moshe Rabbeinu* - had children who did

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

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

Because *Moshe Rabbeinu* inaugurated '*Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*' - the telling of the going out of Egypt - it remains a Mitzvah forever rooted in the hearts of the entire Jewish People.

CLEAN MEAN MATZA MACHINE

The difference between hand-made and machine-made Matza

BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

Since the Exodus, Jews have zealously carried out all the fine details concerning the baking of the Matza, whose method has remained basically unchanged for all those years. Careful and agile hands have performed each process from making the dough until the baking was complete.

About one hundred and fifty years ago, a machine was invented for baking Matza. Most of the processes were done by this machine, and the *matzot* were untouched by human hands. The rabbinical authorities at that time and afterward were divided in their opinions as to whether *matzot* baked by machinery should be permitted on Passover.

Those who rejected using machine Matza argued that when making Matza we must be fully conscious of the fact that we are performing a Mitzvah. A machine has no such intention. They also claimed that the intricacy of the machinery makes it impossible to ensure that no pieces of dough remain in the apparatus that would render the Matza *chametz*. Furthermore, the fast-moving metal parts of the machine generate heat that might cause the dough to ferment. Also, the time limit for the process of making dough that has been handed down to us by tradition is

specifically regarding hand-made dough. Since we have no such tradition regarding the time limit for machine-made dough, they claimed, we have to take a strict view and retain the original method.

Those in favor of using machine-baked Matza — and they are in the majority — argued that since it is baked more quickly, there is less of a danger of it becoming *chametz* than when the work is done by hand, providing that special care is taken to ensure that the parts of the machinery are kept clean and that no pieces of dough remain which could be transferred from one batch to the next. In addition, they produced counter-arguments to all of the above claims so that their opinion has finally generally been accepted as correct and is followed by many who fulfill the Mitzvah on Passover by eating Matza that has been baked by machinery.

However, there are still many meticulous Jews who take great effort and expense to eat only hand-made Matza for the whole of Passover. And even among those who don't eat only hand-made Matza, many are careful to use it to fulfill the special Matza-eating on the first night of Passover at the Seder.

Pesach Cleaning Primer

BY RABBI MORDECHAI BECHER

Rabbi Becher was a Senior Lecturer in the Ohr Somayach Main Campus in Jerusalem for many years. He is now a Senior Lecturer for Gateways Organization and the author of the best-selling "Gateway to Judaism."

The following instructions are by no means a complete halachic guide for Pesach. A Rabbi should be consulted for any questions and doubts that arise, and refer to the many books available that present the *halachot* in detail. The following instructions are based on classes given by Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, *shlita*.

1. All places or articles into which chametz (leavened grain products, eg. bread, crackers, cake) is usually brought during the year must be cleansed and checked for chametz before the evening preceding the Seder. The search for chametz (details of which can be found in the Haggadah) is started at nightfall on the evening preceding the Seder.

2. Any article or place which is not used on Pesach, which is closed up and sold, does not need to be checked for chametz.

3. Chametz that has been rendered inedible (even to an animal) by being soaked in a foul-tasting liquid such as detergent, "Draino", bleach or ammonia is not considered chametz.

4. There is no obligation to check and destroy chametz

that is less than the size of an olive (approx. 30 grams) and is so dirty that a person would not eat it.

5. Surfaces, closets and cracks where it is possible that chametz has entered should be washed, ensuring that detergent enters all cracks and crevices.

6. Kashering for Pesach is done in the same way as during the year

7. It is customary to also cover any surfaces that have been kashered and that will be used for food, or for utensils on Pesach; e.g. tables, countertops, cabinets and stovetops, with plastic, linoleum or aluminum foil.

8. Any chametz that will not be consumed or destroyed before Pesach must be sold to a Gentile before the time of prohibition of chametz (the time of the prohibition is printed in Jewish calendars and newspapers) for all of Pesach. The transaction should be performed by a Rabbi, since the laws are complex and a contract is necessary. The chametz that has been sold must be stored away until after Pesach.

Short PESACH Q&A

Q: Why is Moses' name not mentioned in the Haggadah?

A: To answer this question, let's look at the very first Pesach Seder in history.

After a full year in the desert, the Jewish People celebrated the Pesach festival. They offered the Paschal lamb and ate *matza* and *maror*. But when it came time to tell the Pesach story, whom did they tell it to? To whom did they relate the plagues and miracles, the Strong Hand and Outstretched Arm? Everybody was there! Everyone saw it with his own eyes!

Only one person had children who did not personally experience the going out of Egypt - Moses! Moses' two sons were in Midian during the Exodus. Moses, therefore, was the first person in history to relate the Pesach story to children who didn't know it first-hand.

As we know, "Moses was the most humble person on the face of the earth." Would you be surprised, then, if the world's humblest person omitted his name from the story, and instead he attributed all the credit to G-d? This would then become a precedent for future generations.

Looking for a remarkable essay which reveals the secret of the structure of the Haggadah, a puzzle which has challenged generations of scholars?

Malbim's Introduction to the Haggadah available at <http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/802>

The Laws of the Pesach Seder - “Unleavened”

A bare-bones guide to conducting the Seder

BY RABBI MORDECHAI BECHER

- The seder table should already be set before nightfall, with the seder plate, *matzot*, cups etc.
- The seder plate should contain, starting from top left (NE) going clockwise: an egg lightly roasted, a piece of meat (chicken also OK), *charoset* (usually made of grated apple, ground walnuts, cinnamon, red wine and dates), *chazeret* (a vegetable), *karpas* (potato, parsley etc.) and in the middle *maror* (the bitter herb - horseradish or romaine lettuce). A bowl of salt water should be placed on the table but not on the plate.
- Three whole *matzot shmura* should be placed under or in front of the plate. They should be covered and separated from each other by a napkin or cloth. *Matzot shmura* are *matzot* that were made for the sake of the mitzvah and from wheat that was protected from moisture from the time of its harvest. They are the *matzot* that one should use for the commandments of the Seder.
- Seats should be equipped with cushions so that the participants can lean on their left sides while eating and reciting the Haggadah (except for eating of the *maror*) to imitate freemen and nobility.
- Everyone should have a cup that holds at least 86 cc. and there should be enough wine to fill four cups for each person at the Seder. Red wine is preferable but white wine may also be used. Children and pregnant women, or people who for health reasons cannot drink wine, may fulfill the obligation with grape juice (preferably, with a little wine mixed in). The cups should be filled to the brim for each of the four cups of wine.
- *Kiddush* is recited by the person conducting the Seder while holding the cup in his right hand. The participants should listen to his words, keep in mind that they are fulfilling their obligation through his recitation, and say *amen* when he finishes each blessing. Everyone then drinks the majority of their cup while leaning to their left. (Try to finish the drink in two gulps.)
- Everyone then washes their hands. Water is poured from a cup, twice on the right hand and twice on the left, no blessing is recited.
- The *karpas* (celery, parsley, boiled potato) is then dipped in the salt water and eaten, after reciting the blessing “*borei pri ha’adama*” as printed in the Haggadah.
- The middle matza is broken into two. The larger part is set aside for the *Afikoman* which is eaten later, and the smaller part is kept with the other two *matzot*. It is customary for small children to “steal” the *Afikoman* and hide it. After the meal the father “buys” it back with offers of gifts (preferably something of a Jewish theme).
- The *matzot* are uncovered and lifted up and the person conducting the Seder recites with everyone else, “*Ha lachma anya.*” The second cup of wine is filled, the seder plate is removed (to arouse children’s curiosity) and the Haggadah begins. The youngest present, and often all the children, now ask the four questions, “*Mah nishtanah.*” The rest of the Haggadah is read, sung and explained. It is the obligation of the parents to explain the Haggadah to their children and to each other. Indeed every

person is obligated to delve into, and explain and relate the story of the Exodus to others and to themselves to the best of their ability.

- When “*Vehi she’amdah*” is recited the cups of wine should be raised. When the plagues are recounted we tip a little wine out of the cups, and afterwards fill them to the brim. Likewise, when the *Hallel* is begun (“*Lefikach*”), the cup should be raised, and when the blessing is reached, everyone (or just the leader with others responding *amen*) says the blessing over wine and the second cup is drunk, also while leaning.
- Wash hands as before, but this time a blessing is recited (“*al netilat yadaim*”). One should not speak from the time the hands are washed until after the matza is eaten.
- The leader holds all three *matzot*, and recites the blessing over bread (“*hamotzi lechem min ha’aretz*”). He then drops the bottom matza and recites the blessing over eating matza (“*al achilat matza*”). He then distributes a small piece of each of the top two *matzot* to the participants (who supplement their portion from other *matza shmura* on the table.) Everyone now eats, while leaning on the left side. One should eat about 2/3 of a square machine-made matza, or a little less than half of a round hand-made matza. Try to eat this amount within about 3 minutes.
- The blessing (“*al achilat maror*”) is then recited on the *maror* (grated, raw horseradish or romaine lettuce). The *maror* is dipped into the *charoset*, then shaken off and eaten (not leaning). One should eat about 27cc. of *maror*, (about two leaves of romaine lettuce). Be sure to clean and check the lettuce carefully before the Seder to ensure that there are no insects on the leaves.
- A sandwich is made, using a little from the bottom matza (add from the table’s supply if necessary) and *maror*. One should eat about the same amount of *maror* as before (no. 14; a little less is OK) and about half the amount of matza as before (no. 13). No blessing is recited but the paragraph “*zecher lemikdash keHillel*” is recited beforehand.
- The meal is now eaten. Many people have a custom to eat boiled eggs dipped in salt water. One should take care not to overeat at the meal, as one must leave room for two more cups of wine, and the matza of the *Afikoman*. Roasted meat should not be served at the meal, so as not to appear as though we are bringing the Paschal sacrifice outside the Temple. The meal should be eaten while leaning, and one should discuss the Haggadah during the meal as well.
- At the end of the meal the *Afikoman* is eaten while leaning. No blessing is made. One should eat the same amount of matza as in no. 13, although if this is difficult, one may eat half that amount. Nothing should be eaten or drunk after the *Afikoman* except for water.
- “Elijah’s” cup and the third cup are filled at this time. The Grace After Meals is recited while holding the cup of wine (until “*al yechasrenu*” is said). Don’t forget to insert the appropriate prayer for Pesach (“*ya’aleh veyavoh*”). After the Grace (*Birkat Hamazon*) the cup of wine is lifted, the blessing over wine is said, and the majority of the cup is drunk, while leaning. The fourth and final cup is filled, the door is opened, and “*Shfoch chamatcha*” is said.
- The door is closed and the rest of *Hallel* is sung or recited. At the end of *Hallel*, the participants say the blessing over wine, and drink the last cup. Then the blessing after wine is recited.
- The concluding prayer is recited, “Next Year in Jerusalem” is sung, and the Seder is concluded with the singing of the traditional songs (*echad mi yodea, chad gadya, adir hu, etc.*).

Order! Order!

by Rabbi Richard H. Jacobs

One would expect that on Seder night there be some “*seder*” (order) to the evening, yet when you look at the Haggadah, our guidebook for the evening, you cannot help but marvel at the seeming lack of organization, at the apparent random order of this collection of verses, exposition, stories, halachic discussions and songs of praise.

There is a lack of chronological sequence. We start by discussing being slaves in Egypt, later jump back in time to when our fathers worshipped idols, and several paragraphs later return to the time of our slavery and subsequent redemption. What does this initial mention of slavery add to our later in-depth exposition of the Exodus? Why do those who already know the story of the Exodus have to tell it over, even if there is no one there to listen?

The Haggadah then continues with the *drasha* of Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, who explains that the daily obligation of every Jew to mention the Exodus applies at night as well as day. Why is this included in the Haggadah? It applies every night of the year.

The questions of the four sons follow, and then the Haggadah turns hard to port to discuss the timing of the Mitzvah of recounting the Exodus before returning to the timestream of the historical sequence of events, this time in full — from the idol worshipping times of yore through the times of slavery, the plagues, and the Exodus itself.

The narrative concludes with us extolling the praises of G-d and all that He has done for us, when again the Haggadah changes direction, now turning to Rabban Gamliel’s halachic ruling that whoever does not explain Pesach, Matza and maror has not fulfilled his obligation. From where does Rabban Gamliel learn this? And what is the connection between this and the following declaration that in every single generation one is obligated to look upon oneself as if he personally had gone out of Egypt (in itself problematic because this concept was already presented at the beginning of the Haggadah!)?

The first half of the Seder then concludes with the first part of Hallel – verses of praise and thanks to G-d.

How are we to make sense of this coagulation of

concepts? Is there meaning or “method to the madness”? (These are only a few of the questions that we could ask).

With a beautiful and succinct explanation, the Malbim manages to draw together the threads and reveal a plan so clear, simple and logical that it is breathtaking. Understanding this can change your appreciation of Seder nights forever.

The Haggadah is the means through which we fulfill one of the Torah commandments of the night — to recount the story of the Exodus. The source for this is the verse: “And you shall relate to your child on that day, saying: It is because of this that G-d acted for me when I came forth out of Egypt.” (Exodus 13:8), and it is this verse which delineates the entire structure of the Haggadah. The verse has six sections, each corresponding to a different section of the Haggadah.

1) “And you shall relate to your child” - the Haggadah opens, not with a narrative account, but rather with a declaration why we are obligated to recount the story of the Exodus. Because we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt we are obligated to tell the story of the Exodus and to express our gratitude to G-d. This is not only for our benefit, but also for that of our children and future generations. In order that there is no risk of the events being forgotten, of the children being ignorant, everyone — even those who know what happened — is obligated to recount the tale, even if no one else is present. This is in contrast to all other nights of the year where we are required only to just *mention* the Exodus.

2) “...on that day” – which describes the correct time to fulfill our obligation.

3) “...saying” – and now we actually fulfill our obligation and tell over the story of the Exodus by analyzing, expanding on and expounding the verses in the Torah (Devarim 26: 5-8) which summarize the history of the Exodus. This section concludes with paragraphs listing the tremendous acts of kindness that G-d did for us as He took us out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and escorted us into the Land of Israel.

4) “...because of this” – this verse is the source of Rabban

continued on page fifteen

Gamliel's ruling that if one does not explain Pesach, Matza and maror he has not fulfilled his obligation. Rabban Gamliel explains the verse to mean that *this* (Pesach, Matza and maror) is because of what G-d acted for me when I came forth out of Egypt.

5) "...G-d acted for me" – each of us has to consider ourselves as if we personally were redeemed from Egypt.

6) "...when I came forth from Egypt" – we are obliged to thank and praise G-d for all that he did and does for us.

We do this by reciting Hallel, which (in the section which we sing before the Yom Tov meal) specifically highlights Bnei Yisrael leaving Egypt.

This one verse is the blueprint for the *seder* of the evening. Nothing here is haphazard. It is a carefully structured "hitchhiker's guide" to fulfilling the Mitzvah of "*sippur yetziat Mitzrayim*" — recounting the tale of the Exodus.

PESACH Q&A

Q

1. What is the meaning of the word Pesach?
 2. When must we stop eating chametz?
 3. Why do we eat maror (bitter herbs)?
 4. Which *mitzvot* of Seder night apply to women?
 5. What is *ta'anit bechorim* – fast of the firstborn?
 6. How did the Sage Hillel fulfill *mitzvot* of Matza and maror?
 7. When is Hallel said without a blessing before it?
 8. Which part of Shabbat and Yom Tov morning service is said on Seder night?
 9. What do you do if you find chametz in your home on Pesach?
 10. Which Torah portion is read on seventh day of Pesach?
 11. How do we call the "fifth" cup of wine?
 12. What is the purpose of the *charoset* on the Seder plate?
 13. On what date was the Korban Pesach offered?
 14. Why do we open the door at the end of the Seder?
 15. How many times do we dip vegetables at the Seder?
 16. What does the egg on the Seder plate symbolize?
 17. Who performed the first three of the ten plagues?
 18. What is the Torah portion which is the basis for the text of the Haggadah?
 19. What special garment do some men wear at the Seder?
 20. What do these three numbers represent in the Seder – 2, 3, 4?
- A**
1. Pass over – a reference to G-d passing over the houses of the Israelites as He slaughtered the Egyptian firstborn. (*Shmot* 12:12-13)
 2. The morning of Erev Pesach – end of the fourth hour.
 3. It recalls the bitterness of Egyptian bondage.
 4. They are obligated in all the *mitzvot* except for reclining.
 5. They fast because they were spared when the Egyptian firstborn were slain.
 6. He made a sandwich of Korban Pesach meat, Matza and maror.
 7. On Pesach eve at the Seder.
 8. *Nishmat kol chai*.
 9. If it is during a Chol Hamo'ed weekday you burn it. If it is on Shabbat or on Yom Tov you cover it and burn it when the holy day is over.
 10. The chapter of the crossing of the sea (*Shmot* 13:17-15:26).
 11. The Cup of the Prophet Eliyahu (which we do not drink).
 12. To moderate the effect of the maror and to symbolize the mortar with which our ancestors worked as slaves.
 13. Offered on the fourteenth day of Nissan and consumed on the eve of the fifteenth of Nissan.
 14. In order to demonstrate our belief that the night of Pesach is a *leil shimurim* – a guarded night.
 15. Twice – karpas in salt water, maror in charoset
 16. It is a reminder of the Chagigah sacrifice that was consumed on Pesach eve by a company that did not have sufficient meat from the Korban Pesach.
 17. They were performed by Aharon because Moshe could not strike the water and earth which had saved his life.
 18. The declaration that a Jew makes when bringing the *bikkurim* first crops to the Beit Hamikdash (*Devarim* 26:5-8).
 19. A white *kittel*.
 - 20 2 dippings, 3 *matzot*, 4 cups of wine.

Haggadah Insights

The essential goal of the Pesach Seder is to communicate the story of the going out of Egypt. The following are insights into the Haggadah, contributed by Ohr Somayach Rabbis, past and present. We sincerely hope they will enrich your Pesach Seder.

THE SEDER

The Seder has 15 parts, corresponding to the fifteen steps which ascended to the Beit Hamikdash. Our Sages say that our table is like an Altar, and this is particularly true on Seder-night, when our family table is a tool to achieve new spiritual heights. Similarly, just as the Beit Hamikdash helped the Jewish People sense the Divine Order in the world, so too, the Seder, the Hebrew word for order, is a reminder that Hashem guides world history.

• Rabbi Moshe Newman, based on the Maharal

URCHATZ

Why, of all parts of the Seder, does only *Urchatz*, the handwashing before dipping the vegetable in saltwater, start with a (conjunctive) 'vav'?

The *gemara* in Pesachim (115a) teaches: Rabbi Elazer states in the name of Rabbi Oshia that "any food item that is dipped in a liquid requires handwashing before eating". Rashi maintains that this requirement is similar to the obligation to wash before eating bread, and is still appropriate nowadays. Tosefot is of the opinion that this law is relevant only during the times of the *Beit Hamikdash*. The ruling in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 158, 4) is that even nowadays one should do his utmost to be vigilant with this and wash hands before eating a food item dipped in liquid.

The Chida explains that this is reason for the added 'vav' by *Urchatz*. We find a parallel by the *bracha* that our patriarch Yitzchak bestowed on his son Yaakov, 'V'yitein Lecha' – 'And G-d should give you'. According to the Arizal, the extra conjunctive 'vav' means that G-d should *continually and constantly* give.

Likewise we can explain the 'vav' in *Urchatz*. Just as during the Seder we all wash before dipping a vegetable in salt water, the extra 'vav' is telling us that we should *continue* to do so anytime we want to eat food dipped in liquid all year round.

• Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

THE FOUR CUPS

The cups parallel the four expressions in the Torah which describe our freedom from Egypt. The *first* cup, which also serves as Kiddush, parallels "I will take you out," when Hashem helped us recognize that we were *Egyptian Jews*, and not *Jewish Egyptians*. This is the essence of Kiddush sanctification - the realization that the Jewish People play a unique role in this world. The Haggadah, the story of our physical exodus from Egypt, is recited over the *second* cup, symbolizing our physical salvation, which is parallel to "I will save you." A person is a slave to his physical needs. When the people were fed by Hashem in the wilderness, as we are today in a less miraculous manner, they were liberated from the shackles of the physical world in order to concentrate on

continued on page seventeen

Haggadah Insights

loftier matters. *Birkas HaMazon*, the blessings which remind us that Hashem provides for our sustenance, is recited over the *third* cup, paralleling “I will redeem you” - the goal of the Exodus was the formation of a unique relationship with Hashem. Hallel is recited over the *fourth* cup. Hallel is the praise we bestow on Hashem, recognizing that He said “I will take you to be My nation.”

• Rabbi Uziel Milevsky zt”l

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

More so than any other festival, the Seder-night is dedicated to children, because the Torah dictates that we must tell the history of the Exodus to our children on this night. The Haggadah directs us to do many unusual things to arouse the children’s curiosity so that they will want to know “why this night is different than all other nights.” Immediately following Kiddush the curiosities begin. We wash hands as on each Shabbos or Festival, but on Seder-night we wash without a blessing because we first eat *karpas* (a vegetable) and not bread. Just as *karpas* whets our appetites for the *Matza*, so too, this unusual procedure interests us in the secrets of this night. The four questions expressing the childrens’ interest are more than just a springboard for our discussion. They are part of the answer - the best story is one you want to hear! That is why the Sages say that even if you sit by yourself on this night you should interest yourself in the material by asking the four questions. People are inquisitive and should not be afraid to ask; if you are embarrassed to ask, you do not learn. The custom of providing treats for the children not only helps keep them awake, but also serves as a stimulus for their questions, and as a reward for their participation.

• Rabbi Uziel Milevsky zt”l

“A STORY OF RABBI AKIVA...” OR RABBI AKIVA’S ALL-NIGHTER

Dr. Emanuel Carlebach, zt”l, described the historical context of the story. The Jewish nation had just suffered its greatest national tragedy. The second *Beit Hamikdash* stood in flames. Yerushalayim was destroyed. The Jewish land was desolate and its

people exiled after much pain and death. In the small town of Bnei Brak, the great rabbinical leaders of the generation gathered to prepare for the Pesach Seder.

It was not yet Pesach, and they were filled with worries and trepidation for the Jewish future as they awaited the coming Pesach. When they thought about preparing *Matza* — the “bread of affliction” — and *maror* bitter herbs for the Seder, these were not mere symbols, but cold hard facts in their everyday lives.

They began to tell the story of the Exodus, to give praise and thanks to G-d for having taken an enslaved and downtrodden nation thousands of years earlier and miraculously giving them their freedom. They prayed that He once again save His children from annihilation, and the discussion strengthened their faith and hope that He would once again redeem His people from their plight. Given the trying circumstances, however, it is reasonable to expect that they weren’t fully consoled.

Suddenly, the door opened. In walked their rabbinical students. On their faces you could see that although they were also affected by the terrible events, their eyes — shining with respect and admiration for their rabbis — showed their commitment to follow their leaders in rebuilding a Torah community. When the great rabbinical leaders saw these young men, any hopelessness that they might have harbored was washed away. As long as there were young men ready to learn Torah and to do whatever was necessary to preserve it in unadulterated form, the future of the Jewish people was guaranteed.

“*Ad sheba’u talmideihem v’amru lahem*” (“Until their students came and said to them”). The coming of the young students was itself the message that the elders needed to be able to have the confidence that “*higia zman kriat shema shel shachrit*” — that the dawn has risen that there is a bright future for the Torah Nation.

• Rabbi Shmuel Bloom

THE FOUR SONS

The author of the Haggadah hints at the danger of a lack of education by his unique order of the Torah’s four sons. He feared a degeneration from monotheism to self-worship (a form of idol worship), the opposite path from that traversed by our ancestors. A *wise child* who asks questions demonstrating a basic knowledge of Judaism and is not answered properly may

continued on page eighteen

Haggadah Insights

be so bitter that even if he himself is observant, his child will move away from Torah and Mitzvos. This *wayward second generation* will refuse to educate the third one. This *Jewishly-simple third generation* will never understand the parents' rejection of Judaism. He will be curious, but not overly interested in his heritage. He will produce a fourth generation which feels that the Torah could not possibly be intellectually satisfying. He is therefore so far removed from Torah that he has no interest in participating actively, *nor does he know how to begin investigating*. If he does not unearth the depth of Torah, the fifth generation will not even attend a Pesach Seder.

• Rabbi Uziel Milevsky zt"l

"...AND THE ONE WHO DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO ASK"

The Chida — Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai — in his commentary "*Simchat HaRegel*" on the Haggadah, explains that there are three ways one can fulfill the *Mitzvah* of the telling of "*Yetzias Mitzrayim*. Ideally, the story should be told in the form of **question and answer**. The Talmud derives this from the Torah's description of *Matza* as "*Lechem Oni*" — the bread over which a person **answers**.

The second level is to tell the story even if nobody asks. This is derived from the verse "and you shall *tell* your son on that day..." You should *tell* him, even if he doesn't ask. Thus, the procedure of question and answer is **preferable**, but *not absolutely necessary*. (This is a rare example of *L'chatchila* and *B'dieved* in a Torah *Mitzvah*.)

The third level is this: Even if a person is alone, he must speak about the going out of *Mitzrayim*. This is what Rabban Gamliel teaches when he says that one must "say" three particular statements as the bare minimum to fulfill the *Mitzvah*. Thus, there are three possible levels on which to perform the *Mitzvah* of "*Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*."

The Chida adds: When introducing the fourth son the Haggadah uses the word "**and**." This teaches us that even if someone has other sons that fit into the first three categories, he should *also* pay attention to the one who does not know how to ask. This is an important lesson for those who are tempted to make the Haggadah an intellectual display which goes over the head of the youngest or least knowledgeable.

• Rabbi Ephraim Yawitz

"AND IT IS THIS..."

"... Which has stood for our fathers and for us; for in each and every generation they stand against us to destroy us, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu rescues us from their hand."

Exactly what "*This*" refers to is not immediately clear. Is it the promise made to Abraham, mentioned previously? Or that "*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* always rescues us from their hand?"

Here is a third possibility — a unique insight into the phenomenon of anti-Semitism: *This*, that "in each and every generation they stand against us to exterminate us" — *This* is what has stood for us. Hard as we may try to forget our Jewishness and adopt the ways of our host nation, sooner or later they rise against us, remind us of our uniqueness, and awaken our commitment to Judaism.

• Rabbi Shlomo Zweig, in the name of his father's father

"GO AND LEARN WHAT LAVAN THE ARAMEAN PLANNED TO DO TO OUR FATHER YAAKOV..."

The author of the Haggadah quotes the verse (Devarim 26:5) which teaches that Lavan wanted to totally annihilate the Jewish people and G-d saved us from this genocide. By contrast, Pharaoh and the Egyptians wanted to destroy only the male children. There, too, G-d intervened. Rav Chaim Soloveitchik asked: How is it, then, that we so elaborately emphasize the Exodus from Egypt with Pesach and its attendant mitzvot, and, by contrast, downplay the escape from Lavan's nefarious designs?

Rav Chaim said that given the covenantal pact with the forefathers, Lavan's scheme could never work. G-d, as it were, contractually bound Himself to maintain us as partners in that pact of survival. Such was and is His will. Therefore, there was never a chance for Lavan's evil to ultimately succeed. Pharaoh, cognizant of the ultimate failure of the Lavan Plan, modified his attack accordingly. He attempted to undo the leadership and sanctity of the Jewish people, to undermine the quality of Jewish life, by destroying the male children only. Technically, halachically, there could still be Jews – born of Jewish mothers, however Jewishly less fulfilled. The Pharaoh Plan might theoretically work. Pesach, then, is the celebration of a victory against an enemy whose designs

continued on page nineteen

Haggadah Insights

did really threaten the character and the soul of our people. G-d extricated us from that danger as well: The Pharaoh Plan did not prevail.

• *Rav Nota Schiller*

“AND THEY EMBITTERED THEIR LIVES...”

During a scholarly lecture, a simple person asked Rabbi Yonasan Eybeschitz the following: The Torah says, “and they embittered their lives,” but the cantillation symbol that the cantor reads is a **happy** tune! The simplicity of his question amused the more erudite listeners.

“Excellent question!” said Rabbi Yonasan. “Hashem told Abraham that his offspring would be in exile for 400 years. But in fact we were in Egypt for only 210 years. Why was this? Since the Egyptians “embittered their lives,” Hashem had pity on us and shortened the exile by 190 years — surely a cause for song!

“By the way,” said Rabbi Yonason, to the astonishment of his listeners, “the cantillation symbol, ‘*Kadma V’Azla*,’ hints at this idea by its exact numerical value: 190.

• *Rabbi Yehoshua Karsh*

“AND HASHEM BROUGHT US OUT”

This verse introduces a crucial switch in the process of the escape from Egypt. Until this point, the Haggadah has described the desperation and the suffering of the Jews as they remained tormented by their Egyptian masters. Now the rescue begins and the fate of the downtrodden is reversed in a dramatic twist; the victor becomes the vanquished and the slave becomes the

master. What is strange, though, is the emphasis the Baal Haggadah places on the role that the Creator plays in this turn of events. He goes out of his way to show that Hashem *Himself*, not through any form of agent or emissary, performed this supernatural saving. Why is this point so crucial?

There is a vital point contained in this description - that the connection between the Jews and their G-d is an *intimate* one. This connection transcends the notion of any interruption, be it spiritual or physical, between Israel and Hashem. As a people we are bound to the Divine as a son to his father. That relationship is not only abstract idea; rather Hashem’s involvement is tangible, in the very details of our lives. The role of the Jew is so inextricably linked to the Divine plan that even in the technical logistics of the redemption Hashem will never send an agent.

This intimacy is the hallmark of our lives and forms the mindframe of our prayers and how we relate to Hashem’s daily involvement in our struggles and triumphs.

The Holy One, blessed be He, the Torah and Israel are one.

• *Rabbi Peretz Segal*

THE FESTIVE MEAL

One of the unique aspects of the Seder is that we interrupt the saying of the Hallel with a meal. Why is that? The *Netziv* explains as follows: The purpose of going out of Egypt was to receive the Torah. With the Torah we gain the ability to serve Hashem not only through “spiritual” means, such as Torah study and prayer, but through “physical” *Mitzvos* as well, such as marriage, enjoying Shabbos, eating *Matza*, *marror*, and the Pesach offering.

continued on page twenty

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Haggadah Insights ...continued from previous page

We eat in the *middle* of Hallel in order to praise Hashem for sanctifying and elevating our physical existence. Even “mundane” things like eating are elevated when we do them in the service of Hashem.

• Rabbi Mordechai Perlman

AFIKOMEN - TZAFON (HIDDEN)

The Afikomen is hidden away during *Yachatz* (division ceremony) at the beginning of the Seder. Many families have the custom to allow the children to steal the Afikomen. If we are trying to teach our children about Torah, how can we teach them to steal?! The Afikomen represents the future redemption which is *hidden* from us. *Matza*, which must be eaten only after eating an appetizer to make us hungry, represents a passion for truth. Eliyahu HaNavi, whom we symbolically welcome with a fifth cup of wine on Seder-night, “will return the heart of the parents to the children and the children to the parents.” The “gap” that prevents one generation from relating to a previous one is our biggest problem. When a generation takes the potential they have been given, and misappropriates it by not applying it to Torah, which is the one thing that can help us bridge the gap between all past generations, they are stealing our future hope. We want our children to steal

the Afikomen instead; they should crave the “quest” for Torah, represented by the *Matza* of the Afikomen, so that our final hidden redemption can be revealed.

• Rabbi Uziel Milevsky zt”l

HALLEL

*In our lowliness, he remembered us...
and redeemed us from our oppressors
He gives food to all flesh...
Praise G-d of the heavens!*

These last four phrases of “*Hallel HaGadol*” can be seen as paralleling the four cups we drink tonight. Over the first cup we make *kiddush and declare*, “You chose us from all the nations.” Why did G-d choose us? The Sages explain that Hashem chose the Jewish people because of their humility. “*In our lowliness*” — in our humility, “*He remembered us*” and chose us. The second cup goes together with the Haggadah, where we tell how Hashem “*redeemed us from our oppressors.*” *Bircas Hamazon*, where we recognize that “*He gives food to all flesh*” is said over the third cup. And with the fourth cup we sing Hallel...“*Praise Hashem of the heavens!*”

• Rabbi Yehuda Samet

Wishing our readers and all of Klal Yisrael a
Happy and Kosher Pesach

חג כשר ושמח