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“Thirty days before Pesach, questions about the laws of the festival are asked and expounded” (*Orach Chaim* 429:1). One of the most special aspects of the Seder night is sharing new *divrei Torah* and learning inspiring insights from everyone seated around the Yom Tov table. In that spirit I am honored to share, in the following editions of Torah Tidbits, teachings from the commentary of Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop zt”l on the Haggadah. His ideas regarding Seder night emphasize the sacred and exalted nature of the Seder, the spiritual heights that every Jew can reach on Pesach, and the unique longing for Redemption and love of the Land of Israel that is to be felt during the night of Seder.

Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop zt”l: *Mei Marom* on the Haggadah

Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop (1882–1951) was an eminent student and close friend of Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook. Following Rav Kook’s passing, he served as Rosh Yeshiva of Mercaz HaRav Yeshiva. Rav Charlop also served as the rabbi of the Sha’arei Chesed and Rechavia neighborhoods in Jerusalem.

He is the author of the *Mei Marom* series on *hashkafa* and Jewish thought, a collection that spans a breathtaking range of topics. Rav Charlop was regarded as one of the most venerated sages in Jerusalem in the years preceding and following the founding of the State of Israel.

ELEVATED PESACH PREPARATION

Rav Charlop emphasizes the unique spiritual quality of the days leading up to Pesach as we prepare for the festival. In Egypt, the Jews were instructed to take a lamb several days prior to the first Seder. The anticipation and excitement that build toward the day possess immense value; these days of preparation

themselves carry great spiritual significance. (*Haggadah Mei Marom*, p. alef)

Rav Charlop suggests that during the days leading up to Pesach a Jew resembles an eved, a servant of Hashem, whereas on the festival itself we resemble a *sar*, an officer.

At first glance, an “officer” appears to occupy a higher rank than a “servant.” Yet the Talmud in *Berachot* (34b) emphasizes the unique superiority of the eved. The Talmud recounts that when Chanina ben Dosa was studying with his teacher, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai, the rabbi’s son became gravely ill. Rabbi Yochanan asked his student to pray for the child, and the child was healed.

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai’s wife found this perplexing. Why did he ask his student to pray instead of praying himself? Rabbi Yochanan explained: “He is like a servant before the king, whereas I am like an officer before the king.”

Rav Kook explained this passage to mean that the eved possesses a unique advantage: he serves God with purity and unquestioning faith. A servant does not question the master. By contrast, a *sar*, an officer, expresses his own opinions and is called upon to apply his own wisdom and judgment.

In this sense, the eved enjoys a certain spiritual advantage.

Rav Charlop here articulates an exquisite idea often emphasized in Chassidic thought: the time and effort one invests in preparing to perform a mitzvah—sometimes hours, days, or even weeks—is itself a profound expression of purity, devotion, and love for Hashem and His commandments.

THE FOUR SONS: EMULATING EACH TRAIT

The Four Sons of the Seder are often presented as personalities arranged along a spectrum from admirable to problematic. Rav Charlop, however, offers a unique interpretation: each of the four sons represents an elevated spiritual trait that we seek to attain specifically on the sacred night of the Seder.

The Chacham (wise child) represents the pursuit of wisdom and the desire to understand the commandments.

The Tam (simple or pure child) symbolizes the aspiration to reach the level of our forefather Yaakov, described as “*Yaakov ish tam*” (Bereishit 25:27)—a person of pure and wholesome faith.

The child known as “*She’eino Yodea Lish’ol*” (the one who does not know how to ask) reflects a dimension of elevated insight regarding mysteries that lie beyond ordinary human

questioning. On the spiritually elevated night of the Seder, we are able to glimpse spiritual conceptions and visions that are rarely accessible during the rest of the year.

Even the Rasha (wicked child), Rav Charlop suggests, may be understood in a positive light. The Rasha represents a person who recognizes his faults and transgressions and understands that these are merely external layers masking an inner nature that is fundamentally pure and good. External influences and harmful surroundings may obscure that inner holiness, but these layers can be removed, allowing the true sanctity of the soul to shine forth.

Thus, Rav Charlop teaches that each of us strives to attain the lofty qualities represented by the *Arba Banim* on the night of the Seder. (*Haggadah Mei Marom*, p. 31) ■



Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop zt”l



Title page of Rav Charlop's commentary on the Haggadah

INVITATION

Rav Kook observed the age-old minhag of reciting the text of the Korban Pesach on the eve of Pesach at the Kotel.

In this spirit, **please join me at the Kotel on Wednesday, April 1, Erev Pesach at 1:15 pm for a Mincha minyan followed by the reading of the Korban Pesach.**

(We will conclude at approximately 1:45 pm). Wishing you Chag Kasher v'Sameach! Men and Women are invited. We will meet in the back, next to the mechitza be"H.



Rabbi Goldscheider's most recent OU Press Publication, “Torah United” on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at aarong@ouisrael.org at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.