

# Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1655

UNITED  
WE STAND



Dear Torah Tidbits Family  
Rabbi Avi Berman  
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Beyond Worthiness  
Jen Airley  
Page 78

APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup> 2026  
י"ד ניסן תשפ"ו

פסח - פרשת שמיני  
PESACH - PARSHAT SHEMINI



Sefirat HaOmer  
Chart inside



## חג כשר ושמח

### YERUSHALAYIM ZMANIM

- YOM TOV RISHON: CANDLES 6:22 PM • HAVDALA 7:36 PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:16 PM
- SHABBAT CHOL HAMOED: CANDLES 6:24PM • EARLY 5:41 PM • HAVDALA 7:38 PM • R.TAM 8:17 PM
- SHVII SHEL PESACH: CANDLES 6:26 PM • HAVDALA 7:41 PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:20 PM
- SHABBAT SHEMINI: CANDLES 6:28 PM • EARLY 5:44 PM • HAVDALA 7:43 PM • R.TAM 8:22 PM

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## HELPFUL REMINDERS

### PESACH

-  *Bedikat Chametz* is done after nightfall on the eve of March 31<sup>st</sup>
-  Wednesday April 1<sup>st</sup> is a *fast day for first born males* - many congregations conduct a siyum
-  Last time to *eat chametz*, Wed. April 1<sup>st</sup>, Jerusalem: 10:14 (Magen Avraham)
-  Last time for *burning chametz*, Wed. April 1<sup>st</sup>, Jerusalem: 11:28am (Magen Avraham)
-  *Afikoman* must be eaten by: 12:42 am
-  *Tefilat Tal* is recited on the first day of Pesach
-  We begin to say *ברכה וזמן* in the weekday Amidah (we stop saying *גשם*)
-  We begin counting *Sefirat HaOmer* on Motzei Yom Tov Rishon
-  The book of *Shir Hashirim* is read on Shabbat Chol Hamoed

### END OF PESACH

-  When lighting candles for the last day of Pesach the blessing of *Shehechiyanu* is NOT recited
-  We recite *Yizkor* on the last day of Pesach

### PARSHAT SHEMINI (Shabbat Mevarchim)

-  We begin the cycle of *Pirkei Avot* on Shabbat Shemini (First Chapter)
-  *Rosh Chodesh* Iyar is on Friday April 17th and Shabbat April 18th  
מולד חודש אייר יהיה ביום שישי בשעה 5, 18 דקות ו 14 חלקים  
ראש חודש אייר יהיה ביום הששי וביום שבת קודש הבא עלינו ועל כל ישראל לטובה
-  *Yom Hashoah* is observed on Mon. night April 13th and Tue April 14th

# CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



Zmanim for Shabbat Shemini can be found on page 110.

	Yom Tov Rishon		Shabbat Chol Hamoed		Shvii Shel Pesach		
	Seder	Havdala	Candles	Early	Havdala	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	6:22	7:36	6:24	5:41	7:38	6:26	7:41
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	6:40	7:39	6:42	5:44	7:40	6:44	7:43
Beit Shemesh/RBS	6:41	7:37	6:43	5:42	7:39	6:45	7:42
Gush Etzion	6:38	7:37	6:40	5:42	7:38	6:42	7:41
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	6:40	7:38	6:41	5:43	7:40	6:44	7:43
Modiin/Chashmonaim	6:39	7:37	6:40	5:42	7:39	6:43	7:42
Netanya	6:40	7:38	6:41	5:43	7:40	6:44	7:43
Be'er Sheva	6:40	7:38	6:41	5:43	7:39	6:43	7:42
Rehovot	6:40	7:38	6:41	5:43	7:40	6:44	7:42
Petach Tikva	6:22	7:38	6:24	5:43	7:39	6:26	7:42
Ginot Shomron	6:39	7:37	6:40	5:42	7:39	6:43	7:42
Haifa / Zichron	6:30	7:38	6:31	5:43	7:40	6:34	7:43
Gush Shiloh	6:38	7:36	6:39	5:41	7:38	6:42	7:41
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	6:40	7:38	6:41	5:43	7:40	6:44	7:43
Givat Ze'ev	6:42	7:37	6:44	5:41	7:38	6:46	7:41
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	6:38	7:37	6:40	5:42	7:38	6:42	7:41
Ashkelon	6:41	7:39	6:42	5:44	7:40	6:45	7:43
Yad Binyamin	6:40	7:37	6:41	5:43	7:39	6:44	7:42
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	6:32	7:36	6:33	5:41	7:38	6:36	7:41
Golan	6:37	7:36	6:38	5:40	7:37	6:41	7:40
Nahariya/Maalot	6:28	7:38	6:30	5:42	7:40	6:33	7:42
Afula	6:38	7:37	6:40	5:41	7:38	6:42	7:41

**Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem):** YT #1 - 8:16 PM • Shabbat CH - 8:17 PM • YT #2 - 8:20 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities; 40 mins in Yerushalyim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat, Nahariya, Maalot and Haifa)

\*Havdala without candle or besamim

**Daf Yomi:** YT #1 - Menachot 80 • Shabbat CH - Menachot 83 • YT #2 - Menachot 87



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## OTHER Z'MANIM



### JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat

April 1 - 11 | 14 - 24 Nisan

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:37-5:23
Sunrise	6:28-6:15
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:35-9:28
Magen Avraham	8:59-8:50
Sof Zman Tefila (According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	10:38-10:32
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:43-12:40
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:14-1:12
Plag Mincha	5:40-5:44
Sunset (Including Elevation)	7:02-7:09



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## DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN  
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I want to start off by saying that I hope by the time this edition is published that we have finally been greeted by *Moshiach* and are offering our *Korban Pesach* in the *Beit HaMikdash*. If we don't merit the coming of *Moshiach* by seder night, we will begin the Seder with the familiar question, מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות (*Mah nishtanah halailah hazeh mikol haleilot?*) Why is this night different from all other nights? This year, I find myself hearing that question a little differently. Not only why is this night different, but why is this year different? מה נשתנה השנה הזאת מכל השנים (*Mah nishtanah hashanah hazot mikol hashanim?*) What is it about this year that makes the Seder feel so different, so much heavier, and at the same time so much more alive?

In our home, like in so many homes across Israel, this is not a theoretical question. This Pesach comes during a time in which war has entered our homes, our conversations, our *tefillot*, and our hearts. It comes in a year in which families think not only about who is sitting around the Seder table, but who may still come in late, who may need to leave early, and who may be spending part of *Yom Tov* in uniform. It comes in a year in which children know what it means to run to a shelter, and parents know what it means to sleep with one ear open. It comes in a year in which all of us have become more familiar than we ever wanted to be with sirens, headlines, funerals, hospitals, and prayers whispered with tears.

And yet, as painful as this year has been, I keep thinking that it is also a year in which *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* has shown us things that we dare not ignore. We have seen suffering, yes. We have seen sacrifice, certainly. But we have also seen extraordinary strength, extraordinary courage, extraordinary unity, and extraordinary miracles. This year, when we sit down to tell the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, I do not think we can speak only about what happened then. We have to speak, at least a little, about what Hashem is doing for us now.

Perhaps that is exactly what the Haggadah is asking of us. We do not say only that Hashem redeemed our fathers. We say, אשר גאלנו וגאל את אבותינו (*Asher ge'alanu vega'al et avoteinu*). He redeemed us and redeemed our fathers. The *geulah* that began in Egypt did not end there. It continues through Jewish history, and in our generation we have been privileged to see parts of it with our own eyes. The *Mishnah* and *Gemara* already point us in that direction when they discuss how the story of redemption will be told in the future, and when the prophets speak not only of our Father in Heaven Who took us out of Egypt, but of our Father in Heaven Who gathers His children from all the lands where they had been scattered. The message is not that we stop speaking about Egypt. The message is that Egypt was the beginning, not the end. The first great chapter, not the last.

This year, that truth feels very personal

to me. I think about my own parents who brought us on *aliyah*, becoming part of the miracle of Jews returning home after so many centuries. I think about what that means on a night when we sit around the table and tell our children that once we were strangers in a foreign land, and now we have merited to live in our own Land, speak our own language, defend ourselves with our own army, and raise Jewish children in a Jewish state. I think about my own family, and about the many families across this country. Including my own, whose children are serving in the army. Once that is your reality, the Haggadah sounds different. You do not hear only an ancient story. You hear its continuation.

There is another image from this year that I cannot get out of my mind. On the very night when we tell our children that Hashem took us out of Egypt, we are also living through a time in which Jews have been finding every possible way to come home, even through Egypt. What an astonishing thing to say. In earlier generations, Egypt was the place of bondage, the place of narrowness, the place from which we cried out to be redeemed. And in our generation, in one of history's deepest ironies, it has become one of the roads through which Jews return home to *Eretz Yisrael*. Not away from Jewish destiny, but back to it. That image alone should stop us in our tracks at the Seder table. The *Ribono Shel Olam* Who redeemed us then has not stopped redeeming us now.

And if the miracle of return is extraordinary, the miracle of Jewish courage may be



even greater. One of the greatest miracles of this past period has not only been what happened to our enemies, but what happened to us. We have watched hundreds of thousands of Israelis leave behind homes, businesses, schools, *yeshivot*, and families and run toward the front. Not away from danger, but toward it. We have seen women send husbands, sons, and fathers back to reserve duty with tears in their eyes and strength in their hearts. We have seen mothers carrying homes, children, work, fear, and uncertainty on their shoulders with breathtaking dignity. We have seen Jews from Israel and from around the world give of their money, their time, their energy, and

In loving memory of  
our dear Father and Grandfather

**MOSHE KAHAN ז"ל**  
ניסן משה בן יצחק אייזק ז"ל  
On his 9<sup>th</sup> Yartzeit - כ' בניסן

May the Torah learned from  
this issue be in his merit

*Channie Kahan, Yonatan Ledee,  
Elizabeth Kahan Ledee,  
Yitzchak Ledee & Zev Ledee*

their hearts. They have come with hot food, with equipment, with care packages, with support, with presence, and with love. Some boarded planes into a war zone. Others searched for every possible route home. At *Kriyat Yam Suf*, Hashem split the sea before us. In our generation, He has planted *betoch Am Yisrael* a spirit of *gevurah*, *achdut*, and willingness that no analyst and no statistic can fully explain.

Perhaps that is the real miracle of our generation. At the sea, the miracle was revealed from Above. In our days, the miracle is being revealed through the hearts of Jews. Through soldiers who keep returning for a fourth or fifth round of service. Through families who continue to carry impossible burdens. Through a nation that, despite exhaustion and grief, keeps standing up again. Through a people that refuses to let fear define it. We sometimes think miracles only count when nature is shattered. But Purim taught us otherwise. Chanukah taught us otherwise. *David HaMelech* taught us otherwise. המאזר רני חיל. מלמד די למלחמה (*Hame'azreni chayil. Melamed yadai lamilchamah.*) You are the One Who girds me with strength. You are the One Who trains my hands for battle. The strength may look human. The courage may look natural. But the believing Jew knows where it comes from.

At the Seder, however, we do not only

speak about our salvation. We also speak about the downfall of those who rose against us. We recite the ten *makkot*, and then the Haggadah itself expands them. Ten, fifty, two hundred, two hundred and fifty. *Chazal* are teaching us that when *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* judges evil, what appears to us as one blow may in truth be many blows. This year, that language feels alive again. We have seen not only that *Am Yisrael* survived, but that those who sought to surround us with terror have been struck again and again. We have seen heads of murderous organizations eliminated. We have seen chains of command broken. We have seen terror infrastructure destroyed. We have seen tunnels uncovered and collapsed, rocket systems dismantled, missile stockpiles hit, and the very centers of power of those who dreamed of Jewish destruction shaken to their core.

And now, as if to make the message even clearer, the blows have not fallen only on the hands of the terror empire, but on its head. For decades, Iran stood behind so much of the hatred, bloodshed, weaponry, and terror directed at *Am Yisrael*. It armed, financed, trained, and inflamed. It built rings of fire and believed that the Jewish people could be threatened from every direction into weakness and fear. And this year, on the eve of Pesach, we have seen that the One Who struck Egypt still knows how to humble those who rise against His people. We have watched the architects of evil themselves be struck. We have watched senior figures who imagined that they could threaten the Jewish people from a safe distance discover that even they are not beyond the reach of *din Shamayim*.

לעילוי נשמות

בת שבע בת יעקב אריה ע"ה

**Bat Sheva Rubinstein a"h**  
On her 32<sup>th</sup> yearzeit 26<sup>th</sup> Nisan

*Mark & Livia Rottenberg*

We have seen thousands of points of terror infrastructure hit. We have seen the snake itself wounded, not only its tail. When we sit this year and speak about the ten *makkot*, or the fifty, or the two hundred, or the two hundred and fifty, how can we not think about the many blows that have fallen upon those who rose to destroy us?

Of course, the challenge is that אין בעל הנס מכיר בניסו (*ein ba'al hanes makir b'niso*). The one living through the miracle does not always recognize it. When the sea splits, everyone sees the hand of Hashem. When salvation comes clothed in fighter pilots, intelligence, strategy, sacrifice, resilience, and a nation that refuses to break, it is easier to call it military success. But the Torah asks more of us than that. The Torah asks us to see deeper. It asks us to understand that miracles do not become smaller because they are clothed in the natural world. Sometimes they become greater, because they require from us not only amazement, but *emunah*.

That is why I keep thinking this year about the soldiers who will not experience the Seder in the usual way. Some will be on base. Some over the border. Some in command rooms. Some in the skies. Some in places where they may not be able to fulfill every detail of the night as they would wish. And yet perhaps they are among those living the message of the Seder most deeply. For nearly two thousand years, Jews could not defend themselves as a sovereign people in their own Land. We lived at the mercy of others. We prayed to survive their moods, their decrees, and their hatred. And now Jewish soldiers stand guard over a free Jewish people in *Medinat Yisrael*. That itself is one of the great reversals of Jewish history.

I also think this gives new meaning to *נהגדת לבנך* (*Vehigadeta levincha*). This year, telling our children the story means more than reading what is printed on the page. It means helping them understand that they are living in the continuation of that story. It means telling them where their grandparents came from. It means telling them about *aliyah*, about *kibbutz galuyot*, about Jewish courage, about Jewish tears, about Jewish resilience, and about Jewish return. It means telling them that their people did not only survive. Their people came home. Their people stood up. Their people fought back. Their people refused to surrender to fear. Their people carried one another. Their people sang even while crying. Their people still believed.

Perhaps that is the deepest meaning this year of *את אדם לראות את* *בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את* *עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים* (*B'chol dor vador chayav adam lirot et atzmo k'ilu hu yatza miMitzrayim*). It means seeing that the *geulah* that began in Egypt is still unfolding. It means understanding that Hashem is still gathering our exiles, still bringing His children home, still planting courage in the

May the Torah learning from this issue of Torah Tidbits be לעילוי נשמת

**Leila Manasseh a"h**

**לאה מנוחה בת**

**צבי וחייה רבקה ז"ל**

**כ"ד ניסן - On her fourth Yahrzeit**

*Greatly missed by  
her children, grandchildren  
and great-grandchildren  
Families Ross, Miller,  
Lipnick and Manasseh*

heart of His people, and still striking those who seek our destruction. It means understanding that this year, as we sit at the Seder, we are not only remembering redemption. We are living close enough to it to be frightened by it, humbled by it, and grateful for it all at once.

So this year, tell the story of Egypt. Of course. But do not stop there. Tell your children where your family came from. Tell them about grandparents who dreamed of this Land and children who now defend it. Tell them about Jews who crossed oceans to return home. Tell them about families who carried impossible burdens with faith and strength. Tell them about the courage of our soldiers and the greatness of our people. Tell them that even the roads through Egypt have become roads of return. Tell them that the heads of the terror empire that rose against *Am Yisrael* have been struck. Tell them that miracles do not belong only to the distant past.

And when the child asks this year, מה נשתנה (*Mah nishtanah*), perhaps one answer is this: this year is different because this year the words of the Haggadah no longer feel only ancient. This year they feel like the language of our lives. This year, with all the pain and all the greatness, we have

seen again that בכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכלור תינו והקדוש ברוך הוא מצילנו מידם (*b'chol dor vador omdim aleinu l'chaloteinu v'HaKadosh Baruch Hu matzileinu miyadam*). This year, perhaps more than many other years, we are being asked not only to remember redemption, but to recognize it.

May we merit this Pesach to sit at the Seder with hearts open enough to hold both grief and gratitude. May we pray for our soldiers, for the wounded, for the bereaved, and for all those still waiting to come home. May we be worthy to see the miracles of our generation and not dismiss them because they come clothed in history rather than in split seas. And may we merit to sing a true *shir chadash* for the miracles Hashem has done for our fathers and for us, the safety of all who defend our people, comfort for all who mourn, and the complete redemption of *Am Yisrael* במהרה בימינו (*bimheirah b'yameinu*).

Wishing you all a Chag Kasher v'Sameach,



Rabbi Avi Berman  
Executive Director, OU Israel  
aberman@ouisrael.org

May the Torah learning  
in this issue be לעילוי נשמת

מנחם מנדל בן

אברהם ליפה הכהן ז"ל

**Manny Wollman** ז"ל

On his 20<sup>th</sup> yahrzeit - י"א ניסן

*All the family*



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# ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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## 1<sup>ST</sup> DAY OF PESACH



### 1ST ALIYA (EXODUS 12:21-24)

Offer the Pesach offering, place its blood on the doorposts and remain indoors ‘til the morning. For G-d will pass over the homes identified with the blood and your firstborn will be spared. This law is eternal.

The simplicity of this narrative belies its drama. Take the Pesach. Offer it. And they did.

But this is anything but simple. It is defiance. You, who have no status in this place, you who are slaves – slaughter what the Egyptians deify in an act of defiance.

The slave people listened to their G-d regardless of the risk from their overseers.

This is the first act of loyalty demanded of the Jewish people by G-d. All of the Torah has been G-d’s promises to us. Now he asks for our hand to be stretched to Him in return. The Holy One could have redeemed us, could have passed over our homes



### 2ND ALIYA (12:25-28)

When you enter the Land and your children ask you what this service is, you will answer that this is a Pesach, as Hashem passed over our homes. The people did as Moshe commanded.

These simple verses are as dramatic as the first.

“When you enter the Land”? What? Slaves are being told to keep this mitzvah when they enter the Land? The Land of Israel is the farthest thing from their minds, mired in slavery. Who is thinking, before being redeemed, with redemption still just a hope, an aspiration, who is thinking of what we will do in the Land of Israel?

From the dawn of our history, we are dreamers, dreaming fantastic dreams and visions of the future, oblivious to the grimness of the reality of the moment.



### 3RD ALIYA (12:29-36)

At midnight all the first born in Egypt are killed. Paro orders Moshe and Aharon to leave and take all the people to their festival and to bless him as well. The Egyptians urged the Jews to leave quickly. The Jewish people took unrisen dough and gold, silver and clothing from the Egyptians.

While the buildup to this moment took many months, the redemption occurs in a flash. Out. Now.

Even the Jews, knowing they are going to

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be redeemed that night, are unprepared for the moment, dough unrisen. They had not prepared provisions. Faithful they were; prepared, not.

Anticipation tempers not the shock of the moment.



#### 4TH ALIYA (12:37-42)

The people left, including 600,000 of military age, many others who joined, and laden with flocks. The dough was baked hastily as they were expelled in haste. The Jews lived in Egypt 430 years; they departed after exactly 430 years. This day that G-d anticipated for their departure remains a noted day for Jews forever.

The Torah emphasizes that this was the day destined from the start for the redemption. From *our* perspective the redemption was sudden; *we* were unprepared. But from *His* perspective, this was in the cards the whole time. He anticipated it. That is our history. Sweeps of hundreds of years, even millennium, for the Divine plan to take shape.



#### 5TH ALIYA (12:43-51)

**The Pesach Offering:** non-Jews may not participate, must be eaten in one home, may not be taken out of the home, no bone may be broken, all Jews participate. One who joins the Jewish people and is circumcised may join the Pesach; there is one law for all. On that day G-d took the Jewish people out of Egypt.

The Torah emphasizes the home. Consume the Pesach in the home. Do not leave the home.

The Pesach Seder is truly remarkable. The first seder was in the home. I don't know what that home looked like. Or what Jewish homes have looked like over the 3,000 plus



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years of our history. What did our homes look like in the land of Israel to Babylonia, Persia, Italy, North Africa, Germany, France, Russia, Poland.... How varied those homes have looked.

But with their varied look, Jews have had matza and marror around the table at the Seder. From that first one to this day. Remarkable.

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## 7<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF PESACH

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#### 1ST ALIYA (EXODUS 13:17-22)

The people traveled away from Egypt toward the sea. Moshe took the bones of Yosef, as Yosef had instructed them to do. A Divine cloud guided them by day, fire by night.

When Yosef died, he should have done what Yaakov did. Yaakov wanted to assert that the Land of Israel is our land, not Egypt,

In loving memory of  
our dear mother, grandmother  
and great-grandmother

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and demanded he be brought to Israel for burial.

Yosef didn't do that. Rather Yosef commanded "when you all leave here, take my bones with you." Wow, Yosef was mighty confident in the Divine promise of redemption. He staked his bones on it.

What a powerful assertion of faith on his part. And a powerful expression of encouragement to the people: "things will get bad here in Egypt, plenty bad. But I believe in the promise made to Avraham that we will be redeemed. And when that happens, because I know it will, take my bones with you."



#### 2ND ALIYA (14:1-8)

The people camp at the sea; Paro pursues with the elite of his fighting forces.

Paro's change of heart is a pattern; in the plagues and even after the plague of the first born. Though his change of heart oscillates between his own stubbornness and stubbornness assisted from Above.

Is that not the human condition? How much of life is our agency and how much influenced from Above? Thoughts planted unexpectedly, newfound and surprising energy. Us? Or Him?



#### 3RD ALIYA (14:9-14)

With the sea in front of them and Paro in pursuit, the people are desperate. They question why Moshe brought them out of Egypt to die in the desert. And state: this is what we said in Egypt. We would rather remain in Egypt to live and work as slaves than leave Egypt to die in the desert. Moshe reassured them.

This is the first we hear of the reluctance of the people to leave Egypt. While the Torah tells the story of the Jewish people

leaving slavery, that doesn't mean that every Jewish person was a willing participant. Skepticism is not a modern invention; it is a part of our people from antiquity.

But, while skeptical, they *did* leave, taking their place as part of the redemption of the Jewish people. Skeptics join the Jewish adventure of redemption, albeit skeptically.



#### 4TH ALIYA (14:15-25)

G-d tells Moshe to march forward, raise his staff over the water, the water will split and the people will proceed through the water. Moshe does so, the sea splits, the people march through and the Egyptians pursue. By daybreak the Egyptians are stuck in the sea, claiming G-d is fighting the battle of the Jews.

Redemption occurs with water. The first thing in creation was water; verse 2 in the Torah states G-d's spirit hovered over the waters. Water recurs as a symbol of beginnings. The splitting of the sea and the redemption from Egypt closes a chapter of Jewish history and opens a new beginning. It is the beginning of the national march to receive the Torah and to enter the Land of Israel. A new beginning marked by water.



#### 5TH ALIYA (14:26-15:26)

The sea waters return, drowning the Egyptians. The people sing Az Yashir, the song of thanks. Miriam leads the women in song. The journey into the desert begins.

Redemption brings song. This song creates a religious paradigm. When we are the recipients of Divine gifts, we must respond. The religious heart cannot contain itself. It needs to burst forth with song. Divine gifts, His Hand in our history, must generate a response by us. And that response is Song. ■

# A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES  
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

וראה את הדם על המשקוף ועל שתי המזוזות ופסח ה' על הפתח ולא יתן המשחית לבוא אל בתיכם.....לחק לך ולבניך עד עולם (יב:כג-כד)

“And when he sees the blood upon the lintel and on the two side posts, G-d will pass over the door and will not let the destroyer come into you home... this is an ordinance for you and your sons forever.” (12:23,24)

The Ibn Ezra and Ramban both comment that the verse seems to imply that the command of placing the blood on the doorposts applies every single year and yet the Rabbis explained that this ceremony of applying the blood on the doorposts was only the year of the exiting from Egypt?

A further question raised by the Mechilta from the verse “the blood shall serve as a sign for you” (12:13), hints to the fact that the blood was only visible to those sitting in the home, so how could G-d, so to speak, see the blood if it was not placed on the outside part of the door?

The Tal Shichakim (Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak Korev 1872-1957 St. Louis) explains that as the Jewish people were formed as a nation their initiation process included observing all the commandments relating to Pesach in their home. This will serve as the basis of their Jewish identity and family. The placing of the blood on the inside of the door signaled the proclamation that the Israelites would always be unique and special, keeping their home practices separated from the gentile surroundings. For the future generations, the Paschal blood would be replaced with observance of the mitzvot as the citadel of defense for our Jewish home against outside threats and assimilation.

Chag Sameach

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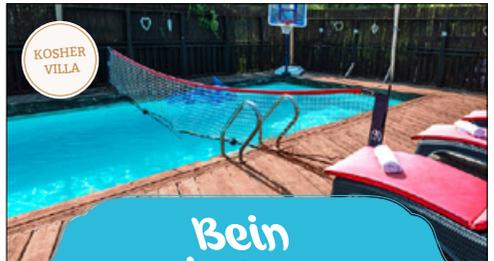
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## THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB  
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### “Imagine That!”

There was a time when I would only go out of my way to listen to speakers who were older and more experienced than I. Recently, however, I have changed my preferences and have begun to seek out speakers, rabbis and teachers, who are young and relatively inexperienced. I find their ideas fresh and often very much on the mark. After all, they are in much better touch with our fast-changing world than I am.

Once, during a visit to Israel, I sat in on a series of lectures which were designed to prepare the audience for the upcoming Passover holiday. The speaker, a brilliant young rabbi, focused upon the *Seder* night, and particularly upon the text of the *Haggadah*. He spent most of his opening lecture elaborating upon what he considered the most difficult task with which we are all confronted on the first night of Passover. The task is described in the following famous passage:

“In each and every generation, a person must see himself as if he personally left Egypt. As it is written, ‘And you shall explain to your son on that day that it is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt (*Exodus* 13:8).” The requirement is explicit in the biblical text: the Lord

did it for *me*, when I went free from Egypt.

The young rabbi candidly confessed to his audience that he had never been able to fulfill this requirement. Indeed, he didn’t think it was possible, certainly not for most of us, to envision ourselves as if we personally had experienced slavery and redemption. “This,” he insisted, “is the most difficult task we are faced with on the *Seder* night.”

When I first heard this assertion, I found it to be quite provocative. I wanted to protest but maintained my silence in respect for the young rabbi. I attributed his conviction to his relative immaturity. I have never found this obligation difficult. Personally, I have found it quite easy to imagine myself as a slave and to personally exult in the emotional experiences of redemption and freedom.

I usually forget the content of most lectures that I hear almost as soon as I leave the lecture hall. This time, however, I could not rid my mind of the young rabbi’s statement. I began to question my own inner certainty. Had it really been so easy for me all these years to envision myself as one of those who had experienced both slavery and the Exodus?

In the midst of my extended preoccupation with the young rabbi’s assertion, a long-forgotten memory suddenly surfaced in my mind. I was taken back in time to another lecture I had heard just before Passover many years ago. This time, the speaker was not a young rabbi at all. Rather, he was an old and revered Chassidic *rebbe*,

a survivor of the Holocaust who had spent years in Auschwitz and had witnessed the vicious murder of his wife and children with his own eyes.

That old *rebbe* was Rabbi Yekutiel Yehudah Halberstam, may his memory be blessed, who was known as the Klausenberger *Rebbe*, after the small town in the Balkans where he had served prior to World War II.

In that lecture, Rabbi Halberstam recounted his own puzzlement over a lecture he had heard very long ago from one of his mentors. I no longer remember the name of that mentor, but Rabbi Halberstam was careful to identify him in detail because of the strange and almost unbelievable experience that he reported.

The mentor said that he had no difficulty at all imagining himself to have been in slavery in Egypt and to have been redeemed. In fact, this mentor reported that he could clearly remember the experience. He could recall in great detail the burdensome work he had to perform, the dirty hovel in which he was forced to live, and the sighs and groans of his companions. He could even still see, in his mind's eye, the cruel face of his tormentors as they sadistically whipped him for not producing his daily quota of bricks.

The Klausenberger *Rebbe* confessed that when he first heard his mentor make those claims, he had difficulty believing them. He thought that his mentor had made such a claim just for the effect it would have upon his listeners. He stressed that sometimes it is justified for a speaker to resort to hyperbole to make his point more dramatic and more graphic.

But then the *rebbe* continued to say that after many years, he had come to realize

that his mentor was telling the absolute truth. "It took the experiences I had during the horrible years of the Holocaust," he exclaimed, "for me to realize why my mentor was able to recall his experiences in ancient Egypt's tyranny."

The *rebbe* then went on to elaborate upon two psychological processes that are necessary to invoke during the *Seder* night as we recite the *Haggadah*. He used two Hebrew and Yiddish terms respectively: *koach hadimyon* (the power of imagination) and *mitleid* (empathy).

The lesson that the old *Rebbe* related to me and to the dozens of other eager listeners that evening so long ago was that we are often restricted by our own tendencies to rely upon our reason, rationality, and intellectuality. We underplay the powers that we have to fantasize, to imagine, to dream freely. In a sense, we are slaves to reason and need to learn to allow ourselves to go beyond reason and to give our imaginations free rein. Only then can we "see ourselves as if we had personally endured slavery." Only by cultivating our imagery can we ourselves experience the emotions of freedom and liberty.

We are all required to imagine ourselves as if we are the other person. If the other person is poor, the *mitzvah* of charity demands that we ourselves feel his poverty. If he is ill, we must literally suffer along with him. This is empathy, and to be empathic, one must rely upon a well-developed imagination.

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Imagination and empathy are not words that one often hears in rabbinic sermons, but they are the words that the Klausenberger *Rebbe* used that evening. And, as he concluded in his remarks, he learned about those words through the bitter suffering that he endured when he was enslaved in Auschwitz, and he appreciated redemption when he himself was finally freed from his personal bondage.

The young rabbi who started my thinking about this had, through his good fortune, never really experienced anything remotely resembling slavery. Naturally, he was thus deprived of the ability to really appreciate freedom.

After a few days, I approached the young rabbi and shared with him the words that I had heard decades ago, before this young rabbi was even born. I told him what the

Klausenberger *Rebbe* had said about empathy and imagination. The young rabbi responded politely and with gratitude, but with a gentle smile got in the last word: “But the Klausenberger *Rebbe* didn’t say that learning to imagine and to empathize were easy.”

I had to admit that the young rabbi was correct. Creative imagination and compassionate empathy are not easily attained. Achieving them may indeed be the hardest task of the holiday of Passover.

But I feel confident that the young rabbi agreed with my assertion: Learning to use one’s powers of imagination in order to empathize with the plight of others is the essential objective of this magnificent holiday, *zman cheiruteinu*, the season of our freedom.

*Chag Sameach!* A happy holiday! ■

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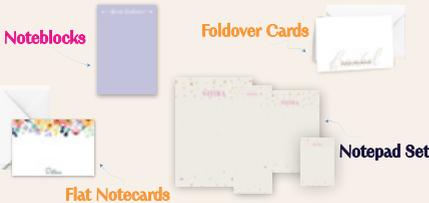
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## PROBING THE PROPHETS

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER  
FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

# “Od Lo Avda Tikvateinu!!”

Our haftarah tells of the well-known vision of the dry bones that Hashem revealed to the navi Yechezkel. After gazing upon this frightening sight, the prophet was asked by G-d: “HaTichyena Ha’atzamot Ha’ela?” - “Can these dry bones [ever] come to life?” It is a question that, undoubtedly, was repeated for generations by many Jews in numerous lands.

Our ancient scholars established that this prophetic vision be read on Chol HaMoed Pesach – yet, strangely, it does not mention Pesach at all. It is, indeed, a curious choice. After all, the selection from Sefer Yehoshua that we read on the first day of the chag, tells of the very first Korban Pesach that was offered in Eretz Yisrael, and, is, therefore a fitting selection for the first day. Likewise, David’s song of praise from Sefer Shmuel B which is read on the seventh day, is also an understandable choice, as it echoes Israel’s song of praise at Kriyat Yam Suf, that was sung on the seventh day. But why do we read Yechezkel’s vision of dry bones on Shabbat Chol Hamo’ed Pesach?

A logical question.... With a logical answer.

“Z’man Cheiruteinu”, our “Festival of Freedom” was never meant to be a simple

“reminiscence” of the exodus from Egypt alone. It was not to be limited to our past redemption. “Z’man Cheiruteinu” is better understood as the “*Season of Freedom*” and as such, our dream for a future redemption is part of the theme and the observances of Pesach. It is with this understanding that we turn to the haftarah for Shabbat Chol HaMo’ed Pesach.

The well-known prophecy found in the 37th perek of Sefer Yechezkel, captured the imagination of the early Zionists who saw the prophetic words as a message of renewal and rebirth; it reflected their view of the return of the Jewish nation to its homeland, as they labored to reawaken its lifeless agriculture and revive its ancient practices.

Indeed, they believed that the dry bones would yet come back to life!

A wonderful Israeli congregant of mine who was brought up in a secular home and educated in a secular school, told me that, in the early years following independence, all the students in their public schools were expected to memorize this vision of Yechezkel (which he repeated to me)! And why not? It was the dream of the future redemption, a dream they hoped to realize through their efforts. And, seeing the once-arid land give forth her fruit and the once-barren country repopulated with her children, why should they not recognize Yechezkel’s vision as coming true?

HaRav Amnon Bazak points out that Hashem’s revival of the dry bones followed

a specific progression: **First**, the bones will be brought together and connect to one another, **Second**, sinew and flesh would come up, **Third**, skin would be drawn over them and, **finally**, “ru’ach” - breath and spirit it would be blown into them and bring them to life. There would be separate phases to bringing life to the bones. The first three phases would focus on the physical structure of the dry bones and only after that, would Hashem grant them life by providing them with “breath”, i.e., spirit.

Rav Bazak contends that those who grieved over the churban, and suffered in the “golus” had little hope of ever seeing the rebirth of a devastated community. Hashem expresses their feelings in our haftarah: “... hinei omrim... `avdah tikvateinu` ” –“they [the exiled] proclaim `our hope is lost` ”. Clearly the purpose of the vision to Yechezkel was to encourage this lost community that there would yet be a rebirth, that there would be another redemption; and that the dry bones would come back to life.

And this is, therefore, part of the message of Pesach. It is not enough to celebrate the PAST redemption from Egypt, for one must also celebrate – and affirm - their belief in the FUTURE redemption. It is essential for our generation to see Pesach as the time to recognize the current – miraculous – *ge’ulah* - one that we experience daily.

It is not surprising that today millions of voices declare with assurance what past generations could not: **“OD LO AVDA TIKVATEINU!!”** ■

Rabbi Winkler's popular Jewish History lectures can be viewed by visiting the OU Israel Video archive: <https://www.ouisrael.org/video-library>

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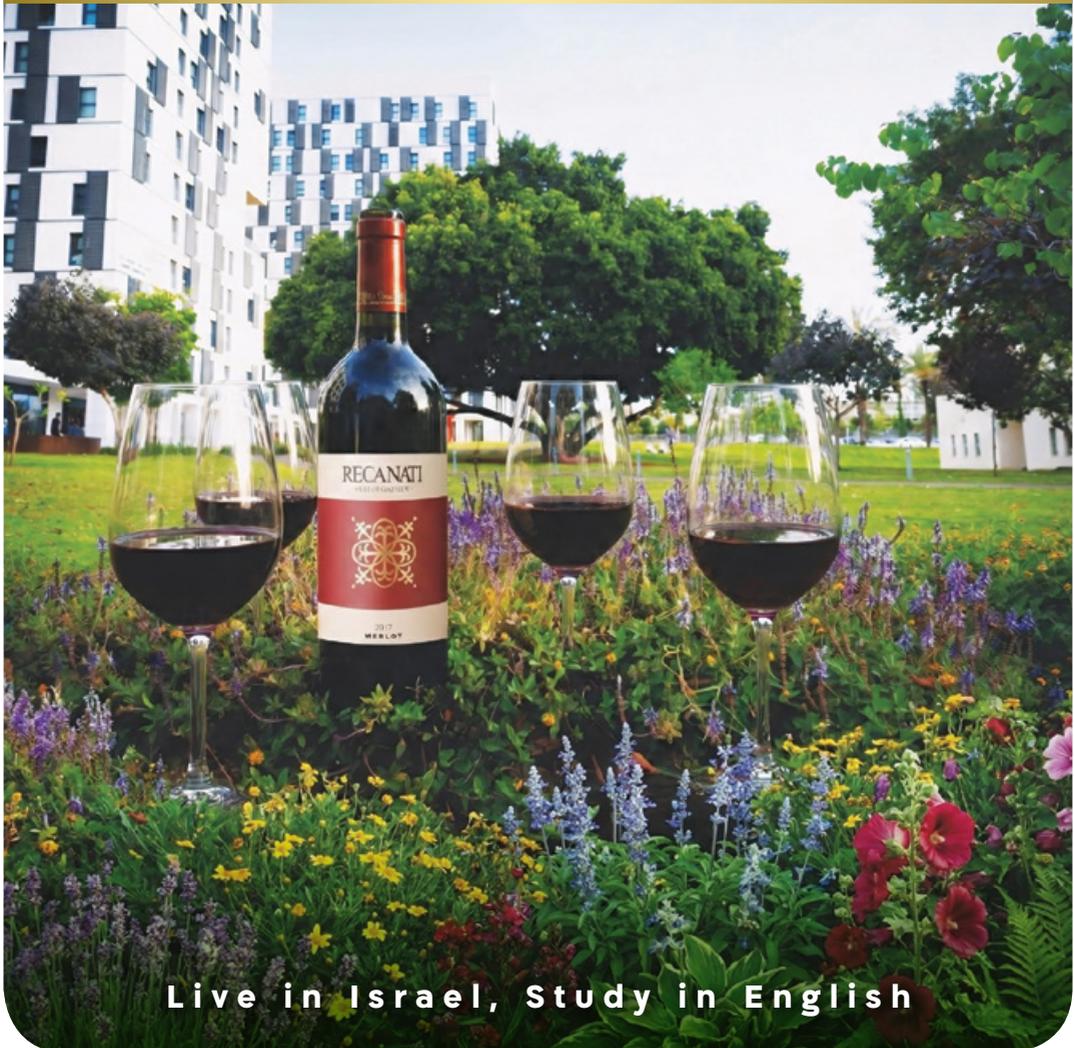
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# The Torah Spoke in Reference to Four Sons

In the **Haggadah of Pesah** we say:  
"ברוך המקום ברוך הוא, ברוך שנתן תורה לעמו ישראל ברוך הוא. כנגד ארבעה בנים דיברה תורה..."  
*Blessed is the Omnipresent, blessed is He; blessed is He who gave the Torah to His people Israel, blessed is He. The Torah spoke in reference to four sons...*

The phrase "כנגד ארבעה בנים" means that the Torah addresses itself to each of the four sons individually, meeting each one where he is. This itself carries profound depth, as we will see.

## EVERY JEW'S PORTION IN TORAH

Rav Haim Soloveitchik<sup>1</sup> explains that the intent of this passage is to praise Hashem, who gave the Torah not only to a nation - but to every single Jewish individual. Torah is unlike any other field of wisdom. In other disciplines, books are written for specific levels: children study from one set of books, adults from another; scholars read what the unlearned cannot grasp.

But the Torah, both Written and Oral, is designed for all ages and all levels. A child and a great Torah scholar may learn the very same Gemara or Rashi yet each will discover meaning according to his own depth and understanding. Torah belongs to everyone, at every stage of life.

1. Haggadah shel Pesach MiBeit Levi

"כנגד ארבעה בנים" This is the meaning of "דיברה תורה – the Torah speaks **to each son, to each Jew, on his level.**

## DESTINED TO SPEAK WITH THE SHEKHINAH

Since the Torah is suited to everyone, we must recognize that every child has the potential to grow in Torah and to reach exalted spiritual heights. Thus, every Jewish child should be regarded as one who is "עתיד להיות גדול בישראל" – destined to become great in Israel.

The Rama rules in *Shulkhan Arukh*<sup>2</sup>:  
לא יניקו תינוק מן הגויה, אם אפשר בישראלית, דחלב כותית מטמאם הלב

*A Jewish child should not nurse from a non-Jewish woman if a Jewish nurse is available, for the milk of a gentile dulls the heart.*

The source of this halakha is in the words of Hazal<sup>3</sup>. When Miriam said to Pharaoh's daughter<sup>4</sup>:

האלף וקראתי לך אשה מינקת מן העברית ותינק לך את הילד

*Shall I go and call for you a Hebrew woman to nurse the child for you?"*

Hazal explain that Moshe refused to nurse from a non-Jewish woman, for a mouth destined to speak with the Shekhinah could not ingest something impure. Rashi there

2. Yoreh De'ah 81:7

3. Sotah 12b

4. Shemot 2:7

comments:

מלמד שהחזירתו על מצריות הרבה לינק ולא ינק,  
לפי שהיה עתיד לדבר עם השכינה.

*This teaches that they brought him to many Egyptian women to nurse, but he would not nurse, since he was destined to speak with the Shekhinah.*

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky<sup>5</sup> raises a question: How can we derive a general halakha from Moshe Rabbeinu? After all, Moshe was unique, destined to speak face-to-face with the Divine Presence. Why should this apply to every Jewish child?

Rav Kamenetsky answers powerfully: Every child has the potential to speak with the Shekhinah. Therefore, we must raise and educate every child on a level befitting that destiny – with the awareness that each Jewish soul carries within it the possibility of becoming like Moshe Rabbeinu.

#### TORAH SPEAKS TO EVERY JEW

“כנגד ארבעה בנים, דיברה תורה”  
“דיברה תורה”, remind us that Torah speaks to **every Jew** – the wise, the rebellious, the simple, and even the one who cannot ask. No one is excluded, and every Jew has a portion in Torah.

Rav Haim Soloveitchik teaches that Torah is unique in that it meets each of us at our own level. Rav Kamenetsky expands this truth even further: we must see in every child the spark of Moshe Rabbeinu, one who is “עתיד לדבר עם השכינה”.

This vision transforms the way we view ourselves and others: no Jew is too far, too small, or too unworthy. Each of us is addressed by Torah, and each of us holds the potential for greatness. ■

5. Emet LeYaakov, Shemot 2:7

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# Chesed and Clarity

Pesach is a very apropos time for one to strengthen his emunah. The Seder night is the “Rosh Hashanah” for emunah, we even call the matzah “the bread of emunah.” Indeed, the Slominer Rebbe in *Netivot Shalom* understands that the dictum, “*ve’chol hamarbeh lesaper be’yitziat mitzrayim harei zeh meshubach* — and all who elaborate on the story of the exodus from Egypt, they are praiseworthy,” refers to speaking about aspects of emunah. The goal of the night is for everyone to clearly understand that “One is Hashem in the heavens and the earth.”

The theme of emunah continues throughout the week of the *chag* and culminates on the seventh day of Pesach. The Torah tells us that when the sea split, “*Vaya’aminu*

*ba’Hashem u’veMoshe avdo* — and they [Am Yisrael] believed in Hashem and in Moshe His servant.” (*Shemot 14:31*) Indeed, Chazal teach that at the sea, a maidservant reached similar levels of spiritual revelation as Yechezkel Hanavi. Rav Biderman quotes Rav Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt”l*, who explains that when the people witnessed the great manifestation of Hashem’s presence, they exclaimed, “*Hashem yimloch l’olam va’ed* — Hashem will reign forever and ever,” in the future tense. They were expressing their wish for this level of clarity and connection to remain within them forever. Thus, the day itself remains a time when we can access and tap into this wellspring of emunah on our own personal level.

Rav Pincus *zt”l* describes a special aspect of relationship and closeness to Hashem that we find on the seventh day of Pesach. He explains that water represents Hashem’s chesed, His lovingkindness. When Hashem created the world, it was filled entirely with water, representing Hashem’s outpouring of love. On the second day of creation Hashem separated the upper and lower waters. We access the upper waters in heaven through the raindrops that fall to the earth. We are told that when it rains, there is a powerful revelation of Divine favor and therefore is time for anyone to daven for any and all needs. It is a “window” into the treasure house of the abundant chesed in the heavens. In contrast, we only “meet” the waters found beneath the earth twice a year. Once

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is at the *Simchat Beit Hasho'eva*, the water drawing ceremony on the holiday of Succot when the lower waters were drawn forth and poured on the altar in the Beit Hamikdash. We were able to access these special waters after completing the whole teshuvah process of the *Yamim Nora'im*. The second time is on the seventh day of Pesach. *Am Yisrael* was able to walk through the waters of the *Yam Suf* onto the dry land, surrounded by the chesed of Hashem. The seventh day of Pesach is a time when we recall our troubles and Hashem's response of enormous love.

Let us take advantage of of this favorable time, the seventh day of Pesach, to truly believe and feel this abounding flow of Divine love and connection, to believe that Hashem's love surrounds us and buoys us in every situation and every circumstance. ■

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## SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR  
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One of the many interesting segments of the *Hagada* text is the story of the Sages who gathered together in *Bnai Brak* and spent the entire evening discussing the Exodus from Egypt .

*“It happened that Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya, Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon gathered together (for the Seder) in Bnai Brak. They spoke and elucidated regarding the departure from Egypt for that entire night, until their students announced: ‘Masters, it is time to recite the morning Shema’ ...”*

The most familiar lesson drawn from this well known text is that the *mitzva* of retelling and recalling the Exodus is so vital, that these great Sage s l literally stayed awake until daybreak deep in their discussion!

However there are actually many other lessons and questions to be drawn from this intriguing paragraph! Why were these Sages, each a great scholar and leader of their own community, gathered together? Why specifically these leaders and not others? Why did they come together specifically in *Bnai Brak*?

According to tradition, Rabbi Akiva lived in *Bnai Brak*, thus it seems Rabbi Akiva was the host of this momentous *Seder*.

Rabbi Akiva was also the spiritual mentor of *Simon Bar Kochba*, the great warrior who organized a failed revolt against the Roman Empire . It is Rabbi Akiva who gives an encouraging religious perspective, who offers hope during this dark period of Jewish history.

There is a very interesting story that concludes the Talmudic tractate of *Makot*. Rabbi Akiva, together with a small group of some of those same important rabbinic luminaries mentioned in our *Hagada* text, has traveled to Jerusalem to gaze upon the ruins following the Roman conquest of the Holy City . The Talmud describes that as the Rabbis began to gaze out over Mount Scopus , they collectively ripped their garments to mourn the destruction they now witnessed first hand. When they continued on to look at the Temple Mount , they saw a fox wandering in the area that once was the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctum of the Holy Temple . The sages began to cry, while Rabbi Akiva began to laugh. The other sages of course were dumbfounded; how could Rabbi Akiva laugh when foxes are running wild on the holiest space on the Temple Mount ?

Rabbi Akiva’s reply is both fascinating and challenging. Rabbi Akiva cites a verse from the book of Isaiah (Chapter 8, verse 2):

*“ V’aeeda li eidim neemanim et Uria HaKohein, v’et Zecharia ben Yeverechayu.”*

 **Mazel Tov to**   
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*“And I took for myself as faithful witnesses, Uria the Priest, and the prophet Zecharia.”*

The Talmud asks the question- what is the connection between Uria, who lived during the First Temple Period, and Zecharia, who lived during the Second Temple Period?

Regarding the time period of Uria, the Talmud suggests, it is written:

*“And Zion shall be plowed as a field, Jerusalem should become a heap of ruins, and Jerusalem a shrine in the wilderness” (Micha, 3:12).*

While in Zecharia it is written: *“Thus said the Lord of Hosts:*

*“Old men and women shall again dwell in the broad corridors of Jerusalem.” (Zecharia, 8:4)*

The Talmud then continues with Rabbi Akiva’s answer to the other Sages:

*“ Until Uria’s dire prediction of Jerusalem ‘s destruction had been fulfilled, I was afraid that we might never again see the vision of Zecharia’s prophecy (of men and women growing old in the streets of Jerusalem ). Now that I have seen with my own eyes the destruction prophesized by Uria, I know for a fact that Zecharia’s vision will one day come true as well...”*

And the tractate of *Makkot*, concludes with this last line:

*“They (the other Sages) replied to him: ‘Akiva, you have comforted us, Akiva you have comforted us...”*

Rabbi Akiva, upon seeing the ruins of the Second Temple , and the city of Jerusalem left decimated by the Romans, was able to laugh, to see that destruction as a step in the fulfillment of subsequent

prophecies predicting the redemption of the Jewish people, and the building of the Third Temple .

Perhaps, it is Rabbi Akiva’s unique capacity to see the decimation levied by the Roman legionnaires as a necessary step in the process of redemption, to offer hope and a perspective of light shining just beyond the darkness, which serves as the impetus for these same Sages gathering together on the night of Pesach. During a time of much despair, even these great luminaries needed to come together with Rabbi Akiva, who through his inspired visionary perspective could remind them just what the celebratory nature of this night of freedom was truly all about.

**Rabbi Avigdor HaLevi Nebentzahl, shlita**, the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem ‘s Old City , offers another interesting perspective on this *Hagada* segment. In his work *Yerushalayim B’Moadeha*, he writes:

*“We must examine why the names of the Sages are recalled in such detail. And there are those who explain that Rabbi Akiva was the son of converts and Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua were Leviim; while Rabbi Tarfon and Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya*

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were Kohanim. One might think that converts, Leviim and Kohanim would not be required to tell and relive the Exodus, since we might think they did not experience enslavement in Egypt (According to Rashi the entire tribe of Levi was exempted from the rigors of slavery, while converts were not part of the Jewish people at all until the time of the conversion...). Therefore we recall, that even those who would not have been enslaved in Egypt, are still required to tell of the Exodus from Egypt, because the entire Jewish People are required to fulfill this mitzva. It is for this purpose that even though there might very well have been additional Sages present, they are not recalled here, they are not recalled since this section is trying to emphasize that even those who might think the Exodus story would not be relevant to them, very well must recall the Exodus, that it is indeed relevant to each and every Jew..."

From Rav Nebentzahl's words, one might infer that redemption, the freedom we embrace and celebrate on the Seder night, is not solely the freedom from physical slave labor, but perhaps equally profound- the freedom to become who each of us as individuals is truly destined to be, no matter our background or life experiences until this point.

Yet another beautiful interpretation of this rabbinic teaching was offered by **Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook zy'a**. Rav Kook saw it significant that these rabbis had gathered in Bnai Brak, citing a Talmudic entry from Tractate *Ketubot* (111b):

"Rami bar Yechezkel came to visit Bnai Brak where he saw goats grazing under fig-trees while honey was flowing from

the figs, and milk ran forth from the goats, and these mingled with each other.' This is indeed', he remarked, '[a land] flowing with milk and honey'..."

Rav Kook explained the gathering of Sages on the Seder night based on this Talmudic teaching- the sages chose to gather to celebrate the redemption from Egypt, not solely as a means to recall the bondage left behind, but as a reminder of the destination, the ultimate goal to live in freedom in the Land of Israel. During this very dark period of Jewish History, these sages convened specifically in *Bnai Brak*, and all it represents based on this Talmudic teaching, to remind us for all posterity the goodness that is personified by the 'land flowing with milk and honey...'

**Rabbi Yochanan Sofer, The Erlau Rebbe zy'a** in a powerful lecture to educators in the Erlau educational system, suggests that the *Baal Hagada* includes this story to emphasize a fundamental pedagogical approach. More than details or minutiae, what our students and children recall most are the stories of *tzadikim*, of the earlier generations who faced hardship with heroism, perseverance and faith.

The story of the Sages conducting the Seder in *Bnai Brak* really helps to define the many facets of freedom and redemption which are part and parcel of the very essence of Pesach as Zman Cheiruteinu- the season of our freedom.

*'Hashata Hacha, L'shana HaBa'a B'Ara D'Yisrael. Hashata Avdei, L'Shana Ha Ba'a bnai chorin...'*

*'Presently we are here, but next year may we be in the land of Israel. Now, we remain in servitude, but next year may we truly be free...'*

These words, and the many beautiful teachings cited above, are particularly important for us to heed this year. *Yehi Ratzon*, may we continue to have strength and spiritual fortitude, and may we merit to experience *geula* in the days ahead.

*Chag Kasher V'Sameach...*Rabbi Sam Shor ■

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# Pesach: Not Enough

For years, Chevron’s Park Hotel had hosted members of the Jordanian aristocracy to enjoy the cool dry air. The miraculous victory of the Six Day War forced the regular vacationers to change their travel plans and the hotel’s Arab owners were thrilled to accept reservations for the entire hotel for an extended stay of undisclosed ‘tourists’.

On Erev Pesach 1968, *shlepping* a refrigerator, stove-tops and Yom Tov provisions, close to ninety people arrived for check-in. Led by the heroic Rav Moshe and Miriam Levinger, the group included Rav Eliezer Waldman, Rav Chaim Druckman and a young beret-wearing French *oleh* at the beginning of his *teshuvah* journey: the future Rav Shlomo Aviner. Dozens of passionate, ideologically driven pioneers, some fervent in their observance, others not at all, gathered. Rabbinit Levinger recalls, “Less than a year after Chevron was recaptured in the Six Day War, white flags of surrender still hung from many of the windows in the city. It was all very thrilling. We all had the feeling that we were taking part in a great moment of Jewish history... everyone that Pesach shone an inner light that I had never seen before.”

When one of the participants, Moshe

Shamir, an author affiliated with the leftist *HaShomer HaTzair*, rose to share a ‘vort’, everyone braced themselves....

“We are sitting here singing *Dayeinu*, *dayeinu*. How can we imply that we would be willing to forgo even one of the gifts given to us by God? Is not every one of these fourteen steps, values and experiences, essential to who we are?

The truth is that this part of the Haggadah has only one aim: to teach us how each and every generation of Jews tends to settle for the achievements of the past, to rest on its laurels, satisfied with what has already been accomplished, without aspirations for anything more. Even we, gathered here tonight, can become complacent and say *Dayenu*—‘It is enough for us.’ The State of Israel? *Dayenu*. A unified Jerusalem and liberated Chevron? *Dayenu*. Friends! This is just the beginning. חובה לדעת, כי עוד דיינו. רבים לפנינו עד שנגיע לגאולה השלימה, It is our obligation to know that there will be many more ‘*dayenus*’ ahead of us until we reach *Geulah*...”

Rav Druckman embraced Shamir, kissing him on the forehead. Indeed, it was just the beginning.

.....  
אלו הכניסנו לארץ ישראל ולא בנה לנו את בית  
הבחירה, דיינו.  
.....

We are living in extraordinary times, a *ulma* of great historical importance. In the two and a half years since that tragic

day of *hester panim* of October 7th, we have experienced the intensity of war in Gaza as well as awe-inspiring, miraculous military achievements in Lebanon, Syria and Iran, which were unthinkable even a generation ago. Along with awesome accomplishments on the battlefield, we are a part of an awakening of authentic Jewish heroism, *gevurah* and sacrifice, an expression of deep and renewed faith, identity and holiness, of expanded consciousness and holy pride.

The open *hashgacha pratis* and national progress has accelerated a sense of urgency and focus on our relationship with and *kesher* to Eretz Yisrael.

The *tefillah* entitled “*Ribbon Kol haOlamim*” is a deeply moving one, appearing in some *sidurim* between *Shalom Aleichem* and *Eishes Chayil*. This traditional *Leil Shabbos* prayer expresses an array of uplifting *bakashos*, capturing the faith, hope and yearning that a *Yid* uncovers in the sacred moments preceding Kiddush. On one line, we ask in a unique way for Hashem’s compassion: לתרחמי עוד בגלותי, לגאלני, “May You further show me mercy and deliver me in my exile, to redeem me.” Here it seems that instead of asking to be saved *from* our *galus*, we are asking to be delivered “in” it—*within* the exile. The great Reb Shalom Rockeach, the first Belzer Rebbe known as the *Sar Shalom*, *zy’a*, explained that there are three expressions of *galus*, each one more harsh than the preceding. One is a physical exile among non-Jews, the second is a form of exile among fellow Jews and the third is an experience of being in an internal *galus*, exiled within oneself.

The needle is moving forward on Jewish

history; there is a unique opportunity right now for us to break out of our passive acceptance of *golus*, and say, ‘*Ad masai!* How long will we cower in the “safety” of our self-induced exile? How long do we need to push off becoming who we really are as a people?’ Can we muster the strength and faith to believe that Hashem is waiting for us to be ready for the Beis Hamikdash?

When we beseech the *Ribono Shel Olam*, שתרחמי עוד בגלותי, “that He have more compassion on me in my exile,” we are referring to exile consciousness which is self-induced. We are asking to be saved *from ourselves*. Indeed, it is easier to take a Jew out of *galus*, than to take *galus* out of a Jew...

הַשְׁתָּא הָכָא, לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאָה בְּאַרְעָא דְיִשְׂרָאֵל.  
הַשְׁתָּא עֲבָדִי, לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאָה בְּנֵי חוּרִין.

*Now we are here, this coming year we will (all) be in the Land of Israel; this year we are slaves, this coming year we will be free people!*

“Friends! This is just the beginning; לדעת, כי עוד ‘דיינו’ רבים לפנינו עד שנגיע לגאולה השלימה, It is our obligation to know that there will be many more *dayenus*,” many occasions to thank Hashem for what we have, before we reach *Geulah*. May the great, redemptive days of Pesach free us from all of our self-limiting *conseptziot*, so that we may celebrate as a free, independent holy nation in our Land! Let us raise high the flag of freedom and envision the complete and true, internal and external, Final Redemption *bim’heirah*: לְשָׁנָה הַזֹּאת בְּנֵי חוּרִין, “This year we will be free people!” ■




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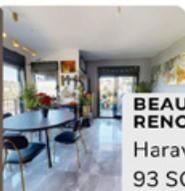

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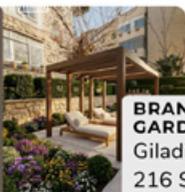

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# Pesach: The Night We Remember, The War We Are Living

The Torah assigns the night of Pesach a striking name: *Leil shimurim*. On the simplest level, it describes the condition on the night of Yetziat Mitzrayim itself. After centuries of vulnerability, exposure, and fear, our people finally experienced a night of safety. While death raged through Egypt, the Jewish people sat inside their homes, protected and alive. It was the first *Leil shimurim* our nation had known in centuries.

### A LAYERED NIGHT

In truth, this night had already served as a night of protection long before Yetziat Mitzrayim. This evening appears earlier in the life of Avraham Avinu. When he went to war against the four kings who had swept through the region, Avraham pursued them at night and defeated them. The Torah describes his strategy with the phrase “וַיַּחַלֵּק עֲלֵיהֶם” - he divided against them. On a simple level, this refers to a tactical division of his forces, a calculated maneuver designed to overwhelm the larger enemy.

Yet Chazal hear something deeper in the word וַיַּחַלֵּק. The Gemara reads it as a division of time, a splitting of the night

hours. This battle unfolded on the night of the fifteenth of Nisan. Avraham pressed forward until midnight and then halted. The remainder of the night of the fifteenth was reserved for a future deliverance, the night of Yetziat Mitzrayim. The night was divided. The first half served Avraham, and the second half was preserved for us in Mitzrayim.

The layering of this night, shared by Avraham and Am Yisrael, is preserved in the piyyut Vayehi Bachatzi Halailah, which we recite toward the close of the Seder. The piyyut traces a pattern of geulot, each unfolding within this same historic night. Long before we left Mitzrayim, the night of the fifteenth had already been marked and set apart. It was a *leil shimurim* even before it became ours as a nation.

### A TEMPLATE FOR TODAY

The term shimurim does not refer only to the protection granted on that night. It also serves as a model for future generations and future events, even those that do not occur on this date. Yetziat Mitzrayim, our first geulah, became a template for later geulot. Chazal teach that when Moshiach comes, our enemies will be struck by a

sequence of events that echo the ten makkot, and the protection of that night will, in some form, return. This night is not limited to what occurred on the fifteenth of Nisan but shapes how future geulah will unfold.

As we move through this current war, our experience partially echoes that first night of Yetziat Mitzrayim. The sounds, the tension, and the sudden turns recall that night. Yet the resemblance remains incomplete. In many respects, we are still far from the fullness of geulah experienced on *leil shimurim*. We are moving toward geulah, but we have not yet arrived. That future night of redemption will carry the clarity and completeness of Yetziat Mitzrayim.

Until then, as we experience Pesach under fire, we remember what that night felt like in Mitzrayim and recognize how our current reality echoes it while still falling short.

### WAR IN HEAVEN

The sequence of ten makkot reflected a shift in altitude. The early plagues unfolded at ground level. Water turned to blood, the Nile disgorged swarms of creatures, the land crawled with vermin, and the carcasses of dead cattle lay across the landscape.

Gradually, the arena of the makkot rose from earth to heaven. Beginning with shechin, attention turned upward. Moshe cast handfuls of furnace soot into the air, and it spread across Egypt before descending upon the Egyptians as a skin affliction. Barad followed, with thunder and flaming hail descending from above. Then came the locusts, driven in from the sky, and afterward a dense darkness that settled

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from above. Finally, the angel of death passed through Egypt, moving from home to home.

The plagues did not only intensify. They ascended. The battleground shifted from the ground beneath Egypt's feet to the heavens above.

This shift carried deep monotheistic meaning. Yetziat Mitzrayim introduced monotheistic ideas into a pagan world. Over many generations these ideas would spread, but the direction was set. A central principle of monotheism is the hierarchy between Hashem and man. Paganism blurs that boundary. Man fashions his own gods and imagines that he can influence them through ritual and flattery. Monotheism rests upon an unbridgeable distance between man and Hashem. Hashem is not an extension of human

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The clearest image of that hierarchy is the divide between heaven and earth. Hashem in the heavens, beyond human reach, and man upon the earth. By shifting the later makkot to the heavens, the Egyptians were taught that Hashem is not part of their world and not subject to their control.

Our current war has also shifted from the sand dunes of Gaza to the skies above us and above our enemies. Watching these events unfold in the heavens, and experiencing the success we have seen, reinforces the awareness that Hashem is waging these battles on our behalf. It makes no difference where battles are fought. Hashem ish milchamah, Hashem Shemo. Yet the movement into the heavens sharpens that awareness and strengthens our bitachon.

### THE DOME OF THE SHECHINAH

On the night of Yetziat Mitzrayim, we were shielded from Makkat Bechorot by the presence of the Shechinah. That night marked the first time the Shechinah revealed itself to an entire nation. The word Pesach is typically translated as Passover, but it also carries the meaning of hovering over. On that night, Hashem's Shechinah descended into history on a national scale and hovered above the Jewish homes.

The Korban Pesach drew the Shechinah down from heaven. As the Shechinah hovered over each Jewish home, the angel of death could not enter, and those homes were passed over. The presence of the Shechinah formed an impenetrable canopy of protection, preventing a single Jew from being harmed.

Today, Hashem has granted us the ability to protect our homes in Israel from missiles of death. The technological ingenuity He has enabled, together with the devotion and courage of our soldiers, has saved hundreds, if not thousands, of lives.

Yet this protective shield is not fully sealed. We have still suffered casualties and injuries. Our defenses are powerful, but they remain partial.

We live beneath a dome we have built, strengthened by siyata diShmaya, but we remember another kind of protection, quiet and complete. We await the moment when the Shechinah will once again descend, hovering over our homes and keeping us safe from harm.

### SHELTER

The night of Pesach was spent at home. We were instructed not to leave our homes so that we would remain protected. This instruction continued to echo in later years in the way we ate the Korban Pesach. Even when the angel of death no longer hovered above, we were still forbidden to take any of the meat outside our homes.

The home became a place of protection, where families gathered for a festive meal that would launch their departure the next morning.

Over the past month, we too have gathered inside for protection. It has not been around festive tables or in a spirit of celebration. We have been crowded into shelters, waking multiple times each night.

Like Pesach, we have been drawn indoors for safety. Our protection has not been complete, and our sheltering has been tense and unsettled.

## HURRIED

The night of Pesach unfolded with haste and compressed schedules. When redemption arrives, Hashem contracts time and accelerates history. Sudden political shifts and rapid timelines signal that geulah is approaching. This was evident in the final year in Mitzrayim and even more on that last night. Within hours, we moved from slavery to freedom, from bondage to destiny, marching toward our homeland. Matzah became the enduring image of that hurried departure. Our geulah was too urgent to wait for. History moved faster than human rhythm.

The past month has carried a similar urgency. We feel history lurching forward. Wars are unfolding in compressed time-frames, and the landscape shifts almost daily. Once again, events outpace us, and we are being hurried along.

Yet unlike Mitzrayim, our urgency is not yet aligned with redemption. An entire nation remains tethered to its phones, moving between routine and shelter, between ordinary life and sudden alarm. In some communities, the distinction between day and night has blurred, as relentless barrages interrupt every rhythm.

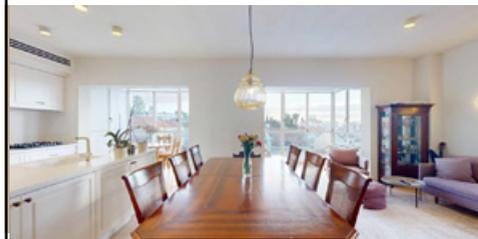
In Mitzrayim, the acceleration carried us forward with clarity and security, driving us toward freedom. Our current urgency feels unsettled. History is pressing forward, but it has not yet reached that final surge toward redemption and stability. We are moving quickly, but we have not yet arrived.

## SILENT AND LOUD

The night of Pesach was at once loud and silent. In the Egyptian quarters, it was



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filled with fear and shrieking. Pharaoh roamed the streets of Mitzrayim, searching for Moshe and pleading with him to leave at once. For the Jewish people in Goshen, the night was strikingly quiet.

ולכל בני ישראל לא יחרץ כלב את לשונו

Hashem's Shechinah descended, and even the natural order seemed to respond. The world beyond was chaotic, but the Jewish world was calm and composed. Even the dogs did not disturb the stillness.

We have not known much of that stillness in Israel this past month. Serenity has given way to sirens that wake us at night, interrupt our meals, and cut into our tefillah. In some places there are only seconds to reach shelter. The noise unsettles, and what it signals weighs on us. The sirens are followed by ambulances and security forces rushing to the sites where missiles have struck. Life has become loud and constantly interrupted.

We wait for that quiet to return. We long for a life that feels protected again, where the chaos no longer reaches us.

We have experienced many of the sounds and emotions of the night of Yetziat Mitzrayim. We are moving toward our geulah, but we are still at a distance. Some elements of that night have begun to reappear, while others remain beyond our reach.

### NO LONGER DEFENSELESS

Yechezkel (chapter 16) describes our people during the Egyptian experience as a newborn cast into the open field, abandoned and struggling for life:

ואעבור עליך ואראך מתבוססת בדמיו

Hashem took us in, raised us, clothed us, and sustained us. That image captures

how exposed and helpless we were in Mitzrayim, without strength and without protection. It reflects the unilateral nature of the geulah from Mitzrayim.

We are no longer that defenseless child. We have a state, an army, and millions of Jews, in Israel and across the world, working tirelessly to defend our people. We depend deeply on Hashem's siyata diShmaya, but we now stand as partners in shaping our destiny.

The Haggadah emphasizes that on the night of Pesach, Hashem alone passed through Egypt and struck down the Egyptians, without any intermediary:

אני ה' אני ולא מלאך, אני ולא שליח

Moshe's name is absent from the Haggadah to underscore this reality. Redemption unfolded directly through Hashem, without human agency.

Today we act as His agents. At this stage of our redemption, we fight, we build, and we protect, often with courage that stretches beyond what we imagined possible. We still long for a moment when Hashem will descend into history and reshape it without the filters of politics and human effort, אני ה' אני ולא מלאך.

Until that moment arrives, we continue as partners with Hakadosh Baruch Hu, acting as His agents in this world, defending the land of our Avot and struggling to rebuild Jewish life in our homeland.

Chag Kasher V'samei'ach ■



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## The Journey of a Promise

**PESACH - YEHOSHUA 3:5-7, 5:2-6:1, 6:27**

There is a moment in this week's Haftorah that feels like the closing of a circle. After forty years of wandering, Bnei Yisrael stand in Gilgal, just having crossed the Yarden. The promise first spoken to Avraham Avinu centuries earlier is now becoming reality. At the Brit Bein HaBetarim, Hashem tells Avraham, וְדַע יְדָעָה... וְדוֹר — that his descendants will endure exile and affliction, and then return. Now, standing at the threshold of the Land, those final words — יְשׁוּבוּ הָנָּה — are being fulfilled.

As the Abarbanel explains, Sefer Yehoshua is not merely a narrative of conquest but a testimony to the reliability of Hashem's promise. What was spoken to Avraham, reaffirmed to Yitzchak and Yaakov, and carried forward through Moshe, now takes form. A family of seventy becomes a nation,

entering its land with Torah, identity and purpose.

And yet, before they move forward, they pause. Before battle, before settlement, they renew the covenant. Yehoshua circumcises the nation, restoring the ברית מילה that binds them to Avraham. The Land and the covenant are inseparable as promised to Avraham: וְנָתַתִּי לָךְ... אֶת כָּל-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן... וְאֶתָּה. To enter the Land is to step into that relationship.

It is here that Hashem declares, הַיּוֹם — “Today I have rolled away the shame of Egypt from upon you.” Gilgal marks a turning point: not only have they left Egypt physically, they have now shed its imprint spiritually. Through Bris Milah and Korban Pesach, they reconnect to the covenant that began with Avraham and was first lived in Egypt.

Perhaps this is why this perek is read on Pesach, because Pesach is not only about leaving — it is about arriving. The Bris Bein HaBetarim reminds us that Jewish history unfolds with direction and purpose. The return in the days of Yehoshua stands as testimony that Hashem's promises endure.

As Chazal teach, בניסן נגאלו ובניסן עתידין, ליגאל. The redemption of the past points toward the redemption of the future. Each year, as we sit at the Seder, we are not only remembering a story — we are stepping back into a covenant. The journey that began with Avraham is still unfolding. ■

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## RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

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# Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop: Mei Marom Haggadah Highlights

### FAMILY CLOSENESS

The Haggadah comments and analyzes the verses which describe the enslavement in Egypt. Regarding the phrase “And God saw...our *amaleinu* (our burden)...” the Haggadah states that this refers to “the sons” (*eilu habanim*). How are we to understand this cryptic comment of the Haggadah?

Rav Charlop suggests that this refers to one of the devils plans of the Egyptians. The Egyptians noted a treasured quality in the Jewish nation, Namely, their unique familial closeness and tight bond which characterized the Jewish nation.

By drowning the first born sons they intended to degrade and disrupt family life. It is noteworthy that the Talmud (Sota 12a) relates that Amram and Yocheved separated from each other in order not to bring another child into a wretched world. Our *amaleinu*, our ‘burden’ or our ‘efforts’ to maintain a healthy family life seemed almost futile in this harsh environment. And yet, somehow the Jewish people held strong and refused to give up. Amram and Yocheved remarry and

bring Moshe into the world.

Thus, Rav Charlop says, that the central mitzvah of the night reflects the family bond. We are to take a lamb “for the family” - “...buy for yourselves one of the flock for your families and slaughter the pesach-offering” (*Shemot* 12:21). Rarely if not ever do we find a mitzvah



Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop zt"l

that is directed specifically to the *mishpacha* (family). This is intentional. It is meant to highlight the distinctiveness of the Jewish family and to emphasize from the very outset of forming a nation that Judaism places a supreme value on inter-family relationships and closeness.

The central mitzvah of the *Pesach* night is for parents to personally and directly relay the story to their children, *v'higadeta levincha*, another example of the central motif of family closeness and that every child should feel valued, supported and embraced. (*Haggadah Mei Marom*, p. 41)

Rav Charlop takes note that toward the end of the Seder we once again spotlight the beauty of family closeness. Eliyahu's arrival at the end of the Seder is undoubtedly one of the most inspiring parts of

Pesach night. It should be noted, says Rav Charlop, that Eliyahu the prophet is celebrated for the role he will play as we enter the time of redemption “to bring the heart of the father to his children and the hearts of children to their fathers” (*Malachki* 3:24). The love of family members for one another and their close bond is one of the most celebrated and beautiful qualities of our people. (Ibid. pp. 1-2)

### **MIGHTILY BOUND TO THE LAND**

The text of the Pesach Haggada cites the Torah’s very first mention of the exile in Egypt. It comes in a message from God to Avraham: “He said to Avraham, ‘You shall know that your seed will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they will enslave them and make them suffer...’” (Bereshit 15:13). Rav Charlop points out that embedded in this verse that describes the darkness of enslavement is also the eternal promise that *any other land* is foreign to the Jew. Only the Land of Israel is home. The Jew will have one dream, one vision, one aspiration, one hope: to get back to the Land of Israel. “Next year in Yerushalayim!”

Rav Charlop adds a crucial addendum. This verse which describes the Egyptian servitude hints at a broader experience of the Jew in foreign lands. As long as the Jew maintains a clear cognizance that they live in a foreign land, they will not need the reminders of suffering imposed by the gentile world which surrounds them. Lest the Jew begin to forget that they are to feel fully at home in any land, “the enslavement and suffering” of a foreign culture and people may suddenly emerge to call to mind the eternal love of

the Land. (*Mei Marom Haggadah*, p. 35)

In a similar vein, Rav Charlop comments on the Haggadah’s description of the matza being the food that slaves ate ‘because they rushed out of Egypt.’ The Haggadah states: “They couldn’t tarry any longer” (*lo yachlu le’hitmameah*). This sense of immediacy was felt by Jew because they finally discerned that they no longer had a place in Egypt. They realized that living in such an environment was simply no longer viable. Rav Charlop writes: “And this will also be the sign [of the redemption] in the future - when the Jew will feel that they no longer have a place in exile, and feel it necessary to leave and arrive in the Land of Israel.” (Ibid., p.50)

In another memorable Pesach teaching of Rav Charlop regarding the uniqueness of Eretz Yisrael, Rav Charlop turns to Haggadah’s description of the *Rasha* (wicked child). The text states that must we relay to the *Rasha* that were he had been in Egypt he would not have been redeemed. *Reshaim* at that time actually died during the plague of darkness and we emphasize that this would have been your demise as well. Rav Charlop comments that although the wicked among the Jews would have been lost in the exile servitude of Egypt, a ‘wicked Jew’ will surely not to be lost when living in the Land of Israel. The bonds of the nation when living in the Land are so strong that even a Jew who is on the fringe is held tightly to the nation and will eventually find a path that will direct him to *teshuvah* and commitment to Torah.

Rav Charlop cites Rashi (Shemot 12:27)

who teaches that the people of Israel were joyful when they heard of the redemption from Egypt “and bowed in gratitude” not only for the freedom but due to the fact that “they will have future generations of children.” Although the child just described to them in the verse (12:26) is a reference to the *Rasha*, ‘wicked child,’ knowing that this child will make his home in the Land of Israel he will remain connected and surely will find the path that will bring him to a commitment to Torah and mitzvot. (*Haggadah Mei Marom*, p. 32)

Seder night in particular, says Rav Charlop, inspires a deep longing and connection of a Jew to Eretz Yisrael. “On this night the Jewish people are crowned with the majestic crown of the holy atmosphere of Eretz Yisrael and with the holy light of the *makom Hamikdash* (the place of the Holy Temple)...one senses the holiness of Eretz Yisrael no matter where one is located.” (*Haggadah Mei Marom*, p. 2).

Seemingly Rav Charlop is alluding to the many *halachot* and symbols of the Seder night specifically awakens within a Jew and longing for the Holy Land and the Beit Hamikdash. We wash our hands

for the vegetables (*karpas*) the way it was done when Beit Hamikdash stood. An egg and shank bone sitting on the Seder plate reminds us of the loss of the Beit Hamikdash and a Jews yearning to bring the *korban Pesach* once again. The Seder ends with the beloved words: “Next Year in a rebuilt Jerusalem.” These are only a few examples of prominent places throughout the Seder where our yearnings for redemption and the return of our nation to the Land is expressed and should be wholly felt at the Seder.

### SPEECH IN EXILE

Rav Charlop cites an evocative passage from the work of the *Zohar* which states: “The exile in Egypt was an exile of speech.” (*Zohar Parshat Va'era* p. 25b). This cryptic statement requires elucidation. Is there a source for this idea in the Torah’s description of the Israelite enslavement? Noteworthy is the fact that Moshe is described as being “heavy of lip and heavy of speech.” With the giving of Torah Moshe becomes the “speaker,” communicator and teacher of Torah.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik was also intrigued by this teaching in the *Zohar* (‘Redemption, Prayer, Talmud Torah’ in Tradition 1978) and cited this teaching as the basis for one of his classic teachings in regard to Pesach and the meaning of redemption. Both masters suggest that a slave who is forced to engage in harsh labor and has no freedom to choose for himself - however the slave, on a psychological level, tragically also loses something most precious - namely, his sense of self. He no longer believes that his own convictions and ideas have any



relevance. There is no need to speak because he has nothing to contribute - he has no confidence in himself and he surely believes that he cannot make a difference - "his speech is in exile." Freedom from slavery is not only a physical freedom from servitude it is new self awareness that expressing my thoughts, sharing words for others to hear is of great import.

Mount Sinai was a place of words. The Ten commandments are known as the *Asert Adibrot*, literally translated: 'The Ten Statements.' The study of Torah and its wisdom invest man with the gift to communicate a message. The Jewish nation accepting the Torah was an act of "redeeming speech." (*Haggadah Mei Marom*, p.33)

The night of Pesach is celebrated especially as a night of speech. *Ve'higadeat le'vincha*, "Tell your child." The central mitzvah of the night highlights the fact that we have a unique story and an enthralling message to pass on to the next generation. The Ari'zal (*Pri Eitz Chaim, Shaar Mikrah Kodesh*, ch. 4) suggested that the name of the festival contains an exquisite hint to the power of speech - "*Peh Sach*" - a mouth converses. The path to redemption is when we as Jews make use of the precious and powerful gift of prayer and Talmud Torah which are expressions of speech.

### THE AROMA OF REDEMPTION

Rav Charlop shares an intriguing midrash which tells a more detailed account of what transpired on the final night the Jews were in Egypt prior to being freed (*Shemot Rabah* ch. 19). According to the

midrashic telling, God asked the Jewish people to first undergo the procedure of circumcision so that you will have the requisite merit in order to be redeemed.

The majority of the people pushed back and refused to go through with this difficult and painful task. God then told Moshe to prepare his Paschal offering and along with the aroma of the meat being cooked, God attached the sweet aroma of the Garden of Eden. At this point the people could not restrain themselves from desiring the taste of the meat of the pesach-offering and begged Moshe for a taste. Moshe said, "Unless you are circumcised I cannot allow you to eat the meat."

The Jewish men quickly agreed to circumcision and astoundingly, says the midrash, the blood of sacrificial lamb mixed with the blood of the circumcision. God then passed through the camp and placed a kiss on the forehead of each Jew and gave a blessing. The midrash concludes: This is the meaning of the verse in Yechezkel which described God's redemption of the Israel from Egypt, "Then I passed you and saw you wallowing in your blood, and I said, "By your blood you shall live; and I said to you, "By the blood you shall live"

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(*Yechezkel* 16:6). The repeated phrase, ‘By the blood you shall live’ means: ‘You shall live’ by the blood of the pesach-offering and ‘you shall live’ by the blood of the circumcision.”

Rav Charlop explains that there was a purity in scent or the aroma that the Jew, even under the harshest conditions, was able to discern. When they tapped into their sincere feelings in their heart and souls and discovered the true longing they had for redemption which had been a promise of God to their forefather Avraham, they immediately came to Moshe and were able to garner the strength, courage and determination to sacrifice what was needed (the blood of circumcision) in order to embark on the path which would direct them to fulfill the grand vision of Redemption. (*Haggadah Mei Marom*, pp. 39-40)

### THE EXHILARATING SEVENTH NIGHT

On the seventh night of Pesach, *Shevii Shel Pesach*, Rav Charlop would host each year a large gathering at his home late in the night around the midnight hour, where he would present a shiur on the *Shirat Hayam* (‘Song of the Sea’) which is of course the reading of the Torah the morning in the seventh day of Pesach celebrating the wondrous event that took place on date. Torah scholars would flock to listen to his expounding on this passage, which included halacha and the deeper teachings of kabbalah.

Following his celebrated discourse, Rav Chalop would stand and recite the *Shirat Hayam* verse by verse with immense feeling and in a special tune, a melody that Rav Chalop composed himself. All who

gathered would then sing and dance with great exuberance. (‘The Seventh Night of Pesach with Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlop,’ Samson Arutz Sheva)

It is noteworthy that the events of the splitting of the Sea served as the culmination of the redemption from Egypt. Until that point the Jewish people were not completely safe and completely emancipated. That final miracle of crossing the sea was the highpoint of redemption.

Surely this night had special relevance for Rav Charlop in that he perceived the miracles of the modern State of Israel as a high point in the redemptive process for *Am Yisrael* in modern times.

In one of the talks he gave on the seventh night of Pesach recorded in his Haggada, he emphasis the love shared between the Almighty and His beloved people and submits that this love is evident in our day as we are experiencing the Jews longing and the miraculous return to the Land of Israel. The love of God for his people in the ancient days of Egypt and the splitting of the sea is being revealed once again before very eyes in modern times. (*Haggadah Mei Marom*, pp.89-95) [It is noteworthy that Chabad chassidim have the custom to learn Torah the entire seventh night of Pesach. Special emphasis is placed on the seventh day of the Pesach in the writings of the Alter Rebbe in *Likutie Torah*, parshat Tzav 15, 1-4] ■



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](mailto:aarong@ouisrael.org) at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.

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# SEFIRAT HAOMER 2026/5786

Sign up for the OU daily sefirah reminder email @ [www.ou.org/sefirah](http://www.ou.org/sefirah)

Sefirah is the counting of seven complete weeks from the second evening of Pesach until Shavuot. The count, which takes place after night fall for the following day, is preceded by the blessing only if done in the evening and no days have been missed in the count.

Visit [www.ou.org/sefirah](http://www.ou.org/sefirah) to receive an email reminder to count each day. Emails are pre-programmed to go out on each of the 49 days of the Omer to help make sure you don't forget to count!

## בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל סִפְרַת הָעוֹמֵר.

### הַיּוֹם יוֹם אֶחָד לְעוֹמֵר.

THURSDAY EVENING

APRIL 2

1

הַרְחֵמֵנוּ הוּא יַחְזִיר לָנוּ עֲבוּדַת בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ לְמִקְוָמָה בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיַמֵּינוּ. אָמֵן סְלָה.

**NOTE:** IF YOU FORGET TO COUNT AT NIGHT, YOU MAY COUNT ALL OF THE NEXT DAY - BUT WITHOUT A BLESSING YOU MAY RESUME COUNTING THE NEXT EVENING WITH A BLESSING.

הַיּוֹם שְׁנֵי יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	FRI. EVENING	APRIL 3	2
הַיּוֹם שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	SAT. EVENING	APRIL 4	3
הַיּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	SUN. EVENING	APRIL 5	4
הַיּוֹם חֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	MON. EVENING	APRIL 6	5
הַיּוֹם שֵׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	TUES. EVENING	APRIL 7	6
הַיּוֹם שִׁבְעָה יָמִים שֶׁהֵם שְׁבוּעַ אֶחָד לְעוֹמֵר.	WED. EVENING	APRIL 8	7
הַיּוֹם שְׁמוֹנָה יָמִים שֶׁהֵם שְׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וְיוֹם אֶחָד לְעוֹמֵר.	THURS. EVENING	APRIL 9	8
הַיּוֹם תְּשַׁעָה יָמִים שֶׁהֵם שְׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וְשְׁנֵי יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	FRI. EVENING	APRIL 10	9
הַיּוֹם עָשָׂרָה יָמִים שֶׁהֵם שְׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וְשִׁלְשָׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	SAT. EVENING	APRIL 11	10
הַיּוֹם אֶחָד עָשָׂר יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	SUN. EVENING	APRIL 12	11
הַיּוֹם שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וְחֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	MON. EVENING	APRIL 13	12
הַיּוֹם שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וְשֵׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	TUES. EVENING	APRIL 14	13
הַיּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁנֵי שְׁבוּעוֹת לְעוֹמֵר.	WED. EVENING	APRIL 15	14
הַיּוֹם חֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁנֵי שְׁבוּעוֹת וְיוֹם אֶחָד לְעוֹמֵר.	THURS. EVENING	APRIL 16	15
הַיּוֹם שֵׁשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁנֵי שְׁבוּעוֹת וְשְׁנֵי יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	FRI. EVENING	APRIL 17	16
הַיּוֹם שִׁבְעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁנֵי שְׁבוּעוֹת וְשִׁלְשָׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	SAT. EVENING	APRIL 18	17
הַיּוֹם שְׁמוֹנָה עָשָׂר יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁנֵי שְׁבוּעוֹת וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	SUN. EVENING	APRIL 19	18
הַיּוֹם תְּשַׁעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁנֵי שְׁבוּעוֹת וְחֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	MON. EVENING	APRIL 20	19
הַיּוֹם עָשָׂרִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁנֵי שְׁבוּעוֹת וְשֵׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	TUES. EVENING	APRIL 21	20



# ברוך אתה ה' א-לקינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו, וצונו על ספירת העומר.

היום אָחַד וְעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁלֹשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת לְעוֹמֵר.	WED. EVENING	APRIL 22	21
היום שְׁנַיִם וְעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁלֹשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְיוֹם אָחַד לְעוֹמֵר.	THURS. EVENING	APRIL 23	22
היום שְׁלֹשָׁה וְעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁלֹשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וּשְׁנַיִם יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	FRI. EVENING	APRIL 24	23
היום אַרְבָּעָה וְעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁלֹשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וּשְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	SAT. EVENING	APRIL 25	24
היום חֲמִשָּׁה וְעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁלֹשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	SUN. EVENING	APRIL 26	25
היום שֵׁשָׁה וְעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁלֹשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְחֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	MON. EVENING	APRIL 27	26
היום שִׁבְעָה וְעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שְׁלֹשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְשֵׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	TUES. EVENING	APRIL 28	27
היום שְׁמוֹנֶה וְעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם אַרְבָּעָה שָׁבוּעוֹת לְעוֹמֵר.	WED. EVENING	APRIL 29	28
היום תְּשַׁעָה וְעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם אַרְבָּעָה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְיוֹם אָחַד לְעוֹמֵר.	THURS. EVENING	APRIL 30	29
היום שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם אַרְבָּעָה שָׁבוּעוֹת וּשְׁנַיִם יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	FRI. EVENING	MAY 1	30
היום אָחַד וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם אַרְבָּעָה שָׁבוּעוֹת וּשְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	SAT. EVENING	MAY 2	31
היום שְׁנַיִם וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם אַרְבָּעָה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	SUN. EVENING	MAY 3	32
היום שְׁלֹשָׁה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם אַרְבָּעָה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְחֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	MON. EVENING	MAY 4	33
היום אַרְבָּעָה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם אַרְבָּעָה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְשֵׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	TUES. EVENING	MAY 5	34
היום חֲמִשָּׁה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם חֲמִשָּׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת לְעוֹמֵר.	WED. EVENING	MAY 6	35
היום שֵׁשָׁה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם חֲמִשָּׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְיוֹם אָחַד לְעוֹמֵר.	THURS. EVENING	MAY 7	36
היום שִׁבְעָה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם חֲמִשָּׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וּשְׁנַיִם יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	FRI. EVENING	MAY 8	37
היום שְׁמוֹנֶה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם חֲמִשָּׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וּשְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	SAT. EVENING	MAY 9	38
היום תְּשַׁעָה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם חֲמִשָּׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	SUN. EVENING	MAY 10	39
היום אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם חֲמִשָּׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְחֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	MON. EVENING	MAY 11	40
היום אָחַד וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם חֲמִשָּׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְשֵׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	TUES. EVENING	MAY 12	41
היום שְׁנַיִם וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שֵׁשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת לְעוֹמֵר.	WED. EVENING	MAY 13	42
היום שְׁלֹשָׁה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שֵׁשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְיוֹם אָחַד לְעוֹמֵר.	THURS. EVENING	MAY 14	43
היום אַרְבָּעָה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שֵׁשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וּשְׁנַיִם יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	FRI. EVENING	MAY 15	44
היום חֲמִשָּׁה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שֵׁשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וּשְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	SAT. EVENING	MAY 16	45
היום שֵׁשָׁה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שֵׁשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	SUN. EVENING	MAY 17	46
היום שִׁבְעָה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שֵׁשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְחֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	MON. EVENING	MAY 18	47
היום שְׁמוֹנֶה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שֵׁשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְשֵׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעוֹמֵר.	TUES. EVENING	MAY 19	48
היום תְּשַׁעָה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, שֶׁהֵם שִׁבְעָה שָׁבוּעוֹת לְעוֹמֵר.	WED. EVENING	MAY 20	49



# Meet our Dror Head Counselors

## Zahava Bauer

### Head Counselor Girls' Campus



After making aliyah from Philly in 2024, Zahava now lives in Efrat with her husband and family and has been inspiring and guiding youth across Israel.

She joined Camp Dror in 2025, bringing years of leadership, camp, and chinuch experience.

Known for warmth and mentorship, she creates a vibrant, supportive environment for campers and staff.

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[www.campdror.com](http://www.campdror.com)

## Yonatan Hirschhorn

### Head Counselor Boys' Campus

Rabbi Yonatan Hirschhorn joins Camp Dror this year, bringing years of experience in summer camps including Camp Lavi.

Originally from Neve Daniel, Yonatan now lives in Nerya with his wife and family.

He connects with campers through Torah, outdoor adventure, spirited singing, and meaningful conversations—shaping a warm, dynamic environment where every camper thrives.



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**RSVP / Info:** Rabbi Yair Hindin – [BPNetwork@ouisrael.org](mailto:BPNetwork@ouisrael.org)

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RABBI ELI OZAROWSKI

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# The Mitzvah of Matzah

In the following summary, we will discuss some of the primary halachot related to the mitzvah of eating matzah at the Seder.

There is a Torah mitzvah to eat at least one *k'zayit* of matzah on the night of the Seder (two Seder nights outside of Eretz Yisrael) (Rambam, Chametz Umatzah 6:1). This mitzvah applies to both men and women. Children who have reached the age of *chinuch* (education), approximately six years old, should likewise be trained to fulfill this mitzvah (Ibid., 6:10; see also R. Moshe Harari, Mikraei Kodesh, Leil Haseder 7:39). One should have in mind to fulfill the mitzvah when eating the matzah during “*motzi-matzah*” (Mishnah Berurah 475:34).

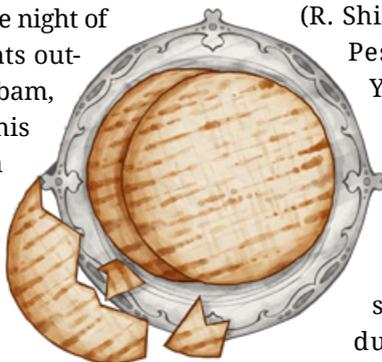
The procedure for eating the matzah is as follows: The leader of the Seder picks up all three matzot and recites the *beracha* of “*hamotzi*” over them, in order to fulfill the requirement of *lechem mishneh* (two loaves) according to all opinions (some hold that on Pesach, the broken matzah should serve as one, while others hold the

bottom whole matzah is the second one). The leader then puts down the bottom matzah and recites the second *beracha* of “*al achilat matzah*” over the top two matzot, which are used for “*motzi-matzah*” (Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 475:1 and Mishnah Berurah 475:2). The matzah is then distributed to all participants, ensuring that each person receives at least a *k'zayit* (see below). If necessary, the required amount may be completed using additional matzah

(R. Shimon Eider, “Halachos of Pesach,” p.274; R. Ovadia Yosef, Chazon Ovadia, p.65).

There are numerous opinions regarding the precise measurement of a *k'zayit*. In addition, some maintain that one should eat two *k'zeitim*, due to uncertainty as to

whether the halachic size of an egg (which is used as a reference measure) has changed over time (see Shulchan Aruch 486:1 and Mishnah Berurah 486:1). Although the details and various opinions are beyond the scope of this summary (see, e.g., [https://halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Required\\_Amount\\_of\\_Matzah\\_and\\_Wine\\_for\\_the\\_Seder](https://halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Required_Amount_of_Matzah_and_Wine_for_the_Seder) for a range of opinions), eating at least approximately 48 cc fulfills the mitzvah according to many opinions. This amount satisfies one *k'zayit* according to many stringent opinions, and two *k'zeitim* according to some of the more



lenient opinions (R. Yosef Zvi Rimon, “Leil Haseder: Halacha Mimekorah, p.151).

The *k'zayit* is generally calculated by volume (length x width x height) among Ashkenazim (R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Halichot Shlomo, Pesach 9:8; R. Simcha Rabinowitz, Piskei Teshuvot 210:1), and is approximately three-quarters of a standard machine matzah (60 cc), which is often a bit less than half of a whole hand matzah (though sizes and thickness of hand matzot vary, so one should measure using a standard-size machine matzah). Many Sephardim, however, measure the amount by weight, which results in a larger required amount (Kaf Hachaim, O.C. 168:46; R. Ovadia Yosef, Yechaveh Da'at 1:16).

The *k'zayit* of matzah should ideally be eaten within the time frame of “*kedei achilat peras*” (the time it takes to eat half a loaf of bread) (Mishnah Berurah 475:9). This is often estimated at approximately four minutes (V'zot Habracha, p.6), while some allow for up to six or seven minutes (Chazon Ovadia, p.66).

Many poskim maintain that one fulfills this requirement by eating in a normal, continuous manner, even if it takes longer than this time to complete the *k'zayit* (R. Rimon, p.128).

One who is ill, or for whom eating the amount of matzah discussed previously may pose a medical concern, should consult a competent halachic authority. In such cases, one may be able to rely on more lenient opinions and suffice with approximately 30 cc of matzah, or even less if necessary (see R. Moshe Mordechai Karp, Hilchot Chag B'chag, end; R. Rimon, p.148;

see also <https://www.star-k.org/articles/articles/seasonal/15813/pesach-shiurim/>).

One who has celiac disease but is able to tolerate oats should endeavor to obtain kosher oat matzah, as in cases of need, matzah may be made from any of the five grains (Chazon Ovadia, p.76; R. Yaakov Ariel, as cited in Oholei Halacha, p.265).

Ideally, the matzah for *motzi-matzah* should be eaten on its own in the normal manner of eating. One who has difficulty chewing may crumble the matzah (Biur Halachah 461:4). If necessary, it may be slightly softened by minimal soaking in water prior to eating (Chazon Ovadia, p.72).

Regarding using salt with matzah, Sephardim generally dip the matzah in salt, as is done with challah throughout the year, whereas Ashkenazim generally refrain from doing so, since matzah is considered *lechem oni* (poor-man's bread) (Shulchan Aruch and Rema 475:1; Mishnah Berurah 475:4).

One should eat the matzah while reclining, in fulfillment of the mitzvah of *haseibah*. If one ate the matzah without reclining, one should eat another *k'zayit* while reclining; however, the *berachot* are not repeated (Shulchan Aruch and Rema 472:7, 475:1).

Sephardic women who forgot to recline need not eat again, as although they generally are obligated to recline, after the fact they may rely on the opinion that women are not obligated in *haseibah* (Chazon Ovadia, p.68; R. Mordechai Elyahu, cited in R. Harari, p.161). Ashkenazi women, who according to most poskim are not obligated to recline, certainly need not eat the matzah again if they did not recline,

although some recommend them reclining *lechatchilah* for all parts of the Seder where men recline (see Rema 472:4; Kaf Hachaim 472:28; Peninei Halacha, Pesach 16:12)

It is forbidden to speak in between the *berachot* recited on matzah until one has eaten a *k'zayit*. If one did speak, the *berachaot* are not repeated (Chazon Ovadia, p.68). Ideally, one should avoid unnecessary conversation until the end of *Korech*, as this, too, is considered a continuation of the mitzvah of matzah (Shulchan Aruch 475:1 and Mishnah Berurah 475:24; see further below).

In situations where an interruption may be necessary, e.g., a pre-warning currently given in Israel after a missile launch from Iran a few minutes before the missile arrives, one should, if possible, delay beginning *motzi-matzah* briefly in order to avoid interruption when moving to the shelter or safe room. If a siren for an incoming missile is heard in the middle of *motzi-matzah*, one may take the remainder of the matzah to the shelter or safe room and continue to eat there in the proper manner. If that is not possible, one may return and eat a new *k'zayit* within the proper time frame.

In all such cases, one may speak as

needed for safety purposes, though unnecessary conversation should still be avoided until the mitzvah has been completed (for further discussion of missile alerts during the Seder, see R. Elchanan Printz, “*Azakah B’leil Haseder*,” available on request).

During “*Korech*,” one eats an additional *k'zayit* of matzah (taken from the bottom matzah, supplemented as needed) together with a *k'zayit* of maror, in accordance with the opinion of Hillel, who held that matzah should be eaten together with *maror* (Shulchan Aruch 475:1).

Since *Korech* is a rabbinic enactment, one may rely on a smaller measure of approximately 30 cc of matzah, which is about half of a standard machine matzah, and a bit more than a quarter of an average hand matzah, but as noted above, sizes of hand matzot vary (R. Rimon, p.152). Before eating the *Korech*, one recites the paragraph of “*Zecher L’mikdash k’Hillel*,” as printed in the Haggadah. One should recline when eating *Korech*. If one did not recline, one need not eat it again, as reclining for *Korech* is not obligatory (Shulchan Aruch 475:1; Shulchan Aruch Harav 475:18-20).

The *Afikomen* is eaten after the meal in commemoration of the Korban Pesach, which was eaten when one was already satiated (Shulchan Aruch 477:1). It should be taken from the larger broken matzah, though additional matzah may be used if needed or if the original *Afikomen* is lost (Rema 477:2). Since some opinions consider this eating to fulfill a Torah-level mitzvah, one should ideally eat the same amount as for *motzi-matzah*. However, one

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may rely on a smaller amount if necessary – preferably at least 40 cc, which constitutes two *k'zeitim* according to some opinions (two-thirds of a machine matzah, a bit more than one-third of average hand matzah), or less in cases of difficulty (R. Rimon, p.195). One should recline while eating the *Afikomen* (Shulchan Aruch 477:1). If one forgets to recline and it is difficult to eat more, one need not eat again (Mishnah Berurah 477:4).

Ideally, one should retain a slight appetite for the *Afikomen*. If one is already entirely full, one nevertheless fulfills the mitzvah; however, one who is so satiated that one is repulsed by food does not fulfill the mitzvah (Mishnah Berurah 476:6)

One should ideally eat the *Afikomen* before *chatzot* (halachic midnight, 12:42 am in Jerusalem and 12:59 am in New York). One who was unable to do so may still eat it afterward (Shulchan Aruch 477:1). However, if even the initial eating of matzah took place only after *chatzot*, the *berachot* on matzah should no longer be recited at that point (Mishnah Berurah 477:6).

It is forbidden to eat any food after the *Afikomen* (Shulchan Aruch 478:1). With regard to drinking, some prohibit all beverages aside from the third and fourth cups, while others permit non-intoxicating drinks, and some are lenient to allow all beverages after *chatzot* (Mishnah Berurah 478:2; Chazon Ovadia, p.112; Piskei Teshuvot 478:1).

The *afikomen* must be eaten all in one room. Moreover, the entire thing must be eaten at the same table (Rema 478:1; Mishnah Berurah 4). Therefore, if one receives

a pre-warning for a missile launch, one should avoid having to interrupt eating the *afikomen* in the middle to move to a shelter or safe room, such as by waiting until after the all clear notification is given, even if this is after *chatzot*. However, if needed, one may rely on more lenient opinions that permit eating the rest of the *afikomen* in a second location (Chazon Ish, O.C. 124; see article of R. Printz referenced above). ■

**Rabbi Eli Ozarowski** serves as editor of the *Tzurba M' Rabanan* English Series, an innovative, systematic learning program covering hundreds of major topics in the Shulchan Aruch from Tanach through modern-day halachic application. He is also the author of the OU's Torat Imecha Halacha Series. Rabbi Ozarowski received semicha from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and holds an M.A. from the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration. He lives in Mitzpeh Yericho with his wife, Zemira, who serves as Director of Women's Programming at OU Israel, together with their nine children.

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# Beyond Worthiness

Hashem's - מדלג על ההרים ומקפץ על הגבעות  
Infinite Love Revealed on Pesach

Shir HaShirim, the Megillah we read on Shabbat of Pesach, paints a striking image: "מדלג על ההרים, מקפץ על הגבעות" - Hashem "leaps over mountains" and "skips over hills." Chazal, in the Midrash, explain that this describes how Hashem relates to us, most powerfully at the moment of Yetziat Mitzrayim.

What are these "mountains" and "hills"?

The Midrash explains that Moshe says to Am Yisrael "this is the month you will be redeemed" but the people replied, 'how will we be redeemed? We are so immersed in the idol worship of the land of Egypt'. כיון שחפץ הקב"ה לגאלכם, אינו מביט בגלולי עבודה זרה שלכם. Here, Hashem is overriding His trait of דין, of judgement. Instead, His deep love for בני ישראל, His precious, favored child, covers all iniquities.

Am Yisrael had sunk to the depths of מ"ט nearly indistinguishable from the Egyptians. By all standards, redemption should have been withheld.

And yet - Hashem "skipped."

He leapt over the calculations. He ignored the "mountains" of הדין and the "hills" of

unworthiness. Why? Because His love is not dependent on what we are in the moment. It flows from something deeper, something essential - the bond between Hashem and His people.

This is the 'love song' between Hashem and Am Yisrael of Shir Hashirim that Rabbi Akiva said is the קודש הקודשים of Scripture.

Pesach is not only the story of freedom. It is the revelation of a love that defies logic.

If we were to truly internalize this - that Hashem took us out not because we earned it, but because He loves us - everything about our avodat Hashem should begin to shift. Faith should feel different.

We often believe we need to become "worthy" before we can fully trust Hashem. But Pesach teaches the opposite. The greatest Geulah of our past came when we were least deserving. That means our bitachon doesn't need to wait. It can be whole, even now.

This was not just a rescue - it was an act of love. Hashem didn't hesitate. He "jumped" toward us. When we daven, when we struggle, even when we fall, we are turning to One who has already shown how far He is willing to go for us.

For me, I often try to imagine Hashem's love through the lens of a parent's love for a child - because that is something I can relate to.

Some people are blessed to experience a deep, safe, and loving parent-child relationship, something they can naturally draw upon to understand this idea. Others carry pain, distance, or confusion from

those relationships — and for them, the metaphor can feel harder to access. That reality deserves to be acknowledged with sensitivity.

I recently came across a conversation I had with my son, Binyamin, when he was 15 years old - at a stage when he could be difficult, wild, and at times even defiant, like many adolescents finding their way. And yet, in that exchange, I felt something so strong, so unconditional - a love that wasn't dependent on behavior, compliance, or perfection. It simply was.

Upon reflection, I think: if this is what I feel as a human being, with all my limitations... then this is only a tiny, almost insignificant taste of Hashem's love for His children. Because He is not human. His love is not limited. It is infinite.

That realization reframes everything.

It means that when Hashem “skips over mountains,” it is not a one-time act in history. It is a window into how He relates to us always.

And it invites a response.

Not מתוך פחד - not from fear.

But מתוך אהבה - from love.

When someone shows us kindness we did not earn, something inside us awakens. A desire to come closer. To respond. To not take that love for granted.

Pesach, then, becomes deeply personal.

If Hashem loved us enough to redeem us from the lowest place - if He was willing to leap over every barrier to bring us close - then the question is not only what happened then.

The question is:



How would we live... how would we daven... how would we trust... if we truly believed how much He loves us?

.....

P.S. People will likely wonder how I can feel so passionately about this — when it is this same Hakadosh Baruch Hu who took my Binyamin away from me.

It is precisely this.

Relationships are not always simple or perfect. In every deep relationship, there are moments of closeness and moments of pain. There are דברים שאיננו מבינים. Especially with Hashem. Love does not mean the absence of hurt. Relationships do not live on highs alone.

And yet, the existence of pain does not negate the love — it deepens the complexity of the relationship. If anything, it calls for a more honest, more real connection. One that can hold both אהבה and כאב at the same time.

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Yoni thanks Hashem for having the opportunity of having Tziporah in his life, to learn of her caring, patience and happiness, to overcome her challenges. May Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world, in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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# The Need for Supervision

Last time we discussed the problems facing couples undergoing fertility during the current Iran War. One of the challenges was that some of the fertility clinics did not want to permit the halachic supervisors to be in the laboratory. They told couples that halachic supervision was not available in their clinic, and the couple should undergo treatment without supervision.

If a couple had not started treatment, or was at a very early stage, they were able to switch to another facility. But if the couple were at an advanced stage of treatment, or were in the middle, such as a case in which the eggs had been retrieved, fertilized and were ready for transfer, it was not possible to suggest another clinic.

Halachic supervision, called *hashgacha* or *pikuach*, for fertility treatments ensures the integrity of genetic material during lab procedures, preventing mix-ups and ensuring correct, known, or acceptable lineage. PUAH provides supervised lab services to meet strict Orthodox Jewish legal standards regarding paternity and maternity, particularly in IVF.

The halachic rationale for supervision of fertility treatments is based on the halachic imperative of determining who the

parent is, and this leading to the need for differentiating between the potential parents. If a man dies, or a couple divorce, his wife cannot remarry until three months have elapsed. The Gemara (Yevamot 42a) explains this requirement based on the verse (Bereishit 17:7) “to be your God and for your children after you”, “said Rav Nachman and Shmuel – to distinguish between the children of the first [husband] and the second [husband].”

Rashi explains that God resides on the Jewish people when it is certain who are whose parents, but when this distinction is absent, God’s presence retreats as well.

Another concern that the Talmud raises is the possibility that siblings may marry each other. If it is unclear who is the father then there could be a situation in which a brother and a sister may end up marrying each other, without knowing that they were siblings.

Usually, we assume that the parents are the mother and her husband, even if there is a chance that another man is actually the father. When a couple are married the assumption is that she is the mother and he is the father. But when the fertilization takes place in the lab and there is other genetic material in the vicinity and mistakes can happen, to rely on the natural process may not be sufficient.

Therefore, many poskim require halachic supervision for treatment.

More on this next time. ■

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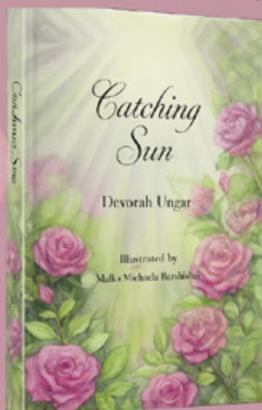
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# Shagririm Balev

## Tips from Shagririm

SHIRA JACOBOWITZ | Shagririm Balev Staff



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מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל

## It's Time for Love

There is something we don't talk about enough: how incredibly hard it is to date during a war - and Pesach, starting now, only adds to that.

I know this firsthand. For the first year and a half of the war, I didn't go on any dates. There were barely any suggestions, and the matches I did have fell apart because of miluim or other war-related circumstances - and it's been like that again recently too. I know I'm not alone in this. Finding people to date in the first place is its own challenge.

Now more than ever, people need connection - not in spite of the war, but

because of it. Loneliness in hard times is its own heartbreak. Feeling chosen by another human being matters more right now, not less. This is the time to pursue love with more intention, more courage, and more community. It's also why I set up friends myself - because even if I haven't found "the one" yet, I can still help the people I love find theirs.

Shagririm Balev exists because singles deserve someone in their corner. A warm introduction from a caring friend can be a lifeline. Love is, in its own quiet way, an act of resistance - a declaration that we are still here, still hopeful, still building a future. We believe that everyone can be a shadchan! It's a community run database where friends set up friends - doing the behind-the-scenes work of helping the people they love find their person.

Pesach is the ultimate holiday of hope - the story of a people who refused to give up, who believed the future could look completely different from the present. Sometimes being single feels like wandering. But the waiting is not wasted. Just as we open our homes to friends and family at the Seder and over chag, we can open our hearts to making matches - to helping the people we love feel a little less alone.

Hope with a community behind it? That's a movement. At Shagririm Balev, we just celebrated our 500th engagement - and by the time this goes to print, we'll probably be at 510 or more! Whether



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you're searching yourself or have already found love, everyone can join and help their friends find love.

So this Pesach, let's be the change. Let's light a spark of hope, make introductions, and remind each other that no one should sit at the Seder table feeling invisible.

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*Chag Pesach Sameach - may all of us who are searching find love before next Pesach.* ❤️ ■

♥

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# The Seder: The Question is the Answer

At the time of this writing Am Yisrael is at war. The State of Israel in Eretz Yisrael is valiantly defeating the enemy under the watchful eye and direction of The Shomer Yisrael. As well, the Torah that we read, learn, live and love is the real answer to the antisemitism that we experience world wide.

Ask anyone what piece of art comes to mind when they think of Leonardo De Vinci or one of the Renaissance Masters invariably it will be the Mona Lisa painted in 1515 and it only became famous 400 years later when it was found missing from its place in a French museum. An Italian handyman, Vincenzo Peruggia stole it. Twenty six hours later it was discovered missing. By the time the thief was found, the painting was major news. The only reason Peruggia chose the Mona Lisa was because it was unknown and its loss would not be discovered so quickly. The missing Mona Lisa became famous through its absence.

By the time the Pesach Haggada became the central text of the Seder, Moshe was already the most famous man who ever lived on the planet. In fact it was largely the events described in the Haggada which made him famous. From Egyptian

bondage to the receiving of the Torah at Har Sinai continuing with the journey through the desert towards Eretz Yisrael, Moshe led the way.

This begs the question that has been asked by countless commentaries , why is Moshe's name absent from the Haggada? His name does appear once in a pasuk, but interestingly that very verse does not even appear in the Rambam's Haggada!

**Moshe about whom the Gemarah (Sota 136) comments “Moshe did not die... just as he served Hashem in his lifetime, so does He serve Him now” is missing from the Haggada.**

Rabbi Soloveitchik records his childhood frustration about the missing Moshe.

“Moshe's name was eliminated from the pages of the Haggada as if he had never existed. As a small child, I asked why Moshe is not mentioned in the Haggada, and the answers my father gave me - which were similar to the explanation I have given here , - were futile. Simply, I cried. Finally, my father, in order to placate me, found the name of Moshe in the Haggada. It is not in the Haggada proper but in a proof text: “They believed in the L-rd and in His servant Moshe (Shmot 14:31). This calmed my

mind somewhat but I still felt that we were committing an injustice against Moshe” (Shiurei l’ Zecher Avi Mori)

In fact the Vilna Gaon in his comments on the Haggada clarifies that this very verse is making it clear that the story is about the Almighty (with the assistance of Moshe). **The redemption of the Jewish People was not Moshe the man but Hakadosh Baruch Hu.**

There are three historical facts recorded in the Torah that will perhaps provide us with some direction in answering the question. Firstly Moshe died and secondly Moshe did not enter Eretz Yisrael. Moshe (at least physically) did in fact die and was buried and finally Yehoshua replaced him.

The Seder experience of Sipur Yetziat Mitzrayim is not simply a history lesson between parents and children. It is among other things a Leadership Training Program. The central motif of the child – parent moment is formed as questions and answers (The Four Questions).

But more, the Rambam instructs us to perform certain rituals in order to evoke a question from the children. Well known is the instruction to remove the Seder plate from the table and then return it. “In order for the children to ask”. How does this dialogue go?

Question “Abba why did Imma take the Seder plate into the kitchen?”

Answer “Excellent! So you would ask the question”.

Clearly absurd.

Derech Sh’eila UTeshuva is about encouraging the child to question. It is about developing a curious, questioning child.

As previously mentioned, the Rambam insists that the mitzva of Sippur Yetziat Mitzraim has to be in the form of questions and answers because it is designed to encourage independent thinking. **In fact of the four sons in the Haggada the קטן child is not called the katan but the אינו יודע לשאול "the one who does not know how to ask a question" is the true definition of a child .**

Isadore Rabi was an American nuclear physicist who received the Nobel Prize in 1944 for his breakthrough with magnetic resonance (microwave ovens!). Yitzhak was the child of Jewish immigrants on the Lower East Side of New York. When he received the Nobel Prize he spoke about his mother and her role in his achievements and of all immigrant parents who dreamed about the future educational achievements of their children in the New World they would say to them when they came home each day from school. “What did you learn today? **My mother every day that I came home from school had a different approach “Yitzchak, did you ask a good question today?”**”

Paroah’s daughter Bitya set the stage for Yocheved to nurse baby Moshe. Rashi comments that because Moshe would one day speak with the Almighty he exclusively had to be nursed by a Jewish woman. The Shulchan Arusha codifies the preference of a Jewish nursemaid for all Jewish children.

The Vilna Gaon comments that this halacha is based on the baby Moshe story. Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky considers that this is not a logical conclusion. Moshe would eventually speak directly

with Hashem. What does that have to do with future generations of Jewish children? Majestically, Rabbi Yaakov explains that Rashi's comment does in fact apply to every Jewish child. Who knows which child will grow up to in fact, converse with the Almighty . In raising and educating our children we must strive for excellence.

The Seder conversation between parents and children is the opportunity to inspire them.

Moshe is purposely removed from the Haggada to ensure that the next generation of Jews will continue the work of Moshe. Learning and teaching **Torat Moshe**, engaging in leadership positions as Rabbis, teachers, lay leaders or Torah conversant parents.

The Seder conversation is designed to bring out the best in our children. Self confidence and commitment to continue **the Mesora of Torat Moshe**. To realize that Moshe Rabeinu may no longer be here physically, but we have the ability and responsibility to be "Moshe" Jews. To continue his spiritual legacy which is very much present.

This is the meaning of Chazal's statement that Moshe did not die. His spirit resides in every generation. **Moshe's absence from the Haggada is perhaps his greatest contribution to the Haggada experience.** ■

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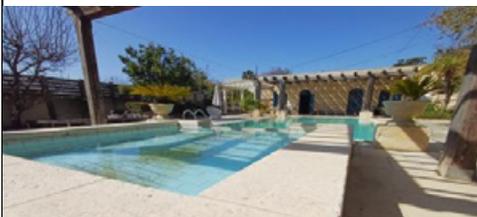
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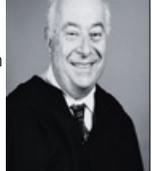
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# Understanding the Not-So-Simple Matzah

The Pesach holiday is also known by its biblical name, Chag HaMatzos”, demonstrating the centrality of this food to the festival. Many associate matzah exclusively with the thin and brittle cracker-like flat bread consumed on Pesach. Many understand that matzah is unleavened bread. None of this, however, explains all the varieties of matzah available on the market. From *shmura* to 18-minute matzah, and *round* to square machine-made matzah, what really is the difference? Add in Yeminite soft matza and egg matza to the mix, and the options become even more complex. We will attempt to clarify the distinctions of each.

## THE BASIC MATZAH

The Torah states that on Pesach we may not eat leavened bread, rather only

matzah. The basic definition of matzah is bread that has not risen. Most bread is comprised of multiple ingredients. The two ingredients that all breads have in common are flour and water. Normally, one adds a leavening agent like yeast or sourdough to the flour-water mixture, to hasten rising. However, even flour and water without any added ingredients will rise after some time, via naturally occurring yeast (bacteria). Chazal determined that 18 minutes constitutes the amount of time for water and flour to rise on their own. Consequently, the timing between the mixing of the flour and water until matzah is fully baked cannot exceed 18 minutes.

This timelimit does not require matzah to emerge thin and brittle. Thus, from a very basic perspective, one could theoretically prepare a very plain pita, baked within that time span, and it wouldn't constitute chametz. In fact, the only size restriction mentioned by the Gemara is the maximum height for matzah -- less than one *tefach* (approximately four inches). Nevertheless, the pita could still become chametz, if it is not fully dry and contains unbaked flour within. Folds in matzah dough can also potentially create

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raw pockets. It is for this reason that matzah has customarily been made cracker thin, to ensure that it is entirely baked through. Ashkenazi Jews universally use very thin, dry and brittle matzot. (Some Jewish communities sanction the use of soft flat bread.)

The concern of unbaked flour parts in matzah is also what has led to the custom (particularly in Hasidic communities) to not consume *gebrochts*, or wet matzot. This practice ensures that if somehow, some flour remained unbaked and was inadvertently mixed with water, it would not become chametz. Those who eat *gebrochts* presume all the flour was baked, thus alleviating any worry.

There is one more basic criterion: As mentioned earlier, Chazal determined the maximum time before simple flour and water becomes chametz is 18 minutes. This time allowance is given if the dough mixture strictly contains these two ingredients. Other added ingredients may hasten the dough to rise, which could even happen immediately. As such, matzot must be made from flour and water alone.

The 18-minute clock starts the moment flour and water meet. The flour used for matzah must be sourced from a dry grinding. Wheat is often tempered with water prior to being ground, to help separate the different parts of the kernel. It is therefore essential to use flour that has not been tempered.

All bread, not just matzo, is only considered bread, according to halacha, if it is made from the following five grains: wheat, barley, spelt, rye and oats. It should be noted that in order for a mixture to be



rendered chametz, it must contain one of these five types of grain.

The 18-minute period also assumes that the mixture isn't exposed to heat prior to being baked, which could hasten its leavening. Accordingly, flour needs to be stored in a cool, dark space. Likewise, the water should be poured and stored overnight to ensure that it is cooled down; this is referred to as *Mayim Shelanu*.

**Why Shmura?** For the matzot eaten on Seder night, the Torah specifically states, “ושמרתם את המצות,” you should guard the matzot.” Chazal understand the Torah's extra emphasis as an obligation to guard not just the processing of the matzot, but also supervision of the flour; hence *shmura* matzah. There are two approaches amongst *Rishonim* (early commentaries) as to when this extra guarding of the flour begins. The Rambam and Rif maintain that one should safeguard the flour

from the harvesting of the grain, while Rashi and Rosh argue that it is sufficient to safeguard the flour from the time that it is milled.

Currently, when we refer to matzot as *shmura*, we generally mean from harvest (which is the higher level of supervision). All OU-Pesach certified matzot are supervised, at least from the time the flour was ground.

One is only obligated to use *shmura* matzah for the Seder. Non-*shmura* matzot are 100 percent halachically kosher for the remainder of Pesach. With regard to Pesach particularly, many *minhagim* (traditions) involve taking on extra *chumros* (stringencies). Using only *shmura* matzot for the entire Pesach is one of those. If one's family *minhag* is to only use *shmura* matzah on Pesach, one should act accordingly. If, however, one doesn't have such a *minhag*, one need not start to be *machmir* (strict) to only use *shmura*, especially because all matzot nowadays are minimally *shmura* from the time of grinding.

There is an additional reason why one might wish to strictly eat *shmura* matzah: the Gra explains that there is a *Mitzva Kiyumis* (a voluntary/conditional mitzvah)

in eating matzah all seven days of Pesach, according to the verse, "Seven days you shall eat matzot." It may therefore be that all matzot we eat on Pesach (as matzah – i.e. not as matzah/cake meal) have the status of the *Matzot Mitzva* and therefore should also require an excessive *shmira* (safeguard). If one chooses to exclusively eat *shmura* for this reason, there is no need to use only *shmura* matzah when one is using matzah byproducts such as cakes and rolls made from matzah meal.

### EIGHTEEN-MINUTE MATZOT

"Eighteen-minute matzot" is a term used to describe machine-made matzah for which the equipment is stopped, partially disassembled, and cleaned every 18 minutes, instead of after an eight-hour shift (or some other time variant).

To understand the idea of 18-minute matzot, we must first understand why this isn't a basic requirement of all matzot. We have already established that Chazal dictated an 18-minute limit from the time of the mixing of the flour and water until it is baked. It would therefore seem necessary to clean the machine from all remnants of dough, and dough build-up, every 18 minutes. However, the Gemara also tells us that one can leave flour mixed with water all day before baking, as long as it is being constantly toiled, (Chazal refer to this as *Issuk*). This means that as long as the dough is being worked on, it doesn't need to be baked. The moment the dough sits untouched, the clock starts ticking.

The 18-minute requirement is deemed unnecessary for machine-made matzot because the machine is always moving and all the dough is always mixed. There

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is consequently no risk of any chametz coming into existence.

There is one more detail required for this Talmudic leniency of *Issuk*, and that is that the dough doesn't become warm from the *Issuk*. To this end, the machine-made matzah lines that OU certifies are especially designed to operate under completely cool conditions. In fact, despite being industrial, heavy-duty equipment, they stay completely cool to the touch. Additionally, OU requires that the area around the matzah production line be properly ventilated and cooled to the extent that extra air vents cool the conveyer belt both above and below, as it returns from where it meets the oven.

While there is much room to be lenient and to allow the matzah production lines to work for hours straight, those wishing to be more scrupulous consume matzot from lines which were stopped and fully cleaned every 18 minutes – hence the term 18-minute matzot.

It should be noted that OU kosher requires multiple *mashgichim* (supervisors) on matzah production lines who constantly clean them with vacuums and air guns, ensuring that even non-18-minute-matzot are free of dough build-up.

**Hand-Made Matzah** According to many opinions, it is important that matzot being used for the mitzva of eating matzot be made with that specific intention, known as *Li'Shma*. When workers make matzah by hand, everyone explicitly declares ahead of their shift that all the work they will be doing is "*l'shem matzot mitzva*" – for the sake of the mitzva of matzot. While the same declaration could

be made by the workers who control the production line of machine-made matzah, it is a matter of historical contention as to whether one can convey *Li'Shma* in reference to a machine. Consequently, some refrain from using machine-made matzot for the Seder. Some also prefer hand-made matzot because the many parts of machine lines allow dough to get stuck in various nooks and crannies.

Hand-made matzot have an element of *hiddur* (enhancement or beautification) because of their "*Lishma*" status and individual attention and care.

Rabbi Yisroel Belsky, zt"l, pointed out yet another *hiddur* in hand-made matzot: machine-made matzot are generally baked in tunnel ovens. The matzot bake as they travel through the tunnel on a steel conveyer belt. While these ovens are constructed so that the matzot fully bake early on in their travel journey, hand-made matzot are generally baked in stone ovens that are heated for prolonged periods of time. As such, the matzot bake practically the instant they hit the oven.

As Pesach is a time when many people follow very particular *minhagim* regarding what they eat, there are those who will

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not use machine-made matzot no matter how *mehudar* (enhanced or beautified) they are, as their ancestors did not use them.

There are still many *hidurim* that can be done with both machine and hand-made matzot. As a result, there definitely are differences among brands and *hashgachos* (kosher certifications).

### EGG MATZOT

Egg matzot, or, in more halachic terms, matzot ashira, are matzot made from a mixture of fruit juice or eggs, and flour. Earlier we noted that only flour from one of the five grains mixed with water can become chametz. The Gemara discusses whether liquids other than water, when mixed with flour, can become chametz. While it does not rule out the possibility that they can become chametz, it states that they are not *memaher lehachmitz*, meaning they do not cause the dough to rise quickly. Since “not rising quickly” isn’t a precise time limit, we refer back to the 18-minute limit for regular water and flour-based matzot when approaching egg matzah. Additionally, we assume that if more ingredients are added, they can cause the mixture to rise more quickly. Thus, egg matzot must be made from flour and juice or egg alone, and be free of additional ingredients.

Egg matzot must be totally free of water, otherwise the mixture becomes flour and water with an added ingredient of juice or eggs, rendering it chametz very quickly. This is especially challenging as most fruit is washed with water before being juiced, and most industrial production lines are cleaned using water. Therefore, juice or

eggs being used for egg matzot need special kosher supervision and certification to guarantee that they are totally water-free. According to the Rama’s ruling, Ashkenazi Jews do not use matzah ashira on Pesach, with the exception of minors and the ill.

Like most areas in industry, new technologies in the realm of matzah manufacturing emerge with time. These technologies present new halachic challenges that require new and innovative solutions. The goal is to harness these technologies to improve matzot’ halachic quality.

With a plethora of matzah options, how does one choose? Pesach is about the transmission of our heritage from generation to generation. Each generation should attempt to maintain the halachically mandated traditions of their family and community. ■

בס"ד

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# Yes, It Is Worth It!

A MESSAGE FROM NCSY ISRAEL SENIOR DIRECTORS



**RABBI MICHAEL KAHN**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**RABBI YOSEF GINSBERG**  
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

We are living through extraordinary and historic days. On the one hand, these are challenging times for the Jewish people and for the State of Israel. The current war with Iran has brought moments of tension, uncertainty, and real danger. Sirens interrupt daily life. Families run to shelters. Parents comfort children while following the news with concern. It is not easy. And yet, alongside the challenge, we are witnessing something else as well, constant miracles. Again and again, we see threats intercepted before they reach their targets. We see enemies who rise against the Jewish people

only to see their plans crumble. We see the remarkable strength and resilience of a nation that continues to live, build, and move forward even under pressure. One of the spiritual dangers of living in such times is that we can begin to grow accustomed to these miracles. When extraordinary things happen repeatedly, there is a risk that we stop pausing to recognize them. But Jewish history teaches us that the survival and flourishing of our people has never been natural alone it has always carried the unmistakable imprint of Hashem's orchestration.

At moments like this, those of us who have made our homes here as olim may sometimes find ourselves asking the quiet questions: Couldn't life have been easier somewhere else? Couldn't we have avoided the missiles, the sirens, the running to shelters if we had simply remained in the United States, Canada, or England? The honest answer is that perhaps we could have. But the deeper answer, the Jewish answer, is far more powerful.

## Yes, it is worth it!

Because our generation has been given something extraordinary: The opportunity not only to observe Jewish history, but to actively participate in it. For nearly two thousand years, Jews ended the Seder with the words לשנה הבאה בירושלים. For most of Jewish history, those words expressed longing from afar. They were dreams that spread across continents and centuries. Today, we are living in a time when that dream is being realized.

On the night of Pesach we drink four cups of wine corresponding to the four expressions of redemption in the Torah: "I will take you out... I will save you... I will redeem you... I will take you to Me as a nation." These promises appear in שמות ו:י-יז. But the Torah actually records a fifth expression as well in שמות ו:ח: "והבאתי אתכם אל הארץ." I will bring you to the Land.

For generations we recognized this fifth expression but treated it differently. Some early authorities, including the Raavad, suggested that it should correspond to a fifth cup of wine. In practice, Jewish communities developed the custom of pouring that fifth cup but not drinking it. Over time it became associated with אליהו הנביא, symbolizing a stage of redemption that unfolds gradually across history.

The first four expressions describe the dramatic moment of leaving Egypt. The fifth describes the destination being brought into the Land of Israel and into the fuller destiny of the Jewish people. Drawing on classical sources such as the ספרי, this final stage connects redemption not only with freedom, but with returning home.

Building on this idea, Rabbi Yosef Zvi

Rimon explains that the fifth expression represents a process that unfolds over generations. Unlike the Exodus itself, which happened in a single moment, the promise of "והבאתי" develops slowly throughout Jewish history. And in our time, we are not only witnessing this process, we are helping bring it to life. Reflecting on the return of the Jewish people to their land, the great Torah scholar Rabbi Menachem Mendel Kasher wrote in *Haggadat Pesach Eretz Yisraelit*:

*"In our times, when we have been privileged to see Gd's kindness and His rescue of us... and the fulfillment of the promise of 'I will bring you to the Land,' it is appropriate... to thank Gd for all the miracles and wonders."*

This idea resonates even more deeply today. Yes, we are living through difficult days. Yes, there are sirens and shelters. Yes, there are moments of fear. But there is also something else. There is the incredible merit of living in the Land of Israel at a moment when Jewish history is unfolding before our eyes. There is the privilege of helping rebuild our national home. There is the opportunity to raise a new generation of Jews who experience Israel not as a

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distant idea, but as the center of their identity and future and... **Yes, it is worth it!**

Our generation is not simply watching redemption unfold. We are participating in it.

We are the generation that returned home. We are the generation building, strengthening, and defending that home. And we are the generation helping ensure that the next chapter of Jewish history is written here. This idea lies at the heart of the work we strive to do through NCSY Israel. When our teens in NCSY experience Israel firsthand, walking its streets, learning its history, connecting to its people—they begin to understand that the Jewish story did not end with leaving מצרים. It continues in every generation, and they themselves are part of its next chapter.

As we gather around our Seder tables

this year, surrounded by family, tradition, and memory, let us look at the quiet fifth cup on the table and see it in a new light. For centuries, it represented a promise waiting to be fulfilled. Today, it reminds us that we are living in the very chapter where that promise is becoming reality. May we continue to recognize the miracles around us, remain strong and united as a people, and merit to see the complete fulfillment of “והבאתי אתכם אל הארץ” עם ישראל for all of us.

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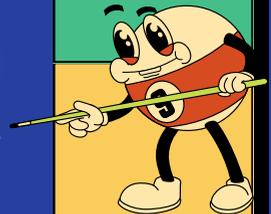
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# Blessing the Trees: Acknowledging What Is Good While Expecting So Much Better

Many people are going out these days to fulfill the mitzvah of “Birkat Hailanot” (Blessing of the Trees), which is recited during the month of Nissan. You stand near two flowering fruit trees and bless as follows:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁלֵא חֶסֶר  
בְּעוֹלָמוֹ כְּלוּם, וּבָרָא בּוֹ בְּרִיּוֹת טוֹבוֹת וְאֵילָנוֹת טוֹבוֹת  
לְהֵנֹת בְּהֵן גְּנֵי אָדָם

Blessed are You, Hashem our God, King of the universe, who has not withheld anything from His world, and has created within it good creatures and good trees for mankind to enjoy.

This is a blessing of gratitude to God and an acknowledgment of the good in all living things, especially fruit trees.

There is a special story about fruit trees regarding Rabbi Nissim Luzon and his family. Twenty-five years ago a mortar shell fired by terrorists struck the community of Kfar Darom in Gush Katif and hit the Luzon family's home there. The entire family, including their daughter Eliraz, who was five years old at the time, was miraculously saved, thank God. Eliraz grew up, married, and settled in the community of

Neta, established by Gush Katif residents. In their new home, they planted fruit trees they had brought with them, in tears, from Kfar Darom during the disengagement from Gaza.

Now, during the current war, on Eliraz's 30th birthday, a missile from Iran fell into her living room. Once again, thank God, the entire family was saved. The next day, the head of the family, Rabbi Nissim, went out to recite Birkat Hailanot next to the fruit trees that were brought from Kfar Darom. This act conveyed a powerful message about Jewish resilience to which Rabbi Nissim added the following message of his own:

“Twice we saw damage to our home from terrorist attacks. Twice we saw with our own eyes how a calm reality can change in an instant from good to bad, how everything can be suddenly destroyed. But we know that reality can just as easily change in the opposite direction and everything can quickly go from bad to good. The nation of Israel can rectify its mistakes and God can bring us into a new reality as we assume a new stature. This month of Nissan we wait expectantly for such an

enormous positive change and, with God's help, only good news in the future.”

We are looking forward to redemption together with you, Luzon family, as you continue to plant and to bless. ■

**Sivan Rahav-Meir** is a media personality and lecturer. Married to Yedidya, the mother of five. Lives in Jerusalem, and formerly served as the World Mizrahi Shlichah to North America. Sivan lectures in Israel and overseas about the media, Judaism, Zionism and new media. She was voted by Globes newspaper as most popular female media personality in Israel and by the Jerusalem Post as one of the 50 most influential Jews in the world.

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"...דשרף לחוטרא..." "WHACK!"... "דהיכה לכלבא..." "WOOF!"  
"דאכלא לגדיא..." "MEOW!"... "דאכלא לגדיא..." "MEH-E-E-E-EH!"  
"רובין אבא בתרי זווי חד חריא חד גדיא..."



WOW,  
BEAUTIFUL  
SEDER, BATZI!  
YOU DID A  
SPECTACULAR  
JOB TONIGHT,  
SWEETHEART!

THANKS, HONEY.  
YOU DID WELL, TOO, LEADING  
US THROUGH THE WHOLE  
SEDER WITH HARDLY ANY  
TANTRUMS, SPILLAGES,  
MESS AND NOISE...

AND THANK G-D, THE KIDS  
WERE WELL-BEHAVED, TOO!



AW, LOOK AT HER, SHE'S FALLEN ASLEEP  
IN A BOWL OF CHAROSET AGAIN...

LET'S GET YOU TO BED,  
SHLOMTZI...

"VEHII-SHE-AMDA..."



AW, SWEET, SHE'S SINGING IN HER  
SLEEP AGAIN...

COME ON, MY DARLING  
LITTLE PLAGUE OF  
WILDERBEASTS...

"SHE-LO-ECHAD  
BIL-VAD..."



"FOR IS IT NOT JUST  
ONE WHOM AROSE  
AGAINST US TO  
AN-EYE-ILL-ATE US!"

OH NO, NO MORE SLEEP-SERMONS! WE HAD  
QUITE ENOUGH OF THEM AFTER LAST YEAR'S  
SEDER...



"IN EVERY GEN-E-ERATION  
THEY TRY TO DO US IN..."

THAT'S IT, NEXT YEAR YOU'E  
GETTING GRAPE JUICE FOR THE  
FOUR CUPS, YOUNG LADY...!



IT'S AMAZING YOU ANTI-SEE-MITES DON'T  
LEARN YOUR LESSON AND GIVE UP...?

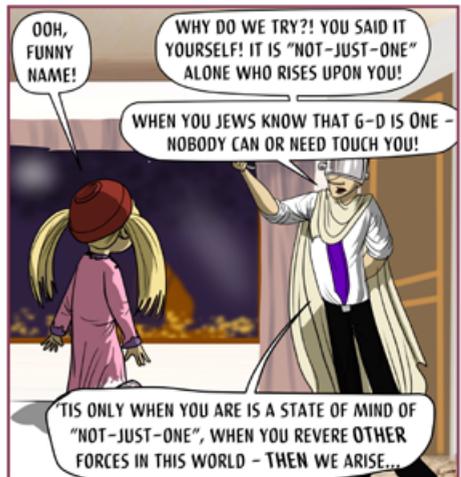
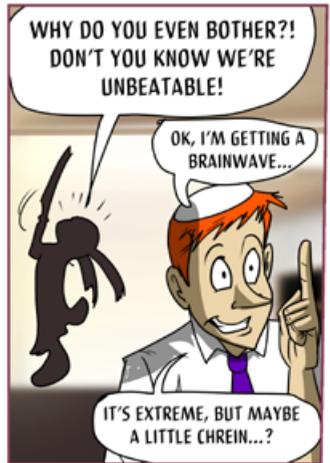
THAT'S NO WAY TO  
SPEAK TO YOUR AUNTIES!  
COME ON, SHLOMTZ, WAKE  
UP SO WE CAN GET YOU  
TO SLEEP, WILL YOU?

EVERY GENERATION YOU GUYS  
KEEP TRYING TO PUT OUR EXISTENCE  
IN DANGER...?



WELL, SINCE  
WHEN ARE  
WE AFRAID  
OF A LITTLE  
DANGER?!

SHLOMTZI, YOU'RE  
A LITTLE DANGER,  
AND BELIEVE ME,  
I CAN GET VERY  
AFRAID OF YOU...



# CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



	SHEMINI		
	Candles	Early	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	<b>6:28</b>	5:44	<b>7:43</b>
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	<b>6:46</b>	5:47	<b>7:45</b>
Beit Shemesh/RBS	<b>6:47</b>	5:45	<b>7:44</b>
Alon Shvut	<b>6:44</b>	5:45	<b>7:43</b>
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	<b>6:46</b>	5:46	<b>7:45</b>
Modiin/Chashmonaim	<b>6:45</b>	5:46	<b>7:44</b>
Netanya	<b>6:46</b>	5:46	<b>7:45</b>
Be'er Sheva	<b>6:45</b>	5:46	<b>7:44</b>
Rehovot	<b>6:46</b>	5:46	<b>7:45</b>
Petach Tikva	<b>6:28</b>	5:46	<b>7:45</b>
Ginot Shomron	<b>6:45</b>	5:45	<b>7:44</b>
Haifa / Zichron	<b>6:36</b>	5:46	<b>7:45</b>
Gush Shiloh	<b>6:44</b>	5:45	<b>7:43</b>
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	<b>6:46</b>	5:47	<b>7:45</b>
Givat Zeev	<b>6:48</b>	5:45	<b>7:43</b>
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	<b>6:44</b>	5:45	<b>7:43</b>
Ashkelon	<b>6:47</b>	5:47	<b>7:45</b>
Yad Binyamin	<b>6:46</b>	5:46	<b>7:45</b>
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	<b>6:38</b>	5:44	<b>7:43</b>
Golan	<b>6:43</b>	5:44	<b>7:43</b>
Nahariya/Maalot	<b>6:35</b>	5:46	<b>7:45</b>
Afula	<b>6:45</b>	5:45	<b>7:44</b>

**Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Shemini 8:22 PM**

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## ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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### PARSHAT SHEMINI



#### 1ST ALIYA (VAYIKRA 9:1-16)

On the eighth day of the inauguration of Aharon and the kohanim, Moshe gathers the people. He instructs Aharon to offer a chatat and an olah. The people are also to bring a chatat, olah, shlamim and mincha. For today, G-d will appear. Aharon offers his offerings. He offers the people's offerings. The offerings are brought exactly as instructed.

This is the 8th day of the 7-day inauguration of Aharon and the Kohanim. Meaning, the inauguration is over. Aharon has been invested as Kohen Gadol. This is the day after the inauguration, the first day of full service by Aharon.

The Torah emphasized that Moshe filled the role of the Kohen Gadol during the 7 days of the inauguration. Moshe himself did all the service for those 7 days. Now it emphasizes that all the offerings on this, the 8th day are done by the new Kohen, Aharon.

However, these are not normal daily offerings. Moshe tells Aharon that this is to be a special day with special offerings. For it is the day that the G-d will appear.

The moment is pregnant with anticipation. For this is the day that G-d's Presence will fill the Mishkan. We hope.

For that is the purpose of the Mishkan. His Presence and our service. He meets us; we meet Him.

It is not just man serving G-d. It is Presence. A rendezvous. Not just us, but He too. The Divine meets man. That is actually the meaning of the word Mishkan; the place in which He Will Dwell.

So, this 8th day is a big, big moment. There is tense anticipation. Anticipation of the Shechina, of the Presence.

Moshe says so. The offerings today will invite G-d's presence. In fact, he tells them this twice.

As Aharon assumes his role, bringing his offerings, both for himself and for the Jewish people, there is tense anticipation. Will His Presence descend and meet us here in this special place?



#### 2ND ALIYA (9:17-23)

Aharon offers the mincha and the shlamim. All the details are performed as commanded. The portion Aharon is to receive is waved as commanded. Upon conclusion of all the offerings, Aharon blesses the people and descends from the offerings. Moshe and Aharon enter the Tent of Meeting, blessing the people upon exiting. The Glory of G-d appears to the people.

All the types of offerings have been brought by Aharon: chatat, olah, mincha, shlamim. The moment of rendezvous of the Divine, of responding to the approach of man is about to occur. Aharon blesses the people.

Aharon blesses the people with the hope that their aspiration for G-d's rendezvous be

realized. Nothing happens.

Moshe and Aharon bless the people: May the pleasure of G-d be upon you. May the Shechina dwell on your efforts.

And then, the Kavod Hashem, the Glory of G-d appeared to the people. Their approach and their prayers were granted with a rendezvous with the Divine. Truly a peak, sublime moment of the entire Torah. Man's approach to G-d is answered with His Presence.



### 3RD ALIYA (9:24-10:11)

A fire descended from G-d and consumed the offerings on the altar. The people saw, sang out and fell on their faces. Nadav and Avihu, sons of Aharon, took incense, though not commanded, and burnt it before G-d. A fire consumed them and they died. Moshe told Aharon that this is what G-d said: With those close to Me I am sanctified. Aharon was silent. After removing the bodies, Moshe told the other sons of Aharon to not mourn or leave the Mikdash; the Jewish people will mourn. Moshe commanded the kohanim to not consume wine when serving in the Mikdash, so that they can distinguish holy and profane and to teach the people.

The people are ecstatic with the Presence of G-d. They sing. Bow. Ecstatic.

But the ecstasy is shattered by the death of Nadav and Avihu in bringing incense not commanded.

Ecstasy and death. Ecstasy shattered by death.

What could the meaning of this terrible juxtaposition be? That our ecstatic rendezvous with the Divine is shattered with death?

We have seen a warning of death juxtaposed with the Divine Presence before. At Sinai. The people were warned: do not approach the mountain upon which the cloud has descended or you will die.

Even upon hearing G-d's voice the people trembled, recoiling, for man cannot experience G-d and live. The people didn't want to die. They asked Moshe to hear G-d's voice, so they wouldn't die.

Immanence is dangerous. It must be handled with care.

The Mishkan is the place of intimate approach to G-d, the meeting of man and G-d in His home. But the approach of finite man to infinite G-d is fraught with mystery. It must be handled delicately, gingerly. How can finite man dare to think he can approach the Infinite? It is absurd to imagine that we could rendezvous with His Presence. And yet, we were invited by Him to do so.

We can do so only because – well, because He told us how. G-d invited us, instructed us how to approach Him. And we do so tentatively, carefully, acknowledging that we are approaching Him only by His invitation.

Perhaps that is the conceptual underpinning of the detailed instructions of the Mishkan. And the detailed instructions of the offerings. Perhaps it is to communicate that the rendezvous of man and G-d is fraught with mystery. Finite man is incapable of fathoming how to approach G-d. He, though, reaches for us, with detailed instructions as to how to approach Him.

Without His reach to us, his instructions to us, the meeting of the Infinite with the finite would not be possible. It is only through the details of His instructions that

it is possible.

It is in this context, after a long, extended narrative of detailed instructions and detailed compliance that the spontaneous desire of Nadav and Avihu to approach G-d with their unauthorized incense must be seen.

That is not the way I said it. Where is the temerity? Man cannot approach G-d lest he die. Nadav and Avihu throw abandon to the wind and approach. They are smitten dead.



#### 4TH ALIYA (10:12-15)

Moshe instructs Aharon and his remaining sons, Elazar and Itamar, to consume the parts of the offerings that were brought today that they were entitled to. They need to consume the mincha matza and the meat of the breast in the holy grounds.

Moshe proceeds with the momentous day of the appearance of G-d's glory, proceeding with the details of the offerings. As if to say, service of G-d continues regardless of your personal tragedy.



#### 5TH ALIYA (10:16-20)

Moshe inquired about the meat of the chatat but it had been burned, not consumed. He was upset: why did you not consume these in the holy place as commanded? Aharon responded: On a day that this occurred, should we offer the offerings and eat them? Is that proper in G-d's eyes? Moshe heard and agreed.

Moshe is upset that the offerings had not been consumed by Aharon and his other sons. Aharon, struck speechless by the death of his 2 sons, now challenges Moshe. Does our role as Divine servants eliminate our human feelings of tragedy? Is a holy person untethered to normal human emotion? Am

I angelic? Or am I a holy man with normal feelings, shattered by the death of 2 sons? Am I not entitled to mourn at least today?

This brief, very brief, confrontation expresses a universal theme of the holy man. Does holiness untether our humanity, our emotions, our desires, our hold on this world? Does the religious leader, the holy man, float above normal human feelings of grief? Does he continue serving G-d sublimating the pain he is suffering?

Religions of the world come down differently on this question. Moshe thought Aharon should rise above his despair. But Aharon objects. And Moshe agrees with him. The holiest person we have, the Kohen Gadol, cries like anyone else on the death of his children. Normal service does not continue as if nothing happened. However holy the holy man is, he is also a person with legitimate feelings. Holy men are holy, but men they remain.



#### 6TH ALIYA (11:1-32)

Of **land animals**, you may eat those with split hooves and that chew their cud. Those with only one such sign shall not be eaten: camel, hyrax, hare and pig. **Aquatic beings** that have fins and scales may be eaten. Predator **birds** may not be eaten. **Insects** may not be eaten with the exception of certain grasshoppers. Touching the carcass of certain dead animals renders a person Tameh, impure.

We would expect some transition from the horrible moment of the death of Aharon's sons to the laws of kashrut. Yet, there is no transition at all.

Perhaps the laws of kashrut continue this theme of the pursuit of the sublime. And addresses not only what you may not

consume, but what you may.

There has been extensive focus on the pursuit of the rendezvous with the Shechina. And the care, the respect that must be exercised in that pursuit.

But do not think that all of life is circumscribed by that pursuit. That perhaps meat can be consumed only in the context of sacrifices.

No. There is Divine service. And there is life. Plodding, pedestrian life. In which we consume meat. And refrain from non kosher.

The laws of kashrut restrict. And permit. This is forbidden. But this is permitted.

The permission is as important as the restriction. You, man, are permitted to consume meat. You are not restricted to eating meat only in the context of the encounter in the Mishkan. You may consume meat in your ordinary life.



### 7TH ALIYA (11:33-47)

The contraction of Tumah from contact with animals requires immersion in a mikveh. You shall be holy because I, G-d, am holy. I brought you out of Egypt to be My people and to be holy, as I am. You are to distinguish between pure and impure and between living things that may be eaten and those that may not.

We are instructed to imitate G-d's holiness. In what way are we to imitate Him? In Creation he separated, *mavdil*; so too we exercise discernment. We distinguish between that which we consume; and that which we don't. Discernment, self control, structure, in particular in those activities we share with animals are what make us holy, imitating His holiness.

## HAFTORAH SHEMINI 2 SHMUEL 6:1-19

King David makes the decision to move the Holy Ark to the new capital, Jerusalem. He instructed that the Ark be placed on a cart and it was brought to the Holy City amidst singing and dancing. When the Ark with the large procession made its way to *Goren Nachon*, the oxen misstepped and Uzza, Avinadav's son, reached out and took hold of the Ark to catch it. At that moment he was suddenly killed.

The haftorah which spotlights how Uzza was struck dead when he disrespectfully touched the Ark parallels the episode in the parsha of Nadav and Avihu's death.

King David was greatly distressed over this tragic episode. He then chose to place the Ark in the home of Oved- edom the Edomite, where it then stayed for three months.

Ultimately King David brought the Ark from the house of Oved-edom into the City of David with great joy and celebration. King David offers blessing and to all present at this historic moment in the history of the nation of Israel. ■



### STATS

26th of 54 sedras; 3rd of 10 in Vayikra.  
157.2 lines in a Sefer Torah, rank: 42nd.  
6 Parshiyot, 3 open, 3 closed.  
91 pesukim - ranks 41st (4th in Vayikra).  
1238 words - 41st (5th in Vayikra).  
4670 letters - 41st (5th in Vayikra).



### MITZVOT

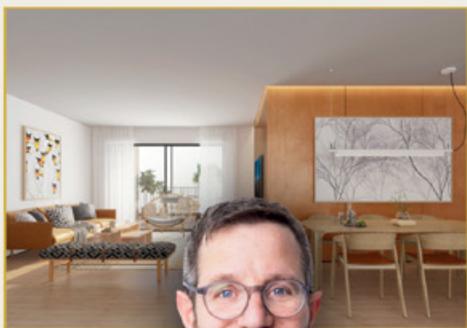
17 mitzvot; 6 positive; 11 prohibitions.

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# Fire: Holy and Unholy

The shock is immense. For several weeks and many chapters – the longest prelude in the Torah – we have read of the preparations for the moment at which God would bring His Presence to rest in the midst of the people. Five *parshiyot* (Terumah, Tetzaveh, Ki Tissa, Vayakhel and Pekudei) describe the instructions for building the Sanctuary. Two further *parshiyot* (Vayikra, Tzav) detail the sacrificial offerings to be brought there. All is now ready. For seven days the Priests (Aaron and his sons) have been consecrated into office. Now comes the eighth day when the service of the *Mishkan* will begin.

The entire people have played their part in constructing what will become the visible home of the Divine Presence on Earth. With a simple, moving verse the drama reaches its climax:

Moses and Aaron went into the Tent of Meeting and when they came out, they blessed the people. God's glory was then revealed to all the people. (*Lev. 9:23*)

Just as we think the narrative has reached closure, a terrifying scene takes place:

Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu, took their censers, put fire into them and added incense; and they offered unauthorised fire before God, which He had not instructed them to offer. Fire came forth from before God, and it consumed them so that they died before God. Moses then said to Aaron: "This is what God spoke of when He said: Among those who approach Me, I will show Myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honoured." (*Lev. 10:1-3*)

Celebration turned to tragedy with the death of Aaron's two eldest sons. The Sages and commentators offer many explanations. Nadav and Avihu died because: they entered the Holy of Holies;<sup>1</sup> they were not wearing the requisite clothes;<sup>2</sup> they took fire from the kitchen, not the Altar;<sup>3</sup> they did not consult Moses and Aaron;<sup>4</sup> nor did they consult one another.<sup>5</sup>

According to some, they were guilty of hubris. They were impatient to assume

1. Midrash Tanchuma (Buber), parshat Acharei Mot 7.

2. Leviticus Rabbah 20:9.

3. Midrash Tanchuma, ad loc.

4. Yalkut Shimoni, I:524.

5. Midrash Tanchuma, ad loc.

leadership roles themselves;<sup>6</sup> and they did not marry, considering themselves above such things.<sup>7</sup> Yet others see their deaths as delayed punishment for an earlier sin, when, at Mount Sinai they “ate and drank” in the Presence of God (Ex. 24:9-11).

These interpretations represent close readings of the four places in the Torah which Nadav and Avihu’s death is mentioned (Lev. 10:2, Lev. 16:1, Num. 3:4, Num. 26:61), as well as the reference to their presence on Mount Sinai. Each is a profound meditation on the dangers of over-enthusiasm in religious life. However, the simplest explanation is the one explicit in the Torah itself. Nadav and Avihu died because they offered unauthorised, literally “strange,” fire, meaning “that which was not commanded.” To understand the significance of this, we must go back to first principles and remind ourselves of the meaning of *kadosh*, “holy”, and thus of the *Mikdash* as the home of the holy.

The holy is that segment of time and space God has reserved for His Presence. *Creation involves concealment*. The word *olam*, “universe”, is semantically linked to the word *ne’elam*, “hidden”. To give humankind some of His own creative powers – the use of language to think, communicate, understand, imagine alternative futures and choose between them – God must do more than create *Homo sapiens*. He must efface Himself (what the Kabbalists called *tzimtzum*, self-limitation) to create space for human action. No single act more profoundly indicates the love and generosity implicit in creation. God as we

6. Aggadah (Buber), Vayikra 10.

7. Leviticus Rabbah 20:10.



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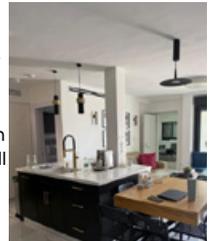
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encounter Him in the Torah is like a parent who knows they must hold back, let go, refrain from intervening, if their children are to become responsible and mature.

But there is a limit. To efface Himself entirely would be equivalent to abandoning the world, deserting His own children. That, God may not and will not do. How then does God leave a trace of His Presence on Earth?

The biblical answer is not philosophical. A philosophical answer (I am thinking here of the mainstream of Western philosophy, beginning in antiquity with Plato, in modernity with Descartes) would be one that applies universally – i.e., at all times, in all places. But there is no answer that applies to all times and places. *That is why philosophy cannot and never will understand the apparent contradiction between Divine creation and human freewill, or between Divine Presence and the empirical world in which we reflect, choose, and act.*

Jewish thought is counter-philosophical. It insists that truths are embodied precisely in particular times and places. There are holy times (the seventh day, seventh month, seventh year, and the end of seven septennial cycles, the jubilee). There are holy people (the Children of Israel as a whole; within them, the Levi'im, and within them the Kohanim). And there is holy space (eventually, Israel; within that, Jerusalem; within that the Temple; in the desert, they were the *Mishkan*, the Holy, and the Holy of Holies).

The holy is that point of time and space in which the Presence of God is encountered by *tzimtzum* – self-renunciation – on the part of humankind. *Just as God makes space for humanity by an act of self-limitation, so*

*humanity makes space for God by an act of self-limitation.* The holy is where God is experienced as absolute Presence. Not accidentally but essentially, this can only take place through the total renunciation of human will and initiative. That is not because God does not value human will and initiative. To the contrary: God has empowered humankind to use them to become His “partners in the work of creation”.

However, to be true to God's purposes, there must be times and places at which humanity experiences the reality of the Divine. Those times and places require absolute obedience. The most fundamental mistake – the mistake of Nadav and Avihu – is to take the powers that belong to man's encounter with the world, and apply them to man's encounter with the Divine. Had Nadav and Avihu used their own initiative to fight evil and injustice they would have been heroes. Because they used their own initiative in the arena of the holy, they erred. They asserted their own presence in the absolute Presence of God. That is a contradiction in terms. That is why they died.

We err if we think of God as capricious, jealous, angry: a myth spread by early Christianity in an attempt to define itself as the religion of love, superseding the cruel/harsh/retributive God of the “Old Testament”. When the Torah itself uses such language it “speaks in the language of humanity” (Brachot 31a) – that is to say, in terms people will understand.

In truth, Tanach is a love story through and through – the passionate love of the Creator for His creatures that survives all the disappointments and betrayals of human history. God needs us to encounter Him, not

because He needs humankind but because we need Him. If civilization is to be guided by love, justice, and respect for the integrity of creation, there must be moments in which we leave the “I” behind and encounter the fullness of being in all its glory.

That is the function of the holy – the point at which “I am” is silent in the overwhelming presence of “There is”. That is what Nadav and Avihu forgot – that to enter holy space or time requires ontological humility, the total renunciation of human initiative and desire.

The significance of this fact cannot be over-estimated. When we confuse God’s will with our will, we turn the holy – the source of life – into something unholy and a source of death. The classic example of this is “holy war,” jihad, crusade – investing imperialism (the desire to rule over other people) with the cloak of sanctity as if conquest and forced conversion were God’s will.

The story of Nadav and Avihu reminds us yet again of the warning first spelled out in the days of Cain and Abel. *The first act of worship led to the first murder.* Like nuclear fission, worship generates power, which can be benign but can also be profoundly dangerous.

The episode of Nadav and Avihu is written in three kinds of fire. First there is the fire from Heaven:

Fire came forth from before God and consumed the burnt offering. (*Lev. 9:24*)

This was the fire of favour, consummating the service of the Sanctuary. Then came the “unauthorised fire” offered by the two sons.

Aaron’s sons, Nadav and Avihu took their censers, put fire in them and added

incense; and they offered unauthorised fire before God, which He had not instructed them [to offer]. (*Lev. 10:1*)

Then there was the counter-fire from Heaven:

Fire came forth from before God, and it consumed them so that they died before God. (*Lev. 10:2*)

The message is simple and intensely serious: Religion is not what the European Enlightenment thought it would become: mute, marginal and mild. It is fire – and like fire, it warms but it also burns. And we are the guardians of the flame. ■

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## Elevating Everything

The book of *Vayikra* focuses on maintaining *kedushah*, holiness in Jewish life. “*Ki ani Hashem hama’aleh etchem mei’eretz Mitzrayim le’heyot lachem le’Elokim*

*ve’heyitem kedoshim ki Kadosh Ani* — For I am Hashem Who has brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your G-d. Thus, you shall be holy, because I am holy.” (*Vayikra 11:45*) This verse beautifully encapsulates the essence of our service to Hashem. Rashi understands that the reason Hashem took us out of Egypt was to give us the opportunity to do the mitzvot. What is the deeper message behind Rashi’s message?

In his introduction to his sefer *Ba’alei Hanefesh*, the *Ravad zt”l* explains that we encounter opportunities to do mitzvot in every area of life. There are laws relating to the food we eat, the clothes we wear, in our interpersonal relationships, in our interactions with family members, and in business. At times, we tend to look at religion as something ancillary; mitzvot become things to get done so we can move on and focus on “our lives.” The *Ravad* stresses that Torah and mitzvot form the basis of our lives, and thus, must be our essential focus. We are given the mandate to remember the Exodus from Egypt each day so we can remember **why** Hashem took us out — so that we can serve Him in good faith.

The Saba from Kelm *zt”l* would continuously exhort his students to live with introspection, not to

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simply go through the motions. We are not meant to remain “simple people” rather, we must continuously seek growth throughout our lives to become deeper, greater and more developed people.

Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt”l* warns that we are held accountable for the way we use our G-d given resources in all areas of our lives. Understanding that we are created to serve Hashem, comes with the responsibility to use our money, our time, and our many talents in a purposeful, meaningful way. At every juncture, we must examine what the Will of Hashem is so we can best fulfill His Will in the highest sense that we can.

The *Ba'al Shem Tov Hakadosh zt”l* sees our verse as strongly supporting this idea. One can put a comma after “*le’heyot lachem* —to be for you” and separate it from the word following, “*le’Elokim*,” G-d. It is hinting to us that in the “for you” areas of life, the areas of personal pleasures and interests, we must be genuinely dedicated to direct it all “to G-d.”

As we approach the time period of *Sefirat Ha’omer*, let us apply ourselves to live with a greater degree of awareness toward our actions and feel the pride of being servants of Hashem at every moment of the day. ■

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