

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The holiday of Pesach represents many basic values in Jewish life. Foremost naturally is that of liberty and freedom from oppression, slavery, and domination by others. The holiday is described as being the holiday of our freedom. But, there is another basic idea and value that underlies the commemoration of our exodus from Egypt and the beginning of our freedom. That value is the human capacity to believe and keep faith with an ideal that has not yet been realized and that is yet to be exploited.

In the retelling of the story of the Exodus, the Bible mentions several times in the narrative of the description of the redemption from Egyptian bondage, the fact that people believed that they would be freed, and that Moshe would be the one that would be able to lead them from bondage to freedom. It was this belief that fueled the entire narrative of freedom and brought about the eventual triumph over Pharaoh and the Egyptian nation.

No matter how much lip service we pay to the idea of faith and belief, we always have a tendency to underplay its importance in shaping human events, both individual and communal. But faith, literally, does have the power to move and change the course of human history and personal existence.

The Lord may have performed untold miracles in order to extract the Jewish people from under the yoke of Egyptian bondage, but none of this would've been successful had the people not believed it would be successful and that they would achieve their freedom.

One of the great ideas in Judaism, especially emphasized in the teachings of the great Chasidic master Rabbi Zadok HaKohein of Lublin is that within events that appear to be negative and tragic, such as the enslavement of the Jewish people in Egypt, there are the seeds of redemption and hope.

Even though there are tragedies such as the destruction of millions of Jews in Egypt, at the time of Moses, the inner soul of the Jew had faith that better times would arrive and that the redemption from slavery would actually occur. That path is the definition of faith and belief in Jewish life throughout Jewish history.

No matter how difficult and oppressive the situation appeared to be, already hidden within it were

the solutions to the problem and the redemption from bondage.

An expression of this is to be found in the song attributed to the Jewish partisans in World War II who hid in the forests of Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine and Russia, from where they continued to harass the Nazi beast. They created a thousand pinpricks that collectively hampered the operations of the German army on the Eastern front. The words to their song in Yiddish, to the effect that, "Do not dare to say that this is our final road." It is this faith that overwrites all obstacles and situations of anguish and despair.

The holiday of Pesach always represents a soaring sense of optimism and a deeply abiding faith in the Jewish future and in the redemptive powers of heaven that will be exhibited in the coming of the messianic era.

The matzoh that we eat is called, in Jewish tradition, by its Aramaic phrase – the bread of faith. Matzoh is potential bread but it is not yet risen. It appears to be doomed to be flat and crunchy, without much taste or substance. However, we are aware of the potential contained within that matzoh. Jews believe in the power and potential of it to rise and become the fluffy and the most delicious breads and pastry.

We celebrate while the matzoh is still in its flattened state. The commandment is to eat it in its raw state so that we can sense the power of its potential, when we will be allowed to eat it after being fully risen and tasty.

Our entire fulfillment of the commandment of eating matzoh on Pesach is to reinforce our innate sense of belief and faith in the future and in our ability to realize our individual and national potential. Belief eventually leads to action and action leads to redemption. ©2021 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"You shall observe the month of the springtime and perform the Passover offering for the Lord your God, for in the month of springtime the Lord your God took you out of Egypt at night." (Deut. 16:1) On the eighth day of Passover we read a

passage from the Book of Deuteronomy which lists the festivals of the Jewish calendar. What does it tell us about how we spend our time and our relationship to the people around us?

Every ancient people held certain places and objects sacred. The Jewish people, however, attached the most importance to sanctifying time. The Torah reserves sanctification not for the physical objects of creation but for the Sabbath: "And God blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it" (Gen. 2:3). It became an oasis of holy time.

Two Hassidic rabbis, the Kotzker Rebbe and the Vorker Rebbe, once discussed the relative holiness of certain commandments. The Vorker observed that on Sukkot one chooses the four species after painstaking care to ensure their perfection and beauty. They are admired and waved, but finally they are laid aside, the commandment concerning them having been fulfilled.

This is the way it is with most mitzvot: as long as we hold them we encompass the holy; the moment we release them their holiness departs. But when the Jew sits in the sukkah, he is surrounded by the commandment. The holy literally encompasses the Jew. Thus, sukkah is the greatest mitzvah.

The Kotzker replied that the commandment concerning the Sabbath is even greater. The Jew can walk out of the sukkah, but he cannot walk out of the Sabbath. In other words, the sanctification of time is the ultimate sanctity, and since life is measured in time, holiness of time means holiness of life. It is thus characteristic that the first commandment God gave the people of Israel as a nation—while yet in Egypt—was a mitzvah dealing with an aspect of time: "This month shall be to you the first of the months" (Ex. 12:2).

The Torah clearly emphasizes our role in transforming and ennobling the time we are granted by the Almighty. As Jews, we must view time not merely as objective, disparate units, such as minutes, days, etc., but rather as subjective, interconnected moments which we are empowered to fill with content and to sanctify with meaning. This idea is halakhically manifested in the institution of sanctifying the new moon (*kiddush ha-hodesh*), which is the process whereby we declare a certain day to be the beginning of the month.

Originally, after hearing testimony from witnesses concerning the new moon, the Great Sanhedrin would proclaim the onset of a new month by the formula "the month is holy, the month is holy." The court's decision determined on what day the festivals would occur. In contrast to the Sabbath, which occurs every seven days regardless of the calendar, the festivals depend on the determination of the month, which in turn is fixed by the Jewish people. As Rabbi Ovadiah Sforno (ca. 1475-1550) observes in his Bible commentary, it is no coincidence that this

commandment to sanctify time was given at the moment of freedom from Egypt.

Slaves have no clear notion of time since it is not theirs to dispose of. Only free men, who have at least limited control over their time, can fill it with significant matters—and sanctify it. Thus, the concept of freedom and the sanctification of time are bound up with each other.

The first month in the Jewish calendar is the month of Nisan, the time of the emergence of the independent nation. The seventh month is the month of Tishrei, the anniversary of the creation of the human being. The major Jewish holidays occur in or near these two major periods: Passover and Shavuot in the former; Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot in the latter. The first group of holidays is characterized by its emphasis on the particular—on historical events of relevance only to the Jewish people, namely emancipation from Egyptian bondage and the revelation at Mount Sinai.

The holidays of the second group, however, contain universal themes and occur appropriately in the month when man was created. Despite the fact that there is tension between particularism and universalism, between chauvinism and cosmopolitanism, both are part of the Jew's life-cycle. That they can be reconciled is an important motif of the Kiddush. By making reference in this blessing to both the creation of the world and the Exodus from Egypt, we affirm that there is no conflict between the two.

The Bible opens with the Lord of the universe creating a world designed for all humanity and with instructions applicable to every individual. After the major Divine disappointments, first in Adam, then in Noah, the Almighty decides, as it were, to create a family out of which would be forged a "holy nation and kingdom of priests." This nation would by its example inspire the world to accept God's teachings. Hence at the very moment of his election, Abraham is promised by God that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" through him. From the elevation of a particular people will follow the elevation of an entire peoplehood. ©2021 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"**T**hen Moshe and the Children of Israel sang this song to Hashem saying..." (Shmos 15:1) If this posuk seems familiar, it should. We say it daily as part of our morning prayers. In fact, that was part of the plan, as we see the words, "Vayomru laimor," which literally means, "they said to say." This teaches, explains the Chizkuni, that from the beginning, the plan was that this song of praise to Hashem would be recited by generations of Jews to thank Hashem for His salvation, as we still say it today.

The syntax of the posuk is unusual though. The word 'yashir,' typically means 'will sing.' In this case, though, it is past tense. Rashi says that when the sea split, the Jews passed through, and the Egyptian tormentors died, Moshe's heart told him, "You should sing!" and that's where the language came from.

The Ibn Ezra and Ramban differ from Rashi, and they say that it is a standard usage of Lashon Kodesh (the holy tongue, not modern Hebrew) for words in future tense to be used in conjunction with certain words, or for a narrator to use them depending on where he is placing himself within the timeline of the story. It would seem, then, that the words "Az Yashir" mean, "then they sang," and not "then they will sing."

However, the Gemara in Sanhedrin (91b) quotes R' Meir as saying, "From where in the Torah do we know that resurrection of the dead [will occur]? From the verse, "Az Yashir." It does not say, "They sang," but rather, "they will sing!" If so, it seems that this usage is, in fact, intended to teach us something about the future and it is not merely a function of the Hebrew language that yashir is used. We'd like to suggest the very fact that the word is both normal in usage but can also mean a reference to the future is significant.

When Hashem appeared to Moshe and commanded him to go and take the Children of Israel from Mitzrayim, Moshe asked Hashem's name. He responded, "I will be what I will be." Chazal tell us that Hashem responded, "Just as I am with them in this sorrow, so shall I be with them in future sorrows."

Moshe countered, "It's enough for them to be steeped in suffering now. Do they really need to know that there will be future sorrows?" Hashem agreed and told Moshe to say, "'I will be' sent me to you." Then, in the future, when other sorrows occurred, the original name would arise, along with Hashem's promise to be with us and protect us in other hard times.

But wait! Moshe never did convey the original message to the Jews, with the name of "I will be what I will be." How then could they be comforted by it in the future? Perhaps that's why the Torah specifically chose this language of Az Yashir, to communicate this principle to us. At that moment, it was merely a phrase which could mean "they sang," referring to the past and the salvation they experienced at that moment, not hinting to future troubles.

However, in retrospect in the future, we would witness Hashem's presence and salvation time after time, and realize that what it was saying from the beginning was, "They WILL sing – Hashem will always be with us, until the time that He revives the dead and the world will witness Moshe leading the Jews in song once again."

A man once came to R' Mendel of Kotsk. He said, "Rebbe, I have a very serious problem. I have no parnasa (livelihood.)" "Is that your most serious

problem?" asked the Kotsker Rebbe.

The man answered in the affirmative. "Then pray to HaShem for parnasa," replied the sage. "But Rebbe," sighed the man, "I don't know how to pray properly."

"Then why do you say parnasa is your greatest problem?" said R' Mendel, "Not knowing how to pray properly is a far more serious a problem than that!"
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RABBI AVROHOM LEVENTHAL

How Kind is Your Kindness?

Rav Aryeh Levin, the famed Tzadik of Yerushalyim was reputed to carry only small coins with him.

This practice was not only due to his modest lifestyle. Rav Aryeh was frequently approached by those asking for alms. Rav Aryeh didn't want to pull out a larger denomination and ask for change, lest the petitioner think for even a second that he was going to receive a larger donation. For Rav Aryeh it was preferable to walk around with the burden of many small coins than to potentially disappoint another person for even a second.

This midda comes directly from HaKadosh Baruch Hu Himself.

After exiting the Yam Suf, the Jews discovered a treasure beyond their wildest imaginations. Confident that they would easily overtake the Jews, the Egyptians took chase with their finest horses and chariots. These ceremonial chariots were fashioned from gold and bejeweled with precious stones. After drowning in the sea, these chariots were spewed onto the beach so that Jews would be certain that the threat was over.

The Jews gathered up these spoils with such abandon that Moshe had to literally pry them away. We are taught that this treasure was worth many times more than the wealth of Egypt that Bnei Yisrael had taken from their neighbors.

If so, there is a glaring question.

What was the need for the Jews in Egypt to ask from the Egyptians? G-d knew well what was waiting for them on the other side of the sea. Why trouble them and potentially cause issues between them and their neighbors? Couldn't they wait a week?

Chazal teach us that HaShem commanded the taking from Egypt so that Avraham Avinu would not have any "complaints". He could have said "the promise of 400 years of slavery You kept but they will go out with great wealth You didn't?"

Therefore, HaShem wanted to ensure that the Jews had plenty of wealth as they left Egypt for good.

So back to our question. If Avraham Avinu, resting comfortably in Chevron would see the vast treasure of the Yam Suf, wouldn't he have gladly "forgiven" those few days from the Exodus until the

splitting of the sea?

The answer is simple yet so deep. Hakadosh Baruch didn't want Avraham to suffer or be disappointed for even a "second". Although he would have been overjoyed with the spoils of the sea, it would have still been a few days until that materialized. He would have been thinking of the wealth promised to his children.

The first day of the counting of the Omer is "Chesed Sh'bchesed", the "kindness within kindness". Our journey from slavery toward receiving the Torah begins on the right foot, with the foundation of chesed.

Chesed, doing for others, is the characteristic of our nation and in fact the reason that G-d put us all in this world. We should always strive to make certain that our chesed itself is done with as much consideration and sensitivity as possible. ©2021 Rabbi A. Leventhal. *Rabbi Leventhal is the Executive Director of Lema'an Achai lemaanachai.org*

RABBI AVI WEISS

Sefirat Ha'Omer

The fifty days between Passover and Shavuot are commonly known as Sefirat Ha'omer (Leviticus 23:15, 16). From a biblical perspective, these days relate to the barley offering brought on the second day of Passover and the wheat offering brought on the festival of Shavuot. These are days of hope that the produce from the ground grow fruitfully and plentifully.

Not coincidentally, the Hebrew for fifty is chamishim, which recalls the word chamsin, the hot, often destructive wind prevalent during that time of year. We pray that it not harm the successful reaping of the crop.

In addition, this period of time certainly has something to do with the counting of time from Passover, the holiday marking our physical exodus from Egypt, to Shavuot, the holiday commemorating the giving of the Torah. For this reason, we count up and not down from Pesach to Shavuot, spiritually reaching higher and higher as we approach that moment in history when the Torah was given.

It is fitting that we count up to forty-nine. This is because the number seven in Judaism symbolizes completion, wholeness, and spirituality – the number of Shabbat. Forty-nine is seven sets of seven, therefore the omer period is the ultimate completion of the completion, the holiest of the holiest.

As time progressed, these joyous days turned into sad ones. It was between Passover and Shavuot that the students of Rabbi Akiva died. According to tradition, this occurred because these learned men were involved in endless dispute (Yevamot 62b).

Too often, Torah scholars become so engrossed in their understanding of Torah that they begin to believe that their approach is the only correct one. They often cannot see the truth in any other

opinion.

It would be beneficial for all of us to remember that different views are recorded in the Talmud to teach that while one should continue to focus and deepen one's view of Torah, it should not lead to tunnel vision. People with different outlooks should listen to one another.

And so, the omer count, which was originally joyous, became days of mourning. In fact, the Aruch Hashulchan notes that the most intense attacks against the Jewish People during the Crusades occurred during Sefirat Ha'omer (Orach Chayim 493:1). Indeed, Dr. Yaffa Eliach implored children of survivors to be especially kind to their parents between Pesach and Shavuot, as the Nazis – aware of the importance of these holidays to Jews – were particularly brutal during this time of year.

Today, we are seeing a slow turnaround, as Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israel's Independence Day) and Yom Yerushalayim (the day commemorating the liberation of Jerusalem) are joyously celebrated during Sefirat Ha'omer.

May the day soon come when God will wipe away tears from all faces (Isaiah 25:8), and days of "mourning turn into dancing" (Psalms 30:12). ©2021 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

HARAV SHLOMO WOLBE Z"l

Bais Hamussar

Before Adom Ha'rishon sinned, he was able to clearly discern that despite the fact that this world seems to be a reality, it is merely a facade in comparison to the reality of ruchniyos in general and Hashem in particular. However, after he sinned, the yetzer hara i.e. the power of imagination became part and parcel of Adom's very being. The extent that he exercised the use of his imagination, the more he turned the physical world into a reality. This in turn obscured the true reality of the spiritual world.

Rav Wolbe (Da'as Shlomo Geulah pg. 313) writes that this concept holds true for each and every one of us. The Torah relates regarding the staffs Yaakov Avinu placed in front of the sheep, that the sheep gave birth to offspring which mirrored the designs on the staffs. The "imagination" of the sheep had the power to create a reality. The same holds true for our imagination. When



a person uses his imagination to conjure up various worldly pleasures, he is creating; he is turning the physical world into more and more of a reality. This in effect obscures the reality of ruchniyos thereby giving it inferior status.

How does one combat this yetzer hara masked in his imagination? The answer can be found in the Kuzari (3, 5). "The pious commands his imagination to conjure up the most splendid images stored away in his mind in order to create a picture for a desired G-dly phenomenon such as the revelation by Har Sinai, Akeidas Yitzchok, the Mishkan along with Moshe and the service performed therein, the glory of the Beis Hamikdosh and many other images." It is imperative that one utilize his imagination in his avodas Hashem. Otherwise, his imagination unchecked will run wild, and solely paint portraits of the many pleasures and temptations of this very materialistic world.

The importance of using one's imagination to aid his avodas Hashem is expressed succinctly by the Sforno in his explanation of two pesukim in Devarim (27, 9-10). "Haskeis" -- Depict in your mind "U'Shema" - - and contemplate. "V'Shamata B'kol Hashem Elokecha" -- When you depict this and comprehend it, then you will most certainly heed the word of Hashem."

This being the case, concludes Rav Wolbe, we have clarified for ourselves the avodah of Pesach. A person is obligated to feel as if he himself left Mitzrayim. This can only be accomplished by picturing the bondage and the subsequent freedom. For this reason we are instructed to recline, drink four cups of wine, and eat matzah and marror. Going through the motions of freedom, observing the "pesach" and tasting the bread of affliction all aid our imagination in a more complete picture of Yetzias Mitzrayim.

If we truly want to gain from this Yom Tov of Pesach, let us follow the Kuzari's advice. Let's not merely "go through the motions" of the Seder, but also take some time to picture the scenes of Yetzias Mitzrayim. The ten makkos, Paroah's nocturnal search for Moshe and Aharon, each Jew with ninety donkeys laden with the bounty of Mitzrayim, Kriyas Yam Suf and the cloud and fire that led the Jews through the wilderness. These pictures can do wonders in advancing our emunah and additionally, prevents our imagination from tempting us with the false pleasures of Olam Hazei. © 2021 Rabbi S. Wolbe z"l and torah.org

RABBI MORDECHAI WEISS

Going in the Same Direction

We are at the threshold of the time of Geulah-redemption. It was during the month of Nissan that the Jewish people- after two hundred and ten years of slavery-left the land of their persecution-the land of Egypt-and began their dramatic story which was

to become the spectacular story of the formation of the Jewish people as a people. This journey has lasted even until the present day as still today we are found in different stages of our redemption and we are asked to react and overcome challenges that we face daily as a people. What was strange about the leaving Egypt was that though we all left as one people we comprised twelve unique and different tribes-each with their special flag and no doubt each with their special customs and each with their separate views.

The Midrash relates that when the Jews crossed the sea, the sea split in twelve parts giving each of the tribes a special path to follow. One would expect that Almighty G-d would have provided or at least preferred that all of the tribes would proceed in unison --that there would be only one lane for everyone-as a sign of harmony and agreement-"achdut"- as Rashi states when the Jews received the Torah "keish echad b'lev echad" as one person with one heart. Yet each tribe, according to this Midrash, was provided with a special path-a special direction. Perhaps the message at this time of redemption was that the Jewish people needn't be all alike. We can be different! But the most important characteristic, however, is that we are all pointing and going in the same direction. How we get there is of little concern. What is important is that we all have our sights on the same goal.

A remarkable occurrence is happening in the state of Israel Today. The vast majority of the people living there-whether observant or non observant-ultra religious or not-a very high percentage observe the holidays as national or religious events in their lives. Well into the eighty or ninety percent of Israeli citizens celebrate Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Purim Succoth and Pesach. Whether their reasoning is based on Torah law, or on nationalistic pride-the bottom line is that these holidays are being observed! And the results are truly amazing. To me it is a sign that we are experiencing the Messianic era. There is no doubt in my mind that over the ensuing years those who observe these holidays because of nationalistic reason will realize the historic one as well and the religious aspect will also be their drive for observance.

The difference in living in Israel verses outside of Israel is that in Israel Judaism is the basis of the country's daily operations. On the radio on Friday they will wish you a Shabbat Shalom. On Pesach they will tell you Chag Kasher V'sameach. On Purim everyone gets dressed up in a costume and on Succoth all the stores sell decorations for your Succah and people wish each other a Chag Sameach. The entire nation is moving in one direction-which is heartwarming.

Out side of Israel our Jewish lives are very often in direct opposite of our daily and business lives. There is tension. We need to make an effort often to swim against the tide to retain our Jewishness-and it is

in this environment that some of us-our children-lose direction and mix-up goals and get lost in this society.

There is no question in my mind that the future of the Jewish people is in Israel. May this time of redemption bring us all to that ultimate goal. ©2012 Rabbi M. Weiss. Rabbi Mordechai Weiss is the former Principal of the Bess and Paul Sigal Hebrew Academy of Greater Hartford and the Hebrew Academy of Atlantic County where together he served for over forty years. He and his wife D'vorah live in Efrat. All comments are welcome at rvmordechai@aol.com

RABBI TZVI KLUGERMAN

Baruch Hamakom

As we enter deeper into the recitation of the Passover saga, we recite Baruch Hamakom, Baruch Hu, Blessed is the Omnipresent. This paragraph concludes with Baruch Shenatan Torah L'Amo Yisrael, Blessed be the One who gave Torah to His nation Israel. This blessing is unique, as it is said without Shem u' Malchut, the Divine Name and Royal Appellation. A blessing usually signifies the liturgical division of a prayer service. This blessing, albeit without the Divine Name, sanctifies what may be the actual start of the Passover seder, the commandment to relate the Exodus from Egypt.

This possible beginning of the seder, is marked by the section of the four sons. Why would the seder begin with the four sons? Why not begin immediately with the passage from the Midrash Mechilta "Yachol M'Rosh Chodesh, You might suppose that we should begin from the beginning of the month"?

If the motif of the seder is Chinuch Hayeladim, instruction of the children, then we have to establish pedagogical guidelines. We bring the example of the wise son, the Chacham, to reaffirm our obligation. Even if our children are more learned than us, we still have an obligation to transmit our heritage. The Rasha, evil son, reminds us not to discount the rebellious child without trying. The harsh response offered to this son is another attempt to show him the folly of his attitude. As we learn in the Torah, the Ben Sorer u'Moreh, rebellious son, was declared rebellious only after repeated attempts were made to teach him. The Tam, simple son, receives the simple answer. We are encouraged to be persistent in our attempts to teach him, even if he doesn't understand after the first time. The Sh'eino Yodea Lish'ol, one who doesn't even know to ask, reminds us not to disregard the quiet student, and not to assume that everyone present understands what is being said and done.

Yet, perhaps there is another meaning behind the placement of the four sons at this juncture. The saga of the Redemption of the Israelites as G-d's people, was an epic event that had many different facets. Witnessing the Otot u'Mo'otim, G-d's wonders and signs that were visited upon the Egyptians and

retelling the Exodus can have profound reactions in the same person.

After learning about the Exodus, we should be able to see The Divine and search out G-d in the events. This spiritual revelation may overwhelm us, even inspire us to new heights, but even the sky is a limit. We must remember the seemingly inappropriate answer given to the Chacham, "Ein Maftirim Achar Hapesach Afikoman, nothing is to be eaten after the Afikomen". Regardless of the spiritual revelation achieved, the primacy of Halacha remains supreme.

Similarly, we may at times deny the Divine in the events of the Redemption saga. Like the Rasha, we might try not to see the hand of G-d in the events. The answer given to the wicked son makes us aware that had we denied the Divine during the actual plagues and not heeded Moshe's warnings to place the blood upon the doorposts, we would not have been saved.

However, there are times that we look at G-d's divine providence with some hesitation. Did He have to do it that way?, we might ask. The answer given to the Tam instructs us to look at the wonders and signs of The Almighty with Temimut, full acceptance. This is the approach of Nachum Ish Gamzu, who regularly stated "Gamzu L'Tova, this too is for the best". That is the approach of the Tam. Acceptance of G-d's will with Emunah She'leimah - complete belief.

Yet, there may be events of the Redemption that overpower us and our response is one of silence. We are too overwhelmed to respond. "At Petach Lo, you open for him", is the response to the Sheino Yodea Lish'ol. The learning process must never cease.

At the beginning of our Kiyum Hamitzvah, the discharge of the commandment, of telling the Exodus saga, we need to be aware of others' and our own reactions. © 1999 Rabbi T. Klugerman

RABBI ARI WEISS

Where's Moshe?

This year, like every year, as we read through the Hagaddah, we wonder why Moshe is not mentioned. One would think that Moshe, through whom all of the plagues were brought, and whom Hashem commanded to lead us out of Egypt would be the central character at our seder. Wasn't it through him that our redemption occurred? Yet, we find no trace of Moshe's name anywhere.

In order to understand why Moshe is in the background during our seder, we must examine the content of maggid. Maggid outlines the story of our redemption and actually retells the story of every exile we've gone through and will go through. In maggid we read of the prototypical exile and redemption that generalizes all of our exiles and redemptions. The Baal Hagadah presents this in the form of four P'sukim which are expounded upon during maggid. The first verse describes our descent into exile, and how it was

intended for but a short time. The second verse describes how the Egyptians oppressed and afflicted us. The third verse describes how we finally called out to Hashem to help us, and the final verse describes our redemption.

These four verses can therefore be seen as the outline of golus and geula. We first go into exile, are oppressed, cry out to Hashem for help, and he answers by saving us. This is the model for all redemptions, including our final one (IY"H). But what happened to Moshe - the Moshiach? The Gemara at the end of Sanhedrin underscores the importance and requirement of Moshiach in our redemption. Yet the Baal Hagadah neglects to mention Moshiach as one of the elements of Golus and Geula.

It is very possible, then, that the Baal Hagadah is focusing on our role in the Geula and how we can help to bring it about. We read, therefore, in the maggid how Hashem listened to our calls, saw our afflictions, our toils, and our troubles. It wasn't until we cried out to Hashem in tefillah that we were saved. We finally realized that we couldn't do it ourselves and could only be saved through Hashem's intervention. But the Baal Hagadah goes on to explain that the Passuk also refers to the children. Hashem came to redeem us because of our tefillos and because of the Jewish identity instilled in the children.

So why isn't Moshe mentioned? Because Moshiach is Hashem's "job." Ours, as is recalled in the Hagaddah, is Tefillah and the home. When we uphold our end, Hashem will bring about the Geula in whatever way He sees fit. © 1999 Rabbi A. Weiss

YITZ WEISS

Generations

What is the lesson of the four sons? My grandfather, Rabbi Moshe Weiss z"l, explained the lesson with a story: Once there was a scholarly gentleman, with a long white beard and black cloak. He was a deeply righteous man who grew up in very religious surroundings. The man married and moved to America to seek his fortune. He arrived with hopes and dreams, and a commitment to his heritage. Time passed, and the man had a son. His son was a rasha, a wicked son. He only concerned himself with the here and now. He discounted his heritage as archaic and wanted to completely assimilate himself in his secular surroundings.

Years later, the rasha marries, and he, too, has a son. His son learns very little of his Judaism from his father. But once a year he sits at his grandfather's seder and asks questions. The rasha's son is a tam, a simple son. He asks his questions at the seder and hears the answers.

As time progresses, the grandfather passes away and the tam grows older and marries. His son is now a she-eino yodaiya lishol, one who can't even ask

a question. He can't ask his father - he is only a tam. He can't ask his grandfather - he's a rasha. His questions not only remain unanswered, they also remain unasked. He doesn't even understand enough to be able to ask questions.

So what happens when all the Jewish people eventually become she-eino yodaiya lishol's?

Now we can understand why the Jewish people are compared to the moon. The moon starts out bright and large, and slowly diminishes over the course of a month - almost until it seems that it would disappear forever. But then, like a spark in the night, it becomes whole again, and the process repeats. So too the Jewish people may seem to dwindle. What will happen when the Jewish people become totally assimilated? Impossible. For when things seem at their worst, suddenly there is a spark and we are great once again. © 1999 Y. Weiss

RABBI MORDECHAI WILLIG

Eating to Live

The very first mitzvah given to every individual of Am Yisrael was the Korban Pesach. As opposed to all other offerings, eating the meat is a separate mitzvah unto itself (Shemos 12:8, Rambam aseh 56). In contrast to other offerings, if it becomes impure and cannot be eaten it may not be offered (Pesachim 78b). Conversely, when the majority of Am Yisrael is impure and the Korban Pesach is brought in an impure state, it is eaten that way since the whole reason to offer it is to eat it (76b).

The Torah teaches us that eating, the most basic human need for survival, can be done before Hashem (Devarim 14:23), as a mitzvah. Although this activity is one which man shares with the animal kingdom (Chagiga 16a), man must elevate his eating to a dignified level.

This is a uniquely Jewish perspective. A non-Jew can offer a sacrifice, but only an olah, which is totally burned on the mizbe'ach (Menachos 73b). Eating before Hashem does not exist in a bifurcated lifestyle in which worldly actions are not included in religious life.

Esav told Yaakov "Pour into me now some of the red soup" (Breishis 25:30). Rashi writes, "I will open my mouth, and pour a lot into it, as we have learned (Shabbos 155b) we may pour food into a camel's mouth." Rav Yerucham Levovitz (Daas Torah) explains that many laws apply to eating in order to raise it from an animalistic act to a human one. The portion size and the pace distinguish humans from animals. A Jew must eat for the sake of doing Hashem's will, just as we must do when eating kodshim from the mizbe'ach. Woe unto a person whose eating is not superior to that of an animal.

When Yaakov received the berachos instead of Esav, he was told by Rivka to bring meat from the

Korban Peach to Yitzchak (Rashi 27:9). Yitzchak planned to give Esav worldly berachos and Yaakov spiritual ones (27:28,29; 28:4). Rivka arranged for Yaakov to receive the physical berachos as well. Her plan was for Yaakov to sublimate earthly matters by including them in avodas Hashem, and this is symbolized by the Korban Pesach which she gave to Yaakov in order to receive, and thereby elevate, worldly berachos (Rav C.Y. Goldvicht). Divine Providence ruled in accordance with Rivka's view (Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik).

"A tzadik eats to satiate his soul" (Mishlei 13:25). As a rule, the Torah discourages asceticism, and yet running after food is deemed sinful and requires teshuva (Rambam, Hilchos Teshuva 7:3).

Recently, medical science has taught that overeating is injurious not only to the soul but to the body as well. In the U.S., overweightness and obesity are primary causes of mortality and morbidity, perhaps even exceeding smoking (see *The Health Risks of Obesity Worse Than Smoking, Drinking or Poverty* <https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB4549.html>). The typical eating habits of Orthodox Jews on Shabbos and Yom Tov, especially Pesach, can have negative medical consequences. The Torah prohibits dangerous activities, and this includes smoking (Rav Ovadia Yosef, *Yechaveh Daas* 5:39). Unhealthy eating is difficult to define precisely, but egregious gluttony, which clearly reduces longevity, is prohibited.

The Ramban (Vayikra 19:1) describes a lustful individual who avoids technical prohibitions as a "naval bereshus haTorah - a degenerate operating within the technical requirements of Torah." "Kedoshim tihiyu - be holy" requires moderation in food and alcohol. If excessive eating or drinking endangers one's health, it no longer is bereshus haTorah. The Rambam (Hilchos Deos 4:1) rules "It is the way of Hashem to be healthy, as illness prevents understanding and knowledge of the Creator. Therefore, one must distance himself from things that harm the body, and conduct himself with things that heal and strengthen. One should not eat unless he is hungry".

Our bodies do not belong to us, but rather to Hashem (Radvaz, Hilchos Sanhedrin 18:6), as we say in Selichos, "...and the body is Yours" (See *Leor Hahalacha* by Rav S.Y. Zevin, p. 318-328). We are commanded to follow medical advice and avoid dangerous practices. We must eat to livelonger and healthier lives and avoid living to eat, especially if it shortens or harms our lives.

"You may not break a bone in it" (the Korban Pesach) (Shemos 12:46). The Chinuch (16) explains that it is not honorable for princes to eat like dogs that break bones. To remember the exalted level we reached on Pesach, we must eat like princes would, and not like animals.

The Chinuch famously continues that a

person's heart is influenced by his deeds. One should not indulge in the pleasures of those who engage in gluttony and scoffery, as these actions, even if not technically prohibited, affect one's heart and soul negatively.

The Rambam (Hilchos Yom Tov 6:18) states that when one eats and drinks on yom tov, he is also obligated to feed the poor and the stranger (ger). If one does not feed the poor and the embittered souls, his is not a simcha of mitzvah but of his stomach, which is a disgrace.

This can explain the juxtaposition of the subsequent pesukim (12:47, 48). "All of Adas Yisrael shall do it", (the Korban Pesach), including a ger. One who doesn't break bones recognizes that eating should not be gluttonous but refined. Sharing with those who do not have the means assures that all Am Yisrael, including the poor and the ger, will fulfill the mitzvah of Korban Pesach. This elevates the Korban Pesach of the donor, as he eats it like a prince, who bears and feels responsibility to provide for the unfortunate.

The original Korban Pesach was eaten only in one's home (12:46) in a princely fashion (see Chinuch 15). Ideally, the seder should be at home, with extended family and appropriate guests.

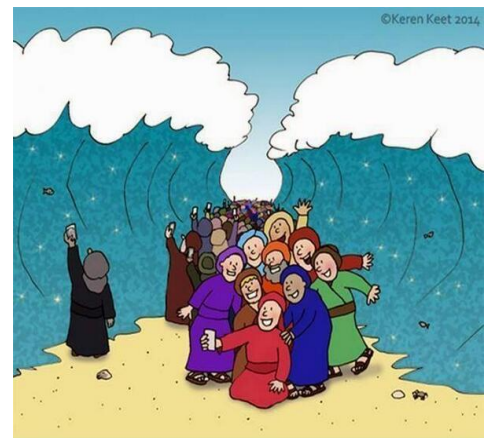
For those who, for whatever reason, spend Pesach in hotels, the words of the Chinuch are doubly important. Unfortunately, a culture of overindulgence, reported by participants and reflected in advertisements, can negatively influence a person's heart and soul on Pesach.

True simchas yom tov requires moderation in eating and drinking, the avoidance of idle chatter and scoffing, and significant time learning Torah (Rambam, Hilchos Yom Tov 6:19). In some cases, as the Chinuch writes, this requires resisting temptations and social pressures. For those expending great sums for hotels and/or travel, the amount of money given before Pesach to feed the poor should increase commensurately.

On Pesach 5778, let us all be mindful of the elevated

status we achieved on Pesach years ago and thereby merit the rebuilt Bais Hamikdash and the renewal of the Korban Pesach.

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If there were cellphones at the Red Sea