

PHILO-TORAH – YOUNG ISRAEL OF AVE. K – M'TZORA/SHABBOS HAGADOL

Philo-Torah (Loving Torah); website – www.philo-torah.co

created by R' Phil Chernofsky of TT fame. Much the same, much to be different.

This Y. I. of Ave. K edition is dedicated in loving memory of ILANA MICHAL b. AMIT YEHUDA, a"h

May HaShem protect our soldiers and the hostages; may He send Refu'ah Sh'leima to the many injured; may He console the bereaved families and all of Israel, and may He end this war with success for us and peace.

RAV RALBAG'S SHABBOS HAGADOL DRASHA – THIS SHABBOS – 7:20pm

SHABBOS MORNING PARASHA SHIUR CONTINUES AT 8:30am - Mr. Norman Sanders

ON MONDAY AND WEDNESDAY MORNINGS, 8am NY TIME (3pm Israel time), YOU CAN "ZOOM" INTO A PARASHA SHIUR GIVEN BY R' PHIL CHERNOFSKY, EDITOR OF THESE WEEKLY PHILO-TORAH DIVREI TORAH

Email the shul at yiofavek@gmail.com and we'll send you the link to the shiur

FRIDAY PLAG MINYAN/KABBALAS SHABBOS CONTINUES THIS FRIDAY – 5:56pm

Candlelighting – 7:21pm BUT NOT BEFORE 6:16pm

EARLY MINCHA – 1:45pm; Friday Plag minyan – 5:56pm; Friday z'man minyan – 7:26pm

THIS SHABBOS – Two minyanim for Shabbos afternoon Mincha – 1:45pm, 7:00pm ALWAYS CHECK ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR CHANGES

SHABBOS MORNING MINYANIM

Shabbos Shacharis – Shocheyn Ad – 5:55am (heineitz – 6:08:54); 7:50am; 9:15am

WEEKDAY SHACHARIS MINYANIM – 5:40am, 7:00am, 7:55am

DAF YOMI ON SHABBOS - BAVA M'TZIYA 52 – 6:00pm

DAF HAYOMI – MORNING AND NIGHT THIS WEEK:

Mornings – Monday through Friday – 6:15am;

Nightly, Sunday through Thursday – 8:30pm

REMEMBER that we have set up conferencing capability for our shiurim. Please call in to hear our wonderful Daf

Yomi Maggidei shiur, Rabbi Moshe Zywica - mornings, and Rabbi Shmuel Sadowsky - evenings

Mornings – Monday THROUGH Friday – 6:15am – (605) 313-5943, ID – 106083#

Nightly, Sunday THROUGH Thursday – 8:30pm – Zoom ID 770 292 6177#, PW – 414019#

Parashas M'tzora

12 Nissan, 5784;

Daf – Bava M'tziya 52

19-20 Apr

These Divrei Torah are dedicated for a z'chus for a refua shleima for Chava Tova Emunah bas Shulamis, Eliyahu Zev b. Breindl, Yona Malka b. Pesil, Aviva Sabra b. Yona Malka, Breina b. Esther, Aharon Yitzchak b. Breina, Chaim Dov b. Minna Rochel, Meir Yakov b. Dina, Moshe Aharon b. Liba Baila, Shlomo Ze'ev b. Faiga, b'soch sh'ar cholei Yisrael

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CAL - Unlike the Four Parshiyot - Sh'kalim, Zachor, Para, HaChodesh - for which a second Sefer Torah was used for the Maftir, on Shabbat HaGadol we have only one Torah (Parshat HaShavua), no second Torah, no special Maftir. We do have a special Haftara. In our day, the

HaGadol haftara is read on all Shabbat HaGadol. However, on the books, there is a dispute - some say to read the special haftara on Shabbat HaGadol except when it is Erev Pesach. Others say to read the special haftara only when Shabbat HaGadol is Erev Pesach. As mentioned above, we always read V'AR'VA LASHEM MINCHAT Y'HUDA VIRUSHALAYIM...

Much More than Commemorating the Exodus – R' Phil Chernosky, Editor

Before we say how much more it is, let's examine the primary and central role that Pesach plays in Judaism.

Pesach marks our Exodus from Egypt - no doubt about that. So does Shabbat and so do all of our Chagim, including Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. We repeatedly say in the davening and kiddush - ZEICHER LIYTZI'AT MITZRAYIM. Many other mitzvot than the Chagim are also tied to remembering the Exodus. We are commanded to remember it every day of our lives. This we fulfill with the last pasuk of the Sh'ma, at least twice every day of the year.

Then, of course, there is the focus of telling the story of the Exodus on the night of the 15th of Nisan, when we have matza and maror lying in front of us. Towards the beginning of the Hagada, we have a Mishna from B'rachot, about reciting the third passage of the Sh'ma at night, in addition to the day, even though Tzitzit is a daytime mitzva. The reason we say it at night too is its reference to the Exodus.

Then come the Chachamim and add that we will mention and remember the Exodus not only 'now' but even in the time of the Mashiach, even after the Geula Sh'leima. This might be a bit puzzling if the events of the Exodus we 'merely' about our redemption from Egypt. Because the Complete redemption will eclipse the events of the Exodus.

So we need to understand and see what the Exodus has for us, besides our transition from slavery to freedom. And the answer is THE BIRTH OF THE JEWISH NATION. That was the purpose of G-d's taking us out of Egypt. He said it to Moshe Rabeinu at the Burning Bush and He sent Moshe to say it in different words to the Jewish people in Egypt.

Becoming a nation is more than Y'tzi'at Mitzrayim. It started with that, sort of, but it is much more. It is coming out from Egypt; it is being taken by G-d to Him as His nation; it is His promise to bring us into Eretz Yisrael. Our becoming a nation includes many components, all of which we at least mention at the Seder. If Pesach were just remembering the Exodus, then only the first three terms of redemption would belong to the Seder night.

But we are celebrating nationhood, so we have a fourth cup of wine to remember V'LAKACHTI - which means the Sinai experience. And we fill a fifth cup to include the Geula Sh'leima in the package deal. Dayeinu says it. Ha Lachma Anya says it. The Geula bracha at the end of Magid says it. L'SHANA HABAA says it.

Package deal. And it is the total package that means that we will be talking about and remembering Y'tzi'at Mitzrayim KOL Y'MEI CHAYEI- NU, ALL the days of our lives. In good times and in bad times. Now and after the final Geula as well. If the broken piece of matza is the symbol of coming out of Egypt and the Afikoman symbolizes the final redemption, then remember that they both come from the same matza.

M'tzora stats - 28th of 54 sedras; 5th of 10 in Vayikra, written on 159 lines - ranks: 40th

6 Parshiyot - 3 open and 3 closed

90 p'sukim, rank 42 (5th in Vayikra)

1274 words, rank 39 (4th in Vayikra)

4697 letters, rank 39 (4th in Vayikra)

M'tzora's p'sukim are longer than average, hence its rise in ranking for words & letters

Mitzvot - 11 mitzvot - all positive (just 5 other sedras have only positive mitzvot: B'reishit (1), Lech L'cha (1), Chukat (3), Pinchas (6), Vayeilech (2) - M'tzora has the most by far)

FYI: Vayishlach, B'shalach, Vayakhel are the only sedras with only mitzvot Lo Taasei - one each.

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary - [P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha. Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI (positive mitzva); L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek and pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya 12 p'sukim - 14:1-12 - [P> 14:1 (20)] The afflictions presented in Tazria are immediately dealt with by the procedures described in M'tzora.

The main theme of M'tzora is the "ritual purification" of the one afflicted with Tzora'at. These procedures constitute a positive mitzva [173, A110 14:2]. Two birds are to be taken, a ceremony is performed with them, one bird is slaughtered, and the other is set free. The person immerses in a mikve, he cleans his garments, and he shaves all the hair on his body [174, A111 14:9]. The rules of ritual immersion in general, come from this context [175, A109 14:9].

LDT The 12th and final chapter of Mishna Chulin deals with the mitzva of Shilu'ach HaKen (the sending away of the mother bird who is on her nest of eggs or fledglings). The final mishna in that chapter deals with the situation when that mitzva might clash with the purification of the M'tzora. What if the only bird available to the M'tzora for his atoning offerings is a mother sparrow hovering over her nest? Do we say the positive mitzva of Taharat HaM'tzora overrides the prohibition of taking the mother bird? This would seem to fit a general rule: a positive commandment overrides a prohibition (Asei docheh lo taasei). Yet this is not the case. Even for a mitzva, and even when the bird will be released alive(!), as is the case of the second of the M'tzora's two birds, one may not violate the Shilu'ach HaKen prohibitions. There are technical reasons based on the wording in the text of the Torah for this. And, Shilu'ach HaKen is not a "simple" prohibition, but involves an attached positive command.

But there might be another concept here. Shilu'ach HaKen is a "show-case" mitzva. It is one of the rare mitzvot for which a reward is specified - Arichat Yamim (lengthening of life, the exact meaning of this is not clear - does it apply to this world or the next or both? - but the reward is expressed). The mitzva defies common logic and reasoning. It contains enigmatic qualities of a CHOK - a Divine imperative, not readily explainable. And its reward is implied for many other mitzvot by reasoning of a Kal VaChomer - if this mitzva is rewarded thusly, then certainly the more difficult mitzvot must carry with them great reward. (Although we are cautioned not to act in order to receive reward, and although we cannot compare one mitzva with another since we "don't know how G-d keeps score", we do have a sense of the truth of the logic expressed by the mishna.) Be that as it may, we can possibly learn that the pursuit of personal improvement may not be at the expense of others, be they human or animal. [Note: this is only food for thought, might not even be "correct" for this issue. One should not generalize to other areas of mitzva.]

BTW, the "rule" mentioned earlier whereby a positive commandment (sometimes) pushes aside a prohibition, does not operate when it is possible to satisfy the command without violating the prohibition. Since there is no requirement to take specifically a mother bird that is hovering over her nest, then the positive commandment of TAHARAT HAM'TZORA cannot override the LO TIKACH HA'EIM AL HABANIM prohibition of Shilu'ach HaKen. Additionally, Shilu'ach HaKen is not a pure prohibition because of the positive command to verily chase away the mother bird - SHALEI'ACH T'SHALACH... But the original point is still something to ponder.

Levi - Second Aliya 8 p'sukim - 14:13-20

The purification process is completed after bringing various korbanot, following a seven day period and the other procedures, as mentioned above [176, A77 14:10].

SDT: Notice how the M'tzora is isolated from others during the time he is ritually unclean. That gives him time to examine himself, his deeds, his thoughts. But as part of the process of purification, as part of the process of having a second chance in the world, he is ministered to by a kohen who becomes the first contact in his renewal procedure. There is a significant psychological factor at work in the area of NEGA'IM.

On another note... Notice the use of the blood of the korbanot as well as the oil that the purifying M'tzora brings. Many of the same things are done to both - sprinkling, dabbing the right earlobe, right thumb and right big toe.

Shlishi - Third Aliya 12 p'sukim - 14:21-32 - [S> 14:21 (12)] A person who cannot afford the animals for the sacrifices, is to bring one sheep and two birds as his offering. The Torah describes the rituals involved in these offerings. It is not important how much the sacrifice is worth on a dollars and cents basis (shekels and agorot), but what is relative to the means of the atoner.

Thus ends the section of the Torah dealing with afflictions to the individual. ZOT TORAT... this is the body of law of one afflicted who cannot afford the full set of korbanot.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya 21 p'sukim - 14:33-53

[P> 14:33 (25)] The Torah next discusses Tzora'at that can afflict a person's house. This can only be in the Land of Israel, in a house made of specific materials, and under specific conditions [177, A103 14:35]. Once again, it is the kohen who makes the determination as to whether Tzora'at does exist, or a professional house painter should be consulted. In the case of a "house plague", there are procedures to be followed and purification processes, including korbanot to be brought.

SDT: Not only does a person's body contain elements of spirituality, but even his home - specifically in Eretz Yisrael. Although we do not "practice" this whole topic today, the lessons of the bridge and connection between the physical world and the spiritual one cannot be overlooked. A person whose home is a meeting place for Torah scholars, a launching pad for acts of charity and kindness, a training ground for a new generation of sensitive, feeling, enthusiastic Jews, such a home cannot be infected by spiritual plague. A home devoid of spirituality is a prime target for Nig'ei HaBayit. In this case, it is not the anti-rust and anti-mold paint that makes the difference. It is the values that a Jew lives by and their effect on the next generation.

It is worthwhile to point out that the manifestation of a NEGA and some kind of rot, mold, fungus, or whatever can be EXACTLY the same. If a kohen sees it and declares ritual impurity, then it is a NEGA HABAYIT. And if he doesn't see it (and doesn't say it!), then it isn't. Even if a non- kohen

expert in the field identifies it as a NEGA. And it is possible that a kohen was about to declare a house TAMEI and he finds out the the homeowner is a CHATAN in his first week of marriage, then he won't make the declaration and there is no TUM'A. It is all "the way a kohen sees it".

Let's contrast this kind of TUM'A to that of TUM'AT MEIT. If a person dies in a tent, let's say, then anyone in the tent becomes TAMEI. Same for objects that are subject to contracting that TUM'A. No one declares them TAMEI. They are automatically TAMEI by virtue of the fact that they were under the same roof as a dead body. But with NEGA HABAYIT, we find different rules. People and personal possessions are removed from the house before the kohein comes in to inspect. When he declares the house TAMEI, then it is and so are certain objects in it. An object that was in the same house minutes before - and nothing physically changed with the house in the meantime - but was removed before the declaration by the kohein, is TAHOR. Maybe we can say that TUM'AT MEIT is objective while the TUM'A of these N'GA'IM is subjective. There's a lot to ponder here.

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GIMATRIYA based on L'ORA SHEL TORA by R. Yaakov Auerbach z"l - Our sources clearly state that the (main) cause of Tzora'at is Lashon HaRa. This idea is beautifully reflected in the following Gimatriya.

The numeric value of NEGA TZORA'AT is 883. The prohibition of gossip and "evil tongue" is LO TEILEICH RACHIL B'AMECHA, "do not be a talebearer". Its numeric value is 883. Punishment for violating the 883-prohibition of Lashon HaRa is the 883-affliction of Tzora'at.

More... The proper way to avoid both the violation and its punishment is with MIDOT TOVOT (good personality traits) = 883.

And if we all can avoid Lashon HaRa and its punishment by developing those good traits, then TIZKU L'GEULA SHLEIMA (you shall merit the Complete Redemption) = 883.

Chamishi 5th Aliya 19 p'sukim - 14:54-15:15

This portion begins with a sum- mary of different types of N'GA'IM.

The smallest p'sukim in the Torah have 3 words each. There are only 13 in the whole Torah. Here in M'tzora are two 3-word p'sukim back-to- back - unique. Is there anything special about these 3-word p'sukim? Perhaps. In some Sidurim there is the list of the 3-word p'sukim (plus some "special" p'sukim from Tanach) in the Motza'ei Shabbat readings (after Z'mirot). It is probably Kabalistic.

[P> 15:1 (15)] Next the Torah speaks of the status of a man with an "unnatural discharge" (probably a form of venereal disease). In such cases, the Torah view matters as a combination of physical symptoms with spiritual causes - in the case of "Zav" and "Zava", most probably attributable to sexual misconduct. (As such, there is a close relationship between the different themes of the sedra. Interesting, is it not, that there are doctors and clinics today that specialize in dermatology and venereal diseases. Interesting combination of specialties in light of this week's sedra.)

The one afflicted is himself "Tamei" as well as causing other people and objects to become "ritually impure" through contact, both direct and indirect [178, A104 15:2]. The one afflicted, must bring special korbanot after a purification process [179,A74 15:13].

Shishi - Sixth Aliya 13 p'sukim - 15:16-28

[S> 15:16 (3)] There is also a "ritual impurity" (of a lesser degree - one-day type) in cases of normal seminal emissions [180, A105 15:17]. A woman who has relations with a man also contracts this one-day Tum'a.

A menstruating woman is "ritually unclean". This is counted as a positive mitzva [181, A99 15:19]; its negative counterpart is in the next sedra.

[P> 15:19 (6)] A woman with an unnatural discharge has a specific set of rules. In the case of a Zava, there are differences in her status depending upon how many sightings of blood there are, and how frequent. These rules and procedures constitute a mitzva [182, A106 15:19].

[S> 15:25 (9)] The longer-term Zava is presented in its own parsha, a S'TUMA that can be seen as a sub-parsha of the previous P'TUCHA that introduced the topic of ZAVA. These rules and procedures constitute a mitzva [182, A106 15:19].

Sh'VII Seventh Aliya 5 p'sukim - 15:29-33

The requirement of the korbanot at the conclusion of the period of impurity constitutes a positive commandment [183, A75 15:29]. The people of Israel have a great potential for attaining spiritual heights. They have an equally great potential for descending to low levels of spiritual impurity.

Generally, when there is a rich man's korban and a poor man's korban for the same situation, if a rich man brings the less expensive version of the korban, he fulfills his obligation, after the fact. Tzora'at is an exception. If a rich man brought a poor man's offering, he has not fulfilled his obligation. The son of the Nodeh B'Yehuda beautifully explained why this is so. One of the causes of Tzora'at is stinginess. Even the term in our Vidui can be seen as a play on words - TZAROT AYIN. If a rich man brings a poor person's korban, in this case it is an indication that he hasn't healed. The korban cannot bring atonement.

The last 3 p'sukim of the sedra (which are reread for Maftir) serve as a summary to the topics of ritual purity and impurity and present the challenge to the Jewish People to rise above mundane physical existence by scrupulously avoiding "impurity".

SDI: Commentaries note that the laws pertaining to human beings (the sedras of Tazria and M'tzora) follow the laws pertaining to animals (Vayikra, Tzav, Shmini). This corresponds to the sequence of creation - animals were created before humans. If a person behaves in an improper manner, he is lower than an animal. And is reminded that "the mosquito preceded him". If however, he behaves properly, keeps the Torah and mitzvot, rises to the challenge of being holy, then he is worthy of having been created in the image of G-d.

Haftara 21+1 p'sukim Mal'achi 3:4-24 - See Word of the Month - p.1

The haftara speaks of faithfulness to Torah and the promise of the coming of Eliyahu HaNavi as the harbinger of the Complete Redemption. That the second, to some extent, depends on the first can be seen in the closeness of the following two phrases: ZICHRU TORAT MOSHE... (remember the Torah, and keep it), and HINEI ANOCHI SHOLEI'ACH LACHEM and if you do, then I will send Eliyahu...

Note: The penultimate (next to the last) pasuk is repeated as the concluding pasuk of the haftara. This is done to end Malachi and Trei-Asar and the Nevi'im portion of Tanach on a positive note. (This is done three other times - end of Yeshayahu, Eicha, and Kohelet.)

Probing the Prophets - Rabbi Nachman Winkler

After studying today's haftarah reading we may realize that it has very little connection to the chag of Pesach – even though the decision of the ancient scholars to have this perek from Sefer Malachi (chp. 3) read on the Shabbat preceding Pesach was due to its proximity to the holiday! Additionally, this reading, as opposed to the previous special pre-Pesach parashot, readings, is NOT ordained by Tanna'im in the Mishna and this Shabbat carries with it no obligation to read a special Maftir. In fact, we do not find the custom of reading this haftarah mentioned in the Talmud at all, with the earliest source found for reading this haftarah, dates back to the 12th century!

So what is this all about? It would seem clear that the Rabbis wished to connect this Shabbat with the Y'mot HaMashi'ach, the final, ultimate redemption, a theme that runs throughout the days of Pesach. The haftarah, therefore, is particularly fitting for that theme of a future redemption, as these are final prophetic words of Mal'achi, the last and latest navi in Tanach. In effect, therefore, what we read this Shabbat is Hashem's last prophetic message to be relayed to the nation. And, were we to begin reading from the first verse of the chapter, we would understand that the prophet speaks of the day when Hashem will send his messenger to harbinger G-d's arrival to judge the people, to purify and refine them in preparation for the Messianic era.

After promising G-d's promise of future economic success and a "rebirth" of the land's productivity, the prophet focuses upon the failure of the nation to worship G-d loyally. Malachi reminds the people of how faithFUL G-d had been to them and how faithLESS they had been to G-d, pointing out that the very survival of the tiny nation was proof of Hashem's love! For that reason, he urges the nation to recognize Hashem's kindnesses and remain faithful to Hashem. In effect, the navi's message connects to Chag HaPesach and Israel's exodus from Egypt. The demand Moshe 'made of Par'oh was to release the people from Egypt so that they could worship their Hashem. This was the ultimatum that brought them their freedom! And yet, bemoans the prophet, the nation had now forgotten their obligation to do just that.

As the Book of Mal'achi closes, the people are given a haunting message, one that we realize, only in hindsight, was meant as a the essential key for their survival in the soon-to-be exile: "Zichru Torat Moshe Avdi...", "Remember the Torah of Moshe my servant, and the laws and statutes which I commanded him." With the eventual destruction of the Bet HaMikdash and the dispersion of the Jewish nation, there would seem to be nothing to keep them surviving as a united nation, a Jewish nation. They would not be remaining in their homeland, nor making pilgrimages to their Beit HaMikdash; there would be no Kohen Gadol and no Melech. For this reason, Malachi reminds the future generations that they indeed DO have something. They will have the Torah – and THAT would be the force that would keep them one and keep them as Jews.

Today, we look back at the truth of these words and realize that, because of our adherence to them, we can now look forward to the final verses of the haftarah, the sefer and the era of prophecy: "Behold I shall send you the prophet Eliyah before the arrival of the great and awesome day of Hashem."

May we all merit to see that day when the Mashiach arrives that, we pray, will take place in the very near future.

From the Desk of Rabbi Moshe Hauer - Jews Stand Together

Klal Yisrael is being attacked and challenged from all sides. Some threaten us physically, others attack our moral standing, yet others try to block us from having the resources to protect ourselves. The world's social justice warriors who could always count on the support and allyship of Jews have

joined forces with those who oppose the Jewish people's right to defend their very existence. The nation that dwells alone would be justified in feeling lonely.

Our emunah, our faith and recognition that Ata imadi, Hashem is with us, is critical to our continued strength. But no less fundamental to our future as a people is the extent to which we are there for each other, standing up proudly and protectively against those who cast at us both aspersions and stones.

Vayigdal Moshe vayeitzei el echav. Moshe first emerged from Pharaoh's palace to concern himself with and connect to the Jewish people (Shemos 2:11). He observed their oppression and was immediately there for them, defending a Jew under attack by subduing his Egyptian attacker. Moshe was nevertheless left wondering and confused as to why specifically his people, Klal Yisrael, deserved to suffer such persecution, until on the very next day he encountered two Jews fighting with each other who respond to Moshe's attempted intervention by turning on him and informing on him to Pharaoh. Here Moshe sadly saw that instead of Jews closing ranks to be there for each other, they were fighting with and turning on each other, leading Moshe to remark, *achein noda hadavar*, "the matter is now known." As our sages rendered this, Moshe now understood that the reason for our unusual suffering was this kind of betrayal (Rashi Shemos 2:14). The key to our fate as a people is the extent to which we are there for each other. Lacking that bond of mutual care and responsibility, we did not deserve freedom.

Moshe would be the one chosen to lead the Jewish nation to freedom because it was he who came out of the safety of the palace to take notice of how individual Jews were suffering and to do his part to stand up for them.

This idea reappears later in the story (Shemos 5:23), when Moshe - after having been charged by G-d to go to Pharaoh to seek freedom for the Jewish people - saw things go from bad to worse. Why would Hashem send him on a mission of redemption that produced failure instead of success? Why did it have to get worse before it got better? "Why have you harmed this people? Why did you send me?!"

While Moshe was correct that his request made the bondage worse, it also made the Jewish people better, moving them to rise to the challenge and stand up for each other.

In response to Moshe's plea for relief, Pharaoh chose instead to double down and stopped giving straw to the Jewish people to make the bricks while maintaining the same production quotas. As the Torah records (Shemos 5:14), there were Jewish officers accountable to the Egyptians whose job it was to ensure that the quotas were met who at this point refused to squeeze any more out of their fellow Jews. Instead, they chose to absorb the blows of the Egyptians and protect their brothers from being unjustly punished (see Rashi to Bamidbar 11:16). After seeing from Moshe's "failed mission" that Pharaoh would not be there for the Jews, these officers realized that the Jews would only find support from each other. Now, instead of a Jew turning on another Jew, they stood up for and protected each other.

"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a mighty hand he will send them out and with a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land.'" (Shemos 6:1) Once Hashem sees us standing up for each other, He is ready to redeem us. *Achein noda hadavar*. Here again, the key to our fate as a people is the extent to which we are there for each other.

The Haggadah refers to the wicked son who removes himself from the community by speaking as an outsider about the Jewish people's behaviors and experiences. As Rambam wrote (Hilchos Teshuva 3:11):

A person who separates himself from the community even though he has not transgressed any sins... who separates himself from the congregation of Israel and does not fulfill mitzvot together with them, does not take part in their hardships, or join in their communal fasts, but rather goes on his own individual path as if he is from another nation, does not have a portion in the world to come.

At this treacherous time, our identification with each other and our standing up for each other is most needed, but it is also most telling. Let us not – as the metzorah – park ourselves outside the machaneh of Jewish community and experience by speaking negatively of each other in any forum. Let us both privately and publicly speak proudly and protectively of every individual Jew and of our precious nation and then be privileged to merit geulah.

The Person in the Parsha - The Great, But Not Yet Holy, Sabbath - Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersch Weinreb

There are many steps that we ascend on our journey towards the holiday of Passover. It is as if it is impossible to just plunge into the holiday without proper preparation. These steps include the many special Sabbaths that precede the holiday. They include the Parshiyot of Shekalim, Zachor, Parah, and HaChodesh, and they culminate this week with Shabbat HaGadol, the Great Sabbath, the final Sabbath before Passover.

I fondly remember the wise old rabbi whose little shul I frequented before I became a shul rabbi myself, back in Baltimore. His name was Rav Yitzchok Sternhell, may he rest in peace. He had many astute observations, only a few of which I recall.

In one of these insights, he pointed out that when one has a question about some aspect of Torah study and finds a single answer, then, essentially, there is no longer a question. It is answered, plainly and simply, once and for all.

But when one has a question and there are many answers, then the question remains as strong as when it was posed. There is no need for many answers when there is one correct answer. The multitude of answers indicates that not one of them was sufficient enough to completely resolve the question posed.

One question that has received many answers over the centuries is, "Why is this Sabbath called the Great Sabbath, Shabbat HaGadol?" One answer points to the closing phrase of this week's selection from the Prophets, the Haftarah, which reads:

"Behold, I will send you
Elijah the Prophet
Before the coming
Of the great and awesome day of the Lord." (Malachi 3:24)
Since we read of the "the great day," we call it "the Great Sabbath."

Another approach emphasizes that on the Sabbath preceding the Exodus, the Jews were finally able to prepare lambs and goats for the paschal offering. They did so in the face of their Egyptian slave masters, for whom those animals were considered divine. To be able to fearlessly defy their former slave masters was a "great miracle." Hence the term "the Great Sabbath."

The list of answers goes on, and space does not allow even a small sample of the others. But I would like to share with you, dear reader, a very creative approach to the term “the Great Sabbath.” This approach is creative because, contrary to all the other interpretations with which I am familiar, this approach sees this week’s Sabbath not as greater than all the others of the year, but as lesser.

The creative commentator to whom I refer is the Chassidic Rebbe, Rabbi Shaul of Modzitz, may he rest in peace. He was known for his prodigious repertoire of musical compositions. The musical creativity of Rabbi Shaul was expressed in his ability to surprise the ear of the listener. His homiletic creativity also contains the element of surprise, of divergent thinking. Using this same divergent thinking, he held a very unique and thought-provoking approach to the Passover Haggadah.

Most of the reasons that are given for the fact that this week’s Sabbath is called the Great Sabbath insist upon the superiority of this particular Sabbath over all the others of the year. Rabbi Shaul diverges from all these other explanations and provocatively suggests that this week’s Sabbath is inferior to all the others.

Therein he asks the question, “Why do we praise this Sabbath as ‘great?’ Is every Sabbath not ‘great?’ In the special blessing that we incorporate in the Grace After Meals, the Birkat HaMazon, every Sabbath, we refer to ‘this great and holy Sabbath... this day which is great and holy before Thee...’”

His surprising answer is that every Sabbath of the year is both “great and holy,” but this final Sabbath before Passover is, in a certain sense, merely “great” and not “holy.”

For every Sabbath, argues Rabbi Shaul, has two components. We might refer to them as the physical component and the spiritual component. The former is built in to the cosmos and can be traced back to the verses in Genesis 2:3. There, God blesses and hallows the Sabbath as part of the process of creation. That is the Sabbath of the physical rest and gives recognition to God’s creative powers and omnipotence. It is “holy,” but only potentially so.

The second aspect of the Sabbath is a spiritual one; “zecher l’yetziat Mizrayim,” a memorial day celebrating the Exodus from Egypt. This has to do with the experience of freedom, of becoming a nation, of undertaking an historical mission.

On this last Sabbath before Passover, the Exodus had not yet taken place. And so, the Sabbath was merely “gadol,” “great.” On that Sabbath, the Jew could only celebrate his freedom from utter bondage and his ability to defy his former slave master. That was “great,” but not yet “holy.” He did not yet have a sense of spiritual freedom and religious destiny.

Only after the first day of Passover, with the actual departure from Egypt, and the march into the desert and towards Mount Sinai, could the Jews begin to sense that something “holy” was in store for them. Only then could they begin to anticipate not just “great” freedom, but “holy” freedom, in order to sense that something spiritual and “holy” was in store.

After that first Passover day, and with every ensuing Sabbath since, the Jewish people experienced not just “a great Sabbath,” but a “great and holy Sabbath.”

Sabbath prior to Passover is “great,” but not yet fully “holy.” After Passover, every Sabbath is transformed and is not only “great,” but “great and holy.” Passover and all that it symbolizes adds a new dimension to every Sabbath that follows it.

This week, then, we remember a Sabbath long ago that was the last of the merely “great” Sabbaths: A Sabbath only of respite from slavish toil, of relief from physical slavery. Next week, after we tell the full narrative of the Exodus and experience all of the Seder night’s rich symbolism and profound lessons, we will be able to celebrate a complete Sabbath, a Sabbath of spiritual freedom and full religious significance. Not just “Shabbat HaGadol,” but “Shabbat HaGadol VeHaKadosh.”

Covenant & Conversation - Is There Such A Thing As Lashon Tov? - Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks
zt"l

The Sages understood tsara’at, the theme of this week’s parsha, not as an illness but as a miraculous public exposure of the sin of lashon hara, speaking badly about people. Judaism is a sustained meditation on the power of words to heal or harm, mend or destroy. Just as God created the world with words, He empowered us to create, and destroy, relationships with words.

The rabbis said much about lashon hara, but virtually nothing about the corollary, lashon tov, “good speech”. The phrase does not appear in either the Babylonian Talmud or the Talmud Yerushalmi. It figures only in two midrashic passages (where it refers to praising God). But lashon hara does not mean speaking badly about God. It means speaking badly about human beings. If it is a sin to speak badly about people, is it a mitzvah to speak well about them? My argument will be that it is, and to show this, let us take a journey through the sources.

In Mishnah Avot we read the following: Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai had five (pre-eminent) disciples, namely Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, Rabbi Joshua ben Chananya, Rabbi Yose the Priest, Rabbi Shimon ben Netanel, and Rabbi Elazar ben Arach.

He used to recount their praise: Eliezer ben Hyrcanus: a plastered well that never loses a drop. Joshua ben Chananya: happy the one who gave him birth. Yose the Priest: a pious man. Shimon ben Netanel: a man who fears sin. Elazar ben Arach: an ever-flowing spring. Ethics of the Fathers 2:10-11

However, the practice of Rabban Yochanan in praising his disciples seems to stand in contradiction to a Talmudic principle: Rav Dimi, brother of Rav Safra said: Let no one ever talk in praise of his neighbour, for praise will lead to criticism. Arachin 16a

Rashi gives two explanations of this statement. Having delivered excessive praise [yoter midai], the speaker himself will come to qualify his remarks, admitting for the sake of balance that the person of whom he speaks also has faults. Alternatively, others will point out his faults in response to the praise. For Rashi, the crucial consideration is, is the praise judicious, accurate, true, or it is overstated? If the former, it is permitted; if the latter, it is forbidden. Evidently Rabban Yochanan was careful not to exaggerate.

Rambam, however, sees matters differently. He writes: “Whoever speaks well about his neighbour in the presence of his enemies is guilty of a secondary form of evil speech [avak lashon hara], since he will provoke them to speak badly about him” (Hilchot Deot 7:4). According to the Rambam the issue is not whether the praise is moderate or excessive, but the context in which it is delivered. If it is done in the presence of friends of the person about whom you are speaking, it is permitted. It is

forbidden only when you are among his enemies and detractors. Praise then becomes a provocation, with bad consequences.

Are these merely two opinions, or is there something deeper at stake? There is a famous passage in the Talmud which discusses how one should sing the praises of a bride at her wedding:

Our Rabbis taught: How should you dance before the bride [i.e. what should one sing]?

The disciples of Hillel hold that at a wedding you should sing that the bride is beautiful, whether she is or not. Shammai's disciples disagree. Whatever the occasion, don't tell a lie. "Do you call that a lie?" the Hillel's disciples respond. "In the eyes of the groom at least, the bride is beautiful."

What's really at stake here is not just temperament – puritanical Shammaites versus good-natured Hillelites – but two views about the nature of language. The Shammaites think of language as a way of making statements, which are either true or false. The Hillelites understand that language is about more than making statements. We can use language to encourage, empathise, motivate, and inspire. Or we can use it to discourage, disparage, criticise, and depress. Language does more than convey information. It conveys emotion. It creates or disrupts a mood. The sensitive use of speech involves social and emotional intelligence. Language, in J. L. Austin's famous account can be performative as well as informative.

The discourse between the disciples of Hillel and Shammai is similar to the argument between Rambam and Rashi. For Rashi, as for Shammai, the key question about praise is: is it true, or is it excessive? For Rambam as for Hillel, the question is: what is the context? Is it being said among enemies or friends? Will it create warmth and esteem or envy and resentment?

We can go one further, for the disagreement between Rashi and Rambam about praise may be related to a more fundamental disagreement about the nature of the command, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). Rashi interprets the command to mean: do not do to your neighbour what you would not wish him to do to you (Rashi to Sanhedrin 84b). Rambam, however, says that the command includes the duty "to speak in his praise" (Hilchot Deot 6:3). Rashi evidently sees praise of one's neighbour as optional, while Rambam sees it as falling within the command of love.

We can now answer a question we should have asked at the outset about the Mishnah in Avot that speaks of Yochanan ben Zakkai's disciples. Avot is about ethics, not about history or biography. Why then does it tell us that Rabban Yochanan had disciples? That, surely, is a fact not a value, a piece of information not a guide to how to live.

However, we can now see that the Mishnah is telling us something profound indeed. The very first statement in Avot includes the principle: "Raise up many disciples." But how do you create disciples? How do you inspire people to become what they could become, to reach the full measure of their potential? Answer: By acting as did Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai when he praised his students, showing them their specific strengths.

He did not flatter them. He guided them to see their distinctive talents. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, the "well that never loses a drop", was not creative but he had a remarkable memory – not unimportant in the days before the Oral Torah was written in books. Elazar ben Arach, the "ever-flowing spring," was creative, but needed to be fed by mountain waters (years later he separated from his colleagues and it is said that he forgot all he had learned).

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai took a Hillel-Rambam view of praise. He used it not so much to describe as to motivate. And that is lashon tov. Evil speech diminishes us, good speech helps us grow. Evil speech puts people down, good speech lifts them up. Focused, targeted praise, informed by considered judgment of individual strengths, and sustained by faith in people and their potentiality, is what makes teachers great and their disciples greater than they would otherwise have been. That is what we learn from Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai.

So there is such a thing as lashon tov. According to Rambam it falls within the command of “Love your neighbour as yourself.” According to Avot it is one way of “raising up many disciples.” It is as creative as lashon hara is destructive.

Seeing the good in people and telling them so is a way of helping it become real, becoming a midwife to their personal growth. If so, then not only must we praise God. We must praise people too.

METZORA – Rabbi Berel Wein

This week's parsha is truly one of the most difficult subjects for people in our time to contemplate, understand or from which to gain knowledge and inspiration. The entire subject of these mysterious diseases, which manifested themselves on the human body, in clothing and even in houses and buildings is technically discussed in the Mishna and also in various places in the Talmud itself. However, the fact that the subject is discussed does not really reveal the underlying pathology of these diseases nor does it help explain it to us in a purely rational fashion.

We are all aware that the Talmud connects the disease to the sin of slandering others and improper speech. Nevertheless, the mystery of the cause, diagnosis and cure for the condition remains a troubling and hidden matter. It is beyond my ability to add any new insights into this age-old discussion by the great scholars of Israel. I think, though, that we simply have to accept that there are physical diseases that manifest themselves because of spiritual failings, whatever those failings may be and however they are interpreted.

We are all aware that there are psychosomatic diseases that can and often do become actually physical. Medical science has not yet been able to determine why such phenomena occur. Well, just as there are, so to speak, mentally caused diseases, the Torah informs us that there are also spiritually caused diseases that actually affect one's body, clothing and even one's home. There are many events and occurrences in life, both personal and national, that defy logic or any form of human understanding.

The Torah does indicate to us the areas of our lives where our human vulnerabilities exist and are apparent. Certainly our bodies, our health, our appearance and our general physical well-being rank as some of the most vulnerable of all human conditions. Our bodies are so delicately formed and perfectly balanced that even the slightest malfunction of any of its parts immediately causes pain and requires our attention.

The Torah expands this idea to include spiritual imbalances and shortcomings. We are usually never conscious of these matters and if, in fact, they are pointed out to us by others, the usual reaction is one of resentment. So, through the mechanism of physical symptoms as described in this week's parsha, the Torah reminds us that we need to examine and purify ourselves spiritually and not merely physically.

Our bodies, our clothing, even our dwelling places require inspection and sanctification. Even though the physical manifestations of these shortcomings are no longer apparent in our time, the underlying lesson is still present in all of our actions and attitudes.

The realization that we can be woefully deficient in behavior, unless we are constantly monitoring our relationship to our unique value system, is essential for living a truly Jewish and observant life. We are responsible for discerning those weaknesses within us even if they are not physically apparent. Perhaps this is the message to us from this week's parsha. Shabbat shalom, Rabbi Berel Wein

Shabbat HaGadol

The date of the first Shabbat HaGadol was 10 Nissan 2448. The Jews in Egypt were commanded - not a mitzva for the generations, but rather a one-time command - to take a lamb (or young goat) into their homes on the 10th of Nissan, four days before they were to slaughter it as the Korban Pesach. (In all subsequent years - in perpetuity - one may acquire his KP anytime, but in practice, people did designate the lamb or goat as early as the 10th of Nissan, so it could be properly inspected for blemishes for the four days before its being brought to the Mizbei'ach. But it was required to take the animal on the 10th, only during that first, original Nissan.) The Midrash tells us of the unusual miracle that occurred on the original Shabbat HaGadol. The Egyptians asked the Jews what they were doing with the lambs. When the Jews told them that they were going to sacrifice them to G-d, the Egyptians would have been expected to react with outrage and anger at the "desecration" of their deity. But they didn't. They took the news calmly. This is considered one of the miracles of the whole Exodus experience, in addition to other miracles of that Shabbat day; this led to identify the day for all generations as: Shabbat HaGadol.

Since the people of Israel entered into the realm of mitzvot by fulfilling the command to take the KP into their homes, they changed their status from KATAN to GADOL, much like a Bar/Bat Mitzva boy or girl does when he/she receives upon his/her shoulders the yoke of mitzvot. Hence, Shabbat HaGadol.

Even after Moshe got Shabbat from Par'o for the people as a day of rest, when Shabbat ended, it saw the Jews back into slavery and oppression. Not so the Shabbat prior to the Exodus. That was truly a Shabbat HaGadol.

The Torah calls the first day of Pesach Shabbat (because of the forbidden activities on Yom Tov, it qualifies to be called Shabbat, a day of rest), as in, "on the morrow of the Shabbat you shall begin counting." The Tz'dokim claimed that Shabbat refers only to Shabbat B'reishit (i.e. Saturday). Traditional Judaism claims that there is a "minor" or small Shabbat (Yom Tov) in contrast with Shabbat HaGadol, when all 39 Melachot are prohibited. It is the Shabbat right before the Yom Tov day in question that got the name Shabbat HaGadol - because of its closeness to the first day of Pesach, the contrast between the two Shabbats is highlighted.

Of course, the famous pasuk in the Haftara, telling us that G-d will send Eliya(hu) HaNavi before the coming of G-d's Day, the great (haGadol) and terrifying one. (Best reason why we don't call the day Shabbat HaGedola.)

Some say that the long Drashot on this pre-Pesach Shabbat, that sometimes continue into the night, serve to lengthen the day into a Shabbat HaGadol.

Until this pre-Exodus Shabbat, Shabbat only possessed the aspect of acknowledging G-d for His Creation of the world. With the preparation for Korban Pesach and for leaving Mitzrayim, Shabbat took on the extra dimension of commemorating the Egyptian experience and the Exodus. Shabbat increased in significance and scope and became then a Shabbat HaGadol.

And here's a riddle you can pose to your family and guests at the Shabbat HaGadol table. Ask them which Shabbat of the year is called Shabbat HaGadol. If they answer, "Today", tell them they are only partially correct.

The answer is - EVERY SHABBAT OF THE YEAR. We say it in the R'TZEI passage of Birkat HaMazon: ...UVMITZVAT YOM HASH'VI'I HAGADOL V'HAKADOSH HAZEH... Then we continue to say the reason we called it GADOL and KADOSH - KI YOM ZEH GADOL V'KADOSH HU L'FANECHA... because it is for You, a great and holy day.

Here's a 'cute' gimatriya for Shabbat HaGadol:

Shabbat Hagadol = $300+2+400 (702) + 5+3+4+6+30 (48) = 750$. And who gives the special drasha on Shabbat HaGadol? A DARSHAN M'TZUYAN, and expert speaker - $4+200+300+50 (554) + 40+90+6 +10+50 (196) = 750$.

A Short Vort - Rabbi Chanoch Yeres

ליל שמרים הוא לה' להוציאם מארץ מצרים הוא הלילה הזה לה' שמרים לכל בני ישראל) יב:מב)

“It was a night of watching for G-d to bring them out of Egypt. This same night is a night of watching for G-d for all of the children of Israel.” (Shemot 12:42)

Rabbi Eliezer Dessler (Michtav M'Eliyahu) asked why is this phrase of a “night of watching” used, not only once but twice?

Rashi explains this phrase as a night of anticipation, for G-d to fulfill His promise of Exodus for the Israelites.

The Midrash Yalkut Shimoni (Shemot 210) relates this to a double redemption- a redemption for the Israelites and a redemption for G-d. That is why the word “watching” is in the plural form “Shemurim”. When we are in exile, so is G-d, with us.

Another explanation is that this night is and will be a night of future redemptions, like by the deliverance of King Chizkiyahu from the hands of Sancherev's army, Doniel from the lion's den and the future arrival of the Mashiach, on this night for all generations.

Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575) stated in his Shulchan Aruch (Pesach 481) that one need not recite the whole Shema on this night because it is deemed a “night of watching” by G-d against all threats and attacks. Shabbat Shalom V'Chag Sameach

Thoughts on Hallel - Rabbi Shalom Rosner

We recite Hallel throughout Pesach. Hallel is even included in the Haggada and recited at the Seder. We will share several ideas on Hallel (see also Shalom Rav Haggada, published by Koren).

A Break in the Action? - The Hallel that is recited at the Seder is a bit strange. First, we interrupt the recitation of Hallel and break for a meal. Second, we do not recite a bracha over Hallel. Perhaps we can explain this phenomenon based on a suggestion by Rav Hai Gaon, quoted in the Ran at the end

of Massechet Pesachim. He explains that this Hallel is classified as song, as shira, rather than as a reading, a kriya. What does Rav Hai Gaon mean by this?

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik explains that after spending two hours discussing the exile and Exodus, we should truly feel an outburst of emotion, the desire for spontaneous praise.

Thus, if we were to recite a beracha, it would diminish the authenticity of our passion. We are praising God at this time because we want to, not because we are commanded. That is why we can interrupt our outpouring of praise, and that is also why we do not recite a blessing over this praise. To do so would dilute its personal authenticity and spontaneity.

Shira Chadasha - When we recite Hallel at the Seder, we introduce it with the words, venomar lefanav shira chadasha, we will sing a new song before You. With that introduction, one would expect to use new and different words that are uttered only at the Seder. Yet we then reiterate the same Hallel that we recite on holidays and on Rosh Chodesh. So why do we refer to it as a new song, a shira chadasha?

Rabbi Lamm (The Royal Table) explains that in Judaism, we take the old and instill it with vigor and newness. The same religion that has been practiced for centuries does not go out of vogue. It crosses the chasm of time.

It is amazing how each year we once again read the same Torah, and yet we uncover new insights on each parsha. When we recite Hallel at the Seder, it may be the same words that have been sung over thousands of years, but it is not outdated. Its words are applicable today and express our appreciation to the Almighty. Hallel and Judaism maintain their freshness throughout the generations.

Hallelu Et Hashem Kol Goyim - A priest once asked Rav Chaim of Volozhin a question regarding a pasuk in Tehillim that we recite in Hallel. It says in Tehillim (117), Hallelu et Hashem kol goyim, shabehuhu kol ha'umim, all the nations of the world will praise God. Why? Ki gavar aleinu hasdo, because God showered us Jews with compassion. The priest did not comprehend why gentiles would praise God for showing compassion to the Jews.

Rav Chaim Volozhin explained to the priest that we are not cognizant of all the evil schemes that you plotted against us. Only you know exactly what you have planned for us, and Hashem acts to protect us. That is to say, you may plan to blow up a bridge and destroy a caravan of Jews, but Hashem causes your explosive device to jam, and the Jewish caravan is saved. Only you are aware of this compassionate act of the Almighty, and therefore, only you can praise Him for His chesed toward us.

Even in those generations where there appears to be tranquility, the other nations either plot unsuccessfully against us or seek to annihilate us not through physical means, but by doing all they can to degrade us spiritually. They recognize how God protects us even when it is not apparent to us.

Ana Hashem Ki Ani Avdecha - A story is told that the Lev Simha, one of the Gerer Rebbeim, told his chasidim to have special kavana when reciting the words ana Hashem during Hallel. There was an argument among the chasidim as to whether the Rebbe was referring to ana Hashem hoshia na, or ana Hashem hatzlicha na. The Rebbe's son approached Rav Simha to resolve the debate among the chasidim.

The Rebbe responded that it was neither. He was referring to ana Hashem ki ani avdecha, please Hashem, for I am your servant. This is the key to being a Jew: understanding that we are here to serve Hashem. Seder night in particular, we should state this verse with special concentration, special kavana, as we are proclaiming that we went from being servants of Pharaoh to being avdei Hashem!

Ana Hashem Hoshia Na - As we recite Hallel and feel like we are on top of the world, it seems a bit strange that we are also asking for a yeshua, for salvation. Similarly, on Sukkot, we perform Hoshanot at a time of tremendous celebration. We cry out hoshia na! It would seem more appropriate to conduct Hoshanot on Rosh Hashana or Yom Kippur, rather than on Sukkot which is zman simchatenu.

The Shemen Hatov explains that calling out to Hashem should not be limited to an eit tzara, to challenging times. We should turn to Hashem even at times of celebration, during Hallel and on Sukkot, expressing that we know Hashem is in charge, no matter what we are experiencing.

In addition, twice in Tanakh the statement yehei shem Hashem mevorach appears. Once in Tehillim (113:2) which is cited in Hallel and the other at the beginning of Iyov (1:21) when it states Hashem natan veHashem lakach, yehei shem Hashem mevorach. Thus, we recognize and turn to Hashem in times of difficulty, as well as in times of celebration.

Existential Egg - Rebbetzin Shira Smiles

The egg sits comfortably on the upper left side of the Seder plate, a representation of the korban Chagigah, the festival sacrifice offered in the days of the Temple. It carries deep symbolism and conveys a significant message to us on the elevated evening of the Pesach Seder.

In his commentary on the Haggadah, Rav Pincus discusses the profound meaning of the elements found on the Seder plate. He explains that each element reflects different sfirot; the shank bone on the upper right side represents chesed, expansiveness and spirituality, expressed through the korban Pesach. The egg, on the upper left side, represents gevurah, containment and limitation. The egg's round shape expresses the idea that everything physical is inherently restricted by its form. The meat of the korban Chagigah was eaten, representing Man's physical nature. Perhaps then, the egg reminds us of the constraints of our physical world, and that infinite, boundless love and kindness really only exist in the spiritual dimension.

Rav Salomon zt"l, (Matnat Chayim), contemplates the symbolism of the karpas eaten at the beginning of the Seder. He sees it as a reminder of how Am Yisrael landed in Egypt. The Torah calls Yosef's special coat a ketonet passim, which Rashi (Shemot 37:3), translates as karpas, a fabric made of fine, soft wool. The Egyptian exile began with the brothers convincing Yaakov Avinu that Yosef had been devoured by a wild animal with dipping Yosef's coat into blood. The Exodus from Egypt commenced with a second dipping of blood, that of the hyssop into the blood of the korban Pesach. It is the egg, says Rav Salomon, that intimates the secret of Redemption, unity and connection with one another. It is no coincidence that each year both Seder night and the eve of Tisha B'Av fall out on the same day of the week. If we wish to avoid dipping an egg into ashes to commemorate the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, we must develop ahavat chinam, love for our brothers and sisters, to merit Geulah.

At the Seder we not only remember the past, but we also yearn for a more complete future. Indeed, each of us can experience a personal redemption on this night. In a fascinating commentary, Targum Yonatan teaches that on the original night of Pesach in Mitzrayim, the Jews were transported on

eagle's wings to Har Habayit, the site of the holy Temple, to eat the korban Pesach and were delivered back to Mitzrayim that same night. Rav Wolfson maintains that this happens to all of us on Seder night. We too, in a sense, are transported to eat the afikoman in the makom haMikdash. He notes that although our bodies may not feel this happening, our souls do. We are profoundly affected by the holiness of this night and, in the deepest part of ourselves, we become transformed.

Rav Laibele Eiger zt"l quotes the Ishbitzer Rebbe, of blessed memory, who teaches that this is the egg's message. One cannot tell whether an egg is fertilized or not simply by looking at it from the outside. Only with time can he see this when it hatches. Likewise, we may not see any difference in ourselves after Seder night, however over time, throughout Sefirat Haomer, we will be able to notice the contrast.

Our simple egg therefore represents the past, marked by divisiveness in a powerful way. Yet it also reminds us how we can choose to change and be part of the redemptive process as we journey toward an expanded future. Let us take the lessons of galut and use them to propel us into a magnificent geulah when we will once again eat the festive chagigah offering as a united people in G-d's rightful home.

Simchat Shmuel - Rabbi Sam Shor

Perhaps my earliest memory of our family's annual Pesach Sedarim, was the daunting moment when I was called upon to recite for the first time, the Ma Nishtana, the segment of the Haggadah text commonly referred to as the "Four Questions." This year (More than 40 years since my personal four questions debut), I look forward to once again hearing those very same words from my adorable nine year old daughter .

What exactly is the origin of the custom for the youngest child who is capable of reciting this section of the Haggadah? Might there be a specific educational and pedagogic rationale for this long standing tradition?

The Mishna in Pesachim (116 A), introduces the basic premise for our familiar custom: "Mozgo lo kos sheini, v'kaan haben shoel Aviv. V'im ein daat b'ven, Aviv melamdo-'ma nishtana halaila hazeh, mikol haleilot... 'ulefi daato shel ben, Aviv melamdo..."

"A second cup of wine is poured and the child should then inquire of his father (the reasons for the Seder ritual). If the child is intellectually incapable of doing this, the father is bound to instruct him as follows: 'What differentiates this night from all other nights...?' A father should instruct the child in accordance with his capacity to understand..."

It seems from this teaching that upon pouring the second of the four cups of wine, a child should ask regarding the purpose of the many aspects of the Seder. If the child is not intellectually capable to ask those questions then his father should demonstrate for him, meaning he should recite the Ma Nishtana text to instruct his child in the proper Seder protocol, and should in general begin to cultivate the curiosity of the child, and engage the child in a manner that is consistent with his capacity to understand.

Our Chazal explain this teaching further: Tanu Rabanan: Chacham beno, shoelu, v'im eno chacham, ishto shoeloto. V'im lav, hu shoel l'atzmo, v'afilu shnei talmidei chachamim, sheyodiin b'hilchot haPesach shoelin zeh lazeh..."

“The rabbis taught: One whose child is intellectually capable, should be asked by his child; if the child is not capable, the wife should inquire, and if the wife is not capable, he himself should ask those questions; and even if two scholars who are well versed in the laws of the Pesach should sit together at the Pesach-meal, one should ask the other the above questions...”

The Sages introduce a new wrinkle to this entire teaching. Ideally we should be asked by our children, but if no child present is capable of asking, or if there is no child present, then the adults should still ask these questions of each other!

Perhaps, then there is an important educational idea being introduced through this teaching. Even if no child is present, we as adults still must ask these questions, to reiterate the value of verbalizing a question, of articulating our intellectual curiosity. One cannot truly grow intellectually if he/she does not have the capacity to seek, inquire and probe, to look for answers and understanding. The mechanism of the question is perhaps the most vital and fundamental of pedagogical tools.

The Rambam also addresses this Talmudic teaching in two entries in his Hilchot Chametz UMatza. In Chapter 7 (the third entry): “V’tzarich laasot shinui balayla hazeh, kidei sherau habanim, veyishaalu, v’yamru ‘Ma nishtana halayla hazeh mikol haleilot’...”

“It is necessary to make changes on this night (the many rituals which are unique to the Seder evening), in order that the children will notice these differences, and ask saying: ‘What differentiates this night from all other nights?’...”

In Chapter 8 (the second entry), we read a slightly different scenario concerning these four questions: “...umozgin hakos hasheini, v’kaan haben shoeil, v’omeir haKorei: ‘Ma Nishtana halaila hazeh mikol halailot...’” “And you should pour the second cup of wine, and here the child asks. And the Reader (the one leading the Seder-) says: ‘What differentiates this night from all other nights?’...”

In our first entry from Chapter 7, the Rambam explains that all the symbolic food and actions of the Seder are meant to peak the child’s curiosity so that he will notice and ask the familiar questions, while in Chapter 8, seems to contradict himself, suggesting that once the second cup is poured, the children ask whatever questions they wish, and then the person leading the Seder states our familiar questions.

This of course leaves us to ask, which is it? Does the child ask or does the leader ask? How are we to understand this apparent contradiction?

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook zy’a explained that really this entire section of the Ma Nishtana, is meant for the Sheayno Yodea LiShole- the child who does not know how to ask, the child who does not yet understand the value in asking questions. For the other children they see all that is going on in the ritual of the Seder, in the symbolic foods, in the discussion, and they are naturally inclined to ask, but sometimes there is the child who does not yet know how to formulate a question, so as the haggadah text tells us ‘at ptach lo...’ we give him the script- begin the process for him, teach him how to ask questions.

Perhaps though there is something more profound in the words of the Rambam, beyond Rav Kook’s suggested interpretation. Perhaps, the Rambam is teaching us in Chapter 7, make all these changes on this night-create a laboratory-to encourage and cultivate our children’s innate curiosity.

However, sometimes that innate curiosity, if not properly channeled can lead to inappropriate queries and mischief. In Chapter 8, the Rambam teaches us that sometimes we need to not only encourage the precocious nature of each and every child, but sometimes we need to acknowledge and harness that inquisitiveness by demonstrating how to ask the right questions, how to properly apply that curiosity for pursuit of timely and appropriate knowledge.

Our Chazal introduced to us that the goal of this evening is to encourage our children to ask questions. The Sages of the Talmud explain that even if no child is present and the adults ask each other these questions, the Seder serves an incredible educational experience. Yes, adults should teach children the intrinsic value of asking questions; but on the Seder night, even adults sitting together with no children present become re-acquainted with the most fundamental, yet powerful tools for growth, the capacity to ask an articulate question, to seek an answer to that which seems strange, confusing, or challenging.

Pesach is referred to as zman cheiruteinu, the Festival of our Freedom. The cheirut (freedom) which we commemorate each and every Pesach is so much more than freedom from the physical servitude of ancient Egypt. Cheirut, true spiritual freedom is the capacity to learn, probe and grow, to cultivate the penchant for knowledge and identity which is innate within each of us. True cheirut, is the capacity to seek the answers to life's challenges and questions, so that ultimately each of us may become who we are destined to be!

May those familiar questions which we'll recite and reply to in just a few days, inspire within each of us the capacity to continually thirst for answers, to continually probe, to continually seek to become exactly who each of us was meant to be. Chag Kasher V'Sameach.

Geulas Yisrael - Pesach: Will Geulah Be Selective Or Inclusive? - Rabbi Moshe Taragin

Aside from everything else, Yetziat Mitzrayim was a logistical miracle. Approximately 3.5 million newly liberated Jewish slaves were joined by a large faction of "eirev rav" Egyptians, which some accounts put as high as another 3.5 million people. Essentially, 7 million people had to be assembled, transported and fed. Only blind faith in Hashem could convince us to follow Him into an arid and dangerous desert. Hashem never forgot our innocent and youthful faith: זכרתי לך חסד נעורייך לכתך אחרי במדבר בארץ לא זרועה

These staggering numbers could have been much larger. A well-known Midrash asserts that only 20% of the Jewish population left Egypt. The Torah describes our triumphant departure from Egypt with an intriguing term: חמושים עלו בני ישראל מארץ מצרים

Based on the "numeric" tone of the word חמושים, Chazal claimed that only 1 in 5 Jews departed Egypt, the remaining 80% being removed during the week of makkat Choshech, under the cover of darkness. Had the entire nation departed Egypt, the numbers would have been closer to 15 million. Whether Chazal are being precise or merely rounding off and approximating, only a small percentage of our people were redeemed from Egypt. As stunning and history-altering as Yetziat Mitzrayim was, only a small segment of our people was redeemed.

Will Selective Redemption Recur?

Everything in Jewish history is cyclical – what happened before will happen again. Redemption is certainly cyclical and our redemption from Egypt created a paradigm for future redemptions. The original night of Pesach was referred to as שומריום and, was a template for future geulah: שומריום לכל בני ישראל לדורותם

The Exodus from Egypt created a historical carve-out which would shape Jewish history.

Will our final geulah also be selective? If Egypt created a pattern for future redemptions will only a small fragment of our people be redeemed? Some assert this view, especially given the large percentage of our people, both in Israel and abroad, who have abandoned classic Orthodox observance and traditions. Perhaps they are the 80% who will not survive the end of Jewish history.

What is the difference between the selective redemption of Mitzrayim and our final and all-inclusive redemption of every single Jew? How will every Jew be redeemed despite the major shifts in the Jewish world away from traditional halachic behavior? How will geulah include “acheinu kol beis Yisrael”?

Faith and Land

Despite our tendency to glorify the past, Chazal paint a harsh portrait of the Jews in Egypt. Most of their religious traditions completely collapsed. Chazal laud their preservation of national identity and their maintaining Jewish dress, language and names. The implication is that their theological faith and ritual practice eroded. A Midrash cites the complaints of the angels at keriyat yam suf: Jews had fallen into the pagan culture, and it seemed unjust that Egyptians drown, while Jews cross the dry ocean bed.

It is impossible to correlate between Jews who worshipped other gods and those who didn't survive redemption, but it is easy to imagine that many of those excluded from yetziat Mitzrayim were those whose defection to idolatry rendered them unfit for a newly rebuilt nation of monotheists. As they had completely turned their back on the monotheistic revolution of Avraham, they could not participate in Jewish destiny. They had exited Jewish history.

At our stage of history, the situation is completely different. Throughout our tortured exile, we faced endless hostility and persecution, yet, we stoutly defended Hashem's presence. At no point did we abdicate belief in one G-d and at no point did we voluntarily defect to other religions. Sadly, many Jews have strayed from halachic observance and even, in some cases, from basic tenets of faith, but they haven't pledged allegiance to other gods. By and large, our people haven't turned our back on Avraham's revolution of consciousness.

In addition to the merits of our monotheistic legacy, modern-day Jews possess an additional merit which includes them in redemption. The Jews of Egypt hadn't yet entered the Land of Israel, while our generation is privileged to live in the Land of Hashem and to fulfill his divine promise and historical design. For the past century we have tirelessly built our homeland despite the violent opposition of a world which still denies our Biblical rights to Israel. We have demonstrated courage, patriotism, and commitment to Jewish history. Even in the absence of personal merit, commitment to our homeland is sufficient to justify redemption.

וזכרתי את בריתי יעקב ואף את בריתי יצחק ואף את בריתי אברהם אזכור והארץ אזכור

Even those who have abandoned the lifestyle and calling of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov still enjoy the zechut of Eretz Yisrael.

This is the reason why, on Pesach night, we cite the Arami Oved Avi section of Ki Tavo. This four-pasuk synopsis of Yetziat Mitzrayim was recited while bringing Bikkurim fruit to the Mikdash. By

definition, only those who had entered Israel recited this summary of Yetziat Mitzrayim. Those who have the merit of living in Israel are never excluded from redemption.

In chapter 16, Yechezkel compares the Jews in Egypt to a pre-adolescent girl. Chazal interpret this as a metaphor for our people who were barren of mitzvot and of any other merit. Jews today, even those who are barren of mitzvot, aren't barren of virtue. We have battled to build our homeland in the face of never-ending hostility and violence. Hashem embedded an ancient echo within every Jewish heart. Commitment to Land, people, and history echoes even within hearts which have, sadly, abandoned Har Sinai. Our preservation of monotheism and our courage and defiance in settling Israel makes us all worthy of redemption.

Collective Historical Merit

We also possess collective historical merit. We are at a completely different stage of history. In Egypt we were an emerging nation with little to no national history and a nascent but yet-to-be-developed relationship with Hashem. Tasked with redeeming us from Egypt, Moshe was baffled about introducing Hashem to downtrodden slaves, who had little exposure to Him. Our national experience with Hashem was first starting to evolve.

We are now at the tail end of history, and have been through a lot, on behalf of Hashem and together with Hashem. We have valiantly defended His presence in this world at great cost, often paying with our lives. Even if individual Jews may not possess sufficient merit to be redeemed, our people deserve a full-scale and all-inclusive geulah.

The metamorphosis of our relationship with Hashem through history is portrayed in Shir Hashirim, the great lyric of Jewish history. At the outset of the story the young girl-representing our people- is invited to join the Man-representing Hashem. She shyly defers the invitation, worried about foxes infiltrating the vineyard which her older brothers ordered her to guard. Beyond her technical excuses for not rendezvousing with the Man, this country girl from Ein Gedi seems intimidated by a king from a fancy palace in Yerushalayim adorned with ornate wood and plated with expensive gold and silver. They have no relationship and no common history.

By the end of the sefer, which refers to the end of history, the woman speaks a different tune, confidently inviting the Man or Hashem to return to the home she has steadfastly refurbished. Chazal attribute her confidence to Jewish heroism throughout history. In Egypt we possessed little collective merit, but at this stage in history our people have accumulated enough heroism to warrant a redemption which includes every member of our extended family.

The Covenant - Yetziat Mitzrayim occurred prior to our covenant with Hashem. Though Hashem had forged a proto-covenant with our ancestors, it hadn't yet been implemented on a national scale. Yetziat Mitzrayim forged us into a nation which would, seven weeks later, join a covenant with Hashem at Sinai. We are the people of that Brit.

A covenant isn't dependent upon personal merit or even upon collective behavior, but is absolute and immutable. Even though we don't always merit Hashem's favor we are locked together with Him in a historical covenant. Our brit assures redemption for all members of the covenant, even for those who may not be fully aware of the connotations of our brit.

Grass or Sand? In that same chapter 16, Yechezkel compares our people in Egypt to blades of grass:

רבבה כצמח השדה נתתיך

Not every blade of grass is equal in quality and often, inferior blades are cut away to improve the quality of the remaining grass. In Egypt we may have been like grass, but long-term Jewish destiny is compared to sand and dust. Grains of sand are indistinguishable. It is almost impossible to separate grains of sand or particles of dust from one another. We are all part of one common covenant, first forged with our Avot, but later enshrined at Sinai.

וְזוֹכֵר חֲסֵדֵי אֲבוֹת וּמְבִיא גּוֹאֵל לְבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן שְׂמוֹ

One By One

Yeshayahu promises us: וְאַתֶּם תִּלְוֶקְטוּ אֶחָד אֶחָד

Hashem will select each and every Jew and return us to Yerushalayim. History has moved on since Yetziat Mitzrayim. Jews have merits. Our Jewish nation has merits. We all have a covenant.

Redemption will not be selective.

Haftorah Insights - Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman

וְהָשִׁיב לְבָ-אֲבוֹת עַל-בְּנֵים וְלֵב בְּנֵים עַל-אֲבוֹתָם (מלאכי ג כד)

He shall reconcile parents with children and children with their parents

There are many well-known pesukim in this week's Haftorah, pesukim that anchor us in our faith of the end of days. Malachi in his closing words charges our people to remember the Torah of Moshe, the coming of Eliyahu, the arrival of the great and mighty day, and the returning of the hearts of parents to children and children to their parents. In addition to these words being Malachi's final speech, these are the final words of prophecy for our people. Somehow knowing that these are Hashem's final words spoken directly to His people, the words take on even greater significance. What is the message to us as we listen to these words of the Navi today?

Malachi's parting words give us the key to open the door to Geula, leaving us with a message of hope and faith. As the Children of Israel, the בני ישראל, the strength of our fathers gives us faith to move forward. But it is not only looking back that empowers our people. Knowing the destiny of our children, gives us the will to move ahead toward a better future. It is the past and the future we pray will meet through us as we pray for the Day of Redemption.

The Pesach Seder is our yearly redemption touchpoint, connecting our past with our future. These lessons of faith, lessons of family, and lessons of perseverance are lessons we've learned and are now experiencing as we approach Pesach in a surreal and unprecedented way. The past and future will merit to see the fulfillment of the words of the Haftorah, "Behold I will send the prophet Eliyahu to you before the arrival of Hashem's great and awesome day."

Towards Meaningful Shabbos - The Meaning Behind the Leaning: Lessons for Today's Times

Rebbetzin Zemira Ozarowski

Many of us are probably asking ourselves – how are we meant to celebrate Pesach this year? Obviously, we need to go through the motions of Matzah and Maggid, but how can we really feel free when our brothers and sisters are being held hostage in Gaza, thousands of soldiers will be away from their families over Pesach, and many displaced families will be forced to conduct the Seder away from the comforts of home?

There's a fascinating discussion in Gemara Pesachim 108a that can give us some insight into this question. The Gemara discusses when one should lean during the Seder. Since leaning represents freedom, the Gemara explains that we do lean for Matzah, since Matzah is the symbol of Yetziat Mitzrayim, of running out so fast that there was no time for the dough to rise. We don't lean during

Maror since it represents the bitterness of slavery. The Gemara then asks – what about the 4 cups of wine? Should we lean for them?

The Gemara brings down two opinions. The first opinion says that we don't lean for the first two cups of wine since they book-end Maggid. We can't possibly feel free when we are still in the midst of the story of slavery and Yetziat Mitzrayim. We only lean for the last two cups of wine, once the story is over and we are completely free.

But the second opinion says the opposite. We don't lean for the last two cups because by then the story is already long over, we've already forgotten how terrible it was to be slaves and we can't truly appreciate our freedom anymore. When do we lean? Davka for the first two cups, DURING the actual telling of the story. Why? Because even though at that point we are still slaves and things are still difficult, we slowly begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel. As we watch the scenes unfold, we see each stage slowly leading to redemption. Moshe is born and is saved from drowning and is brought up in the Egyptian palace....Moshe grows up and identifies with the Jewish people and Hashem appoints him to go confront Paroh....Hashem begins to bring the Makkot.

Even as we are still in the midst of terrible pain and suffering, we start to watch the beginning of a process. And it is davka then, when we still feel that bitterness, that we can begin to recognize our journey towards freedom, and it is then that we can and should lean.

After bringing both opinions, the Gemara concludes that we should follow both approaches and lean for all four cups. What's the message for us? We can learn from here how important it is to be able to thank Hashem and celebrate our freedom at both stages. During today's difficult times, even when things seem very bitter, we need to be able to recognize Yad Hashem, to note what is being accomplished, and to recognize that we are part of a process. But we can't end there, when the war finally comes to a successful end, we need to be able to continue to thank Hashem and appreciate all He has done for many years to come.

When To Speak About the War at Your Seder. And What To Say - Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

It has now been more than a half a year that Israel is at war. Tragically, it appears that we may be observing the 'holiday of freedom' while our beloved brothers and sisters are still being held hostage in Gaza. So many soldiers protecting our nation will not be home to celebrate with their families.

Our Seder this year takes on a unique complexion. For this reason, it is fitting at our Seders to include special prayers, Tehillim, or perhaps a reading about the precious lives that were lost, or sharing a story of courage and faith in this regard.

When On Seder Night? - Is there an optimal time during the Seder to address the war? There are a number of places that have been suggested by rabbis and I share here one recommendation based on a chassidic teaching: A poignant moment to pray or share words regarding this painful period is early on at the Seder, when we break the matzah in half; Yachatz.

Why here? - An exquisite explanation in chassidic thought offered for this ritual suggests that the breaking of the matzah represents the brokenness in the world. The broken matzah symbolizes the innumerable broken hearts, broken lives... the endless tears. The broken matzah signifies that the world is badly fractured and we need to know that in order to repair it.

Immediately following that ritual of splitting the matzah in two the larger broken piece is carefully tucked away. This half piece which is hidden is known as the Afikoman. And it is that broken matzah which will be brought back to the table at the end of the Seder. Everyone at the table then eats a piece of it.

Who brings the piece of matzah back to the table? The long held custom is for the children to search for it and they then excitedly present it to everyone.

There is far-reaching symbolism here. Who will fix the brokenness? If we, in our day, are unsuccessful in mending the deep fragmentation, we have faith that our children will. Seder night our children bring back the broken piece and make the world whole again. (The Night That Unites Haggadah p.66)

What Message To Share? - The Seder is best known for being a night of questions and answers. And yet, perhaps the most important lesson to convey to our children Seder night is not that we have all the answers. Rather, we need to share that although in life we are faced with many questions, there will be questions which we simply cannot answer. But one thing we are sure of is that we have Hashem in our lives. And that Hashem is good and full of compassion.

When reaching the Seder's end we drink a fourth cup of wine. At this point we are no longer relaying the story of the exodus from Egypt, rather, we lift that cup of wine to acknowledge, with anticipation, the future redemption. As the Seder comes to a close we are making the following statement to our children (...and to ourselves and all those around the table): "I don't know when the Redemption will happen. I don't know how it will happen. But one thing I know beyond a shadow of doubt, my dear children, is that the Redemption will come." In a word, the night of Seder is a night of faith. (Ibid., p. 252)

The Shape of the Matzah - The Lubavitcher Rebbe cited the well known explanation that the three pieces of matzah placed on the Seder table correspond to the three distinct segments that make up the Jewish people - Kohen, Levi and Yisrael. The Rebbe added that the rashei tevot - the first letters of each word - spell out the word KLI (כלי) , a vessel. This teaches that every Jew must endeavor to be a 'vessel', a repository filled with sanctity and kindness.

The Rebbe shared his unique Pesach practice of choosing pieces of matzah for the Seder that were not completely flat, but pieces that, in some measure, were bowl shaped, so that they resemble a receptacle. The matzah signifies that we must fashion our own lives in such a way so that they are brimming with benevolence and generosity. We are to be givers. (Haggadah Shel Pesach of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, p. 32)

Troubling times abound. We feel besieged by hordes espousing hatred. But we as a people know how to respond. We reach even deeper into our reservoirs of faith. Every Jew: kohen, levi, yisrael, must continue to contribute, each in their own way, to bring light to this darkness. We must continue to uplift one another and widen the path towards a better future. We continue to pray to Hashem for comfort and for salvation.

Finding God, Wherever He Is - Rabbi Gideon Weitzman

This week, within 12 hours I attended two celebrations of the birth of children. While both of them were great occasions and had many similar elements; proud parents, delighted families and happy guests, they were very different from each other.

The first was a party to celebrate the birth of a healthy girl. Her parents had undergone numerous fertility treatments, and had endured years of infertility. They had been to PUAH numerous times to be consoled when yet another treatment failed, and to explore other opportunities and treatment options. They did not give up, and, eventually, their dream to have a child was realized. They were much older than the average new parents, but they were no less delighted and excited.

The following morning, I attended the Brit of a young couple who had given birth to their fourth child, within a few years. The young couple had not faced any serious fertility challenges and had been blessed with healthy children. They were extremely happy and celebrated the birth, and they had not faced the extreme trials and tribulations experienced by the previous couple.

Sometimes everything goes according to plan, all moves forward at the correct pace, with no obvious pitfalls. And sometimes life is much more complicated, our plans are dashed by reality and the accompanying difficulties.

These events reminded me of Purim and Pesach. The celebration of Pesach is of the obvious miracles, during which God can be seen and observed clearly for all to see, both the Jewish People and the Egyptian nation recognized that it was God who took us out of Egypt.

Purim is very different; God is absent, so much that His Name is not mentioned in the Book of Esther, only alluded to. Not even all of the Jews saw the miracle and recognized the Divine Hand, and saw Mordechai as just a politician and not as part of the Divine plan. It takes someone able and willing to delve deeper to see God behind the complications and complexities.

It is well worth noting that 50 days after Pesach we celebrate Shavuot where we met and saw God on Har Sinai and received His holy Torah. 50 days after Purim we celebrate Yom Haatzmaut, the establishment of the State of Israel. Those who are able to discover God within the complexities of hidden miracles on Purim should be able to see Him within our own miracle of the modern State of Israel.

We celebrate God's hand in all births, the "simple" ones as well as the much more complicated births. Pesach Sameach

Holy Sites in Israel - The Freedom of Pesach (Cleaning) - Shoshana Judelman

Am Yisrael left Mitzrayim in the blink of an eye. What took longer, though, was getting the "Mitzrayim" out of Am Yisrael. The slave mindset, instilled in them for 210 years, did not dissipate upon crossing the border. In reality we are all still working on it thousands of years later.

Each chag shines a specific energy into the world. The energy of Pesach is freedom and renewal. Every year, during this season, the koach of the first Geulah is drawn into the world, and we are given the opportunity to become "free" once again by "leaving Mitzrayim."

The word “Mitzrayim” is related to the word “meitzarim,” limitations. Each year “leaving Mitzrayim” means breaking free from the slavery of old habits, outdated mindsets, and unhealthy self-perceptions.

It seems ironic that the chag which represents becoming free also includes the most intense work in the days and weeks leading up to it. How does this labor and the resulting exhaustion and chaos help us find freedom?

Rav Avraham Tzvi Kluger teaches us that the chaos of preparing for Pesach is not only part of “leaving Mitzrayim,” but actually enables the whole process. One of the impurities of “Mitzrayim” is the idea that we can rule over the forces of nature to gain the outcomes we desire. The impurity of thinking we are in control. But we have no control. Hashem runs the world and control is only in His Hands. The sooner we realize that reality, the healthier, freer, and more connected we will be.

Rav Kluger points out that in the days leading up to Pesach, the reality of the situation: the topsy-turvy schedule, the mess of turning over our houses, and the sheer chaos of the preparation forces us to practically raise our hands in surrender. And that is exactly the point. Only through the act of recognizing and yielding to a Greater Power, to Hashem, can we find true serenity and actual freedom.

This is the truth of reality. We never have control. Over the course of the year we slip into the delusion that we can manage and contain the chaos. That we can manipulate and master the world around us. In the days leading up to Pesach, however, that façade is conclusively crushed.

These days compel us to open our eyes to the truth: Having a schedule does not give us the power to control the outcome of the day, keeping our houses neat cannot impose order on the world, and there is no way to restrain the commotion of life.

Pesach reminds us that Hashem, in His kindness, has not left us in charge. The restrictions the chag imposes on us rewire our brains to recognize true freedom- knowing that we are in Hashem’s Hands. In acknowledging Hashem’s control, we relieve ourselves of the burden of our own misconceptions and meitzarim.

All year long I see myself a certain way, I doubt and limit myself by my own mindset. Freedom from Mitzrayim comes from knowing that since only Hashem is in control, only He sets the limits on my capabilities. The dreams in my heart are there because He plants them there, and I am limited only by my willingness to reach for them.

May Hashem bless each one of us to know that our efforts leading up to this chag unlocked a doorway of renewal, to courageously walk through that doorway to the path of growth, to embrace the chaos as a way of letting go, and, above all, to feel Hashem giving us the koach to keep moving forward. Chag Sameach!

Beyond the Letter of the Law - Rabbi Baruch Taub

The first fulfillment of the mitzvah of relating the Exodus - סיפור יציאת מצרים, was performed by Moshe with his father in law, Yitro (Shmot 18:8 ויספר משה להתנו).

Included in this memorable dialogue, Yitro actually adds a parsha to the Torah. This is quite bizarre. Yitro, a newly minted Ger, proceeds to reform Moshe’s judicial system! Concerned that his son in

law is working too hard, he presents a court system that will ease Moshe's role of providing law and order for the nation.

Parenthetically there is dispute between Rashi and Ibn Ezra whether Yitro converted before or after the Giving of the Torah. Tongue in cheek we can suggest a third possibility, that Yitro in fact never converted. It is highly unusual to imagine a Jewish father in law complaining that his son in law is working too hard!

The real question is the presumptuousness of this "new man on the block" immediately to suggest major changes in the transmission of Torah.

It gets more bizarre. The Talmud (Baba Metzia 30b) insists that Yitro did not simply offer advice about how to insure that Am Yisrael will live according to the Law. He actually introduced the obligation to perform mitzvot Beyond the Letter of the Law – משורת הדין ליפנים (Shmot 18:18 המעשה אשר יעשו).

It is surprising enough that he insists on adjusting the procedure of Law but now he is insisting that Am Yisrael go "the extra mile" beyond the letter of the Law!

Perhaps "presumptuous" is not strong enough criticism. It seems to be the height of chutzpa! Again how does this newly minted convert assume the position of challenging Moshe and the people to aspire to this elevated level of commitment?

Before we answer the question let us define the concept of Lifnim Meshurat haDin with the help of Ramban . The central mitzvah ואהבת לרעך כמוך - to love every Jew as yourself

In the words of Ramban is an exaggeration Firstly it is against the law, -היך קודמין "your own life comes first". (Bava Metzia 62b). Secondly it seems to be psychologically impossible based upon the axiom "man's best friend is himself" - אדם קרוב אצל עצמו (Yevamot 25)

Here's the amazing thing, Ramban is not being critical and dismissive of yourself when he refers to it as an exaggeration. He is actually defining the proper performance level of the mitzvah. Incredulously, every Jew is challenged to perform Beyond the Letter of the Law.

In fact "beyond" is an imprecise translation. Lifnim means two things. "Pnim", internal, meaning that this concept is the essence, the microchip of the mitzvah. Additionally Lifnim means "before" not "beyond". The goal to reach this level is a prerequisite to the performance of the mitzvot.

So how in the world is Yitro the first Ger in Jewish history the one to not only introduce this concept but insists on its universal performance?!

The truth is Yitro is the only one in a position to introduce this idea precisely because he is the first Ger. Yitro is the first Jew by choice. His entire persona is Beyond the Letter of the Law. His surrender to HaShem is not about what "I have to do" but about "what I want to do".

This entire dialogue took place on the backdrop of a "Pesach Seder" between Moshe and Yitro. This was not unintended nor serendipitous. The seder is in fact designed to be a Beyond the Letter of the Law moment. Take for example the central mitzvah of the seder והגדת לבינך, discussing the Exodus with our children. Beyond the Letter of the Law demands a conversation reaching beyond the words

of the Haggadah. It is not a “one size fits all” presentation. The Haggadah speaks of multiple children with different needs. The open dialogue of the Seder must be infused with a sense of excitement and adventure. The ideal fulfillment should encourage curiosity, questioning, seeking and exploring. The central motif of the seder should create a desire on the part of the participants to understand that Yahadut is not about what “I have to do” but “ what I want to do” more and more!

There is no better place to put Yitro’s “beyond” challenge to work than at the Seder Shel Pesach. Chag Kasher veSameach

Beit HaMikdash at the Seder - Rabbi David Fine

Maimonides describes the order of practices of the Seder night in the eighth and final chapter of the “Laws of Chametz and Matzah” in his Mishna Torah. It is a simple description of the steps of the Haggada which almost any Jewish school child could have written equally as well. But there is something surprising: after the eating of Matzah and Maror he suddenly gets to the meal- what we call Shulchan Orech and this is how he describes it: “the body of the Paschal lamb, and the meat of the festive offering of the fourteenth of Pesach [is brought out].” Whoa! The Rambam lived over a thousand years following the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash and wrote a practical guide to Jewish law for people living in his time. Why would he say that we bring out sacrificial meat fully realizing that this was impossible?

Yes, he does immediately write “At present, we bring two types of meat on the table: one in commemoration of the Paschal sacrifice and one in commemoration of the festive offering.” But this seems to be a strange and perhaps even confusing way of describing what one should do at the Seder.

Rambam is attempting to make something crystal. The essence of the Passover Seder is the Beit HaMikdash. No matter how grand and festive a Seder may be – it is lacking until we are able to eat the sacrificial meat. It is no mistake that Pesach is celebrated while we read the Parshiot that describe the Mishkan and the sacrifices. The worship of God in his Temple in Jerusalem is the only way that the Torah can be fully realized.

This message lurks behind almost every page of the Haggada. One example is Karpas. Some classical commentators (see Maharil Seder HaHagadda 16) suggest that we eat Karpas because it increases our appetites. The Matzah and the Korban Pesach are to be eaten with an appetite and so we eat Karpas. At the outset this seems strange, writes Rabbi Mordechai Breuer in his Pirke Moadot (Volume 1:82-87). There is a significant amount of time between the eating of Karpas and the eating of Matza. Certainly, the increase in appetite caused by a small amount of Karpas would be far more effective done closer to eating the Matza. We eat the Karpas when we do according to Rav Breuer because in the time of the Temple the Korban Pesach would be eaten directly after the Karpas and before the reading of the Haggadah different from the order we do it today (See also HaHaggada Mimekora by Rav Rimon p. 23 note 2). So even though it would be far more effective in doing what it is meant to do if eaten later, we eat it when we do to remind us of the Temple.

The Temple is not simply a physical structure. It is meant to serve as a metaphor of peace and unity for all who wish to worship the One God in peace. Our current struggle against those who attack us is essentially about this. Soldiers report that almost every home in Gaza had a picture of “Haram Al Shariff” and Al-Aqsa Mosque on the wall. It was no mistake that the actual name of October 7th attack was “Operation Al Aqsa Flood” by Hamas. The battle is over whether our concept of the Temple as a place of moral and ethical monotheism will win out.

Do we have pictures of the Temple mount on our walls? Are we willing to go the extent that they are (Lehavdil) in order to make sure that our vision wins the day? As we celebrate the Seder this year where the multiplicity of reminders of this concept abound this is something that I suggest we think about as the Rambam reminded us we need to do many hundreds of years ago.

70 PERSPECTIVE BUT ONLY ONE TORAH - Open Miracles and National Redemption by Dr. Meir Tamari

Pesach, the beginning of our national cycle of festivals, is the festival of freedom, since only free men and women can choose to worship G-d. Rabbi S. R. Hirsch goes on to note that this freedom was given with the promise that "you shall be unto Me a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation"; not pious individuals but a nation-religion perfecting its freedom from the many different forms of slavery by following G-d's laws.

Our festivals: Pesach-spring; Shavuot- chag hakatzir, harvest of first fruits, and Sukkot - chag ha'asif, ingathering of the harvest at the close of the year (Sh'mot 23:14-16) - follow the agricultural cycle of the natural seasons of the year. So they seem to be celebrations of nature-worship as in the idolatry of the days of the Neviyim. Such nature festivals were renewed in the early days of our modern return to Zion; cutting the Omer was celebrated as pageantry, song and dance of farmers, Bikurim were brought to the J.N.F and Sukkot ended the financial year for agricultural units, allied industries and institutions. There are strong elements of this nature-worship present in many aspects of the modern green movement. Ironically enough our three festivals are fundamentally anti-nature throughout their ideology and observance.

Kiddush HaChodesh commences this anti-nature by giving human courts the freedom and power to adjust the time cycle of natural phenomena to human needs. These courts determine the number of months in the year and the number of days in the month. Ours is a lunar calendar whereas the seasons are solar so that Pesach would naturally rotate among the seasons. However, human adjustment of an additional month, Adar, made certain that Nissan, hence Pesach, would always be in spring. In addition, the courts make adjustments to the length of certain months to take into account halakhic considerations regarding Shabbat.

Bikurim mandates a confession high- lighting the bringer's humble beginnings in slavery and his total dependence on G-d for his land and its first-fruits. Many other rules, for instance the Omer harvested and brought on the first day of Chol Hamoed Pesach, strengthen this anti-nature worship. "S'firat HaOmer counts the days between Korban HaOmer and Korban Shtei Ha- Lechem" (Rambam, T'midim uMusafim 7:22). Korban HaOmer permitted the eating of the new grains while the Shtei Lechem permitted their use in the Mikdash. Rabbi Hirsch sees the Omer as coming to teach the individual that the sole source of his legally acquired fruits [profits] was G-d and not nature nor luck. Similarly, Shtei HaLechem comes to teach the nation to acknowledge Hashem as the sole source of their national wealth, power and success. In both cases, the acknowledgement requires a payment before any benefit could be had. "It [HaOmer] is similar to the rent which is made to an owner" (S'forno).

Parshat HaChodesh proclaimed Nissan as Rosh Chodashim; "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear, the time of singing is come" (Shir HaShirim 2:11-12). In the spring, nature awakes from the dormancy of winter, the strength that the whole of nature gathered while it rested, now bursts forth and the animal, trees and flowers all awake as from a long sleep. So, Israel blossomed forth from slavery in a burst of freedom and so too in the future it will awaken from the

long galut to realize its true purpose (Rabbi A. I. Kook). In Nissan-Spring they were redeemed from Egypt and in Nissan will also be their future and final redemption.

Shabbat HaGadol prepares us for Pesach just as Shabbat T'shuva prepares for Yom Kippur. The Tur (Orach Chaim 430) writes that it owes this name to the great miracle that was performed then for Israel. Each family took a lamb, the god of Egypt, and tied it to their bedposts and kept it there for four days. The Egyptians were told that it was going to be slaughtered and eaten 4 days later. Despite this insult and provocation, the Egyptians were powerless to do anything to Israel and that was a great miracle.

It is the specific characteristics of Shabbat which made that miracle possible so the name and observance remain whether Nissan 10th is a Shabbat or not. "Midat HaDin demanded that Israel should fulfill some obligatory actions before redemption otherwise they would deserve no better treatment than the Egyptians. Therefore, G-d gave Israel the mitzvot of Mila and Korban Pesach, so redemption would be not merely Chesed, but also earned in justice. Although Chesed and Din are contradictory, Shabbat is able to be both simultaneously. It commemorates both Chesed with which He created the world (Sh'mot 20:11) and Justice which He executed by the Exodus (D'varim 5:15). That explains why the first Korban Pesach had to be taken on Shabbat; so we call the Shabbat before Pesach Shabbat HaGadol, irrespective of whether it is Nissan 10th or not" (Shem MiShmuel).

CHIZUK and IDUD for Olim & not-yet-Olim respectively

On Pesach night we do so many different things in order to attract the children's attention and involve them in the Seder activities. We expectantly turn to the youngest of all participants, eagerly awaiting their shy and hesitant rendition of the Four Questions of the Ma Nishtana. As regards to the older children, no Seder would be the same without the Afikoman "treasure hunt" (which for many will become ingrained as the peak memory of the Seder night for years to come). How are we to understand this unusual focus on the younger generation? Surely, many reasons have been put forth, and yet I find the answer suggested by Rav Soloveitchik zt"l to carry unparalleled force. R. Soloveitchik highlights a unique capability which all children possess, one which we, the adults, have long forgotten. Children have a natural capability to relive a story, injecting themselves into the tale they hear and directly experiencing the events.

Whereas the adult perceives himself as removed from historical experiences, at best commemorating past events as anniversaries of days gone by, children have the ability to immerse themselves into the ancient stories, and via their imagination breathe life into the dry words.

The Rambam writes that on the Seder night, CHAYAV ADAM LEHAR'OT ET ATZMO, one is obligated to show, or present himself as one exiting Egypt. Amongst Yemenite Jewry many follow this directive by having the leader of the Seder put on a knapsack and gather a walking stick to show he is literally prepared to leave Egypt. While the adult may view such behavior as frivolous play acting, for the children this is a way of stepping back into history, viewing the Exodus through the present tense. Perhaps the great emphasis we place on the children, stems from the fact that through the wondrous look we see in their eyes, we too, the adults, can share in their magical journey through time.

Many Chassidic thinkers have discussed how the Jewish calendar assumes that there is a circular, repetitive, aspect to time. As Rabbi Moshe Bamberger writes in his work on "Hallel", we regard time: "Not in a linear fashion but in a circular one. Events around the Jewish calendar are analogous to train stations on a circular time track".

On the Seder night our goal is not to "turn the clock back" and return to an earlier era, but rather to tap into the Geulat Mitzrayim taking place in the present.

This perspective can radically change the way we look at this night: If the entire process is reenacted on a yearly basis, then we realize that the stakes are exceedingly high. After all, although we tend to overlook it, we know that during the original Exodus millions of Jews were not included amongst the fortunate. As the Seder night arrives we must pause and candidly ask ourselves: Are we deserving to be counted amongst the chamushim (one-fifth, or one in five-hundred) who leave, or will we be amongst those left behind?

Indeed, what was it that led so many of our brethren to choose to stay in Egypt? - In order to break away from past mistakes, we have to understand their causes.

The Midrash Tehillim (107,114), as quoted by the Rosh HaYeshiva of Kerem BeYavneh, teaches us that: "When Israel went out of Egypt, Hashem 'took one nation from the midst of another nation" (D'varim 4:34) - Like a shepherd extracting the fetus from its mother's womb".

The Maharal (Gevurot Hashem 3) writes that the point of the Midrash is to explain that at the time of the Exodus we were enslaved not only physically but rather spiritually as well. We had become so intertwined with the Egyptian values and mores, so intermingled with the Egyptian way of life, that we were like a fetus residing within its mother's womb, woefully incapable of independent existence.

As we near the end of the Seder we will all proclaim: L'SHANA HABA'A BIRUSHALAYIM! - and yet we know that only a small proportion of Jews will actually board the "Jerusalem Express" and be here next year. Why is that? What inhibits Jews from leaving galut and being amongst the Chamushim who get up and come here?

Continuing the Maharal's line of thought, it seems that today too, many have become enslaved by the corporate mentality and by suburban values and culture - they too have been swallowed up by the West, viewing themselves like the embryo which cannot survive outside its mother's womb. Shabbat HaGadol is a reminder that one can tear oneself away. It can be done. On Shabbat HaGadol we commemorate the heroic actions of our ancestors who daringly captured, and slayed, the Egyptian deity reclaiming thereby our own cultural independence.

Once every year as we chant L'SHANA HABA'A BIRUSHALAYIM, the Jerusalem Express prepares to leave the station. As the conductor begins to chant: "All aboard, all aboard last call for Jerusalem!" - take one long look into your childrens' wide open starry eyes, and I'm sure you will muster the courage to hop aboard! Rabbi Yerachmiel Roness, Ramat Shiloh, Beit Shemesh

Portion from the Portion by Rakel Berenbaum - TZARAAT AND BEDIKAT CHAMETZ

The portion of M'tzora doesn't usually fall right before Pesach, but this year it does, because of the extra Adar we added for the leap year. I was wondering if I could find a connection between this portion dealing with the purification of a leper, discoloration in houses and other types of tum'a. I happened (nothing is by chance) to open up a beautiful book Muzmanim L'Chagim, written by Noam Perl with photographs taken by the students of the Yeshiva in Sussia.

I opened to the place where one page was about Bedikat Chametz, which we will all be doing next Thursday night, and the opposite page was a striking photograph of a very dark night with a bright lantern illuminating all the hidden places. Noam explains that from the portion of Tzaraat we learn that a person's house is a reflection of his spiritual condition. The afflictions that would strike a

person's house were just an externalization of the person's internal spiritual afflictions. Tzaraat was a way to get the person to check within himself and improve his behavior.

Checking for chametz in every nook and cranny in a person's home is a reminder to the person to check within himself, at his soul, his strengths, and personality. He should burn any "chametz" that may be resting there. Checking at night, with the light of a candle, sets the atmosphere to awaken us to check our own inner selves - step by step. As the verse says in Mishlei: "Ner hashem nishmat adam, ch-o-pes kol chadrei va-ten - The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the inward parts" (20:27).

Checking through all the places in every room of the house helps each person to make a thorough self-introspection and reckoning related to all of his relationships (with spouse, children, neighbors, guests), and all his endeavors (how he eats, talks, drives, dresses, learns, shops)...
The mishna teaches that we don't have to check for chametz in a place where we never put any chametz (Pesachim 1:1). Noam says this halacha is very consoling, because it hints to us that there are also places in our personality where we don't allow sin to enter. These are our strong places that are protected from sin. "Elokai Neshama shenatata bi - tehora hi - My God. The soul that You put within me is pure"

This is the first year that I noticed the prayer - the "Yehi Ratzon" after bedikat chametz, about the afflictions of the house of our soul - May it be Your will to allow us to examine and scrutinize the houses of our souls, and help us to do teshuva.

One of the types of discolorations mentioned in this week's portion is called shekarurot - translated by R' Aryeh Kaplan as penetrating streaks that are bright green or bright red. Saadia Gaon and Ibn Ezra say that this was hair-like lines. So this week's recipe is with hair-like pasta (an opportunity to use what you still have in your closet). You can substitute spaghetti if that's what you still have. It also includes red beets and green herbs.

ANGEL HAIR PASTA WITH BEETS AND HERBS

6 beets, finely sliced; 2 large cloves garlic, minced; 2 Tbsp olive oil; Salt and pepper to taste;
1 cup chicken broth 1/4 red onion, minced; Fresh herbs, (basil and parsley)
Crushed red pepper flakes; 250 gr. angel hair pasta

Cook beets, olive oil, salt and pepper over moderate heat, until just tender. About 5 minutes. Add garlic and cook another minute. Add broth and simmer 12 minutes until beets are tender. Serve over cooked pasta with mixed herbs.

**From "OzTorah" by Rabbi Dr. Raymond Apple, AO RFD,
Emeritus Rabbi of the Great Synagogue, Sydney - www.oztorah.com**

A look at Pesach - Why is he wicked?

There are many explanations as to what makes the rasha a "wicked" child. Most focus on his words, "What does this service mean to you?"

People think he is mocking old-fashioned rituals that have long since lost their point. What the interpreters often fail to recognise, however, is that the wicked son is not totally wicked. When he mocks the traditional ritual, he is not necessarily saying that it never had a point. His view can be taken as saying, "I can see that it had meaning in the past, but surely we have outgrown such things."

He is also saying, "Some people can't manage without rituals, but aren't we more advanced intellectually these days, perfectly capable of handling ideas without tokens, totems and traditions?"

The Haggadah's response is a verse that says the Pesach ritual was ordained by G-d, not just for the post-Exodus generation, but as a permanent feature of Judaism.

The implication? Not only is the ritual the word of G-d, but it answers a permanent need in human psychology, to have symbols of abstract concept and not to imagine that man can live on ideas without analogies and active reminders. Rabbi Apple blogs at www.oztorah.com

From the S'forno - Jacob Solomon

On the eighth day... the kohen who purifies [the metzora] shall place the person being purified before G-d at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting... The kohen shall take [from the purifying metzora] the one lamb and bring it as an asham - a guilt offering. (14:11-12).

The opening section of this parsha deals with the purification process that is unique to the metzora. The metzora is a person who shows definite symptoms of tzaraat, as described in the previous parsha. R. Samson Raphael Hirsch writes that tzaraat is not 'leprosy' as commonly translated, but a physically-recognizable, Divinely-imposed sign of moral deficiency. These shortcomings include lashon hara (gossip), gasut ru'ach (haughtiness), and chemdat mamon (jealous greed).

The S'forno connects the first two of those sins with the asham (14:12) - the guilt offering. For the root cause of needing to bring the asham is me-ila. Me-ila (sacrilege) is the wrongful use of property belonging to G-d (5:14-16), and - as theft - the wrongful use of property belonging to other people (5:20-26, Bamidbar 5:5-8).

Lashon hara, shows the S'forno, is rooted in me-ila. This is because sharing negative and harmful information about other people typically takes place behind closed doors, in private gatherings. Indeed, as Rashi explains, "Cursed is the person who strikes the other in secret" (D'varim 27:24) refers to the common secluded surroundings in which lashon hara takes place. Such people forget that G-d is listening. As the Gemara explains: "When anyone commits a transgression in secret, it is though he has cast away the feet of the Divine Presence" (Chagiga 16a). In other words, the gossiper has invaded G-d's space with the mind-frame that He isn't watching when He is. That is the me-ila.

And gasut ru'ach - undue pride - is also an incursion on G-d's space. The S'forno quotes the Tanach's describing King Uziyahu's attitude of "haughtiness to destruction" in his entering the Temple to offer ketoret (incense) as me-ila. For that was a privilege given by G-d to the kohanim only. Non-kohanim and even kings were not permitted into that space. And as a result, he was inflicted with tzaraat until his dying day (Divrei Hayamim Bet 26:16-21).

Indeed, the person with gasut ru'ach does not grasp that everyone is created differently, and every person has something to teach. As Ben Zoma declares: "Who is wise? One who learns from everyone" (Avot 4:1). Gasut ruach implies invading G-d's space by haughty behavior - only the Creator is superior to people.

And the opening words of the parsha teach the Torah-acceptable attitude - that those at the pinnacle of the community should interact with those excluded from the community with due consideration. For when a metzora begins the purification process, he must not enter the area of the community: "he shall dwell in isolation, outside the camp" (13:46). The kohen - one of the hereditary spiritual aristocracy - has to go out of the camp to meet him (14:3). The S'forno interprets "he shall be brought to the kohen" (14:2) as he shall go as near as possible to the area of the community as permissible, and then the kohen - the 'VIP' - will go out to meet him and examine him.

ParshaPix – M'tzora/Shabbat HaGadol



Shabbat Hagadol - When Israel Became Great!
by Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher, Dean of Students, Diaspora Yeshiva

One meaning of Shabbat HaGadol is the Shabbat when the Jewish slaves in Egypt passed into adulthood, a stage marked by independence of thought and action.

Unlike the miraculous holidays later in Jewish history, the Exodus from Egypt was entirely the work of G-D. In the Haggadah itself we read the Midrash that it was G-D Himself who redeemed us from Egypt - not a messenger, not an angel, but G-D in His revealed glory.

In later Jewish history the salvation of Chanuka and Purim, miraculous as they were, involved a human initiative. There could have been no Purim without the active role of Mordechai and Esther. There would have been no Chanuka without the heroic revolt of the Maccabees. There would be no State of Israel without the initiative and the heroic suffering of the CHALUTZIM, and the IRGUN, the HAGANA, and the IDF. In all of the salvations in Jewish history, we played the active role and G-D was the Silent Partner.

Not so on Pesach. Here the Redemption from Egypt was entirely a supernatural, Divine, Magic Moment. The Jewish slaves in Egypt before the Redemption had been passive, reluctant, fearful of rocking the boat, and suspicious of Moshe. In all of the Torah readings of Israel in Egypt, there was only one instance before the Exodus when the Jews showed bravery, courage, and daring.

And that was on the 10th of Nissan, 5 days before the Exodus, when the Jewish slaves took a sheep, the deity of Egypt, and prepared to slaughter it as the Korban Pesach, to sprinkle its blood on their door posts, in defiance of their Egyptian masters, and the backlash of pogroms and massacres.

That day was Israel's first sign of maturity and bravery of an enslaved people. It was the sole element in the deliverance that marked a conscious willingness to be a partner with G-D in His plans for Jewish history.

Shabbat HaGadol is the day when Israel entered adulthood as a nation, when we became collectively a GADOL (great). The Midrash states that the Exodus occurred on a Thursday that year, which would make the 10th of Nissan the Shabbat immediately preceding the Exodus. That Shabbat was the day when human initiative was first shown - the Shabbat of Israel's greatness.

Thus, the Haftara of Shabbat HaGadol is from Malachi which concludes the biblical section of Tanach called "Prophets". But this reading has nothing to do with Pesach. So why is it read on the Shabbat before Pesach? Because Malachi prophesies that Eliyahu HaNavi will come to announce the Final Redemption, which is the culmination and climax of the Exodus from Egypt. To achieve final redemption, we must become GEDOLIM (great). We must become totally committed to our historic destiny.

Mashiach will come when we are ready for him. Eliyahu HaNavi is the one whose role it is help us become GADOL - spiritually great.

Divrei Menachem

As we think about Shabbat HAGADOL, the Great Shabbat, let us reflect on the first redemption of our wondrous people and on our yearning for the Ge'ula. Let us dwell on the fact that the first ever Shabbat Hagadol was celebrated by Bnei Yisrael on the tenth of Nissan, five days before the redemption from Egypt. On that day, specifically, Hashem commanded the people, "To take a lamb for the household, a lamb for each home" (Sh'mot 12:3).

Yes, this animal would be displayed to a shocked Egyptian people, paralyzed with fear and unable to prevent the offering of their deity, the lamb. The long-awaited Ge'ula had begun - only to be dashed hundreds of years later by the Babylonians and then again by the Roman Empire who squashed the Jewish presence in Eretz Yisra'el, destroyed the Beit HaMikdash, and dispersed us among the nations.

From those days on, we have yearned for the next redemption by imploring the Compassionate One to make us worthy of the Messianic age (Birkat HaMazon). We complete this prayer by echoing the words of David HaMelech, that G-d, "Gives great salvation to his king" (MAGDIL Yeshu'ot Malko) or that, "He is a tower (MIGDAL) of salvation to his king" (Tehillim 18:51; Shmuel 2, 22:51).

Here we see the term GADOL in action again. The Yalkut explains that on weekdays, when we toil to achieve better things, we use the active term MAGDIL as an expression of our hope for a world where all our material and spiritual needs will be fulfilled. On Shabbat, that the rabbis describe as "A taste of the World to Come", we stress the outcome "MIGDAL" - the tower of salvation that should come speedily and in our days, Amen. Shabbat Shalom, Menachem Persoff

Parsha Pix – the answers

The two birds are part of the purification process of a M'TZORA. Pictured in the ParshaPix are sparrows. Neither bird of the two required is a korban and is therefore not necessarily a dove or turtledove - those being the only two birds eligible for the Mizbei'ach. They only have to be kosher birds.

Also pictured are the other objects that were used in the ceremony for the M'tzora: a branch from a cedar tree (EITZ EREZ)

the hyssop plant (EISOV)

and a red wool thread (SH'NI TOLAAT)

The M'tzora is required to shave the hair of his body (razor)

including, as is mentioned in the Torah, the eyebrows. In the picture, one eyebrow has already been shaved

The 2+1 on the lamb are for 2 male sheep and 1 female - part of the procedure of purification

The sack of flour and the oil can represent the meal offerings of the purifying M'tzora, as well as the oil applications described in the sedra

In the lower right are the three recipients of the blood and oil of the purification process - the earlobe (one opinion - others hold the top of the

outer ear, or the middle ridge of cartilage), thumb, and big toe - of the right ear, the right hand, and the right foot

Above that is a left palm, mentioned many times in the sedra - KAF HAKOHEIN HAS'MALI - as where the kohein put the blood and then the oil from which he took on his right index finger in order to apply to the MITAHEIR

AB-- represents a type of blood - AB negative, negative - like the blood in the sedra that rendered a man or woman TAMEI

The house in the picture is frowning. It is sad that it is afflicted with NIG'EI HABAYIT

Upper-right is a picture of a set of Lincoln Logs. Suggestion: older generation explains to the younger generation what Lincoln Logs are. As to

ParshaPix, a log represents the Hebrew word LOG (with a long O, as in lone, rather than the short O of the English word log), which is a Biblical

measure mentioned several times in the sedra as the amount of oil that was used in the purification process of a M'TZORA. Therefore, the

Lincoln Logs go with the oil can below them in the ParshaPix to stand for LOG SHEMEN. By the way, a LOG is equivalent to 345.6ml

according to the measures of Rav Chaim Naeh to 597ml according to the Chazon Ish - with other opinions between those two. Of significance for

us today is the measure called a R'VIIT, which is a quarter of a LOG (in contrast to the Torah's R'VIIT which is a quarter of a HIN - a HIN is 12

LOGIM. A R'VIIT of a LOG is the minimum amount of wine that a Kiddush cup must contain, etc. The R'VIIT ranges from 86.4- 149.25ml

Also, the pieces of the Lincoln Logs can represent the dismantled house having been declared TAMEI

Woodstock, avian best friend of Snoopy, is pictured in a birdbath, loosely representing the live bird of the two which is immersed in (see the beginning of the sedra for further details)

In the lower-right corner is a picture of a Garage Sale. Its connection to the sedra is the kohein's instructions to the owners of a house which might be afflicted with NEGA'IM to empty the house of its furnishings and vessels, lest they become TAMEI if he (the kohein) declares the house

TAMEI. Who knows? Some people might have used the opportunity to have a garage sale of those items they would like to get rid of

The lower-left has Father and Son from the haftara for HaGadol - V'HEISHIV LEIV AVOT AL BANIM...

And the Torah is also from the haftara - ZICHRU TORAT MOSHE...

2024 - PESACH SCHEDULE - 5784

**BEGINNING SUNDAY, APRIL 14, RABBI RALBAG WILL BE IN SHUL FOR SELLING CHOMETZ EACH WEEKDAY EVENING FROM 7:15pm - 8:00pm
OTHER TIMES AT HOME - Tel. No. (718) 258-5596**

SHABBOS HAGADOL – April 19-20

Friday night – April 19

Candle lighting – 7:21pm **but not before 6:16pm**

Mincha/Kabbalas Shabbos - TWO MINYANIM - 1) Plag minyan – 5:56pm; 2) Z'man – 7:26pm

SHABBOS – April 20

Shacharis – **Shochevn Ad** - 5:55am (heinetz – 6:08am); 7:50am (Hashkama); 9:15am (Main shul)

Daf Yomi – 6:00pm;

Mincha – 1:45pm and 7:00pm followed by

SHABBOS HAGADOL DRASHA - 7:20pm

FOLLOWED BY MA'ARIV

SUNDAY – April 21 - Rabbi Ralbag will be in shul for selling chometz from 8:30am until 10:30am on Sunday, April 21, and again in the evening from 6:30pm – 7:30pm.

OTHER TIMES AT HOME - Tel. No. (718) 258-5596

SUNDAY – April 21 - KASHERING OF DISHES AND UTENSILS IN SHUL

Kashering will take place from 8:45 - 10:45am.

SUNDAY – April 21 - BEDIKAS CHOMETZ - AFTER 7:42pm

MONDAY – April 22 - EREV PESACH

Shacharis - 5:45am (Heinetz – 6:06am) - Siyum bechorim – 6:30am

7:00am, Siyum bechorim - 7:45am.

7:55am, Siyum bechorim - 8:40am

CHOMETZ CAN BE EATEN UNTIL 10:38am

CHOMETZ CAN BE BURNED UNTIL 11:45am

Monday night/Tuesday – April 22/23 - PESACH - 1ST NIGHT/DAY OF PESACH

Candle lighting - 7:24pm; Mincha - 7:29pm

Ma'ariv **NOT BEFORE** – 8:00pm

Nightfall (kiddush) - 8:00pm; CHATZOS ----- 12:54am

TUESDAY – April 23 - FIRST DAY PESACH

Shacharis – **Hokeil** - 5:52am (heinetz – 6:04am); 8:20am (Hashkama); 9:15am (Main shul)

Daf Yomi – 6:25pm; Mincha – 1:45pm and 7:25pm

Ma'ariv **NOT BEFORE** – 8:00pm

Candle lighting **NOT BEFORE** - 8:25pm

WEDNESDAY – April 24 - SECOND DAY PESACH

Shacharis – **Hokeil** - 5:51am (heinetz – 6:03am); 8:20am (Hashkama); 9:15am (Main shul)
Daf Yomi – 6:25pm; Mincha – 1:45pm and 7:25pm;
Ma'ariv **NOT BEFORE** – 8:15pm; Motza'ei Yom Tov – 8:25pm

HAVDALA – NO B'SAMIM, NO FIRE

CHOL HAMOED PESACH – April 25 – April 28

Shacharis – Thurs/Fri - 5:30am (Vasikin), 7:00am, 7:55am; Mincha – Thurs – April 25 - 7:30pm

SHABBOS CHOL HAMOED – April 26-27

Friday night – April 26 - Candle lighting – 7:29pm **but not before 6:22pm**

Mincha - Friday - **THREE MINYANIM** – 1:45pm; Plag minyan – 6:07pm; Z'man – 7:34pm

SHABBOS – April 27

Shacharis – **Shocheyn Ad** - 5:45am (heinetz – 5:59am); 7:50am (Hashkama); 9:15am (Main shul)
Shir Hashirim from Klaf with Brochos - 9:40am – Main shul
Mincha – THREE minyanim – 1:45, 6:00, 7:20pm – **Daf Yomi – 6:20** - No s'euda sh'lishis in shul
Ma'ariv – 8:20pm; Motza'ei Shabbos – 8:30pm – Regular, full Motza'ei Shabbos Havdala

SUNDAY, Erev Yom Tov – April 28

Shacharis – 5:30am (heinetz – 5:58am); 7:55am

CANDLE LIGHTING - 7:31pm, **BUT NOT BEFORE 6:23pm**

Mincha - **THREE MINYANIM** – 1:45pm; Plag minyan – 6:08pm; Z'man – 7:36pm

MONDAY, SHVI' SHEL PESACH – April 29 - 7th DAY

Shacharis – **Hokeil** - 5:44am (heinetz – 5:56am); 7:50am (Hashkama); 9:15am (Main shul)

Daf Yomi – 6:45pm

Mincha – **TWO MINYANIM (No Plag minyan)** – 1:45pm; Z'man – 7:35pm

Ma'ariv **NOT BEFORE** – 8:05pm

CANDLELIGHTING **NOT BEFORE** 8:32pm

TUESDAY – ACHARON SHEL PESACH – April 30 - 8th DAY

Shacharis – **Hokeil** - 5:43am (heinetz – 5:55am); 7:50am (Hashkama); 9:15am (Main shul)

YIZKOR - 10:00am – Main Shul

Daf Yomi – 6:20pm; Mincha - 1:45pm and 7:20pm

Ma'ariv **NOT BEFORE** – 8:20pm

Motza'ei Yom Tov – 8:33pm - **HAVDALA – NO B'SAMIM, NO FIRE**

SPECIAL NOTES –

- 1) – Shabbos and Yom Tov morning minyan times are SHOCHEYN AD/HOKEIL times
- 2) – Each Shabbos and Yom Tov morning there is an Edot Mizrach minyan at 9:15am
- 3) – There is a Mincha G'dola minyan EVERY DAY at 1:45pm in the main shul

PLEASE ALLOW 1 HOUR AFTER MOTZA'EI YOM TOV FOR RABBI RALBAG TO CONCLUDE THE CHOMETZ TRANSACTION.

YOUNG ISRAEL OF AVE. K - SCHEDULE FOR SHABBOS – Apr 19-20

(EMAIL - yiofavek@gmail.com)

Candlelighting – 7:21pm BUT NOT BEFORE 6:16pm

EARLY MINCHA – 1:45pm; Friday Plag minyan – 5:56pm; Friday z’man minyan – 7:26pm

**THIS SHABBOS – Two minyanim for Shabbos afternoon Mincha – 1:45pm, 7:00pm
ALWAYS CHECK ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR CHANGES**

SHABBOS MORNING MINYANIM

Shabbos Shacharis – Shocheyn Ad – 5:55am (heineitz – 6:08:54); 7:50am; 9:15am

WEEKDAY SHACHARIS MINYANIM – 5:40am, 7:00am, 7:55am

DAF YOMI ON SHABBOS - BAVA M’TZIYA 52 – 6:00pm

DAF HAYOMI – MORNING AND NIGHT THIS WEEK:

Mornings – Monday through Friday – 6:15am; Nightly, Sunday through Thursday – 8:30pm

REMEMBER that we have set up conferencing capability for our shiurim. Please call in to hear our wonderful Daf

Yomi Maggidei shiur, Rabbi Moshe Zywica - mornings, and Rabbi Shmuel Sadowsky - evenings

Mornings – Monday THROUGH Friday – 6:15am – (605) 313-5943, ID – 106083#

Nightly, Sunday THROUGH Thursday – 8:30pm – Zoom ID 770 292 6177#, PW – 414019#

Z’MAN KRIAS SH’MA THIS SHABBOS IS 9:31am

MINCHA GEDOLA EVERY AFTERNOON INCLUDING FRIDAY – 1:45pm

Sh’kiya Friday Night – 7:40pm

Earliest Tallis – 5:12pm

K’VASIKIN – Heineitz is at 6:08:54am (Shocheyn Ad – 5:55am)

Hashkama Minyan – Shocheyn Ad – 7:50am; Regular Minyan – Shocheyn Ad – 9:15am

Earliest Mincha Shabbos afternoon – 1:29pm

Mincha G’dola – 1:45pm

Daf Yomi – 6:00pm – Rabbi Shmuel Sadowsky

Mincha #2 – 7:00pm followed by Rav Ralbag’s Shabbos Hagadol Drasha

Sh’kiya Shabbos afternoon – 7:41pm

Ma’ariv – follows the Rav’s Drasha

Motza’ei Shabbos – 8:25pm

Weekday Mincha followed by Ma’ariv – 7:25pm

The Y. I. of Ave. K edition is dedicated in loving memory of ILANA MICHAL b. AMIT YEHUDA, a”h