PESACH FIRST DAYS | 12 - 19 NISSAN 5783 | APRIL 3 - 10 2023



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RABBI YY JACOBSON

WILL <u>NOT</u> BE IN TOWN FOR SHABBOS



845-356-2273 77 Route 59, Monsey, NY In front of Evergreen Shopping Center

PESACH

Every year on the eve of Pesach after a wonderful Seder we lie in bed falling asleep and there is something else different from all other nights; we don't say Shema. As we know, its "lail shemurim l'bnei Yisrael" a time that Hashem will watch us so we don't need the extra protection that we normally receive from saying the Shema. How is it that the Shema protects us? Do we need a special Kavana(thoughts) to receive that protection? Is it a magical Segula? Why is it that we say Shema just twice a day, if it protects us we should say it many other times?

The Medrash that Rashi quotes teaches us that the moment that Yaakov and Yosef met after 22 years of being apart, Yosef cried on his father's shoulders and Yaakov recited the Shema. We can only imagine the emotional scene of the most powerful king reuniting with his father after so many years, the paparazzi taking millions of pictures, headlines in every newspaper around the world. But the question is, why was Yaakov reciting Shema at this amazing time? Did he, chas v'shalom, miss minyan on that day? Could he have not better worked out his schedule so that he would be finished reciting his shema of the day and fully concentrate on the reunion of his dearest son?

The minhag by Sephardic Jews is to say Patach Eliyahu before Mincha and in that special tefilah Eliyahu Hanavi says we know that Hashem is full of Chochma but we will never know his wisdom in totality. We know he is mighty but we will never know all of his strength. The only thing we can know from Hashem in it's entirety is his attributes of his Unity (his oneness). The reason is in his wisdom or strength the more we know, we realize we know nothing. It constantly grows exponentially from our ability to comprehend. But Hashem's unity we can perceive because it's the accumulation of all life experiences that we have, that are even conflicting with one another, are all Hashem. His Unity is like all of our comprehensions of Hashem coming to an inward point, whereas his strengths and wisdoms get wider and wider. This is the meaning of Shema Yisrael -accept or hear Israel, Hashem- the attribute of mercy, Elokeinu- the attribute of judgment, Hashem Achod- they are one. It is the understanding that all of our life's experiences are kindness from Hashem.

That is why Yaakov Avinu said Shema at that moment when he met Yosef. It was the most appropriate pasuk to say as he experienced firsthand all the years of pain was now clarified as the greater good. The message of the absolute unity of Hashem became so alive for him at that instant and he expressed it by saying Shema.

Throughout the night of the Seder we live this reality of seeing how everything Hashem does is all good for that is the story of the Hagada. We were pained in Egypt but we exited much stronger. We grew tremendously, it's the process of hardening steel; the more you bang on it, the harder it becomes. This was known as Kor Habarzel and it made us worthy to be Hashems nation. When you are living in Hashems unity on the night of Pesach you don't need to additionally recite it because we are experiencing it and being it. This is the reason we don't say Shema on the night of the Seder, and this is how we are different than on all other nights. The protection of the Shema is the constant reminder that everything is all good; we can't get hurt as Hashem is guiding everything. Shema is not some kind of spell or magic. We recite the Shema every morning in preparation for the day to keep the awareness that all is one and all is good. We recite Shema when we go to sleep and we reflect over our day and see how things worked out, how life mends and heals B"H. We can rest knowing we are in the hands of Hashem and it's all good.

May we be zoche, this year, to open the door and greet Eliyahu Hanavi who will share with us the good news of the final redemption which will enable us to live constantly in the unity of Hashem Chag Kasher Vshameah

Aaron Lankry

		Statement and	-		
April 5		Siyum Bechorim	1.5		פסח תשפ"ג בית מ
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	7:10 PM	Sof Zman Biur 11:42	-	COMMUNITY LEARNING CEN	
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	12:58 AM	עירוב תבשלין		Tuesday, April 11 ^{th,}	ערב יום טוב
oril 6 First day of Pesach (ברכת טל)				Early Mincha	1:34, 2:00,2:30,3:00,3:30,4:00 PM
20 upstairs)		letz 6:33) Followed by Daf Yomi	1.1	Candle Lighting	7:13PM
,	8:00 AM		-	Mincha	7:15 PM Followed by Maariv
	9:45 AM		1	Bais Chabad	7:15 PM Followed by Maariv
	10:00 AM		-	Shkiya	7:31 PM
ר)	10:30 AM			Эпктуа	7.51110
	1:45 PM		100	Wednesday, April 12 th , שביעי של פסח	
	7:10 PM			Shachris Neitz	5:53 AM (Neitz 6:23) followed by Daf Yomi
	7:26 PM		1.33	Early Shachris	8:00 AM (Ashkenaz)
	8:00 PM			Sof Zman Kriyas Shema	9:03/9:39
		0 Min) ספירת העומר		Shachris	9:15 AM (Hodu 9:30am)
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il 8 th (שיר השירים)			-		5:51AM (NEITZ 6:21) followed by Daf Yomi
	5:59 AM(Neitz 6:29) followed by Daf Yomi		1	Early Shachris	8:00AM (Ashkenaz)
	8:00 AM		- 5	Sof Zman Kriyas Shema	9:03/9:39
ihema	9:07/9:43		35	Shachris	9:15AM (Hodu 9:30am)
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	כה) 8:19 PM ((ווין בו	-		

Shachris (Tent) Bais Chabad Shachris (18 Main) Sof Zman Kriyas Sh Early Mincha Mincha followed I Bais Chabad Candle Lighting Shkiya Shachris Neitz Early Shachris Sof Zman Kriyas Sh

> Shachris Bais Chabad Shachris (18 Main) Early Mincha Mincha Shkiya Bais Chabad **Maariy**

Wednesday, A Candle Lighting Mincha Bais Chabad Shkiya CHATZOS

Thursday, Apr Shachris Vasikin (2 Early Shachris Bais Chabad Shachris (18 Main) Early Mincha Mincha Shkiya Maariv Candle Lighting Friday, April 7 Shachris Neitz Tef Shachris Neitz Tef



Someone asked me recently on Whatsapp, "So what's up with all these Chumros on Pesach? They just don't make sense from a Halachik perspective." His question was a legitimate one. It does seem that when it comes to the holiday of Pesach, we suddenly veer away from reasoning and follow a path of Chumros. In fact, if not for the documented commentaries of the learned Rishonim, Achronim, the Yerushlami and Ari Z"l, we might agree that we go a bisel meshuga on Pesach. Indeed, I think that this is exactly the point--on Pesach we do go meshuga. Each Middah incorporates a bit of craziness which we can say light-heartedly is really an actual command as it states in the Tochecha in Parshas Bechukosai והיית משוגע -- you should be crazy. While in this instance it implies a curse, every middah can also be utilized as both a negative and a positive experience.

The passuk which many poskim suggest we quote when coming to shul is העת את ה'-we will know and run to know Hashem. Rashi, when portraying how Avraham Avinu rose early to follow the command of Hashem for Akeidas Yitzchak, quotes the words of Chazal-em for Akeidas Yitzchak, quotes the words of Chazal-muth and the command of Hashem for Akeidas Yitzchak, quotes the words of Chazal-em for Akeidas Yitzchak, quotes the words of Chazal-ent cove perverts the true path. The Rambam in Hilchos Teshuva defines the ultimate level of Teshuva as the love of Hashem and compares it to the love of a person crazy for a woman – he doesn't stop thinking about her. These are all powerful lessons that provide the key to understanding what may sound as ultra- strict measures of carefulness in preparation for the momentous night of Pesach.

We can also well understand the custom of reading Shir Hashirim both at the end of the Seder night and on Shabbas Chol Hamoed Pesach because it emphasizes our intense connection to Hashem, the one and only Creator of the universe who loves us more than anyone else and has chosen us to be His children and emissaries in the world.

The Vilna Gaon explains beautifully the words of the Yerushalmi quoted by Tosfos in the beginning of Arvei Pesachim that eating Matzoh Erev Pesach before the right time is like a Chasan that can't wait for the Chupah with his future wife. The Gra explains that it refers to the Sheva Brachos - the seven blessings that we recite before eating the Matzoh. The focus of all this is exactly as we explained above: we are celebrating the intense connection that Hashem has made with us. So when we understand what Pesach Night is all about, we have good reasons to go "A bissel meshuga."

Wishing everyone a very special Pesach Kasher Vesameach

Rabbi Aaron Lankry Marah D'asra 305-332-3311 alankry@yahoo.com **Rabbi Daniel Coren** דומ"צ - מניד שישר 914-645-4199 | rabbidac@gmail.com Rabbi Nachum Scheiner Rabbinic Coordinator, Rosh Kollel, Kollel Boker & Night Kollel 845-587-3462 | rabbischeiner@18forshay.com

Shmulie Fruchter Manager 845-587-3462 ext 4 | manager@18forshay.com

PESACH EIRUV TAVSHILIN – SEGULAH FOR YIRAS SHOMAYIM

ABBI YAKOV YOSEF SCHECHTER

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The Gemara in Yuma 28b says that we learn from the Posuk in Bereishis 26:5 "עקב אשר שמע אברהם בקלי, וישמר משמרתי Wath Avrohom Avinu was Mekayeim all of the Mitzvos of the Torah, even Eiruv Tavshilin. It is learned from the word, "תורתי" – which is a Loshon Rabbim – meaning two Torahs – Avrohom kept both Torah Shebiksav and Torah Shebal Peh. Why does the Gemara choose the Mitzvah of Eiruv Tavshilin as the "Mitzvah" that demonstrates the extent of what Avrohom Avinu kept?

We can answer this question based on the words of the Belzer Rebbe, who said, "Eiruvei Tavshilin is a Segulah for Yiras Shomayim - so I have as a Kabbalah from my holy forefathers." One Shita in the Gemara says that the reason for an Eiruv Tavshilin is to ensure that one has proper food for the honor of Yom Tov, as well as having proper food for the honor of Shabbos. The other Shita says that the reason is so that one should not come to cook on Yom Toy for the weekdays. The reason for this is because of Yiras Shomayim, that one should not Chas V'sholom be Mechalel Yom Tov, or forget to take care of his needs for Shabbos. Ensuring not to be Mechalel Yom Tov, and making sure to take care of his needs for Shabbos so that Shabbos receives the proper honor, comes from Yirah. Therefore, Eiruv Tavshilin is a Segulah for Yiras Shomayim.

Avrohom Avinu served Hakodosh Boruch Hu with Ahavah, with love. The Nisoyon of the Akeidah was to see if Avrohom could also serve Hakodosh Boruch Hu with Yirah. After Avrohom passed the test of the Akeidah, the Torah tells us that now it is known that Avrohom is a Yarei Elokim. The Gemara mentions that Avrohom Avinu even performed the Mitzvah of Eiruv Tavshilin to stress that Avrohom Avinu performed his Avodas Hashem in a complete manner: in Ahavas Hashem; Avrohom's great love for Hashem was well known, as well as his Yiras Hashem. The Posuk uses the word "עקב – which is a Remez to Avrohom Avinu's Yiras Hashem. (יצב אברהם)

Eiruv Tavshilin is that which that needs to be done prior to something else – prior to Yom Toy and Shabbos. The Mishna in Avos in the fourth Perek tells us. "העולם הזה דומה לפרוזדור בפני העולם הבא. התקן עצמך בפרוזדור כדי שתכנס לטרקלין – "This world is like the antechamber for the World to Come. Prepare yourself in the antechamber so that you may enter the grand ballroom." Avrohom Avinu was the carrier of the Mesorah. Although he did not actually receive the Torah from Hakodosh Boruch Hu, it is as if he did. He was prepared to fulfill the Rotzon Hashem no matter what it was. Avrohom's Midah was a Midah of Chesed - Ahavah, yet he also served Hakodosh Boruch Hu with Yirah. He knew everything in the Torah Shebiksav and Torah Shebal Peh, and followed it to the letter, and was also able to elevate his performance to that of a מצווה ועושה. Avrohom Avinu stayed focused on what his Avodah was in this world, and was preparing for the future.

It says in the Tur that the Yom Tov of Pesach is K'neged Avrohom Avinu. Let's take these holy days of Pesach, and make them days of Aliyah through proper Avodah. Let's prepare for this holy Yom Tov, with an Eiruv Tavshilin and other preparations, so that it will be a truly uplifting Yom Tov. No matter where one is, or what the situation may be, we must all seek to elevate ourselves, and really connect to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Know that a Yid is never alone - Hakodosh Boruch Hu is always there. Chazal tell us that on Leil Pesach, there is a Gilui Shechina, and it is a time for one to connect to Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

All of Klal Yisroel left Mitzrayim on Pesach – and there is a specific command on Pesach that each and every Yid should see it as if he is actually leaving Mitzrayim on that night. May we be Zoche to emulate Avrohom Avinu, and seek to fulfill the Rotzon Hashem in all aspects of our lives, both through Ahavah, as well as Yirah. May all of Klal Yisroel be Zoche to Yeshuos, Refuos, and be Zoche to the Geulah Shlaima, שמו אמנה בימינו אמן



Of course, the main purpose of the evening is L'hagid (וְהְגֵּדָת לְבְנֵך). There is an old Chakira that I had for many many years. What is the Mitzvah of Maggid. Is the Mitzvah of Maggid to tell someone something that he never heard before or it the Mitzvah of Maggid to tell somebody something that he already knows? In other words what is the Mitzvah of Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim, do you have to say Chiddushim to the person who is listening or is it enough to recite what was? We have a bit of a Kasha and that is that we know that the Haggadah has to be said B'derech Shaila U'teshuva (question and answer) and that sounds like you are going to hear a Chiddush. However, there is a difficulty. That is because the question and answer is prewritten. If it is prewritten how is that a question and answer? So this needs a Hesber.

The Malbim explains the difference between the word L'haggid and L'sapeir. Both of which mean to tell. The Malbim's Yesod is that in the Hebrew language there are separate words for telling someone something which he knows already and telling someone something new. Now when it comes to the Haggadah is says both Shemos 13:8 (הַבָּדָת לְבִנְך בַּיוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר) L'haggid and it also says in Shemos 10:2 (הַעַלְלָתִי בְּמַצְרַיִם וּלְמַעֵן הְּסַפֵּר) which is a Lashon of Sippur. Therefore, it would seem to turn out that you would need both, to tell the old and to tell the new. Well which one is the Mitzvah, how do you do both? (Please look in the Avadim Hayinu section at what Rav Hutner says regarding the difference between a Talmid and an outsider).

The Malbim who is the authority of this type of definition of words, writes in Tehillim 19:2 something that we say every Shabbos (ה ר מִעַשֵׁה י ד יו, מַגִּיד) the following. He says in Lashon Kadosh we find the Lashon of (לְהַגִּיד) as in Tehillim 92:3 (לְהַגִּיד לְהַגִּיד בַּבֹקֶר) is to tell something new. L'sapeir is to relate something old. So that in Hebrew there are words similar to synonyms but not quite synonyms which refer to two ideas. (לְהַגִּיד כְּבוּד-קל) is something new and L'sapeir as in Tehillim 19:2 (לְהַגִּיד כְבוּד-קל) refers to things that are already known.

How does that explain the night of the Seder? In a confusing way. On the night of the Seder we are commanded as it says in Shemos 13:8 (הַוּא הַהָּאַ וֹרָבָרָ בַּיּוֹם). L'hagid, so you are supposed to say something new. But the Torah also says in Shemos 10:2 (הַא זְבֵי בְנָך וּבָן-בָּנְך וֹרָבָו הָנָד ז to say the old. Which one is it, is it to say the old or is it to say the new? The Avoda on the night of the Seder is to say the old and to have a new appreciation. To say that which we already know which is Yetzias Mitzrayim but to understand it with a greater Chashivus and a greater depth.

In the Mah Nishtanah section of Maggid, it is brought B'sheim the GRA that Halaila Hazeh seems improper, as we know that any word that ends in a Komeitz Hei is Lashoin Nekaiva. So it should be Halaila Hazois to make it that both words are Lashoin Nekaiva? The GRA explains that by the night of Pesach it was Yoim and it only appeared to be night. Night symbolizes Tzarois and difficulty. The night of Pesach is like day because it is a wonderful and bright period. So we say Halaila Hazeh in the Lashon Zachor which is a Lashoin of Yom.

The Torah Temimah brings this Vort and he is tremendously upset over it, he says it is not Emes and the Kasha does not begin. The word Laila is an exception to the rule, it is always Lashoin Zachor. We just had in the Megillah, Balaila Hahu Nadida Shnas Hamelech. We have Laila Hahu Yotzah Mimitzrayim. Hahu is Lashon Zachor not Lashon Nekaivah. Obviously, Laila is Lashon Zachor. Ai, it says Mikol "Haleilois" in the Mah Nishtaneh which is a Lashoin Nekaivah? We find the word B'chor which is Lashon Zachor, and we call it Makos "B'choirois". So there are exceptions to the rule. The Torah Temimah still maintains that the Kasha does not begin and that Laila is Lashon Zachor and there is no Shaila on the Mah Nishtaneh.

The same exact Vort is brought B'sheim the Shla Hakadoish. He says that 2 mistakes should come up is a very strange thing. 1) Laila Hazeh instead of Laila Hazois and 2) Laila K'Yoim Yair. Rebbi suggested an answer, that Laila symbolizes Tzarois. Really it should be Lashoin Nekaivah, however, when darkness is secretly very good then it is Lashoin Zachor. Then it is Laila K'yoim Yair. The truth is, every Laila is that way. Laila in Tanach typically doesn't mean nighttime it means a period of difficulty, a time of Tzarah. In Tehillim it is certainly that way. All Lailois appear B'Lashoin Zachor. Balaila Hahu Nadida Shnas Hamelech, it looks like a difficult time for Klal Yisroel, however, the Yeshua was beginning. Any difficult time a person goes through, the secret is Laila Kayoim Yair. It is not a difficult time it is a wonderful time, it's just that we don't see it. Therefore, the GRA and Shla who's Vort is primarily aimed at the Megillah is applicable everywhere.



In Vayikra 13:52, the Torah tells us that one needs to burn clothing that was afflicted with tzoraas.

The Tosefta in 5:13 says that if a Jew dyes the clothing afflicted with tzoraas or sells it to a non-Jew, the clothing becomes tahor. The reason for this is that if a non-Jew has an article of clothing with tzoraas on it, it would not be tamei; so too, if a Jew sells an article of clothing with tzoraas on it to a non-Jew, it automatically becomes tahor. The Rambam in 13:15 of Hilchos Tzoraas brings the above opinion down le'halacha.

The Ohr Sameach and the Chazon Ish ask how can one sell something that is assur be'hanaah? We find that an ox that was sentenced to be stoned for goring a human may not be sold since it is assur be'hanaah. We also find the same concept that chametz after the time that it becomes assur may no longer be sold to a non-Jew. Why is it permissible for the article of clothing with tzoraas to be sold?

The Ohr Sameach and the Chazon Ish explain that one may not sell an item that is assur be'hanaah in a case where it will remain assur be'hanaah in the hand of the buyer as well. Since the tzoraas clothing in the hand of the non-Jew would be muttar be'hanaah since clothing of a non-Jew is never tamei tzoraas, the sale would therefore be valid. In a case of an ox that was sentenced to be stoned, it would be assur even in the hands of the non-Jew; therefore, the sale is invalid.

What about selling chametz to a non-Jew? The Ramabm in 1:3 Chametz and Matza, says that one does not get malkus (39 lashes) if he transgresses the lav of Bal Yeiroeh (chametz may not be seen nor found in a Jewish home.) The reason why one does not get malkus is because having chametz in one's domain is not an action, but rather an act of passivity that he did not get rid of his chametz. The Rambam concludes that in a case where a Yid obtains chametz by buying it from a non-Jew, this will cause him to get malkus.

The Noda Biyhuda in Vol 1, Orach Chaim 19, asks, how is it possible to buy chametz if it is assur be'hanaah? The Ran in Avoda Zora 18b, in the dafim of the Rif differentiates between chametz of a Jew which is assur Be'hanaah and chametz of a non-Jew. Since the Yid has a mitzvah to destroy his chametz, it is therefore assur be'hanaah and the chametz has no monetary value; however, by a non-Jew who has no mitzvah of destroying his chametz, his chametz will have monetary value.

There may be no issur be'hanaah for the goy, but a Jew has an issur as soon as he gets the chametz and therefore the chametz would have no monetary value so how is he transgressing when it has no monetary value? The Ran explains that since chametz is a temporary issur - it is limited in time only during the Yom Tov of Pesach - it therefore has monetary value to buy and sell because it will become muttar right after Pesach. We see from the Ran that something that will become muttar after a period of time still has monetary value and can be bought or sold. In the case of an article of clothing; since it will be muttar as soon as it reaches the non-Jew's hands, it therefore is considered as having monetary value even though it is assur be'hanaah.

May we be zocheh to do all the Mitzvos properly this Pesach! Do you have a topic or discussion you want to read about? Please send comments or questions to hymanbsdhevens@gmail.com or berachsteinfeldscorner@gmail.com

rabbi dovid orlofsky **MY BROTHER**

לא לָנוּ ד' לא לָנוּ Not for our sake, Hashem, not for our sake...

Years ago, as a young man enjoyed the smooth ride in his new car, he pulled up to the local supermarket to buy some groceries. While looking for a place to park, he caught sight of his friend's younger brother gazing at his car. Rolling down his window, the young man called out to the boy, "Do you like the car?" "I really do. Where did you get it?" "My brother bought it for me," the man replied.

Still entranced by the sight of the car, the boy stood there. The man figured that he would respond as any other typical boy would, "Oh, I wish I had a brother like that!" But this boy was different; he had a different look on the matter. "Wow!" he said, "I wish I could be a brother like that."

Caught off guard by such a comment, the man said to the boy, "Would you like to go for a ride?" With his face breaking out in a smile, the little boy excitedly nodded his head. "Can we drive to my house?" asked the boy. The man figured that the boy wished to show off the elegant car to his friends, to which he happily complied.

When the man finally pulled into the driveway of the house, the boy turned to the man and shyly asked, "Could you wait just a moment?" Running inside, the little boy soon came out carrying his younger brother who could not walk. He had polio. As he brought him close to the car, he clenched his brother tightly and said, "Can you see that? His brother bought him that car. One day I will buy you a car like that so it will be easier for you to get around. Right now it's a bit hard for you to do so, but that will one day all change."

Just listen to the beautiful message of this little boy: "Everybody wishes they had a brother like that; but how many people wish they could be a brother like that." We would live as much happier, thoughtful and selfless people if we would only adopt such an attitude.



BBI YY JACOBSON

The Sweetest Lettuce is the Bitterest

Life-Changing Seder Gems

Not the Cookie Cutter Model

"The Torah speaks of four children: One is wise, one is rebellious, one is simple and one does not know how to ask."-Haggadah

This simple, brief passage of the Haggadah contains profound pedagogical insight. To begin with, three critical points are being conveyed:

#1: No two children are alike and no two children can be spoken to alike. We sometimes want to create a "cookie cutter" model, where one size fits all. 3,000 years ago the Torah told us it will not work. The message you give one child is not the one you can give to a second child. There are different types of children-with different personality types, skills, challenges, and gifts. You must find the proper words to speak to each one; you must discover the proper mechanisms through which to penetrate each one of them.

#2: Despite these four being so different they are all your children. Never give up on any of them, or tell yourself that this one is too difficult for me to deal with. All four are your children. They may differ in so many ways, but what unites them is that they are your children. You must and can be here for each of them. You have the power to touch each of them and to make their souls shine

#3: The Torah speaks to each of the four children. Do not think that the Torah is a general document that works for many or most children, but there are some outcasts, misfits, to whom the Torah does not relate. That is never the case. The Torah speaks to every child. Judaism contains truths that can be related to every single child. We must search for the proper words and approach of how to make the Torah relevant and palpable to these children. We must discover how to give them the Torah in a way that they will appreciate how it speaks to their individual lives.

Give Me Some Passion

"In the beginning our fathers served idols; and now G-d has brought us close to His service."-Haggadah

Why would we begin this section of the Haggadah with the observation of how morally degraded our ancestors were? Besides, which of our ancestors worshiped idols? Abraham, the first Jew, our first father, smashed the idols of his father Terach and embraced Monotheism! True, it took Abraham some time till he discovered that the Pagan idols were futile. But why would we make mention of that at this point?

The answer to this is powerful. The Hag-

gadah is not simply describing our ugly past. "In the beginning our fathers served idols; but now G-d has brought us close to His service." Rather, the Haggadah is explaining why indeed G-d brought us close to His service. "In the beginning our fathers served idols"-that is why "now G-d has embraced us." Had our fathers not worshiped idols G-d could have never brought us to His service! What indeed constituted the difference between the father Terach and his son Abraham? If Abraham rationally realized that the statutes of his father were lifeless, stone images, and that the universe must

have a transcendental designer and creator, why could his father not understand the same principle? The foundations of Judaism do not require blind faith. They are rational. To assume

that a house was built by a contractor, not as a result of an avalanche randomly combining the bricks that built the home, is quite rational. To embrace the notion that the 40 trillion cells of one human body, each cell organized with mind-staggering coherence, skill and order, did not occur randomly, is not primitive. (And this is only one body of one human. Now multiply these mind blowing structures with every other organism on our planet!). Similarly, for the Jews standing at Sinai it was rational to belief that G-d wants them to observe the Torah.

So here is the question: Why are some people are like Abraham—they will reject the deities of the time and embrace truth, while other will be like Terach, and continue to stick to the old, comfortable irrational notions?

The answer is: "In the beginning our fathers served idols"-and that is why "now G-d has brought us close to His service." Abraham worshipped idols! That is the key. He took faith seriously. He craved to know the truth. He was idealistically searching to discover what is at the core of life. He served idols with passion and commitment, believing that they constitute the answer to life's deepest questions. His father Terach was not searching for truth, only for comfort. The pagan statues provides a safe business and he would not be disturbed by questions of truth. Do you care for truth or not? That makes all the difference. Our forefathers worshipped idols for real, they passionately believed this was "it." When they found the real G-d they now channeled their passion toward truth.

But if you are a person who does not worship anybody or anything, only your needs and comforts at the moment, then even if you understand the truth about the universe it makes little difference. (Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi.)

The Secret of Romaine Lettuce: Pharaoh, **Hitler and the Frog**

What is the proffered ingredient to use for maror, the bitter herbs?

The Talmud states that one can perform the mitzvah of eating maror through one of five vegetables. In the words of Maimonides: "The bitter herbs referred to by the Torah are Romaine lettuce, endives, horseradish, date ivy, wormwood. All of these five species of vegetable are called maror."

Yet, as the codes of Jewish law state, the most preferable item to use is romaine lettuce. It is just that if one cannot obtain romaine lettuce, then he can use one of the other types of maror. Many have a custom to eat both romaine lettuce and horseradish. But it is the romaine lettuce that takes precedence.

This is strange. Romaine lettuce is not bitter in the slightest. We eat lettuce with our salad all year round, and it is not bitter. If anything it is quite sweet tasting. So why eat lettuce to commemorate the bitterness of Egyptian slavery? And why would the lettuce precede the horseradish which is visibly bitter?

It is here we can discover the subtlety of many Jewish laws, and their psychological intricacies. The answer is provided by the 17th century sage, Rabbi Tzvi Ashkenazi (known as the Chacham Tzvi).

The sweet piece of lettuce is a sneaky little vegetable. Its nature very closely parallels the Egyptian slavery experience-and that it why it is the most preferred item for maror.

Lettuce has a gentle and pleasant taste only because we pick it when it is young. But leave the lettuce stalk in the ground for a bit longer, and it turns bitter and pungent. What starts off sweet, turns sour in the end

This was the exact course of events in Egypt. Pharaoh did not begin enslaving and crushing the Hebrews conspicuously. It began very slowly, enlisting them into the task force for pay. (The term "avodas perech," crushing labor, is explained by our sages as "peh rach," a soft mouth.) Once he had the Jews working for him under his domain, once the Jewish defenses were down, the harsh labor and slavery began. Like the lettuce stalk, it all seemed sweet at first, but given some time it turned bitter.

The Frog

I once read of a fascinating scientific experiment. If you were to place a frog in boiling water, it would jump out. Its instinct protects itself automatically from danger. But if you were to deceive its natural instincts by putting the frog in cold water, and then slowly warm the water, the frog will remain in the water and it will, in fact, boil to death.

That's the way slavery, oppression, and all other forms of degradation function. If you throw a person into a terrible, degrading experience suddenly they are going to fight it. But if it is slowly incorporated into them, and it becomes a habit, then their natural instinct to rebel is dulled.

Pharaoh and Hitler

That was the cleverness of Pharaoh, and the meaning of his words in the opening of the book of Exodus: "havah nischakmah lo," 'let us treat the Jews cleverly." Pharaoh didn't just take them and throw them into ghettos. He didn't make them slaves right away, only gradually, little by little, taking away their rights, and before they realized it, they had the status of slaves. It became a habit and they themselves became accustomed to it. That water was comfortable at first, but slowly and surely, it began to heat up. Before they knew it, it was boiling over.

Hitler used the very same tactic to take away the sense of freedom and independence from the Jews, and turn them into subhuman objects. The prescribed program for the Jewish people was first the Nuremberg Laws, and little by little, layer by layer, peel by peel, their rights were removed. Jobs were taken away, identification badges were required to be worn on garments, no Jew could run for political office; their status as honorable law-abiding citizens of Germany no longer existed. Hitler's trick was to heat up the water slowly, so that the Jews would not realize immediately where he is heading. Gradually the water became hotter, until before they knew it, they were slaves to the Nazi regime. I'd like to believe that had Hitler announced, upon taking office in 1933, that all the Jews were going to be burned in ovens, to purify the Aryan race from Jewish vermin, the Jewish people would have fought back to stop the horror.

Decay and degradation do not just happen suddenly. They have a clever way of creeping up and robbing you of your capacity to fight back. The instinct of fight or flight is taken away and like the robber who cuts the wires to the alarm system before he does his dirty work, so too, Pharaoh or Hitler, or others, weaken the defenses of the victims with an insidious, pernicious, step by step program.

Breakup of the Family

This is true in our personal lives as well. Couples don't get divorced in one day. Children don't get alienated from parents in one day. People don't become alcoholics or other addicts in one day. Bernie Madoff did not become a mega-thief in one day. It is a gradual process. We make small mistakes; we ignore small symptoms; we fail to challenge the small habits and instincts. We ignore the small daggers at our heart. We deceive ourselves that it is all still sweet, functional, and fine. And then, before we know it the monster has grown strong and we are drowning in despair and grief. So at the Seder we eat lettuce. Not the mature and embittered type, but rather the lettuce that is still tasty and sweet. Because the sweet lettuce is the bitterest of them all. In life, beware of the lettuce. Kill the devil when it still appears to be benign.

We All Do Our PartA remarkable ceremony was instituted by the Chassidic master, Rabbi Naphtali of Ropschitz. The cup of Elijah, symbol of the messianic future, was passed from person to person at the table. Each person poured a little wine into Elijah's cup from his own cup, until it was filled.

The tradition expressed the truth that Elijah's cup is filled from all of our wines. We must act together, each contributing his or her own best talents and energies, to bring Elijah's promise to the world. No one is excluded from the work of bringing our world toward redemption. Each of us has something to do to ignite the world with love.



RABBI ZECHARIA WALLERSTEIN

THE STRANGE STICK

As a tzedakah collector once came to my office and I was about to write him a check, he told me to wait a minute. "Before you give me a check, would you mind if I ask you a question on the Haggadah? It is the easiest question you have ever heard. If you can answer it, I don't want the check; however, if you cannot answer it, I want double."

Being presented with this deal, I liked what I heard. "It's an easy question?" I confirmed. "It's the simplest question you ever heard on the Haggadah!" "Okay, go ahead," I said.

"In Chad Gadya, we read how a man purchased a goat for two zuzim. Along came a cat and ate the goat; along came a dog and ate the cat; along came a stick and hit the dog; fire then burnt up the stick; water then extinguished the fire; the cow then drank the water; the slaughterer then slaughtered the cow; the angel of death then killed the slaughterer; and then Hashem smote the angel of death.

Everything naturally makes sense in the sequence of events. Cats eat goats, dogs eat cats, water extinguishes fire, cows drink water and so on. But I have one question. How did the stick hit the dog? Sticks don't walk. It should have said that a person came with a stick and hit the dog. But it doesn't say that.

Thinking to myself how I have been reading the Haggadah for decades and never even considered this, I sat there silently. "Double the check please," he said. And I did.

"Let me tell you the answer," he continued. "The Haggadah was written in this way for a reason. When you read the story of Chad Gadya everything appears to occur naturally. But there is something the author of the Haggadah put into the middle of the story that doesn't make sense. A stick appears on its own and hits the dog. When you read this, you immediately raise your eyebrows and say, "Wait a second! How did the stick get there?" And then you realize that it must be Hashem holding the stick. And that being the case, the same is true of all the other "natural" sequence of events. Nothing is natural and happens by itself. Even the cat eating the goat and the water extinguishing the fire is the hand of Hashem."

After the man finished explaining this, I said, "I will triple your check." I was taken aback by this answer.

All throughout the hardships in our lives, we can never think it is natural. At the end of the Haggadah when we read about the events of Chad Gadya, we are meant to think of all the events in our own personal lives. And then we are to realize that even the stick that hits and the hardships that confront us are from Hashem. He is behind our lives every step of the way.

Stories for the YOM TOV TABLE

AN EFFORT TO SUCCEED

Rabbi Joey Haber told a story about a man whose effort proved to be invaluable. The man was asked to fly a Sefer Torah from one country to another. He got to the security line and was immediately confronted. "Sir, what is this?" the TSA agent asked. "It's a very holy religious object." The agent said, "Well it's going to have to go underneath the plane with the luggage. You can't carry that with you." The man replied, "Absolutely not, please just let me through. This needs to stay with me at all times." She saw it was important to him and answered, "Okay. You can try to go to the gate with it, but there's no way they'll let it on the plane." And she cleared him through security. When he approached the gate, the man at the gate stopped him. "Sir, what is that?" "This is my Torah," he answered. The man at the gate shook his head. "I was cleared through security, and it has to fly with me. I can't separate from it; it's really important." The man at the gate called his supervisor and after some deliberating, he said to the passenger, "If you want you can try to get on the plane but they're going to stop you at the door again. I'm telling you there is no way they're going to let you on that plane with that." The man happily went through and waited for his next hurdle. As he stepped on the plane with the Sefer Torah, the head flight attendant said, "Uh sir, no you can't bring that on this plane. You have to gate-check that. Other-wise we won't be able to take off." The man stressed how important this holy article was and begged them to let him keep it with him for the flight. The flight attendant went to get the pilot to ask special permission, and the man braced himself waiting for the final answer. The pilot came out and said, "What's going on here?" The man started rambling, "This is my Torah and it's extremely important, and I need it to fly with me so I could make sure nothing happens to it." The pilot said, "Well you can't keep it here, but no problem, you can keep it up in the cockpit with me, because that's where I keep my tefillin." When we want to achieve something, we can't just sit back. We have to do everything in our power to succeed, just as B'nei Yisrael put their blood, sweat, and tears into trying to build the Mishkan. May we see many berachot and successes from our efforts. May we all learn to appreciate the Shabbat and keep it to the highest standards that we possibly can, because it is the true source of all our berachot. Amen! Jack E. Rahmey as based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

THE GREATLY "DISRESPECTED" WOMAN ON THE BUS TO MERON

Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlit"a, relates that a young man once came to see Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l. He explained that he had been married for a number of years and had not yet been Bentched with a child, and he requested a Brachah from Rav Chaim. Rav Chaim advised him to seek out a person who controlled himself during an argument, and though he suffered humiliation and pain, he still refused to respond with anything negative in the argument. Rav Chaim said that such a person, who has exemplary selfcontrol, would be able to give him an effective Brachah. A while later, the young man returned to Rav Chaim and told him that he was able to discover such a person, but it was with great difficulty. He told Rav Chaim that he had asked this individual for a Brachah, and subsequently, he and his wife were Bentched with a baby! Rav Zilberstein then shared a story with a similar idea. The daughter of a prominent Talmid Chacham in Bnei Brak was married for guite some time, and had still not conceived. She had undergone many painful and difficult tests and procedures, but nothing helped. The frustration led to depression, and she began to accept her fate in life. As Lag B'Omer approached, this young woman's mother decided that she would travel to Meron to Daven at the Kever of Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai for her daughter. Perhaps a mother's broken-hearted Tefilah might make an impression in Shamayim. Her daughter also went to accompany her mother on the trip. It was 10:00 at night on Lag B'Omer, and the two set out for the bus station, among thousands of others, to take the bus to Meron. After a while, they were able to get seats on a bus. A woman, someone they did not know, sat down directly across from them. As the bus began to move, another passenger, a man, came over. He walked over to the seat occupied by this woman and began to shout and scream at her: "You are sitting in my seat!" However, she calmly explained to him that he was mistaken, and it was in fact her seat. The man was adamant. He insisted that it was his seat, and he wanted it now. The woman never raised her voice, despite the man's anger and the verbal abuse he was putting her though. The man was clearly wrong, rude, and impossible to reason with. Passengers sitting nearby came over and pleaded with him to leave this woman alone, but he would not back down. He kept on screaming at her, "Why did you take my seat?! Why won't you let me sit down in my seat?!" During this entire time, the woman never responded with anger. She just suffered her humiliation in silence. Finally, after the man had another angry tirade, she stood up and left the bus. The people who saw this were horrified by the man's behavior, and astounded by the woman's reaction. How could a person sustain so much abuse and not get even slightly upset? The bus moved on, and shortly after, this man, who was now in the woman's seat, started to feel bad about what he had done. He went from passenger to passenger, and explained that he was really not that kind of person who gets angry. He said he was a decent individual, but he was just overtired. The bus pulled into a rest area, and the passengers went to walk around a little. Meanwhile, other busses pulled in, and the rest area quickly began to fill up with people who were on their way to Meron. The woman and her daughter noticed that getting off another bus was the woman who had originally been on their bus. Apparently, she had gotten on another bus, and she was able to get a seat there. It was at that moment, when they saw her, they remembered what Rav Chaim Kanievsky had said about the type of person one should seek a Brachah from, and this woman clearly fit the description! The two went over to her, and the mother asked her if she would forgive the man for the hurt that he caused. She replied, "Certainly. I forgave him immediately." She then told her what Rav Chaim had said. She listened intently to the story, and the mother said, "Would you please give a Brachah to my daughter? She has not yet been Bentched with children." The woman smiled and said, "I would be happy to give her a Brachah!" She gave a warm Brachah for her to have a child, and within the year, she gave birth to a healthy baby boy! Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah



RABBI EFREM GOLDBERG

THANKING THOSE WHO PACKED YOUR PARACHUTE: THE ESSENCE OF DAYEINU

The real meaning of dayeinu and how it can transform your Passover experience. It is almost impossible to imagine the Seder night without the singing of dayeinu. The tune is catchy, but the words and theme are frankly bizarre. Had you taken us from Egypt but not split the sea, dayeinu. Really, would it have been enough? If you had taken us to Mount Sinai but not given us the Torah, dayeinu, it would have been enough. Really? Don't we talk about how the Torah is the air that we breathe, indispensable to our lives and to our very existence? Had He given us the Torah but not brought us into Israel it would have been enough. Really? Wasn't Israel created before the world because it, the Jewish people and Torah and the three pillars upon which the world is built?

I want to share with you an insight that will give you a new way to understand *dayeinu*. What do the 15 stanzas have in common? Why were these events or experiences chosen? Rabbi Nachman Cohen in his *Historical Haggada* offers a fantastic insight. If you look at the Torah and in <u>Psalms, chapter 106</u> in particular, you will notice that every stanza of *dayeinu* corresponds with an incredibly gracious act God did for us and our absolute ungrateful response.

Here are a few examples: We say "had God just taken us out of Egypt it would have been enough." However, if you look in <u>Deuteronomy</u> <u>1:27</u> it wasn't enough. "Because God hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us."

Another example: we say, "If you just fed us the manna it would have been enough." But it wasn't enough. We said, "Our soul loathes this bread." We say, "If You just brought us into Israel *dayeinu*, it would have been enough," but it wasn't. It says in Numbers, "[Israel is] the land that eats up its inhabitants."

Dayeinu reflects on our history and repairs the lack of gratitude we exhibited in the past. Seder night we look back on our national history, we review our story and we identify those moments, those gifts from God that we failed to say thank you for and we give thanks now. In truth, *dayeinu*, each of these things was enough to be exceedingly grateful for.

Freedom demands gratitude. If you are set free but fail to acknowledge how you attained that freedom, you remain enslaved to your ego and you selfishness. If you can't recognize what has been done for you and that you could not have done it yourself, you are trapped by your selfabsorption. Gratitude is a byproduct of true freedom.

The Midrash says that one who has no gratitude is like one who negates the existence

of God. If you are so insensitive to those who benefit and sustain you, certainly you will never recognize the blessings which God provides.

On the night of Passover, when we relive the experience of becoming a people and celebrate our national birth, we repair the ingratitude of our past with the recognition that we are unworthy and *dayeinu*, all that God did for us was beyond what we deserved.

Instilling Gratitude in the Home

A couple of years ago the *Wall Street Journal* had an article entitled, <u>Raising Children</u> <u>With an Attitude of Gratitude, Research Finds</u> <u>Real Benefits for Kids Who Say 'Thank You'</u>. The author, Dianna Kapp writes: "A field of research on gratitude in kids is emerging, and early findings indicate parents' instincts to elevate the topic are spot-on. Concrete benefits come to kids who literally

count their blessings. Gratitude works like a muscle. Take time to recognize good fortune, and feelings of appreciation can increase." The mere act of giving thanks has tangible benefits, research suggests. A 2008 study of 221 kids published in the Journal of School Psychology analyzed sixth- and seventhgraders assigned to list five things they were grateful for every day for two weeks. It found they had a better outlook on school and greater life satisfaction three weeks later, compared with kids assigned to list five hassles. "The old adage that virtues are caught, not taught, applies here," says University of California, Davis psychology professor Robert Emmons. Parents need to model this behavior to build their children's gratitude muscle. "It's not what parents want to hear, but you cannot give your kids something that you yourselves do not have," Dr. Emmons says. Everyday actions may be even more important than big efforts, researchers say. "Express gratitude to your spouse. Thank your kids,"

Hofstra's Dr. Froh says. "Parents say, 'Why should I thank them for doing something they should do, like clean their room?' By reinforcing this, kids will internalize the idea, and do it on their own."

Seder night is an incredible opportunity to model gratitude for our children, grandchildren and all gathered. During *dayeinu*, pause to be appreciative, not only to God for what He has done for our people and for each of us, but be thankful to those who worked so hard to make Passover happen. Someone had to work hard to earn the money to pay for Passover. Someone had to shop, cook, clean, prepare, set up, clean up, etc.

Passover reminds us that to set ourselves free we need to look back at our lives and identify those who made all the difference and whom we neglected to thank.

Who Packed Your Parachute?

Charles Plum, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate, was a jet fighter pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent six years in a Communist prison. He survived that ordeal and one day, when Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, "You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam and you were shot down!"

"How in the world did you know that?" asked Plumb.

"I packed your parachute," the man replied, "I guess it worked!"

That night, Plumb couldn't sleep. He kept wondering what this man might have looked like in a sailor uniform. He wondered how many times he might have passed him on the ship and never acknowledged him. How many times he never said hello, good morning or how are you. Plumb was a fighter pilot, respected and revered, while this man was just an ordinary sailor. Now it grated on his conscious.

Plumb thought of the many lonely hours the sailor had spent on a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship carefully weaving the fabric together, making sure the parachute was just right and going to great lengths to make it as precise as can be, knowing that somebody's life depended on it. Only now does Plumb have a full appreciation for what this man did. And now Plumb goes around the world as a motivational speaker asking people to recognize who is packing your parachute. Have we thanked those who contributed to the lives we are blessed to live? Imagine if our kindergarten teacher got a note from us thanking her for nurturing us with love. Imagine if our high school principal, our childhood pediatrician, our housekeeper growing up who cleaned our room, out of the blue got a gesture of gratitude showing that we cared enough to track them down and say thank you after all of these years. Did we express enough appreciation to the person who set us up with our spouse, gave us our first job, safely delivered our children? We all have family, friends, mentors and neighbors whose efforts shaped who we are today. Freedom means knowing that we didn't get here on our own. This Passover, let's sing our own personal dayeinu and repair our ingratitude by saying thank you to those who packed our parachutes.

JEWISH SECRETS OF SUCCESS

How to attain true self-esteem.

The importance of self-esteem is not debatable. The renowned psychologist Dr. Abraham Maslow lists self-esteem at the top of man's hierarchy of needs -- behind only food, shelter and interpersonal relationships. How we attain that respect is another issue. Western society's focus on external accomplishment decreases the chance of developing genuine self-esteem. Western man looks to external accomplishments for self-respect, driven by a need to achieve what others will recognize as status symbols. He will readily identify himself by his profession or career. "I'm a stockbroker, a vice president of marketing, a Harvard graduate." If others are impressed, it reassures us that we're important. But this focus on external accomplishment implants an intense fear of failure. We're afraid that if no one is impressed, what will happen to our self-esteem? The house of cards we've built will collapse. Each time Jack parks his Lexus (complete with the supple leather interior), in his driveway, he feels he's "made it." A year later, Jack's model is outdated and the neighbors are no longer impressed. His facade collapses, his self-esteem is crushed. What now?

Evolution and The Battle for Self-Esteem

Evolution teaches that a human is simply a sophisticated form of animal, with no more or less intrinsic value than any another creature, be it a cat or a worm. The underlying message is that a human has no inherent source of self-esteem. Rather he needs tangible accomplishments to feel

"successful." What tremendous pressure! If "success" is our only ticket to self-respect, then many of us will never get there. And those with the good fortune to achieve such "success" will always live in fear of losing it through circumstances beyond their control. We may have all the talent in the world, but we can end up tripping on the pavement and missing the interview!

Man is created with a soul, a divine spark of G-d. Self-respect is a birthright. Judaism starts with the premise that eachhuman being is created in the image of G-d. With such a lofty starting point, self-respect is therefore every human's birthright.

Many mitzvot in Judaism guide us how to treat other people. These are based on the recognition that man has inherent dignity and self-worth -- regardless of whether or not he has "accomplished" anything of significance.

Effort Versus Results

"According to the effort is the reward." (Talmud - Pirkei Avot 5:27) In Judaism, it is the struggle, not the achievement of a goal, that matters. Because the final outcome anyway rests in the hands of the Almighty. A person can thus succeed by winning a moral struggle, even if there are no tangible results. But effort is difficult to quantify, so in our materialistic world we tendto disregard its value. You are watching two people compete in a 100-meter dash. One runs a world record time of 9.3 seconds. The other crosses the finish line in 30 seconds.

Who attained success? The record breaker of course!

Except that the one who clocked 30 seconds had developed polio as a child, was unable to walk until he was 14-years-old, and had invested years of painful, grueling exercise until he was finally able to even run the distance.

We can never measure anyone's value based on external success, because we can never know the circumstances he has had to deal with.

Never measure anyone's value based on external success, because you don't know his set of circumstances. We are born into a particular set of circustances, as determined by G-d. We only have control over the effort that we exert. How we deal with our particular circumstances determines whether we are a success. Where we stand on the ladder is less important than how many rungs we've climbed. Self-esteem comes from knowing you're making the effort to grow. If we're making our best effort, we can live with a deep and abiding sense of satisfaction.

A Talmudic Tale

Eliezer was the son of Hurkanas, a leading rabbi of his generation and a very wealthy man. Eliezer was plowing on the mountain, and he began to cry. His father said: "Why are you crying? If it's hot up on the mountain, I'll move you down to the plain." So Eliezer began to plow in the plain, and cried there too.

"Why are you crying?" Hurkanas asked.

"I want to learn Torah," said Eliezer. He cried until Elijah the Prophet came and told him to go to Jerusalem and seek out Rebbe Yochanan Ben Zakkai, the greatest sage of his generation.

Eliezer went to Jerusalem -- and you guessed it -- started crying: "I want to learn Torah."

Rebbe Yochanan Ben Zakkai asked: "Didn't they even teach you to say the Shema?" "Nope."

And so the great sage, Rebbe Yochanan Ben Zakkai, taught Eliezer the ABCs of Judaism. Then he said, "Very good, Eliezer. We were successful. Now it's time for you to go." Eliezer started crying: "I want to learn more Torah."

So Rebbe Yochanan Ben Zakkai taught Eliezer the Five Books of Moses and the Oral Law. After this, Rebbe Yochanan said, "Eliezer, it is time for you to go."

Eliezer cried: "I want to learn more Torah!" And so it went. Then one day, Eliezer was sitting and learning Torah in the back of the study hall. Unexpectedly, his father Hurkanas walked in. At which point, Rebbe Yochanan Ben Zakkai told Eliezer to move to the front and recite his Torah aloud.

After Eliezer had finished, Hurkanas stood up, and beaming with pride, said: "Eliezer, at first I wanted to give my property to all of my sons but you. But now I am going to give everything I have to you and you alone!"

Eliezer replied, "My father, if I wanted gold and silver, I would have stayed working on the farm. All I want is Torah." And Rabbi Eliezer Ben Hurkanas went on to become the leader of his generation, and the teacher of the great Rebbe Akiva.

The Lesson Unfolds

There are many difficulties with this story. 1. How could it be that Hurkanas, a great rabbi and wealthy man, did not teach his son Torah?

2. Why did Hurkanas make his son do the menial labor of plowing? He could have hired other workers to plow, and given his son a supervisory position.

3. Why did Elijah the Prophet tell Eliezer to go learn basic Judaism from such an esteemed sage as Rebbe Yochanan ben Zakkai? Any intermediate yeshiva student could have done that!

There is only one answer to explain all of these difficulties. Eliezer had a head made of straw. He was extremely slow. Of course, Hurkanas hired teachers for his

son! But even the best teacher couldn't get Shema into the thick head of Eliezer! So what is a father supposed to do with

such a son? Make him a foreman? No way! Give him a plow. At least he'll be productive.

But Eliezer cried: "I want to learn Torah!" The only one left who stood a chance of getting through to Eliezer was the leader of the generation, Rebbe Yochanan Ben Zakkai.

Rebbe Yochanan struggled and achieved a major accomplishment: He taught Eliezer the basics. And when Eliezer cried for more, Rebbe Yochanan realized it had worked once, maybe he could teach him more. And so it went, until Eliezer became one of the greatest scholars of his generation.

You have to want it so badly that you will cry for it.

From all of this we see that even the slowest of the slow can achieve greatness. The secret? You have to want it so badly that you will cry for it. This was the merit of Rabbi Eliezer Ben Hurkanas.

Success is a Gift from G-D

"Each and every Jew should strive to become as great as Moses." -- Maimonides, Laws of Teshuva 5:2

Obviously, not all of us are born with the intelligence, character and leadership qualities of Moses. So how can we be expected to become as great as Moses?

If you make the effort, you will find results. (Talmud - Megillah 6b)

What do we mean by "find results?" Why not just say, "If you try, you'll see results"?

The answer is that effort and results are not cause and effect. Reaching great heights does not depend upon our natural talents and capabilities. Effort is our responsibility, but results are a "find" -- a gift from G-d. And G-d will give us whatever we need to succeed. Potential for greatness is unlimited when we have the power of the Almighty behind us.

The Jewish people are called the "children of G-d" (Deut. 14:1, Talmud - Pirkei Avot 3:18). Just as a father naturally wants to give everything good to his children, so too G-d wants us to have all that is good.

Here's the real secret of success: Regardless of our mortal limitations, our potential for greatness is unlimited when we have the power of the Almighty behind us.

All G-d asks is that we try. Don't keep Him waiting.

BY LORI PALATNIK FROM GOOD TO GREAT: The Wisdom of Rebbetzin Denah Weinberg

Not a week goes by that I do not quote my spiritual "mother", Rebbetzin Denah Weinberg, of blessed memory, the wife of the founder of Aish HaTorah, Rabbi Noah Weinberg, of blessed memory. I met her at the beginning of my young adult Jewish journey in 1985. She passed away last week (March 12th) at the age of 85 and her death has hit me hard. She was a powerful, regal woman who in addition to raising 12 children ran a seminary geared for Jewish women of all backgrounds. She impacted thousands of people with her strength, wisdom and personal model of what it means to be a great Jewish woman. Here are some of the teachings I learned from her that reframed how I look at life. "It's not enough to be good, we must be great." No one wants the rabbi to say at their funeral, "She was...okay." "He was pretty darn average." Everyone wants the rabbi to say, "She was great and this is why." Rebbetzin Weinberg demanded from us not to settle for good, that the blessing of life requires us to strive for greatness. "Be a great Jewish woman" was her mantra. "None of you are going to ride on your husband's coattails." "If 20 people are standing at a bus stop and the bus does not stop, there are 20 reasons." Everything happens for a reason, and everything is for your good. And everything contains a specific message from G-d to each and every one of you. Yes, everything. No one can tell you what G-d is telling you; only you can know. "To know Him is to love Him." The more knowledge, the more love. The more you deeply understand the qualities of your Creator, the more you can emulate them, the more meaning you will have in this world, and the closer your relationship with G-d will be. G-d is giving, loving, patient, merciful, slow to anger... and that's what you must strive to be. There is no

such thing as, "That's just the way I am." That may be the way you were created ---now work on yourself and change. What is the importance of Monotheism? One-stop shopping? Multiple gods (think: Greek mythology) means each one has certain attributes and also certain lacks. One G-d means He has it all, no lacks. What can you give to someone who really has it all? Nothing. That means He can't receive. He can only give. He is perfectly altruistic. And the more you give, the more you love. G-d loves us more than our parents love us, more than we love our kids. G-d gives us these relationships to give us an inkling of His love. Your husband may be a CEO of a major corporation, but if he comes home and feels his wife does not respect him and what he stands for, it's not good. When I first heard this I pushed back, big time. But, just like we dismiss so much our parents tell us when we are growing up, and once we do grow up we realize how wise their advice is - what Rebbetzin Weinberg taught is definitely true and a pillar of a thriving marriage. (Bonus wisdom: "Treat him like a man you respect and he will become a man that you respect.) With the passing of Rebbetzin Weinberg, I feel a deep ache that I was not expecting. I feel orphaned. The loss of great leaders creates a vacuum. How can their shoes be possibly filled? They can't. But each of us can place our smaller feet in the footprints they made for us and continue along their path. Thank you, Rebbetzin Weinberg — I know I was not an easy student, but I want you to know that you changed my life and the lives of so many others with your unwavering teachings, values and example. Thank you for never lowering the bar. I am still trying to reach it-it will likely take a lifetime, but as you taught us, that's what life is all about. Aish.com

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A Simcha Shel Torah:

KOLLEL BOKER MAKES SIYUM ON MESECHES BEITZAH

A Simcha Shel Torah: The Siyum on Meseches Beitzah by the Kollel Boker at Scheiners Shul

The Siyum was conducted by two members of the community, Yochanan Abitbol and Meshulem Rubinfeld, who also shared a vort on the word Beitzah. Rabbi Yoseph Fried, Shoel Umeishiv, also spoke, recognizing the growth and fulfillment of people who, despite their chaotic days, find time to learn. This creates a foundation of spirituality that helps unify their busy schedules with the inner satisfaction that ruchnius is what governs their lives. One of the most fulfilling parts of working with the Kollel Boker is seeing the journey of growth individuals and their families make. The event concluded with a harmonious kumzitz, which was enjoyed by all.

The Kollel wives who partook of the SImchah were given the opportunity to shep nachas and see a snapshot into the mesiras nefesh of their husbands. They greatly appreciated the event. More people are now encouraged to join the Kollel Boker for the enjoyable and energizing Talmud torah.

The Kollel Boker meets for one hour each morning before Shachris. Even if you can't make it daily, come by and speak to our Shoel uMeshiv for chavrusa options. Even if you are interested in learning different topics, come by and ask if we can accommodate you. The next limud will be Mesechas Taanis, starting on Rosh Chodesh Iyar with the goal of making a siyum before Sukkos. All are welcome to join!









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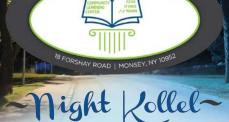
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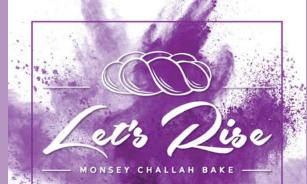


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BORDER GROSSING

A fellow tries to cross the Mexican border on a bicycle with two big bags balanced on his shoulders. The guard asks, 'What's in the bags?' The fellow says, 'Sand!'

The guard wants to examine them. The fellow gets off the bike, places the bags on the ground, opens them up, and the guard inspects... only to find sand. The fellow packs the sand, places the bags on his shoulders, and pedals the bike across the border.

Two weeks later, the same situation is repeated...

'What have you there?'

'Sand'

'We want to examine.'

Same results... nothing but sand and the fellow is on his way again. Every two weeks for six months the inspections continue. Finally, one week the fellow didn't show up. However, the guard sees him downtown and says to the fellow, 'Buddy, you had us crazy. We sort of knew you were smuggling something. I won't say anything - what were you smuggling?'

The fellow says, 'Bicycles.'

CROSSING THE RIVER

Two guys were fishing down by the Ohio River on different sides of the riverbank at night. Guy number one was catching a whole bunch of fish for his family, but guy number two hadn't caught any and was frustrated and called out to guy number one "How come you've been catching all them there fish and I ain't caught a single one?"



MEATWORKS

EAT ART

Guy number one replied, " I don't know why don't ya come on over here?"

"I don't know.... I don't see a bridge, and their aint no boat, and I don't swim to well"

Guy number one picks up his flashlight, turns it on, and replies, " Why don't you walk across this here beam off light?"

Guy number two was outraged and replied "do you think I'm a fool? When I get half way you'll turn it off!!!"

GOOGLED MY SYMPTOMS

I've been feeling a bit moody & run down recently, so I googled my symptoms to see what I have.

Kids...

I have kids!

I had a taser once. It was stunning.

Know any good rope jokes? I'm a frayed knot. Why do coffee cups avoid the city? They're afraid to get mugged. I tried to take a photo of a wheat field. It turned out grainy. I'm afraid of speed bumps, but I'm slowly getting over it. Why should you wear glasses when doing math? They improve division. I'm happy Ford didn't invent the airplane. It wouldn't have been Wright. I want to be a doctor, but I don't have enough patience. What do sweet potatoes wear to bed? Yammies. Why did the belt go to jail? It held up a pair of pants. Why couldn't the bike stand up? It was two-tired. I used to hate facial hair, but then it grew on me.

I don't trust trees. They're shady.

A chemist walked into a couch store and ended up buying a photon. Why should you stay away from artists? They're sketchy. Where can you go to find a tiny Coke? Mini-soda.

I wrote a song about burritos. It's a rap.

Can February March? No, but April May. I love math. And then sum.

I met a giant once. I didn't know what to say so I used big words. How did the barber win the race? He knew a shortcut.

Why did the thief hire a maid to plan his vacation? He wanted a clean getaway.

Making mirrors is a job I can really see myself doing.

THE ADVICE FROM CHIEF DOCTOR OF CHEI

Q: Doctor, I've heard that cardiovascular exercise can prolong life. Is this true? A: Your heart is only good for so many beats, and that it...don't waste on exercise. Everything wears out eventually. Speeding up heart will not make you live longer; it like saying you the extend life of car by driving faster. Want to live longer? Take nap.

Q: Should I cut down on meat and eat more fruits and vegetables? A: You must grasp logistical efficiency. What does a cow eat? Hay and corn. And what are these? Vegetables. So steak is nothing more than an efficient mechanism of delivering vegetables to your system. Need grain? Eat chicken. Beef is also a good source of field grass (green leafy vegetable).

Q: Should I reduce my alcohol intake?

A: No, not at all. Wine is made from fruit. Brandy is distilled wine that means they take water out of the fruity bit so you get even more of goodness that way. Beer also made of grain. Bottoms up!

Q: Will sit-ups help prevent me from getting a little soft around the middle? A: Definitely not! When you exercise muscle, it get bigger. You should only be doing sit-ups if you want bigger stomach..

PROFOUND THOUGHTS

If the rich could hire other people to die for them, the poor could make a wonderful living.

The wise man, even when he holds his tongue, says more than the fool when he speaks

What you don't see with your eyes, don't invent with your mouth. A hero is someone who can keep his mouth shut when he is right. One old friend is better than two new ones.

One of life's greatest mysteries is how the boy who wasn't good enough to marry your daughter can be the father of the smartest grandchild in the world.

A wise man hears one word and understands two.





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RABBI NACHUM SCHEINER

MORE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO UNDERSTANDNGS OF THE FOUR CUPS

I would like to wrap up our discussion if the mitzvah of the four kosos includes drinking the four cups of wine. According to Tosfos the mitzvah is just to recite the four brochos – kiddush, the brocha the end of the hagada, bentching, and hallel – over a cup of wine. According to the Rambam and the Rosh there is also a mitzvah to drink the wine.

SOMEONE ELSE POURING

The Rama (473:1) writes that the baal habayis should have someone pouring for him the four cups of wine, as a way of showing freedom and royalty. Many have the custom that every participant at the seder has someone pour for him or her. Why do they do different than the Rama?

Rav Dovid Soloveitchik explains that this may depend on our discussion. As noted earlier, the Rama seems to follow Tosfos that the mitzvah is to recite the brocha over a cup of wine, which can be done exclusively by the baal habayis, who will be motzi everyone else. Therefore, the Rama is focused on the baal habayis, and no one else needs to show freedom. However, according to the Rambam and the Rosh, since there is a mitzvah on each person to drink the wine in a way of showing freedom, we are all equally showing our freedom, and we therefore all have the practice of someone else pouring the wine.

AGE OF CHINUCH FOR DRINKING

The Shulchan Aruch (472:15) writes that a child who is of chinuch age – around 6 or 7 – should be given the four cups. At first glance this needs to be understood. Since even a much younger child can drink a few ounces of grape juice, he should already be old enough to do the mitzvah, and the age of chinuch for drinking the four cups should be earlier. So, why wait until the general age of chinuch?

The Shulchan Aruch Harav explains that since the mitzvah is not merely the drinking but also reciting the brochos over the cups, that is something only possible at an older age. This fits well with the opinion of Tosfos that the mitzvah is not the drinking, but reciting of the brochos. But according to the Rambam that there is also a mitzvah of drinking, the age of chinuch for drinking the four cups should be earlier. Why should they not fulfill that part of the mitzvah from a younger age?

We can answer this based on what we discussed in a previous shiur. Even according to the Rambam,

it is not just merely drinking four cups of wine, but it must be drunk at the right places in the hagada. Since drinking the wine alone, without understanding what it is for, is not a fulfillment of the mitzvah, a child who does not understand what he is doing would not have a mitzvah of chinuch. In addition, there is a concept in chinuch that we do not teach parts of the mitzvah, but wait until the child can fulfill the entire mitzvah. Therefore, the Rambam holds that we wait until the child can fulfill the entire mitzvah. Since a young child is only capable of drinking but not reciting the brochos, we wait until he is older, and he can fulfill the mitzvah in its entirety.

SUMMARY

We are all equally showing our freedom, and we therefore all have the practice of someone else pouring the wine, not just the baal habayis.

A young child, who does not understand what he is doing, does not have a mitzvah of chinuch, and we wait until the child can fulfill the entire mitzvah properly.

There are also a number of Kuntreisim available – both in English and in Hebrew. Here are some of the highlights:

Baking Matzos

"Afiya Lishma" – What to have in Mind Requirement of Mayim shelanu Keeping the dough cool Baking matzos on Erev Pesach

Mechiras Chometz

Selling the chometz and being mevatel What the seller has to know The 3 Methods of Mitzvas Tashbisu Mitzvas Tashbisu – Active or Passive?

Leil Haseder and Daled Kosos:

"Starting the Seder Early" "Understanding Hesieva," "Women's Requirement in the Mitzvos of the Night" "What to use for the Daled Kosos"

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