



# TAL

## PESACH 5775



### THE COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

#### A MESSAGE FROM THE

#### Chief Rabbi Ephraim MIRVIS



At our Seder tables, we will declare: "My father was a wandering Aramean and he went down to Egypt...and there he became a nation." (Deuteronomy 26:5)

However, after our deliverance from Egypt, at the time of our acceptance of the Torah, the Almighty declared: "Now if you obey Me fully, and keep My covenant, then you will be My treasured possession out of all the nations.....you will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:4-6)

So, when did we become a nation? Was it during our time in Egypt, arriving as an extended family group, which then expanded into a people that was cruelly persecuted, or was it through our commitment at Sinai to a life of Torah and mitzvot that we became God's chosen people?

There are two routes through which a nation can be formed. One is through a shared past and the other is through

account of where they have come from, but also based on where they are going to. When a group of people shares a common set of ideals, values and dreams, they are bound together by a treasured common destiny.



At Pesach-time, while we celebrate our historic redemption from Egypt, we are particularly mindful of our eventful past. Looking back through the history of British Jewry, we can be immensely proud of our achievements, many of which were attained through adversity and hardship. On my travels to commu-

a shared future. A group of people can meaningfully be fused into a national entity not just on

nities large and small, I always hear memories of previous eras with their highs and lows, their challenges and achievements. We can be immensely proud of where we have come from.

At the same time, what is even more important is how we approach our future. This recognition has inspired the United Synagogue to engage in a strategic review, while many other communities throughout the UK are likewise carefully investing in developing a clear, realistic and ambitious approach to their future.

As is the case at the Seder table, within British Jewry we are deeply aware of our origins and are keenly anticipating our shared future. With attention to strengthening our communities, deepening our Jewish awareness through education and enhancing our environment through acts of kindness, we will invest in a great destiny for ourselves, our families and our communities.

Valerie and our family join me in wishing you all a *chag kasher vesameach*.

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

#### A Night Of Miracles

#### Rabbi Jonathan TAWIL



The Prince of Mannheim, once approached the 19th century Sage - Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Berlin Zts'l and asked him this question: "Every year at the Seder on Pesach, Jewish children ask 'Mah Nishtana....Why is this night different from all other nights?' But Pesach is not the only time Jews perform unusual commandments. Surely the custom of dwelling in a Sukkah is at least as bizarre as the Seder experi-

ence! So why don't your children ask Mah Nishtana on Sukkot as well?"

On the spot, the Rabbi responded to the prince: "Quite the contrary: the experience of sitting joyously with one's family at the Seder table, feasting like royalty, opening the doors wide on a Leil Shimurim - a divinely protected night of safety and security - that's a strange experience

for Jews, and prompts a quizzical 'Mah Nishtana?'

But sitting in a sukkah, living in a flimsy hut with no physical security, out in the cold and the rain, buffeted by the winds - this experience has been typical of Jewish history. There's nothing unusual about it at all; hence there's no need to ask 'Mah Nishtana?'

(p.t.o.)

Unfortunately we are used to Galut – exile. To take just one period as an example: Jews were expelled from England in 1290, and during the next two centuries from almost every country in Europe, culminating in the Spanish Expulsion in 1492, and the Portuguese in 1497. They lived in a state of permanent insecurity. For us that is not unusual. What is unusual however is that we are celebrating like kings and queens on Pesach – that's not the normal way of the Jew!?

In fact Pesach is unique in several ways and the following three questions will help us to a new understanding of this important festival.

Out of all the festivals, the Torah relates only to Pesach as a Shabbat.

When explaining the Mitsvah of Omer, the Torah states that it should be done Mimacharat Hashabat – the day after Shabbat. Our sages explain this to mean the day after Pesach. I.e. Pesach equals Shabbat!

What is the connection?

Furthermore, looking at all the festivals, we note that Hallel – a special prayer of G-ds praise is sung on festivals at different intervals, yet it is never sung at night. Only one festival differs – Pesach. We sing Hallel on Seder night! Why?

Finally the Vilna Gaon notes that the word Laylah ends with a Heh. Normally words that end in a Heh in Hebrew are feminine. Yet when the children ask Ma Nishtana on Pesach – they say Halayla **HaZeh** (masculine) – not Halayla **Hazot** (feminine). Why?

In order to understand these questions we must first delve into a unique occurrence in history.

One of the largest armies ever gathered against Judea — 185,000 heads of companies, each leading a battalion with a total army of astronomical number. They laid siege to Jerusalem and were prepared to invade.

Sancheriv, the Assyrian leader of his troops, had no doubt that it was all but over for the Jews of that era. With an army so vast, he was confident of his invincibility. He sent blasphemous letters to Chizkiyahu Hamelech filled with mockery and reeking of arrogance. Jerusalem was devastated due to the siege and thousands of inhabitants were starving.

Sancheriv turned to his generals ridiculing them for having to bring such a large army, "Why did you bring me here, if all our soldiers were to spit in the direction of Jerusalem, it would cover the entire city."

On Erev Pesach, the righteous Chizkiyahu (known for his resilient support of Torah and service of Hashem) went to the Bet Hamikdash and poured out his heart in Tefilah, pleading with Hashem to save Am Yisrael. He commanded the people to bring the Korban Pesach as usual. The bewildered people, joined faithfully together, and that year produced an unprecedented Korban Pesach. The Leviim sung to their best notes, the people acted with righteousness. When a Jewish traitor called Ravshakeh heard this noise, he came to Sancheriv and told him that he would be better not to attack. Sancheriv dismissed his comments and prepared for battle.

That night, the angel Gavriel descended into the camp of the Assyrians and the massive forces died an inexplicable death: their bodies remained intact but a fire consumed their insides. 185,000 generals died with only three men surviving: Sancheriv and his two sons, one of whom was the evil Nevuchadnetzar. Hashem allowed Sancheriv to survive so that he could suffer the indignity of returning to his capital city of Ninveh in disgrace. He was subsequently assassinated by his own sons.

Our Sages relate (Shemot Rabah 18 – Balayla Hahu) that night was the first night of Pesach. It is referred to as that night! When you want to show something special, you say, *that* person, *that* article. This night is a special night designated for greatness. At the Seder night, we say Hallel, because Seder night takes on a new meaning – it is not a night (representing confusion) rather even the night takes on the dimension of a day – it's powerfully shining bright with sanctification.

Every week we are blessed with Shabbat. Shabbat is a day designated from Hashem. Whether we change the calendar or not, Shabbat will always be on the seventh day.

Yom Tov, however is designated by us.

The Sages were given the right to define when Rosh Chodesh (the beginning of the month) occurs. Hence they command when the festivals will be.

Shabbat represents a flow of blessing from above, whilst Yom Tov is a flow of blessing from below.

Pesach is a night where the blessing flows from above. It is a night designated by Hashem, a Leil Shimurim – guarded and loved by Him. He showers blessing down to us on this night.

Now we can understand why we refer to it as Halayla Hazeh in the masculine form. It is a night, but it has the connotations of day. Moreover, just like the male is a giver in relationship, so too is Hashem the giver of bounty on this night.

Pesach we celebrate how Hashem passed over the Jewish houses whilst killing only the Egyptian first born.

Now we have a deeper understanding of Pesach and especially Seder night. It is a night designated by Hashem, the night that Avraham waged war against the kings, the night that Yitschak gave the Beracha to Yakov, the night that Sancheriv's entire army was miraculously wiped out.

It's a night of miracles.

We honour this night with the best cutlery, and décor, sitting as kings and queens, yet in reverence of the most important guest – G-d Almighty.

As the Zohar states on this night G-d descends so to speak and listens to what His children are speaking about. We talk about His praise and miracles, we appreciate His essence – and then He too speaks to the heavenly angels and relates our praise.

The prophet Micha (7:15) states "As in the days of your going out of Egypt, I will show you wonders"

Every year we have an opportunity to be directly with the Creator. We have an opportunity to tap into those miracles and let Hashem shine his radiance upon us.

Who can hear this and not move to action? This year lets be prepared – read up on the miracles, relate His greatness.

Chag Sameach!





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## Pesach Insights

### Rabbi NETANEL



Rabbi Levi Itzchak of Berditchev (also known as "the defender of the Jewish people"), would recount how precious the Jews were in keeping Mitzvot.

In comparison when looking around at the non-Jews, he saw that however much they were warned not to smuggle goods, they didn't listen. On the other hand, the Jewish people- who are commanded to rid of all their chometz - till this day keep this Mitzva-commandment.

It was told that the Rabbi would approach a non-Jew and ask him if he had any smuggled goods. The non Jew would respond that indeed he had.

When the same question was asked of a Jew, the response was very different. The Jew would be offended that he

could even be suspected of such a thing.

Then, Rabbi Levi Itzchak would lift up his eyes to G-d and say: "Ribono

Shel Olam. See how particular are the Jewish people with your Mitzvot which had been commanded to them over 3000 years ago. See how your Mitzvot are kept properly – how well behaved and good your children are. Please fulfil their desire and redeem them".

Another story is also told about the Rabbi:

One year whilst he was cleaning for Pesach, he asked his helper to come to the synagogue and bring along his Rosh Hashana Machzor. His helper was confused by this mysterious request but nevertheless he did as the Rabbi had told him. He knew there must be an explanation for this.

Upon arriving to the synagogue, R' Levi Itzchak put on his Tallit. The helper closed all the windows so that no noise

could be heard from outside, as that would disturb the Rabbi. To his surprise, the Rabbi told him to reopen all the windows. "I need the noise of the washing and cleaning to help me with my prayers."

Although not completely understanding, the helper along with the Rabbi started praying. Together they began by saying the "Yehi Ratson" that is said after the blowing of the Shofar (on Rosh Hashana). The Rabbi asked that in the merit of the sounds of the Shofar, G-d should stand up from the Throne of Din (severity) and sit on the chair of mercy.

The Rabbi stood up and started to repeat the Yehi Ratson, but this time a little differently. "Ribono Shel Olam. We blow the Shofar before you on Rosh Hashana, and you stand up from the Throne of Din (severity) and sit on the chair of mercy. Now we hear the loud sounds of the great waters from the Jewish peoples washing and cleaning, we ask before you Hashem" continued R'Levy Itzchak, "that all these sounds

*Continued on p5*

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that are heard before You be as precious as the sounds of the Shofar and that through this merit will come the redemption of the Jewish people."

There is a dispute in the Talmud (Rosh Hashana 11a) between Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Eliezer. They disagree on which month the final redemption of the Jewish people will take place. According to Rabbi Yehoshua, it will take place in the month of Nissan. Rabbi Eliezer says it will take place in the month of Tishrey.

What is behind this argument?  
The argument can be explained like this. Both agree that the redemption may

take place in either month, but that it is dependent on the type of redemption. There may be two types of redemption. Rabbi Yehoshua says that redemption will come "from above" this means that the redemption will come and that no effort from our (the Jewish peoples) part will be needed. He states that the month of Nissan was a month in which G-d "from above" made all the miracles with no effort on our part. Rabbi Eliezer says that the future redemption is symbolized with the month of Tishrey. Tishrey is a month of Teshuva, a month where we celebrate both Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. There is a hint to be found in the Passuk in Shemot 12:23: "And G-d leaped over the door posts...)" Hashem says to the

Jewish people "I ask of you, my children, to do a little from your part (Pitchu Li Kepitcho Shel Machat), and I'll do the rest (Kepitcho Shel Ulam), but in the festival of Pesach – no further effort is needed from your part" (I leap...).

This is Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's message to us – that also now in the month of Nissan, we have with us the "sounds" of the Shofar (from the month of Tishrey). So, when cleaning and getting rid of the real Chametz – the evil within us – we do so, despite the fact that G-d does not "ask" for our effort. We do so anyway by purifying our hearts from any bad traits, leaving all of us free from any evil, and with this may we merit the final redemption speedily in our days. Amen.

## Halachot Of Seder Night

### Rabbi Dov LEVY



#### The 4 Cups:

##### **How big should the cup itself be?**

The cup used must have a minimum capacity of 86 cc.

##### **How do I tell exactly how big my cup is?**

Measure it. Since this is for the purpose of a mitzva, one is permitted to use a measuring jug to accurately measure the capacity of the cup.

##### **Do I have to drink the whole cup each time?**

Ideally yes one should try to, but if it's too difficult the majority of the cup (44cc) is sufficient. For either the 3rd or 4th cup a full 86cc should be drunk in order to say a beracha acharona.

##### **I have a big cup, do I have to finish it?**

If one has a bigger cup it is recommended to drink the majority of the bigger sized cup. It is therefore advisable to find a smaller cup, just above the minimum capacity (86cc), in order to fulfil the mitzva properly.

##### **Do I have to drink each cup in one go?**

Yes, one should try to finish the whole cup in 2 or 3 shots. At the very most, each cup should be drunk within 4 minutes. If one waited longer than 4 minutes from start to finish of the cup, another cup must be drunk as the mitzva has not been fulfilled.

##### **Do the cups have to be rinsed out in between?**

Halachically is it sufficient to rinse the cup before the first cup, then rinse it for the third cup before beginning Birkat Hamazon. Rinsing is not necessary

before the 2nd and 4th cup. However, many authorities cite kabbalistic reasons for rinsing the cup

before each use - each should follow their family's custom.

#### Leaning:

##### **Which bits do I have to lean for?**

It is obligatory to lean for the four cups of wine, eating the matza, korech and afikomen. In addition it is praiseworthy to lean and sit in a regal manner for as much of the Seder as possible. A token head movement is not enough and it is advisable to use an extra cushion to get into a comfy position. One does not lean for karpas or marror.

##### **I forgot to lean when I should have, what should I do?**

Someone who didn't lean for any one of the cups or the matza or korech or afikomen must drink or eat again. Therefore it is very important for the head of the house to remind everyone, before each cup and matza, to make sure to lean.

##### **Do women have to lean?**

The generally accepted custom amongst Sephardim is that women do lean. However, there are some Sephardi communities where the custom is not to - each should follow their family's custom.

#### Kadesh:

##### **Since it's friday night this year can we make kiddush before nightfall like on a regular Friday night?**

No, one must wait until nightfall as kiddush is the first of the 4 cups, which must all be drunk after nightfall.

#### Karpas:

##### **How much celery (or other vegetable)**

##### **should each person eat for karpas?**

Since the beracha of bore peri ha'adama also goes on the marror, one should eat a small piece in order not to invoke the obligation of a beracha acharona.

##### **I ate loads of Karpas, do I say borei nefashot afterwards?**

No.

##### **Do I lean for Karpas?**

No.

#### Magid - The story of Redemption:

##### **Do all the participants need to say the whole of magid?**

Yes. To fulfil the mitza properly one should read the whole of the Magid section and understand its basic meaning. Women should take particular care not to miss pieces out, when often preoccupied, making sure the food isn't burning etc.

##### **I don't understand the Hebrew, have I fulfilled the mitzva by reading the haggada?**

No, unlike prayer, the obligation here is to relate and re-live the series of events forming the story of our redemption from Egypt. As Magid is being said, those who do understand should make sure that all participants, men women and children, have at least a basic outline of the events being described.

##### **Can people add their own divrei Torah and thoughts during the telling of the story?**

Particular care should be taken to explain to everyone the details of our affliction in Egypt and the redemption. The more one feels like he is reliving the events, the better the mitzva is fulfilled. However, this is not the time for any divrei Torah or halachic discussion



which are not directly describing the story of the redemption. Children should be encouraged to participate in the discussion, but only be allowed to say over the parts they have learnt in school which relate to the story. Any other divrei Torah should be left for the daytime meals.

### **Is there an amount of time magid should take?**

There is an obligation to eat the Afikomen and ideally also to finish Hallel by chatzot (1:04 am this year). Because of this many communities have the practice of saying Magid without going into great detail, just outlining the basic points. This enables one to finish Hallel in time, returning to discuss the story of redemption after the Seder has formally concluded (See the last question below). However, one should not cut it too short if the children will not be able to participate later on.

### Motzi-Matza:

#### **How much Matza do I need to eat?**

One must take a small piece from each of the top 2 matzot and supplement that with other matza to make up just over 1 kazayit, which is 28g (for an ill person 20g is enough). This comes to approximately just less than a third of a regular hand

baked matza. For the denser soft matzot the piece will be smaller. A non electrical kitchen scale can be used to find the correct amount. This is sufficient for motzi and matza combined.

#### **How come my hagada says 2 kazetim?**

The halacha of eating 2 kazetim is only relevant when one is eating the motzi and matza portions completely from the matzot on the seder plate, or in households where each participant has his own 3 matzot which he makes the berachot over.

#### **How long do I have to eat it?**

You should try your hardest to eat it within 4 minutes. One can have a drink at the same time to help it down.

### Marror:

#### **How much marror do I need to eat?**

One large lettuce leaf is enough.

### Korech:

#### **How much matza and marror do I need for korech?**

The same amounts as for motzi and marror. One should not speak from netilat yadayim until after korech.

### Tzafun:

#### **How much matza do I need to eat for**

### **afikomen?**

The same amount as motz. Some follow the stringent view and eat two kazetim.

#### **Can I have a drink after afikomen?**

Ideally only water should be drunk after afikomen, however a weak lemon tea is also permissible.

### Hallel:

#### **Is this a less important hallel as we don't make a beracha before it?**

No, this hallel is extremely important, possibly the most. All members of the seder should make all efforts to say it with enthusiasm and genuine gratitude to Hashem. One must be particularly careful to say every single word, in order to fulfil the obligation.

#### **During magid we only told the story quickly, is it too late to discuss yetziat mitzrayim after the seder?**

On the contrary, this night is the one night in the year that has a mitzva specifically attached to it. It is also the only night when there is a full obligation to stay up. It is important to try and stay awake tonight to discuss the story of the redemption, trying to gain a clearer grasp of Hashem's kindness to us.

The Mishna, Pesachim 116a, states that the story we relate at Seder night of the Exodus, must start by mentioning the Gnut - dishonourable events and end with the Shevach - praiseworthy events. There is a debate in the Gemara as to what constitutes Gnut and what is Shevach (the redemptive process).

Shmuel claims that Gnut was a purely **physical** one: the Israelites were "slaves in Egypt; they worked very hard and then G-d gave them their freedom". This is known in the Hagada as "Avadim Hayinu" meaning "we were slaves" (in Egypt). Rav contrasts this view with Gnut being a **spiritual** process. He says that the Israelites worshipped idols in Egypt and G-d took them out of Egypt, not so much to free them from slavery but to reveal Himself to the Israelites and to give them the Torah. Ein Lecha Ben Chorin – the real free person is one who studies Torah.

Therefore, Pesach is not a celebration of freedom from slavery but of freedom to worship G-d. This is known in the Hagada as "Matchila Ovdei Avodah Zara Hayu Avoteinu" meaning "at the beginning our ancestors worshipped idols".

It would seem therefore that Rav and Shmuel are arguing about which factor needs to be stressed the servitude of the soul or the servitude of the body.

However, on closer inspection, we can assume that they are actually in agreement. In fact when looking in the Hagada we notice that we mention both paths – after Ma Nishtana we say we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and Hashem took us out of there with a strong hand ... - Avadim Hayinu LePharaoh. Thus going in accordance to Shmuel.

And later on we mention the fact that our ancestors were at the beginning idol worshipers (Ovdei Avoda Zara Hayu Avotenu), and Hashem brought us closer to Him (through the giving of the Torah).

It would seem that from here that in the Hagada we wish to apply both understandings and hence mention both themes.

If we go with this understanding we are left with an important question.

Why do we leave a space in the Hagada between these explanations? Surely if they are talking about the same issue they should be mentioned in the same paragraph? Yet we find that the Hagada talks about other things in between – why?

## **From Servitude To Freedom**

### **Rabbi Aharon BASSOUS**



The Rambam Hilchot Chamets UMatsa (7:2) writes;

It is a mitzvah to inform one's sons even though they do not ask, as [Shemot 13:8] states: "You shall tell your son."

A father should teach his son according to the son's knowledge: How is this applied? If the son is young or foolish, he should tell him: "My son, in Egypt, we were all slaves like this maidservant or this slave. On this night, the Holy One, Blessed be He, redeemed us and took us out to freedom."

If the son is older and wise, he should inform him what happened to us in Egypt and the miracles wrought for us by Moses, our teacher; everything according to the son's knowledge.

We see from the Rambam that to the foolish son we don't talk about the spiritual redemption, rather we relate to him that Hashem took us out of Egypt physically which is what he can relate to, whereas to the wise son, we mention the spiritual redemption.

We can now understand why there is a gap between the two explanations.

At the beginning of Magid, which is mainly focussed towards small children, we perform many differences in order to get them involved and asking and therefore we speak about Avadim Hayinu – the physical servitude.

Later we focus on the older children and say “V'Afilu Kulanu Chachamim – even if we were all wise... we would need to

talk about the exodus from Egypt, and whoever increases in speaking about this is praiseworthy.”

We proceed to talk about how our ancestors were serving idols and eventually were redeemed spiritually.

Thus Rav and Shmuel are in effect not arguing, there was a spiritual redemption and a physical redemption both

important and necessary to mention at the Seder night.

Rav spoke in relation to the spiritual redemption addressing the wise son, and Shmuel spoke in relation to the physical redemption as per the simple son.

May we be Zocheh soon to both a physical and spiritual redemption with the coming of Mashiach.

## The Physical & Mental Exodus Of Pesach

**Rabbi Danny KADA**



Imagine you were all by yourself on the night of Pesach. No large table with members of the family you haven't seen since last year, no relatives, no guests. Just you and the haggadah. Would you still need to ask the 4 Questions? Would you still need to perform the countless number of rituals and customs you do every year in order to arouse the curiosity and inquisitiveness of the young participants? Of course not, most of us would answer. Surely the purpose of the questions is to communicate and create a dialogue with those attending the seder. So certainly if I'm alone it would be pointless to ask the questions. Just start with the answers!

Maimonides, however, writes that even in such a scenario one must still ask the questions. To who? To himself! Why? Pesach commemorates the emancipation of the Jewish people from Egypt. It celebrates the freedom of the Jewish people from the backbreaking labour, endless hours of work and physical

persecution by the taskmasters.

But there was another exodus the Jewish people experienced when they left Egypt.

In a totalitarian state one cannot express his views or opinions openly. One must conform to society whether or not one agrees. The individual who challenges or questions any of the dictator's policies will land himself in deep waters, sometimes even bloody ones.

Pharaoh subjected the Jews to a physical servitude. But he also subjected them to a mental and intellectual servitude. The Jews could not express themselves as they wished. Indeed, Pharaoh's response to Moshe's request to relax the work expectations was to impose more work upon them. Pharaoh did not want the Jews to have the time on their hands to think, let alone to challenge and question the situation they were in. Apart from being physically enslaved to Pharaoh they were additionally mentally enslaved to him. When the Jews left Egypt they left behind not just the physical servitude but also the mental.

On Pesach night we commemorate and relive these two emancipations.

We drink wine, recline and eat like kings in order to experience the physical emancipation. And we also relive the mental and intellectual emancipation. We do this by thinking, asking questions, debating and challenging the status quo. When one asks questions, when one challenges and doesn't accept mindlessly his surroundings then he is mentally free. As long as one just accepts things on a superficial level and doesn't probe in to the reasons of things he is not yet mentally free.

Maimonides teaches us that the questions we ask on Pesach night are not just a means to an end - the answers – but a *means in themselves*. When we ask, we experience and re-live the intellectual and theological freedom our forefathers experienced 3300 years ago. Therefore, even if one is alone he must ask himself all the questions.

This idea was echoed by the kabbalists. The word Pesach can be dissected into 'peh' (mouth) and 'sach' (chat). The essence of Pesach is the mouth chatting and talking and most importantly, questioning.

More than a question needs an answer, an answer needs a question.

Wishing you all a truly free Pesach.

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