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PESACH 5776

Community Parasha Sheet

CHIEF RABBI EPHRAIM MIRVIS



*a pesach message
from the
chief rabbi*

Education has always been at the heart of Jewish life and never more so than at Pesach. Socrates once sounded a fascinating note of caution about education, describing it as "the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel." That is to say that while creative educational programmes at home, in school or in the community are important - if they have no long term impact on our lives, they have been of little value. Pesach Sedarim are precious family gatherings that provide significant educational experiences. Hopefully, we leave our Seder tables better informed, often on an emotional and spiritual high. But, as with any educational experience, so much depends on the follow-up. There is every danger that our Pesach experiences, however impactful, will, in the course of time, become a distant

memory to which we return only at further Sedarim in subsequent years.

Our Sages teach, "Lo Hamidrash hu ha'ikar, ela hama'ase" - Study is not the main objective, rather, the action that arises from it. Once empowered by greater knowledge, we have a responsibility to translate our deeper understanding into meaningful action.

At Pesach we learn the most central and powerful lesson of all - that we were granted the gift of freedom. But, the lesson itself is an empty one if we fail to embrace that freedom and take full advantage of it. We are blessed to live in a country that safeguards our religious freedom in strong and vibrant communities, with no limits on what we can achieve together.

This Pesach, as we sit around our Seder tables, just before we wash our hands for the meal, we will read a passage which blesses the Almighty - "Asher ge'alanu vega'al et avoteinu" - Who has redeemed us and our ancestors?" It is a phrase which appears, at the very least, to be in the wrong order. Surely Hashem redeemed our ancestors before us. Why is our own redemption mentioned first and to what redemption is it referring? Our Sages refer us back to the passage in the Haggadah which points out that, in

every generation, it is our duty to regard ourselves as if we had personally left Egypt. Taking this one step further, we recognise that each one of us is privileged to benefit from our freedom, which comes with a responsibility to make a truly positive impact on the world around us.

This year, when you reach that part of the Seder, please stop for a moment and make a commitment, either individually or as a family, for the year ahead. Commit to an extra hour every week of precious family time. Commit to a few hours every month, volunteering for the benefit of those who need our help. Commit to an hour of Torah learning every week. Commit to regularly performing one extra mitzva. Commit to helping people in Israel or on the other side of the world. Make a commitment so that at next year's Seder, and every subsequent year, you can look back as a family and say: This is how we have made the most of our freedom.

This year, let us guarantee that education will be accompanied by action and freedom by responsibility.

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

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS



*passover tells us:
teach your
children well*

As one nation after another in Africa and the Middle East engages in a fight for freedom, Passover, which begins this week, still has much to teach us about the nature of that fight.

The Jewish festival of freedom is the oldest continuously observed religious ritual in the world. Across the centuries, Passover has never lost its power to inspire the imagination of successive generations of Jews with its annually re-enacted drama of slavery and liberation.

It is vivid, replete with direct experiences like eating matza, the unleavened bread of affliction,

and tasting maror, the bitter herbs of oppression. It is a ritual performed not in the synagogue but at home, in the midst of the family, reminding us that, in Alexis de Tocqueville's words, "As long as family feeling is kept alive, the opponent of oppression is never alone." Perhaps its single most striking innovation is that from beginning to end, it is designed to engage and enthrall the mind of a child.

The rabbis who developed the ritual were guided by the Bible itself and the highly counterintuitive

narrative it tells in the 12th and 13th chapters of Exodus. Here is the scene: Moses has assembled the people to tell them they are about to go free. Exiled, enslaved, threatened by a Pharaoh who has commanded that every male Israelite child shall be killed, the people have witnessed a series of wonders performed on their behalf. Moses is now about to tell them that soon they will leave and begin their long walk to freedom.

I sometimes ask people what they would speak about if they were in Moses' shoes? Some say they would talk about freedom, others that they would speak about the destination that lay ahead: the "land flowing with milk and honey." Yet others, made of sterner stuff, propose talking about the arduous journey that lay ahead, the march across the wilderness with all its hazards.

Any of these would have been a great speech by a great leader.



1. How many mitzvos are associated with Pesach and how many of these can we do nowadays?



1st day (22nd) begins - 19:54
2nd day (23rd) light - 21:03
3rd day (24th) ends - 21:04
6th day (28th) light - 20:04
7th day (29th) light - 20:06
8th day (30th) ends - 21:15

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Moses did none of these things. That is what made him a unique leader. If you examine the text in Exodus carefully, you will see that three times he reverted to the same theme: children, education and the distant future. "And when your children ask you, What does this ceremony mean to you?" (Exodus 12:26). "On that day tell your son, I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt" (13:8). "In days to come, when your son asks you, What does this mean?" (13:14).

Moses spoke not about freedom but about education. He fixed his vision not on the immediate but on the distant future, and not on adults but children. In so doing he was making a fundamental point. It may be hard to escape from tyranny but it is harder still to build and sustain a free society.



The last day of Pesah ends with a yom which introduces a concept that isn't expressed in the opening days of the festival. We recognise the 7th day as the day that G-d split the sea for us and we walked through the walls of the ocean to begin our lives as free people. When we refer to this event in our liturgy we say *shira hadasha shibehu ge'ulim al sefat hayam* - 'The redeemed ones sang a new song at the sea shore'. The new song that we sang was different than the songs that we had been singing to G-d in Egypt. There was something new in this divine display that was essential to our freedom and our progress.

he epic splitting of the sea was apparently not part of the official programme. Neither Abraham nor Moshe were told that this would happen although the rest of the journey was outlined in surprising detail.

And He said to Abraham you must know that your seed will be sojourners in a land not theirs; they will put them in servitude and afflict them... But the nation to which they are in servitude — I will bring judgement on them, and after they will go out with great prosperity. (Gen., 15:13-14)

G-d called to him out of the midst of the bush, He said: Moshe! Moshe!... I have taken account of what is being done in Egypt... So I will set forth My hand and I will strike Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in its midst — after that he will send you free. And I will give this people favour in the eyes of Egypt; it will be that when you go, you shall not go empty-handed: each woman shall ask of her

In the long run there is only one way of doing so. To defend a country you need an army, but to defend a civilisation you need education. That is why Moses, according to Rousseau, the world's greatest architect of a free society, spoke about the duty of parents in every generation to educate their children about why freedom matters and how it was achieved.

Freedom is not won by merely overthrowing a tyrannical ruler or an oppressive regime. That is usually only the prelude to a new tyranny, a new oppression. The faces change, but not the script. True freedom requires the rule of law and justice, and a judicial system in which the rights of some are not secured by the denial of rights to others.

neighbour and of the sojourner in her house objects of silver and objects of gold, and clothing, you shall put (them) on your sons and your daughters... (Ex., 3:4, 16-17, 20-22)

This miracle of the Red Sea was meant to be a special surprise. On the path out of Egypt, G-d insists that Moshe change course:

G-d spoke to Moshe saying: 'Tell the Children of Israel that they should turn back! They should encamp before Pi-haHiro, between Migdol and the sea! (Ex., 14:1-2)

Even the most cutting edge ideas grow stale with time and acceptance. We see it with everything — scientific discoveries, business models, technological advances and religious practices. Yesterday's innovations become today's institutions. The same was true for the fight for truth and freedom that began with a covenant between G-d and our patriarch Abraham.

And I shall uphold my covenant between Me and you, and between your seed after you for all of their generations — an eternal covenant. (Gen., 17:7)

For over four hundred years a story about the hope of redemption and freedom was passed from parent to child. What was once exciting and fresh became endemic to our national ethnicity and psychology.

Among the elements that we lose when a novel concept becomes institutionalised is its personal connection and experience. When Newton discovered optical science it changed our whole understanding of reality. It was so profound a discovery that it fundamentally affected our perception of our world forever.

When it was revealed, people did not take it for granted. And then, inevitably, they did. A new business might begin because the owners have a passion for a product or for providing a service for the consumer. The challenge is to maintain the connection with the consumer, and the original principles even as the

Freedom begins with what we teach our children. That is why Jews became a people whose passion is education, whose heroes are teachers and whose citadels are schools. Nowhere is this more evident than on Passover, when the entire ritual of handing on our story to the next generation is set in motion by the questions asked by a child. In every generation we need to cultivate afresh the habits of the heart that Tocqueville called "the apprenticeship of liberty."

The message of Passover remains as powerful as ever. Freedom is won not on the battlefield but in the classroom and the home. Teach your children the history of freedom if you want them never to lose it.

business grows and becomes well-established. As Howard Behar put it in his book *It's Not About the Coffee* which discusses how he, as a senior executive at Starbucks, coached hundreds of leaders in the company and helped Starbucks grow into a world-renowned brand, "We're in the people business serving coffee, not the coffee business serving people". But Starbucks too, in its quest for growth, reached a point where it had its executives questioning whether the company had become so established that it had lost its connection with its original, driving ideals. In 2008 Howard Shultz returned as CEO of Starbucks in order to address that issue. He wrote his book *Onward* which deals with questions like: 'How can you grow a company without losing an intimate relationship with each customer?' and 'How can you revive your employees' passion for your company's founding principles?'

At the Red Sea, G-d addressed the same questions concerning his covenant with Abraham and his children. The covenant had become an institution and He wanted to make that institution personally significant to each of Abraham's offspring. He wanted to reignite the passion for Israel's founding principles. The plan to split the sea was not shared in order that He might extend His 'hand' to the people, showing them that this was more than an age-old pact with their forebear — it was for them.

On the seventh day of Pesah it is proper to consider which elements of our Jewish lives have become institutionalised, and assess the nature of our relationship with its founding purpose. Pesah closes with this concept because true freedom always requires an element of revolution. Freedom that is achieved is easily lost if it is taken for granted. One must feel a part of the freedom personally and fight for it so it is not assumed to be a default of life. The last day of Pesah teaches us that we must always ensure that our cherished traditions remain personally meaningful and that they always inspire us to sing a *shira hadasha* - a new song.



2. What are the mitzvos of the seder night?

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RABBI JONATHAN TZOREF

Director, TAL

Freedom!

It was a momentous occasion; Simon was finally under the Chupa with his dear bride Sarah. Hundreds of people eagerly looked on as the final smash of the glass occurred accompanied by music and large chants of Mazal Tov!

The Rabbi stood there and said "I pronounce you man and wife". Both Simon and Sarah raced their hands to their pockets.

As they took out their phones, the Rabbi continued – "you can now update your Facebook status!"

This is the year 2016!

In October 2014 research was carried out showing that there were more mobile devices in the world than people, and that they were multiplying five times faster than us! No other technology has impacted us like the mobile phone. It's the fastest growing manmade phenomenon ever -- from zero to 6.5 billion in three decades.

Out of the world's estimated 7.2 billion people, 6.5 billion have access to mobile phones. Far fewer — only 4.5 billion people — have access to working toilets.

In a blessed generation of technological advance the question has to be asked, how do we feel? I am sure you feel blessed with the affluence of this generation, but living in this generation comes with its baggage, are we really free, or are we subservient to our surroundings and the ever increasing techno advance?

It was the custom of ancient Royalty to recline on their left (since one holds food with their right hand, or alternatively to prevent the epiglottis from covering the trachea) when indulging in delicacies.

On Pesach we consider ourselves as not only a free nation, but a nation of Royalty. Thus our Sages enacted that on Pesach when participating in the Mitsvot of the night one should lean like Royalty.

Rabbi David Yosef Shlita (son of Rabbi Ovadia Z'l) told me of a case where a person had been a prisoner for many years. He was still in prison and asked the Rabbi whether he should also lean on Pesach. On the one hand Pesach and particularly the leaning is a celebration of freedom, yet in reality he was not free. Was it really necessary for him to lean?

Rabbi David Yosef answered that he was still obligated to lean. Although he was physically in prison, that did not impede on his mental freedom and celebration of Pesach.

Freedom is a choice of mind. If you are in control of your mind, you have the ability to be free even in the most daunting of places.

However, 'Freedom' itself has different dimensions, a point reflected in the two Hebrew words used to describe it - Chofesh and Cherut. Chofesh is 'freedom from' and Cherut is 'freedom to'.

Chofesh is what a slave acquires when released from slavery. He or she is free from being subject to someone else's will. But this kind of liberty is not enough to create a free society. A world in which everyone is free to do what they like begins in anarchy and ends in tyranny. That is why Chofesh is only the beginning of freedom, not its ultimate destination. One only needs look around at the world and in particular the Middle East to understand that 'freedom from' is not the end game.

Conversely, Cherut is collective freedom, a society in which my freedom respects yours. A free society is always a moral achievement. It rests on self-restraint and regard for others. The ultimate aim of Torah is to fashion a society on the foundations of justice and compassion, both of which depend on recognising the sovereignty of G-d and the integrity of creation. It is for this reason that we say, 'Next year may we all be Bnei Chorin, rather than Bnei Chofshim. We are stating,

'May we be free in a way that honours the freedom of all'.

Chofesh is what a slave acquires when released from slavery. He or she is free from being subject to someone else's will. But this kind of liberty is not enough to create a free society.

In January 1945, fearing the Russian advance, all prisoners of Auschwitz who could walk were taken on the brutal 'death marches'. The only people left in the camps were those who were too ill to move. Those remaining were liberated on January 27 1945, a day now commemorated as International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Primo Levi was a survivor of Auschwitz. In his book 'If This is a Man', he describes how the worst time of all was the last ten days that they were left alone with only scraps of food and fuel. One day he managed to light a fire and bring some warmth to his fellow prisoners, many of them slowly dying. He writes, "When the broken window was repaired and the stove began to spread its heat, something seemed to relax everyone and at that moment Towarowski (a Franco-Pole of twenty-three) proposed to the others that each of them offer a slice of bread to the three of us who had been working. And

so it was agreed. Only a day before, a similar event would have been inconceivable. The law of the Lager said, 'eat your own bread and if you can, that of your neighbour,' and left no room for gratitude. It really meant that the law of the lager was dead. It was the first human gesture that occurred amongst us. I believe that that moment can be dated as the beginning of the change by which we who had not died slowly changed from prisoners to men again."

The sharing of food was the first act through which slaves became human beings. That was the time they were able to attach themselves to humanity, enabling their free will, conquering their 'natural tendencies' in order to give of themselves to become Bnei Chorin.

The Midrash has a fascinating commentary on the location of the first meeting between G-d and Moshe. It was at the Sneh (the burning bush), that Moshe was delegated to deliver the Jews from the slavery of Egypt. Our Sages relate it was because of the Sneh that the very spot would eventually be called Sinai. The place where the mission began defined its purpose. The goal was not simply to get the Jews out of Egypt, but rather to bring them to the mountain where they would receive the Law. Freedom without Torah (law) is inconceivable.

That is why Moshe subsequently told Pharaoh not only to "let my people go", but added the all-important phrase "so that they may serve Me." This is the freedom of Pesach, wedded to the moral covenant of the Torah.

From a Jewish perspective, to speak only of the ideal of freedom – while ignoring its necessary partner of responsibility – is to pervert its true meaning.

This is what Abraham Lincoln understood so well in his famous words, "Freedom is not the right to do what we want, but what we ought." And this is the real message of Pesach; G-d granted us the gift of physical freedom, so that we might become truly free to be guided by our spiritual selves.

The Hebrew word for Egypt is Mitzrayim, the root of which is Metzar, meaning constriction, narrowness, and limitation. Spiritually, as Pesach approaches, the same energy of freedom that existed at the time of the Exodus is available for us to tap into. It's the ideal time to ask ourselves: What am I enslaved to that is holding me back from achieving my potential? What are the blockages, constrictions and limitations that stand in the way of accomplishing my goals in any area of my life? Am I a slave to my physical appetites, to social media and devices?

At the Pesach Seder we read, "In every generation we must each regard ourselves as though we personally had just left Egypt." The goal is to use the tools we have been given to make this happen in the context of our own lives.



3. Why is it called "Seder (order) night" when the things that happened then were extraordinary and miraculous?

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רבי דוב לוי
חול המועד

hilchot
pesach
chol hamoed

Chol Hamoed, the intermediate days of Pesach have a unique status. They are on the one hand holy days of Chag, intrinsically days of Pesach, but at the same time, work, or melachot, are permitted during them under certain circumstances.

Aren't the days of Chol Hamoed just a break between the first and last days of Yom Tov?

No, they are festival days when, according to many authorities, work carried out during these days carries biblical prohibition.

So I can't do any work, like on Yom Tov?

Melachah is permitted on Chol Hamoed, however, because Chol Hamoed is not a regular weekday only certain types under certain circumstances are allowed.

Which type of work can I do on Chol Hamoed?

The purpose of the work defines whether it's permitted. There are 4 main categories where melachah is permitted on Chol Hamoed: 1) Related to food preparation. 2) Avoiding a loss. 3) Necessary for any of the 8 days of the Chag. 4) For public benefit. Each category has details specific to it. We will look at each one individually.

Additionally, Muktzah and carrying (Hotza'ah) are fully permitted on Chol Hamoed.

What are the main factors affecting whether these categories of work can be done on Chol Hamoed?

The main factors are: Whether it's an action which 1) needs some skill or training (*uman*), or can be done easily by anyone (*hedyot*). 2) Done in its regular form (*darko*) or with in an unusual manner (*shinui*). 3) Intending to do the job on Chol Hamoed by putting it off to then (*kiven*) or the necessity happened to arise during Chol Hamoed. 4) The amount of effort and exertion (*tirchah*) involved in the action.

Category 1: Work involving food preparation:

Food preparation is split into two main categories, 1) preparation of the food itself (e.g. cooking, baking) and 2) work to enable food preparation (e.g. repairing kitchen appliances). All types of food preparation are permitted as long as for use on Pesach. It is permitted even if done in a professional manner (*Uman*) and even involving much exertion (*uman*).

So what difference does it make if it's direct food preparation or only to enable food preparation?

Food preparation which you could have done before Yom Tov, without any difference to the quality of the food, can intentionally be pushed off until Chol Hamoed. However actions, or

melachot, where you aren't directly preparing food should not be intentionally left for Chol Hamoed.

Can you give me an example?

If you had a second fridge which is broken and you need it for the second half of Yom Tov. Irrespective of whether you'll need a professional to fix it, you shouldn't plan to have it repaired on Chol Hamoed. Similarly, don't leave it til Chol Hamoed to sharpen your knives.

If I did leave it can I do it on Chol Hamoed?

You have to do the repair in an unusual manner. If it requires a professional, he would have to do it with a *shinui* - in some way which looks unusual; or in an unprofessional manner, if it's the kind of job where that's possible.

Is anything else included in this category?

Yes, any work or melachah to benefit one's body is included in this category and has the same rules as food preparations, e.g. showering, vitamins. The exceptions to this are haircuts, shaving and possibly cutting nails which we'll discuss later.

Category 2: Avoiding a loss:

Work is permitted where a loss would result were the action not be done. A professional action (*uman*) is permitted to avoid a significant loss but only an unskilled task (*hedyot*), or an unusual way of doing it (*shinui*), is permitted to avoid a small loss. In every case an effort should be made to do the action in private and only if unavoidable the melachah can be done publicly.

What if I'm not sure if a loss will result?

As long as it's reasonable to assume a loss will result, you can do the melachah to avoid it.

Can I put off the task until Chol Hamoed?

No, if you know you'll have to do a certain task as some point to avoid a loss, you shouldn't deliberately plan to do it on Chol Hamoed if you could easily do it before or after.

What if I won't lose anything but my friend will?

You are allowed irrespective of who will incur the loss.

Can I take payment for a melachah carried out to avoid someone else incurring a loss?

No, you have to do it for free.

Can I go to work on Chol Hamoed since I'll lose my wages if I take off?

No you should use your days off for Chol Hamoed. If your boss won't allow you to take off and you feel it jeopardises your position, you can go to work to avoid this possibility.

My boss closes early on Chol hamoed so if I take my days off I'll be losing time. Does that count as a loss?

No, that isn't a direct or significant enough loss.

As an employer is it ok to employ Jews on Chol Hamoed?

Certainly not! It is forbidden to give a Jew work to do on Chol Hamoed. It would only be

permitted if you'd incur an actual financial loss by not having your employees work over Chol Hamoed. The fact you wouldn't make profit during that time wouldn't be a *heter*. You have to calculate the minimum time you need them to come in to work to avoid loss.

Does it matter how much exertion the task involves?

Yes, a very strenuous task would only be allowed where a very significant loss is envisaged.

How much is 'very strenuous' and 'significant'?

You'd need to ask your Rabbi that.

Can I buy something which is on sale during Chol Hamoed?

Only if you think you won't find it for that price after Yom Tov.

Can I back up my computer on Chol Hamoed?

Committing data to memory is forbidden on Chol Hamoed unless one of the exceptions applies. Backing computer data is permitted if you didn't have reason to do so before Chol Hamoed.

Category 3: Necessary for the Chag:

Work which will benefit the Chag, both Yom Tov and Chol Hamoed, is permitted. This must however be done in an unskilled (*hedyot*) manner or an unusual way (*shinui*) if it's a skilled task (*uman*).

Are there any exceptions?

The main exceptions to this are haircuts, shaving and washing clothes. These are forbidden on Chol Hamoed. Laundry is only permitted on Chol Hamoed if it could not have been done before (e.g. young children's clothes). Haircutting and shaving is forbidden even if one didn't have time or forgot before Yom Tov. Moving house is also forbidden on Chol Hamoed.

Can I push off tasks needed for the Chag until Chol Hamoed?

No, you shouldn't deliberately arrange to do them on Chol Hamoed. It's only permitted if a necessity came up during the Chag.

What if I *did* plan these tasks for Chol Hamoed?

You cannot carry them out on Chol Hamoed. If you did so by mistake you can still benefit from your melacha. If one purposefully planned a melacha during Chol Hamoed, which could have been done before, the one who did it should never benefit from it but others may benefit from it after Pesach.

Category 4: For public benefit:

All unskilled tasks are permitted for public benefit. Professional or skilled tasks are permitted only for a benefit public to one's body (e.g. heating) or for the purpose of the Chag. This skilled task is allowed in the usual way because it's for public benefit.



4. In the Torah it is called "Chag hamatzos". Why then do we call it "Pesach"?



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5. What lesson can we learn from the difference between chometz and matza?



RABBI ADRIAN KURLAND
Rabbi Of Stanmore
Sephardi Kehilla

**Freedom
in chains**

I don't know about you, but I love Pesach. It's a time for family, stories, soft matzah (for us Sephardim) and of course, time off school/work.

The overriding theme about the holiday of Pesach is the notion of freedom, liberation – emancipation. But one look out of the window by anyone with a 'mashehu' of intelligence will reveal that we are anything but free. If you work for a non-jewish company, try taking off early Fridays in the winter. Doesn't really make for a popular relationship with the boss, does it?

So how do we understand these two opposing concepts?

The Hagadah, that mysterious authorless sefer that we drowsily read on Seder night, begins with a preface. We point to the matza and recite: "Ha lachma anya. This is the poor bread that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt." The short paragraph ends with the hopeful words, "this year we are here; next year we will be in the land of Israel. This year we are restricted next year we will be free."

Immediately after this statement the children all gather round and watch as the youngest of them asks the mah nishtana, noting how different this night is from all other nights. We

respond to the questions by explaining that we were once slaves and Hashem redeemed us. We give the impression to our children that tonight we celebrate our liberation. Yet minutes prior we told our children that we are presently enslaved and restricted. It seems that our reply contradicts our previous declarations that "this year we are restricted next year we will be free." What is the truth? Are we free or are we slaves? If we are free then what is meant by the verses in ha lachma anya? And if we are not free, then what is the meaning of the Seder?

Hopefully the following vignette will explain. Two weeks after Anatoly (Natan) Sharansky was sent to Vladimir prison to fill a 13-year sentence, he was led to a meeting. To his shock, across the table sat his mother and brother Lenya. Though the conversation was never allowed to lead to anything substantial, it was quickly terminated and the guests were asked to leave. When the guard announced that time was up Lenya pointed to the name boldly printed on Sharansky's prisoner's garb. "Tolya, you have your name on your outfit. I have it on mine too!" With that Lenya lifted his shirt to reveal a T-shirt with a picture of Anatoly and the words, in English "Free Anatoly Sharansky!" The guard quickly pushed the guests out of the room and snapped at Sharansky. "You will not see anyone for at least six months. Then he added sarcastically, "that's too bad."

"My sentence will end one day," Sharansky replied, "but what about yours? You are going to spend your whole life in jail!"

The Hagadah teaches us that there is room to be trapped in a country, in a civilization, or even in

a jail - and still be free. The dreams and aspirations that were set with the liberation of soul and body thousands of years ago have become the symbolic unshackling of every one of our mortal restraints. We may be behind Iron Curtains or even iron bars, but we have the vision of freedom. We have the knowledge and experience that there is a better, more spiritual, even a more meaningful world lying past the border of complacency. The guard who sneers behind his desk in Siberia is eternally subjugated while perceiving that he is free. We Jews, on the other hand, have the vision for true freedom, the aspirations for a better life, a better land, and a better existence that keeps us free despite the chains of our mortality.

We may begin the Seder with the words, "now we are bound, next year we will be free," but those are only comments about physical freedom. They apply to the mortal bodies trapped in Auschwitz, in the Gulag, or in the depths of poverty and debt even in the most democratic of countries. But the dreams of true freedom and spiritual redemption were fulfilled over 3,000 years ago near the banks of the Nile. And that emancipation of the Jewish People will never be subject to chains. That is the freedom that no one can take from us. Those are the hopes that we all can live and relive. That is the story of our emergence to freedom. It lives on forever. And anyone can relive it - anywhere, anytime. All you need is a vision and a dream.

As Rav Yosef Kahaneman famously said - "I may be dreaming - but I'm not sleeping".

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RABBI JOSEPH PEARLMAN
A Torah Educator

charoset

The Gemara (Pesachim 116a) and the commentaries contain

many recipes, which are not based merely on taste, but on solid halakhic reasons. Rabbi Levi says that the *charoset* is "zekher le-tapuach (in memory of the apple)", i.e. the apple tree under which the Israelite women hid themselves from the Egyptians to give birth. In order to give the *charoset* a sharp taste, Rashi says to use apples and wine, and sharp ingredients; *Ran* says to use sour apples and vinegar. Rabbi Yochanan maintains that the *charoset* is *zekher le-tit*, in memory of the clay which our forefathers made in Egypt. Rashi advises, to thicken it, to put in plenty of ingredients and grind it well, and *Ran* says to grind many vegetables into it. At the time of the meal, *Tosafot* says to thin it by pouring in wine or vinegar. *Mordekhai*, in the name of the *Arukh*, says it should be made from all types of food – sweet, bitter, and sour – just like clay, which contains all sorts of things.

Leket Yosher, in the name of *Terumat ha Deshem*, adds pears. It suggests that if they are mixed in the proper measure with apples and nuts, the resulting material will have the colour of clay. According to other opinions, however, while the *charoset* should have the texture of clay, it need not be of the same colour.

Shibbolei ha-Leket maintains that, since the *charoset* is in memory of the clay, we should add a little bit of clay or brick scrapings! *Maharam de Lunzano* totally disagrees with this, for we must convert sorrow into joy. He says that the suggestion of adding brick scrapings had its origins in a misprint in Rashi and *Rashbam* (Pesachim 116a). The erroneous text read "*ve-cheres*", which means broken bits of pottery, but it is clear that the correct reading should be "*ve-charoset*". It is only the latter which is to be ground "in memory of the clay".

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Pesachim 10:3) says the *charset* is *zekher le-dam*, in memory of the blood. *Tosafot*, quoting the Yerushalmi, accordingly advise the use of wine or vinegar to thin it out at the time of the meal. *Rema (Orach Chayim 473:5)* rules that it must be made thick like clay, and then we add a little vinegar or red wine, so it will be suitable for dipping.

A Baraita in the name of Rabbi Yochanan says that it is *zekher le-teven*, in memory of the straw (which was kneaded into the clay). Rashi says to use vegetables; *Rashbam*, spices; *Rif*, *Rach* and

Rema all say to use cinnamon or ginger, which resembles straw; *Mordekhai* (in the name of *Rokeach*, and quoted by *Beit Yosef*) suggests calamus, cinnamon, or ginger, which cannot be properly ground to remove the hard strands in them, thereby reminding us of the clay and the straw it contained; *Maharil (Sha'ar ha Tziyun 68)* writes that one should not grind them, so that they will remain long.

Tosafot, in the name of *Teshuvot ha-Geonim*, says that *charoset* is in memory of the fruits to which all Yisrael are compared in *Shir haShirim*. "Under the apple tree I awakened you" (*Shir haShirim 8:5*); "The fig tree puts forth her green figs" (2:13); "your temples are like a pomegranate split open" (4:3, 6:7); "I will climb up into the (date) palm tree" (7:9); "I went down into the nut garden" (6:11). *Tosafot* also adds almonds (*shekedim*) because the Holy One, blessed be He, *shakad*, (was eager and diligent) for the End of Days – and to whiten the *charoset*, since the clay also contained lime.

Peri Chadash, in the name of *Kol Bo*, adds grapes, in memory of the vines: "and the vines in blossom give forth their fragrance" (*Shir haShirim 2:13*).

Haggadah Sheleimah (p.63), in the name of *Sefer ha-Menuchach*, says that it was the custom of Jews from Salonika to add chesnuts and raisins.



6. Why is it called "Yetzias Mitzrayim" that literally means the going out of the Egyptians – not the Jews?!



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Tur (Orach Chayim 473) says that the *charoset* is in memory of *maror*, the bitter times, and so sour things should be included in the recipe. He excludes pomegranates, dates, and almonds, because, as *Bach* explains, only apples, nuts,

and figs were mentioned in connection with the Redemption from Egypt. Almonds also are not connected with redemption; to the contrary, they refer to punishment, as in "I see the rod of an almond tree" (Yirmeyahu 1:11)

So we see that there are very many possible ingredients and everyone should follow the custom that their family have adopted and enjoy their individual recipe.



yachatz

Strange Minhag? Why are we starting off Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim with this 'Breaking the Matzah'? What does it represent?

A famous story is recounted about a man who used to be a member of the "Hells Angels" biking group. Travelling across America with his group for about a decade, until he reacquainted himself with his Jewish roots, married a frum girl and settled down within the tri-state area.

He loved everything about his newfound Judaism, except for one thing: Erev Yom Kippur. Going to the mikva would mean exposing the embarrassing tattoos covering his body and revealing his very different (embarrassing) past. He devised a plan: He would visit the mikva at a less busy time and would cover himself with his extra-large towel... The plan work for the first and second year, but the third erev-yom-kippur all went pear-shaped. He missed the less busy time, and arrived at a packed mikva. He started his usual ritual of undressing in a modest or secretive way, but when he walked out of the mikvatowards his stand, he slipped on the floor, and exposed his upper body for all to see. Silence deafened in this crowded room as everyone was shocked at this gallery of unsavoury tattoos. The man turned all colours of the rainbow and laid there paralysed... until one elderly gentleman walked up to him and gently said "My son, I see that you have been through your gehinnom...." He rolled up his sleeve and showed a tattoo of a number branded into his arm by some animal in Auschwitz, and continued "... I too have been through my gehinnom. Come let us leave the mikva together."

I love the story. I feel it to be iconic of our generation. Reminds me of the famous Passuk in yeshaya (27:13) which we read as

part of our rosh hashana mussaf (and of course a famous song): "And it will come to be on 'That Day' a great shofar blast will be blown, and those lost in the Land of Ashur will come, as will those oppressed in the Land of Egypt, and will bow down to Hashem on the Har HaKodesh in Yerushalayim."

Those lost in the Land of Ashur. Those crushed in the Land of Mitzrayim.

The Ba'al Shem Tov teaches, that in fact we are speaking about two lots of contemporary Jews. Some are "Lost in the Land of Happiness" ("Ashur" related to the word 'Ashrei' means happiness), while others are "Crushed in the Land of Constraints" ("Mitzrayim" is related to the word 'Meitzar', which means a narrow strait. "Min HaMeitzar Karati Kah". The Nile Delta narrows into a strait.).

Both are equally damaging. Both are equal threats to our Emunah. In either people can become estranged to our History and our Mission. One through persecution, the other through assimilation. The nevuah is, that they will come back "on that Day", and together bow down to Hashem in Yerushalayim. They will meet in a mikvah, and together identify themselves as Jews.

Yachatz breaks the middle matzah. The first half is the first bite we eat (after the long hagaddah on seder night), and the second half is the last bite we eat ("ain affirinachar hapesach afikoman"). The halacha states that the first half has to be eaten "bete'avon" (when you have an appetite and are eagerly awaiting the matzah). The second half has to be eaten "Al HaSovah" (when we are satisfied, and have eaten a full Shulchan Orech). The first half is our Emunah despite poverty and hardships, despite hunger. The Second half is our Emunah despite affluence.

The two halves of Yachatz have never been so pertinent to us as we look through history, realise what tonight is about, and understand how these two halves are so necessary at framing the special 'order' of Seder Night.

This is one way of looking at Yachatz - but I recently saw an amazing second approach that spoke to me:

The Gemara [Shabbat 89b] records Hashem approaching the Forefathers accusing the Jewish People "Your Sons Have sinned". Unlike Avraham and Yaakov, Yitzchak steps up to the plate and after some bargaining ["after all, for how many years does a human being live? How much of that is spent sleeping and eating?...etc] Yitzchak strikes a deal - "I will take half the responsibility if you take half the responsibility".

Rav Hutner understands this puzzling deal - half Us, Half Hashem - in light of a famous statement in the Gemara [Brachot 17a] - "It is obvious that our desire is to do the Will of Hashem, the only two items that prevent us are; 'The Dominion of Nations (which subjugate the Jewish People)' and 'The Yeast in the dough (The YetzerHara)'".

One preventative from the outside (The Dominion of others and antisemitism), and one from the inside (The yetzer Hara).

On Seder night, we free ourselves of the Dominion of The Nations (Leaving Egypt - and the implied future redemption), and the 'Yeast in the Dough' (literally - chametz-free - but symbolically, ridding ourselves of the Yetzer Hara).

Half is our Job (working on the Yetzer Hara - overcoming our desires), Half is Hashem's Job (ridding the world of Antisemitism).

This is the deal that Yitzchak strikes with Hashem - and this is why tonight we break the middle Matzah - the middle of Three Matzot, representing Yitzchak Avinu's involvement in our Destiny.

So much of Seder Night is so central to us as a Nation. Yachatz is only the kick-off. May we merit to witness the materializing of the hope that every Seder Night has dreamed of, and that we should be Next Year in Jerusalem.

Living with Mitzvos

ANSWERS

- There are sixteen mitzvos that are associated with the korban Pesach that we cannot do nowadays. We can do three positive mitzvos: dispose of our chometz on Erev Pesach; eat matzos on the night of Pesach; tell over to our children the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim. There are five negative mitzvos: not to eat chometz after midday on Erev Pesach; not to eat chometz all seven days of Pesach; not to eat mixtures of chometz all seven days of Pesach; not to see and not to find chometz in your possession for the duration of Pesach.
- On the first night of Pesach there are two positive commandments required by the Torah with an additional three mitzvos added by the Rabonon, Sages. The two positive Torah mitzvos are the eating of matza on the first night of Pesach and relating the story of the exodus from Egypt. The three additional rabbinical mitzvos on this night are the drinking of four cups of wine; the eating of the maror, bitter herbs; the reciting of the Hallel (Psalms of praise).
- The reality is that all things are miraculous only that we do not see it living in a world of teva, nature. Therefore the real order is what happened on Seder night.
- Hashem performed miracles for the Jews. Each party calls the festival the special act done by the other. The Jews call it Pesach after Hashem jumping over the houses to save the Jews while Hashem in the Torah calls it Matzos describing the Jews racing out of Mitzrayim to do Hashem's bidding.
- Chometz and Matza have the same ingredients and the only difference is time that allows the dough to blow it up with air pockets. This bloating represents the evil inclination that distorts the facts - known as "*seor shebisa* - yeast in the dough". We can learn from here that in life we can one situation that can be good or bad depending on how we deal with the evil inclination. Matza is where the dough is not allowed to rise reflecting the limiting of the evil inclination.
- This shows us the low spiritual level that the Jews had sunk to. Externally it looked like the Mitzreiym were the ones going out! However, the pintele Yid internally was the source for the great difference.

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