

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita*

Pesach



Torah WELLSPRINGS

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Pesach

Shabbos HaGadol	4
Lessons from Chametz and Matzah	4
Spiritual Growth from <i>Bedikas Chametz</i>	7
Erev Pesach.....	8
Every Part of the Seder is Special	9
The Holiness of the Night When We Tell Hashem's Wonders.....	11
Levels we can Attain.....	15
<i>Matzah</i>	16
Maror	18
<i>Magid</i>	19
Tefillah at the Seder.....	21
<i>Vanitzak!</i>	24
<i>Emunah</i>	26
Belief in <i>Hashgachah Pratis</i>	28
<i>Shevi'i Shel Pesach</i> and <i>Emunah</i>	30
Annual <i>Kriyas Yam Suf</i>	33

Torah Wellsprings - Pesach

Shabbos HaGadol

Chazal (Yoma 39a) say, "A person sanctifies himself a drop from below, and heaven sanctifies him a lot from above." The Shlah HaKadosh (Vayechi) states that this refers to the preparation for performing mitzvos. "According to the extent that a person prepares himself, that is how much spirituality he will attain..."

The Tiferes Shlomo (Vayigash ר"ה ויגדו) writes, "For all mitzvos, and for Torah and tefillah, one must prepare himself, what he will bring to the King...."

One of the ways we prepare for Pesach is through this Shabbos, Shabbos HaGadol.

The Tur (430) writes, "The Shabbos before Pesach is called Shabbos HaGadol because a great miracle (*nes gadol*) happened on this day..." The Tur explains that the Yidden tied sheep to their bedposts for the korban Pesach. "The Mitzrim asked them, 'Why are you doing this?' The Yidden answered that Hashem commanded them to slaughter the sheep as a korban Pesach. The Mitzrim were very upset that the Jewish nation was about to slaughter their gods, but they didn't have permission to say anything. In remembrance of this miracle, we call this Shabbos 'Shabbos HaGadol.'"

Tosfos (Shabbos 87:) states another miracle we celebrate on Shabbos HaGadol. The *bechorim* (firstborns) of the Egyptians asked the Yidden why they tied a sheep to their bedposts. The Yidden told them that Hashem was going to slay every firstborn Mitzri, and they would bring a korban Pesach to celebrate this miracle.

The firstborns of the Egyptians rushed to Pharaoh and their parents, demanding that the Jewish nation be freed. They correctly realized that if the Jewish nation wasn't permitted to go free, all the firstborn Mitzrim would die.

Pharaoh and their parents didn't heed their shouts, not believing that what they were saying would indeed occur.

The firstborns then declared war on Mitzrayim, as it states (*Tehillim* 136:10), למכה מצרים, בבכוריהם, "Who smote Egypt through their firstborns." Many Egyptians died in this war. According to Tosfos, this is the miracle we celebrate on Shabbos HaGadol.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* teaches that Shabbos HaGadol is a day of atonement, like that of Yom Kippur. The day of Yom Kippur is on the 10th of Tishrei, and the miracles of Shabbos HaGadol happened on the 10th of Nisan. Yom Kippur is called *Yoma Rabba*, "the great day" (see Rosh Hashanah, 21.), and this Shabbos is called "the great Shabbos." Chidushei HaRim explains that when Pesach arrives, we have no *aveiros* because we burned and got rid of the chametz, which symbolizes *aveiros*.

The Levush says it is called Shabbos HaGadol because it is a preparation for (Malachi 3:24) יום ה' הגדול והנורא, "Hashem's great and awesome day" – the day when Moshiach will come.

The Ohev Yisrael *zt'l* (*Likutei Na'ch, Shabbos HaGadol*) writes, "The origin and foundation of all Shabbosos of the year is Shabbos HaGadol and Shabbos Teshuvah. They are the heads of all Shabbosos of the year." It is therefore wise and recommended to make this Shabbos special.

Lessons from Chametz and Matzah

We are more stringent with the laws of chametz than with any other aveirah. Even a drop of chametz renders the food forbidden. In addition to the prohibition of eating chametz, it is also forbidden to derive pleasure from chametz. Furthermore, we are prohibited from having chametz in the house during Pesach (בל יראה ובל ימצא). There is no other

prohibition in the Torah that has so many stringencies like chametz on Pesach.

The Radvaz writes that he sought a reason for this, and he only found an answer in the path of *drush*. Chazal tell us that chametz represents the yetzer hara. This is the reason we are so stringent with chametz. We don't want a drop of the yetzer hara throughout Pesach.

מצה means to battle, as it states (Yeshayah 41:12) אנשי מצותך, "the men who battle with you." Therefore, matzah hints to the yetzer tov, which battles against the yetzer hara. Just as all bad middos and the yetzer hara are alluded to by the chametz, all good middos

and the yetzer tov are alluded to by the matzah.

Shulchan Aruch (459:2) teaches, לא יניחו העיסה בלא עסק ואפילו רגע אחד.

"Don't leave the dough idle without working it – not even for a moment." When making matzah, one must always work with the dough. This prevents it from rising and becoming chametz. The Satmar Rebbe zt'l said that this halachah hints at the virtue of always being active in *avodas Hashem*. As we explained, the matzah represents all good middos in *avodas Hashem*, and one example is that it represents the good attribute of always being busy performing Hashem's service.¹

1. Once, the Chasam Sofer zt'l wittily said, "If you have extra time, pass it my way because I don't have enough." We have a great deal to accomplish; there is no time to waste.

Being constantly occupied with *avodas Hashem* has two benefits. One is that you earn many mitzvos. A second benefit is that when you are busy, you don't have time for aveiros. The Rebbe of Kotzk zt'l said to his chassidim, "More than the aveiros you transgressed, it bothers me that you had time for them."

The Divrei Chaim of Sanz zt'l would say, "If you don't have the energy to learn Torah, say *Tehillim*. If you don't have the strength to say *Tehillim*, give *tzedakah*..." There is always something you can do, to be occupied with *avodas Hashem*.

The Gemara (Brachos 28.) tells us that when Reb Zeira was drained from his studies, he would sit at the doorway of Reb Noson bar Tuvi's beis medrash. He said, "When the Rabbanim pass, I will stand up for them, and receive reward." He sought to serve Hashem in every situation, including at the times when he was fatigued.

Rebbe Zusha of Anipoli zt'l said that we can learn three lessons from little children: (1) When a child wants something, he cries until he gets it. (2) A child is happy when he gets what he wants. [Adults are not that way; When they get their desires, they are soon dissatisfied again because they want more.] (3) A child is always active.

We, too, must strive always to be active and engaged in Hashem's service. We learn this attitude from matzah. From the moment water is poured on the flour, we work with the dough nonstop, until it is baked.

2. Reb Eliyahu Dessler would tell his students to take on a small *kabbalah* before Pesach. He told them that even a tiny *kabbalah* would elevate them to very high levels, and ready them for Pesach. One year, Reb Eliyahu asked a *bachur*, "What *kabbalah tovah* did you accept on yourself as a preparation for Pesach?"

The *bachur* replied that he didn't take on anything, saying that he didn't believe a small *kabbalah* would make a difference.

Reb Dessler told him the following *mashal*:

A person from a third-world country visited New York City and was astounded by the tall skyscrapers he saw. He stood outside a skyscraper, looking up in amazement.

A passerby told him, "On the top floor, there's an observation deck. From there, you can see the entire city."

"Amazing!" the man replied. "I would love to go up there, but I can't walk up all those steps!"

The letters of the words *חמץ* and *מצה* are nearly identical – both have the letters *mem* and *tzaddik* in them. The primary difference between them is that *matzah* has a *heh*, and *chametz* has a *ches*. The letters *ה* and *ח* are also almost the same. The difference is that the leg of a *ה* is broken, whereas the leg of a *ח* is unbroken, from the roof to the ground. Rebbe Shlomo Dovid of Slonim *zt'l* explained that the broken leg of the *ה* hints at a broken heart. This is the defining factor that differentiates between *matzah* and *chametz*, between *kedushah* and *tumah*, *r'l*. A broken heart means feeling incomplete in one's *avodas Hashem* and regretting that one isn't doing more. This is a praised and holy emotion during the times that a person contemplates his ways to do *teshuvah*. The Rebbe of Kotzk *zt'l* says, "There is nothing more complete than a broken heart."

Additionally, the similarity between the letters of *חמץ* and *מצה* suggests that it is often difficult to differentiate between *kedushah* and *tumah*. This is because the *yetzer hara* tells a person that his *aveiros* are *mitzvos*.

The person thinks it is the *yetzer tov* that is speaking, so he listens to him. The Meor Einayim (*Tzav חמץ חמץ*) writes, "*Kedushah* is called *matzah* and the *kelipah* is called *chametz*. There's barely a difference between them, aside from the small drop that differentiates a *ches* from a *heh*. The *yetzer hara* generally doesn't tell a person to do an *aveirah*, because who would listen to him? Instead, the *yetzer hara* tries to convince his victims that an *aveirah* is a *mitzvah*..."

We note that the slight difference between the *ches* and the *heh* indicates that all it takes is a drop of improvement, and one can reach very high levels. He might be presently in the realm of *tumah*, but with a tiny change, everything turns around, and he enters into the realm of *kedushah*.²

One of the ways we clean our homes of *chametz* is with a *mitzvah* called *bitul chametz*. The morning after *bedikas chametz*, we burn the *chametz* and say a *nusach* written in the *siddur* to annul the *chametz*. The words declare that if there is *chametz* in our possession that we don't know about,

"You don't have to take the stairs," the man replied. "You can use the elevator."

The visitor had never seen an elevator before. The stranger explained to him that you press a button, and you reach the top floor.

He walked into the building and gingerly entered the elevator, but didn't press any buttons. The door closed, and it turned dark. He was afraid he was trapped inside. Panicking, he started hitting all the buttons on the panel, including the emergency button. Emergency personnel rushed over and freed him from the elevator. They asked him, "Which floor did you want to go to?"

"The top floor, to the observation deck."

"So why didn't you press that button?"

"I don't believe it would work," he answered. "How can pressing a button bring me up so high?"

With this *mashal*, Reb Dessler explained to the *bachur* that although people think tiny *kabbalos* are insignificant, that isn't the case. With each small *kabbalah*, one grows immensely.

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* compared it to two people walking towards an escalator. One of them took one step more than his friend. That one step got him onto the escalator, which brought him to the next floor. His friend, who didn't take that final step, remained below.

This is the uniqueness of a *kabbalah tovah*. It is a small step that brings us very high.

These ideas are alluded to by the minor difference between the *heh* and the *ches*. It is the small things that make a tremendous difference.

we consider the chametz to be like the dust of the earth. After reciting these words of *bitul*, even if one accidentally has chametz in his home, he hasn't transgressed the aveirah of owning chametz on Pesach.

As we explained, chametz represents the yetzer hara and negative character traits. We annul chametz when we consider it to be nothing more than the dust of the earth. We should do the same for aveiros and destructive temptations. We should recognize how meaningless and hollow these matters are, and then we won't desire them.

The yetzer hara glorifies aveiros and attempts to draw us to them. Bitul means to annul them, and to realize that there is no rational reason to want these matters.³

Spiritual Growth from *Bedikas Chametz*

As a bachur studying in Yeshivas Chevron, which is located in Yerushalayim, Reb Shimshon Pinkus performed the mitzvah

of bedikas chametz with mesirus nefesh, and he recounts the high levels he attained from performing this mitzvah. He shared an apartment in Yerushalayim with some other bachurim from the yeshiva, but for Pesach, his friends all returned to America or to wherever their families lived. Since Reb Shimshon was the only person who remained in Yerushalayim, the obligation of bedikas chametz was entirely his responsibility that year.

He studied the halachos thoroughly and conducted a meticulous *bedikah* that lasted several hours. Then he remembered that he should make bedikas chametz on the roof as well. All residents of the apartment building used the roof, but Reb Shimshon Pinkus knew that people tend to rely on others, and if he didn't check the roof, likely no one would.

He found the roof cluttered. The residents used the roof for storage, and many items

3. The Mesillas Yesharim (ch.15) writes, "The factor that draws people to pleasures [of this world]... is the belief that pleasures are sweet and good. When a person understands that the good is false and the bad that will come from it is true, he will be disgusted and won't want them at all. This is the primary lesson that a person must educate himself in... All pleasures of this world are the same. If you think about them, you will see that even the imagined good is for a fleeting moment, and the bad that can come from the pleasures is long and difficult. Any intelligent person won't want to place himself in these dangers for a small moment of pleasure. This is obvious. When you accustom yourself to think about this truth, slowly but surely, you will free yourself from the shackles of foolishness, and you will not want the foolish pleasures at all. You will be disgusted by them and only partake in them the necessary amount."

Similarly, Reb Gad'l Eisner *zt'l* explained that when one thinks forbidden thoughts are pleasurable, it presents a significant challenge to maintain a pure mind. But when one recognizes how much he suffers from these thoughts, even in this world, it is easy to push these forbidden thoughts away.

Reb Gad'l told a parable:

A person carrying expensive diamonds noticed, out of the corner of his eye, that thieves were following him. If he runs, the thieves will know that he is carrying something precious and they will undoubtedly pursue him. So, he walks calmly and casually, signaling to them that he has nothing to hide, and the thieves let him be.

The *nimshal* is a lesson on how to overcome forbidden thoughts. You can fight them by running away from them, but then the yetzer hara will chase after you and force the forbidden thoughts onto you. A wiser approach is to decide in your heart that you don't want these temptations, and then you will quickly and effortlessly stop thinking about them.

In a similar approach, the Beis Aharon *zt'l* explains that you should fill your heart with a desire to do good. Your desire to serve Hashem will annul all other temptations.

were tossed up there. To do an effective *bedikas chametz*, he would have to tidy up first. He knew that this would take a long time (and this was after performing *bedikas chametz* for several hours in his apartment), but he was prepared to perform the mitzvah of *bedikas chametz* with *mesirus nefesh*. To encourage himself, he kept reminding himself, "I'm doing the mitzvah of *bedikas chametz*!" That thought gave him the strength to continue. He completed *bedikas chametz* just before daybreak.

He thought he would be tired at the Seder, but it was just the opposite. He never had such a good Seder. He enjoyed each word of the *Haggadah*. When the Seder was over, he couldn't sleep – he felt so inspired. He remained awake all night, studying about *yetzias Mitzrayim* until the morning.

The inspiration remained with him for the entire *yom tov*, and after Pesach passed, he continued to grow higher and higher. Reb Shimshon Pinkus said, "If I have any good qualities today, it is from that mitzvah *d'rabbanan* of *bedikas chametz*, which I did with *mesirus nefesh*."⁴

Reb Yeruchem, the *mashgiach* of Mir *zt'l*, said, "If we came to this world just to perform the mitzvah of *biur chametz*, בייני, it would already be worthwhile. This mitzvah imbues us with *kedushah* and *taharah*."

Erev Pesach

In a letter, Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l* writes, "When the Jewish people lived in their land, *erev Pesach* was a joyous holiday because everyone sacrificed the *korban Pesach* and

said *Hallel*, etc. Even today, *erev Pesach* should be in that spirit... We should be busy with mitzvos all day, burning the chametz, preparing for the Seder..."

The Bas Ayin (*Drush lePesach, Metzora*) writes, "*Erev Pesach*, when a person does *teshuvah sheleimah* before Hashem and eradicates all the chametz and evil from his heart, it is the greatest *eis ratzon* of the year!"

The Ateres Yehoshua of Dzikov *zt'l* would recite the tefillah of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* (printed at the beginning of many *machzorim* and *siddurim*) when he burned his chametz.

Tzaddikim taught that the war of Gog and Magog, which heralds the coming of Moshiach, will take place on *erev Pesach* during the three hours when people are burning their chametz.

This can be the meaning of the verse in *Hoshanos*, הוֹשַׁעֵנָּא שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁעוֹת, "Save us three hours." We pray to be saved from the war of Gog and Magog, which will take place during those three hours.

The Russian government issued a harsh decree on the Jewish community. A Jewish activist discovered that for a price, it was possible to bribe one of the ministers, who had the power to annul the decree. The price was high, and he spoke with many rabbanim, urging them to influence their followers to donate money for the bribe. Rebbe Aharon of Chernobyl *zt'l* ignored the activist's request.

The activist spoke to Rebbe Yitzchok of Skver *zt'l* (Rebbe Aharon Chernobyler's brother) and

4. Reb Shimshon Pinkus considered that special night of *bedikas chametz* to be the day he was born, because it was then that he became a new person. Chazal say that tzaddikim are *niftar* on the day they were born. Indeed, Reb Shimshon Pinkus passed away on Wednesday, and he was buried on Thursday evening, on the 13th of Nisan, the night of *bedikas chametz* (that year, Pesach began on Motzei Shabbos).

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov once asked his sister, "Do you remember our father's *bedikas chametz*? It took all night and was performed with tears and *hisorerus*."

Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* rarely cried, but he did cry when he burned the chametz and while saying קְרוּבֵץ on Purim.

asked him to encourage his brother to participate in this fundraising program. The Skverer Rebbe spoke with Reb Aharon and explained why raising money for this cause was important; however, Reb Aharon still didn't participate.

On *Erev Pesach*, when Rebbe Aharon Chernobyler went outside to burn his *chametz*, he said, "Some say we can annul harsh decrees with money, but that isn't correct. When we burn the *chametz* on *erev Pesach*, we annul all harsh decrees."

Reb Shimshon Ostropole *zt'l* wrote a letter and advised that people should read it once a year, and ideally, they should read it on *erev Pesach*. He said that whoever reads and studies this letter will experience salvations.

He writes at the beginning of this letter the following:

"Our master, the holy [Arizal], wrote the following wondrous ideas in a concealed manner, and no one knows how to decipher them. Many *gedolim* asked me to explain what the Arizal was saying, and I didn't tell them. But because of my love for you, I will reveal the secret of this matter according to how it was revealed to me in a dream at night." Reb Shimshon explains the concealed lesson of the Arizal wondrously and concludes, "After these matters were revealed to me, heaven told me that whoever studies this awesome secret as I wrote it here, even just once a year, primarily when he studies it on *erev Pesach*, he will certainly be guarded the entire year from all troubles, unnatural deaths, and tragedies. His enemies won't rule over him; they will fall before him, and wherever he turns, he will enjoy success."⁵

Every Part of the Seder is Special

Rebbe Shalom of Shotz *zt'l* told the following parable to explain the specialness of the Seder, even for those who don't know the secrets of what they are accomplishing with each part of the Seder.

Someone tied a donkey to a mill and had the donkey walk around the mill several times. Each time the donkey walked around, the mill churned and milled the kernels that were in the mill. The donkey, however, didn't understand why it had to walk around in circles. If it could think, it would say, "This person is doing *tzaar baalei chaim!* If he wants me to go someplace, it's my duty to bring him there. But to walk around endlessly for no purpose is just cruel." The donkey doesn't know that as it walks around, it is turning the millstone and grinding wheat into flour.

Rebbe Shalom of Shotz *zt'l* explained that each part of the Seder has great kabbalistic secrets. On the *קערה* there's an egg in one corner, *karpas* in another corner, *maror* in the middle, and so on. Each item represents one of Hashem's attributes: *chesed*, *gevurah*, *tiferes*, and so on, and many other secrets and profound ideas are happening at the Seder. We don't fully understand the significance of the Seder plate and all the other mitzvos of the Seder, but we go through the motions of the Seder happily, and we believe that this process will accomplish great things and bring us incredible blessings.

The *קערה* is round to indicate that we go around the cycle of performing the customs and *halachos* of the Seder. When we do so, we will receive many *brachos* from Hashem.⁶

5. Once, in Elul, during the Holocaust, the Erloyer Rav *zt'l* remembered that he hadn't yet studied Reb Shimshon of Ostropola's letter that year. So, he immediately learned the letter and was saved from the grave dangers he was in.

The Erloyer Rav said that his grandfather, the Hisorerus HaTeshuvah, would study that letter yearly. When he was ninety-four years old, he didn't get around to reviewing the letter, and he was *niftar* that year.

6. It is said that after the Seder, Rebbe Yechiel Meir of Gustenin *zt'l* was unable to fall asleep. He said, "I

The Maharil writes, "Even if aspects of the Seder seem insignificant to you, be wise to perform them because there is nothing extra."

The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* writes, "It is amazing the many great things... that occur in the upper worlds when the Jewish nation makes the Seder on this night, with the matzos, the *maror*, the *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*..." The Tiferes Shlomo elaborates that Mordechai and Esther decreed a three-day fast, and one of the fast days was on the Seder night! That year, the Yidden didn't eat matzah and *maror*, etc. as it states *ויעבר מרדכי*, which means that Mordechai transgressed the first night of Pesach by declaring a fast on that day (see Gemara *Megillah* 15.).

Why did Mordechai choose to create a fast day on this night? There was still plenty of time. Haman's decree was to be carried out twelve months later, on the fourteenth of Adar. Why did Mordechai decree a three-day fast now, which resulted in the absence

of the mitzvos of matzah and maror at the Seder?

The Tiferes Shlomo explains that Mordechai wanted to show Heaven what the world would look like if Haman's scheme succeeded and there would be no Jewish nation to celebrate the Seder. The Tiferes Shlomo writes, "A great commotion arose in heaven when no one made a Seder that night. The *malachim* were asking, "What is happening? ... This showed Heaven that if Haman's plan were to succeed, *chalilah*, the entire world would cease to exist."

Reb Eliyahu Gutmacher *zt'l* offers another explanation for why Mordechai and Esther established a fast day specifically on the night of the Seder. He explains that the night of the Seder is the greatest *eis ratzon* of the year. Mordechai and Esther wanted to use the potential of this special time to daven and to annul Haman's decrees. Their *tefillos* were immediately answered, and Haman was hung on the second day of Pesach.⁷

feel like a person who had just won the lottery. He can't fall asleep, he is so excited, and I also can't fall asleep. We profited greatly this night!

There are fifteen simanim at the seder, and holy sefarim teach that we should say each siman before performing that part of the seder. Saying the name of the siman brings us kedushah (see *Yesod v'Shores HaAvodah*).

Chassidim once heard Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* silently repeat to himself the simanim of the Seder (*קדש ורחוק כרפס יחין* etc.). He recited all of them *before* he began the Seder. Chassidim explain that he was reminding himself of all the wonderful steps of the Seder so that he could perform each step correctly.

Sometimes, when a person reaches *נרצה* he regrets that he didn't take more advantage of the holy Seder with all its mitzvos, segulos, holiness, and bounty. Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* wanted to make sure that he took advantage of all the mitzvos of this holy night, so at the beginning of the Seder, he reviewed what was coming up, so he could perform the mitzvos properly.

The order of the Seder, *קדש ורחוק*, etc., are called simanim. When someone claims a lost object, he must present evidence of ownership (simanim), to retrieve it. Throughout the year, due to sins, a person loses his holiness. When he performs the simanim of the Seder, he regains his kedushah. What was lost is returned to him.

7. Reb Gutmacher said a mashal to describe the uniqueness of this night:

A person who is imprisoned, with four high walls surrounding him, has no hope for escape. However, if he finds even just a tiny breach in one of the walls, he will hammer away at that opening, and the opening will widen until he can escape. The Seder night provides us with that tiny crack. Everyone has "fortified walls" surrounding them. For some, it's the lack of *parnassah*; for others, it's health issues or other forms of *tzaros*, *rachmana litzlan*. People feel trapped, unable to escape. They don't know how to leave their *tzaros*.

The Holiness of the Night When We Tell Hashem's Wonders

The Chasam Sofer zy'a discusses the holiness in our homes on this special night, the night we recount the Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim, and reflect on Hashem's wonders and miracles.

He bases his lesson on the halachah (*Shulchan Aruch* 472:2) which states, יסדר שולחנו בכלים

נאים לפי כוחו, "One should set the table with beautiful utensils according to his abilities." The table should be decorated with beautiful utensils to show the freedom we attain on this night.

Magen Avraham (472:2) writes that the Maharil would even place on the table the vessels that he received from goyim. (The Maharil would lend money to goyim, and they gave him their

On Pesach, at the Seder, they find a crack in the walls. If they pound on this crack (with tefillah and the mitzvos of the night), the crack will widen, and everything can change. Even one's mazal can change for the better on this night.

Rebbe Simchah Bunim of Peshischa zy'a told the following mashal:

A wealthy person purchased a rare, expensive, and beautiful horse. He put it in his stable, near his home. However, he was afraid his rare horse would be stolen, so he built a fence around the stable. Still, he feared thieves might find a way to get through the wall, so he hired someone to stand guard all night. He told the guard, "I want you to think about something interesting, such as an intriguing question, something that will occupy your mind and keep you awake throughout the night."

The owner of the horse went to bed, but sleep eluded him. He thought, "I have a gate, I have a guard, but the guard might fall asleep!" So, he went outside to see what was going on. He saw his horse resting peacefully in the stable, and the watchman was awake. That was good.

"What are you thinking about now?" he asked the guard.

"I am trying to figure out where the wood goes when a peg is knocked into a wooden plank. There was wood there before; where did it go?"

The wealthy man patted him on his shoulders, "Very good," he said. "Keep thinking about such weighty matters, and you won't fall asleep."

The wealthy man returned home, satisfied that everything was under control, and fell asleep. But an hour later, he awoke, frightened once again. "What if the guard fell asleep?"

So he went back outside to check on his horse. The watchman was still standing there, guarding the horse, while the horse rested in the barn.

"I am so glad you are still awake," the man said to his guard. "What are you thinking about now?"

The guard replied, "I'm thinking about bakers." They bake bagels and donuts with holes in the middle. There used to be dough there. Where did the dough go?"

"Wonderful question," the wealthy man replied. "Keep thinking along these lines, and you won't fall asleep."

The wealthy man managed to sleep for another hour, but then he woke up again, feeling that he had to check up on his horse again. He asked the guard, "What are you thinking about now?"

"I was just wondering," he said, "A wealthy person buys a prize horse, constructs a fence to protect it, hires someone to stand guard, and wakes up every hour to make sure everything is okay." So, I'm wondering, if he took such good care, where did the horse go? How did the horse disappear?"

What's the lesson of this story? It's a reminder that we must grab the opportunities of this night so we aren't left empty-handed. Otherwise, one will ask, "I bought matzah, maror, and all the Seder products; I cooked and prepared for Pesach, so where did the Seder go?" How did it slip out of my hands?"

silver utensils, as collateral for the loans. The Maharil held onto the items until they repaid the loan.) Throughout the year, the Maharil didn't use these vessels since they didn't belong to him, and it would be *gezel* to use them. But at the seder, he would take them out and use them because it is customary to adorn the Seder table with valuable vessels.

The Magen Avraham asks why at the seder it wasn't considered theft. The Magen Avraham answers, "Since the Maharil used them one day a year, the goyim weren't *makpid*." The Maharil understood that the goyim wouldn't mind if he used their vessels for just one night. Therefore, it wasn't theft.⁸

However, the Chasam Sofer *zt'l* raises another question (Drashos Shabbos HaGadol, vol. 2, p. 255). Eating food from utensils that weren't immersed in a mikvah is not allowed. How did the Maharil use the Goyishe dishes? As the Chasam Sofer writes, *יש בו סכנה וטומאה עצומה*, של לחמם טמא, "There is a danger, and a powerful *tumah*" when one eats on gentile utensils. So why wasn't the Maharil concerned about this impurity? Why did he use gentile utensils at the Seder?

The Chasam Sofer replies that there is a lot of *kedushah* on this night, when we discuss Hashem's wonders. Therefore, all the *tumah* of the non-Jewish utensils disappears and becomes negated in the great *kedushah* of the night.

When the Jewish nation left Mitzrayim (Shemos 12:35), *וישאלו ממצרים כלי כסף וכל זהב*, "they borrowed from the Egyptians silver and gold utensils..."

Rashi (Shemos 12:37) writes, "The Egyptians gave more than the Yidden asked for. [The Egyptians said], 'You are asking for one? Take two and leave.'" The Chasam Sofer

explains that the Egyptians were eager to give their utensils because they understood that their dishes could contaminate the Jewish nation.

(The Chasam Sofer clarifies that the Mitzrim weren't so wise to know that their utensils would generate *tumah* for the Jewish nation, but their *mazal* and *malach* in heaven knew, and unknowingly, this inspired them to give them their utensils.)

The Jewish nation was hesitant and didn't want to borrow anything (see Brachos 9). The Chasam Sofer explains that they were concerned about the *tumah*.

They feared that borrowing the *goyishe keilim* might contaminate them. This *tumah* couldn't be removed with immersion in a mikvah because the utensils were borrowed (and not acquired). This left them with contaminated *goyishe* utensils without the possibility of purifying them. Moshe Rabbeinu had to convince them to borrow the utensils.

But the Yidden had nothing to fear. As the Chasam Sofer explains, "Because of the immense *kedushah* that Hashem bestowed on the Jewish nation on that night...the *tumah* became annulled...in the *kedushah*."⁹

The Chasam Sofer adds that this immense *kedushah* reoccurs in every generation. "Therefore, every Seder night, it is permitted to use the utensils taken as collateral from goyim [as the Maharil would do]. Due to the *hislahavous* we have when telling the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the *tumah* of the *keilim* won't harm us, even if the utensils weren't *toiveled*."

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (*drashos Shabbos HaGadol* תקס"ב ד"ה כי תבאו) teaches that wherever there is *kedushah*, there is abundance and there is

8. Others (*Chok Yaakov* and *Mishnah Berurah*) answer that the Maharil put those utensils on a sideboard in his dining room to decorate the room, and didn't actually use them.

9. The Chasam Sofer explains that the Jewish nation didn't deserve this high level of *kedushah*, but Hashem wanted to keep His promise to Avraham Avinu that the Jewish nation would leave with immense wealth. Therefore, Hashem told them to borrow the utensils, which He purified with the great holiness of the night.

plenty of room. This answers several questions:

1) At the Seder, we say כל דכפין ייתי ויכול, "Whoever is hungry, come and eat." What would happen if some poor people took us up on our offer and came to our home? Where would we put them, and how would we have enough food for everyone?

2) Chazal (*Avos* 5:5) say that one of the ten miracles of the Beis HaMikdash was that "No one ever said he doesn't have a place to sleep in Yerushalayim." There was always room for everyone in Yerushalayim. How did this happen?

3) Another miracle was עומדים צפופים ומשתחוים רווחים, that although it was very crowded in the Beis HaMikdash, when people bowed down, there was plenty of room for everyone. How did this miracle happen?¹⁰

4) Similarly, Chazal say that although the kohanim received just a tiny morsel from the להם הפנים, it was sufficient. They ate the morsel and felt satisfied and full. What is the explanation of all these miracles?

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that this is because where there's holiness, there is always enough. There was plenty of room in the Beis HaMikdash, and in Yerushalayim,

and a drop of food was enough. This is the reason we invite people to our homes on the night of the Seder. If many people take up our offer, we don't have to be afraid. There will be room in our homes, there will be enough food, for that is the nature of kedushah.

The Chasam Sofer writes, "With these ideas, I explain, כהא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתנא, 'This is the bread of poverty our forefathers ate in Mitzrayim with hunger and suffering.' [We are still poor] and we are still eating poor man's bread... Nevertheless, כל דכפין ייתי ויפסה, 'Whoever is hungry, come and eat with us.' Don't worry. There will be enough. As Chazal say, 'The entire nation can eat the same *korban Pesach*.' Our homes will become spacious, and there will be room for all the guests because when we tell Hashem's wonders and miracles, our houses are a miniature Eretz Yisrael.

"Chazal (*Megillah* 29.) say, 'In the future, the *batei midrashim* and the *batei knesiyos* will move to Eretz Yisrael.' Our houses will also move to Eretz Yisrael. This is the meaning of the words השתא הכא לשנה הבאה בארעה דיישראל, 'We are here now. Next year *this house* will be in Eretz Yisrael'. There is an atmosphere of Eretz Yisrael at the Seder, so there will be space and enough food for everyone."¹¹

10. The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that the miracle that the Mishnah refers to isn't that there was enough room to bow down because that would be expected due to the kedushah of the Beis HaMikdash. Wherever there is kedushah, there is space. The miracle was עומדים צפופים, that when they stood straight, it was crowded. The purpose of this miracle was to increase their reward, as Chazal (*Brachos* 4.) tell us, the reward for attending a drashah comes from the discomfort of being crowded (אגרא דכלא דוחקא).

Shu't Tashbatz writes that in his time, there was a beis medrash in Yerushalayim that everyone attended on Shavuos. It was very full, yet miraculously, there was plenty of room for everyone.

The Chasam Sofer (*Teshuvos*, *Yorah Deiah* 234, in a letter to Reb Efraim Margulies, the Beis Efraim *zt'l*) quotes this Tashbatz and the Chasam Sofer adds, "Hashem knows that my eyes also saw such a miracle in chutz l'aretz, only I can't write the details because of the mockers of our nation." The Chasam Sofer's grandson (*Chut HaMeshulash*) writes that the Chasam Sofer was referring to his yeshiva in Pressburg. The physical dimensions of the yeshiva weren't large enough to accommodate the many students who learned there. A miracle occurred, and there was room for everyone.

11. The Maharal (*Haggadah shel Pesach*, ענין לבישת הקיטל) compares the *kittel* to the white garment the *kohen gadol* wore on Yom Kippur when he entered the *kodesh kadoshim*.

Take this a step further, and it means that when we conduct the Seder, we have entered the realm of the *kodesh kadoshim*.

The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* said to his grandson, Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l*, "Eliyahu HaNavi comes to everyone's Seder and there are great tzaddikim who see him. However, a greater level is achieved when one doesn't see Eliyahu but believes that Eliyahu is present.

After saying שפך המתך, the Noda b'Yehudah would escort Eliyahu HaNavi *z'l* out of his house. He would walk down the stairs and into the street to accompany Eliyahu HaNavi as he left his home. The Chidushei HaRim praised this deed immensely and said, "The Noda b'Yehudah didn't actually see Eliyahu HaNavi, but he believed he was there. And believing is a higher level than seeing."

When the Mishna in Pesachim teaches us the order of the Seder, the word לפניו, "before him," is used. For example, the Mishnah states, הביאו לפניו מטבל בחזרת... הביאו לפניו מצה וחזרת, "They bring before him [the karpas]... They bring before him matzah and maror..." However, by the cup for kiddush, it states (Pesachim 10:2), מוזגו לו כוס ראשון, "They pour for him the first cup of wine [to say Kiddush...]" Here it doesn't state לפניו.

The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* explains that לפניו means "before Hashem." When we make the seder, we are seated before Hashem. However, when we are about to say kiddush, the seder hasn't yet begun. Therefore, referring to the first cup of wine, it states מוזגו לו כוס ראשון, "They pour him the first cup of wine." The wine is poured for the person conducting the seder. It doesn't state לפניו, that the wine is poured before Hashem. This is because we are still before the beginning of the seder, and the Shechinah hasn't come yet. However, when the seder begins, we are seated before Hashem.

We also say in the Haggadah, ונאמר לפניו, שירה חדשה, "We will say before Him a new

song." The entire Seder takes place before Hashem.

It states in the Haggadah, ובמזרח גדול זה גילוי שכינה, that Hashem's presence became revealed in Mitzrayim, and this saved the Jewish nation. This recurs yearly at the Seder. The Shechinah is present.

Reb Shimon Shkop *zt'l* would have a *taanis dibur* at the Seder. He explained that Hashem is at the Seder, as it says (Shemos 12:12), ועברתי בארץ מצרים - אני ולא מלאך, "I shall go through the land of Mitzrayim - I, and not an angel." And when one is before a king, he is silent.

The Shlah HaKadosh states that we shouldn't read *magid* while reclining on our left side (הסיבה). We can explain that this is because the Shechinah is present, and it isn't proper to lean when seated before Hashem.

The Gemara (Shabbos 12:) teaches that we shouldn't daven in Aramaic because the malachim don't understand this language and won't be able to elevate the tefillos. However, the Gemara says that when one is visiting the ill, he may daven in Aramaic. This is because the Shechinah is with the sick person, as it states (Tehillim 41:4), ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי, "Hashem will preserve him on his ill-bed." Hashem is present, and the malachim aren't called to elevate the tefillos. Therefore, he can daven in Aramaic.

The Arugas HaBosem *zt'l* explains that the same occurs at the Seder. We begin the Seder with הוא לחמא עניא, in Aramaic. Hashem is present at the Seder, so we can speak in Aramaic.

The Seder ends with קוד גדיא, also in Aramaic. This hints that Hashem is present from the beginning of the Seder until the end. This is one of the reasons tefillah is so powerful at the Seder. It is a tefillah directly before Hashem.

The Belzer Rebbes would clap their hands before saying *Mah Nishtanah* as it states (Shemos 28:35) ונשמע קולו בבאו "His sound shall be heard when he enters the sanctuary..." This pasuk refers to the Beis HaMikdash, but it can also be applied to the Seder, as at the Seder, it is as if we are in the Beis HaMikdash.

Levels we can Attain

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 116.) says about the Seder, מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח, "We begin with the disgrace, and we conclude with the praise." The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* says that this hints at the growth a person can attain at the Seder. Even if one is at a low level at the beginning of the Seder (a place of disgrace), when he concludes the Seder, he is in a high place (a place of praise).¹²

According to Shmuel, the disgrace was that we were slaves (עבדים היינו), and the praise is that we were saved. According to Rav, the disgrace was that our forefathers (the father of Avraham) worshipped avodah zarah (מתחילה עובדי), and the praise is our spiritual salvation, that we now serve Hashem. The Chasam Sofer learns from this that just as we show and imagine ourselves as slaves who were freed, we should also imagine and perceive the spiritual greatness that we attained on this night.

This *yom tov* is called פסח, which means to jump because, on this night, we jump to levels we couldn't reach the entire year.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Chametz u'Matzah* 7:6-7) writes, "In every generation, a person must see himself as if he has just now left

Mitzrayim, as it states (*Devarim* 6:23) ואותנו הוציא משם, "He brought us out from there." Also, Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded us in the Torah (*Devarim* 5:15) וזכרת כי עבד היית בארץ מצרים, 'You shall remember that you were a slave in Mitzrayim.' This means that you should imagine that you were a slave and that you were saved. This is the reason we must eat leaning on our side, as a free person would eat, and everyone, men and women, must drink four cups of wine..." We demonstrate the freedom we attained, because it happens to us again, each year.

Pele Yoetz (*Pesach*) writes, "At the seder, be strong to keep what Chazal say, 'A person must envision himself as though he left Mitzrayim.'" With constant, pure thoughts [about this topic], your heart will become filled with hislahavus until you feel it is impossible not to be happy. According to the extent of your desire to keep this Chazal, and in accordance with your attempts to attain it, so will you receive siyata d'Shmaya. הבא לטהר מסייעין אותו, 'When one desires to be pure, he is helped.' He will be very happy with his Creator, a simchah of a mitzvah..."

Reb Yehoshua of Kroli *zt'l* discussed the greatness of the seder and the levels that one can attain. According to one version, he said

12. The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* once proclaimed at the beginning of the seder, before Kiddush, "If a person doesn't believe that he can rise from the lowest level to the highest level at the Seder, he is the rasha of the Haggadah." The *rasha* of the Haggadah says, מזה העבודה הזאת לכם, and the Haggadah clarifies that the *rasha's* means לכם ולא לו, "for you, and not for me." He thinks the Seder is for tzaddikim. He doesn't believe that even he can rise to the highest levels in the merit of the Seder.

Many use a radish or a potato for *karpas*. Radishes and potatoes both grow in the ground, suggesting that even those who are symbolically beneath the ground and on a very low spiritual level become elevated at the Seder.

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* said, "All year round you're worth a רעטיך, a radish, [a Yiddish expression for something that doesn't have much value]. But now, you merited to be placed on the Seder table."

The Chareidim teaches that when the *malachim* see the high levels Yidden reach, they ask, "Why do they deserve this? How did they reach the *Kisei haKavod* so easily?" The answer is that Hashem knows how difficult it is for a Yid to choose good in this world. Due to the challenges, a Yid can reach high levels very quickly.

Rebbe Shlomo Karliner *zy'a* taught that זבח פסח הוא לך means when a person, זבח, slaughters his *yetzer hara* (by ignoring its temptations), פסח הוא לה, he jumps up all the way to Hashem's throne.

that if a person doesn't attain *ruach hakodesh* at the Seder, he isn't a human being. Another version is that Reb Yehoshua of Kroli said that if one doesn't have *giluy Eliyahu* at the Seder and on Yom Kippur, it's a sign his forefathers weren't at Har Sinai.¹³

At the Seder, we reach the level of malachim. We say in *Shacharis*, וכולם פותחים את פיהם בקדושה ובטהרה "The [malachim] all open their mouths with *kedushah* and *taharah*." *Kedushah* is mentioned first, followed by *taharah*. This is also alluded to in the words קדש ורחץ. First comes *kedushah* and then comes *taharah*. This is a level of the malachim, but for human beings, it is generally first *taharah* (clean from aveiros), and then he can attain *kedushah*. The order of קדש ורחץ indicates that on this night, we reach the level of malachim.¹⁴

The Maharal teaches that Hashem sent the malachim to perform the first nine of the ten makos. To protect the Jewish nation from the makos, Hashem raised them above the level of the *malachim*. The tenth plague, *makas bechoros*, was performed by Hashem Himself, as we say in the *Hagaddah*, ועברתי בארץ מצרים אני ולא מלאך "I passed through Eretz Mitzrayim; it was I and not an angel." What protected the Jewish nation from this plague? It wasn't sufficient to raise them above the malachim because this makah came from a higher source.

The Maharal says that during *makas bechoros*, Hashem elevated the Yidden to His level. They became a חלק אלוהי ממעלה, *kiveyachol*, united with Hashem, and this is what protected them. Every year, on this night, Hashem raises the Jewish nation to that high level. Therefore, the *yom tov* is called פסח, which means to jump (*Rashi Shemos 12:23*). On this holiday, we jump up to Hashem's level, *kiveyachol*.¹⁵

Matzah

The Chasam Sofer (*Choshen Mishpat* 196) writes, "The mitzvah of eating matzah on the Seder night is the only mitzvah of 'eating' that has remained with us in exile. We don't have the mitzvah of eating the *korban Pesach* or the other *korbanos*. We can't eat *terumah* or *maasar sheini* in our days either. Matzah is the only mitzvah we have for eating, and we can only perform this mitzvah once a year. If this mitzvah is not performed correctly, will Hashem be happy with that?"

In a letter, Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l* warns us to eat the right amount. He writes, "You must be careful to eat *more* than the minimal amount of matzah and *maror*, for if you eat less than the minimum amount, you lose the mitzvah. If one has wisdom, how could he not be cautious to keep these mitzvos properly? We cannot perform these mitzvos

13. The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* repeated this thought from Reb Yehoshua of Kroli when the managers of the Satmar institutions sought to discuss financial matters with the Rebbe before Pesach. He told them he would discuss money matters after the seder. Now, he needed to prepare for the holy seder.

14. Rebbe Yochanan of Rachmistrivka *zy'a* taught: קדש ורחץ. If a person wants to sanctify and purify himself, the path is כרפס, which is *roshei teivos* for סגורר פה. The first rule is to keep the mouth shut. יחזק מגיד means that when you do speak, say only half of what you planned to say.

15. As a child, the Imrei Emes *zy'a* asked his father, the Sfas Emes *zt'l*, "Why do we wear a *kittel* at the Seder?"

The Sfas Emes answered, "On *Yom Tov*, we wear nicer clothing than usual, and we don't want them to get ruined. So, we put on a *kittel* to protect the clothing."

When the Imrei Emes got older, he still remembered his father's explanation for the *kittel*. He was certain that his father wasn't just joking. There had to be an explanation. He thought about it and understood that his father was hinting that on Pesach, at the Seder, we reach great heights and become like new. And we must be careful to retain this cleanliness, and not tarnish our souls again.

throughout the year, and who can guarantee that he will be alive to keep them next year? Isn't it enough that we don't keep the mitzvos of tefillin and *birchas hamazon* properly throughout the year? Why should these mitzvos also be lacking?"

At the Seder one year, before eating the matzah, the Kedushas Levi zy'a exclaimed with hislahavus, "Ribono shel Olam!" Either you come into me, or I will go into you."

The Tiferes Shlomo writes that matzah is a spiritual medicine that removes the bad within us and unites us with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Rebbe Mendel of Riminov zt'l says that eating *afikoman* annuls bad *taavos*. The Yismach Yisrael zt'l (*Haggadah shel Pesach* 56) writes that this is alluded to in the word אפיקומן. *Chazal* say that אפיקומן stands for אפיקו מיני מתיקה, bringing out sweet foods. The Yismach Yisrael explains that אפיקו מיני מתיקה means this mitzvah will ward off your temptations to the sweet pleasures of this world.¹⁶

The Beis Avraham zt'l ate very little. His Rebbetzin would say, "I made good food for you, why don't you eat it?"

He would answer, "דאס אדויעט מיר", meaning, "I am disgusted by food." His sole desire was *ruchniyus*.

But at the Seder, the Beis Avraham would eat the matzah with relish. His Rebbetzin asked him, "Did you become a *baal taavah'nik*? Why did you suddenly become so interested in food?"

He said, "The entire year, I am not interested in food, yet you encourage me to eat. Once a year, when I finally am interested

in food, you say that I am a *baal taavah*." The truth is, this is the pattern: When one holds back from *taavos* the entire year, he will eat the matzah with immense *taavah*.¹⁷

The Yerushalmi states, "Someone who eats matzah on *erev Pesach* is similar to someone who takes his fiancée before the *chasunah*."

We understand from this that eating matzah on Pesach is like a *chasunah*. The Maharil writes that this is why we say seven *brachos* before eating the matzah. It is similar to the *sheva brachos* we recite at a *chasunah*.¹⁸

After Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge, it states (Bereishis 3:24) ויגרש את האדם "[Hashem] banished Adam..." The Midrash says that ויגרש means divorce. Hakadosh Baruch Hu, *kiveyachol*, divorced Adam (*geirushin*). When Adam did teshuvah, the marriage, *kiveyachol*, was re-established. As we explained, eating matzah is a *chasunah*. So, if someone became distant from Hashem due to *aveiros*, the union is reestablished when he eats matzah.

Once, at Reb Shimon Sofer's Seder, his grandson asked him, "Why is there a custom that children steal the *afikomen* at the Seder? Is it proper to educate children to steal?"

Reb Shimon Sofer didn't answer. He continued with the Seder. During the meal, he answered the question. He said to his grandson, "You asked a good question. Why do children steal the *afikomen*, and why is it encouraged? The Gemara mentions this custom, as it states (*Pesachim* 109), חוטפין מצה בלילי פסחים בשביל התינוקות שלא ישנו. The Gemara states that it is customary to keep young children

16. Some people always carry a piece of the *afikoman* with them. My grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l, would distribute pieces from his *afikoman* on *motzei Shevi'i shel Pesach*.

17. The Nesivos Shalom zy'a once saw a *bachur* of his yeshiva eating *falafel* with great relish. The Nesivos Shalom gently rebuked him, saying, "The way you eat reminds me of how the Beis Avraham would eat the matzah on Pesach."

18. The *miforshim* list the seven *brachos* we say at the seder, from the beginning of the seder until one eats matzah. (There is a *machlokes* how to count the seven *brachos*.)

awake so they can hear the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. However, we can still wonder why it is performed in a manner of stealing. There can be another way to keep the children awake. I never thought about this question before, and I never heard an explanation. But as soon as you asked the question, I had an answer. I didn't tell you my answer immediately because I wanted to teach you that a Yid must keep *minhagim* even when we don't know the reason. And now, I will tell you my explanation for this custom:

"Chazal (*Pesachim* 113) advise that one should live in a city where there are dogs because dogs protect the residents from theft. On the night of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, no dogs barked, as it states (*Shemos* 11:7), ולכל בני ישראל לא יחרץ כלב, לשונו 'To all of Bnei Yisrael, no dog will bark...' Since the dogs were silent on this night, it was easier for people to steal. The custom of stealing the afikoman is to commemorate and remember the miracle that no dogs barked on this night. We remember this with the custom of stealing the afikomen.

The *roshei teivos* of מצ"ה spell מיכל צרה היצילני, "Save me from all troubles." This means we attain all kinds of salvations through this mitzvah.

The *Zohar* calls matzah, מיכליה דאסותא, healing bread, and the Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* (*Haggadah shel Pesach* 78) writes, "Also non-Jewish doctors agree that matzah cures the head. They don't realize that they are saying a prophecy because by eating matzah, one merits *emunah*, and *emunah* is a cure for the brain to think correctly."

Reb Tzvi Kintzlicher *zt'l*, the Rav of Seban, Romania (later, he moved to Yerushalayim in 5709), suffered from severe stomach pains. The doctors in Klausenberg told him that

they needed to operate immediately. The Rav of Seban informed the doctors that he wished to be home for Pesach and would return immediately after Pesach for the operation.

The doctors agreed to let him wait until then, but they warned him to avoid eating anything difficult to digest. He certainly wasn't permitted to eat matzah. He could only eat light foods, such as fruits and milk.

Reb Tzvi planned to follow instructions, but at the Seder, he changed his mind and decided to eat matzah soaked in milk.

While eating the matzah, he felt something positive happening in his stomach. He ate matzah on the second night of Pesach too, and by the time he finished eating the *kezayis*, he had no stomach pains.

On Shabbos after Pesach, he told his congregation that he was leaving for a serious operation. "Pray for me because I don't know what will be."

When the doctors in Klausenberg tested him, they asked, "Which doctor did you see?" How did this happen? The disease is gone!"

He told them that he was cured through the mitzvah of eating matzah, which Chazal call מיכליה דאסותא, food that heals.

One of the doctors said, "I have seen several times that everything we doctors know means nothing when Hashem desires differently."¹⁹

Maror

The Imrei Chaim of Vizhnitz *zt'l* said, "I don't understand why it's called *maror* (bitter)! It's so sweet!"

19. מצ"ה has three letters: מ צ ה. When spelled out in full, it looks like this: מ"ם צד"ק ה"א. The letters added are ו, די"ק and א. The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* says that these letters spell אקדי"ם, "I will come first..." The Sar Shalom noted that this hints that some tefillos aren't answered immediately, but the tefillos on Pesach אקדי"ם, are answered immediately.

מרור has the same *gematriya* as מוות, implying that by eating *maror*, one annuls death and all other hardships and troubles. So, although *maror* is bitter at first, it makes everything sweet.

There was a time when the only *maror* available was horseradish, and eating a kezayis of horseradish was difficult. Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l* writes, "Even when it comes to *maror*, one should eat the proper amount. Every day we say, בכל נפשך, that it's a mitzvah to serve Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*, so why shouldn't we endure this little bit of hardship [of eating horseradish]? I promise, when one eats *maror* with *simchah*, he will almost not feel the sharpness of the *maror*."

Eating a kezayis *maror* is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. A hint is found in the Chazal (Eiruvim 18, Rashi Bereishis 8:11), which states, "יהיו מזונותי מרורין בזית." This phrase can also be read as, יהא מזונותי, my *parnassah* comes from the *kezayis maror* that I eat at the Seder.

There is a debate among the poskim regarding whether to recline while eating *korach*, and the accepted opinion is that one should recline.

But why should we recline if the *korach* contains *maror*?

The Tiferes Shlomo answers that the *maror* is wrapped in *matzah*, the food of *emunah* (מיכלא דמיהמנותא). When we have *emunah* that even the bitterness of *galus* is good, we

understand that everything is good, and therefore we recline.²⁰

One of the names of *maror* that we can eat at the seder is תמכא. The Chasam Sofer *zy'a* (in his notes on Shulchan Aruch, תע"ג) writes that the *roshei teivos* of תמכ"א is ל"א, "always telling Hashem's praise". Likutei Maharich explains that we are demonstrating belief that even when Hashem leads us in a mode of *maror* and תמכ"א, bitterness, we praise Hashem because we know that it is from Hashem and for our good.

Magid

One of the special mitzvos of this night is *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*, to tell the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. What a privilege this is!

Yesod Yosef (85) writes, "Whoever says the... Haggadah with happiness, without any anger, without laziness, and without feeling that it's a burden, *chas veshalom*... the *Shechinah* spreads out its wings on him to save him in all places and all travels, and he merits miracles..."

The Chasam Sofer (*Drashos* vol.2 p.252.) writes, "We are guaranteed that even in this bitter exile when we sit and tell the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* to our children to implant them with *yiras Hashem*, Hashem's kindness is on us, just as it was when we left *Mitzrayim*."

In the merit of discussing the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* and praising Hashem for the redemption, we merit redemption from

20. In אז ישיר we say, אמר אויב ארדוף אשיג... "The enemy (Pharaoh) said I will chase and catch them..." Why are these words in the *shirah*? Is that something to sing about? The answer is that after we witness the miracles, we can also sing about the difficult moments. We become aware that everything was for the good.

The Haggadah specifies how Hillel prepared the *Korach* combination. Reb Shlomo Kluger (in his Haggadah) explains that Hillel taught his family to trust in Hashem, and not to be afraid. The Gemara Brachos (60a) states about Hillel the pasuk (Tehillim 112:7) בה' ירא נכון לכו בטוח בה' "He will not fear bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in Hashem." Once, from a distance, Hillel heard shouting coming from the city where he lived. He said, "I am certain that it isn't from my home." This is because he taught his family never to shout and to accept every situation with love, believing that it is all for the good. He was therefore sure that the shouting wasn't coming from his home. Reb Shlomo Kluger explains that Hillel sandwiched *matzah* and *maror* together because that was his way, always. To show that even the bitterness is wrapped within Hashem's kindness.

this galus and any other hardship we suffer. This is hinted at in the *brachah* that we say at the end of *magid*, ברוך... אשר גאלנו וגאל את, "Bless Hashem... Who redeemed us and Who redeemed our forefathers..." אשר גאלנו implies that Hashem saved us, too. We are redeemed each year again from our tzaros in the merit of reciting Magid.

The Apter Rav *zy'a* writes, "When one says אשר גאלנו וגאל את אבותינו, and he believes that Hashem is also redeeming us, he will be saved from all kinds of trouble."

This is implied in the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 12:42), ליל שמרים הוא לה' להוציאם מארץ מצרים... לדורותם, "It is a night of anticipation for Hashem to take them out of Mitzrayim... for their generations." It states לדורתם, "for their generations." The Beis Aharon *zt'l* says that this indicates that in every generation, Hashem takes us out of Mitzrayim and saves us from our problems.

It is also implied from the word להוציאם, "to take them out," which is written in the future tense. Every generation Hashem saves us again in the merit of the mitzvos we perform at the seder and in the merit of the Magid.

When the Yidden were at the shore of the Yam Suf, the *malachim* prosecuted against Bnei Yisrael and said that the Yidden also worshiped *avodah zarah*. They asked, "Why should we save these and kill those?" Why should they save the Yidden with a great miracle and kill the Mitzrim if both are equally the same?"

If so, it is indeed a question: why was the Jewish nation saved? The Meor Einayim (*Tzav*) answers, "When the Yidden were in Mitzrayim, they conducted the entire Seder exactly as we do today. They told the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* because they trusted

that Hashem would certainly take them out. These matters drew down Hashem's kindness, and they were redeemed..."

The Meor Einayim adds, "There is *galus* for the nation, and there is *galus* for the individual. The individual's *galus* is his *yesurim* that he suffers. Due to the *chesed* we draw down in Nisan, we will be redeemed from hardships."

The Zohar²¹ states:

"Every person who tells the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*... Hakadosh Baruch Hu gathers all the *malachim* in heaven and says, 'Come and listen to My praises that My children are saying! They are happy with My redemption!' The *malachim* listen, and they see that the Yidden are happy with the redemption... The *malachim* praise Hakadosh Baruch Hu for the miracles and for His holy nation that He has on earth who are happy with His redemption... Just as a king's power increases when his subjects praise him and express their gratitude to him, Bnei Yisrael give strength to their Master [when they praise Hashem for *yetzias Mitzrayim*]. Therefore, we must praise Hashem and tell this story... His words go up to heaven, and all the *malachim* gather and praise Hakadosh Baruch Hu. This brings honor to Hashem above and below."

At the Seder, the father wears a *kittel*, which resembles *tachrichim*, shrouds. The Chasan Sofer *zt'l* explains that we want the father of the house to remember that he won't live forever. There will be a time when he will be dressed in *tachrichim* and buried in the ground, and then he will no longer be able to tell his family about *yetzias Mitzrayim*. This realization will inspire him to take advantage of the night, to tell his children about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and to implant in them *emunah* in Hashem.²²

21. The Zohar is printed in many Haggados before Magid.

22. One year after the seder, when the Beis Yisrael of Gur's *zy'a* removed his *kittel*, he said, "Earlier tonight, we put on the *kittel*, and now we're taking it off. But there will come a time when we will put on a *kittel* and never take it off."

Rebbe Shmelke of Nickelsburg *zt'l* said that the *kittel* helps the father imagine that he has already passed away. In honor of Seder night, heaven lets him return to earth to make the Seder so that he can teach *emunah* to his children. With this thought in mind, he will undoubtedly perform the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* properly.

On the words והגדת לבנך, Onkelus writes, ותחויי לבנך, "Show your children." The simple translation of והגדת לבנך is to tell your children about *yetzias Mitzrayim*. But there is also a concept of showing them. What does this mean?

There is a concept of concealing one's good deeds from others. No one, except Hashem, needs to know all the good things he does.²³ But like every rule, there are exceptions. Rebbe Meir of Dzikov *zy'a* (*Imrei No'am*) says that parents shouldn't conceal their good deeds from their children. The children should know their parents' good deeds to emulate their ways.

This is indicated in the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 31:20), אשר צפנת, מזה רב טובך, ליראיך, but פעלת לחוסים בך, you should conceal.

for those who rely on you – your children, נגד בני אדם, perform your good deeds in front of them so that they can learn from you.

When the head of the family breaks the middle matzah for *yachatz*, the larger half is wrapped and concealed, and the smaller half is left on the table. This hints that people should conceal most of their good deeds.

But then the children search for the *afikoman*. They find the larger half that was concealed. Because on the Seder night, we want the children to see our hidden good deeds so that they can learn from their parents.²⁴

Tefillah at the Seder

The Seder is an opportune time for tefillah. The Gemara (*Brachos* 4:) discusses the tefillos of every day, and the importance of connecting the brachah גאל ישראל with *Shemonah Esrei*. It states that whoever does so will merit *Olam HaBa*.

Rashi explains that this is because when we praise Hashem for redeeming us from *Mitzrayim*, Hashem is close to us, so this is

Reb Shimon Shwab *zt'l* said that when a father speaks to his children moments before his *petirah*, they listen carefully and try their best to fulfill his final wishes. At the seder, the father puts on a *kittel* because he wants his children to listen to what he tells them at the Seder with the same awe and earnestness that they would have during his final moments of life.

23. A handyman once came to the home of the Husiatyner Rebbe *zt'l* to repair a couch. But he didn't patch the back side of the couch. When the Rebbe showed him that he had missed a hole in the back of the couch, the handyman replied, "Rebbe! No one looks there."

The Husiatyner replied, "We were taught that the places where no one looks need to be the best."

The best deeds are those that are concealed because when no one is aware of them, they are easier to perform *l'shem shamayim*, and not to attain honor.

There was a scholar who wanted to study Torah in concealment so that he could learn entirely *l'shem Shamayim*, but my grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l*, advised him against it. Rebbe Moshe Mordechai explained, "When tax auditors come to appraise someone's assets, he will conceal his expensive items from the authorities. He doesn't want them to suspect that he is earning a lot of money. But he won't hide his bread and butter because these are staples every home needs. Similarly, it's ideal to hide your good deeds, but Torah study is a staple. It is something that one cannot be without. And therefore, there is no reason to conceal it."

24. We put aside the larger half of the matzah for later. The *Sfas Emes* *zt'l* (5652) teaches that this is a sign that the inspiration and growth of this night will remain with us for the rest of the year.

a good time for tefillah. Rashi writes, "[If a person doesn't connect גאל ישראל with Shemonah Esrei] it can be compared to a friend of the king who knocks at the king's door, and when the king opens, he sees that his friend is no longer there." When the king sees this, he also leaves. Rather, a person should appease Hashem with praises of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and then Hashem will be close to him. And when Hashem is nearby, he should ask for his needs."

When we discuss *yetzias Mitzrayim*, Hashem is near to us and He wants to hear our requests. Therefore, the seder is a good time for tefillah. Hashem is close, and we can ask Him for our needs.²⁵

The Rema (*Darkei Moshe*) writes that when we tell the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* at the Seder, it is like a *tefillah* because we are praising Hashem. He explains that this is the

reason we wash our hands for ורחץ, because "just like we wash our hands before we daven," we also wash our hands before we say Hashem's praises in Magid because praises are a form of *tefillah*.

An egg is placed on the seder plate, and the Meiri teaches that *beitzah* is often pronounced בעי, which can mean "to request." This is yet another indication that the Seder is an auspicious time for tefillah.²⁶

It states (*Bereishis* 21:25-26), והוכח אברהם את אבימלך, על אדות באר המים אשר גזלו עבדי אבימלך, "Avraham rebuked Avimelech regarding the well of water that Avimelech's servants had seized." The Ahavas Shalom zt'l says that the pasuk can be translated as follows: אברהם are the tzaddikim. They say to אבימלך, to Hashem, the King of the world (אבי מלך), "Why is Hashem's bounty (באר המים) being stolen from

25. I share here a letter that I received from a member of our chaburah:

"I used to wonder: Is there a source in *rishonim* that we should daven at the Seder? I was wondering about this, because the Seder doesn't seem to be a time for prayer. But then I saw (שו"ת דברי יציב אבן העזר ס"ו פ"ג) that the three daily *tefillos* (*Shacharis*, *Minchah*, *Maariv*) were established by the *avos* on the first day of Pesach! What better time is there for tefillah than at the Seder, the day the *avos* established tefillah? Furthermore, someone showed me that the *Likutei Moharan* discusses that it is good to daven loudly on Pesach. The source is from the pasuk (*Eichah* 2), קול נתנו בבית ה' כיום מועד, "They shouted in the Beis HaMikdash like on a holiday". The Targum translates, בקל עמא דמצלין בחנא דפסחא, 'Like the loud voices of the nation when they pray on Pesach.' "

26. Rebbe Leibele Eiger said that we eat eggs at the Seder to indicate that just like an egg becomes a chicken when it is kept warm, placed under a hen, similarly, many great things can happen to us on this night, but we must bring forth the warmth— our enthusiasm and joy — and then we will merit it.

The Imrei Emes zt'l says that an egg is placed on the קערה to remind us to prepare for the seder. The Gemara (*Beitzah* 2) says, "Every egg laid today was finished yesterday." If an egg was laid today, it means that its shell was completed yesterday. The egg is a reminder that whatever happens tonight at the Seder was completed and prepared earlier. The amount of kedushah one receives depends on how much effort one puts into preparation.

There's an expression people use to describe a fool (or someone doing something foolish). They call him "The chacham of the Mah Nishtanah," the wise chacham of the Seder.

It's repeated in the name of the Satmar Rebbe zt'l, "The chacham of the Mah Nishtanah asks wise questions! Why is a fool called 'the chacham from the Mah Nishtanah'? The answer is that although it is true, the chacham asks wise questions at the Seder, but where was he until now? Didn't he see everyone cleaning for Pesach, buying matzah, and so on? Why didn't he ask his questions then? Why did he only wake up now?

Let's not be that chacham; let's not wake up at the Seder to realize something special is happening. We should be awake beforehand and prepare for these holy days.

us (אשר גולו) and taken by the slaves, the nations of the world?"

Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, וגם אתה לא הגדת לי וגם אנכי לא שמעתי בלתי היום. The word הגדת is from the word מגיד. Hashem says, "At the Seder, when you said *magid*, you didn't daven to Me. וגם אנכי, also on Shavuos, when we read 'אנכי ה' אלקיך', I didn't hear your prayers. בלתי היום, I only hear your prayers on Rosh Hashanah (which is called *hayom*). And that isn't sufficient. If you daven on Pesach and Shavuos, as well, you will have your salvation."

A chassid of Rebbe Yechiel Yehoshua of Biala *zt'l* waited many years for children. When the Rebbe went for מים שלנו, to draw water for baking matzos, the chassid went over to the Rebbe and requested a *brachah* for children. The Rebbe advised him to daven for children right before *Mah Nishtanah*. This is because the Mishnah states, כאן הבן שואל, which can be translated as, "This is the place to ask Hashem for children."

But the chassid rushed through his Seder (wanting to go to his Rebbe's seder) and he forgot to daven for children. When he came to the Rebbe's *tisch*, the Rebbe asked him, "Why didn't you daven for children?"

The chassid utilized whatever was left of the night to daven for children, and that year, he had his salvation.

The Rebbe of Alexander (*Akeidas Yitzchak*) *zt'l* said that by *Mah Nishtanah*, one can pray for children and for good children, as it states, כאן הבן שואל.²⁷

The Veyaged Moshe writes (in the name of kabbalah *sefarim*) that asking *Mah Nishtanah* is *mesugal* to have a heart open to understanding Torah. "Therefore, I made it the custom in my house that whoever comes for the Seder should say *Mah Nishtanah*, and I daven for them that they should have a heart open for Torah. And after everyone says *Mah Nishtanah*, I also say the *Mah Nishtanah*."²⁸

27. I know of a youngster who was childless for many years. One of today's tzaddikim advised him to study the Haggadah shel Pesach, and he did so. He learned it with the rishonim, and soon afterward, he came to inform the rebbe that Hashem performed a miracle for him. The rebbe was also surprised that the segulah worked so quickly.

It states (Shemos 13:8), והגדת לבנך. The Or HaChaim HaKadosh teaches that mitzvah to tell the story of yetzias Mitzrayim is *mesugal* that one day you will be able to tell the story to your own children.

There was a *dayan* who didn't have children for four years after his wedding. During Elul, he was giving his weekly shiur on *Or HaChaim Hakadosh* and was looking for the *vort* from the Or HaChaim of the topic of having children. He thought it would be in *parashas* כי תבוא, by the discussion of ארמי אובר אבי, which is read at the Seder. When he didn't find it there, he remembered that it is in *parashas* Bo on the words והגדת לבנך. So he read the Or Hachaim in *parashas* Bo at his *shiur*.

Ten months later, he had his first child.

28. Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt'l* asked some children after the Seder, "Did you ask *Mah Nishtanah*?"

"Yes."

"What answer did you get?"

"עבדים היינו".

"Did you ask the *Mah Nishnatah* last year?"

"We did."

"And what answer did you get last year?"

Vanitzak!

We share the following renowned story:

One of the times that are auspicious for tefillah is when we say in the Hagadah (Devarim 26:7) וּנְצַעַק אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְיִשְׁמַע ה' אֶת קוֹלֵנוּ, "We shouted to Hashem the G-d of our fathers, and Hashem heard our voice..." This pasuk tells us that Hashem heard our tefillos when we were in Mitzrayim. Hashem will also listen to our tefillos today, when we daven to Him, and it is a special *eis ratzon* to daven at this place of the Hagadah.

An innkeeper fell behind on his rent payments. The *poritz* warned him that if he didn't pay up soon, he and his family would be thrown into a dungeon. The worried innkeeper went to the Apter Rav *zy'a* for Shabbos HaGadol to receive a *brachah*. He desperately needed a *yeshuah*. *Erev Shabbos*, the *gabbai* told him that the Rebbe couldn't see him.

"עבדים היינו, "It was the same answer,

"If you received this answer last year, why did you ask the same questions again this year?"

The children tried to explain in various ways.

Reb Shlomo Zalman commented, "When I was eight years old, I was walking home from the Kosel with my father, and we met Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt'l*. He asked me the same question I had just asked you: 'If you asked Mah Nishtanah last year and received an answer, why did you ask it again this year?' But when Reb Yosef Chaim asked me this question, I cried, and when I asked you this question, you tried answering me in different ways..."

Year תש"ד in Bergen-Belzen, the Bluzhever Rebbe *zy'a* conducted a Seder. There was no table, so he sat on the floor, together with a group of young children and a few adults, and told them the story of yetzias Mitzrayim. For the *kaarah*, they had some matzos and a potato for *karpas*. They didn't have *ביצה* or *זרוע*. But they had an abundance of "maror".

The adults cried emotionally, remembering better times, when a young child got up and recited the Mah Nishtanah in a sweet voice. Then the Bluzhever Rebbe repeated the Mah Nishtanah and explained the questions. He said, *מה נשתנה הלילה הזה*, why is this *galus* so much darker than all other *galuyos*? The first question is: We always eat *chametz* or *matzah*, but in this *galus*, we are only eating *matzah*. Why is that? He explained that *chametz*, which rises, represents the Jewish nation when they enjoy honor, prestige, and prosperity. They have some good times in *galus*. But in this *galus*, there is only *matzah*, which doesn't rise. This represents the lack of all good, the lack of any success. Why is this *galus* so much harder than all other *galus*?

Also, in this *galus*, we eat solely *maror* (bitterness), unlike other *galuyos* when we could eat other vegetables too. Also, why is it that in this *galus*, we are *בולגו מוסבם*, lying on the ground, because we don't have chairs to sit on? Why is our situation so pitiful in this *galus*? There were other *galuyos* in history, but none of them can compare to the difficulties of this one (the Holocaust).

In this manner, the Bluzhever Rebbe explained the four questions, tying them into their present situation.

Then the Bluzhever Rebbe raised his eyes to heaven and said, "But know children, every night, before daybreak, the darkness of the night becomes thicker. Also, the *galus* becomes darker as we near its end. We are very close to the final redemption, which is why we are currently experiencing such difficulties.

"The answer is *עבדים היינו*. The letters of *עבדים* are the *roshei teivos* of *עבדך משיחך*. (We say these words before *Yishtabach* on Shabbos and *yom tov*). The Hagadah is hinting that the redemption is approaching very soon, and it will become light for us, once again, and this is the reason now, moments before the redemption, the *galus* becomes darker. "

This discussion breathed life and hope into those who attended that special Seder.

The innkeeper hoped to speak to the Rebbe on *motzei Shabbos*, but as it turned out, he had already received his answer and counsel on Shabbos afternoon at the Apter Rav's Shabbos HaGadol *drashah*. The Apter Rav began the *drashah* with a deep halachic discussion, which this simple Yid couldn't follow. Then the Rebbe turned to discuss the *Haggadah*, and he said, "When we get to וַיִּצַק אֱלֹהִים it's an extraordinary moment for *tefillah*. If one needs *parnassah*, *refuah*, or if a Yid rents an inn from a *poritz* and doesn't have money to pay the rent, and the *poritz* threatens to throw him and his family into a dungeon, if the Yid shouts out to Hashem at this point and begs for salvation, Hashem will save him."

The innkeeper was certain the Rebbe was talking to him. He understood that his salvation would come when he shouts out to Hashem at וַיִּצַק in the *Haggadah*.

When Shabbos was over, he didn't wait to speak with the Rebbe. He had already received the advice he needed. He came home, and his wife asked him what the Rebbe said. He told her that she would soon find out.

At the Seder, when they reached וַיִּצַק, the innkeeper shouted and prayed, and his wife shouted and prayed along with him.

Shortly after they finished davening in this manner, there was a knock on their

door. It was a goy whom they knew. He told them that he had killed his wife and must escape before the police arrest him. "I must store my money somewhere, so I'm bringing it to you. I know I can trust you because you are Yidden."

The goy rolled in two barrels filled with gold coins. He said, "You can keep one barrel for yourself. Eventually, I will settle down in another country, and then I will send you a letter with my address so you can send me the other barrel."

After saying this, he left in a hurry.

The Yid and his family continued the Seder with joy. Hashem had answered their tefillos and sent them the money they needed. They would be able to pay the *poritz*... and there would be much more money left for them.

The goy never sent a letter requesting the other barrel, so both barrels, filled with gold coins, became theirs.

After Pesach, they traveled to the city to buy new clothes. They no longer needed to dress in rags. Then, they traveled to the Apter Rav to thank him for the miracle he had performed. He told them, "It wasn't my miracle. You don't have to thank me. You drew down the miracle on your own through your וַיִּצַק"²⁹.

29. We know of several people who had their *yeshuos* when they prayed to Hashem on this holy night. Some of them shouted to Hashem during the *eis ratzon* of וַיִּצַק, and others davened at other times on this sacred night, and they received their *yeshuah*.

I know the following story firsthand:

A family of Gerer chassidim had a hard time finding *shidduchim* for their three older sons, ages twenty-five, twenty-seven, and thirty. They all had fully grown beards, and they weren't engaged yet.

The custom in the Gerer yeshiva was that before *yom tov*, the *bachurim* would *gezegen* [take leave] from the Rebbe, the Lev Simchah *zy'a*, before going home. The Rebbe would call them *kasha fregers* ("question askers") because they were returning home to ask the Four Questions from their fathers. When these three older *bachurim* came to the Rebbe, he told them, "This year, ask your father why you aren't engaged yet."

They understood that he intended that they should ask their Father in heaven for a *shidduch* at the Seder, but one son took the Rebbe's counsel literally. At the Seder, he asked his father, "Why am I not yet engaged?"

Rebbe Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch *zy'a* said that people think that all they lack is the arrival of Moshiach. But in Mitzrayim, they understood that waiting for salvation isn't sufficient. They had to daven, as well. The *geulah* came when there was a *וַיִּצְעַק*. We should do the same, and we will merit the coming of Moshiach.

Emunah

Some *miforshim* say that the mitzvah of *Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim* isn't solely at the Seder. Whenever a child asks his father a question related to *yetzias Mitzrayim*, any day of the year, the father has the mitzvah of *v'higadita l'vincha*, to teach his son about *yetzias Mitzrayim*.

The Ohev Yisrael writes, "The truth is that even if a child asks his father about *yetzias Mitzrayim* during the year, the father must also answer him.³⁰ Nevertheless, the

holy Torah teaches us that throughout the year, even if you tell your son the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the words won't settle in the child's heart... The Haggadah teaches, *לֹא אָמַרְתִּי אֱלֹהִים בְּשַׁעַת שִׂישׁ מִצָּה וּמְרֹר מוֹנְחִים לְפָנֶיךָ*, 'the time to speak about *yetzias Mitzrayim* is when you have matzah and *maror* in front of you.' This is because, on the night of Pesach, the mind is open for comprehending...and the light of wisdom is revealed, and *emunah* and *bitachon* hover over all Jewish people. At this time, when you tell your son the entire story, your words will certainly enter his ears, and he will truly believe in *yetzias Mitzrayim*. The rest of the year, when darkness prevails in the world, the son is unable to receive the father's words properly and thus cannot believe.

The Mishnah (*Pesachim* 10:4) says, "If the child isn't wise enough to ask questions on his own, his father should teach him to ask questions." We want the child to ask

The father began to cry, and his three older sons joined in.

The mother stopped them. She said, "It's *yom tov*. It isn't proper to cry now."

They stopped crying and celebrated the rest of the Seder in the proper *yom tov* spirit.

After the Seder, the father announced, "Let's say *Tehillim*, from chapter 90 until the end, and we will daven that our sons get engaged."

Chodesh Iyar, one of them got engaged. *Sivan*, the second son was engaged, and by *Tamuz*, the third son was engaged.

Here's another story. It happened to a very special Yerushalmi couple who were childless for eleven years. For Pesach, they usually went to either his or her parents, but one year, he told his wife, "This time, we're staying home."

In the privacy of their home, they made a *וַיִּצְעַק*. They shouted to a Hashem for salvation. A year later, they had a child.

A person had trouble with his legs; he was often in excruciating pain. From time to time, he would go to the hospital or a clinic for a shot to stabilize the condition somewhat. This went on for years. One Pesach, he was celebrating the Seder at his brother's house. When they got to *וַיִּצְעַק* he left the room and poured his heart out to Hashem. *Motzei Yom Tov*, he received a shot in his leg, and he never needed another one. He was cured.

We also know stories of people who could not shout at the seder in a literal sense, so they shouted silently in their hearts and merited salvation.

30. Some *meforshim* say that the mitzvah of telling the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* isn't only at the Seder. Whenever a child asks his father a question related to *yetzias Mitzrayim*, any day of the year, the father has the mitzvah of *v'higadita l'vincha*, to teach his son about *yetzias Mitzrayim*.

questions so that we can teach him about *emunah* and *yetzias Mitzrayim* at this ideal time of the Seder. It is a time when the children can internalize the lessons.

The definition of a *segulah* (in contrast to a *refuah*) is that it is something that brings about results, although the process can't be explained with logic or according to the rulf nature. For example, a *segulah* for *refuah* is wearing a kameia, or some other matter, that is believed to cure, but its mechanism can't be explained in natural terms.

The Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l* says that the mitzvah of *Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim* is *mesugal* for *emunah*. He means that this mitzvah increases *emunah* in the realm of a *segulah*, on a level that can't be explained logically. It is also logical, because when you speak

about *emunah*, you implant *emunah* in yourself and your children. This mitzvah and these discussions are *mesugal* for increasing *emunah* on a level that is beyond explanation.

The Gemara (Brachos 6., 7.) tells us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu keeps all the mitzvos of the Torah. Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* said that this means Hashem also performs the mitzvah of *והגדת לבנך*. On the night of the Seder, Hashem tells His children that He took us out of Mitzrayim and He tells us the miracles that occurred. We are Hashem's children, so Hashem speaks to us, too. Our *neshamos* hear Hashem's words, and we are deeply influenced. When Hashem teaches us *emunah*, we can be sure that His lessons are firmly implanted in our hearts.³¹

31. We say in Shemonah Esrei, *השיבנו אבינו לתורתך*, "Return us, our Father, to Your Torah." Most brachos don't address Hashem as "our Father." Why do we do so in this brachah? The Tur (Orach Chaim 115) explains that we are saying, "Hashem, You are our Father, and every father has a mitzvah to teach his children Torah. You keep the entire Torah, and therefore, I plead to You, my father, that You open my heart so I can learn and understand the Torah."

Similarly, Hashem performs the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*, and as a father, He implants in our heart *emunah* in Hashem.

Reb Elyah Lopian *zt'l* heard the following story in Kelm from a talmid chacham whose grandfather was the author of *Malbushei Yom Tov zt'l*.

One year, before the Seder, the *Malbushei Yom Tov* sat in his place for a few minutes with intense emotion and then said, "Just as we are conducting the Seder with our family, so is the entire city conducting the Seder in the same manner – with matzah and maror, and all other parts of the Seder. The entire country and the entire world are observing the Seder in this manner. And this is the Seder that we saw by our fathers, and they saw it by their fathers. The chain goes back generations, to the Rishonim, Amoraim, Tanaim, all the way up to the people who left Mitzrayim and received the Torah. Hashem said to the generation that received the Torah (Shemos 19:4) *אתם ראיתם אשר עשיתי למצרים* "You saw what I did to Mitzrayim." Rashi writes, "It isn't a tradition that you received, it isn't just words that I am telling you... You saw what I did in Mitzrayim."

A *dibuk*, a spirit of a *rasha*, entered a woman in Tzefas, afflicting her.

The Arizal sent Reb Chaim Vital to heal her.

When Reb Chaim Vital came into the room, the spirit immediately turned to the wall and explained that he didn't have permission to look at the Shechinah.

Reb Chaim Vital asked the spirit why he was granted permission to enter this woman.

The spirit replied, "This woman woke up early one morning and was striking flint stones to create fire, but she wasn't succeeding. In frustration, she shouted, 'Let it be for the Satan,' and because of those words, I was granted permission to enter her and afflict her."

Rav Chaim Vital asked, "You were permitted to afflict her just because of that?"

Chazal tell us that we were redeemed from Mitzrayim in Nisan and we will be redeemed from the present galus in Nisan. Another Chazal (*Yalkut Shimoni, Hosheia 519*) states that we were redeemed from Mitzrayim in the merit of emunah, and we will be redeemed from the present galus in the merit of emunah. Rebbe Menachem Nochum of Boyan-Tchernovitz *zt'l* (Tiferes Menachem 5695 ד"ה 113) explains that both Chazals teach the same lesson. This is because due to the *mitzvos* we perform in Nisan, such as matzah (which is called *מִכֵּלֵּא דְמִיַּהֲמִנּוּתָא* the food of belief) and the *mitzvah* of *Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, etc., our emunah becomes stronger, and in the merit of emunah, we were redeemed and we will be redeemed from this galus.³²

Belief in *Hashgachah Pratis*

Round objects are indicative of cycles.

Many people make the mistake and think that everything runs on a cycle and not by *hashgachah pratis*. By יחזן, we break the round matzah to remind ourselves that things don't happen because of a cycle; everything happens by Hashem's decree.

The first *Ani Maamin* states, אני מאמין באמונה שלימה שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא ... עשה ועושה ויעשה לכל המעשים, "I believe with a complete belief that the Creator, may His name be blessed... He did, does, and will do everything."

The top matzah represents our belief in עשה that Hashem did – that everything that happened in the past was from Hashem's decree. The middle matzah represents עושה, does – that everything that happens now is by His will. The bottom matzah represents our belief in יעשה; He will do – everything that will happen in the future will come from Hashem.

The spirit replied, "It is primarily because this woman is not the same inside as she appears on the outside. She doesn't believe in yetzias Mitzrayim. At the Seder, when Yidden say Hallel and tell the story of yetzias Mitzrayim with joy, she thinks it's a joke. She thinks the miracles never occurred."

Rav Chaim Vital asked the woman, "Do you believe that HaKadosh Baruch Hu took us out of Mitzrayim and split the sea for us?"

"I believe," she replied, "and if occasionally I have other thoughts, I regret them." She started to cry.

After she said this, Reb Chaim Vital was able to banish the spirit from her.

The Chida *zt'l* writes that we should repeat this story at the Seder.

32. Every year, at the Seder, Reb Yaakov Yosef Weiss *z'l* from Manchester would tell his family the miracle that happened to him, which saved him during the Holocaust:

"I was in the camps with a friend. I repeatedly spoke to him about *emunah* and *bitachon*, encouraging him to believe that we would one day be free. My friend was pessimistic, always expecting the worst. It was hard for him to hear my optimistic predictions.

"Then came the dreaded day when the Germans ordered us to the showers. We all knew what that meant. We were headed for the gas chambers. My friend said to me, 'What do you say now?'

"I told him, 'Even now, I trust in Hashem. Hashem can save us in a moment.'

"We were crammed into the gas chamber, but the door couldn't shut. I was heavier than others, so a Nazi guard y"sh pulled me out of the gas chamber so that he could close the door. That's how I was saved."

Each year, at the Seder, Reb Yaakov Yosef would repeat this story of how he was saved, in the merit of his emunah and bitachon. Then he would add, "At my father's Seder, he spoke a lot about *emunah* and *bitachon*, and his words were firmly implanted in my heart. That gave me strength during the dark moments of the Holocaust and helped me keep my emunah in Hashem."

We break the middle matzah because it is hardest to believe that even the present is by Hashem's decree. It is easier for people to believe that the past was from Hashem and that the future will be from Hashem. But they struggle to live with the knowledge that the present is from Hashem. So, we break the middle matzah to remind ourselves that even the present is led with hashgachah pratis, and not by a cycle.

The *Haggadah* states, וירעו אתנו המצרים כמה שנאמר... וישמע ה' את קולנו כמה שנאמר... ויוציאנו... ביד שנאמר... כמה שנאמר חזקה... כמה שנאמר... The words are repeated numerous times.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* translates it as follows, "The Mitzrim afflicted us, כמה שנאמר because Hashem said they should. We went out of Mitzrayim, כמה שנאמר because Hashem said so." Everything that happened was by Hashem's decree. The slavery, the salvation, the significant, and the trivial are all כמה שנאמר, precisely as Hashem decreed it.

It states (*Shemos* 13:4), היום אתם יוצאים בחודש, האביב, "Today you are going out, in the month of spring." Rashi asks, "Don't we know when they left? [The answer is] Moshe was telling them: Take note of the *chesed* Hashem performed for you. He redeemed you from Mitzrayim when the weather was dry and comfortable, when it wasn't too hot or too cold."

The pasuk is telling us to recognize Hashem's kindness, as yetzias Mitzrayim happened during pleasant weather. This raises a question, because the joy of yetzias Mitzrayim is so great that it seems trivial to celebrate the pleasant climate that was. Why should this factor be worth mentioning?

To understand our question better, imagine a Holocaust survivor telling the story of how he was saved. He says that he was on a train, speeding towards a concentration camp, and he courageously jumped out of a window, and this was how he saved his life. Someone listening to this story asks him, "How was the weather that day?"

He will say, "I see that you aren't hearing what I'm telling you." My life was saved! The weather is irrelevant!"

Nevertheless, the Torah tells us to take note of the comfortable weather the Yidden enjoyed when they left Mitzrayim. This is because even the weather on the day of *yetzias Mitzrayim* wasn't by chance - it was Hashem's decree. Everything, down to the smallest detail, is from Hashem. We should take note of even the most minor details because everything is from Hashem.

The Yidden in Mitzrayim probably thought that when they are taken out of Mitzrayim and become free men, they will no longer have to eat matzah - the bread of affliction. But on the day they were redeemed, they, once again, ate matzos! This taught them that Hashem's will always prevails. If Hashem wants them to eat matzah, nothing can change that.

We discuss this in the *Haggadah*. We begin the *Haggadah* with הא לחמא עניא די אכלו די אבהתנא בארעא דמצרים, "This is the bread of affliction that our parents ate in Mitzrayim." This verse tells us that they ate matzah in Mitzrayim. They also ate matzah when they left Mitzrayim, as we say at the end of Magid, מצה זו שאנו אוכלים... על שום שלא הספיק בצקם, "Why do we eat matzah...? Because our forefathers didn't have time to let their dough rise [when they left Mitzrayim]..."

The Maharal (*Gevuras Hashem* 10) explains the pasuk (*Bereishis* 45:23), ולאביו שלח כזאת עשרה חמרים, "To his father [Yosef] sent the following: ten donkeys carrying of the best of Egypt..." Why did Yosef send specifically donkeys, and why ten of them? Donkeys carry loads on their back, but they don't know what they are carrying or why they are carrying them. Yosef sent his father ten donkeys to hint to him that his ten brothers shouldn't be blamed for selling Yosef to Mitzrayim. Like donkeys, they didn't know what they were doing. They thought they were acting independently, but they were carrying out Hashem's plan.

It is known that we drink four cups of wine on Pesach, at the Seder, to commemorate the four expressions of geulah: והוצאתי והצאתי וגאלתי ולקחתי. Rashi (Pesachim 108a) however states that the word כוס is written three times in the Sar HaMashkim's dream, as it states (Bereishis 40:11) וְכֹס פְּרֹעָה בְּיָדִי וְאָקַח אֶת הָעִנְבִים וְאֶשְׁחַט אֹתָם אֵל כּוֹס וְכֹס פְּרֹעָה וְאָתָּן אֶת הַכּוֹס עַל כַּף פְּרֹעָה, "Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I placed the cup on Pharaoh's palm." We also drink a fourth cup, the cup for *birkas hamazon*. Together with the three alluded to in the Sar HaMashkim's dream, there are four cups of wine.

But we wonder what connection there is between the Sar HaMashkim's dream and the story of yetzias Mitzrayim? Why should the three cups he saw in his dream be a reason for us to drink three cups corresponding to them?

It states in sefer פסח ליל שיערי (p.145), a wonderful answer: One of the lessons we seek to acquire on Pesach is the awareness that everything is in Hashem's hands, down to the most minor details. We can say that the galus mitzrayim occurred because of a fly. A fly, a tiny bug, is responsible for causing this galus, followed by the wondrous redemption. This is because the Sar HaMashkim's position was to serve wine to

Pharaoh. Once, Pharaoh found a fly in his cup of wine. He angrily sent the Sar HaMashkim to prison.

In prison, the Sar HaMashkim met with Yosef. Ten years later, Yosef deciphered his dreams, and two years after that, when Pharaoh had a dream, the Sar HaMashkim remembered Yosef and told Pharaoh that Yosef could interpret dreams. Yosef was freed from jail, became the leader of Mitzrayim, revealed himself to his brothers, and invited them to live in Mitzrayim.

So, it can be said that the entire galus in Mitzrayim occurred because of a hair. We commemorate what happened when we drink the four cups of wine on Pesach. We learn from this that Hashem's hashgachah pratis is over every creation, even a tiny fly.

Shevi'i Shel Pesach and Emunah

Rebbe Mendel Riminover *zt'l* writes, "I heard a student of Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* say in the name of their great rebbe that the best time to attain *emunah sheleimah* is the night of *Shevi'i Shel Pesach*.³³ It is also an ideal time to strengthen your connection with the holy tzaddikim, because connection to tzaddikim will help you attain *emunah sheleimah*. About this day it states (*Shemos* 14:31), וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ בִּה' וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ, "They believed in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant."³⁴

33. It states (*Tehillim* 92:3) לְהַגִּיד בְּבֹקֶר חַסְדְּךָ וְאֶמּוּנָתְךָ בְּלַיְלוֹת, "To declare in the morning Your kindness and Your emunah at nights." Notice that morning is written in singular (בְּבֹקֶר) while "nights" is written in plural (בְּלַיְלוֹת). The *Nesivos Shalom zy'a* (vol.2 p.284) explains that בְּלַיְלוֹת, "nights" refers to the two nights a year that are mesugal for attaining that emunah. They are the night of the Seder and the night of *Shevi'i Shel Pesach*.

34. At *Kriyas Yam Suf*, it states, "וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ בִּה'", "They believed in Hashem," so apparently, their emunah wasn't complete beforehand. Why was that?

The *Drashos HaRan* (*Drush* 11) explains that the Jewish nation was bothered by two questions, which hindered their emunah: (1) Why did they tell Pharaoh they were leaving for only three days? They should have told him the truth: that they were going for good. (Especially after *makas bechoros* when Pharaoh was ready to free them fully.) When people are confident in their strength, they don't have to lie or play tricks. Only people who aren't entirely in control feel the need to alter the truth and say, "We wish to go for only three days, so please let us go." This factor confused the nation, and they wondered whether Hashem is in complete control, to do as He desires.

(2) Why did they tell the Egyptians that they wanted to borrow their clothing, gold and silver utensils, etc.? They should have said that they were taking them. (They had the right to take their assets since they worked for the

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* (p.93:) writes, "The six days of Pesach are a preparation for the seventh day, the primary day of Pesach. It is the perfect day, the day they sang *shirah* (*Oz Yashir*).... The *shirah* has everything in it, the past and the future. All redemptions and all concepts can be found in the *shirah*. If a person says it with all his heart, with *mesirus nefesh*, according to his level, everything will be corrected, for his body and soul."³⁵

The Tzemach Tzedek *zt'l* said: "Shevi'i shel Pesach is Rosh Hashanah for *mesirus nefesh*." Also, the Reishis Chachmah (*Shaar*

Ahavah 8:6) writes that the lesson of Shevi'i shel Pesach is to serve Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*, and as a result, miracles will occur.

The Midrash states that Nachshon ben Aminadav was the first to jump into the Yam Suf. He was *moser nefesh*, and when the water reached his nostrils, he shouted *הושיעני כי באו מים עד נפש*, "Save me because the water is smothering my soul," and that is when the sea split.

It is written, *הים ראה וינס*, "The Sea saw and fled." The Midrash asks, "What did the Yam

Mitzrim for so many years.) Saying that you want to borrow when you intend to keep it is another tactic used only by those not entirely in control and who have no other way to get what they want.

These were the which caused their *emunah* to be incomplete.

But when they saw the *kriyas Yam Suf*, they realized that the purpose of these tricks was that Pharaoh and his army should chase the Jewish nation directly into the sea, and drown there. Pharaoh wouldn't have pursued them had they told him at the start that they were leaving, never to come back. It was because they said they were only going for three days and that they were only borrowing the valuables they took, which spurred Pharaoh and his army to chase them when they realized they weren't returning.

Now, everything made sense, *ויאמינו בה*, and they believed in Hashem. However, the higher level of *emunah*, which we strive for, is to believe in Hashem even before we have the answers.

35. A song has high notes and low notes. This reminds us to sing along with the ups and downs of life because even the hardships are for the good.

It states in the *shirah*, *צללו כעופרת במים אדירים*, "They sank like lead in mighty waters." ... *נמית ימינך תבלעמו ארץ*. "You turned Your hand, the earth swallowed them up." In between these two *pasukim*, it states *מי כמוך באלים ה'*, "Who compares to You among the mighty, Hashem?" This *pasuk* seems out of context because the *pasuk* before and the *pasuk* after discuss the details of *kriyas Yam Suf*, how the Mitzrim drowned in the sea, while this *pasuk* praises Hashem. This *pasuk* of praise should be written either before or after these two *pasukim*, not in between.

The Shinover Rav *zt'l* answers that as the Jewish people sang the *shirah*, their hearts became full of love and yearning for Hashem, and they couldn't contain their emotions and they shouted out *מי כמוך באלים ה'*, "Who compares to You among the mighty, Hashem?" The location of this *pasuk* demonstrates the immense love the Jewish nation had for Hashem at that time.

The Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* sent one of his students to a certain town in Poland, instructing him to give his regards to a Yid, who's name was Reb Berel. The student went there, but everyone told him there was no one in their town with that name. He continued searching until he was directed to a cheder rebbe called Dov Ber (later renowned as the Magid of Mezritz *zt'l*). He heard Reb Dov Ber tell his students that when Dovid HaMelech lists the wonders of creation in *Tehillim* (103) in the middle of this conversation, Dovid shouts out, *מה רבו מעשיך ה'*, "How great are Your deeds, Hashem..." (*Tehillim* 103:24). This *pasuk* seems out of place because it should be written either before or after all the wonders of creation are listed. Why is it written in the middle? The answer is that as King Dovid was enumerating Hashem's wonders of creation, his heart became filled with joy. He couldn't contain his excitement and shouted *מה רבו מעשיך ה'*, "How great are Your deeds, Hashem..."

At *kriyas Yam Suf*, a similar thing occurred, and they all shouted out *מי כמוך באלים ה'*.

Suf see? It saw the *aron* of Yosef." Yosef HaTzaddik ran away from aveiros with *mesirus nefesh*. When the sea saw Yosef's bones, it split.

Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev *zy'a* teaches:

When a person serves Hashem beyond his natural limits, Hashem will act with him beyond the rules of nature and perform miracles for him.

When the Yidden were at the Yam Suf, there were malachim in heaven who were complaining and protesting, saying, "Why should the Yidden be saved and the goyim killed? The Yidden also worshipped avodah zarah in Mitzrayim!" Klal Yisrael needed a merit to be saved. (The meforshim give various ideas of what merit they had, for which they were saved.) The Avnei Nezer asks, the Jewish nation also needed a merit in Mitzrayim in order to be redeemed. This is the reason Hashem instructed the nation to perform a *bris milah* and to bring a *korban Pesach*. These two merits made them worthy of yetzias Mitzrayim. So, why didn't Hashem do the same by kriyas Yam Suf? Hashem could have given the Jewish nation mitzvos to perform, and this would have rendered them worthy of kriyas Yam Suf, and it would

have silenced the accusations of the malachim.

Avnei Nezer answers that they had *mesirus nefesh*, and therefore, no other merit was needed. The merit of their *mesirus nefesh* saved them and silenced the prosecuting angels.³⁶

The sea also split in the merit of bitachon.

The Or HaChaim Hakadosh (*Shemos* 14:14) writes, "Hashem said to Moshe, מַה תִּצַּעַק אֵלַי, 'Why are you praying to me?'" Hashem was telling Moshe that tefillah wouldn't save the nation because the prosecuting malachim were saying that they didn't deserve to be saved. The only way to be saved was for them to go into the sea even before it split. The merit of bitachon made them worthy of the miracle.

The sea also split in the merit of Torah. The Or HaChaim (14:27) teaches: "Hashem made a condition with all creation that they must be subjugated to those who study Torah and do whatever they decree onto them.

Therefore, we find that there were tzaddikim who ruled over the heavens, the earth, the stars, the sun, and the moon. They did so, one tzaddik alone! Certainly, many

36. Years ago, a Moroccan king, lying on his deathbed, overheard two ministers say to one another, "The king's enemies are glad that the king is about to die because as soon as he dies, they will take over the kingdom." The Moroccan king suddenly regained his strength and sat up in his bed. He recovered and lived for another three years.

Tzaddikim retold this story to demonstrate the power of *ratzon*, desire. It can bring a dying person to life. If a person truly desires something, he can go against the rules of nature to attain it.

The Sfas Emes taught, "A person doesn't do good, and a person doesn't do bad. Even thoughts of *teshuvah* come from Hashem... Don't ask, if so, what do people do? People have *ratzon* and *yegiah*, desire and toil. And when one desires to do good, he can achieve anything."

The Sefas Emes (*Pesach* 5632) teaches:

Chazal tell us, "Even a maidservant at the Yam Suf saw more than Yechezkel ben Buzi." This shows us the specialness of a Yid who serves Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*. In a moment, he is elevated from the lowest level to the highest.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov *zt'l* taught that even a person born with a low *neshamah* can reach the highest levels. It all depends on how much he desires and how hard he tries.

Yidden who study Torah have that power. This is the rule that Hashem established for them when He created the world...

"When the Yidden left Mitzrayim, they hadn't yet received the Torah... This is why the sea wouldn't part for them. The sea said to Moshe, 'You were created [later than me] on the sixth day of creation, while I was created on the third day of creation.' The sea was implying that Moshe didn't yet possess the merit of Torah. If Moshe had the merit of Torah, the sea would surely split before him, because the Torah was created before the entire world.

"Hashem wisely went to Moshe's right side. This was to show the sea that Moshe has the merit of Torah, which is related to the right, as it states (Devarim 33:2) מִיְמֵינוּ אֵשׁ דָּת, 'From Hashem's right hand, He presented the fiery Torah.' When the sea saw this, it immediately split, for that was the condition that was made with the sea..."

It states (Shemos 14:27) וַיֵּשֶׁב הַיָּם לִפְנוֹת בֹּקֶר לְאִיתָנוּ, "The sea went back in the morning to its strength." The letters לְאִיתָנוּ spell לתנאו, to the *tnay*, the condition that Hashem made with creation. The Or HaChaim writes, הַתְּנָה ה' עַל כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה בְרָאשִׁית לְהִיּוֹת כְּפֹפִים לְתוֹרָה וְעִמְלִיָּה וְלַעֲשׂוֹת כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִגְזֹר עֲלֵיהֶם, "Hashem made a condition with all creation that they must be submitted to Torah and to those who toil over it, to do whatever they decree upon them." This is the reason the sea split before Bnei Yisrael.

Annual *Kriyas Yam Suf*

Rebbe Shalom Ber of Lubavitch *zt'l* (the Rebbe Rasha'b) asked his son, Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak (the Maharyatz) *zt'l*, "If *kriyas Yam Suf* were happening a few miles away from here, would you go to watch it?"

Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak said that he would.

"And if it happened just outside the city, would you go there to see it?"

"Of course, I would."

"Well, you should know that every year, on *Shevi'i shel Pesach*, the sea splits again, literally..."

Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak replied, "But what shall we do if people's eyes are blind and don't see it?"

His father, Rebbe Shalom Ber, replied, "That's exactly the point: The miracles happen each year, and if we don't see them, the fault lies with us. If a person purifies himself, he will see the miracles."

One difference between the first splitting of the sea and the subsequent splitting that happens yearly is that the first time (when the Jewish nation walked through the Yam Suf), the sea was originally one body and it split into two. In the years following, the sea already had a nature of being split into parts. Now, *kriyas Yam Suf* is like reopening the split that already exists.

This explains why the Torah refers to the splitting of the sea as וַיִּבְקַע הַיָּם, while we refer to it as קְרִיעַת יַם סוּף. The word בקיעה is used when one breaks something whole. For example, it states בּוֹקֵעַ עֵצִים, chopping wood (*Koheles* 10:9). The wood was one, and the person breaks it into two. But קְרִיעָה means to tear. It's an expression used to describe ripping a garment made from multiple threads sewn together. It wasn't one to begin with because it was made from many threads sewn together, and when you rip it, it returns to its original state. We now understand why the first time the sea split, it is called וַיִּבְקַע הַיָּם. The sea was one, and it split and became two. But from then on, the sea is like different parts patched together. Each year, when the sea splits again, it's called קְרִיעַת יַם סוּף, "ripping the sea" since it's reopening the seam, returning the sea to its state of two. And since it was split once before, it is easier to happen again.

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 21:6) states, "The Torah doesn't write וַיִּבְקַע הַיָּם, that the sea split. It states וַיִּבְקַע הַיָּמִים, that the water split [in the plural form], to teach us that all wells,

reservoirs, and every other gathering of water throughout the world, split."

Every miracle serves a purpose. The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* asks, what was the purpose of ויבקעו המים, that all waters of the world should split?

He answers that מים represents troubles, as it states (*Tehillim* 69:2) הושיעני אלוקים כי באו מים עד נפש, "Save me Hashem because water (troubles) is covering over my soul." When the Torah tells us that "water" split, this means we are saved from all troubles. Throughout all generations, *kriyas Yam Suf* occurs again, and each year we merit new salvations. In particular, a person can have a *yeshuah* for *parnassah* and *shidduchim*, because Chazal compare the hardships of *parnassah* and *shidduchim* to *kriyas Yam Suf*.

The Ateres Tzvi writes, "When the sea split, it opened salvations for all generations – for the individual and the community. Even if the gates of *parnassah* or the gates of *shidduchim* are *chas veshalom* closed, one should pray at this special *eis ratzon* by *kriyas Yam Suf*... and Hashem will save Bnei Yisrael when they shout out to Him."

Regarding Shevi'i shel Pesach, it states (*Shemos* 12:16) אך אשר יאכל לכל נפש הוא לבדו יעשה לכם. "But what is eaten by any soul that alone may be performed for you..." This pasuk tells us that one is permitted to cook food on yom tov. The Torah discusses Shevi'i shel Pesach, but the rule applies to every yom tov. Bnei Yissaschar (*Chodesh Nisan* 13:2) states, "I heard from my holy *mechutan*, Rebbe Hershel of Ziditchov *zt'l*, that the Torah specifically writes this regarding Shevi'i shel Pesach to teach us that on this day it's easier... to bestow *parnassah* on the Jewish people, even if they don't have sufficient merits, *chas veshalom*."³⁷

The name of the month ניסן (from the word נס) implies that it's a month when miracles occur. The Rebbe of Ruzhin added that ניסן, with a ך at the end, means that miracles are ongoing and continuous this month. A ך at the end of a word represents something that happens often.³⁸

May we merit a true זמן חריתנו, a kosher and *freilich* yom tov with all its *brachos* and *yeshuos*, and may we merit celebrating the *yom tov* Pesach in the Beis HaMikdash, speedily in our days, amen.

37. The Beis Avraham *zt'l* advised those who needed *shidduchim*, *parnassah*, or *refuos* to complete the entire *Tehillim* on Shevi'i shel Pesach because it is a day of salvations.

38. For example, many occupations have a ך at the end of the word. For instance, רצען is a shoemaker, קבלן is a contractor, and so on. The extra ך implies that this is their occupation, something they always do. Chazal (*Bava Metzia* 33.) also teaches this lesson on the following pasuk (*Shemos* 23:5) כי תראה חמור שניאך רבץ תחת כי תראה חמור שניאך רבץ תחת, "If you see your enemy's donkey crouched under its burden would you refrain from helping him? You shall surely help along with him." The Gemara notes that it states רובץ, "crouched," and doesn't state רבץ. The latter, רבץ, would imply that it crouches and sits down very often. If that is the animal's nature, you aren't obligated to help the animal get up. We see from this Gemara that a ך at the end of the word means something that happens often. Likewise, ניסן means that miracles are constantly occurring in this month.