Happy Pesach!

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The *Dayeinu* song seems utterly absurd! Unraveling this absurdity provides a powerful insight into the art of appreciation.

**It Would NOT Have Been Enough**

A close look at the song reveals that many stanzas don’t seem to make any sense at all.

Here are two examples: If G-d would have brought us out of Egypt and not split the sea, *Dayeinu* – It would have been enough for us.

If G-d would have split the sea and not given us food and water to drink in the desert, *Dayeinu* – It would have been enough for us.

Really?

If G-d had brought us out of Egypt but not split the sea, we would have all died at the hands of the Egyptian army.

If G-d had split the sea but not given us food and water, we would have all died of starvation and heat exhaustion in the desert.

It most certainly would not have been enough!

It is clear that every stage is incomplete without the realization of the stages which follow. If the redemption process would have been held up at any one of the stages, it certainly would not have been enough – we would either have died in the desert or wandered aimlessly in the wilderness. Without completing the entire series – Exodus, Revelation, Promised Land and Temple – the process would have either ended in disarray or disaster.

**A Gratitude Attitude**

Indeed, the song is senseless only when viewed with the ultimate goal in mind. If the purpose of *Dayeinu* was to celebrate reaching the final goal of redemption, it never would have been enough until the destination was reached.

However, *Dayeinu* is about a different frame of mind – a mindset of gratitude and appreciation. It is about the process not the result. It is about the journey, not the destination.

**When we see how far we have come as opposed to how far there is to go, what we have rather than what we lack, we are able to feel deep gratitude irrespective of whether or not we have achieved our final aim. And hence we are able to appreciate the enormity of every step along the way.**

Therefore, *Dayeinu* means it would have been enough to say thank you. If G-d had brought us out of Egypt but not split the sea, this miraculous act of freedom would have been enough for us to thank Him irrespective of what the future held. If G-d would have split the sea and we would have died in the desert, we should still have thanked Him for such an unprecedented miracle and for bringing our oppressors to justice.

This then is the profound lesson of *Dayeinu* – to feel perfectly grateful in imperfect situations. If we focus incessantly on the final goal of any undertaking, the destination of every life journey, the endpoint of every beginning, then we simply won’t be able to savor any part of the process itself.

The positioning of *Dayeinu* in the Haggadah is significant. It comes immediately after completing the story of the Exodus and is our first reflection on those events. As the first expression of praise and thanksgiving, *Dayeinu* forms the foundation of the Hallel that follows soon. It provides us with a powerful spiritual paradigm – to live life with a profound attitude of gratitude and practice the oft elusive art of appreciation.

**A Modern Dayeinu**

In this spirit, I have written a modern-day *Dayeinu* song in honor of Israel, which appears in the Seder Companion later in this publication. Israel is still some distance from the ideal moral and spiritual society we wish it to be. Yet this should never cloud our ability to express heartfelt appreciation for its enormous accomplishments every step of the way.

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CONTEMPORARY GEULA
A CHANGE OF PACE

Where it All Began

The Prophets Micha (7:15) and Yishayahu (Isaiah 11:11-16) both describe the final Geula (redemption) as a continuation of Yetziat Mitzrayim, the Exodus from Egypt. In fact, the Maharal, in the introduction to Netzach Yisrael, interprets Yetziat Mitzrayim as a necessary paradigm without which the final Geula would be impossible.

Building off Torah verses that describe Yetziat Mitzrayim in the present tense (Exodus 14:8 and Numbers 23:22), Rav Kook explains that “the redemption is an ongoing process. The redemption from Egypt and the future final redemption are one continuum.”

This approach explains why, in addition to Yetziat Mitzrayim, the Haggadah also mentions geulot throughout the generations (Ehoda shel Yisrael) and includes prayers for the final Geula: והִיא זְמֵן הַבָּאָה בְּאַרְעָא דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל על גְּאֻלָּתֵנוּ וְעַל פְּדוּת נַפְשֵׁנוּ, לְשָׁנָה לְשָׁנָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם and of course, ולשנה הבאה ירושלים.

Change of Pace

Despite the relationship between future and past geulot, Isaiah (52:12) singles out one major difference – the eventual redemption will unfold slowly, as opposed to בֵּשָׂם (in haste).

The Torah emphasizes that the Exodus from Egypt was בֵּשָׂם. It is why the Korban Pesach had to be eaten quickly and why we eat matzah on Pesach instead of chametz. In fact, the Avudraham (Seder HaHaggadah) even explains that the Jews were commanded to eat matzah even before they left Mitzrayim so that they would pay attention to how quickly they were leaving.

The final Redemption happens slowly or, as the Yerushalmi (Yoma 14a) outlines, like the sunrise – little by little with continually increasing light. Following this line of thought, Rashi explains that Zechariah’s mention of a day that is “neither day nor night” refers to the twilight stages between exile and redemption that “are not yet the full light of the next world but also no longer the dark of night because we are free of the pain of subjugation to foreign powers.” (Zechariah 14:7).

Rashi’s words seem to describe today’s reality. On the one hand, thankfully, we have the opportunity to live independently in Eretz Yisrael. On the other, we still face challenges, both physical and spiritual.

There are many who are disillusioned by the fact that our return to Eretz Yisrael is not yet what it is fully meant to be. They would be wise to remember that sources dating back to the Nevi'im Yeshayahu and Zechariah had already predicted this slow and gradual progression.

Why We Take It Slow

Nevertheless, living in a generation experiencing this slow progression, we wonder why the final Redemption needs to proceed so slowly. Why are we not blessed with a speedy redemption like the one from Mitzrayim?

Many commentaries suggest that in order for the Jewish people to initially forge their own identity, the first redemption needed to be a quick and clean break from the Egyptian culture into which they had assimilated.

Building off a Jewish identity established over millennia, the final Geula need not be as quick.

Rav Kook explains that the slow pace of the final Redemption is not just because it need not be quick, but because it must be deliberately slow to accomplish two important goals. Firstly, our exile was meant to impact the world we were exiled to. In Orot HaTeshuva (17:1), he explains that our redemption is meant to carry the world’s redemption along with it, hence we need to move slowly to ensure that the rest of civilization is keeping pace with us. Secondly, in order to reach the final redemptive high point, we need to sharpen our unique identity, partly by distinguishing between the good we take with us as opposed to what we leave behind.

May our reflection on the goals of a slow redemption help us realize them and facilitate the completion of the Geula process!

1 Understandably these pesukim are read as the Haftarah portion on the last day of Pesach (and on Yom HaAtzmaut). Similarly, the Haftarot on Shabbat HaGadol and on the seventh day of Pesach also relate to Geula.

2 Yisrael U’Techiyato, 28.

3 See Berachot 9a, which discusses two aspects of this haste, that of the Jews and that of the Egyptians.

4 This pasuk inspired קָרֵב יוֹם הָאָרֶץ, the song many recite at the end of the Seder.

5 For example, Tzidkat HaTzadik 1, Tanya 31, and Torat Menachem, Rosh Chodesh Nissan 5746.

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The Book of Shemot begins with re-counting Yaakov Avinu and his children – 70 nefesh (souls) of Bnei Yisrael who journeyed to Mitzrayim – ‘אש ונתתי – each man and his בת (home).1 A few verses later, we find Pharaoh calling Bnei Yisrael a threatening nation – ‘ויתרו בני ישראל. Every בת, nation, begins as a בת, a home.

Therefore, before G-d fulfills His promises of survival to the 70 souls of Bnei Yisrael who risk their lives to save Hebrew women;[2] daughters of a Midianite priest who reciprocate with a newborn child, and daughters of a mother, a sister and a mother-in-law team. They are ultimately responsible for the metamorphosis from 2 to 8 occurrences of בת to eight occurrences of הבת by Chapter 12 – the perfect inclusio!2

The Torah is teaching us that it is the בת (daughter) who builds the בת (home). Our story of national redemption begins with individuals who appreciate that they are continuing the dreams, destiny and moral values of their parents, connoted through their consistent identity as daughters.

Yocheved, albeit the mother of Moshe, is never noted in matriarchal terms, but rather as בת ובת – the quintessential daughter born to Levi in Mitzrayim. Chazal teach us3 that she was born הבת הבת – between the walls, on the Canaan-Egyptian border; she is the bridge between past and future, between the 70 descendants of Yaakov and the 600,000 soldiers of a nation who will leave Egypt to return home. Through identifying as the daughter of Levi, she perpetuates the values and covenants of the past as she raises the leaders of the next generation.

Even at age 130, when she gives birth to Moshe, Yocheved is still called a daughter! Rabbi Yehuda bar Zveida (in Bava Batra 120a) teaches that she was reborn as a daughter – her wrinkles disappeared and her youth was restored. As long as we see ourselves as daughters to our mothers and fathers, as a continuum of the families we come from, we are inspired to build the homes and leaders of the future – with youthful vigor and optimism, even in the face of oppression! Through the “bookends” of the story of redemption (הבת בת), the Torah teaches us the secret of Jewish survival!

Because only when we identify our homes with the blood reminiscent of Brit bein HaBETARIM and with the Divine promises of our past may we proceed to religious nationhood. Perhaps that’s why the word הבת appears eight times as the מילקון המנה (leading word) in Chapter 12, as a pre-condition for national-religious formation.

How are we meant to undergo this transformation from individuals to families?

We find 10 chapters charting the Bnei Yisrael’s development from oppression through redemption. We learn of challenges of leadership, tenacity of faith, patience in the process. The people are exposed to...
Although it usually requires herculean efforts to drink the fourth cup at the end of the Seder, what would you say if I told you that you got off easy?

The Gemara (Pesachim 109b) instructs us to drink four cups of wine, to commemorate the four different wordings of redemption found in Parashat Vaeira:

- июю (I took you out),
- юю (I saved you),
- юю (I redeemed you),
- юю (I took you).

However, there is one more reference to redemption, namely юю (I brought you) – that should seemingly require us to have a fifth cup at the Seder.

The Rif and Rabbeinu Chananel explain that according to Rabbi Tarfon we are indeed required to drink a fifth cup of wine and recite the remaining portion of Hallel.

The Ran falls short of endorsing Rabbi Tarfon’s position but does state that there is an obligation to drink four cups (our general practice). However, the fifth cup is a reshut (optional) and can even be viewed as a mitzvah min hamuvchar (a choicest mitzvah).

The Rambam seems to follow the opinion of the Ran and rules that the fifth cup is categorized as a reshut but should preferably be associated with finishing the Hallel as well.

So yes, general practice is to drink only four cups of wine during the Seder. Why? Although the Jews enslaved in Egypt experienced all four stages of redemption, they were punished due to their lack of enthusiasm for the Land of Israel, and for the sin of the Spies that caused them not to enter Israel. They never experienced the юю redemption phase of coming into the Land of Israel, thus mandating only four cups of wine.

Nevertheless, it is evident that our Sages struggled with this last reference of redemption and its practical manifestation at our Seder, from suggesting that all must drink the fifth cup to not having a fifth cup at all (Netziv). Common practice is of course to have the fifth cup at the table – but not to drink it – as some sort of compromise. This cup is known as the cup of Eliyahu HaNavi.

The Vilna Gaon explains that when there is an uncertainty that cannot be resolved, we believe that the prophet Eliyahu, who returns as a harbinger of the messianic era, will resolve it. Thus, we pour a fifth cup in his honor, and he will tell us if we should drink it when he arrives.

But this is odd. Rarely do we have a safek (a halachic doubt) represented as a symbolic reminder of a divergent opinion as we practice a ritual.

The question remains: Why do we have the fifth cup on our table?

Perhaps the answer is that on Seder night, we are mandated to do much more than merely commemorate the Exodus story. As the Rambam writes, each of us is instructed to reenact a visceral experience that helps us view ourselves as if we have been redeemed. Singing Hallel as if we had witnessed G-d’s miracles ourselves and eating the same matzah as we did hurrying on our way out from slavery.

But the reenactment experience shouldn’t end there. It should continue. We should attempt to transport ourselves back to the same nexus of post-Red Sea as well. We should be posed with the same challenge of юю – moments after the Exodus – as were our forefathers – challenging us as a nation to continue onwards to enter our Homeland, Eretz Yisrael.

The fifth cup on the table represents the option of юю – the very choice the Jews had moments after the Exodus from Egypt, and the astounding opportunity miraculously available to our nation today.

In fact, after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Rav Menachem Mendel Kasher unsuccessfully lobbied the Israeli Rabbinate to establish a fifth cup of wine at the Pesach Seder to reflect the completion of this final redemption.

Perhaps in our times, the fifth cup is the most significant. It represents the very real accessibility of fulfilling our national destiny and embracing and experiencing our modern-day miracle.

This is the challenge our generation faces: the option of fulfilling the fifth phase of redemption – юю – and whether we choose to embrace this gift that G-d has bestowed upon us and return to our Promised Land.

1 Hilchot Chametz Umatzah 8:10.
2 Hilchot Chametz Umatzah 7:6.
3 1895-1983. Author of the encyclopedic masterpiece Torah Shleimah.

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With all of its rituals and wonder, Pesach marks the uniqueness of the Jewish people – a people delivered from centuries of bondage through miraculous Heavenly intervention. So, one of the main functions of Pesach is to connect us to an event that occurred millennia ago in a distant land.

The natural inclination of people is to feel disconnected to that event. This is implicit in the questions raised in the section of the Haggadah devoted to the four sons. Their basic question is: “What is the relevance of this long-ago event to me?” This has remained the basic question in all Jewish life throughout the ages.

The enormous number of Jews who are completely disconnected from their faith and their people, from their homeland of Israel and from the values and observances of Torah, testifies to the intensity of doubt and difficulty posed by this question. If the Exodus from Egypt does not speak to me, then the rest of Judaism is pretty immaterial to me as well.

And that is the evil son’s statement and question. In effect he is saying that the whole rite of Pesach as well the other rituals of Judaism are meaningless, because he has no connection to the Exodus or to Jewish history. It is this disconnect that creates rampant assimilation and a constantly diminishing connection to the past and destiny of the Jewish people.

The Haggadah’s answer to the seeming irrelevance of the Exodus to our current world is difficult for us to understand. We tell the evil son that had he lived at the time of the Exodus from Egypt he would not have been redeemed and would have died in Egyptian captivity.

Midrash teaches us that a majority of the Jews in Egypt did not survive, spiritually or physically, to participate in the Exodus. The message here is that Exodus denial means spiritual annihilation as far as the individual Jew is concerned. To be able to achieve freedom – inner and lasting freedom – as a Jew, one must first feel connected to the Jewish people and its past and committed to its future.

Ritual is one of the proven methods to achieve such a connection. Every bite of matzah brings me closer to my people and to its eternal mission in world civilization. One of my grandsons once said to me at the Seder: “Zaidy, tell everyone to be quiet. I want to hear what the matzah is saying to me.” In his wise, childlike way, he encompassed the message of Pesach for us all.

We have to listen to what the matzah is saying to us. By so doing, we connect ourselves to the Exodus and thus to all of Jewish history and Judaism itself. Without listening to the matzah, we will be disconnected from our past and all of Judaism will appear to be irrelevant to us.

Pesach teaches us many lessons about life generally and Jewish life particularly. It teaches us that the past has to always live in our present and that memory is the key to wisdom and survival. It teaches us never to despair and to always hope and trust for better times and salvation. It teaches us of the power of an individual – even one individual alone, such as our teacher Moshe – to affect and alter all of human history.

It points out to us the inherent danger of Jews not feeling Jewish and distancing themselves from their people and their own individual destiny. It proclaims for us G-d’s rule over nations and the omnipresence of His Divine hand, so to speak, in human affairs. Often this guidance is an unseen force but there are times in history, such as the Exodus from Egypt and perhaps even in our time, in the miraculous resilience of the Jewish people after the terrible events of the past century, when G-d’s direction of events is more visible to us.

Pesach and its matzah have a great deal to say to us if we are prepared to listen and understand the message. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov was reputed to have said: “Every step that I take brings me closer to Jerusalem.” We can also say that every bite of matzah brings us closer to the experience of the Exodus from Egypt and to the great redemption of Israel that yet awaits us.
A s part of the tochecha found in Parashat Bechukotai, we read, "I will make your Sanctuaries desolate" (Vayikra 26:31). Rabbi Yehudah1 understands from this that a shul is still called a mikdash and retains its kedusha even when in a state of ruin. Rabbi Yehoshua2 expresses a similar opinion regarding the sanctity of the Beit HaMikdash: ידשו автомה כי מתashtra להｋדשות ולא הראה לא זה, "the original sanctification of [Yerushalayim and the Beit HaMikdash] sanctified these areas for that time and sanctified them for all future time." Thus, "we may offer korbanot [at the Beit HaMikdash site] even though there is no [Sanctuary] building."

How did Rabbi Yehudah learn that the area of the Beit HaMikdash is permanently endowed with kedusha? The simple understanding is that it is based on the sequence found in the pasuk. The verb, "I will make desolate," is followed by the direct object, "Your Mikdashot." This sequence implies that even after their destruction, they retain the status of Mikdash.

However, one could have simply understood the pasuk as foretelling that G-d will make desolate the structure that had been hitherto recognized as the Beit HaMikdash, and not that the structure necessarily retains Beit HaMikdash status in its destruction. Mefarshim on the Mishna do not seem to feel that the arrangement of the verb and direct object in the pasuk is particularly compelling.

The Netziv3 and the Binyan Tziyon4 offer a novel understanding of the exposition in the Mishna. The proof is not from the sequence, but from the second half of the pasuk, ילא אריה יבריח ונתהכט, “I will not savor your satisfying aromas.” The difficulty is that the conclusion of the pasuk is superfluous. If the Beit HaMikdash has been destroyed in terms of both its physical structure as well as its metaphysical kedusha, it should be obvious that G-d will not accept the aroma of korbanot brought in a non-sanctified location.

Instead, the Mishna understands that this pasuk brings with it a double admonition. First, it foretells that the Beit HaMikdash will be destroyed. Yet, even after its destruction, the desolate Beit HaMikdash will retain its kedusha, and the din ought to be מקריבין א哪一个 לא על פי שיאו מינה. This is the basis of Rabbi Yehudah’s opinion and what necessitates the message of the next part of the pasuk. The second half of the pasuk informs us that there is no purpose in offering such korbanot, for G-d will simply not be interested in savoring the reiach nicoach of our korbanot.

The Kaf tor VaFerach5 writes that in 1257, Rabbi ben Yechiel MiParis, one of the Ba’alei HaTosafot who moved to Eretz Yisrael, advocated building a mizbayach on the makom haMikdash and offering korbanot on it. The Netziv interprets his plans, as well as the tradition that the Korban Pesach was brought after the destruction of the Second Beit HaMikdash (until the time of the fall of Betar), in light of his explanation of the Mishna.

It is most striking, he says, that the Korban Pesach is the one and only korban never described in the Torah as providing a reiach nicoach. It was the only korban offered in the post-churban period and which the Rishonim considered offering, to the exclusion of the other korbanot, which are brought for the purpose of providing a reiach nicoach to G-d.

The Emek Beracha6 makes an interesting comment on the beracha of Asher Ge’dilu, recited on Seder night: גרש כלאל... ונקבר שם מזבחים מי מ◦ ו⁄ ב מקוהו הרמטים איש לרופ שגר, “Who redeemed us... and there we shall partake of the sacrifices and Pesach-offerings, whose blood will be sprinkled upon the sides of your mizbechah for gracious acceptance.” The significance of the word ל›הו roi is understood in light of the Netziv’s observation that the Korban Pesach is unique in that it doesn’t have to provide a satisfying aroma to G-d. Therefore, technically, we would be able to offer the Korban Pesach even nowadays, based on the principle מקריבים א哪一个 על פי שיאו מינה, without the element of reiach nicoach.

May it be His Will that we should merit the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash, so that we may then offer the type of Korban Pesach that will be brought ל›הו roi, providing a reiach nicoach to G-d.

(The original essay appears in Rav Schachter on the Parsha, and in the newly released Rav Schachter on the Haggadah.)

1 Mishna Megillah 3:3.
2 Mishna Eduyot 8:6.
3 HaEmek Davar, Vayikra 26:31; Meishiv Davar 2:56.
4 Siman 1.
5 Perek 6.
6 pp. 77-78.

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There is an ancient Seder custom of eating an egg at the end of Maggid. The Rema (476:2) quotes one reason for this as being a symbol of mourning. Just as a mourner upon returning from the cemetery eats a meal of bread and eggs, so too we must partake of this at the Seder. Why? Aren't we in a celebratory, festive mood? Yes, but we still need a reminder, that though we are celebrating in our respective homes, we must realize that we still don't have a Beit HaMikdash. We are thus mandated to both feel as if we just left Egypt, but also recognize that presently in exile, we still have much for which to mourn. The egg then is similar to the breaking of the glass under a chuppah, or leaving an unfinished area in a new house. These are all ways of focusing on Jerusalem, even at the times when we are most joyous.

The Ishbitzer Rebbe had the following novel idea to explain the custom of the egg. Almost all creatures in the world experience one stage of birth. The mother gives birth to a living offspring, and the process of procreation is complete. But those creatures that lay eggs experience two stages of birth. First, the egg is laid, and only later does the egg hatch. Maybe, suggests the Ishbitzer, this is why we eat an egg at the end of Maggid. We just spent many hours focusing on the Exodus from Egypt, from the lowly, humble beginnings of our nation, both physically and spiritually, all the way up to the ultimate moment, that fateful night when Pharaoh urged us to leave. With great excitement, we finally left behind our 210 years of servitude. We end our re-telling with a bracha which acknowledges and thanks G-d for His redeeming us. Lest we think this is the end, the final stage of our national birth, we quickly eat an egg, symbolizing two stages of birth. The Exodus was amazing, but there is a second stage to this process. This will occur in 49 days from now, when we celebrate the holiday of Shavuot, the day we received the Torah. The Jewish people were not completely “born” until after they received the Torah, and had a blueprint as to how to live their lives. Pesach is the beginning, while Shavuot is the real climax.

The Netziv comments that a detail in the halachot of the four cups reflects this idea as well. Is one allowed to drink other liquids in between the drinking of the four cups of wine? The Shulchan Aruch (473:3, 479:1) codifies that between the first and second, as well as between the second and third, one can drink other beverages. Between the third and fourth cup though, no drinking is allowed. What is the symbolic reason behind this halacha? The Netziv notes the famous Yerushalmi that parallels the four cups to the four words used to describe G-d’s redeeming us: וְהוֹצֵאתִי וְהִצַּלְתִּי וְגָאַלְתִּי וְלָקַחְתִּי. The first three relate to different stages of the Exodus, while the fourth one, וְלָקַחְתִּי, is a reference to Matan Torah. The Netziv explains that between the third and the fourth cup, which symbolize the Exodus and Matan Torah, one cannot drink anything else. There cannot be a break, lest one think the process is complete. We must remember that the Exodus was stage one of birth while Matan Torah was stage two.

Similarly, why don’t we make a shehechiyanu on the counting of the Omer? Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik explains that inherently, this mitzvah differs from all others, and thus makes shehechiyanu inappropriate. Shehechiyanu is recited to thank G-d for bringing us to a special moment. Counting means that we are not there yet. We are counting towards something, towards a particular moment. The mitzvah of Sefirat HaOmer is to count towards the final stage of our natural birth, the day of Shavuot, acknowledging that until that time, we are not completely Am Yisrael. Thus, making a shehechiyanu at the start of the counting would be inappropriate.

Yes, all it is is a little egg at the end of Maggid, but maybe that egg holds the secret to the entire Seder night, or indeed the entire Pesach-Shavuot season.

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DO I HAVE TO USE KOSHER FOR PESACH MEDICATION?

Saving Lives

When the drugs are intended to save lives, it is clear that the necessary drugs (whether containing non-kosher or non-kosher for Pesach ingredients) should be used. Those who take drugs regularly, for diabetes, high blood pressure, or other potentially life-threatening conditions, should not replace prescribed medication for another drug on Pesach.

Drugs With no Taste

A tasteless medicine is considered to be a food whose taste is flawed. The Rishonim and the Poskim disagree whether chametz with a flawed taste is permitted or forbidden to be eaten on Pesach. The Mishnah Berurah writes that according to all opinions, when it comes to a food that is completely spoiled, there is no prohibition of chametz.

However, the Rishonim disagree about a person who eats scorched chametz, which is not edible. According to the Ran, chametz unfit for a dog to eat is no longer considered chametz and may be consumed. According to the Rosh, eating chametz unfit for eating shows that indeed it is worthy of eating, therefore it is forbidden to eat this type of chametz since upon its consumption it is considered edible chametz.

Nevertheless, many Acharonim say that the person is not interested in the medicine as food but swallows it because of medical need. Thus it is permitted to consume the medicine. There are also other reasons why one can be lenient with tasteless medicines. For example, one just swallows it, which is not considered “the way of eating,” and swallowing may be permitted (Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach).

In reality, most medicines produced in Israel are kosher for Pesach because, (all year round), the alcohol in them is produced from kitniyot (legumes), and in this case there is definitely no concern for the decree against eating kitniyot on Pesach for Ashkenazim. Furthermore, in Israel and in other countries, the starch in drugs is from potatoes rather than wheat.

Practical Halacha

A patient who is not in danger can take any medicine that is not tasty (one who is taking an antibiotic is considered, at the very least, a sick person who is not in danger.) However, Am Yisrael are a holy people and are stringent to check the lists of kosher for Pesach medicines published every year (Tzitz Eliezer, 10:25).

Drugs with a Taste

Medications that have a taste are more problematic because they are edible and often have a pleasant taste. Therefore, those that are not kosher for Pesach should not be used on Pesach (and it is even best to sell them). However, there are reasons to permit medicines with taste (for example, no one eats medicines as food because of their medicinal content, hence they may not even be considered edible), and therefore a baby or child with no alternative medicine can continue to take it on Pesach (certainly in the case of antibiotics). Ideally, you should request kosher for Pesach antibiotics from your doctor.

Vitamins

There are many reasons why vitamins and homeopathic remedies need kosher for Pesach certification: a. Sometimes the active ingredients include chametz. b. Sometimes vitamins include edible ingredients. c. Taking vitamins may be considered a “way of eating” as healthy people also take them. d. The need for vitamins is generally not comparable to the need for drugs. When there is a significant need, one should consult with a rabbi as there may be room for leniency.

Summary

Drugs that have no taste or a bitter taste do not require kashrut for Pesach, but we are generally careful about the kashrut of such medications. Medications taken for diseases that can be potentially life threatening, such as diabetes or high blood pressure, should not be replaced. Medications that have a taste, as well as vitamins or homeopathic remedies, should be kosher for Pesach, although there is room to be lenient when necessary.

May we all enjoy a kosher, happy and healthy Pesach: “I will bring none of these diseases upon you that I brought upon the Egyptians for I am the L-rd that heals you” (Exodus 15:26).

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1 Shulchan Aruch 447, Se’if Katan 97.
2 Shulchan Aruch 442: 9.
3 Rav Moshe Feinstein, Rav Ovadia Yosef, and especially if the medicinal substance is kosher and only the additives are not kosher (Chazon Ish, Moed, 116:8).
4 See Mishna Berurah 453, Se’if Katan 7, for example.

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon is Head of Mizrahi’s Shalhevet Educational Advisory Board, Chairman of the Halacha Education Center
Moshe said to the people: ‘Remember this day on which you departed from Egypt, from the house of bondage, for with a strong hand G-d removed you from here... And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, ‘It is on account of this that G-d did for me when I left Egypt.’ And it will be for you for a sign on your hand and for a remembrance between your eyes – so that G-d’s Torah may be in your mouth for with a strong hand G-d removed you from Egypt. And it shall be when your son will ask you tomorrow, ‘What is this?’ you shall say to him, ‘With a strong hand G-d removed us from Egypt from the house of bondage’...” (Exodus 13:3-16)

Since then, the Exodus from Egypt has been a defining event in our national experience. Every year we remember it on Seder night and in many other mitzvot, passages in our prayers, and in many blessings every day.

Why is Yetziat Mitzrayim such a central motif in our lives? And what does it mean to us?

The Exodus was the first stage in Am Yisrael's formation. For the first time, the Israelites became more than just a family; they became a nation, and received their freedom. Indeed, Pesach was the Jewish people's first “Independence Day.”

However, the Exodus is not only a stage in the physical-existential formation of Am Yisrael, but also an important stage in the connection between the chosen people of Israel and the G-d of Israel. Even more than that, the Exodus teaches us about G-d’s supervision of history – His awesome power and ability to lead the world and to change nature and the course of time. The Ramban explains (Leviticus 13:16) that we should remember this lesson of the Exodus every day of our lives:

"... He commanded us that we should always make a memorial and a sign for what our eyes saw. And we should copy this thing for our children, and their children for their children, until the last generation... and... that we write all that was shown to us of signs and wonders upon our arms and upon our eyes, and also write them at the entrances to our houses in mezuzot. And that we mention it with our mouths, in the morning and in the evening... And so [too], many commandments recalling the Exodus from Egypt are similar to these. And all of it is to be a testimony for us about the wonders, for all generations, so they not be forgotten; and that there be no opening for the heretic to speak and reject faith in G-d. ... And from the great public miracles, a person can acknowledge the hidden miracles, which constitute the foundation of the entire Torah. As a person does not have a share in the Torah of Moshe, our teacher, until we believe that everything, every incident that happens in our lives is all a miracle [and] there is no nature or ‘that’s how the world is,’... whether with regard to the many or to the individual. But rather, if one observes the commandments, his reward will bring him success and if he transgresses them, his punishment will cut him off. Everything is by Heavenly decree...”

Thus, Yetziat Mitzrayim gives us both an existential-national basis and a spiritual-faith basis for our Jewish lives.

In addition, by remembering the Exodus we ignite hope, both as individuals and as a nation. How so?

A person who is in a difficult situation finds it difficult to believe it can be otherwise. However, if he has experienced a turnaround in the past, he will be able to believe it possible to overcome the current crisis and emerge stronger for it.

The Exodus constitutes a fundamental memory of the possibility of exiting from exile to redemption, both on national and private levels.

During 2,000 years of difficult and bitter exile, the people of Israel continued to believe and hoped that redemption would come. This belief was based on the historical memory of the Exodus from Egypt. And on a personal level, when we are in trouble and feel that the situation is hopeless, we too can remember the Exodus, and have faith that even in the darkest and most difficult situations, G-d will save us and deliver us from hardship and pain.

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“Splitting the Sea”
THREE DATING POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. Positive and Open-Minded

A few months ago, two young men visited the YU Connect office. One was already an online member, a frequent event participant, and dating a lovely woman through the volunteerism of an online connector. He had brought in his friend, who had expressed some resistance in joining the program.

As the friend continued to hesitate, he turned to him and said: “If you were in the market for a new job today, chances are you’d do everything in your power to network with past colleagues, close friends, casual acquaintances, etc. You would take advantage of all that technology offers by connecting to professionals suspended in multiple degrees of separation from you and by chasing any possible lead that could help you achieve success. Simply put, you would stop at nothing to land the most suitable job. By contrast, can you imagine applying for a job by saying, ‘I won’t fill out an application, I’ll pass on an interview, you really don’t know anything about me, but please—offer me a job.’”

While comparing the dating atmosphere to a job-hunt may sound a bit crass, the young man did raise some noteworthy points. Yes, the dating years can be a trying time but let us try to be positive and open-minded to the possibilities out there and to maximize opportunities. And if one has a negative experience, which unfortunately does happen, let’s not reject an entire system by saying, “the suggestions I received were so off that I will never accept another suggestion made online,” or “there was no one for me at that event, so I’m done with those.”

2. A Broader Perspective

While many consider it unthinkable to ask about colored tablecloths, disposable dishes or the like when considering a dating partner, too often inquiries are made into matters that have little prognostication for a happy marriage. We often hear things like, “Where does her family spend their vacations?” “Why can’t you suggest someone a few years older, a few months younger or two inches taller?” Why that choice of occupation?” or “I can’t see myself with someone from that community, an alumnus of that post-high-school program in Israel,” or other narrow pronouncements.

Relationship-building experts refer to this as a focus on “form versus substance;” i.e., people place more weight on peripheral, circumstantial or even influential institutions, communities, or experiences rather than evaluating the individual’s unique array of character traits, current values, aspiring goals, dreams and practices, many of which indeed come to life through the dating and marital experience.

3. Be Wary in Dismissing Match Ideas

It is common for a anyone who receives a match suggestion to confer with a mutual friend or acquaintance as to whether the proposed match is a good idea. “Can you see it?” is the colloquial question asked – which we try to discourage, as it assumes the person being asked has special prophetic talents. Yet we all know of happily married couples, whom had they relied solely upon the first ratings of others regarding their compatibility, would never have met.

A mother recently called for assistance. She explained that she was contacted by a college friend about a young girl in her community who was suggested for the caller’s son. Her immediate response was, “I can’t see you being in-laws with her mother.” Valuing her friend’s opinion, the calling mother immediately dismissed the match without asking for any further details.

Examples of other frequent discounting comments we hear are, “don’t bother, their personalities will never match,” or “they won’t be attracted to one another.” I shudder each time I hear these flippan remarks (or see them in texts), wondering about the awesome responsibility we take by withholding match possibilities best assessed by a dating couple themselves.

These scenarios serve as a humble reminder of how careful we must be with our words when asked for our impressions of others.

Nevertheless, whenever I hear, “I never thought I would date or marry someone... younger, older, from that family background or community... yet we have so much in common and are so happy together,” my smile becomes almost as wide as theirs.

(The original, longer article first appeared on the Marcos and Adina Katz YUTorah.org site.)

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Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (in his book Strive for Truth) gathered a number of educational insights that emerge from the Passover Haggadah:

The Pesach Haggadah was compiled by the greatest sages of the Torah so that we could fulfill the mitzvah of ‘You shall tell your son.’ It is therefore possible to learn from it the ways of teaching and educating children.

For example:

1. Teaching through questions and answers.
2. The need for the children to ask questions – so that the babies will ask.
3. Teaching through illustration – this matzah, this maror.
4. Depictions of life – He will always see ... as if he had left Egypt, so that the son can concentrate and look at each detail in its own right, so that he can concentrate and look at each detail in its own right.
5. Dayenu – to detail in small sections so that the son can concentrate and look at each detail in its own right, because a large matter consisting of several parts is difficult to comprehend properly all at once.
6. "לע אהתמחשבה בכם – "all the more so" – to do more than all the parts together to affect the heart. In addition to these six educational elements emerging from the Haggadah format, as enumerated by Rabbi Dessler, we can add two more:
7. Summarizing and emphasizing the main point: whoever did not say these three things on Passah did not fulfill his obligation.

After the lengthy discussion of things, it is important to emphasize the main points.

8. Explanation and connection between the idea and the act: “Pesach [offering] ... why?” “Matzah...why?”

To implement these educational instructions, sensitivity and patience are required for young children’s Seder questions. There are moving stories about great sages who were asked a simple question by a child at the Seder. These wise men did not give a quick, short answer, but took the questions seriously, sat down, opened books and answered calmly.

Chazal told us that if there were no young children at the Seder, the adults should ask themselves, using the text of the Haggadah. How could Chazal establish the same text for children, adults and even scholars? Why should a scholar ask himself and give himself a ‘childish’ answer?

Rav Dessler answered: The mitzvah of the night is to recall the truth of the Exodus from Egypt to the heart. If the mind is the scholar, the heart is the simple person and has some childishness about it. The internalization of truth to the heart requires the same language and style as the language and style with which we explain to a child.

The work of Pesach night is not merely intellectual. It is reasonable to assume that one who reads the Haggadah every year and studies the interpretations and commentaries will not discover intellectual innovations when he rereads it (unless he is reading new interpretations of the Haggadah).

So what is our task at the Seder?

Our efforts must be directed toward the “heart,” the experiential dimension, the deep-hearted feeling. This is the work of internalization. Specifically, by using simple words in a simple style, without over-sophistication, we can penetrate the heart, the hearts of each and every person, child or adult, sitting around the table, however smart they are.

Rav Dessler’s words, “the heart is the simple person and has some childishness about it” are fascinating.

One’s level of knowledge is not a guarantee of a wise and mature heart. Higher IQ does not guarantee high emotional intelligence. There are those who deepen their faith and acquire great knowledge, but have no refined emotional feeling and lack a sense of simple gratitude toward G-d. Touching simple, almost childish points may open the gates of the heart and connect the entire person (and not only the mind) to the faith in G-d emanating from the Exodus.

This explains why some of the great Jewish scholars were not involved with deep sophistication and great innovations during the reading of the Haggadah on the Seder night, but simply read the Haggadah and incorporated explanations in plain and clear language understood by all members of the household. Only during the meal did they go into more depth.

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Together or separate? The Sages disagreed on how one should eat the *matzah* and *maror* at the Passover Seder.

The Talmud in Berachot 49a admonishes us not to perform mitzvot ‘bundled together.’ We do not want to give the impression that mitzvot are an unwanted burden, an obligation to discharge as quickly as possible. Thus the majority opinion is that the two mitzvot of eating *matzah* and *maror* should be performed separately.

Hillel’s custom was to place the *Pesach* offering and the *maror* inside the *matzah* and eat them together like a sandwich. Why?

**Matzah and Freedom**

To understand Hillel’s opinion, we must first examine the significance of *matzah* and *maror*. *Matzah* is a symbol of freedom. True freedom means the opportunity to grow and develop according to one’s inner nature and natural gifts, without interference or coercion from outside influences. This freedom is symbolized by *matzah*, a simple food consisting solely of flour and water, unaffected by other ingredients and chemical processes.

To form the Jewish people as a holy nation, their national character needed to be independent of all foreign influences. They left Egypt free from the spiritual baggage of Egyptian culture. Thus, in preparation of bringing the Passover offering, they were commanded to “draw out and take for yourselves sheep” (Exodus 12:21). What does it mean to ‘draw out’? The Midrash explains that they needed to remove any affinity to Egyptian idolatry from within themselves.

With a clean slate, lacking any national character of their own, a holy character could then be imprinted on Israel’s national soul. This is part of the *matzah* metaphor: it lacks any shape and taste of its own, so that the desired form and flavor may be properly imposed upon it.

**The Message of Maror**

*Maror* is the opposite of *matzah*; its bitterness is a symbol of servitude. But even servitude may have a positive value. An individual wants to become a doctor must spend many years in medical school to achieve this goal. The long years of concentrated effort require great dedication and discipline. These years are a form of servitude, but a servitude that advances one’s final goal, and thus is ultimately a true expression of freedom.

This idea may also be applied to the Jewish people. Our souls are ingrained with a Divine nature, but we suffer from character imperfections that prevent us from realizing our inner nature. For this reason we accept upon ourselves a pleasant form of servitude, the service of G-d. We acquired this ability in Egypt. This is slavery’s positive contribution — it teaches one to accept the deferment of immediate desires and short-term goals.

This is the central message of *maror*: acceptance of life’s bitter aspects, with the knowledge that this resolve will allow us to attain higher objectives. For this reason, we eat the *maror* only after eating the *matzah* — only after we have clarified our ultimate goals.

**Discipline and Freedom**

Now we may better understand the disagreement between Hillel and the other sages. Freedom, as symbolized by *matzah*, reveals the inherent holiness of Israel and our natural love for G-d and Torah. This innate character enables us to overcome desires that do not concur with our elevated goals. It is through our persistence and dedication to the overall goal that we reveal our inner resources of freedom.

Both of these traits, freedom and servitude, need to be free to act without interference from one another. When a spirit of freedom and independence is appropriate, it should not be constrained by a servile attitude; and when discipline and a sense of duty are needed, they should not be disrupted by a desire for freedom. Thus, according to the majority opinion, we should eat *matzah* and *maror* separately, indicating that each trait should be expressed to its fullest.

However, the ultimate goal is attained only when we recognize that these two forces do not contradict one another. Together they present the highest freedom, whose nobility and power is fully revealed when it wears the crown of lofty servitude — the service of the Holy King, a service that is freedom in its purest state.

Thus Hillel would eat *matzah* and *maror* together. He sought to emphasize that freedom and slavery are not contradictory concepts. Generally, the quality of servitude belongs more to the preparatory stage; but in the overall picture, the two forces are interrelated, complementing one another to attain the final goal.

*(Silver from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Olat Re’iyah vol. II, pp. 287-289)*

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The expression כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד, “as one person with one heart,” appears in Rashi’s comment to the verse וַיִּחַן שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגֶּד הָהָר, “and Israel encamped there by the mountain” (Exodus 19:2).

The famous question is why did the Torah use the singular וַיִּחַן and not the plural וָיַחֲנוּ? Rashi explains that through their 40 years in the desert, Bnei Yisrael had arguments, differences of opinion, and objections to their leadership. But here, as they stand by Mount Sinai, ready to receive the Torah, they are united, as one person with one heart.

Interestingly, this expression does not appear in the Mishna, the Talmud or the Midrash. It is a phrase coined by Rashi that he indeed uses again, slightly differently, in another context.

As the Jews are fleeing Egypt and approaching the Red Sea, the verse says: וְפָרָעֹה הִקְרִיב... וְהִנֵּה מִצְרַיִם נָסַע אַחֲרֵיהֶם, “and Pharaoh drew near and behold Egypt was traveling after them” (Exodus 14:10). Again, the word traveling, is in the singular, and if Pharaoh and the Egyptians are chasing it should say נָסְעוּ in the plural. Again, Rashi comments בְּלֵב אֶחָד כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד – the Egyptians were united in their pursuit of the Jews.

But why did Rashi reverse the words here? Firstchein אֶחָד בְּלֵב and then אֶחָד כְּאִישׁ? The Avnei Nezer answers that Am Yisrael, by its very nature, is כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד. “All of Israel are responsible for one another.” The Ba’al HaTanya adds – when explaining the reason for the mitzvah of “And you shall love your neighbor as yourself” – that Am Yisrael is one soul divided into many bodies. It is just that the differences of opinion, the arguments and the complaints cause us not to be of one heart. It was only at Mount Sinai that we reached the ideal situation, in which we were of one heart as well.

It was different with the Egyptians. They are not “as one person.” When they were chasing Bnei Yisrael they had a mutual goal, which united them – as one heart – and so for that moment they became as one person to achieve their aim.

Nowadays, in the age of our small global village, in which assimilation and intermarriage rates are high and increasing, and many young Jews are leaving the fold and the tradition of their ancestors, Seder night is an opportunity for community heads, spiritual leaders and of course parents, to strengthen the Jewish family unit around the world, “as one person with one heart.”

The Center for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora in the World Zionist Organization, based in Jerusalem, is in close and constant contact with rabbis in hundreds of communities all over the world, with the aim of helping to strengthen Jewish-Zionist identity, particularly among the youth. In addition, the center’s aim is to nurture the relationship with the State of Israel and emphasize its centrality to Jewish life in the Diaspora.

This activity occurs in many different ways, one of which is through educational material, including a Children’s Haggadah translated into 22 languages! The purpose of the Haggadah is to bring the Pesach story to life for children and to allow them to feel part of the evening’s proceedings and to follow the reading in their own language.

The Center for Religious Affairs also runs seminars for rabbis, encouraging leaders from small and distant communities to become familiar with the latest halachic and educational developments and solutions, as well as enriching their knowledge and toolbox. And we also organize an annual world Jewish leaders’ convention in Jerusalem attended by community rabbis from over 40 countries.

Engaged in many projects on a daily basis all year round, our people work on the assumption that the Jewish holidays are the strongest opportunity for reinforcing the connection between Diaspora Jewry and Jewish tradition, and for nurturing unity and solidarity with the State of Israel and with Jews all over the world, “as one person with one heart.”

1 Rabbi Avraham Bornstein, the Sokatchover Rebbe (1838-1910).
2 Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the first Lubavitcher Rebbe (1745-1813).

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In every generation, we must see ourselves as if we, personally, experienced the Exodus.

One of the most iconic and dramatic elements of the Exodus is the 10 Plagues. They begin with the first plague, presaging what was to come, as all the water in Egypt turns to blood; and they end with the death of the firstborn, a fitting, final response to the hardships laid upon the Jewish nation, the firstborn of G-d. These miraculous events occur over the course of a year and result in Pharaoh finally agreeing to let the Israelites go.

The question has often been asked: Why specifically 10 plagues? Could G-d not have extricated His people via one mighty, devastating jolt that would have shaken Egypt to its core? To answer that question, we must first address another issue: for whom, exactly, were these plagues intended?

The classic response is that G-d brought these acts, which continually accelerated in scope and intensity, primarily to punish the Egyptians for their cruel behavior, in a measure for measure fashion. The Egyptians did not allow us to bathe, causing us to develop lice, and so they, too, would suffer this same indignity; they made us work in the boiling sun, and so they developed boils. And on and on. The plagues were also designed to show Pharaoh – a self-proclaimed deity – just who was boss, at the same time affording him the ongoing opportunity to change his mind and make the morally-proper decision to acknowledge the inhumanity of enslaving fellow human beings and release the Hebrews from bondage.

From this point of view, the plagues were directed solely towards Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

But there is another intriguing viewpoint: that these blows (the literal translation of the word makot) while of course impacting upon the Egyptians, were designed first and foremost for their effect upon us, the Jewish people.

Consider: during our more than a century as slaves, we had been subjected to every possible abuse. We had been tortured, demonized, de-humanized, murdered. We had been cruelly cast down to the lowest rung of the social order. Once a proud, pre-eminent nation that was respected – even feared – by our neighbors, our sense of self-esteem and self-confidence had reached its lowest ebb, and all but vanished. How could we be restored, physically as well as in our own psyches, back to our former glory as G-d’s Chosen?

As G-d performed miracle after miracle, manipulating Nature in our honor and for our sole benefit, we gradually came to acknowledge not only His awesome power, but also our own unique ability to elicit an unparalleled Divine response. In a kind of 10-Step process, our faith in ourselves was slowly but surely restored, a faith that affirmed we were destined to become a great nation and a light unto the world.

Fast-forward 3,330 years to our present day. Just 75 years ago, we were once again a broken people. The Holocaust had decimated not only our numbers, but also our view of the future. How could we go on after such a monumental calamity? We felt abandoned, forsaken, the unwanted stepchild of the universe. Even those Jewish communities that had not personally suffered in the Holocaust were in a state of shock, deeply traumatized by the persecution and powerlessness we had endured.

Then, step-by-step, miracle by miracle, we were again raised from our melancholy and rehabilitated to our former selves. Our shocking victory in the War of Independence – which virtually no expert gave us a chance to win – set in motion a chain of remarkable events that has turned history on its head. The Six-Day War; our brilliant comeback in the Yom Kippur War; the ingathering of our exiles; the repulsion of numerous Arab and Palestinian attempts to subdue us through acts of terror; the emergence of Israel as an economic power and world leader in technology, all combined to rapidly restore our self-respect and national pride. No amount of rational, scientific theory can logically explain how a nation so divided and down on its fate could so rapidly reclaim its rightful honor and buoyant hope for the future.

And so, if ever there was an opportunity to relate to and revisit the events of the Exodus – as the Haggadah bids us to do – it is in this generation, which is blessed with the flowering of the State of Israel. G-d, it seems abundantly clear, is unequivocally a Zionist.

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Annual polls indicate that over 95% of the Israeli public celebrate Seder night in one form or another. And given that only 51% define themselves as religious or traditional, this figure is astonishing.

Why is this?

Well, beyond the many virtues of Pesach, it would appear that one advantage or attraction stands out above the rest: Seder night is the night of family.

Judaism did not introduce the concept of family into the world, but family means the world to Judaism. There seems to be no better incubator for human cubs. No better glasshouse for nurturing individuals, and no better building block for constructing a cooperative and just society.

I would even go further and suggest that our ability to repair the world, to live with a sense of responsibility to others, and to implement most of the great ambitions of the individual, the community, and the nation, all stem from our family roots.

Judaism is undeniably family centric. From our Matriarchs and Patriarchs down through the generations; from individuals, to families, to a nation of families, the Jewish family has been the main font of strength, education, continuity and character for millennia.

The family is also the main arena for religious life, with parental obligations, yet with a most grateful commitment to honoring parents. Parents are obligated to invest in their children’s education, and to share regular yet special family time around the Shabbat table, holidays and particularly Seder night itself.

On the other hand, some would say that bringing a child into this world is almost an act of cruelty, an egotistical option for parental self-realization. In contrast, the ethos of the Jewish family is that one who believes, sows. Jewish parents begin a family with faith in goodness, with dreams of building a house in which both human beings and the Divine Presence can dwell in harmony. On a deeper level, we realize that upon starting a family we are entering into a partnership with G-d to make the world a better place.

Beyond any particular halacha or custom, there is a clear Jewish voice directed at both men and women: develop the world, learn Torah, be creative and innovative and benevolent, and yet when all is told, your family is probably the most important thing you’ll ever create.

That said, what is happening all around us today? Much has been proclaimed about traditional family structures and values crumbling in the modern world. Individualism, pluralism, and the variety of new ‘family’ configurations, plus growing divorce rates, dwindling birth rates, children born out of wedlock, and more are all cited as causes. The cute and familiar drawing of a child depicting his or her family as a robust and stable unit – father-mother-children – is fast becoming an exception in many places.

But let us take a step back for a moment. When writing about the family as the basis of all, I fear I might hurt those who did not grow up in a supportive family, or those longing to establish a family who have not yet fulfilled their dream. I am afraid to upset those whose circumstances led them to establish family units that differ from the classic Jewish model. There is room for sensitivity to others whose lifestyle differs from mine. However, my call here is not to give up on the aspiration, on the great vision of family. Not to let go of the understanding that family is a treasure and a destiny, the well-planted, well-watered root from which everything grows.

True, building a family requires effort, emotional investment, time, delaying gratification, concessions, and a clear set of priorities (because no one on their deathbed ever regretted not spending more time in the office).

These are choices that require patience for deep, complex processes instead of click-quick addictions to excitement, and trust in our ability, together, to form a stable, healthy and long-term entity that is greater than the sum of its parts (each of which is invaluable).

The Torah requires each family to eat the Korban Pesach together in one house. This is meant to elevate the home and to emphasize the centrality of the home and the family in the life of the individual. Nowadays, Seder night, the night of “and you shall tell your children,” unites all the members of the household around one table. This is the night we are reminded of our shared past and mutual destiny. This is the night the Jewish nation was born, family by family.
Seder Companion 5779

Short Ideas, Insights and Stories to Enhance and Enrich Your Seder
**INTRODUCTION**

**Being in the Moment**  
Rabbi Johnny Solomon

The focus of Seder night is our relationship with time—how we can use the present to reflect on the past to shape our future.

To reach this state, it is necessary for us to be 'in the moment' of Seder night, or as Rav Soloveitchik explains, ‘to connect retrospection with anticipation, memory with expectation, hind view with foresight, one must cherish the present fleeting moment as if it represented eternity’ (Noraot HaRav Vol. 4 pp. 153-4).

By cherishing the moments of Seder night, we can achieve true freedom by recognizing that the greatest gift we have at any moment... is that very moment.

So make sure that wherever you are for Seder night, don’t just bring a present, but actually be in the present, so that you cherish the moment of being with those you love, as if it represented eternity.

**Kadesh**

**Why is This Kiddush Different?**  
Rabbi Alex Israel

A slave’s time is not his own. He is at his master's beck and call. Even when the slave has a pressing personal engagement, his taskmaster’s needs will take priority.

In contrast, freedom is the control of our time.

Kiddush says this out loud. We sanctify the day and define its meaning! We proclaim this day as significant, holy and meaningful. We fashion time, claim ownership of it, and fashion it as a potent contact point with G-d, peoplehood and tradition. This is a quintessential act of Jewish freedom.

**Four Cups – Four Mothers**  
Rabbi Yishayahu Halevi Horowitz  
(Shla HaKadosh)

Cup 1: Sarah Imeinu, who with Avraham brought many people closer to G-d and Judaism. We make kiddush on this cup and say “Who chose us from every other people.”

Cup 2: Rivka Imeinu, who reached great spiritual heights, despite coming from a family of idol worshipers. On this cup we recite the Haggadah passages dealing with Lavan (Rivka’s father) and Ya’akov.

Cup 3: Rachel Imeinu. We pour it at the end of the meal and say Birkat HaMazon. It was Yosef, Rachel’s son, who provided food for the whole of Egypt.

Cup 4: Leah Imeinu, who was the first to thank G-d when she gave birth to Yehuda: “This time I will thank G-d” (Genesis 29:35).

**Urchatz**

**A Night of Possibility**  
Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

“On Passover, Jews are commanded to tell the story of the Exodus and to see ourselves as having lived through that story, so that we may better learn how to live our lives today. The stories we tell our children shape what they believe to be possible.”

**Karpas**

**Are We Really Free?**  
Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

A child once complained to me, “I feel like a slave on Seder night!”

“Do you work hard to prepare for the Seder?” I asked him.

“No. I go on hikes with my friends.”

“So what’s so hard?” I replied.

“We eat a bite of karpas, and then we have to go hungry for ages until the meal! I really feel like a slave!”
So I said to him, “So why don’t you just get up and go to the kitchen to eat something?”

“But it’s forbidden to eat anything before the Seder!”

“That’s what a free person is!” I told him. “You don’t eat not because you can’t eat but because you understand that the Halacha doesn’t want you to eat!”

A free person is able to wait for a meal even when he or she is starving. A free person knows they should first express gratitude to G-d and tell the story of the Exodus. A free person can delay instant gratification!

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**Yachatz**

*The Mayflower*

David Ben-Gurion, speaking to the UN commission on the Partition of Palestine in 1947

300 years ago a ship called the Mayflower set sail to the New World. This was a great event in the history of England. Yet I wonder if there is one Englishman who knows at what time the ship set sail? Do the English know how many people embarked on the voyage? What quality of bread did they eat? Yet more than 3,300 years ago, before the Mayflower set sail, the Jews left Egypt. Every Jew in the world, even in America or Soviet Russia, knows what kind of bread the Jews ate – matzah. Even today Jews worldwide eat matzah on the 15th of Nisan. They retell the story of the Exodus and all of the troubles Jews have endured since being exiled, saying: This year, slaves, next year, free! This year here – Next year in Jerusalem, in Zion, in Eretz Yisrael. That is the nature of the Jews.

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**Maggid**

*Ha Lachma Anya*

Rav Reuven Taragin

**Ha Lachma Anya** ends with an expression of confidence that the Redemption will occur within the next year. We describe two independent aspects of Redemption – that we will be in Eretz Yisrael and that we will be bnei chorin (free).

This duality teaches us that one is possible without the other and that each is independently significant. We should therefore greatly appreciate the privilege to be able to visit, live and conduct a Seder in Eretz Yisrael.

But are we free? "No-one is considered a free person apart from one who occupies himself with Torah" (Avot 6:2) – true freedom can only be achieved when a person frees themselves from foreign influences and knows who they truly are, who they are meant to be, and how they intend to get there.

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**Holy is Here**

Rabbi Michi Yosefi

**Moshe sees the** Burning Bush and hears the famous words “Take your shoes off your feet, because the place upon which you stand is holy soil” (Exodus 3:5).

This verse teaches us that we do not need to travel far away to undergo a process of change. On the contrary:

“Take off your shoes” – remove whatever is holding you back.

“From your feet” – from your habits.

“Because the place upon which you stand is holy soil” – the place you are at the moment can become holy.

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**Observing with Empathy**

Dr. David Pelcovitz

As Moshe Rabbeinu grows up, the Torah tells us, וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל בְּסִבְלֹתָם (וַיַּרְא), “And Moshe grew up and went out to his brethren and observed their burdens” (Exodus 2:11). Rav Chaim Shmulevitz notes that the verse uses the verb “see” וַיַּרְא – to connote how Moshe empathized with his fellow brethren. Rav Chaim explains that empathy is developed through vision and face-to-face contact.

Along these lines, research has proven something fascinating. When a person performs a movement, such as moving his hands, there is a very specific motor neuron that fires in the prefrontal cortex of the brain specifically designed for this movement. Research has shown that when an outsider sees the movements, the same motor neuron activity occurs in the viewer’s head. Observing the body language of one person triggers an identical reaction in the observer. This specific activated neuron is called the “mirror neuron.”

When a person makes eye contact with another the mirror neuron is activated. This is what Moshe experienced when looking at the Jews in Egypt. He closely and carefully looked at their suffering and took their pain to heart. It is therefore most important that parents and children give their undivided attention to each other and make eye contact when attempting to efficiently communicate and emotionally empathize with each other’s feelings.

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**My Narrow Prison**

Viktor Frankl

The Hebrew word מִצְרַיִם means a tight spot or a narrow strait where we feel “boxed in.”

One day, a few days after the liberation, I walked through the country past flowering meadows, for miles and miles, toward the market town near the camp. Larks rose to the sky and I could hear their joyous song.
There was no-one to be seen for miles around; there was nothing but the wide earth and sky and the larks’ jubilation and the freedom of space.

I stopped, looked around, and up to the sky – and then I went down on my knees. At that moment there was very little I knew of myself or of the world – I had but one sentence in mind, always the same: “I called to the L-rd from my narrow prison and G-d answered me in the freedom of space.” (Psalms 118:5).

How long I knelt there and repeated this sentence, memory can no longer recall. But I know that on that day, in that hour, my new life started. Step for step I progressed, until I again became a human being.

**Inscribe the Story on the Hearts of our Children**
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

**The Central Mitzvah** of the Seder is to tell the story of leaving Egypt, סיפור יציאת מצרים, story, is related to the word סופר, scribe, or ספר, which means a scroll or a book.

This suggests that a scribe who writes a scroll produces something permanent, something that will last for generations.

On Seder night, parents are the scribes, “writing an everlasting scroll.” Our children are the scrolls upon which we etch the beauty of this night for generations.

**Avadim Hayinu: Real Freedom**
Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook

**REAL FREEDOM is** that noble spirit by which the individual and indeed the whole people are elevated to become loyal to their inner essential self, to the image of G-d within them. Through this characteristic they can perceive their lives as purposeful and worthy of value.

This is not true regarding people with the spirit of a slave – the content of their lives and their feelings attuned to the characteristics of their essential self, but rather to what is considered beautiful and good by others. They are ruled by all sorts of constraints, whether they be formal or moral.

**And You Shall Tell it To Your Children**
Miriam Peretz

When every family is sitting around the Seder table telling the history of our people, I will be sitting with my son, Eliraz’s, four children. Deputy Commander of the 12th Battalion of the Golani Brigade, he fell in battle in Gaza three days before Seder night...

It won’t be his father telling the story to his children but their grandmother, telling her grandchildren about our family Haggadah. I’ll tell them about the father they barely knew (the eldest was six when he died); I’ll tell them the stories I told to Eliraz, about the yearning for Eretz Yisrael in Morocco, from where the family made aliyah, about the excitement when we said לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם, about the desire to be a free people in our Land... and about the heavy price our family paid to realize this dream...

And I will tell them that their uncle Uriel, Eliraz’s brother, fell in Lebanon 12 years before their father fell in Gaza, and that they and all the other soldiers are the continuation of the generation who left Egypt. With their own bodies, they chose to defend their right and the right of future generations to live lives of freedom in their own country. And because of them and others we are sitting at our Seder table tonight.

And so we entwine my family’s story with the story of our people.

And we embrace life.

**The Wicked Son – “What is This Service to You?”**
Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein

In exile, the commandments were necessary for the purposes of creating a national identity and uniqueness that would protect us from assimilation, but why must they still be observed now that we are in Eretz Yisrael?

The question implies a desire to abandon the mitzvot, because – as the questioner sees it – these are necessary only for an external reason, to create a nation consolidated around something. Now we have returned to our homeland, the mitzvot are no longer necessary.
The parents’ answer relates to the commandment of “Pesach dorot,” the Pesach sacrifice brought in future generations.

We tell our children that there is room for innovation and change where necessary, in accordance with a changing reality; the commandment of the Pesach sacrifice symbolizes this change.

Change is indeed essential, but only on condition that it is undertaken with complete commitment to Halacha and its obligations, rather than out of a desire to cast away or to submit oneself to fashionable philosophies.

**Four Sons As One**  
Dr. Tova Ganzel

**All of us** have parts of these four sons within us, and on Seder night we have a special opportunity to connect to our own complex identities, to receive different and changing answers, to be both spectators and participants, to receive a short or a detailed answer, all simultaneously. And to internalize that the different sons are all part of each one of us. There is really no clear distinction between them, because the Torah was given to all... of us.

**10 Plagues**  
Rabbi Stewart Weiss

**The 10 Plagues** represent a breakdown of all the barriers. Suddenly, stunningly, Nature does not “follow the rules.” The water turns into blood, animals encroach upon humans, the sun ceases to shine, fire and ice co-exist. All this and more serve to demonstrate to us that as a people, as a cohesive nation of Yisrael – rather than just a collection of individuals – we can do anything. There are no boundaries. This is the timeless lesson for us all.

If we ever doubted this lesson, just look at what the State of Israel – badgered, beleaguered and bad-mouthed as it is – has accomplished in its short history: We are one of the world’s great democracies with a stunning economy and awesome military – lately judged the eighth most powerful country in the world – with more Jews studying Torah than at any time in the last 2,000 years. And, b’ezrat Hashem – we are not done yet!

**Reaching Higher**  
The Lubavitcher Rebbe

“**AND IT CAME** to pass at midnight” – the darkest moment in the daily cycle symbolizes a situation in which a person is stuck in the darkness of the world. Even such a person has the strength to “go out of Egypt” and continue on. It is possible to leave the darkest situation and become a free person.

In contrast, midday is the brightest moment of the daily cycle and symbolizes the brightest parts of a person’s life. However, even those people have to “go out of Egypt” and realize that their current situation, however good, is considered to be slavery when compared to even higher levels they should still be striving to reach.

**Second Thoughts**  
Rabbi Berel Wein

**Pharaoh has second thoughts** about freeing the Jewish people and is determined to revert once again to tyranny and murder in order to ‘correct’ his previous error.

The Torah teaches us here that our second thoughts in life reveal to a great extent who we are and what path in life we wish to pursue. We are often forced to do good things because of social pressures and other unholy motives. When these disappear so does our desire to do good. And the same is true in the opposite vein.

Sometimes we are forced to do things that are really repugnant to us because of outside pressures we cannot control. But we regret having done so because our inner self only desires good and a sincere attachment to G-d and His Torah.

**Seeing G-d’s Hand in Everything**  
Mrs. Shira Smiles

בנני ישראל הלכו ביבשה ושבו ים (and the Children of Israel walked on the dry land in the middle of the sea). Why does the verse include both “on the dry land” and “in the middle of the sea?”

Doesn’t one phrase suffice? Rabbi Elimelech of Lizenshke explains that these phrases represent different ideas. “On the dry land” symbolizes this physical world and the natural course of events. “In the middle of the sea” symbolizes a fantastic, openly miraculous event like the Splitting of the Sea.

A deeper understanding is that Bnei Yisrael grasped parallel levels of G-d’s greatness in the natural (on dry land) and the supernatural (in the sea); the mundane and the miraculous were equally awesome in their eyes.

The Slonimer Rebbe explains that many people are aware of G-d’s direct intervention in their lives only when they experience open miracles. But at that time, Bnei Yisrael saw the Hand of G-d in everything. Our goal is to reach that level now.
**Never Give Up Hope**  
Sara Yocheved Rigler

**G-d, the Author** of nature, is not restricted by nature. If you believe in the authority of nature, you are bound by cause and effect, but if you believe in G-d, no situation, no diagnosis, no military threat is beyond G-d’s control. There is no room for hopelessness and despair in a G-d-run world. As our Sages said, “Salvation can come in the blink of an eye.” Their proof is the Exodus from Egypt.

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**A Modern Dayeinu**  
Rabbi Doron Perez

**If G-d had** brought us back to the Land of Israel  
But not given us a sovereign state  
**Dayeinu, it would have been enough**

If G-d had given us a sovereign state and allowed us a taste of freedom and dignity for but a moment  
But we would have lost the War of Independence  
**Dayeinu, it would have been enough**

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If G-d had helped us be victorious in the War of Independence  
But we would not have succeeded in building a viable country  
**Dayeinu, it would have been enough**

If G-d had helped us build a viable country  
But not brought back hundreds of thousands of Jews from Sephardic and Yemenite backgrounds  
**Dayeinu, it would have been enough**

If G-d had allowed us to win the Six-Day War  
But not given us the ancient biblical sites of Chevron, Beit El, Shiloh, as well as the Golan Heights  
**Dayeinu, it would have been enough**

If G-d had given us Hevron, Beit El, Shiloh and the Golan Heights  
But not allowed us to return to the Old City of Yerushalayim  
**Dayeinu, it would have been enough**

If G-d had allowed us to liberate the Old City of Jerusalem  
But not allowed us to rebuild her ruins  
**Dayeinu, it would have been enough**

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If G-d had allowed us to rebuild His Old City  
But not made Jerusalem into Israel’s largest city with a population of over 800,000 people  
**Dayeinu, it would have been enough**

If G-d had made Jerusalem Israel’s largest city with a population of over 800,000 people  
But not allowed us to live with dignity in secure borders  
**Dayeinu, it would have been enough**

If G-d had allowed us to live in secure borders  
But not created a strong and sustainable economy  
**Dayeinu, it would have been enough**

If G-d had built for us a strong and sustainable economy  
But not ingathered the exiles from almost 100 countries  
**Dayeinu, it would have been enough**

If G-d had ingathered the exiles from almost 100 countries
But not allowed us to rebuild the Torah world in Israel with well over 100,000 men and women studying Torah full-time, perhaps the most in Jewish history

Dayeinu, it would have been enough

If G-d had rebuilt the Yeshiva and Torah world

But not produced so many outstanding Torah scholars and leaders

Dayeinu, it would have been enough

If G-d had produced so many outstanding Torah scholars and leaders

But not opened the gates of freedom to the oppressed Russian and Ethiopian Jews

Dayeinu, it would have been enough

If G-d had opened the gates of freedom to the oppressed Russian and Ethiopian Jews

But not made Israel the country with largest amount of Jews for the first time in over 2,500 years

Dayeinu, it would have been enough

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**RACHTZA  דנה דניא**

**A Story Before the Meal Seder in Siberia**

Rabbi Yosef Mendelovich

I managed to pull a Seder together in my last year in Christopol prison, where I was kept in a dark dank cell for three years, for the “crime” of having observed Shabbat. I told Hillel, my cell mate, that we should hold a Seder, but Hillel was skeptical considering the dangers and difficulties, and left me alone to try and scrounge the required foods.

I had a small postcard with a picture of a Seder plate from the Israel Museum, which was not confiscated because it had nothing written on it. Thanks to that picture I knew what I needed.

And then the miracles began to happen...

Everything I needed came to me. It started when a flu epidemic began spreading around the prison, and the jail’s administration gave each prisoner an onion for their health. I put it in water to get green sprouts I could use for maror.

Next up was matzah, and I was fortunately allowed to receive two pounds of bread. My sisters had sent me matzah from Israel, but it arrived in small pieces because the guards thought it contained a secret message.

My father had sent me raisins, so I collected the sugar doled out to the prisoners and put it in a jar with the raisins and water, hiding it by a hot water pipe under my bed in the hope it would ferment and become wine.

But that wasn’t all. I found herbs growing under the asphalt in the exercise yard. I took those small leaves breaking through the hard asphalt to be a symbol of freedom, and saved them for my karpas.

Shankbone? That was a little harder! But I did have some chicken soup-flavored cubes sent to me by people from Kibbutz Yavne in Israel.

Finally, I asked my guards for a copy of the Pravda Communist propaganda paper, which I used to craft a seder plate.

I surprised Hillel with the ingredients I had assembled. The raisins had turned to wine, and Hillel had his first Seder.

And the next morning yet another miracle occurred. They took Hillel out of our cell. I thought they were just transferring him elsewhere but Natan Sharansky later told me that he had been released with other friends, and was already in Israel.

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**MOTZI MATZAH  דנין קבין**

**The Blessing Over Chametz in Bergen-Belsen**

**Before eating chametz** in the concentration camp seder, Jews recited a special prayer:

“Our Father in Heaven! It is well-known to you that we desire to follow Your will and celebrate Pesach with matzah, strictly avoiding chametz. Yet our hearts are pained that the enslavement prevents us from doing so for our lives are in danger.
We are here, ready to observe the positive commandment of ‘living by Your laws’ (Leviticus 18:5), and not dying by them. We must take care not to violate the negative commandment, ‘beware and guard yourself well,’ lest we endanger our lives. Therefore, our prayer to You is to preserve our lives and redeem us quickly, so that we may observe Your Will and serve You wholeheartedly. Amen.”

**Maror**

**Benefits of Bitterness**  
Rabbi Nachman of Breslov

A Jew and a non-Jew were traveling together on business, and they’d lost all of their money.

Said the Jew: “I have an idea! It’s Passover Eve. Let’s go to the synagogue and I’m sure someone will invite us home for the Seder. I’ll explain to you what it’s all about and teach you what to do so you’ll know how to behave.”

With nothing to lose and very hungry, the non-Jew agreed. And indeed, they were both invited, but to two different homes!

The non-Jew’s host took him to his large, warm and beautiful home, and his guest, who was starving by this time, eagerly awaited the first course.

They sit around the table, and the wife serves a lettuce leaf in saltwater...

The non-Jew was a little disappointed, to say the least.

Meanwhile, the family reads the Haggadah, sings the songs until finally, two hours later... it’s time for the matzah!

The non-Jew was happy now because his friend had told him that meant the meal was on hand...

So he took a very generous helping of the first food on the table... maror!

As his throat was burning and his eyes watering, he thought his host was making fun of him. Angry, he jumped up from his chair and shouted: “You Jews! After all that waiting, this is what you eat?! And left the house, slamming the door behind him.

Later that night, his friend arrived back, happy and satiated from his sumptuous meal. Seeing his friend’s bitter face, he asked him what had happened. When he heard the story, he laughed out loud:

“If you were a Jew you would understand that to enjoy anything good in life, you have to eat a little maror first...”

**Korech**

**Hillel’s Sandwich**  
Rabbi Shimon Apisdorf

**Take a look** at yourself. Isn’t there something within you – an angelic core – that inclines toward the spiritual? Toward that which transcends the mundanity of the corporeal? A portion of your being which yearns to dispense with its preoccupation with food, sleep, and comfort. To free itself to pursue the eternal and not the transitory. To experience that which is intensely meaningful and not fleeting or petty.

Now look again. Is there not a part of you that longs to spend endless sun-massaged days on a quiet beach? Chilled beverages at your side, CDs playing your favorite music, the Sunday paper... and drift away... from all your cares, worries and responsibilities.

This is us. A not-always-so-harmonious blend of spiritual and physical.

One moment selflessly seeking to better the lot of all mankind, the next in a huff over the pizza delivered without extra cheese.

This is all of us. It is the conundrum of our existence and the dynamic to which the matzah and maror allude.

**Shulchan Orech**

**The Secret to a Happy Home**  
Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi

The Alshich notes that the words מִשְׁפָּחָה (family) and שִׁמְחָה (happiness) share just about the same letters. The only difference is the letter peh פ, cognate to the word פֶּה (mouth). Through expressing kind, encouraging and uplifting words to one’s spouse and children happiness is infused into the home. The mouth פֶּה (a talking mouth) is the key to a happy home.
Why Not Drink the Fifth Cup?
Rabbi Shimshon Nadel

The four cups of wine we drink at the Seder correspond to the four expressions of Redemption found in Exodus 6:6-7.

But there is also a fifth expression: “And I shall bring you to the Land...” (Exodus 6:8).

So why don’t we drink a fifth cup of wine?

According to Da’at Zekeinim (Exodus 12:8), the fifth expression, “And I will bring you to the Land,” is the basis for the other four. It does not require its own cup of wine, as all the other expressions are predicated upon it. G-d took us out of Egypt to give us a Torah and bring us to the Land of Israel. Da’at Zekeinim asks, “Had G-d not brought them into the Land of Israel, what was the purpose for taking them out of Egypt?”

The gift of the Land of Israel represents the deep bond between G-d and His people. It is so fundamental it need not be expressed through its own cup of wine.

So you know what I say to G-d? Right now, everything is so good, I don’t want anything to do with hatred, with war. Please Hashem, You do it. I just want to be with You, and to sing Hallel.”

The Power of Story
Elie Wiesel

When the Jews were being mistreated, the great Baal Shem Tov would walk into the forest, light a holy fire and say a special prayer, asking G-d to protect His people. And G-d sent him a miracle.

Years later, his disciple, the Maggid of Mezritch, would go to the same part of the forest and cry, “Master of the Universe, I don’t know how to light the holy fire but I do know the special prayer. Answer me please!” And He did.

Another generation passed and Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov rushed to the same part of the forest, looked up to the Heavens and said, “Almighty G-d, I don’t know how to light the holy fire nor do I know the special prayer but I still remember the place. Help us!” And the Lord helped.

And fifty years later, Rabbi Israel of Rizhin, confined to a wheelchair, spoke to G-d. “I don’t know how to light the holy fire, I don’t know the special prayer and I can’t even get to the forest. All I can do is tell this story and hope You hear me.”

And indeed, telling the story was enough for the danger to pass.

All Life Needs
Rachel Naomi Remen

Often, when he came to visit, my grandfather would bring me a present... once, in the month of February, he brought me a little paper cup containing some soil. “If you promise so put some water in the cup every day, something may happen,” he told me.

At the time, I was four years old and we lived on the sixth floor of an apartment
building in Manhattan. The whole thing made no sense to me. I looked at him dubiously. He nodded with encouragement. “Every day, Neshume-le, my little one,” he told me.

And so I promised. At first, curious to see what would happen, I did not mind doing this. But as the days went by and nothing changed, it got harder and harder to remember the water for the cup. After a week, I asked my grandfather if it was time to stop yet. Shaking his head no, he said, “Every day Neshume-le.”

The second week was even harder, and I became resentful of my promise to put water in the cup. When my grandfather came again, I tried to give it back to him but he refused to take it, saying simply, “Every day Neshume-le, my little one.” By the third week, I began to forget the water altogether. Often I would remember only after I was in bed and I would have to get out of bed and water the cup in the dark. But I did not miss a single day.

And one morning, there were two little green leaves that had not been there the night before.

I was completely astonished. Day by day they got bigger. I could not wait to tell my grandfather, certain that he would be as surprised as I was. But of course he was not. Carefully he explained to me that life is everywhere, hidden in the most ordinary and unlikely places. I was delighted. “And all it needs is water, Grandpa?” I asked him. Gently he touched me on the top of my head. “No, Neshume-le,” he said. “All it needs is your faithfulness.”

Seder in Syrian Captivity
Baruch Gordon

On Thursday, April 2, 1970, the Israeli Air Force attacked Syrian tanks and artillery in the Golan Heights. Three Syrian MIG jets were downed, as well as one Israeli Phantom jet.

Israeli pilot Gidon Magen and navigator Pinny Nachmani parachuted out of the jet safely, but were captured by the Syrian enemy. They spent the next three years in the high-security Mezze military prison in Damascus.

Writing on small pieces of toilet and wrapping paper, Pinny kept a secret diary of 300 pages. He made the following entry after their second Seder night in 1971:

“Pesach has passed, the quintessential national holiday of the Jews. We are among the few who are prevented from celebrating with our families. It’s difficult to describe the Pesach atmosphere in a Syrian prison. On the morning before, we meticulously cleaned our cell (removing any crumbs of leavened bread) in a way that the cement floor had never been cleaned before.

“On cardboard, we drew a Seder plate, with a Star of David in the middle and room to place each ingredient on the six protrusions of the star.

“In the afternoon, we succeed in organizing permission to shower, albeit in freezing water, after which we donned our holiday clothes and anxiously waited for the beginning of the holiday. These were difficult hours of contemplation – the memories which swelled up to the point that we choked as we recalled our homes, and tried to feel the atmosphere of Pesach as sundown approached, and sense the distinct smells of the late afternoon.

“... As we celebrated and loudly chanted the Haggadah, the prison guards appeared and demanded that we stop. In the next cell sat the recently-deposed President of Syria, Nureddin al-Atassi, the very man who when he had imprisoned us declared, ‘Let the Israeli prisoners age in Syrian prison.’

“We refused to stop! Even the threat of solitary confinement could not stop the roar of freedom.”
The longest-ever running show on Broadway is *The Phantom of the Opera*, a polished and engaging musical that explores a wide range of human emotions. It opened in 1988, and continues to play to sellout crowds.

But my family and I – and, I imagine, you and yours – have been performing in a dramatic production with a far longer run. It is the Passover Seder, presented annually for more than three thousand years. Every Passover Eve, all across the world, members of our extended family prepare for their roles as actors, singers, and storytellers. We provide “dinner and a show” as we tell the story of the liberation of the Children of Israel from slavery in Egypt.

Although every nationality and every family makes individual adaptations, and nuances its version of the story, and though each may sing the text to different tunes or anchor the feast with different cuisines, the Passover Seder retains its shared meaning. It is a celebration of G-d’s love for humanity and humanity’s G-d-given right to be free.

Passover was not ordained to be a singular, isolated moment in our national calendar. It is part of a cycle. The Exodus was the key with which our potential as a nation was unlocked – but what followed was the doorway to realizing that potential.

Every year, for over three thousand years, Jews have counted the days and weeks that lead from Passover, the Festival of Liberation, to Shavuot, the Festival of the Giving of the Law. Passover is only the first act in the drama. Unfortunately, despite the appeal and success of the Passover “production,” most people do not remain for the second act: Shavuot. They leave the theater, as it were, before the entire story has been told, missing the point of the annual journey from slavery in Egypt to the Law at Sinai.

The Israelites were not simply released from bondage to be free in the desert. They were not freed to be absorbed into Egyptian society. Their liberation had a purpose, already expressed in Moses’ first conversation with Pharaoh: “Thus said the Lord, the G-d of Israel: ‘Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness’” (Ex. 5:1). Later, Moses repeatedly transmits G-d’s request to Pharaoh: “Let My people go that they may serve Me” (9:1).

As the Israelites would soon learn, the purpose of the Exodus was for them to serve G-d’s values by observing G-d’s laws. Their ultimate destination was the Holy Land of Israel, but their first stop was Sinai, where they would receive the Law, and, with it, their national objective and destiny.

In this, the Israelites were unusual. Their national purpose preceded their territorial existence – their values were conferred before their homeland – because the Revelation at Sinai provided the Children of Israel with the values they, and all the world, needed to build a new kind of just society.

Passover and Shavuot are two acts in the same drama whose plot explores how liberty and law must be joined to create justice. The immoral pre-diluvian society of Noah, and the years of Pharaoh’s cruel rule in Egypt, demonstrated what happens when people enjoy liberty without law.

Without law, freedom cannot guarantee anyone a secure or good life. That is the point of the second act, Shavuot, in which the rest of the story unfolds, as you will see, if you stay in your seat and experience it.

Joe Lieberman was a US senator from Connecticut for 24 years. He is the author of “With Liberty and Justice: The Fifty Day Journey from Egypt to Sinai” with Rabbi Ari Kahn, published by Maggid Books, a division of Koren Publishers Jerusalem.
And when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the L-rd, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when He struck down the Egyptians’ (Exodus 12:26-27).

In days to come, when your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ say to him, ‘With a mighty hand the L-rd brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery (Exodus 13:14).

There is another passage later in the Torah that also speaks of a question asked by a child:

In the future, when your son asks you, “What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the L-rd our G-d has commanded you?” tell him: “We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the L-rd brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand (Deuteronomy 6:20-21).

The third passage in Bo, the only one that does not mention a question, is:

On that day tell your son, ‘I do this because of what the L-rd did for me when I came out of Egypt’ (Exodus 13:8).

These four passages have become famous because of their appearance in the Haggadah on Pesach. They are the four children: one wise, one wicked or rebellious, one simple and “one who does not know how to ask.” Reading them together, the Sages came to the conclusion that [1] children should ask questions, [2] the Pesach narrative must be constructed in response to, and begin with, questions asked by a child, [3] it is the duty of a parent to encourage his or her children to ask questions, and the child who does not yet know how to ask should be taught to ask.

There is nothing natural about this at all. On the contrary. It goes dramatically against the grain of history. Most traditional cultures see it as the task of a parent or teacher to instruct, guide or command. The task of the child is to obey. “Children should be seen, not heard,” goes the old English proverb. “Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the L-rd,” says a famous Christian text. Socrates, who spent his life teaching people to ask questions, was condemned by the citizens of Athens for corrupting the young. The opposite is the case in Judaism. It is a religious duty to teach our children to ask questions. That is how they grow.

Judaism is the rarest of phenomena: a faith based on asking questions, sometimes deep and difficult ones that seem to shake the very foundations of faith itself. “Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?” asked Abraham. “Why, L-rd, why have you brought trouble on this people?” asked Moses. “Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?” asked Jeremiah. The book of Job is largely constructed out of questions, and G-d’s answer consists of four chapters of yet deeper questions: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... Can you catch Leviathan with a hook? ... Will it make an agreement with you and let you take it as your slave for life?”

It is no accident that Parashat Bo, the section that deals with the culminating plagues and the Exodus, should turn three times to the subject of children and the duty of parents to educate them. As Jews, we believe that to defend a country you need an army, but to defend a civilization you need education. Freedom is lost when it is taken for granted. Unless parents pass over their memories and ideals to the next generation – the story of how they won their freedom and the battles they had to fight along the way – the long journey falters and we lose our way.

What is fascinating, though, is the way the Torah emphasizes the fact that children must ask questions. Two of the three passages in our parsha speak of this:

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The Necessity of Asking Questions
In yeshiva the highest accolade is to ask a good question: *du fregst a gutte kashe*. Rabbi Abraham Twersky, a deeply religious psychiatrist, tells of how when he was young, his teacher would relish challenges to his arguments. In his broken English, he would say, “You right! You 100 prozent right! Now I show you where you wrong.”

Isadore Rabi, winner of a Nobel Prize in physics, was once asked why he became a scientist. He replied, “My mother made me a scientist without ever knowing it. Every other child would come back from school and be asked, ‘What did you learn today?’ But my mother used to ask: ‘Izzy, did you ask a good question today?’ That made the difference. Asking good questions made me a scientist.”

Judaism is not a religion of blind obedience. Indeed, astonishingly in a religion of 613 commandments, there is no Hebrew word that means “to obey.” When Hebrew was revived as a living language in the 19th century, and there was need for a verb meaning “to obey,” it had to be borrowed from the Aramaic: *le-tsayet*. Instead of a word meaning “to obey,” the Torah uses the verb *shema*, untranslatable into English because it means [1] to listen, [2] to hear, [3] to understand, [4] to internalize, and [5] to respond. Written into the very structure of Hebraic consciousness is the idea that our highest duty is to seek to understand the will of G-d, not just to blindly obey. Tennyson’s verse, “Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do or die,” is as far from a Jewish mindset as it is possible to be.

Why? Because we believe that intelligence is G-d’s greatest gift to humanity. Rashi understands the phrase that G-d made man “in His image, after His likeness,” to mean that G-d gave us the ability “to understand and discern.” The very first of our requests in the weekday Amidah is for “knowledge, understanding and discernment.” One of the most breathtakingly bold of the rabbis’ institutions was to coin a blessing to be said on seeing a great non-Jewish scholar. Not only did they see wisdom in cultures other than their own, they thanked G-d for it. How far this is from the narrow-mindedness than has so often demeaned and diminished religions past and present.

The historian Paul Johnson once wrote that rabbinic Judaism was “an ancient and highly efficient social machine for the production of intellectuals.” Much of that had, and still has, to do with the absolute priority Jews have always placed on education, schools, the *beit midrash*, religious study as an act even higher than prayer, learning as a life-long engagement, and teaching as the highest vocation of the religious life.

But much too has to do with how one studies and how we teach our children. The Torah indicates this at the most powerful and poignant juncture in Jewish history – just as the Israelites are about to leave Egypt and begin their life as a free people under the sovereignty of G-d. Hand on the memory of this moment to your children, says Moses. But do not do so in an authoritarian way. Encourage your children to ask, question, probe, investigate, analyze, explore. Liberty means freedom of the mind, not just of the body. Those who are confident of their faith need fear no question. It is only those who lack confidence, who have secret and suppressed doubts, who are afraid.

However, the one essential is to know and to teach this to our children, that not every question has an answer we can immediately understand. There are ideas we will only fully comprehend through age and experience, others that take great intellectual preparation, and yet others that may be beyond our collective comprehension at this stage of the human quest. Darwin never knew what a gene was. Even the great Newton, founder of modern science, understood how little he understood, and put it beautifully: “I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.”

In teaching its children to ask and keep asking, Judaism honored what Maimonides called the “active intellect” and saw it as the gift of G-d. No faith has honored human intelligence more.

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FEAR NOT THE TRUMP PLAN

T he Trump Administration has indicated that immediately following the April Israeli election it will present its long awaited “deal of the century.” Some fear that the Trump plan will bring back the “two-state solution.”

In fact, the New Right’s Naftali Bennett has alleged that Prime Minister Netanyahu is in accord with this, and that Netanyahu and/or his main rival Benny Gantz “will divide Jerusalem.” (This is an ironic riff on Netanyahu’s 1996 allegation that “Shimon Peres will divide Jerusalem.”)

I doubt there is much to be worried about. It is inconceivable that the Trump plan will parrot the stale Clinton/Obama parameters of yesteryear or force any “peace paradigm” on Israel. Not when Iran is on an imperial march, and the Palestinians are mired neck-deep in denialism, rejectionism, terrorism and corruption.

Jared Kushner, who leads the US team on this matter, says that America understands that Israel is much less able to take risks today than it was 20 years ago – because of the disintegration of the Arab state system, Palestinian tremulousness, and Iran’s dogged quest for regional domination bolstered by nuclear weapons. He acknowledges that the American plan must be relevant for the current Mideast context.

The current context includes the fact that the Palestinian Authority spends most of its time seeking to criminalize Israel in international forums and denying the very fact of Jewish history in Jerusalem. That is because the Palestinians view the diplomatic process as a “decolonization” process where the colonizer and victimizer (Israel) is to be held responsible for its crimes. So there is a long process of Palestinian maturation necessary before “peace” can be negotiated.

Surely, Kushner, Jason Greenblatt and David Friedman realize this.

Surely the Trump team also recognizes that Israel’s “occupation” of the Palestinians essentially ended two decades ago when Israel vacated the West Bank’s most populated areas (the Oslo Accords’ Areas A and B) and gave control to the PA.

This effectuated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin’s vision of ending Israel’s control of Palestinian daily life without creating a full-fledged Palestinian state. (Contrary to popular perception, Oslo did not commit Israel to full-fledged Palestinian statehood, and Rabin was unalterably opposed to full-fledged Palestinian statehood.)

Other realities surely understood by Kushner, Greenblatt and Friedman are that Israel must not make unilateral concessions in a situation where the Palestinians refuse to participate in the diplomatic process and show no capacity for compromise. And Israel will never accept proposals that involve “internationalization” of the conflict (such as reliance on foreign forces in securing Israel’s borders) or a physical re-division of Jerusalem.

On the safe assumption that the Trump team comprehends all this, one must ask what the purposes of its Mideast plan could possibly be. Surely the Americans understand that a swift peace deal is unachievable.

More likely is that the Trump plan is meant to legitimate new ideas; to “move the markers” or “shift the goalposts” on the parameters for an aspirational Israeli-Palestinian peace accord somewhere off in the distant future.

For example, I hope and believe that the plan will entrench the idea that Israel’s presence in Jerusalem and Judea is indigenous and legitimate, not illegal. In this conflict, there is historical justice owed to the Jewish people, not just to the Palestinians!

Furthermore, the plan should broach Palestinian refugee resettlement in countries of the region; a third rail issue that must be confronted courageously and expeditiously if there is to be any hope for a better future.

The plan also may be designed on a modular approach, with parts that could work now, such as a broad framework for Arab regional investment in Palestinian-Israeli joint projects; and to do so in way that provides cover for Arab states to work more closely with Israel on a range of issues.

Any movement away from antiquated formulas, obsolete paradigms, and hoary solutions – most of which have been based in maximalist Palestinian demands deemed “holy” by the so-called international community – would be a huge achievement. (Trump likes “huge.”)

Consequently, Israel should approach the tabling of a Trump peace initiative with an open mind, offering it diplomatic space to percolate, and time to develop momentum. Jerusalem can and should welcome the plan as a useful platform for moving ahead, and then carefully consider its components.

Israel should be ready to say: “Yes, but…”

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Miriam
THE PROPHETESS

The drama of the Exodus reached its crescendo as the Red Sea split and Bnei Yisrael traversed the raging waves. That moment is recorded in a song sung in two voices; the voice of Moshe and the voice of his sister Miriam. Moshe’s “Song of the Sea” is quoted by Scripture in full, whereas Miriam’s song appears to be a two-verse refrain echoing Moshe’s oratorio:

“Then Miriam, the prophetess, Aharon’s sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her in dance with timbrels. And Miriam chanted for them: sing to the L-rd, for He has triumphed gloriously; horse and driver He has hurled into the sea” (Exodus 15:20-21).

The portrait of Miriam leading the women in song and dance has been etched for posterity in the nation’s collective consciousness. The Torah not only records her chant, it accentuates her leadership role. Just as Moshe led the Children of Israel in song, Miriam led the women’s chorus.

Her role in the process of redemption is corroborated by Micha: “In fact, I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage, And I sent before you Moshe, Aharon and Miriam” (Micha 6:4).

Nevertheless, Miriam’s precise part in the triumvirate is open to interpretation. Targum Jonathan translates the above verse, elaborating upon the role of each player: “…Moshe to teach the law, Aharon to atone for the nation and Miriam to teach the women.”

The Gemara suggests that each leader contributed to the wellbeing of the nation during their sojourn in the desert. Moshe was responsible for the manna, Aharon for the pillar of cloud, and Miriam for the itinerant well.

A careful reading of our verse suggests that Miriam’s position was that of a prophetess. How did she merit that epithet?

Listening carefully to Miriam’s voice will allow for a broader definition of prophecy. The first time we hear her is in the story of the birth and salvation of the infant Moshe. As she stands watch over him, she catches sight of Pharaoh’s daughter. Witnessing the Egyptian princess discovering her baby brother, she offers the services of a wet nurse. Unbeknownst to the princess, the wet nurse she procures is Moshe’s very own mother.

Consider the course of events. Yocheved, Moshe’s mother, was unable to watch her baby’s final demise. Young Miriam was appointed to report the painful details to her. When Miriam saw the child saved by the princess, she could have run home and shared her joy and relief with her parents. But she went beyond. She braved approaching the princess and ingeniously returned the child to his family.

Although her considerations may have been personal and pragmatic, they reflect a certain long-range vision. She concerned herself with the child’s spiritual wellbeing, not merely his physical safety. Even at this early stage, her prophetic propensities were not a function of prognostication but rather of farsightedness. She was the enabler whose opening words set the process of redemption in motion. And it was her words which brought redemption to a close with the final encore of “the Song of the Sea.”

Rabbinc literature also credits Miriam with insight and foresight. The rabbis embellished her portrait through this aggadah:1 when Amram heard of Pharaoh’s decree, he separated from his wife, figuring that having more children was counter-productive. Miriam argued that her father’s action was worse than the royal decree. Pharaoh devised to kill only the males, not the females. To destroy body, not soul.

Perhaps this aggadah suggests a clear distinction between male linear thinking versus female cyclical thinking. Miriam’s dispute with her father was aimed at resolving the cognitive dissonance between masculine logic and feminine hope and faith. But the rabbis used this exchange to enhance Miriam’s image as a prophetess. Not only because her prediction transpired, but because it illustrates her ability to rise above circumstance and raise others, beyond an uncertain present to a future of greater clarity. She was a woman of extraordinary vision.

Finally, one wonders where all of the women acquired their timbrels from? Surely they had no time to pack their bags as they fled from their enemies. It was Miriam, their prescient leader, who issued the directive. Out of the darkness she foresaw celebration and encouraged her constituency to lift their eyes and spirits, to prepare themselves to sing the glorious song of redemption.

1 Taanit 9a.
2 Sotah 12a.

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As I celebrate Pesach surrounded by the comforts and luxury of our London apartment and the security of more than a dozen relatives and friends, I realize that for all their splendor, these holidays cannot compare to that unique event almost 80 years ago. 1941 was the most extraordinary Pesach of my life.

I was born before World War II and lived content and well loved by my family in Nurnberg, Germany. Until 1933. My world was getting darker, and one day Nazi stormtroopers marched into the city ordering major buildings to fly the swastika flag by sunset. In 1936, my parents took us to Paris, as my father had been appointed rabbi of the prominent Rue Cadet Synagogue. As the political situation deteriorated, my father was conscripted into the army and had to leave us. In 1940, when the Nazis began bombing Paris, my mother fled with us – her four children – on the last train before the main onslaught. It was the eve of Shavuot.

The mass of people on that train repeatedly wrenched us from one another. Months later, on another leg of our desperate journey, I lost track of my family altogether and began to wander from village to village. Lone children all over Europe were doing the same.

One night, I could go no further. I knocked on a farmhouse door. The farmer turned out to be kind and courageous. He took me to his cellar where I found another little girl. Eventually another girl and two boys joined us. For several days none of us admitted we were Jewish.

It was a dire winter. Each morning, a few rays of light would poke their way into the cellar through two windows high on the wall, our only eyes to the world outside. Every day the farmer lowered a net with five morsels of food and a bucket for our needs through those windows. Strange as it sounds, we were very lucky. In that difficult winter, five homeless children developed timeless values and a bond of lifelong friendship.

One day, we noticed a streak of sunlight in blue sky. A few days later, we saw blades of grass. We had no calendar or clocks but we concluded that spring was on the way, and maybe we were nearing Pesach. Each of us came from different Jewish backgrounds yet we shared a strong desire to do something to celebrate Pesach.

When the farmer appeared with our food the next morning, we asked if tomorrow he could send us a little flour, a bottle of water, a newspaper and a match. Two days later we received a small bottle of water, but we had to wait several days for the flour. The entire region was drained of provisions, with everything being transported north to Germany. Our host had barely anything to eat himself.

A newspaper came through and then a match. Then we saw a full day of sunshine and blue skies and decided that today was the day. To cultivate a festive spirit we switched clothing with one another, as if we were wearing new clothes. We hadn’t a clue how to bake matzah properly, but we poured water into the flour and held the dough in our bare hands over the burning newspaper on the floor. We produced something which resembled matzah and it provided enough for the five of us.

That night we celebrated Pesach. One of us recalled the kiddush by heart, another remembered the Ma Nishtana, the Four Questions. We told a few stories of the Exodus that we remembered from our parents. Finally, we managed to reconstruct Chad Gadya, the song which typically ends the evening.

We had a Pesach to remember. With no festive food, no silver candlesticks and no wine – but with our simple desire to connect with G-d – we had a holiday more profound than any we have known since. I thank G-d for allowing me to live to be able to tell my children and grandchildren about it. Even more, I feel obligated to the younger generations of my family, who never experienced what I did, to pass on the clarity it gave me – the vivid appreciation of G-d’s presence in my life, of His constant blessings, wonders and teachings... and of His commitment to the survival of the Jewish people.

Lady Amélie Jakobovits z”l was the wife of the former Chief Rabbi of the UK, Lord Immanuel Jakobovits z”l, and a giant in her own right.

1 The original version of this article appeared in The Jewish Women’s Journal of the Jewish Renaissance Center, a learning institute for women located in New York City.
As Pesach approaches, we begin our preparations for the holiday and we look forward to welcoming thousands of visitors who come to Israel to celebrate. Festive Jerusalem is a treat to anyone who has visited during this time. But have you ever tried to imagine what Pesach was like 2,000 years ago, when the Temple was standing? Have you ever wondered how many olei regel (Jewish pilgrims) came, and on which roads they traveled? Where did they all stay, and what was daily life like?

The obligation of Aliyah LaRegel (lit. going up by foot) pertained to males who lived within the borders of Israel. However, Jews came from as far as Babylon and Rome in very impressive numbers to fulfill this mitzvah. For security reasons, they would travel together. The number of olei regel must have been significant, since we know that if the caravans were delayed, the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem could declare a leap year, to provide them with an additional month of travel. Josephus relates that on Pesach 70 CE, just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, the city welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors despite the danger of travel in wartime.

Although not obligated, women came in large numbers as well, and once they arrived in Jerusalem, they were required to bring a Korban Simcha (a joy offering). Beit Hillel obligated children to come from the time they were able to walk to Jerusalem holding their parent’s hand, and Beit Shammai obligated them to do so as soon as they were able to sit on their father’s shoulders. Incentives were offered to children who came first, and as the Gemara relates in Pesachim, girls were more motivated than boys, and they sometimes won the race.

Several practices were instituted to assist the travelers. For example, on the first of Adar, the collection of the half shekel began and in mid-Adar, messengers were sent out to fix the potholes on the roads, and to ensure that there was water available along the route. In the Judean Desert we have found cisterns dating back to that time period. These cisterns were kept locked the entire year, and only opened by the Beit Din messengers to serve the olei regel. The mikvehs along the road were cleaned so that people who wanted to bypass the long lines in Jerusalem would be able to use them. However, by using these roadside ritual baths to purify oneself, one ran the risk of unknowingly becoming impure should he, further down the road, walk next to a tomb without realizing it. The Beit Din foresaw this possibility and directed that tombs be impure should he, further down the road, walk next to a tomb without realizing it. The Beit Din foresaw this possibility and directed that tombs be newly whitewashed, and thus visible to the olei regel, who could then avoid them.

There were several major routes that the pilgrims could have taken on their way to Jerusalem. Coming from the north, via Shechem, was not a popular route during the Second Temple period. The hostile Samaritans settled that area and thus the path was fraught with danger. Instead, although slightly longer, many olei regel would travel along the King’s Highway. It ran along the Jordan River and offered the advantages of flat terrain, an unlimited water supply, and friendly Jewish communities. When the travelers would reach the area north of the Dead Sea, they would cross the Jordan towards Jericho, and proceed through Ma’ale Adumim to Jerusalem.

Once they arrived in Jerusalem, they would be housed in various synagogues, and in camps outside town. The Jerusalemites opened their homes to guests, and the halachah prohibited them from accepting a fee. The olei regel repaid their kindness by gifting them the hides of the korbanot they sacrificed.

In an effort to create unity among the pilgrims, the Sages suspended tumah (impurity) for the holiday. That enabled all Jews – the chaverim – who were careful about ritual purity, and the Amei HaAretz – who were not, to dine together in harmony.

The joy of the chag, the sharing of the Korban Pesach, the comradery displayed by the Jerusalemites – all combined to make this occasion spectacular. As we all join in prayer in our own shuls thus Pesach, let us envision the grandeur of the occasion that will be, G-d-willing, in the future – חודש יומי הנצח – restore our days as in the beginning.

1 Jerusalem Talmud, Shvi’it 10:1.
2 Wars, Book 6, 9:3.
3 Rambam, Laws of Chagigah 1.
4 Pesachim 89a.
5 Shekalim 1:1.
6 Jerusalem Talmud, Shekalim 1:1.
7 Teodotus Inscription, City of David.
8 Avot DeRabbi Natan, (Version 1), Chap.35.

Ruchama Alter is a licensed Israeli tour guide and lecturer, and a member of the Mizrachi Tour Guides Bureau.
Here’s a story I once heard from Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, former Chief Rabbi of Israel:

An Olympia airline plane lands in Athens, Greece. An old man steps off the plane. He is none other than Socrates, the great Greek philosopher, now a very old man, having been away from his home for hundreds of years.

He steps off the plane and a young Greek porter at the terminal runs up to him to offer some help. “May I take your bag?” asks the porter. The old Socrates looks at the young man confused. “What language are you speaking?” asks Socrates. “Greek,” replied the young man. “But why are you not speaking our classical Greek?” asks Socrates. “This is how we speak Greek today,” replied the young porter, “I studied a little classic Greek in university, but no one speaks it anymore.”

The old man leaves the airport to visit his homeland and to his dismay sees nothing familiar. He looks for the usual Greek idols which used to line the streets of Athens but instead he sees a Greek Orthodox Church, a completely different religion. He hears people talking but no one speaking his classic Greek language. He has nothing in common with these people, just geography.

Another plane lands in Rome, Italy. An old man of great Roman descent steps off the plane, his name Julius Caesar. A young Italian porter runs to greet the old man and says to him: “Shalom Aleichem.” The old man responds: “Aleichem Shalom.”

The young Israeli porter asks the man: “Who are you? The old man answers: “I am Moshe. Moshe, the son of Amram. I was never here in Israel. I died in Moav, in the East bank of the Jordan River after leading my people in the wilderness for 40 years. What is your name?” “Moshe, my name is also Moshe,” the porter answered.

Despite the fact that the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans have ruled over our people, those empires have vanished and the Jewish people remain.

As we say on Seder night: in every generation our enemies rise up against to destroy us but G-d saves us from their hands. This famous phrase from the Haggadah is not simply a statement of history or fact — it’s a statement of our theology, of our belief system.

Rabbi Mark Wildes is the Founder and Director of Manhattan Jewish Experience and author of Beyond the Instant.
The essence of Seder night can be encapsulated in two words: וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ, “and you shall tell your children.” The focus of this night is our family story. It is inter-generational. This story, the Story of stories, is the story of our identity as a people. A people forged by slavery and miraculously united by freedom. It’s not just a historical story from the past but a story of destiny, looking towards the future. From that exodus arose the aspiration and the demand to establish a just and ethical society, dedicated only to G-d’s sovereignty, a society in which every person is entitled to basic human respect. Not a negative freedom empty of content, but a release obligating a respectful attitude to all, detachment from the ropes of routine and external edicts, and devotion to the values of ethics and Torah.

There are three basic elements to this special mitzvah of וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ:

1. To tell a story that will have impact, there must be an inter-generational connection. The word Haggadah in Hebrew comes from the root ח-ג-ד – which in the Talmud means connection. The story is one and only, but the ways to tell it are varied and “according to the child’s intelligence.” One must adapt the vessel to the generation, to the times, to the child and his or her needs. We should plan in advance how we can arouse interest and make it relevant for our children.

2. וְהִגַּדְתָּ, “and you shall tell,” implies the existence of a story of identity. A Jew is born into a story. A foundational story that protects us even when we are dispersed. This is the story that connects all Jews wherever they are. It was not for nothing that Ben-Gurion related this story in front of the UN in 1947 (see page 23). This is the story that is the basis of the Return to Zion in our times.

This is a story that tells the child what he or she belongs to. The role of every parent – and not just of school – is to connect our young to this story. It is very different to all the post-modernist theories that smash every framework of identity to promote one sacred value: the freedom of the individual. The Jewish approach extols the possibilities of choice within a framework of ethical commitment. The freedom we discuss on Seder night is not about detaching ourselves from any family or national context. On the contrary. The content of our freedom is a derivative of its unique context within the Jewish people.

3. One can perhaps see this third point as the opposite of the first, but upon deeper contemplation it is complementary to it: the story is transmitted from parents to children to grandchildren. To pass on tradition and to bequeath Torah one must recognize parental authority. This is how Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch understands the depth of the mitzvot to honor and fear one’s parents. There is no contradiction between the closeness of our first assumption and the hierarchy engrained in the parent-child relationship. This hierarchy ensures that the story is transmitted forwards while also inspiring confidence and security. Our children do not need us purely to be their friends. They need us as authoritative and guiding figures.

Pesach is different from all other holidays in that it places extra emphasis on family traditions, and the special mitzvah of וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ strengthens the inter-generational bond – between those that have been and those will be, all passing on the same story like a burning torch that cannot be extinguished no matter what happens in life.

Rabbanit Dr. Leah Vizel is Dean of Students at a college of higher education and a lecturer in Judaism and in Law.
DURING RIVKA’S LONG-AWAITED pregnancy, “the children struggled within her” (Genesis 25:22). Rivka was so disturbed by the movements in her body that she desperately turns to G-d for guidance.

Rashi comments on the “struggling” inside the womb: “Our Rabbis explain that the word vayitrotsetu – struggling, means running, moving quickly. Whenever Rivka passed by the doors of Torah, Ya’akov moved convulsively in his efforts to leave the womb, and whenever she passed by the gate of a pagan temple, Eisav moved convulsively in his efforts to leave the womb.”

Rivka was not disturbed by normal and daily sporadic movements, but by specific movements, in defined places. Rivka turned to G-d, who explained that her strange feelings were due to the fact that she was carrying twins; twins with very different, even opposing, personalities.

G-d’s answer seems to appease Rivka, but why?

We can assume that the new information was that she was pregnant with only one child.

It is possible that the embryo’s reaction near the pagan temple was excitement, while the movements near the monotheistic seminary were an expression of hate and ridicule. If this is the case, we can certainly understand Rivka’s mollification at the news that she was carrying twins, at least one of whom would be righteous.

We could suggest the exact opposite; the embryo was excited about monotheistic values, and virulently against idolatry. However, if this was what Rivka thought, it would be difficult to understand her concern.

Possibly, Rivka saw her child becoming a character of shallowness and superficiality; a person easily impressed and influenced by any experience he had. He would be excited when in the presence of the righteous, but equally excited and swayed when mingling with non-believers. He wouldn’t be inherently evil; just naive and shallow.

Lastly is the possibility that the child was self-centered. He would manipulate others by pretending to believe in their cause, only to simultaneously negotiate with those who held the opposing view. Therefore, when he would visit the pagans, he was a pagan, and when he would visit the monotheists, he suddenly became a believer in G-d.

It is interesting to note the similarities between these four suggestions and the four sons mentioned at the Seder.

A person enthusiastically following idolatry while equally enthusiastically negating Torah can be paralleled with the Rasha, the wicked son, who makes a point of sitting at the table; not to ask questions, but to make statements that deny the entire process taking place. If he simply doesn’t believe, he need not come, but the Rasha insists on joining us. For him, it is not the slightest bit interested in anything or anyone else. He is interested in himself, and thus even when he appears to be asking it is not for real.

We will not always merit that our child be the Chacham. However, the Haggadah reminds us that these other sons are still our sons. The Haggadah instructs us: you must educate them according to who they are. Every Jew is a Jew, every Jewish child has a place at the Seder table, they are all part of Am Yisrael, and it is our duty to sensitively relate to each child according to their own individual characters.

It is also our duty to sensitively relate to each and every Jew, wherever they may be religiously, and to bring back those ‘fifth sons’ who never even make it to the table.

Rabbi David Milston is the Rosh Midrasha at Midreshet HaRova
Moshe argues with G-d for seven (!) days at the Burning Bush, because he refuses to accept the task G-d has assigned to him. Among his arguments, one is particularly compelling: “I am not a man of words, neither from yesterday nor from the day before yesterday, nor from the time You have spoken to Your servant, for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue” (Exodus 4:10).

When I was young, I imagined Moshe as a Hollywood-type star who leads his people through the Red Sea, who comes down Mount Sinai with the tablets; a charismatic leader who trailblazes the way to freedom. It is easy to forget that the Torah tells us that he stuttered, a far cry from the superstar, screen-o-genic leaders we are accustomed to today.

Political commentators repeatedly tell us that our past leaders would not have been elected under Israel’s current system of open primary elections within the various political parties. Would Moshe have been electable? An 80-year-old with a stammer who expressed no desire whatsoever to be a leader? Moshe is more than happy for Aharon to carry out the task, but G-d insists. He wants a leader like Moshe.

Before Moshe leaves to meet Pharaoh, the Torah tells us something else. It will not be possible to carry out a grandiose operation like the Exodus from Egypt if there is any jealousy between Moshe and Aharon. G-d tells Moshe that his brother Aharon will, “when he sees you, he will rejoice in his heart.” Your brother will not be angry that you are going to do great things; on the contrary. He will be overjoyed or you. You will be partners in this monumental task and you will work together in harmony.

In short, the Jewish paradigm of a leader, the greatest leader we have ever had, is elderly, non-charismatic, works with others, and is acutely aware of – and sensitive to – the weight of responsibility on his shoulders. We should be so lucky today.

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Pesach Customs around the World

Hungary
Jews from Hungary like to decorate their Seder table with gold and silver jewelry. The explanation offered is that the Egyptians gave the Israelites gold and silver to speed up their departure from the land.

Turkey
At the end of Pesach, it is customary for each person to take a sprig of parsley (sign of Spring) and recite a verse in Arabic. With each word of the verse, they cross the parsley in their hands from one shoulder to the other of the person facing them. Then they give each other a blessing for the year ahead, until every person has given everyone else a blessing.

Wisdom and Sensitivity
One day before Pesach, a man knocked at the door of Rabbi Shmuel Salant, Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, and asked him whether he could fulfill the mitzvah of the four cups on Seder night with milk.

Rabbi Salant heard his unusual question and immediately gave the man a generous sum of money: "Go buy yourself wine, meat and fish and celebrate the holiday in the way you should."

Afterwards, Rabbi Salant explained to his household why he had responded like that: "When the man asked me if he could drink four cups of milk instead of wine, I understood that not only doesn’t he have wine, but also meat, because if he had meat he wouldn’t be drinking milk at the Seder. That's why I gave him enough money to buy all he needs..."

Five Fun Questions for Your Seder

1. Why is Pesach called Passover in English?
   a. Because we say "Hey Mom, can you pass over the matzah please?"
   b. Because we want to pass over the long bits of the Haggadah and get to the meal already.
   c. Because G-d passed over the Jewish houses on the night of the Killing of the Firstborn.
   d. Because a cloud passed over the Children of Israel in the desert.

2. What is the 7th Plague and what is the 7th Siman of the Seder?
   a. Frogs and Maror
   b. Hail and Motzi Matzah
   c. Lice and Lockshen
   d. Darkness and Hallel

3. Who were Moshe’s parents?
   a. Amram and Yocheved
   b. Mom and Dad
   c. Jacob and Rachel
   d. Mr. and Mrs. Levy

4. How many things connected to both Pesach and the number 4 can you name? Name them!
   a. 1
   b. 2
   c. 3
   d. 4
   e. More

5. What is another name for Pesach?
   a. Chag HaAviv (The Holiday of Spring)
   b. Zman Cheirutenu (The Time of Our Freedom)
   c. Chag HaMatzot (The Holiday of Unleavened Bread)
   d. All of the above
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Only One Thing Missing

As you sit around your Seder table, full of beautiful dishes and food, dressed in your best with family and guests, think about this for a moment...

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook (Rav Kook) traveled to the United States on a fundraising mission for his yeshiva. While he was there, his students took care of all of his needs.

One of them noticed that the Rav looked unusually sad. "Is the Rav lacking anything?" he asked.

Rav Kook answered with a story: A king had set out to sea with his ministers and servants on the boat with him. The servants had brought all the pots and pans, dishes and cutlery that the king was used to seeing and eating from, and his staff would prepare a wonderful feast every day, with all the king’s favorite food and drink. There was also a band on board who entertained him whenever he wanted.

But still, the king was sad.

"Your Majesty," asked his ministers. "Is there anything we can get you to cheer you up?"

"No thank you," replied the king. "The only thing I want is to get back to the mainland."

"So it's the same here," said Rav Kook to the student. Although I lack nothing and people are treating me like a king, there is one thing missing. The Holy Land of Eretz Yisrael."
Dear Yaniv,

I was invited, for the first time, to attend a wedding in Israel. Is there anything special about them that I should know?

Dear Unsuspecting Wedding-Goer: First, Mazal Tov! It’s a special zechut (merit) to see two Israelis marry, especially when the wedding is in Israel!

Now, the first thing you should understand is that Israeli weddings are LOUD. I mean REALY loud! I suggest that to prepare yourself, you stand as close as possible to a 747 jet revving its engines, while operating a jack-hammer and listening to Satan and the Sadists playing heavy-metal “music” on your earphones! That will give you some idea of the decibel level – and that’s only during the chupa! I have seen people at Israeli weddings wearing heavy fur ear muffs – in August! – and sensory-deprivation helmets to drown out the sound. So don’t be put off if people keep saying, s’licha? (excuse me?) to you when you speak to them at the meal – they just can’t hear you!

Next thing to point out is that Israeli weddings are BIG! By big I mean of the stadium, airplane-hanger size variety; anything under 500 guests is considered an intimate private family affair. Indeed, a very popular wedding venue in Israel actually is a hanger! These gargantuan weddings – please do not ask me how families can afford them without mortgaging their other, younger children – are attended by three major groups: the Chatan’s side, the Kallah’s side, and those who heard about the event and just want to drop in for a free meal, music and dancing. Oh, and I should warn you that in Israel, lots of – shall we diplomatically call them indigent entrepreneurs – may very well be on hand to finance their own upcoming family nuptials.

And don’t be put off by the clothes people are wearing. Israel does not know from Black Tie – unless it actually means just that, a black tie (which goes well with their black suit and white shirt). Black tie optional, of course, would make sense, except that tuxedos in Israel are as rare as standing ovations for Israel at the UN. In general, the dress code at Israeli weddings is more of a “come-as-you-are” motif, even if you’re coming from playing at a soccer game or swimming in the Kinneret. Bottom line: you will not feel out of place, no matter what you wear – unless it’s formal! This, by the way, also goes for the Chatan, who often can be spotted as the one wearing the new gym shoes.

As for presents, well, if you were thinking of bringing a toaster or a microwave, forget it. Most Israeli weddings today don’t even have a container for gifts. Money is the first and pretty much only choice. In fact, in many cases, the cash that comes in at the wedding is what the young couple will use to pay the bill for the hall! As to how much is appropriate to give, I phone the venue first to find out how much each plate costs, and then write my check accordingly; naturally, I wait until after the main course to make my decision!

Israeli weddings are long – many start only after 9 pm – and they are raucous, fun and wildly celebratory. I think these events let Israelis release all their pent-up stress in a burst of Jewish energy that lifts the Chatan and Kalla to heights of ecstasy. Anything goes, particularly on the dance floor. Jugglers, fire-eaters, costumes of every kind. I have seen a person dressed as a gorilla, and a gorilla dressed as a person. I think the operative objective is that if the couple can survive the wedding dances, they can pretty much survive anything that will come their way.

So do your very best to make some successful shidduchim for our young people. You’ll be doing one of the greatest mitzvot there is and, for a bonus, you’ll probably be invited to the wedding! Just remember, bring good dancing shoes – and lots of cash.

Feel free to send me any other perplexing questions you have: yaniv@mizrachi.org
Afiroman

Based on the Mishna (Pesachim 119b), the afiroman - אפיוסן - is a substitute for the pesach [sacrifice].

The Mishna (Pesachim 10:8) states: "After the pesach (sacrifice) one should not end with afiroman."

There are two major questions here. One, what is this afiroman? And two, isn’t the afiroman actually the last thing we eat at the seder?

First, let’s find out what afiroman means. While there are a number of midrashim and folk-etymologies, the most commonly accepted answer is that it comes from the Greek word epikomion, meaning the festal procession after the meal. Epi means after (as in epilogue), and komos means banquet or merrymaking (the root of the word comedy).

Professor Eliezer Segal, in Holidays, History and Halakha, describes the word’s development: The reference is to a custom known as epikomion, a Greek word meaning “after dinner revelry” ... Normally this would involve going off to someone else’s house, whether or not you have been invited, and indulging in another party. What the Mishna is saying is that, in spite of some of the apparent similarities between the seder and a pagan banquet, one should not treat it light-headedly as the Romans and Greeks would their own feasts. This meaning was understood by the Rabbis of the Palestinian [Jerusalem] Talmud, who lived under Roman rule. By contrast, the Babylonian Talmud (whose authors lived farther away from the Greco-Roman world) came to understand the afiroman as a dessert, translating the Mishna as “One should not eat anything after the Passover afiroman.”

So even if we accept the Babylonian Talmud’s understanding that we are not supposed to eat after the afiroman, why do we call the last piece of matzah we eat “the afiroman”?

Most halachic authorities accept that to fulfill the Mishna’s intention, the last thing eaten at the seder should be a quantity of matzah. In the times of the Geonim, there was no mention that this piece needed to come from the broken and hidden piece of the middle matzah. But by the time of the Rishonim, it was emphasized that the last piece of matzah eaten should come from the broken and hidden piece. This is the origin of the siman (step) tzafun – צфан – meaning “hidden.” Eventually, the afiroman began to refer to the piece of matzah eaten during tzafun.

So afiroman changed from a forbidden act of revelry, to a dessert, to a required piece of matzah during the meal.

Karpas

We all know karpas – קרפס – is the vegetable, often parsley or celery, eaten as a sort of appetizer at the Seder. What is the origin of the word?

There are those that claim it comes from the Persian word karafs, meaning parsley. Others claim that it derives from the Greek karpos, meaning fruit of the soil. Karpos originates in the Indo-European root kerp, meaning to gather or to harvest. Other words from the same root include harvest and carpet, because it was made of unraveled, plucked fabric.

One similar word that does not appear to have any etymological connection (apart from some interesting drushot) is the word karpas appearing in the Book of Esther (1:6), meaning “fine cotton or linen.”

Prof. Heinrich Guggenheimer, in The Scholar’s Haggadah, writes that since karpas was not vocalized in the texts where it was first mentioned, those who didn’t know Arabic or Persian assumed (mistakenly) that it had the same pronunciation as the word in Megillat Esther, and that vocalization eventually made it into the Haggadah as well.

Maror

The etymology of maror – מָרוֹר – (in the Tanach, it never appears in the singular but rather as the plural merorim) is simple. It means bitter herbs, from mar ריר, “bitter”.

The English word myrrh also gets its name from the Hebrew word zer (mor). This spice was burned at the altar in the Temple, and appears numerous times in the Song of Songs.

This of course leads to the question: why would a spice be named after something so bitter? Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, (Living Torah, Exodus 30:23) in his Living Torah commentary to Exodus 30:23, explains that it had a pleasant smell and a bitter taste:

Myrrh is a gum resin produced by trees and shrubs ... It has a pleasing fragrance, very much like balsam, and a lasting, bitter, aromatic taste, hence the name mor, which signifies bitterness.

1 Rabbi Shmuel David Luzzato, 1800-1865.
2 Klein was a Romanian-born Canadian linguist, author and Rabbi, 1899-1983.

David Curwin is a writer living in Efrat, and the author of the Balashon blog balashon1@gmail.com
The most prestigious dynastic order of chivalry in France was the Order of Saint Michael. Writer and philosopher Michel de Montaigne, decorated in 1571, said that he had always dreamed of receiving this award, but “instead of the goddess of fortune raising me to the order,” de Montaigne said, “she lowered it to me.” Originally there were a limited number of knights (31), but by de Montaigne’s time the number had risen to 700 and the honor had lost its prestige.

Just over 10 years ago, on the occasion of Israel’s 60th anniversary, eight organizations won the Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement. Uri Elitzur wrote then that if everyone receives a prize then no one really receives it. I recalled this when it was announced last year, in honor of the country’s 70th birthday, that eight people would win the prize. Each and every one of the winners was exemplary, impressive and worthy but I thought it would have been preferable to spread their awards over several years, so as not to diminish from the prestige of this significant honor.

Then I thought again. Uri’s argument is true, but this time the list of winners seems to me much more logical than in past. In other years, almost all of the winners were professors who won the Israel Prize for their research. Prominent businessmen were a small minority among the honorees. This seems quite unreasonable to me – a scholar who specializes in Chinese pottery from the Qing Dynasty has a much greater chance of winning the Israel Prize than someone who has improved the lives of tens of thousands of Israelis. Why is a special occasion necessary for the Israel Prize to be won by a hi-tech pioneer, a social activist or anyone else beyond the walls of academia?

Do not misunderstand me. I am a great admirer of intellectuals. It is excellent that we know how to honor Torah and wisdom. But alongside them we must also praise people of kindness and action. Moreover, in the Jewish tradition, the great Torah scholars were also men of kindness and action. Rabbi Chaim of Brisk, a brilliant scholar who established the method of study most prevalent in the yeshiva world, was a man of kindness on levels that are hard to imagine. His house was full of the poor and downtrodden day and night, his kitchen hummed with people as if it were the public domain. The Sages taught us that it is forbidden for someone who studies Torah to keep it for himself. A person must learn in order to apply what they learn and to teach others. Our Torah is not only a Torah of truth, but also a Torah of Chesed.

Moreover, there is one night a year when it is clear that Torah study is not an intellectual laboratory – Seder night. Many are surprised to learn that this is a night devoted to learning Torah. They do not feel as though they are learning though. After all, they are not in a shul or a Beit Midrash. They are sitting at the dining room table. Yet there is a wealth of Torah on this night – we recite verses and quote our Sages in the Haggadah, we ask and answer, renew and recall. This is the lifeblood of Torah study; study with taste and smell, with matzah and maror; Torah with parents, children, family, guests and strangers.

Torah of the entire year cannot be exactly like the Torah of Seder night. Most working people cannot learn so much Torah, and the great scholars cannot deal with the needs of the people all day long. But this is always the trend. The Beit Midrash has windows (so that those inside should be concerned for those out), and the hands that work have a head and a heart.

The Torah’s strongest connection to the world of action must be through the family. The commandment “You shall teach your children” refers not only to Seder night but to every other day of the year as well. This is how Torah study really should have looked: not a class of 30 children with a board and a marker (or even an iPad), but boys and girls sitting with their parents and grandparents at the table, hunching together over an old book covered with matzah crumbs and wine stains.

(This article first appeared in Makor Rishon in Hebrew.)

1 Uri Elitzur was an award-winning journalist and editor of the Makor Rishon newspaper.

Rabbi Chaim Navon is a renowned educator and author.
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