

New Things for the Seder-2015

Rabbi Joshua Strulowitz

1. Urchatz

Urchatz represents a very important step in the growth process. It is hand washing with no Beracha. One might think that it is meaningless, it carries no actual value. But no, just making that small step, no matter how incomplete, can be the beginning of huge changes. We later wash our hands with a Beracha to show how far we've come, just as the Jews did in their process of leaving Egypt.

2. Urchatz

The **Belzer Rebbe** felt that Urchatz was not only about washing before Karpas, it is because the Haggadah is a form of Tefillah. We even say Hallel and other parts of Davening. Just as we should wash our hands before we daven, we also need to wash our hands before the Haggadah. Therefore, even someone who will not eat Karpas needs to wash their hands.

3. Karpas:

How does Karpas relate to Yitziat Mitzrayim? **Rav Moshe Yaakov Kanner of Toronto** in Kol HaTorah says that in Bamidbar 11:5 it says that the Jews complained about the Ma'an, longing for the fish and vegetables they ate in Egypt:

זָכְרָנוּ אֶת־הַדֶּגֶה אֲשֶׁר־נֹאכַל בְּמִצְרַיִם חֲנֹם אֶת הַקִּשְׁאִים וְאֶת הָאֲבֹטְחִים וְאֶת־הַחֲצִיר וְאֶת־הַבָּצְלִים וְאֶת־הַשּׁוּמִים

The Ramban explains that in Egypt when they worked the fields they were allowed to eat some of the produce, which they were happy to do since all they ate in Egypt was Matzah. So the Karpas represents those vegetables, and can be a lesson how easily we can look back at bad times and only remember the good. Sometimes to our own detriment.

4. Ha Lachmeanyah

The Tur in Orech Chayim 417 says that the three Moadim are connected to the three Avos. Avraham represents Pesach, as he gave Ugot to the angels during Pesach, as it says in Bereishis 18:6:

(ו) וַיֹּמֶר אַבְרָהָם הֲאֵלֶּה אֶל־שָׂרָה וַיֹּאמֶר מִהֲרִי שְׁלֹשׁ סָאִים קֹמַח סֵלֶת לִישִׁי וְעֹשִׂי עֲגוֹת

Yitzchak is Shavuot because the Shofar blown at Har Sinai was from the Akeida and Yaakov is Sukkos because it says in Bereishis 33:17:

(יז) וַיַּעֲקֹב נָסַע סֹכֶתָה וַיָּבֶן לָוּ בֵּית וַלְמִקְנֵהוּ עָשָׂה סֹכֶת עַל־כֵּן קָרָא שְׁם־הַמָּקוֹם סֹכֶת

Rav Kanner says this is why specifically on Pesach we invite everyone to come and join us, to bring out Avraham's middah of Chesed.

5. V'Higadeta LiBincha

Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky was asked how a parent is supposed to fulfill the Mitzvah of telling your children about Yetzias Mitzrayim when they've already learned so much about it in school. Your summary of the story is boring to them at this point. He answers that the purpose of the Mitzvah is to

ensure the children gain a sense of Emunah about Yetzias Mitzrayim, so if the children are primarily speaking and the pride and confidence they get from giving Divrei Torah helps strengthen their emunah, then you can certainly fulfill the Mitzvah that was as well!

6. Avadim Hayinu

“Mitzvah Aleinu LeSaper B’Yetziyat Mitrayim”: Of course the Mitzvah is on us, who else would it be on?

The **Kedushas Levi** in Parshat Bo explains that Pesach is called both Chag HaMatzos and Chag HaPesach. Matzah represents our glory in leaving Egypt quickly, Pesach represents Hashem’s glory in saving and protecting us. We both deserve credit. The Mitzvah is on us to tell the story, and then Hashem reciprocates with His love in return.

7. Kol HaMarbeh L’Saper

What is the nature of this Mitzvah? **The Rebbi from Santz** says that while in Egypt we don’t see the Jews Daven, they only cry. If you mix the letters of “Paroah around you get “Peh Rah”, an inability to speak well. After they leave Egypt they can praise Hashem, “AZ Yashir...” They then get a “Peh Sach”, a mouth that talks-that doesn’t stop praising Hashem, so the more we talk about it the better. Difference between Chametz and Matzah is Heh to Chet. Chet is closed, Heh is open. On Pesach we open up.

8. Bnei Brak

The Sfas Emes points out that the Haggadah never says that the five Rabbis stayed up all night on Pesach, it could have been during the year. Rebbi Eliezer was from Lod, and we see elsewhere that he praises people who stay home for Yom Tov. He couldn’t have been there on Yom Tov. Sfas Emes says we see the Mitzvah to tell the story is a constant Mitzvah, applies 24/7, which is why there is no beracha for Sippur Yerziat Mitrayim.

9. Baruch SheNatan-Kineged Arbah Banim

Harav Aharon Sarasky asks: why are these two sections linked in the same paragraph? The Gemara in **Shabbos 89a** describes the angels fear in Hashem giving the Torah to the Jewish people. Ultimately Hashem convinces them to agree. He asks them “can you murder?” and they say no. He asks them “do you get jealous or have a Yetzer Harah?” They say no. So, Hashem says, clearly the Torah isn’t for you. We see that the case for human beings deserving the Torah is not through our perfection but our frailties. So what’s the best way to represent the Torah? With the 4 sons, with all of their imperfections.

10. Rasha-Blunt his teeth

Why does it say to blunt his teeth? What’s the connection between the Rasha and teeth? The **Sefas Emes** connects the four questions and the four sons. The second son is the Rasha and the second question is about Maror. What’s the connection between Maror and the Rasha? The Gemara in Pesachim 115b says that one who swallows the maror without chewing does not fulfill the Mitzvah, and the Rambam Paskens that way l’halacha. The Rasha is trying to avoid the bitterness, the difficult questions. He is trying to “swallow the Maror”, which leads to his anxiety at the Seder. He doesn’t want to be forced to think about Hashem, about his heritage. So we blunt his teeth as if to say to use his teeth, chew the maror, engage tonight and embrace the complexity and vulnerability that comes with it.

11. Tam

The essence of a Tam is truth, and obsession with truth. Tam in Gematria is one aleph away from **אמת**. The reverse of Tam is **מת**, death, because the Tam sees the world through the prism of truth he is aware of his own mortality. His struggle is being optimistic and hopeful in a world that truly has so much suffering, so we need to remind him that just as Hashem saved the Jews from slavery Hashem can help all those who are suffering.

12. The Son Who Can't Ask

The Belzer Rebbi saw this son as the highest level of the four. How? He says when it comes to Tefillah we often ask Hashem for specific things, which assumes we know what we need and ask for Hashem to provide it. A higher level is to simply say, "Hashem, please provide me with what I need". It shows a tremendous humility and emunah. The Aino Yodeah Lishol doesn't know what to ask, because he doesn't presume he knows what to ask from Hashem. We respond, "You open his mouth", meaning Hashem speaks for him, telling him what he needs.

13. The Son Who Can't Ask

Why does it say "At Petach Lo" and not "Ata" in the masculine? A lesson that in such cases we need to have a softer and more sensitive approach. A more feminine approach, if you will.

14. Macat Bechorot

Why is the final plague the only one called "Macat"? The **Sanzer Rebbi** explains that the Medrish says that Hashem warned Paroah that every first born would be killed. How did the firstborn feel about that? They wanted the Jews freed immediately to prevent the plague, but their elders wouldn't do it. So a civil war broke out. So there were really two plagues, the civil war and the first born dying.

15. Dayenu

A common question on Dayenu is the line: "If you brought us close to Har Sinai but did not give us the Torah, dayeinu!" What would have been gained by standing before Har Sinai if we hadn't received the Torah? In the introduction to the sefer **Siftei Tzadik, Rabbi Yehezkel Biderman, the son-in-law of the Piltzer Rebbe**, quotes the gemara in Nedarim 20a, which states, "If someone does not have a sense of shame then we know their ancestors were not at Har Sinai". The **Rosh and the Ran** both explain that we received that Middah when we camped at Har Sinai, before receiving the Torah. This trait became so essential to the character of the Jewish people that it would have been worthwhile to go to Har Sinai just for that.

16. Pesach, Matzah, Maror

Why is there a need to mention these three things? **Rav Aryeh Tzvi Frommer**, a Polish Posek who was murdered in Majdanek, explained that on Sukkos the Torah clearly tells us the intent of Sukkah:

למען ידעו דרתיכם כי בסכות הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציא אותם מארץ מצרים אני יקוק אלהיכם

The Bach Paskens (Orech Chaim 635) that to fulfill the Mitzvah according to the Torah you need to have that intention when doing the Mitzvah. Sukkos and Pesach are interconnected and we learn many

Halachos from each other from the Gezerah Shavah. So, just as we need intent on Sukkos we need it on Pesach as well.

17. Pesach

We say that Hashem passed over the Jews' houses and saved their homes. If he passed over them didn't he, by definition, save them? The **Belzer Rebbe** explained that not only did none of the Jews prematurely die in the plague, even someone whose time it was to pass away naturally didn't die to fully distinguish between what was happening to the Jews versus the Egyptians. That is the reference of "Their houses were saved"

18. B'Chol Dor V'Dor

The **Arugas HaBosem (Moshe Greenwald (1853–1910), Rav of Chust)** asked why this part is necessary. In the beginning of the Seder we say that if Hashem had not taken them out of Egypt we would have still been there. Isn't this the same message? He quotes the gemara in Sotah that a maidservant who crossed the Yam Suf saw Hashem more clearly than Yechezkel HaNavih. In the beginning of the Seder we are reminded to view ourselves as slaves, here we are being told to view ourselves like that maidservant and strive for the same level of Emunah.

19. Afikoman:

Rav Naftali Stern: Why is there a custom to steal the Afikoman? We need to remember every miracle of Yitziat Mitzrayim. The Passuk says, "But against the children of Israel, no dog shall whet its tongue, against neither man nor beast, so that you shall know that Hashem will have differentiated between Egypt and Israel. Hashem's miracle was that even dogs could distinguish between Jews and Egyptians. The Gemara in Pesachim says that the nature of dogs is to steal (Pesachim 113a), so the stealing of the Afikoman is our way of remembering that miracle.

20. Eliyahu HaNavih

Why do we actually pour a fifth cup for Eliyahu HaNavih? It's one thing to sing about him, but actually pour a cup? It seems like putting out cookies and milk for Santa Claus. The Zaddik from Warsaw, The Ga'on **Rabbi Chaim Ya'akov Naftali Zilberberg (1850-1930)**, a student of Rav Yisrael Salanter, explained as follows. He says there are really five languages of Geulah, the 5th, "And I will bring", refers to bringing us to Eretz Yisrael. That is a reference to the future geulah. So this 5th cup is a reference to Mashiach, which Eliyahu will help usher in. We have a physical 5th cup so we can have something tangible to help us see Mashiach's arrival as something real and grounded in reality.