

Kaddeish : Rav Shraga Feivel Mendelowiz ztl. noted the similarity of the Cheirus on Shabbos and on Pesach. Pesach celebrates the emancipation from slavery while Shabbos is our emancipation from the week. The idea of liberty involves 2 components – physical and spiritual independence. Physical independence is the Pesach part of Shabbos (after all, Pesach night is identified as a Shabbos as per the Torah's language concerning Sfirah – MeeMacharas HaShabbos). But even the weekly Shabbos is a physical and spiritual freedom. Man is released from the responsibilities of thinking about his physical needs having already cared for them before Shabbos. He now has time to think about the spiritual and to exist on a loftier plain.

4 cups (Havdala) – The Meshech Chochma notes that it is apropos that the 4 cups parallel the 4 languages of Geulah. The Jews separated themselves through these languages and nothing separates Jews from the nations more than wine. Wine usually creates problems when we are with the nations of the world. On the night of Pesach, we have the ability to even be liberated from the binding to the nations.

SheHeChiyanu – Why do we recite it at Kiddush but not on Sefirah or Kiddush Levana? **Rav Eitam Henkin Hy"D** suggested that when the entire mitzvah is about the sanctification of time and the ability to count it – as by Kiddush Levana and Sfirah, an additional Beracha of SheHeChianu is superfluous.

Karpas - R. Nachman of Breslov writes that karpas is animal food. After Adam ate from the eitz hada'as, Adam complained: how can me and the donkey eat the same food? To this HaShem responded בזעת רגלך תאכל לחם. This was a beracha. Vegetables are essentially the same thing no matter what we do to them. That is the limitation of what animals can eat on their own. However, we have the ability to turn vegetation into bread. The seder begins with karpas and ends with matzah because we have the choice to use our freedom to be animals or to use it to be humans. (Contributed by Rabbi S. Silber & R. Josh Flug)

Yachatz – Rav Kook ztl. pointed out that there are 2 types of eating that we do. One is a spiritual consumption wherein every bite adds to the Oneg and spiritual delight. At the same time, there is a physical satiation that comes with the eating of every morsel that handles one's physical needs. One needs the spiritual component to give purpose to one's eating but an ascetic who never eats will not survive. Therefore normally we seek a Sheleimus in our eating (hence we make Hamotzee on a Shalem even if smaller than a broken component – RJS). However on Pesach night, we recall that the bounty (both spiritual and physical) could not have been achieved without the pressure of the Shibbud. Thus, stripped of all spirit – recalling only the physical starvation we still managed to become who we are. This teaches us that there is no challenge in life that makes us so low that we cannot overcome. No matter how mundane (planting and farming), there is spirit to be found in our ventures.

Ha Lachma Anya- R. Yisrael Meir Lau Shlita tells a story about a Seder he was conducting on an air force base. A young pilot asked: how could we say השתא עבדי ישראל? These aren't true – right now I am in Israel and I am free. He answered that when he used to watch Gedolim perform Viduy, they used to cry. Why did they cry? They didn't violate these Aveiros! Because they were crying for all of Klal Yisrael. R. Lau then said that that someone living in Eretz Yisrael observing the Seder might be free, but what about all of the other people who not only live outside of Israel but have no connection to Judaism. Are they free? Who is going to take responsibility for them?

A similar idea can be found in a story mentioned by R. Jonathan Sacks about Primo Levi who realized that he was truly liberated from Auschwitz when people started sharing bread with one another. Rav Soloveitchik mentioned that we open with Ha Lachma Anya because slaves don't have the right to invite others for a meal and by inviting others, we show that we are not slaves. (Contributed by Rabbi S. Silber and R. Josh Flug)

Mah Nishtana – IT is interesting that the style of Maggid is Q & A. Why must we use this style instead of simply storytelling? **Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl.** (Rosh Yeshivas Mir and father of Rav Refoel Shmuellevitz ztl.) explained that we have an inherent need to make the old emotional experiences fresh when we relive them. (See Points to Ponder on Shabbos HaChodesh 5776). The best way to do so is by bringing a newness and a freshness to them. The Seder experience is one we not only retell but rather relive. The difference is whether we are emotionally connected to it. In order to emotionally connect, there needs to be a freshness in the connection.

Avadim Hayeenu – The Gemara (Pesachim 116a) notes that there are 2 opinions as to whether the trip through Maggid of Genus to Shevach (negative to praise) is from the Avadim Hayeenu or the idea that MeeTechilah Ovdei Avoda Zara Hayu Avoseinu. **Rav Belsky ztl.** explained that the goal of understanding the slavery is to help us experience and appreciate the brilliance of the freedom. Since the slavery contained 2 components – both physical and spiritual, the Machlokes surrounds which option is the better starting point from which to appreciate the exodus. Rav prefers the people to have a perspective on their low spiritual plane and from there to appreciate Hashem's Rachamim in the redemption and the spiritual guidance that came from at that time. Shmuel prefers us to focus on the physical slavery and the physical freedom and from there to appreciate Hashem's Chessed in the process.

Seder in Bnei Brak – **Rav Belsky ztl.** asked why the Rabbis were not exempt from the Shema since Osek B'Mitzvah Patur min HaMitzva? He answered that there are 2 aspects of the mitzvah of remembering Yetzias Mitzrayim – daily Zechira and the mitzvah of Leil HaSeder of Sippur. It seems as if the Mitzva of Sippur ends at daybreak. Therefore the students told them that the time for Sippur was over and the time for Zechira by day had begun.

Baruch SheNasan Torah – There is a vast divide between Judaism and the reigning Greek culture. The former identifies with the soul, the latter with the intellect. The former with the heart, the Greeks with the mind alone. Character is crucial to the Jewish pinnacle of thought development, while wisdom and understanding is the end of the Greek experience. **Rav Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz ztl.** pointed out that these differences go all the way back to the giving of the Torah. The Sianaitic experience was vastly different than the rules of the culture of Mount Olympus. The twinning of the 2 is impossible.

What is this service to You – Why is the Rasha's question so bad that it makes him a Rasha? **Rav Yehuda Copperman ztl.** noted that a similar concept exists in Yehoshua (4:5-7) when the people crossed the Yarden and were told to set stones as a reminder to fact that the Yarden split because of Hashem. Rav Copperman added that there is a difference between the stress on the nation and the stress on the Aron. When people are present at the event then they do not need the sign in order to remind themselves of the answer to the questions tomorrow. The real tomorrow needing the reminder is in the future. Similarly here at the Seder where we speak of a Ben (as opposed to grandchildren) who rejects the service, we need to understand that he ignores the reality of his experience. That effort to deny what he knows, is what makes him a Rasha.

4 sons - Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ztl. noted that at the end of Parashas Bo, the Torah tells us about the obligation to bring the Pesach sacrifice, and adds: "You shall tell your son, on that day, saying: Because of this God acted for me, when I came out of Egypt" (Shemot 13:8). The Torah makes no mention of the question that prompts this response, nor can we know what the questioner was trying to get at. However, we do learn that part of the commandment of the Pesach sacrifice is to convey the commandment onward and to tell the accompanying story to one's children and future generations. The reason for this is clear: the Torah must continue to be passed down beyond the generation of those who left Egypt, and hence the story must be retold. It is for this reason that the Torah omits to mention any particular situation in which this response is elicited; rather, it is "on that day" – any regular, normal day that may be in the future.

Earlier, however, the Torah presents a different scenario, where the telling is prompted by a specific question: "It shall be, when your children say to you, 'What is this service to you?' You shall say, 'It is a Pesach offering to God...'" (Shemot 12:26-27). The Torah does not describe this question as arising out of nowhere, without any context; rather, it arises at a specific time: "It shall be, when you come to the land that the Lord will give you as He promised..." (12:25). From this perspective, the situation that the Torah is describing is familiar to us – not only from the time of Bnei Yisrael's first entry into the land, but also from the beginnings of modern Jewish settlement in Eretz Yisrael. The question that is posed here is as follows: 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 is in essence a demand to abandon the mitzvot, because – as the questioners see it – these are necessary only for an external reason, to create a nation that is consolidated around something. Therefore, now that we have returned to our homeland, the mitzvot are no longer necessary. This approach is expressed in the famous dictum of Achad Ha'am that "More than the Jews have kept the Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jews."

However, the question may also be interpreted not as a casting off and abandonment, but rather in a less extreme – and hence, perhaps, more dangerous – sense. The question here does not mean to annul Divine service, but rather to question its particular form: "What is THIS service to you?" This demand is not for uprooting and rejecting, but rather for change and adaptation to reality. In this sense, we must understand exactly how the Torah responds to such a demand and how we are to contend with it.

On the surface, the Torah's reply seems unintelligible, unrelated to the question: "You shall say: It is a Pesach offering to God, Who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He struck the Egyptians and saved our children, and the nation kneeled and prostrated themselves." Upon closer examination, though, we find here a fundamental lesson.

The parents' answer relates to the commandment of "Pesach dorot," the Pesach sacrifice brought in future generations. The original Pesach sacrifice that the Jews brought in Egypt was quite different: they took a bunch of hyssop, spread the blood on their doorposts, took the sheep on the tenth day of the month, etc. All of these obligations are absent from the celebration of Pesach in later generations.

Thus, in this statement we are effectively telling our children that there is room for innovation and change where necessary, in accordance with a changing reality; the commandment of the Pesach sacrifice in fact symbolizes this change. However, we must also bear in mind the final words of the verse: "And the people kneeled and prostrated themselves." Change is essential, and the great Torah sages throughout history have applied Halakha to the situation of each generation. But all of this can take place only on condition that it is undertaken with complete commitment to Halakha and its obligations, rather than out of a desire to cast away or to submit oneself to fashionable philosophies.

There is a tendency among parents, when questioned by their children, to dismiss the questions and to remain frozen and inflexible in their position. Yet sometimes there is an opposite tendency to submit altogether to the spirit of the times and to youthful impatience, leading to a shift in the very fundamentals of our religion for the sake of making life easier. The Torah, in its answer here to the children, attempts to indicate a middle path that we should observe in every generation.

On the one hand, we must preserve the Torah from any attempt at uprooting commandments or fundamental principles; on the other hand, we must be open to change in certain points if it is truly necessary. The basis for any such decision must be the understanding that the Torah was given to us in order for us to observe it, not for our convenience, and any change must come from an appreciation and internalization of the greatness and depth of the Torah, as well as an absolute commitment to Torah and its values: "And the people kneeled and they prostrated themselves."

Yachol Mei Rosh Chodesh – The Tosher Rebbe ztl. (Rav Meshulam Feivish Lowy) pointed out that the job of the Jew throughout the month of Nissan is the revelation of Hashem's sovereignty over the world. This process of Hamalachas Hashem begins with the person's acceptance of Hashem's sovereignty over himself. That begins on Rosh Chodesh – HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem – it starts with the person over himself and flows forward to other people. The process starts with a personal Bittul Atzmis and that is the job of the process of cleaning and Biur HaChometz of the soul.

Baruch Shmoer – Rav Belsky ztl. compared this to the author sitting down to write a book. First, he ponders the plot and only thereafter the setting, the background and the details. Irrespective of the number of words he uses, it is still the plot that is the focus of his writing. The same is true with the story here. The goal Hashem wanted was to honor his promise in Bris Bein HaBesarim. He focused on keeping his word. The rest of the details were merely contextual.

And I took Avraham from the other side of the River and I led him (Vo'Oleich) throughout the land of Canaan – The first command from Hashem to Avraham should have been to "leave" – Tzei as opposed to Lech Lecha? Why the stress on the "Halicha"? **Rav Vosner ztl.** suggested that one leaves a place only once but Halicha is perpetual. Avraham was to perpetually distance himself from the Avodah Zara of his past and thus the stress is on the Halicha.

VaYomer Yehoshua el Kol HaAm Koh Amar Hashem – Rav Vosner ztl noted that the inheriting of the land by Avraham and later by Yehoshua were entirely different. Avraham's acquiring of the land was what provided the land with its kedusha and Segulah. It also created that legacy unique to the children of the Avos as opposed to all other nations. Yehoshua's conquering of the land provided the land with the obligations of Mitzvos HaTiluyos BaAretz

Hashem calculated the Keitz – So when the possuk says 400 years, is it in error? And why does Hashem tell this to Avraham 30 years before the birth of his son? **Rav Vosner ztl.** explained that with each good deed that Avraham did, he created Malachim. The Yalkut Reuveini notes that these very Malachim were present in Mitzrayim and were involved in the Geulah. Thus, the count of 430 years included the Malachim created from this moment of Bris Bein HaBesarim and they worked toward paying off the debt for 430 years even though the Jews were enslaved for 210 years.

Lavan wanted to destroy everything – Where is it clear that Lavan tried to uproot “everything?” **Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky zt”l** explains that the source for stating that Lavan wanted to destroy everything is to be found in the deal that they made together. While Lavan swore in the name of the God of Nachor and Avraham, Yaakov only mentioned Yitzchak. According to Rav Yaakov ztl. Yaakov and Lavan, by choosing different fathers by whom to connect, were sending clear additional messages to each other. Lavan desired to have his family and Yaakov's family mingle and co-exist. That is why Lavan connects Avrohom's G-d to Nachor's god, with Terach as the common denominator. By making this connection, Lavan is stating to Yaakov that since we share the same "yichus (lineage)," we are really one family. Yaakov, by connecting himself to Yitzchok, was declaring that although we originate from one great grandfather, we are two distinctly different families. With this declaration, Yaakov clearly expressed that he did not desire to associate any further with Lavan, since he knew quite well that Lavan's influence would corrupt his family and assimilate them into oblivion. Therefore, although Yaakov was making a covenant with Lavan, he was determined to clarify that it was only a peace pact, not a desire to live together. Ergo, Lavan's desire to unite his family with Yaakov's, in essence, is a plan of destruction for the Jewish people.

The Possukim from Parshas Bikkurim: Why does the one bringing the Bikkurim spend so much time discussing Arami oved Avi? The **Tosher Rebbe ztl.** (Rav Meshulam Feivish Lowy) explains that the goal of man's work in this world is to free the Nitzotzos hiding in the straits of the mundane. This was the reason for the slavery in Mitzrayim – to open the 202 Nitzotzos to be gathered from there too. Thus, the one bringing Bikkurim notes that his work was completed with the same spiritual intention as the Jews' slavery in Mitzrayim. (Based on this, the reason why we, at the Seder use these possukim in description as opposed to those in Shemos would be based on the same lesson – it is not about the set table and the gold and silver – the ultimate Rechush we left with was a result of the sparks we freed.)

Finger and hand – What is the difference between Etzba and Yad? **Rav Belsky ztl.** noted that a finger guides and a hand hits. The early makkos were designed to direct Pharaoh to the proper path. Hence, there was a respite between the maakos to allow the Egyptians a chance to contemplate the truth and correct themselves. The later Makkos at the sea were there to show all the Great hand of Hashem. There was no need to separate the makkos. All fifty came at once.

It teaches us that they were Mitzuyanim there – **Rav Shach ztl.** asked what the merit of being **Mitzuyan** was? He explained that it was in the merit of the Sefer Yuchasin that was studied on the day off (Shabbos) provided to the slaves. Rav Shach ztl. explained that this sefer Yuchasin was a sefer of History to explain the positive actions of the previous generations going back to Adam. This, explained Rav Shach, is the purpose of history – to study the earlier generations in order to understand exactly what they did to find favor in Hashem's eyes.

Asher Pasach – Why is the idea of Pesach (passing over) so crucial to the holiday? **The Tosher Rebbe ztl. (Rav Meshulam Feivish Lowy)** noted that when the Jews left Mitzrayim, their spiritual level was low. They could not merit spiritual salvation in the normal course of events. It was the action of Pasach – Dilug – that helped get them out of Mitzrayim. It is the same type of opportunity at the beginning of Shabbos when the detachment from the mundane is difficult and without the assistance of Hashem in the process, we would lose the spiritual awareness (itarusei D'Lieila) of Shabbos at the outset. Perhaps, suggests the Rebbe, this is why the first day of Pesach is referred to, as Shabbos.

Maror – It sounds as if we eat Maror in order to remind us of the bitterness. Yet, they didn't need a reminder in Mitzrayim! Why did they eat it there? **Rav Meshulam Dovid Soloveitchik Shlita** (brother of the late Rav Meir Soloveitchik ztl. Rosh Yeshivas Brisk) suggested that simply, they had stopped working

and did not feel the slavery the same way. He added that the entire section would not have applied in Pesach mitzrayim – the Pesach of Pasach and the Matzo of being sent out quickly also had not happened yet. This underscores the essential message of the Jew. We perform Mitzvos because we are commanded to. The future reasoning will become apparent as it did but first and foremost the reason we do things is because of the command.

L'iros Es Atzmo/L'Haros Es Atzmo – What is the difference between our version and that of the Semag (“leharos”)? **Rav Shach** explained that for the purpose of hallel and hodaah it would be enough for one to see himself. For it is not the fanfare and demonstration that shows someone what he feels. However, because of the Possuk of V’Heegateta which is brought as a proof, one could/should be more demonstrative.

Koreich – Is the language “Pesach Matza U’maror” or just Matza U’Maror”? **R. Yochanan Sofer, the Erloi Rebbe ztl.** explained that the 2 languages seem dependent on the difference between the obligation and the personal practice of Hillel. The learning from the Possuk included the idea of only Matza and Maror while the personal practice of Hillel was to eat them all together. Hillel did so since he saw the eating of all three as one large mitzvah – consistent with his concern that if one ate the Pesach alone he might come to think one could eat matza and maror alone. The critical differential in the paragraph is the issue of whether the what we do now is the focus or is it what Hillel did personally. This would explain the machlokes.

Bareich - Rabbi Avrohom Herman Shlita explained the concept of Mussar based on the writings and Schmoozin of **Rav Henoah Leibowitz ztl.** as containing three components: Chochmas Hamussar – the basis for the mussar a person learns, Chinuch HaMussar or the practical steps that the Chochma leads to and Hisbaalus Hamussar – or owning it completely and including the emotional component. In reflection, I realized that we do the same three steps in bentching --- Achalta (the impetus of blessing Hashem) Savatee (the practical moment of bentching – why I should offer blessing) and Beracha – the Hisbaalus of bentching – Kol Atzmosai Tomarna. This can explain why we put the “kitchen sink” into our Hodaah of Birkas HaMazon – including Yetzias Mitzrayim, Bris, Eretz Yisrael Torah etc. It is these components that give Us Baalus over the world.

Sefiras HaOmer – When one makes the Beracha with the wrong intended date in mind but ultimately makes the correct count why is there any discussion as to whether he fulfilled his Halachic obligation? **Rav Yosef Weiss ztl.** debated the issue of whether the Mitzva of Sefirah is a mitzvah of completing a necessary count of 50 days in which case he did what he needed to, or whether each day of the Sefirah is specific and part of the mandatory self improvement process or connection process toward the 50 days.

Nirtza – Rav Chaim Poupko Shlita, Assistant Rabbi Ahavas Torah, President of the RCBC shared the thought of Rav Kook that Nirtza is the only step of the Seder that has a verb that is in the passive voice. Rav Kook explained that once we get to that pinnacle, the Ritzui and love bubbles over – hence the passive voice. He then added that in his opinion this is the reason why Nirtza contains so much music and latent spiritual practice as opposed to that which has Halachic order to it – until we get to the point of the relationship with Hashem where it is intuitive, Halacha guides us exactly how to live and follow every step of our lives. Once we get there, the Halachic process can be more intuited and the focus of our work – more spiritual.