

# TORAS AVIGDOR

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

WITH R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

PESACH | פסח

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## Chodesh Nissan



**Why does it say that בניסן נגאלו ובניסן עתידים להיגאל – that in Nissan we were redeemed from Egypt, and in Nissan we are going to be redeemed again?**



About Hakadosh Baruch Hu it says: זכר עשה לנפלאותיו – He makes a memorial for His wonderful deeds. He wants us to remember the wonderful deeds He did for us. And therefore, just like He tells us that every 15th of Nissan we should celebrate Pesach because that's when

it happened, so too He will make another great Pesach, a great *geulah*, when He will take us out finally from *galus* and redeem us.

And according to this *ma'amar*, when it happens, it will happen in Nissan. Why? Because it will be a new form of Yetzias Mitzrayim. Of course, coming out of Mitzrayim is one of the biggest things in our history, but in the future, when Moshiach comes and Hakadosh Baruch Hu takes us out of this *galus*, it will be another *geulah* and it will be even greater than the *geulah* of Yetzias Mitzrayim. The *passuk* says that in those days they will no longer say, **חי השם אשר הוציא את עמו מארץ מצרים**. They won't praise Hashem anymore about Yetzias Mitzrayim. They will remember the old Yetzias Mitzrayim of Nissan and they will compare it to the new Yetzias Mitzrayim of Nissan, and they will say **חי השם** Who took us out of all the lands together. So it will be a new kind of Yetzias Mitzrayim, a going out from the nations altogether, forever.

And this *geulah* will be the greatest happiness, because living among the nations is a tremendous misfortune for us. We don't understand how much we are losing by living among the gentiles. Even in Eretz Yisrael you're living among Jewish gentiles. And therefore today, the *galus* is weighing on our minds and on our *neshamos*; we're imprisoned by gentile attitudes. Of course, we learn Torah and that helps; you're a *ben chorin* if you learn Torah, because it frees your mind from all the wickedness and foolishness of the surrounding culture. But no matter, all around us the *avirah*, the atmosphere, is saturated with *shtus* and lies, and it has an effect.

Evolution, liberalism, all the false religions – it's all foolishness; there's nothing to it. You see how silly their ways are, and how they are ruining themselves because of all of these lies. They are ruining their lives, these wicked people. And the problem is that we live among them, and we are being spoiled by them, too.

Being among the nations is a tremendous loss for us; that's what the *galus* means – suffering from the nations.

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But not only suffering physically. If the nations are good to us and tolerate us, that's even worse. When the nations persecuted us, that was a wall between them and us. But when the nations give us liberty and tolerance, that's the worst *gezeirah*, worse than the *gezeirah* of Hitler. Millions went lost because of the toleration and equality.

In the good old days when the Jews were in ghettos, we couldn't mix. When a Jew went out into the street, they spat on him and threw him into the gutter. And the result was that the Jew had no desire to mix with the outside world. And therefore, the *galus* today is worse than it was once upon a time. We're more in *galus* today than ever before.

And once upon a time, we only had *galus* among the nations; today, we are in *galus* among Yidden, too. In Eretz Yisrael, we are in *galus* among the *resha'im*. In America, too – we're in *galus* not only among the gentiles, but also among the Reformers and the *amei ha'arets*. It's a *galus*.

Of course, we do our best to fight back against wrong influences, but we're waiting to go free again in Nissan: “קבצנו והצילנו מן הגויים – Hashem, please save us from the nations, להודות לשם קדשך – so that we can praise Your holy name, ולהשתבח בתהילתך – and we will make ourselves better by praising You.” By praising You, Hashem, we become better. So please save us from the nations so that we should be able to do that. Give us the opportunity to praise You again in Nissan for Your miracles of the *geulah*.

## Season of Pesach



**Why is the Torah so interested that Pesach should fall out in Chodesh Ha'aviv (Spring)? What's the difference which season we celebrate Pesach?**



Why is the Torah interested that Pesach should come out in this month, in the spring month when things are growing?

And the answer is that the Torah wants us to celebrate Pesach with a certain amount of physical gratitude, physical happiness. Every Yom Tov you know

has two names. We call Shavuot the Yom Tov of the Giving of the Torah, but it's called Chag Habikurim in the Torah, the Yom Tov of the Ripe Fruits. How does that fit in? The answer is that when you're munching on a tasty ripe fruit, it's much easier to appreciate the giving of the Torah. That's why when you make a *siyum*, when you complete a *sefer* of the Torah, you eat. Why should you eat? What's eating got to do with studying Torah? The answer is, when you're eating, it's easier to appreciate the spiritual things.

And that's why Sukkos is called Chag Ha'asif, the Festival of the Ingathering of the Crops. Why mention crops? Who's talking about crops? We're talking now about remembering the *sukkos* that our forefathers made!

The answer is, then you have your harvest secure in your bins, and your storehouses are bursting with wheat, with barley, with rye, and you have big barrels full of wine and oil, and you're all set now for the winter, for a long winter of many good meals, of good times, then it's easier to celebrate the Yom Tov.

And that's why Pesach comes in the Aviv; that's when the grain is ready for reaping. It's for the purpose of making us more grateful and more capable of appreciating the lessons we're going to be studying all Pesach long.

Shabbos is the same; why do you have to eat *challo*s on Shabbos and drink wine? We should sit down at an empty table, with a white tablecloth if you wish, and the lady of the house should serve *chumashim* and that's all. And we should study about the creation of the world. The answer is, when you're eating *challah* and fish and chicken and other good things, it's easier to be grateful and be inspired to noble thoughts.

So remember, next time you pull in a boy from the street and try to make him observant, don't feed him only spiritual things; make sure there are a lot of peanuts on the table, and candy and cake and soda; soda is the most important of all! And as he drinks the soda, the message will go down with it.

And that's the whole Torah, the Torah is *Toras chaim*, the Torah of living. Our Torah is a Torah of living. And that's why there is no such thing as telling a man to be righteous and not to get married, to live alone in a cell all your life – that doesn't go; this type of stuff is not real; the Torah says that everybody should get married. Everybody!

All of our great men lived Torah lives and normal lives. The Torah is tied up with normal life according to the great expert of human nature – that’s Hakadosh Baruch Hu. If you divorce idealism from happy living, then it means you’re forcing it into an unnatural course that cannot succeed.

## Pesach Cleaning



**What is something we can think about while we’re busy with preparations for Pesach?**



One thing you can spend time on is appreciating that the Am Yisrael are *tzmei'im l'avodas Yotzram* – they’re thirsty for mitzvos. *Pashuteh* Jews are keeping the Torah with all their hearts. Men and women, boys and girls are getting ready for Pesach, and it’s not easy work but they’re doing it anyhow.

Some people want to dodge their work for Pesach – they want to go to a hotel. But those who are thirsty for mitzvos don’t dodge work. They want to work because it’s a mitzvah. It’s *shver*, it’s not easy – *heint* it’s doubly *shver* because *erev* Pesach is Shabbos but they’re happy to do it. They’re not going to dodge their responsibilities. Taking things in and out; bringing in the *Pesachdige keilim*, taking out the *chametz* – all kinds of preparations.

Now, I’m not interested in changing the curtains. Changing the curtains is not necessary. You want to make a spring house cleaning, you want to change the curtains, I’m *moichel* that. But to prepare for Pesach – it’s a very great mitzvah! And many, many, very *pashuteh* people are laboring to prepare for Pesach! You have to appreciate them. They’re *tzmei'im*, they’re thirsty for *avodas Yotzram*. We’re accustomed to seeing it so we don’t appreciate it, but now is a good time to think about it.

We should train ourselves to see the greatness of the Am Yisrael, how much people are willing to do in order to carry out the *pratim* of the mitzvos. And it’s a very important *shleimus* to appreciate that. No matter how great you are in *avodas Hashem*, how great you are in

knowledge of Torah, you must add this information, this appreciation of the Am Yisrael to your personality.

## The Korban Pesach



**What is one of the lessons that we can learn from the *korban Pesach*?**



In the Haggadah, we read, “ברמיך חיי – With the blood of the *korban Pesach* you will live.” What does that mean? Listen to me, because this is of the utmost importance. Because we were willing to throw away the ideas of the environment around us and to demonstrate that we are the servants of Hashem – that alone gave us the right to live forever. By slaughtering the god of the Egyptians, we were demonstrating that we disregard completely all the ideals of the gentiles; and because of that blood of the *korban Pesach*, Hashem said, “You will live.” ברמיך חיי.

We shouldn’t lose sight of this great significance of the *korban Pesach*. It’s two ideas but they are really one. Number one is that Hashem skipped over us. And why did he skip over us? Because we slaughtered the god of the Egyptians in their presence. Moshe Rabbeinu said: “הן נזבח את תועבת מצרים לעיניהם ולא יסקלנו” – Won’t the Egyptians stone us if we slaughter their *avodah zarah*?!” But we did it anyhow. And that’s why Hashem skipped over the Am Yisrael, and that’s why we’re going to live forever.

The *navi* says, “ברמיך חיי – You will live forever because of the blood that you shed.” Now, the *dam milah* was there, too, but the *dam* of the *korban Pesach* was a much more perilous thing to do. And it’s a symbol, actually, of what is expected of us. We are expected to slaughter all the ideals of the *umos ha’olam*. You must slaughter the ideal of literature. Literature is false. The literature of the gentile world is all false literature. It never happened. It’s fiction. People today have accustomed themselves to fiction, to drama, and it’s all false! People are being paid to act in a certain way. It’s all false. You must slaughter their movies. You must slaughter their music. You must slaughter all their sports.

A Jew is not interested in sports. No interest at all, unless he's exercising for himself, for his health. Otherwise, it's nothing.

When I was in Slabodka, somebody needed a visa to be able to come to America. Today he is one of the *gedolei hador* (The Rav was referring to Rav Elya Svei, רצ"ל). I was an American boy and I spoke a good English, so I went to the Consul to ask for the visa. So I spoke with the Consul and then he says, "Oh, you come from America? What's the score?" There were big baseball games going on in America, so he asks me, "What's the score?" The first thing you ask when you see a *landsman* is, "What's the score?" A *mishugas! Meshuganehs!*

When I came back from Europe, I was walking in Baltimore on the street, minding my own business, and somebody shouts out at me from across the street, "Mister, what's the score?" He's asking *me* for the score! People live with the idea that that's what's important. A man with a stick, hitting a ball. That's important. That's the big news. Newspapers have whole sections devoted to that.

So the Am Yisrael slaughtered this *avodah zarah* of all the things that are important to the nations. And they were demonstrating that it's a sin to be gentilized. It's a sin to be Americanized. You can be a good, loyal citizen, but don't become Americanized! As much as possible, you must rid yourself of all these gentile ideas. And when the Am Yisrael is able to slaughter all the *avodah zarah* – all the ideals and ideas and attitudes of the nations – then Hashem says, "If that's the case, then I'm going to skip over you. The destroyer will destroy everybody else but will skip over you." And that's one of the most important lessons that you can learn from the *korban Pesach*.

## Yetzias Mitzrayim



**You said that we must thank the Creator for taking us out of bondage. So my question is: What did we ever do to deserve such a bondage in the first place?**



Now, let me explain something to you. We must deal with the situation just as it is – whether we deserved it or didn't deserve it, that's a secondary question. The primary question is, what should be our reaction now that we were in bondage and He rescued us?

It's like a man who became ill and then he was healed, and now he's saying, "Why should I thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu for healing me? Why did He make me ill in the first place?" That's not a rational attitude.

Now, the truth is we can explain that, too: Maybe you made yourself ill? Maybe you were careless with your health? Or maybe you deserved some chastisement? You know, we say in the *brachah* of Refa'einu, והעלה רפואה – שלמה לכל מכותינו – We ask Hashem to heal all of our "blows." Why is sickness called *makkos*, blows? Because an illness is really a blow; the Father is hitting His children – He's rebuking us. Sickness is a criticism. We're not sick for nothing, so we call it a *makah*. So probably we earned that kind of treatment anyhow, or there was some other good reason for it.

The going down to Egypt – there was a very good reason for that. When our forefathers went into Egypt, they went for their benefit; we'll have time to discuss this maybe next time or some other time, but the sojourn in Egypt was a very big benefit for us.

But that's not the issue at hand – whatever the reason was, we were in Egypt; that's a fact. And we were enslaved; that's also a fact. And therefore, it's up to us to always have gratitude in our hearts to Hashem because of this deliverance from the bondage of Egypt.

## Yetzias Mitzrayim 2



**The Rav said in the *shiur* that at least two million Jews came out of Mitzrayim. Doesn't the Torah say that the number was 600,000?**



The Torah mentions 600,000 men between the ages of twenty and sixty: כל יוצאי צבא – All those who were of military age, that's all. But if you were twenty years old,

probably you have a father and a mother who brought you into this world. So therefore, every twenty-year-old person had parents. And there were grandparents, too; some of them were older than sixty. Then of course, you cannot have any men unless there are women in this world. So the 600,000 also had wives and therefore, there were wives and mothers and grandmothers and sisters and daughters. There were older men and younger boys, too. So altogether, if you have 600,000 men between twenty and sixty, you had at least two million people.

### Yetzias Mitzrayim 3



**Why did Moshe Rabbeinu tell Pharaoh that the Jews wanted to leave for three days if really his intention was to never return?**



That's a good question. When Moshe Rabbeinu proposed to leave Mitzrayim, he said three days. And by the way, when they took the items from the Mitzrim, they borrowed them. They told the Mitzrim that they were just borrowing. It's a good question.

You have to understand that everybody knew that once they would get out of Mitzrayim, they weren't coming back. Everybody knew that. Only that in order not to be insolent – you're talking to a king, after all – so Moshe Rabbeinu said three days.

Now, Pharaoh understood that they were trying to escape. He understood that. That's why he said, "Who's going with you?" He asked Moshe, "Will you leave over the children? Will you leave your cattle here?" So Moshe said, "We're leaving nothing here. Nothing." "Nothing?" said Pharaoh. "If that's the case, then I won't send you out." Pharaoh knew what was going on. He understood. So Moshe Rabbeinu said three days, because that was the polite way. The polite way was to ask, "Let us go for three days." It's really just a polite way of saying, "Goodbye! Forever!" (The Rav laughed.)

And when the Jews came to their Mitzri neighbors to borrow, what about that?! A Jew came to his next-door neighbor and asked, "Can you please lend me your golden

necklaces?" Lend? Sure; lend! The Egyptian was standing there *mamash malei eimas maves*. He was shaking in his pants, afraid that he was going to die. *Mamash* full of fear. Hashem was killing them. The Mitzrim were being killed on all sides. The firstborn were dying on all sides. *Umitzrayim mekabrim es asher hikah Hashem* (Bamidbar 33-4). All over Egypt they were burying their dead. So what do you expect this Egyptian to do? Not to give him the gold necklaces?! But just to be polite, the Jew said, "Can you lend me your necklaces?" It was only a polite way of taking the necklaces.

### Miracles Today



**I think that if the people here saw with their own eyes the plagues and Kriyas Yam Suf and the quail and the *mann* falling and all the *nissim* that Hashem did for us, they wouldn't have to depend on artificial and superficial enthusiasm when doing mitzvos. Don't you think we deserve today an injection from Hashem of real sensory perception?**



The question is as follows: Why doesn't Hakadosh Baruch Hu repeat for us the same miracles as He did for our forefathers?

And the answer is this – Hakadosh Baruch Hu hates miracles. You know, when a man gives his word, if he's an honest man he hates to take back his word. **הוא צוה ויעמוד** – Hashem commanded the world into being, and it stands. There's no such thing as nature; all the laws of nature are Hashem's will. If you throw something in the air and it falls down, that's Hashem's will that it should fall down. He established the law of gravity.

When Hakadosh Baruch Hu finds it necessary to suspend nature for certain reasons, it's done with the utmost unwillingness; it's against His word. It's not the *ness* that is His word, it's nature that is His word. The *ness* is an abrogation of His word; He doesn't want it. Only that at one time in history, at the beginning of our nation's history, Hakadosh Baruch Hu did these things to serve as a lesson for all generations to study. But after that, Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, "Look, I gave you the

lesson already. How many times do you want Me to break My word? The laws of nature – that’s what I want to follow.” Nature, that’s His word. And so today, anybody who wants to see Hashem can see Hashem in nature. Springtime, you can see Hashem on all sides if you’re really interested in seeing the truth.

However, if you want to see the lessons of history, they are available, too, and that’s why we study them – especially on Pesach night. If you study them properly, they’re going to go with you all the days of your life. It’s only laziness that you don’t do it. Can people really say, “I have tried, and I haven’t benefited by the examples of Yetzias Mitzrayim despite my efforts?” What efforts did you invest?! Did you sit down five minutes to picture the *makah of dam*? And five minutes is not even enough! But you never did it!

Like Reb Yisrael Salanter once said – he once came into a house of a Jew who asked him this question that you’re asking. Now this Jew was already a little bit modern, and Reb Yisrael saw that his daughter had taken singing lessons and she had a diploma from a singing school in Memel. So he said to the daughter, “Is this your diploma?” She said, “Yes.” So Reb Yisrael said, “I don’t believe you. Give me a demonstration of how you can sing.” So she said, “What do you mean?! Every visitor that comes here, I have to show how I can sing?! Here’s the diploma! They listened to my singing once; they examined me, and the diploma says so.”

“Aha,” Reb Yisrael said to the father, “You want miracles today, too? Hakadosh Baruch Hu should perform for you in every generation and break the laws of nature and show *nissim*? He did it once – that’s the testimonial; that’s the diploma hanging on the wall there. Study the diploma in the Torah; it’s all there, and you’ll see there all the things that Hakadosh Baruch Hu did. And if you put thought into it, if you really study them, those *nissim* will go along with you all the days of your life.”

## Pesach Hotels



**Why does the Rav think that going to a hotel for Pesach is such a big sin? A lot of *gedolim* do it.**



I don’t believe that *gedolim* do it. What is the terrible *chet* of going to a hotel for Pesach? I think I told you already. Pesach night, everybody knows, is one of the most sacred nights in Jewish life. The fact is, why do painters portray that scene more than any other subject? It’s because the Jewish nation understands that Pesach night is a sacred event. And to cheapen it by commercialism and community Sedarim is a sacrilege. If some people go, it’s because they’re plain sick; they’re invalids. And if you find people who are not sick and they go, you must know that they are not *gedolim*; they are far from *gedolim*. They are Americanized, and the word *gedolim* doesn’t apply to them at all.

## Matzah Balls



**What’s the reason for the minhag to eat matzah balls on Pesach?**



This man here is asking why we eat matzah *kneidelech* on Pesach. Well, first of all, not everybody eats it, so I’m not speaking for everybody. But as far as those who do, what’s the reason for eating it? Because it tastes good.

## The Haggadah



**Who is the author of the Haggadah?**



And the answer is, who is the author of the Medrash Rabbah or of the Shas? The Jewish people. The Haggadah was created by the Jewish people. It’s not one author. It’s a number of things that were said by many, and it grew by accretion.

And it’s still growing. Because although today nobody has the audacity to insert new parts into the printed text, but *peirushim* and additions are growing by leaps and bounds. Haggadahs today are like mushrooms after

a rain – there are all kinds sprouting. And it's not a bad idea to grace your table with all kinds because it'll make it more interesting. But that's the authorship. The authorship is the Jewish people.

## The Haggadah 2



**In this past week's parshah, we read about the one who brings bikurim, the first fruits of his field, to the Beis Hamikdash to express gratitude to Hashem. What is the reason that he has to make the declaration of ארמי אובר אבי? Why does he have to mention that Avraham Avinu was a lost Aramean, a wandering person who left his home and had to travel through foreign lands?**



It's a principle that the Gemara teaches us: מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח – We begin our expressions of gratitude with our low state, and we conclude with our celebrated state. That's why on Pesach we start with "הא לחמא עניא" – This is the bread of affliction," because when a man is successful, he should always remember the days of his poverty. It's a sickness of mankind to forget the past and not be grateful. And therefore, we begin thanking Hashem by remembering the years of our affliction; we talk about the early time of our history when Avraham Avinu left his family on his own and he was traveling alone as a stranger in strange lands. And we work our way up until we come to, "And now we are in the land that You promised our fathers and we are enjoying the happiness of living in Eretz Yisrael."

It's a lesson for us. Every time a person succeeds, he should never forget his poor days. That's why when the Chashmona'im made a feast to celebrate their victories, they used to put poor herbs, *meluchim*, on their table. And they said, "Our forefathers used to eat *meluchim*, poor herbs, when they were building the Beis Hamikdash." They put the inexpensive herbs on their golden tables because they didn't want to forget their poor beginning.

So any one of you who will someday succeed and become a multi-millionaire, once in a while bring forth some of the old habiliments, some of the old clothing that you left over, as a way of remembering the days

when you didn't dress in gold and diamonds. You take out your old worn-out suit as a *zecher* and look at it. And that will encourage you in your gratitude to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

## Shefoch Chamas'cha



**Why is it that we say, "שפוך חמתך אל הגוים" – Hashem, pour out Your wrath on the nations" specifically when we open the door for Eliyahu?**



Listen to me. The mother went out shopping, and while the mother was away the bigger boy was bullying the little one. So as soon as the door opens and the mother comes in, the little one runs over to his mother and pulls on her skirt, "Ma, could you deal with him? Hit him, hit him."

Eliyahu is coming to usher in the era of justice. And so, as he comes in the door, we run over to him and we're saying, "שפוך חמתך, hit them; hit the nations that have tortured and killed us."

## The Makkos and Vengeance



**Why do we say only Hallel Katan, half Hallel, on the last days of Pesach? Isn't that because of מעשה ירי מועשה ירי (Megillah 10b)? Aren't we sad that Egyptians were drowned, and we therefore don't want to sing to Hashem?**



The answer is not because of מעשה ירי טובעים בים. There is no Gemara that says that this is the reason for not saying full Hallel on the last days of Pesach. I know that it's frequently quoted, and people think it's a Gemara. There is no Gemara to that effect. And even if you show me a *medrash* that says it, you're misinterpreting the *medrash*.

The reason why we say only half Hallel is because there was a *takanah* that on the first day of Pesach – for

us, the first two days – that we have to say Hallel. There is no reason, no *takanah*, to say Hallel on the other days. The other days it was only a *minhag* to say Hallel. And therefore, because there was no *takanah*, they couldn't say the whole Hallel, so they said half Hallel. Half Hallel is only a *minhag* – the *takanah* was only the first day.

Now, on Sukkos the *takanah* was to say Hallel every day, because on Sukkos every day there was a different *korban tzibbur* brought in the Beis Hamikdash. Because every day was something new and special, like its own *yom tov*, so each day was also made special with the whole Hallel. Pesach, however, has the same *korban* every day, and that's the difference – that's why we say only half Hallel on all the other days of Pesach.

But this reason that you give, you heard from others, and I've heard it as well many times, but there is no real Talmudic authority that says that. Maybe in some *sefer* it's written, but we have a right to discount it.



**The Gemara says that when the Egyptians were drowning in the Yam Suf and the *malachim* wanted to sing *shirah* to Hashem, Hashem didn't let them. He said, “מעשה ידי טובעים בים ואתם אומרים שירה – My handiwork is drowning, and you dare sing songs?!” Do we say only half Hallel on Pesach because of מעשה ידי טובעים בים, because we are somewhat sad that Hashem's handiwork was destroyed in the Yam Suf?**



No, no. We don't go along with that thought. That was said for the *malachim* – the angels weren't created to grow greater in Awareness of Hashem, so why should they sing to Hashem when His handiwork is drowning? But we, we're different; we're in this world only to become more and more aware of Hashem. And so Hakadosh Baruch Hu *wants* us to sing to Him in gratitude when He takes *nekamah* for us, because that's one of the more important methods of gaining tangible awareness of Him.

Now, there's no question that it's a loss – it's Hashem's handiwork drowning in the sea. Those are human beings that were drowning! They're not just slabs of meat. It was people, with families. Hashem was drowning *real* people for our benefit. And therefore, it is incumbent

upon us that we recognize that Hashem is expending his creatures for us, so that we should grow in Awareness of Him.

But not that we should feel in any way sad that the Egyptians are drowning – the loss of human life is only accentuated so that we should realize how vital it is to make use of this event. Hashem wants us to sing to Him. That's why He did it. And if Moshe Rabbeinu hadn't led the Bnei Yisrael in *shirah*, Hashem would have said: “My handiwork is drowning in the sea and you're *not* singing song to Me?!”

But that's not the reason for saying half Hallel. The reason we don't say the whole Hallel is because of the *korbanos*. That's the real reason. There's no such thing as half Hallel *al pi din*. It's either full Hallel or no Hallel. Half Hallel is only a *minhag*. Only that to justify the *minhag* they invented this thought. But it's not our thought. It's a thought that Hashem told the *malachim*.

And I'll explain it again because it's misunderstood. We are very happy with what happened to Mitzrayim. We sing every day *Az Yashir*. Even on Chol Hamoed we sing *Az Yashir*. Not half *Az Yashir*, the whole thing! And we're very happy. It says בשמחה רבה! We sing the song of gratitude with great happiness. We sing *ירדו במצולות כמו אבן*. They went down into the depths like stone, like lead. We're very happy that they drowned. We sing and we rejoice that they drowned. We're not sorry at all that they drowned.

And when Haman was hung up, nobody was going to be sorry for Haman. And all the *resha'im* of the world are the same. והזדים מהרה תעקר ותשבר ותמגר ותכניע במהרה. In that *brachah*, we say מהרה three times. More than we say for anything else. And that's because we must get rid of the *resha'im*.

And that's why Dovid Hamelech didn't say הללויה until he saw the punishment of the wicked. Dovid waited until *kapitel* קד, till the 104th chapter to say הללויה. All those *kapitlach* he said, but he couldn't say הללויה. Only when he came to “יתמו חטאים מן הארץ ורשעים עוד אינם – The wicked will be destroyed from the land, and there will be no more *resha'im*.” “Ohhh, now I can say ברכי נפשי הללויה את השם הללויה,” said Dovid. “Now I can praise Hashem” (*Brachos* 9b).

So now you know that the real happiness is not when Hashem does us favors. That's not enough. We have to see the revenge because that's how we see Hashem;



that's how Hashem becomes real to us. When Moshiach will come, it's not enough that we'll go back to Eretz Yisrael. That's not enough. We'll have to see the *nekamah* on the nations for what they did to us. Especially in Europe. We must see the *nekamah*. And it's going to be a tremendous *nekamah*. לעשות נקמה בגוים תוכחות בלאומים. Hakadosh Baruch Hu, in order to show that He's a *shofet tzedek*, must justify his *mishpat* by meeting out a tremendous punishment that they deserve to get. And it will happen; it will happen.

\*

*Editor's Note: Although this reason of "our diminishing joy due to the suffering of the Mitzrim" is widely quoted in many Haggadahs today (and sometimes even wrongly attributed to the Abarbanel), it is actually a quite recent explanation that was first invented in the late 1800's and then recorded in print for the first time by Eduard Baneth in 1904. This reason was then popularized among the masses when it was quoted in Haggadahs that were printed in America in the 1940's and 50's. For example, in a popular Haggadah published in 1943 by the National Jewish Welfare Board "for members of the armed forces of the United States to address the compatibility of Jewish and American values" this is the reason given for the minhag.*

*The earliest reference to the minhag itself is actually found in the Pesach Drashos of the Rokeach (c. 1176-1238), and his mystical explanation of the sixteen drops of wine seems to be more in line with Rav Miller's words above, in that it hints to the "sixteen-sided sword of Hakadosh Baruch Hu." The Sefer Maharil quotes the Rokeach and explains that we want the vengeance of Hashem "to fall upon our enemies." The Darkei Moshe quotes the Maharil and writes that this minhag hints to the "angel in charge of vengeance."*

\*



**The Rav was saying tonight that the drowning of the Egyptians at the Reed Sea was to give the Am Yisrael a shot-in-the-arm of *emunah*, and that their happiness and singing to Hashem was what Hashem expected from them. But can't it be that this was a**

**specific situation where their *emunah* was lacking so they needed that injection of Awareness of Hashem? But maybe in general, when *emunah* is not lacking, one shouldn't rejoice at the downfall of the wicked, because we believe that the *ikar nekamah*, the true revenge, will take place in the next world?**



This gentleman is bringing up the question that perhaps the reason that they were justified at that time in viewing the spectacle of *nekamah* was because their *emunah* was lagging.

And the answer is definitely yes. Absolutely. Only that we must understand that *emunah* is always flagging. There is never enough *emunah*. Because we are expected all our lives to climb the ladder up to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and feel more and more His immanence – to become closer and closer to Him. So it's never enough. So even if we would talk about Moshe Rabbeinu himself, who came closer to Hashem than any man, we could also say about him that in a certain sense he required more injections of *emunah*.

And that's what he asked for. He said, "הראני נא את כבודך – I want to see more of Your glory." And therefore, everyone in this life must labor to get more and more *emunah*. Because there's never enough. In a certain sense, our *emunah* is always lagging, and we always need *emunah* injections. There is never a situation where a person has enough *emunah*.

## *Time of the Seder*



**The Rav said earlier that even more important than being freed by Pharaoh in the middle of the night was the Yetzias Mitzrayim that took place in the morning, when the Am Yisrael left Egypt and escaped the gentile environment. So why do we have the Seder at night and not in the morning?**



The answer is that the Seder is the time of eating of the *korban Pesach*; it's the finale of the "Chag HaPesach," the fourteenth of Nissan, which is a *yom tov* of its own

that comes before the Chag Hamatzos. The “yom tov of Pesach” means the *shechitah* on the fourteenth of Nissan and the eating by night. And we eat the *korban Pesach* at night because that’s the time when a very great thing happened. They put the blood of the *korban Pesach* on the *mezuzos* and on the *mashkof*, and Hashem saw that, and He passed over them. That happened at night. The *pesach*, the skipping over, happened at nighttime, and so the Seder, which in its original form was constructed around the *korban Pesach*, is at night.

Now, Chag Hamatzos is a different story. The significant teachings of the *matzah* that we learned tonight are *nimshach* all seven days. And a wise person makes sure to use all the days and nights of Pesach to think these thoughts and transform himself into a new person.

But the great lesson of skipping over us – that was at night. That was a special lesson that we learned on Pesach night. The *makkas bechoros* was at night: **בכל ארץ מצרים** there was a **צעקה גדולה**, loud screams from all the Mitzri homes. In every home, there was death and screaming. And we were sitting securely in our homes eating the *korban Pesach* and listening to the Mitzrim crying out in their anguish. Hashem was making a very public declaration that although all the nations of the world will eventually go lost, the Destroyer will always skip over the Am Yisrael. That’s what the Pesach symbolized – that we will continue forever. Forever and ever Hakadosh Baruch Hu will watch over and protect the Am Yisrael. It was a tremendous experience that night, and we try to relive it on the Seder night.

It was a night to remember! **ליל שימורים**! What does *Leil Shimurim* mean? *Shimurim* means to always remember it; to keep it always. It means we remember that night forever and ever. Of course, the lesson of the daytime *geulah* was also of utmost importance. But for the lesson of recognizing the miracles of Hashem, the nighttime is the most outstanding of all the opportunities.

At the Seder, we speak about what Hakadosh Baruch Hu did for us that night, when all over Mitzrayim we heard Hakadosh Baruch Hu bringing vengeance upon the Mitzrim. And Pharaoh got up in the middle of the night. That was a *neis*, too. In the middle of the night, for Pharaoh to run around looking for Moshe and Aharon?! All the great things happened that night. Hashem was **פסח על בתי ישראל**; He passed over our homes. And that

great event was a portent, a prophecy for the future – that the Destroyer will always pass over our people, because we are the Am Olam, the eternal people. And because it happened at night, the Seder at night is the great opportunity to talk about these things and remember them.

## Matzah



**How does one maintain enthusiasm in mitzvos?**



There are two ways – a superficial but useful way, and also an intrinsic way. The superficial way is to do the mitzvah with a superficial alacrity, a superficial enthusiasm. When you do something in a sleepy way, you fall asleep. When you do it with enthusiasm, you become enthusiastic. For example, let’s say at the Seder you’ll take the matzah in your hand, and you’ll say, “Ahh! Matzah!” And you say, **הנני מוכן ומזומן** and you are talking about the greatness of the mitzvah, so even though your mind is blank, by doing the externalities, so **החיצוניות מעוררת את הפנימיות** – doing certain external acts will wake up your interior.

So therefore, if you are the father of a house, before you wash you should say to the children, “Children, we’re about to perform a *mitzvah d’Oraisa* of **בערב תאכלו מצות**. It’s a *mitzvah d’Oraisa* tonight to eat matzah. Tomorrow it won’t be a *mitzvah d’Oraisa* anymore to eat matzah. You can’t eat *chametz* tomorrow, but tonight eating a *kezayis* matzah is the same as *tefillin*; it’s the same as any *mitzvah d’Oraisa*, that’s how important it is. And it is going give you *kedushah* – **אשר קדשנו במצוותיו**. And keep in mind that it’s **זכר ליציאת מצרים** and put all you can into it.” That’s how the father should speak to his children – even if he doesn’t feel it.

So the father, by his externalities, by means of his words, and the children who listen to him, they’ll do the mitzvah with a certain superficial enthusiasm – and we should know how valuable that is.

That’s why you come to daven in the morning, and you sit down and say **הודו לה' כי טוב**, if you’re mumbling the words quietly, so you fall asleep after a while. But if

you say הוֹדוּ לָהּ כִּי טוֹב (the Rav said the words loudly), then you wake up! Your words wake you up and you become enthusiastic. And that's how we must do all the mitzvos. The exteriority awakens the interiority.

However, a second and more fundamental way is understanding what you're doing. And that's what we are talking about tonight. Spend time on thinking! Learn how to think! It's a rare exercise for most people. Did you ever think five minutes on one subject? Did you ever think five minutes about matzah? Come on, tell the truth; you never did.

Sit down for five minutes – before Pesach – and think about matzah; sit five minutes and think about Yetzias Mitzrayim. Don't tell me you think about it all night at the Pesach Seder. You're not thinking; you're just saying words.

When a man learns the art of thinking, he becomes a different man. Now I have a program for people who like to do that, a program for teaching yourself how to concentrate for five minutes in thinking. It is of the utmost importance to gain this knack; if you learn how to do that, you're a different personality. When you learn how to think about things, then you'll have insights and understanding that others don't have. And then your enthusiasm will be kindled; it'll be just like you pour oil on a fire. Every time that you refresh the thoughts that you invested in this mitzvah – when you remember what you once thought about it – it's like pouring oil on the fire and your enthusiasm will burn brightly.

## Marror



**Is there a lesson that we can take from the מרור that applies to our lives during the year?**



And the answer is that there are a few aspects of מרור that are applicable to us as lessons for our lives. And I'll tell you one of the most important lessons right now.

When the בני ישראל first arrived in מצרים, they were treated very well by פרעה and the מצריים. We were given ממיתב – from the best of the land of Egypt – to settle. יוסף, our brother, was the leader of all of Egypt, and we

had all the privileges and respect. It was excellent, it seemed. But no! It was a terrible סכנה. A very great danger of falling in love with the Egyptian ways and culture.

So what did Hakadosh Baruch Hu do? He gave us the antidote of וימררו את חייהם. The מצריים began to embitter our lives. They began to persecute us with such venom that it was impossible to have the slightest interest in an Egyptian. An Egyptian became like a snake. When a Jew saw an Egyptian from a distance, he tried to go down a different street, to detour, in order to stay out of his way. וימררו. The Egyptians were terrible in their wickedness, so the Jews avoided them. And that's what Hashem wanted.

And therefore, the מרור commemorates that great miracle that Hashem did, that great השגחה of Hashem, that he causes us to be separated from the environment around us. In Eastern Europe, we were blessed that we were living among people of very low character. The peasants in Eastern Europe were not like the Germans or the Englishmen, who were cultured and refined people with good manners. A Lithuanian, a Pole carried a knife in his boot – and he used it. They were angry people. They got drunk frequently. I was there. I saw them. The Poles, the Lithuanians, the Ukrainians – they were wicked and immoral. Now, don't think I'm prejudiced. I saw it with my own eyes. On market day they would come to sell their produce. And when they finished, they would buy liquor and get drunk. They would stagger around drinking till they would fall on top of each other, collapsed in a heap, men and women. They would lie in a heap, vomiting on each other. Very low people. And it was the same in many other countries as well – very low people. And that's why the Jews thrived in these countries. That's why they thrived as Jews. But when the Jews came to the cultured countries, they got lost. In Germany, Jews got lost. German were polite people with very good manners. Jews in England got lost. Jews in America got ruined. How good it was for the Jews to live among backward people!

But מצרים was a cultured nation. They were an advanced nation and a polite people. And therefore, it was very dangerous for us to live in מצרים. So Hashem said, וימררו את חייהם. I'll make it מרור. And now, the Egyptians became as bitter as מרור. It was Hashem's doing. In תהילים it says, הפך לבם לשנוא עמו. You hear that? We're blaming the Egyptians, but in תהילים it says that it was Hashem who caused the Egyptians to hate us. So

the Egyptians became so bitter, so wicked, that now we were protected against mingling. The מרור was a great gift מן השמים. So, when you pass a man on the street and he calls out at you, “Dirty Jew!” say ברוך ה'. Thank you, Hashem, for reminding me who he is.

A boy I know went into a laundromat to wash his garments. While he was standing there, a gentile girl started up with him. She liked his looks, so she started up with him. But this boy had the sense to know that he was talking to a tiger. She was a lynx, a wolf, that looked like a girl. I remember a case – a man I knew married a gentile girl. He said she was sweet. He said she's not like the other gentile girls. And subsequently, the newspapers reported how she shot him dead. She killed him with a gun. Jewish women, you know, don't kill their husbands with guns.

So Hashem said, וימררו – embitter their lives. And then the Egyptians showed what they were capable of. And the same thing with the Nazis. The Jews in Germany fell in love with the Germans. The Germans were very polite. And cultured. So the Jews began intermarrying with the Germans. So what did Hashem do? He let the Germans show who they really are. And the Nazis did a very good job of showing what a German really is. And now we know. Now we know that the Germans are the very worst. Hyenas! There's not another nation in the world of savages as wicked as the Germans. Under their good manners, we know that they are the most terrible criminals. If we would have the power, and we were allowed to by Hakadosh Baruch Hu, we should organize an army even today and march on Germany and take revenge for six million victims. We don't have the power to do it. The ogres, the cannibals, the very worst people in the whole history of the world, are the Germans. I really must ask מחילה from the cannibals for comparing them to the Germans. At least the cannibals only kill people when they get hungry.

And why did Hashem do that? Because the Jews were in love with them. And it was hard not to fall for them. I myself passed through Germany on the way to Slabodka. And I remember, on the train, a German man, a professor, took my bag and put it on the overhead rack for me. He was so polite. He was so polite and helpful. So וימררו, He sent the מרור to teach us who they really are.

And that's one reason we thank Hashem for the מרור. Ah, what a delicious thing. Take a bite of the מרור,

horseradish, and you swallow it and you're fainting. Tears are flowing from your eyes. That's what our forefathers did in Egypt. They were fainting from the צרות. Tears flowed from their eyes. That's how much they were suffering from the kind and cultured Egyptians. צרות on all sides. And it was a very good medicine. Now we know who the Egyptians are. And we thank Hashem, ברוך אתה, מרור. ה' על אכילת מרור.

That's one aspect of מרור, and you should never forget that. The fact that the nations show us who they really are is a great blessing for us. Don't deceive yourself. He may smile at you, she may smile at you – but it's deceptive. The time will come when you'll realize that you've started up with them at very great peril.

## Pesach Night



**After we finish the Haggadah, is it better to say Tehillim, for example, or to elaborate on the Haggadah with mefarshim and midrash?**



After the Haggadah, anything you do to be ממשיך, לספר ביציאת מצרים, to continue speaking about the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim, is very good. Don't forget to go to sleep on time, however; you have to get up tomorrow morning to go to daven. But if you can stay up a little longer, Yetzias Mitzrayim comes first. Yetzias Mitzrayim – that's the subject of the night; it's very important to spend that time on this topic – you get more siyata d'Shmaya for doing that. If Hakadosh Baruch Hu told you למען תספר that night, so He's going to give you more siyata d'Shmaya if you do that. That's the subject of the night.

## Pesach Night 2



**The Rav said that in Egypt on Pesach night we were commanded to bar our doors, to keep them locked shut. So why is it that we specifically open our doors on Seder nights?**



We don't. On the Seder night, we only open our doors to let in Eliyahu Hanavi – and it's only a symbol. Our doors are closed on the Seder night, and make sure they're barred, too! See to it that your doors should have good locks on them. (וי' זואין נוהגין כן להניח הפתח פתוח כי שכיח הזיקא דגנבים עיין סימן תפ ברמ"א ובחק יעקב שם ס"ק)

We open the doors only as a symbol that the time will come when the doors will open for the Am Yisrael to return home: פתחו שערים ויבוא גוי צדיק שומר אמונים. But right now, it's only a symbol. Open it for a little bit, but don't do it for too long.

## Chol Hamoed



**What is the purpose of Chol Hamoed?**



Chol Hamoed is meant to be an opportunity for people to think over what the Yom Tov is all about. On Yom Tov we're very busy; we're busy bringing *korbanos* and making *seudos*, and sometimes we forget to think about the lessons we're supposed to learn from the Yom Tov. And therefore, Chol Hamoed is a time to think. There is another opportunity at the end of Yom Tov called Atzeres that is also intended to be an opportunity to recap the lessons of the Yom Tov.

Shavuot is the Atzeres for Pesach; a few weeks after Pesach, we come back to the Beis Hamikdash to recap the lessons of Pesach. And Shemini Atzeres is the Atzeres for Sukkos. Shemini Atzeres really should be a while after Sukkos; it should be a few weeks later – an opportunity to come back to the Beis Hamikdash and review all the Sukkos lessons. But the Gemara says that right after Sukkos, the winter season begins; it's the rainy season, and if you go home now you won't be able to come back a month or two later because the roads might be impassable. And therefore, the Torah says make the Atzeres of Sukkos right after Sukkos. Pesach is in the springtime so you can come back a few weeks later for Shavuot and think over the Pesach lessons then. But on Sukkos we have Shemini Atzeres right away in order to think things over.

So, you have two opportunities to review the lessons: Chol Hamoed and Atzeres. Sukkos, maybe you were busy; first you were building your *sukkah*, and then you were worrying about your *esrog*, so maybe you didn't think about the Sukkos lessons sufficiently. So Chol Hamoed is an opportunity to think things over. It's a few days that gives you the opportunity to think; you have the time to appreciate the lessons of Sukkos more, and that way you finish off the Yom Tov with more inspiration; you can come back into Yom Tov with a new inspiration, with the inspiration that you're supposed to get from Sukkos.

After that, you have one more day to think it over, and that's Shemini Atzeres; that's the day for cementing the lessons in our minds. Atzeres is like a סך הכל; a final review – “What did I accomplish?” It's like חסידים ראשונים היו שוהים שעה אחת אחר תפילתם. The *tzaddikim* used to stand a long Shemoneh Esrei, but when they finished, they took a long time to think back: “What did we accomplish in our Shemoneh Esrei? What places did we not think enough? What places were we *mechadesh chiddushim* in our davening?” They try to recall, and they make a *cheshbon*, a סך הכל, a sum total of their Shemoneh Esrei.

And therefore, Chol Hamoed is an opportunity to think over what it's all about. It's very important to think over: “What's Yom Tov all about?!” We're so busy bringing in Yom Tov; there's so much work to do, and many times people don't think at all about the lessons of Sukkos. And therefore, you need some time to think it over. That's what Chol Hamoed is for.

## Chol Hamoed 2



**What does the Gemara mean when it says, “כל המבזה את המועדות כאילו עובר עבודה זרה – Anyone who disgraces the *yamim tovim*, it's considered as if he worshipped idols”?**



It says in the *passuk*, “אלהי מסכה לא תעשה לך” – You should not make molten gods for yourself;” and that *passuk* is immediately followed with the words “את חג המצות תשמור” – You should guard the Yom Tov of Matzos.”

And the Gemara explains that these two *pesukim* were written next to each other in order to teach us this lesson: If you disgrace *Yom Tov*, so it's as if you worshipped *avodah zarah*.

Now, according to many, that statement is talking about Chol Hamoed specifically. It's a rebuke against those who are disrespectful to Chol Hamoed by engaging in *melachah*. Now, I must say at the outset that some people can't help themselves and they have to go to work on Chol Hamoed – their *heter* is addressed in the Shulchan Aruch – but the Gemara is also referring to those who disgrace Chol Hamoed by treating it simply as any other weekday; as if it's a Sunday, a vacation day.

Now, we see that the Gemara doesn't simply say that it's inappropriate or it's wrong to behave disrespectfully to Chol Hamoed. It says there that it's something like worshipping *avodah zarah*! That's not just *drush*; it means something. It's something we have to understand, however – why is that being disrespectful to Chol Hamoed is compared to the sin of idolatry?

And so, we'll explain it as follows. The *yamim tovim* are intended to rejuvenate the spirit in each of us. During the year, you must go out into the world and often you have to mix with the gentiles – maybe you work in a non-Jewish environment, and even if not, you're influenced by the gentile environment. It's difficult to maintain an elevated state of *ruchniyus* week after week if your mind is constantly surrounded with gentile ideas. And now Pesach comes along, and you have the chance

now to recharge your batteries. We spend time on *Yom tov* – on Chol Hamoed, too – only with *frum* Jews, and we're expected to use that time to think over all of the great lessons that the *Yom tov* is teaching us. We must spend the minutes of Chol Hamoed filling up with *ruchniyus*, recharging our batteries.

Now, I know that it has become a *minhag* to take trips on Chol Hamoed, and I don't want to say that you shouldn't do it. However, the truth is that Chol Hamoed wasn't meant to be a vacation time. When we treat Chol Hamoed like that, when we treat it lightly, so we're interrupting the recharging of our batteries, and that puts us at risk of sinking, *chalilah*, to the level of the non-Jews. We don't maintain our spiritual level properly and that's how we become more susceptible, more easily influenced by the ways of the *umos ha'olam*, and it could be that someone will even succumb to the depths of *avodah zarah*, *chas v'shalom*.

It's important to find productive ways to utilize Chol Hamoed – even for children. There is a *tzaddik* in Boro Park who every Chol Hamoed gathers together many children and takes them to *talmidei chachamim*, to *tzaddikim*, to listen to them. It's a practice that should be copied by others – that's using Chol Hamoed properly. In your own house, you can make a *seudah* on Chol Hamoed. Besides for the regular *seudah*, you can make a party for the children, too. Give them nosh. Sing songs with them. Talk to them about the *Yom Tov*. Whatever it is, you must find ways to use Chol Hamoed properly.

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