



O.A.H. PESACH NEWSLETTER

OD AVINU HAI YOUTH MINYAN - 2021



THIS ISSUE

*Short divrei Torah
written by the boys
of the Od Avinu Hai
youth minyan*

OUR RECENT ACTIVITIES

Since our previous newsletter which was filled with divrei Torah about Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot, we are proud to publish another booklet of topical divrei Torah about Pesach.


In the last six months, the boys have continued to keep up with their weekly learning on Zoom and have now almost finished the entire Chelek Alef of Shulchan Aruch, covering most daily practical halachot which are important to know.

They also put together a 'virtual shpiel' video for Purim which provided entertainment for the wider communities and allowed them to feel the Purim spirit without even having to leave their homes! Our video also won 2nd place in the GIFT shpieling contest, receiving over 1,000 likes and finishing ahead of many local schools and charities!

We wish you all a Chag Kasher VeSameach and hope to be united next year in Yerushalayim!

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THE MEANING OF TRUE FREEDOM

DAYAN DAVID



In the tefillot of Pesach we mention the Chag as 'zman cherutenu', the time when we became free from being slaves. But what is true freedom? The world has a common misconception that anyone who has no restrictions or any nation which has received independence is considered happy and free. But is this really true? Are they actually happier now than they were before? Is there no strife in their lands? We hear so much about freedom of speech and yet little respect for the views of others who differ and are stifled. Are people any happier for having no boundaries?

True freedom is explained by Chazal in Avot (6:2), as it says 'charut al haluchot' - 'engraved on the tablets of the ten commandments'. Do not read it as "Charut" but rather as "Cherut" meaning freedom. But how is freedom connected to the luchot?

Our sages teach us that man is made up of two parts, just as Adam harishon was; the physical and a 'neshama', the soul. When a person asks themselves who am I? You are your neshama with its special characteristics and qualities, not just your physical body. When you get emotional or inspired it is not your body, but your spiritual being, your neshama.

We have an evil inclination which Chazal call the yetzer hara, this is generally our physical urges for gratification. Happiness cannot come to a person through such gratification for then his neshama is unhappy and quite distressed. Hashem has gifted into a person a holy neshama to lead a person to serve him and control his physical urges. God created man to serve him, to walk in his ways not just to satisfy his instincts like an animal. Yes, we need our physical urges to live and procreate but as dictated by the Torah.

When Hashem created the world and man, He used the Torah as the blueprint and through it man comes to his destiny and full potential. The Torah makes the perfect balance. The Ramban in halachot of shmitta and yovel (13:13) says that any human being who dedicates his life to serve Hashem and follow His ways (through the Torah as the Leviyim did) and discards the yoke people have taken on themselves for the pleasures and vanities of life, as God created him to be (yasher kemo she'asahu Elokim) is called Kadosh.

Yetziat Mitzrayim was merely just the beginning of our freedom, but this was not complete until we received the Torah on Mount Sinai, for there we became true servers of Hashem and a holy nation with a purpose - the Torah. Only through subjugation can true freedom be achieved - mamlechet kohanim ve goy kadosh.

OWNING SHARES ON PESACH

RABBI YOSSI DAVID



There is a halacha in Shulchan Aruch (440:4) which says that if a Jew deposits his hametz with another Jew or with a non-Jew, even though it is not in his domain he transgresses the prohibition of owning hametz on Pesach. This seems to imply that if one owns shares in a company which deals with hametz, it would similarly be considered as his hametz which the non-Jew is looking after on his behalf and should therefore be problematic.

However, there seems to be a very big difference because in most examples of owning shares in a company, the person who owns them does not actually have a say or decide on anything the company does. In essence, they are just giving the company money, which does go up and down in value depending on the company's success (which is based on hametz), but the Mishna Berura says (440:7) that a Jew is allowed to take responsibility for the hametz of a non-Jew which is in the domain of a non-Jew. This sounds like the case of owning shares where the owner takes responsibility of any profits or losses, but has no rights to the actual hametz itself which is being looked after by the non-Jew.

Before continuing, it is important to understand the different levels of ownership and control when it comes to owning shares. [The percentages used are for illustrative purposes only.] A person may simply own a small amount of shares in a company (eg less than 10%) and they cannot have a say in any decision making but simply receive a profit or loss on their share value, which would be considered insignificant as a shareholder. A person could own enough shares that they can have a say in some of the company's matters and are able to call for a vote on a resolution (eg more than 10% but less than 50%). Or, a someone can own more than 50% of the shares in a company, equating to the majority which would therefore consider them the owner, being that they will decide on the final say.

The Maharia HaLevi Ettinger who lived 120 years ago was the first to speak about this topic, and he is quoted by the Cheshev Ha'Efod who had a similar situation in the town which he lived in where many Jews held shares in the government's businesses



which traded in hametz. He permitted owning less than 50% of these shares on Pesach based on what was said above that the shareholder has no real rights or say in the actual hametz, and it is therefore just considered to be like lending the company money and receiving profits from this money. Even if you can join forces with a few other shareholders to have a more significant say, he holds that you are viewed

as an individual and this would not have to be taken into consideration. He also says that it would not be possible to sell these shares to a non-Jew for Pesach because they have no right to sell it without the company's consent and therefore he says it wouldn't help.

The Minchat Yitzchak (Dayan Yitzchak Weiss) argues and says that even if a person can have somewhat of a say in the company through owning his portion of shares (eg more than 10%), this would be enough to consider him as owning a portion of that hametz on Pesach. Similarly, he also says that if a person owns enough that they can join forces with others to have a say (even if this is less than 10%), this would also be a problem. Therefore, he says that if a person owns this amount of shares in a single company which deals with hametz, they should be included in the sale along with the rest of his hametz to a non-Jew for Pesach. He says that this can be included in the sale, even though by law it may have no effect if it is not sold officially, but halachically it can be sold like this which is sufficient in this situation.

If a person owns more than 50% of the shares in a company which deals with hametz, then the above will no longer apply because they do have a say in what the company does. In this case they would certainly have to sell these shares to a non-Jew for Pesach. Additionally, in order to cover themselves according to the Maharia HaLevi who said that they cannot be sold, they should also do bitul to nullify their ownership of the shares completely. Even though they still want to keep these shares after Pesach, in a time of need like this where there is no other way around it, bitul would suffice in addition to selling it to a non-Jew.

In conclusion, a person should include any significant amount of shares held in a company which deals with hametz (even if this is less than 10% but they can still join forces with others to have a say) in the sale to a non-Jew, which will halachically remove their ownership from the hametz on Pesach. This is especially if the company's main dealings are with hametz (eg a bakery or whisky company). Further, this should certainly be done if they own more than 50% of the company's shares together with doing bitul. This will cover all opinions and avoid any doubts of transgressing the biblical prohibition of owning hametz on Pesach.

If one did not sell their shares to a non-Jew for Pesach (if they held less than 50%), they can rely on the Maharia HaLevi in retrospect and can still have a benefit from this after Pesach.



CHANGING OUR CLOCK ON SHABBAT

JORDAN MOSES



In case we thought there wasn't enough confusion this year being that Pesach falls out on a motsei shabbat, for the first time since 1994, this also happens to be the same night that the clocks move backwards one hour! The only consolation is that this situation will not arise again until the year 2075!

But given these crazy circumstances, we will need to know whether one is allowed to change the time on their watch or clock on shabbat/yom tov in order to be able to tell the time for the next two days!

Let's start with wrist watches. The problem with adjusting the time of a watch on shabbat or yom tov is that one needs to pull out the pin in order to change the time, and when doing so the hands stop moving until the pin is pushed back in. This transgresses the prohibition of Soter (destruction) because you are causing the watch to stop functioning until the pin is pushed back in. Pushing the pin back in would also transgress the prohibition of Makeh Bepatish (the final hammer blow) because this would now make the watch fit for its purpose of telling the time.

Similarly, the question is asked if one has a kinetic watch which has stopped, if it is allowed to shake it or wind it up on shabbat in order for it to start working again. The Panim Me'iot says that this would be permitted since it is a strange way of making the watch work again and it is not long-lasting. However, the Kaf Hachaim, Pri Megadim and Chayei Adam say that this would still not be allowed because when the watch wasn't ticking it is not considered a usable item, therefore by you shaking it you are directly making it work which would fall under the biblical prohibition of Makeh Bepatish by fixing it for its use. The Yavetz holds that it would be rabbinically prohibited.

However, everyone agrees that if the watch is currently working, it is permitted to wear and walk around with it on shabbat, even though doing so will cause it to charge up with kinetic energy. This is because there is no prohibition of simply storing energy, and besides for this there is nothing else being done that would be problematic.

A clock on the wall is considered Muktze (not set aside to be used on shabbat from before shabbat started) and therefore cannot be moved on shabbat or yom tov. Therefore, even though the time on a (non-electronic) clock can be adjusted without stopping it - by simply turning the hands manually or twisting the cog at the back, since it is Muktze this would still be prohibited.

To conclude, one is not allowed to change the time on a watch or clock on shabbat and yom tov. So instead of having to remember to make an eruv tavshilin this year, we will have to remember that from Sunday morning our clocks will be one hour ahead of time until yom tov ends!

WHAT IS CHADASH?

SHANE MIRANDA



What is Chadash?

The concept of Chadash is that we are not allowed to eat anything which is made from 'new grain' until after the 16th of Nissan. From two days into Pesach, we are officially allowed to start eating the new grain. 'New grain' is any grain that was planted before Pesach. For example, if the grain was planted after Pesach and was harvested in the winter season and made into bread, it will be considered as Chadash from then and is forbidden to eat until the 16th of Nissan. Grain products which are from before the 16th of Nissan and are no longer affected by this law from after Pesach and are referred to as Yashan.

Why do we have Chadash?

In the Torah (parshat Emor) it states, 'you shall reap its harvest; and you shall bring the first sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the Kohen'. It then states that "on the day after [the first day of Pesach] the Kohen shall wave it and you shall not eat bread until this day." This clearly implies that the first of the harvest should not be eaten and is holy until the day after the first day of Pesach which is the 16th of Nissan (known as the day of wave offering or omer offering). On this day in the times of the Beit Hamikdash they used to bring the Omer offering, and once this was done, all grains grown and produced before Pesach became permissible for consumption.

The Laws regarding Chadash

Chadash applies nowadays too even though we don't have the Beit Hamikdash, it applies equally inside Israel and outside. However, it applies from a day later and is forbidden to eat until the night of the 17th of Nissan in Israel or 18th of Nissan outside.

Back in the older times, it was easier to manage as it would literally be offering one seasons harvest to Hashem and as all the grain was harvested together it was easy to keep track of what was made when. Nowadays, it is quite difficult to recognise what is Chadash and what is Yashan. Food is much more readily

available than it had been historically. This gives orthodox Jews the need to observe Chadash restrictions. By putting production dates on the packaging, individuals can determine what produce is Yashan and what is Chadash.



THE POWER OF THE MOUTH

NAFTALI JOSEPH

The word Pesach in Hebrew is spelt, פסח which can be broken up into two different words; פה – mouth, and נס – speaking. It's interesting how both of these words have to do with the mouth.

If we look at all the mitzvot which we fulfil on Pesach compared to the other festivals, they also share this common denominator. Unlike on Sukkot where the main mitzvah is to sit in the Succah with our body or shake the lulav with our hands, on Pesach, the main mitzvot are to eat matzah, eat marror, drink four cups of wine and even to tell over the story of the Haggadah, all of which require our mouth.

We have to know that our words have strength. This is an area of our lives which is vitally important, the way we communicate and speak with others, friends, family, colleges and even when praying to Hashem. Words have a tremendous power and we have to be very careful to use them properly, to be sensitive with them and to understand what words mean before we say them.

This is a message which we can take out from Pesach, after using our mouth for so many mitzvot, we can realise what great power it has and continue to only use it for the good!

If you have a look at the word family in Hebrew it is spelt משפחה. If you compare this with the word happiness in Hebrew which is spelt שמחה, you will notice that they both have the same letters except for a פ. This is teaching us that if you want to have שמחה in your משפחה, happiness in your family, you've got to use the פה-mouth appropriately because happiness and connection stems from communication.



KICK-STARTING OUR EMUNAH

YOSEF ISRAELI



Our Rabbis teach us that the pillar of the entire Torah is having Emunah - faith in Hashem, and everything else is built upon that. Similarly, Rabbeinu Yonah says based on the first of the ten commandments, "I am Hashem your G-d Who took you out of Egypt", that this belief in Hashem is the basis for all mitzvot. If one does not believe in this commandment, they cannot perform any mitzvot. The reason for this, is because the source of our commitment must be due to our belief in Hashem. If one fulfils mitzvot for any other reason (eg to receive honour) then they have not fulfilled the mitzvah. He takes this further to say that when a person does fulfil a mitzvah with the correct intentions, they are actually fulfilling two mitzvot, being the mitzvah itself and additionally the mitzvah of having Emunah!

The Ramban writes that through witnessing open miracles, a person can come to realise that even nature is miraculous.

A story is told of a man who was marrying off his fifth daughter and had no idea how he was going to pay for the wedding, but he knew that Hashem will help him. The wedding day arrived and he still didn't know how he would respond when the caterer was going to ask him to pay his debt. After the chuppah, his mechutan leaned over to him and said "I know you committed to paying for the wedding, but I am currently in a very comfortable financial position and I am more than happy to pay for everything. I just didn't want to say anything before the wedding because I wanted to make sure you are the type of people who can take on responsibility". Most people who marry off their children eat themselves up wondering where the money is going to come from, but with a little faith Hashem can send it through the person sitting right next to you at the table!

Emunah is the basis of our service of Hashem. When one recognises Hashem and understands that He is the ruler, then they will be able to accept the yoke of His service upon themselves. Emunah is the substance that kickstarts our service of Hashem.

It is not a coincidence that Seder night comes at the beginning of the Jewish year. It provides the kickstart in Emunah which is necessary for us to reach Shavuot and receive the Torah. With the pure faith we had when we left Egypt, we were able to nullify our own will for the will of Hashem and become His servants. Travelling through the desert with faith and servitude allowed us to be fitting to accept the Torah. This Seder night, if done properly, should infuse and inspire us with Emunah to last us the year and allow us to be real servants of Hashem.



BIRKAT HA'ILANOT

MARK DARZY



Birkat Ha'ilanot is the blessing on the trees which is recited during the month of Nissan on seeing Hashem's wondrous creations, similar to the reason why one makes a blessing on seeing the ocean, lightening, a rainbow, etc. Birkat Ha'ilanot is accordingly recited on seeing the wondrous renewal in nature, as the fruit trees blossom, in anticipation of our benefit from these trees, while acknowledging the deeper aspects of nature's renewal and the connection of man with the botanic kingdom.

The Sages taught us that spring is the renewal period in nature. It is the season of reproduction for numerous creatures and plants. This is also a time when the mind is distracted and the evil inclination (Yetzer Harah) is awakened in mankind. Therefore, on one hand we thank and bless Hashem for His wonderful creation and its renewal, as symbolised by the fruit trees' blossom. On the other hand, we are reminded not to succumb to our evil inclination as it awakens at the same time as Nature. To safeguard us against the evil inclination, the Rabbis instituted reading from the Ethics of the Fathers (Pirkei Avot) during the summer months from the first Shabbat after Pesach until the Shabbat just before Shavuot – seven weeks covering seven chapters.

But why bless Hashem using the symbolism of at least 2 fruit trees? Why not flowers, fish, or animals?

There are several reasons for this, mainly that the Torah says that “man is compared to the tree of the field”. The evil inclination manifested itself in the world only after Chava and Adam ate from Etz Hadaat - the Tree of Knowledge; good and bad. The repair of the sin, as reflected by Birkat Ha'ilanot, has to be done with the instrument through which the transgression was committed and not anything else - fruit trees.

Another reason is that without the blossom and growth of new fruit it will be impossible to celebrate our Chagim. Without agricultural produce, how can we bring Bikkurim (the first and choicest fruit) to the Beit Hamikdash? Without fruit, how are we to celebrate Succot with the Etrog and Lulav? We cannot say Shehechianu on a newly eaten fruit, if it does not grow!



As we can see the complete yearly cycle of Judaism is very much dependent on the botanical kingdom renewing itself regularly.

The wording of the bracha is as follows: “Blessed are You, G-d, our Lord, King of the universe, for nothing lacking in His universe at all, and He created in it good creatures and good trees, to cause mankind pleasure in them.”

KADESH URCHATZ

JOSH ISAAC-SAUL



Throughout Pesach night, we go through the 14 “steps” of the Seder, from Kadesh all the way through to Nirtzah.

The question is asked, regarding the first two steps of Kadesh Urchatz, why is there a “vav” in between these two words? In the list of the many different steps throughout the entire Seder, these are the only two steps in which you will find the letter “vav” (meaning “and”) between two steps, essentially connecting them and turning them into one. Why are these two steps any different from all the other steps?

The answer is given as follows: When we are physically dirty, we wash ourselves to cleanse our body and make ourselves feel fresher and therefore less dirty. The same is true when we wish to purify or cleanse ourselves spiritually. When one wants to sanctify himself after sinning (Lekadesh et atzmo), perhaps one of the very first steps would be to cleanse one’s self from the “stain” of the sin. In other words, these two statements of Kadesh (sanctification) and Rachatz (washing) are in fact intertwined and give us this message.



As we begin the seder and we enter the first step of our new year of Emunah, we seek to better ourselves. The author of the haggadah is indicating that the very first step on that path, the sanctification, is immediately followed through by “cleansing” ourselves of our sins and starting us off afresh.

Although these two steps may seem to be two individual steps, they are in fact one step that will help us to sanctify ourselves and move onto that next level.

HALACHMANYA - FEEDING YOUR SOUL

ALEX HAROUNOF

The first thing we say when we start Maggid is “anyone who is hungry should come and eat...” This seems to be a very nice gesture to start off the Seder night, but do we actually mean what we are saying?

This line is usually recited at the dinner table, where the only people hearing it are those who are already there. What is the point of making grand invitations when the truly needy can't even hear it?

The answer is simple - the invitation is not intended for outsiders. We are inviting ourselves and the people around us to really be present at the Seder. While we may be physically sitting at the table, our minds can be miles away, missing the opportunity of the most powerful spiritual journey - the Seder.

Every Jew has a soul that ‘hungers’ for nourishment and inspiration, and we all feel a profound need for our inner self to be freely expressed. Our soul yearns to love, to give, to contribute to the world and to connect to Hashem. But our soul is sometimes trapped, surrounded by obstacles to its being free - scars from the past that cripple us; fears that prevent us from opening our hearts; bad habits that waste our time and divert our energy; negative attitudes that darken our vision; complacency that stunt our growth.

We are stuck in our own inner Egypt, with these internal slave-masters holding us back from becoming who we are supposed to be. Like Pharaoh, our ego doesn't want to let us go. Even as we sit down to the Seder to read the story of the exodus from slavery, metaphorically, we are still slaves.

So at the beginning of the Seder we are really inviting ourselves to come to the Seder and experience freedom. "Whoever is hungry, come and eat. Whoever is needy, come and celebrate Pesach." If you hunger for inspiration, come and absorb the Haggadah's message of liberty. We should try to enter into the Pesach experience as much as we can. Read the story of the exodus, taste the matzah, the food of faith, and drink in the wine of freedom.



The Seder night is more than just a commemoration of miracles of the past; it is a personal experience, the exodus of the soul. The same spiritual energies that brought about the miracles long ago are reawakened. Freedom is in the air. On this exact night many years ago we left Egypt, and this Pesach we can free ourselves from our own slavery.

We can rush through the Haggadah to get to the main course, but our souls will remain trapped. Rather, let's take our time, allowing the eternal story of freedom to sink in and become a part of us. Let yourself go - free your soul.

TEACHING OUR CHILDREN

STEPHEN MIRANDA



Imagine just over 3,000 years ago one of the Jewish slaves under Pharaoh would have asked him “who do you think is more likely to be around in 3,000 years from now, the powerful Egyptian nation or the Jewish people?!” He would have laughed in their face and thought they were mad! Yet here we are!

Pharaoh was the leader of one of the greatest empires at the time, the Jews on the other hand were powerless slaves of Pharaoh with no freedom. The Egyptians were sure that the Jews were finished. So how is it that we managed to survive and escape from this mighty empire whilst they perished?

The answer is based on how one answers the following question; “How can we survive the short span of years that we call life and achieve immortality?” The Egyptians and Jews had very different answers to this.

The Egyptians thought they could achieve immortality by building huge buildings and pyramids that outlive them. In a way they were correct because buildings are still here today but the civilization that brought them about and their values disappeared long ago.

The Jews said the way to be immortal is not to build monuments and building but instead, all a person needs to do is engrave the values on the heart of their children, and they on theirs and so on across the centuries of time. As we say in Shema “you should teach it to your children and you should speak it”- the Jews built living monuments by handing down their story from generation to generation.



We do this very same thing every Pesach by giving the next generation the gift of Jewish stories and history, which has turned out to be longer lasting than the mightiest of empires. This is the mitzvah of “Vehigadeta Lebincha” – telling over the story to our children. It is important that we realise when we fulfil this mitzvah and give over the story of how we left Egypt to our children, we are living on forever.

THE WICKED SON

YOSSI JAPHETH



We are told that if the wicked son, the rasha, makes light of God's law, his father must "blunt the edge of his teeth" and say to him "it is because of what the lord did for me when I went forth from Egypt."

Why is the father commanded to give such an abrupt reply rather than go into a more detailed and welcoming explanation?

The Dubno Maggid gives over the following mashal:

In a small town, just before the festival of Pesach, there was a fair at which tremendous bargains could be purchased. In this town there was a Jew who was so poor that he barely had money to buy wine and matzah for seder night. But when he heard the bargains which his friend had obtained, he rushed straight to the fair intending to buy a piece of cloth so that his wife could make clothes for them over the winter. So great was his enthusiasm that he forgot his financial straits and spent almost all of his Pesach savings on material. When his wife saw the purchase she was furious. "Fool" she cried "what have you done? Where will we find the money for Pesach seder now? Go back to the seller and ask for your money back straight away! And if they refuse tell them the material was bad!"

The man quickly did as his wife had asked. To his surprise the seller gave the money back without a fuss. Afterwards another merchant who had heard the brief conversation asked the seller why he had given in so easily? Could you not have shown him your other merchandise at least? The merchant replied "That would have had no effect, for the trouble was not in the items but in the customer himself. You must have seen that he did not point out the flaw in the material he

said he had found. It was quite obvious to me from his argument that, for some reason, he had no intention to buy this material or any other. His complaint was nothing more than an excuse for demanding his money back, any attempt to persuade him otherwise would have been a waste of time."



This mashal shows the difference between the chacham and the rasha. The wise son, believing in the Torah wholeheartedly, is more willing to point out the places in the law which give him difficulty, for he refuses to cast it lightly aside and is more anxious for more knowledge. But the wicked son has no intention even to examine the word of Hashem. Instead, like the villager at the fair, who wanted to rid himself of the cloth, he will make up many shallow excuses for rejecting it.

Therefore, his questions will not be sincere and honest but malicious and disrespectful, and how ever much you try to persuade him otherwise he will not listen. Therefore we are told, do not be troubled with his scornful arguments, but blunt the edge of his teeth so that he too will be momentarily stunned to corrupt others with his ways. Look at him and say “what I observe here is in gratitude for what the Lord did for me. As for you, you have rejected His Torah and therefore have no part in our inheritance. Had you been in Egypt you would not have been redeemed!”



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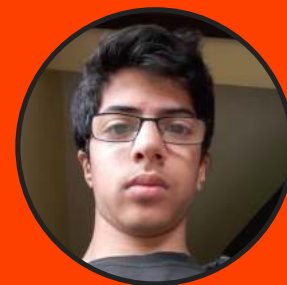
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FOUR CUPS OF WINE

YARON ISRAELI



Our Rabbis instituted drinking four cups of wine on Seder night in order to increase the joy of redemption and give expression to our freedom. On every Yom Tov there is a mitzvah to drink wine, but on Pesach the Rabbis further integrated four cups of wine into the Seder so that our joy finds expression in each of its phases.

Kiddush is recited over the first cup and everyone's cup is filled prior to kiddush. The story of Maggid and the first part of Hallel are recited over the second cup, which is therefore filled just before the telling of the story is begun. Birkat Hamazon is recited over the third cup, we refill our glasses prior to reciting it and we drink the wine right after. Finally, we pour the fourth cup and recite the second part of Hallel and "the Great Hallel" over it and then we drink the cup. But every recitation at the Seder is over wine.

If one drinks four cups of wine one after another it is as if he drank only one cup. Even if one waited between cups, if he did not recite any of the Haggadah during these pauses he has not fulfilled this obligation according to several poskim (Rashbam, Ran, Pri H'adash). This is because one must drink while discussing the Exodus. However, according to the Beit Yosef, if one pauses between cups he fulfils his obligation bedi'avad.

The Sages explain the four cups as alluding to several things: the four expressions of redemption used in the Torah's account of leaving Egypt; the four kingdoms that conquered the Jewish people after we became a nation and from which Hashem saved us; the four cups of calamity that Hashem will serve to the wicked among the nations of the world; and the corresponding four cups of consolation that Hashem will pour out to us.

As a rule, the number four represents completeness, for everything in the world has four sides corresponding to the four points of the compass. Since the Exodus brought about a complete upheaval in the world, the Torah uses four expressions of redemption in relation to it:

Therefore, say to the Israelites: "I am the Lord, I will rescue you from beneath the burden of Egypt, I will save you from their enslavement, I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and great acts of judgment and I will take you for Myself as a people and be your G-d. Thus you will know that I am the Lord your G-d, Who is taking you out from beneath the burden of Egypt." (Shemot 6:6-7)

The reason why we drink wine to remember these four expressions rather than eating a piece of meat for each one or anything else is because unlike any other foods or drinks, a person gets more enjoyment from their second glass of wine than the first. If a person keeps eating the same meat or drink, after a while they will get bored of it and will not be excited to have more, but with wine, the enjoyment increases with every cup.

DAYEINU

NATI RAYMOND



Dayeinu is one of the highlights of my Pesach. With its catchy and happy tune, most people associate this song with the festive spirit of Pesach. It goes through a long list of all the incredible kind things that Hashem did for the Jewish people, such as freeing them from slavery, splitting the sea, giving them shabbat etc. And after proclaiming each point, we say that if He would have only done that and nothing else, it would have still been enough! This shows how much we should appreciate each one of these acts.

But if we stop and think about what we are saying during this sing-song, we would realise that it actually has quite a bizarre meaning. Would it really have been enough if Hashem would have split the sea for us and not crossed us through it? Or taken us to Har Sinai and not given us the Torah?

Rabbi Nachman Cohen explains that if you look at Chumash and Tehillim you will notice that every stanza of dayienu corresponds with a gracious act that G-d did for us and our ungrateful response. If you look at the Jews' response to when the Amorites attacked them, they said "G-d has taken us out of Egypt only to destroy us here". When we received the land of Israel, we complained that it's a land that "eats its inhabitants". Rabbi Nachman explains that dayeinu is reflecting back on our history and making amends for the lack of gratitude which we had in the past.

The Malbim takes this a step further. At the point in the seder when we say dayeinu, we have already discussed our life in Egypt as slaves and all the hardships and the next appropriate step is to say hallel and thank Hashem for



redeeming us. However, before we do so, we want to be sure that we truly understand and appreciate what it was that Hashem did for us so we can say a meaningful thank you. Dayeinu serves as a purpose of reminding us how much Hashem did for us by thanking Him for each and every individual step.

LEAVING THE IMPURITY OF EGYPT

AVI WAKEFIELD



Even after the Jews left Mitzrayim, the dangers of them being affected by that corrupt nation remained very real. That is why the Torah commands us: “Do not perform the practices of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled.” Rashi writes that Mitzrayim was the most immoral nation and the Jews dwelled in the most immoral areas of the country. Why did Hashem deliberately place the Jewish people in the most corrupt place on earth?

Rav Eliyahu Dessler answers this question by discussing how one should react to negative surroundings. He observes that a negative society can have a very detrimental effect on a person, however, if he is so strong that its negative influences do not harm him, it can actually strengthen his service of Hashem. How so? Rav Dessler explains that when such a person sees the surrounding evil, it becomes more disgusting in his eyes, because he attains a greater recognition of its deviance. This clarity strengthens his appreciation of good.

Based on this understanding of human nature, we can understand why Hashem placed the Jewish people in the most degenerate place on earth, and why He places us in such challenging surroundings. Every time a tzaddik has had to rise to an extremely high level, he has been flung into the most lowly and degenerate environments so that he can learn the lowliness of evil and strengthen himself in goodness to the opposite extreme.

Hashem placed the Jews in Mitzrayim so they could develop an intense hatred of its tumah, which, Rav Dessler writes, was indeed their motivation for crying out to Him to free them from this terrible place. This intense disgust catapulted them from the forty-ninth level of tumah to the level of being able to receive the Torah. Had they found themselves in a less immoral environment, they could not have risen to such a high level.



This approach would also seem to explain why the Jewish people had to go to a similarly abhorrent land, that of Canaan. Seeing the immorality of the Canaanite nations was intended to intensify the Jews' revulsion at evil and in turn, heighten their appreciation of Torah morality.

Rav Dessler's principle helps us understand some important aspects of Pesach. We begin the Haggadah by discussing our ancestors who worshipped idols. Rav Dessler asks, how is this ancestry connected to the story of leaving Mitzrayim? He answers that through being surrounded by such negativity, Avraham Avinu rose to such kedushah that its power would never be nullified. The redemption from Egypt sprouted directly from this holiness. Therefore, we talk about our idol-worshipping ancestors to highlight that it was as a direct result of their impurity that Avraham reached such incredible heights, and his greatness in turn planted the seeds of yetziat Mitzrayim.

We can now gain a deeper understanding of why the Haggadah goes to considerable lengths to discuss such negative influences as our pagan ancestors, Lavan, and the Egyptians. Perhaps this focus is intended to arouse our disgust at such immoral people and in turn, heighten our appreciation of Hashem's freeing us from them and giving us the Torah.

In today's world, the challenge of secular influences is unavoidable. Even if we live in observant communities, there are still many negative influences which bombard us regularly. It is obviously highly advisable to minimize their impact, but it is impossible to eliminate all exposure to them. Rav Dessler's principle can help us deal with these influences and perhaps even use them positively. By observing the obvious problems of the secular world, we can enhance our appreciation for the beauty of a Torah lifestyle. May we all protect ourselves from negative influences and use them to grow closer to Hashem.



LOST LIKE SHEEP

RAPHAEL AARON



It is well known that the Egyptians used to worship the sheep and serve it as their god. It is fascinating how out of all the animals in the world they picked the sheep. Sheep are not independent and they need someone to constantly guide them – a shepherd. The Egyptians didn't want a god to be dominion over them, they wanted a god which they can serve on their own terms when it suited them.

The first pasuk in the book of Vayikra begins “Vayikra el Moshe” – “And he called to Moshe”. But why didn't the pasuk mention that it was Hashem who called to Moshe? Why did He remain anonymous?

There's a big lesson that we can learn from here which we can especially apply to these current times. Sometimes Hashem calls out to us without us being aware that it is Him who is calling. Only if a person stops and contemplates will he begin to realise who is actually running the world.

It's amazing how such a small virus that we can't even see has managed to permeate all countries of the world and completely change people's life. We can't go to sporting events, we can't go to the movies, we can't even leave the house unless it is for an something 'essential'! Hashem is calling us to come closer to him!



It is important, now more than ever, that we wake up and heed the call and realise that it is Hashem who is running the world. Let's not be like the Egyptians who went through plague after plague and continued in their stubbornness to reject the existence and power of Hashem, only believing in their god when convenient to them. We should be happy to serve Hashem on His terms and we should make an effort to realise that He runs the world at every instance and every moment in our life has happened because He wanted it to.

STAY HOME - THERE'S A PLAGUE OUT

RAPHAEL MOSES



Most years we normally all spend Pesach with our family, friends and guests, embracing the special occasion and enjoying the annual experience. But this year many of us feel like we are alone, making our own private Seder with only immediate family. This past year has felt as if everything we know about Judaism is going the other way. Our lives are usually so family and community orientated, but we are now being forced to deal with spending a lot of these times alone.

However, in the original story of Pesach during the plague of the firstborn, Hashem actually instructed Moshe to tell the Jewish people to stay home and that He didn't want anyone to go outside. We know that the Jewish people were together after this during the crossing of the sea and receiving the Torah at Har Sinai, so why did Hashem instruct everyone to stay inside? Surely it would have been even greater if they could have all gone out and witnessed one of the greatest miracles in Jewish history?!

When times were normal and we were able to see and be involved with our friends and community more, we sometimes focused so much on everyone else's needs and opinions, that we didn't give much thought as to who we are or what our purpose is.

So maybe Hashem orchestrated things in a way that forced the Jewish people to be home, with just their immediate family during this great miracle for a reason. This could have been to allow us to contemplate and introspect on who we are and where we are heading, and only then we will be able to come together as a strong nation to leave Egypt and receive the Torah from Hashem.



We can apply this reason to our lives in these current times where we are also forced to be at home with our immediate family. Let us use this opportunity to ascertain our goals and direction with a genuine, clear and focused vision, before Hashem will let us out of our house and allow us to be free again to serve Him properly.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

JASON IBRAHIM



We hear the word karma being thrown around in secular society, and whilst it is a nice idea, it lacks the fundamental principle of the causality of it all - Hashem. They say one good thought/deed can influence ourselves later down the line for the positive. Or another version, there are "energies" which surround us that are influenced by our actions which in turn affect us and our lives. Whilst some aspects may sound similar to our own teachings, like we see in Pirkei Avot (4:2), "mitzvah goreret mitzvah, averiah goreret averiah," one mitzvah leads to another mitzvah and one sin leads to another sin, we know this has a tremendous depth which involves Hashem in every way, unlike karma. The true manner in Hashem's dealing with the world, is middah knegged middah (measure for measure).

The Gemara in mesechet Sotah deals with the intricacies of the wife that has been accused of adultery to which there is a concurrent theme, middah knegged middah. All secrets are revealed before Hashem, and the process for the accused adulteress is all in accordance to her actions, like the Mishna in Sotah (1:7) says "Bemidah she'adam modded bah, moddedin lo," meaning "the way that a person acts (measures), is the way that G-d acts (measures) toward him".

Some examples given are of Shimshon who gazed at the Pilishtim with his eyes and as a punishment lost his eyes, and Miriam who waited one day to see what would be with her baby brother Moshe, merited to have the whole of Klal Yisrael wait for her for seven days in the desert. (We see it works greater for the positive, thankfully!) All of the events which unfolded in Mitzrayim are a continuation of this.

Pharaoh knew that Hashem dealt with the world through measure for measure, which was his whole reasoning for choosing to drown the baby boys in the river.



Hashem had promised Noah that He would not bring a flood to the world again, so the Egyptians felt reassured that they would not meet their downfall with water which they otherwise would have expected, but no one can outsmart Hashem.

The Kli Yakar explains the measure for measure aspect of the 10 plagues beautifully, how each one was brought on to the Egyptians for a specific reason based on actions which they had previously done to the Jews.

For example, Pharaoh claimed to be a god over the river and of course drowned masses of children in it, therefore it was shown he had no control over the water when Hashem turned it into blood.

The Jewish people were enslaved by the Egyptians and were compared to wild animals, therefore the Egyptians were attacked by wild animals.

Another example is that the Jewish people were originally shepherds but as a result of their servitude lost all of their livestock. So too, the Egyptians lost all of their livestock and wealth to an epidemic.

Jewish children had to be hidden away in order to be saved from Pharaoh's decree, the midwives carried out all their actions in darkness (secret) and other children abandoned in the field were saved by Hashem and hidden underground. Therefore Hashem brought the plague of darkness onto the Egyptians.

By Hashem acting through middah knegged middah, it brings about a greater revelation of His name. Only Hashem knows the inner thoughts and actions of a person, and only Hashem can enact such an exacting justice. What better way for Hashem to show His hashgacha over the world and to redeem the Bnei Yisrael from galut.

The lesson moving forward is to constantly recognise Hashem's involvement in our day to day lives, that there are no such things as coincidence but everything is perfectly coordinated by HaKadosh Baruch Hu. If we can emulate Hashem's way and act with others positively as He does with us, then Be'ezrat Hashem we should see the final geulah bimhera beyamenu, Amen!



LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

ELISHA MOSES



The plague of darkness which Hashem brought upon Egypt was a dreadful plague. It was a darkness which was so thick that the Egyptians could not even move for three days. But in Hashem's miraculous ways, this did not affect any of the Jewish people even if they were next to an Egyptian, we had light around us to be able to see and move wherever we wanted.

This plague showed a clear difference between the Jews and Egyptians. The whole world outside seemed to be a dark place, but inside the Jewish homes there was light. This sounds very familiar to life today. The world can be looked at as very dark and dull right now, with people losing their sense of purpose and hope, but as Jews we have a purpose even just as an individual restricted to our own homes. We have an opportunity to shine a light in our home, be it to our spouse, children or siblings – charity starts at home.

We learn this approach from Avraham Avinu that when a person gives, they are actually receiving so much more than what they are giving. The world is founded on kindness and through kindness we can cure the world's problems.

So now Hashem has now sent us back to our homes to start again with the basics of kindness, which will ultimately then overflow to the outside world and our other relationships. If we use this message properly, the world that we were used to before this virus came about can be a very different place when we come out from it. It can be full of light; the light of Hashem's ways.

If we stop and think about how the Egyptians forced us to work day and night, killed our babies and took away our freedom, the plague of darkness was an opportunity for us to take revenge and steal whatever we wanted from them without them even being able to move! But Moshe said "no, don't take anything. You can go into their houses and look at what possessions they have, but you cannot take anything until Hashem rightfully gives it to us."



Let us take this lesson of the importance of kindness and giving and may Hashem remove this virus from us so that we can continue to lighten up the world by emulating His ways.

BREAD OF POVERTY OR FREEDOM?

DAVID ISRAELI



What is matzah? Matzah is a simple type of bread made from flour and water and nothing else. It's so simple that it doesn't even rise, meaning, it doesn't become leavened. It's a bread that we Jews are commanded to eat at the Seder. As with all mitzvot, prior to doing it we have to focus ourselves enough and think, "I am fulfilling this mitzvah because God has commanded me to do so." Without that, eating matzah is just part of dinner.

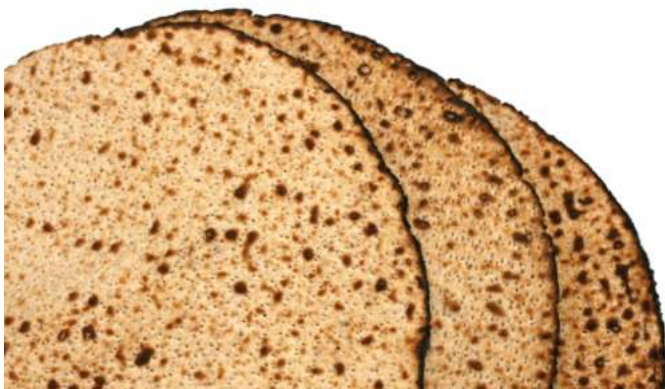
Early on in the Seder, even before the four questions, we raise up a matzah from the Seder plate and declare that it is the bread of affliction that our ancestors (we!) ate in Egypt. Matzah, therefore seems to be a symbol of slavery, and all its narrowness, for example, hunger and lack of dignity.

A while later (short or long, depends upon how quick the participants of your Seder are!), before we perform the mitzvah of eating matzah, we point at the matzah on the Seder plate and read from the Haggadah: Why do we eat this matzah? Because before the dough could rise to be baked into regular bread, the King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He, was revealed to our ancestors and He redeemed them! This seems to imply that matzah is a symbol of freedom.

So which one is it? Is matzah a reminder of our servitude, or is matzah a celebration of freedom? Or maybe is it both simultaneously? Has it changed by our reading (experiencing!) the story? Or have we changed thereby?

The answer is yes. As slaves, we were time-bound and did not have the freedom to wait for something better to eat. We were also mind-bound and thought that freedom was defined by having something good to eat. When we experienced a revelation of G-d, we were mind-unbound: there's more to freedom than a loaf of fresh bread!

The mitzvah and experience of eating matzah is meant to teach us that it's not the matzah itself that determines whether we were free people or slaves, it is the amount of freedom in our minds, the level of our simcha that informs our thinking and attitudes, that determines what matzah - and everything in our life - symbolises and means.



The Pharaoh who rules us, the Egyptians that confines us, can be an emotion, an idea or an experience. But as we read and tell the story of our liberation, of how the events of our life are G-d-guided and moving us toward freedom, the emotion, idea and experience all become symbols of freedom and the focus of our celebration.

MAROR, PESACH, MATZAH?

SHAWN MIRANDA



According to the Haggadah, we eat maror to remind ourselves of the bitterness of our slavery in Egypt. The following verse from the Torah underscores that symbolism: "And they embittered their lives with hard labour, with mortar and with bricks and with all manner of labour in the field; any labour that they made them do was with hard labour".

But why did Hashem make it so bitter and so hard for us? Couldn't He have found a less harsh punishment than that?

It is said that the reason Hashem allowed our lives to become so devoid of purpose and bitter was because the Jewish people were not ready to leave Egypt and were still happy with being a part of the Egyptian culture. So Hashem wasn't punishing us by putting us through this hard work, but rather He was waking us and our souls up so that we would realise once again who we were and what the purpose of life really is.

In the Haggadah Rabban Gamliel says we have to say Pesach, Matzah and Maror to fulfil our obligation, but why does he say it in this order. Surely it would have made more sense to say it in chronological order which was first the Maror (bitter times), then the Pesach (the sacrifice) and then Matzah (when we actually left Egypt)?

The explanation for this could be that when the Haggadah refers to maror over here, it is not talking about the literal bitter years, but rather it could mean that the maror was actually the cause for our redemption. Those hardships which Hashem put us through, woke us up and allowed us to realise what we were lacking and cry out to Hashem to redeem us. So in actual fact, the maror was the cause for the redemption. But we were only able to see this after left Egypt when we can look back and appreciate that the maror which we had endured was not to punish us, but rather to wake us up.

We can take a lesson from this and apply it to our lives now, that the times we are currently going through are very tough and could be seen as bitter punishment.

But just like the maror, we may not realise it now, but this in fact could just be a

wake-up call from Hashem, telling us to contemplate what it really is that we want in our life. If we use this opportunity properly, then maybe this will also be the start of our redemption and the building of the Beit Hamikdash – next year in Yerushalayim!



CHAD GADYA

SOLLY LEVY



The Pesach Hagaddah ends with the fun but peculiar song of Chad Gadya – “Just One Kid”.

This colourful song features “a kid” (a baby goat) purchased by “my father” for the price of two zuz, an ancient coin. No sooner does he buy the kid, it is eaten by “the cat,” which is in turn bitten by “the dog,” which itself suffers being beaten by “the stick.” The stick doesn’t get off lightly for its beating; it is burnt by “the fire,” which is naturally doused by “the water.” What happens to the water seems quite natural: it gets lapped up by “the ox,” which leads to the fatal slaughtering of the ox by “the butcher.” The butcher faces none other than the “Angel of Death”, and in case you thought that this dastardly fellow was invincible, he is ultimately vanquished at the conclusion of the song by the “Holy One, Blessed is He”.

The symbolic meaning of this sequence of people, animals and objects remained obscure until the Vilna Gaon presented the following interpretation. Each verse alludes to one person or event in Jewish history: The “kid” is the birthright mentioned in parshat Toldot. This is the right to take the baton that had been passed from Avraham to Yitzchak, to continue Avraham’s mission to build a world full of loving kindness and monotheism and lack of idolatry and other evils. My “father” is Yaakov who bought the birthright from his twin brother Eisav, who had been born first and thus had the natural right to the birthright. The “two zuzim” are the bread and stew which Yaakov paid Eisav for the birthright. The “cat” represents the envy of the sons of Yaakov towards their brother Yosef, leading them to sell him into slavery in Egypt. The “dog” is Egypt, where Yosef landed, and where eventually the entire clan of Yaakov and the Bnei Yisrael lived, were enslaved and were redeemed. The “stick” is the famous staff of Moshe, used to call forth various plagues and part the waters of the sea for the Jewish people to cross. The “fire” represents the thirst for idolatry amongst the Jewish people that proved to be a persistent struggle for over 800 years, from the year they left Egypt until the destruction of the First Temple (in the fifth century BCE). The “water” represents the fourth century BCE sages who eradicated idolatry. The “ox” is Rome (Eisav’s descendent) who destroyed the Second Temple in 70 CE. The “butcher” is the Moshiach Ben-Yosef who will restore full Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel. The “Angel of Death” needs no introduction; in this song he represents the death of Moshiach Ben-Yosef. The “Holy One” of course also needs no introduction; here He arrives with Moshiach Ben-David.

The repetition in each stanza underscores the flow of Jewish history - sometimes we’re down but then we rise up. While most of the song looks backwards, it ends off with an optimistic view toward the future, a fitting conclusion to the Seder.

This Pesach too will hopefully be the optimistic end of the struggles and hardships of the last year, and may we see the rebuilding of the Third Temple soon Amen!

AZ YASHIR

SAMUEL AARON



Chazal tell us that when the Bnei Yisrael made it out of the Yam Suf and saw the sea crash down on the Egyptians, they sang a song – Az Yashir. It is taught that this took place on the seventh day of Pesach.

But there is a midrash which says that when they initially walked to the yam suf and they saw the sea in front of them and the Egyptians behind them, they realised that they were surrounded and trapped so they asked Moshe Rabbeinu what to do. Moshe told them to sing a song to Hashem, the only One who can help them. So the midrash explains that it was actually before they went into and across the sea when they sang Az Yashir and praised Hashem that only He can save them.

So did they sing Az Yashir before they crossed the sea or after, and what can we learn from this?

The Gra says that there were two groups of Jews; there were those who followed Nachshon ben Aminadav and jumped straight into the sea, fully believing in Hashem, and there were those who only went in after they saw that it had already split and there was dry land to walk on.

Those Jews who were with Nachshon ben Aminadav and had full bitachon in Hashem were the ones who sang Az Yashir before the sea split and before seeing the geula, because they had such confidence in Hashem.



We are currently in a time of hardship and suffering, where many people are struggling all around the world for many different reasons. But we believe in Hashem and we know that He will bring an end to this plague followed by a geula. However, we have an opportunity, just like the Jews who sang and praised Hashem before He split the sea, to sing our own song and show Hashem that we appreciate everything which He has given us. By singing this song at this moment, we will show Hashem that we are anticipating the arrival of Mashiach speedily in our days Amen!

WHAT MADE THE SEA SPLIT?

ELAI NAORI



It is well known that when the Jewish people reached the sea, Hashem did not split it for them immediately. It took one individual called Nachshon ben Aminadav to walk into it all the way up to his neck, seemingly willing to risk his life, and only then Hashem split the sea for everyone.

There is also another well known reason why the sea went against its nature to split for the Jewish people which is brought down in a medrash. It says that the sea saw the bones of Yosef Hatzadik and in the merit of him going against his nature not to succumb to his evil inclination with eshet Potifar, the sea also went against its nature and split for the Jewish people.

A common denominator which both of these reasons share is mesirut nefesh by an individual. These two people showed the willingness to give up their own life or desires in order to serve Hashem and fulfil His will. Nachshon ben Aminadav showed this by being willing to give up his physical life, and Yosef showed this by giving up on his own desires for the sake of Hashem on a spiritual level.

This brings out the importance and power of an individual, how literally one person has the power to save the world! Obviously a prerequisite to this is to be part of Klal Yisrael and in unity with everyone around them, but it does not end there. Each individual has an opportunity to change the world. Chazal tell us that one should constantly view the world in the balance, where their action right now will decide if the world should be destroyed or if Hashem should bring the redemption.



With this powerful message, may we all merit to constantly do what is right, set a positive example to inspire others and encourage all those around us to serve Hashem better. By doing this we will be gradually changing the world from our actions which will help to bring Mashiach soon.

PESACH SHENI - SECOND CHANCES

JORDAN MOSES



A year after the Jewish people left Egypt, Hashem instructed them to sacrifice the Korban Pesach on the afternoon of the 14th of Nissan, and to eat it roasted that evening (now known as Seder night), together with matzah and maror as they had done the previous year just before they left Egypt.

The Torah says in Parshat Behalotcha (9:6-7) "There were, however, certain people who had become ritually impure through contact with a dead body and could not, therefore, prepare the Passover offering on that day. They approached Moshe and Aaron and said: 'Why should we be deprived, and not be able to present Hashem's offering in its time, amongst the children of Israel?'"

Moshe then told the people (9:8) to "stand and listen" to what Hashem is going to do for them.

In response to their plea (9:10-11), Hashem established the 14th of Iyar as Pesach Sheni (a second Pesach) for anyone who was unable to bring the offering on its original time in the previous month (due to being impure from touching a dead body, or on a distant journey so could not go to the Beit Hamikdash).

We can take a simple yet incredible message from this story. Hashem gave those that were unable to sacrifice the Korban Pesach a second chance!! Why? Because they wanted one.

We can relate this to our lives nowadays very easily. There were two types of people who were unable to sacrifice the Korban Pesach in its correct time - someone who was tameh from touching a dead body, and someone who was on a distant journey. In both of these scenarios there is a common factor - physical disconnection. A person can be near and far at the same time. They can be physically close to the Beit Hamikdash, but spiritually distanced by being tameh.



Or nowadays, one can be standing and praying to Hashem in the middle of their amidah, but their mind could be extremely distracted.

This is also very applicable to the current times with covid where we have all been forced to be physically close to our spouses and children, but instead of making the most of this opportunity they still may feel ignored if our attention is not focused on them properly.

Someone who was on a 'distant journey' could also be pictured as someone who is far from who they are really supposed to be. Again, this includes being distanced from Hashem. But the tremendous message of Pesach Sheni is that Hashem gives second chances! Hashem implemented a mini festival simply as a second chance for those who couldn't take part the first time. There is no such thing as a lost case.

We always have the ability to turn around to Hashem and tell Him we want to change our ways, do teshuva, and come closer to Him. And as long as we do so sincerely and we try our best, He will always give us that 'second chance'.

This ties in perfectly with its timing, how it falls out in the middle of the Omer. During a period where we better ourselves and carry out self-reflection day by day, we now have an opportunity to do Teshuva and fix any area we want to, by reaching out to Hashem from the depth of our heart and asking for a personal second chance.

Just like in the times of Moshe Rabbeinu, the Jews who were tameh were not afraid to ask for the opportunity to come closer to Hashem and neither should we. Just like them, we should also be asking Hashem the same question, "Why should we be

deprived of sacrificing the Korban Pesach now?" Why should we be deprived of serving You in the Beit Hamikdash?? Why should we be deprived of the Mashiach?!



This is the greatness of Pesach Sheni. It is not merely a holiday for impure people, it is a holiday for impure people who became pure!

HOW TO OUTLIVE AN EPIDEMIC

EITAN ISRAELI



One of the reasons why we celebrate Lag BaOmer is that the epidemic which caused the death of Rabbi Akiva's 24,000 students ceased on that day. Rabbi Akiva was well known for describing the commandment to "Love your fellow as yourself" as "a fundamental principle" of the way of the Torah.

The obvious question therefore is how could his disciples have departed so drastically from his teachings that their interpersonal conduct resulted in an epidemic?

Since every person is unique in his nature and thought processes, he has a unique path in the service of Hashem, in the study of Torah and in the fulfilment of mitzvot. For example, one individual may be motivated by the love of Hashem, while another is inspired by the awe of Hashem. Similarly, each of Rabbi Akiva's disciples had his own personal approach to Divine service. Because they were highly developed individuals, each had internalised his own particular approach to the point that it affected every aspect of their personality. Each of them perceived any approach different from his own as incomplete and inferior. And because Rabbi Akiva emphasized the commandment to "love your fellow as yourself," each of his students tried to influence their colleagues to accept his own approach of this concept.

But being so intensely involved in their own paths of service, none of them would change. The tension between them escalated as the deep commitment every student felt to his own approach caused a failure of respect for his colleagues who followed different paths.

The single mindedness in their behaviour, further highlighted by the severe punishment which they received, teaches a very important lesson: No matter how deeply one is involved in their own service to Hashem, they must always be broadminded enough to appreciate that someone else may have a different approach and respect his ideas. Although, from one's own perspective, the other person's path may appear inadequate, this perception may stem from one's own lack of broader knowledge rather than from the other person being wrong.

May we all be blessed to love our fellow as we love ourselves and merit to outlive the current epidemic we are in so we can return to serving Hashem in unity.



T - 020 8209 1858

E - info@famerecruitment.com

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