



Torah U'Tefilah

A Collection of Inspiring Insights

Besamei HaTorah

...Beneath the Surface

R' Shmuel Winzelberg

ויעבדו מצרים את בני ישראל בפרך

The Egyptians enslaved the Children of Israel with crushing labor

Why is Egypt mentioned here and not just Pharaoh? The Holy Torah wants to point out to us that all of Egypt partnered with Pharaoh when it came to the subjugation that Pharaoh decreed on the nation of Israel. For this reason, all of them were punished with the Ten Plagues, for otherwise they would have had a valid complaint: 'Pharaoh sinned – he should have been smitten, why are we all guilty?' (*Hagadah, Umatuk HaOhr*)

🌀 ***Pesach Thoughts*** By: Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

כאן הבן שואל (לפני מה נשתנה)

Here the son asks (Before Mah Nishtanah)

We learn in *Pesachim* (116a): "They pour him the second cup and here the son asks", and *Tzadikim* explain that in these holy words there is a hint that when a person hears the questions of *Mah Nishtanah*, it is an opportune time Above in Heaven to *Daven* and ask for all the requests of the heart. This is why the *Gemara* states "and here", in this time and place – "the son asks", as any Jewish person who is called "Children of the Omnipresent" (בנים למקום), to ask for requests from their Father in Heaven. This is applicable to all people, whether one has children or not. One must be wise and have foresight so as not to lose this opportune moment, and this requires great concentration to know what to ask for from his Father, so that one does not come to ask for frivolous things. Though they might seem important to him at that time, one should be careful to take advantage of this moment. This is why in Shushan, Mordechai specifically decreed a fast day on the first day of Pesach because of the decree of the wicked Haman (*Megillah* 15a), as this is the most opportune time of the year to ask for requests. (*Hagadah Be'er HaChaim, Rav Avraham Elimelech Biderman*)

Pearls of Wisdom ... A Word for the Ages

Rav Melech Biderman taught that when we eat *Matzah* at the *Seder*, we recline. Then, when we eat the *Marror*, we don't recline. Soon after, when we eat *Matzah* and *Marror* sandwiched together in *Koreich*, we recline. Why do we recline by this? It is true that there is *Matzah* there, but there is *Marror* there as well! The answer is that *Matzah* is the food of *Emunah*, and when it is wrapped together with the *Marror*, one realizes that even the bitter times one experiences are for his good. Once one knows this, he can now recline for the *Marror* as well!

בוכות לרפואה שלמה: אסתר פרידה בת דינה
בתוך שאר חולי ישראל

פסח תשפ"ה • 5785 Pesach

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🌀 Pesach Treasures

In a *Shiur*, Rav Yissocher Frand spoke about the *Seder*. He said: There are a series of "songs" at the end of the *Pesach Seder*. I hate to refer to them as merely "songs," because they each contain great depth and profound allusions. The *Vilna Gaon* wrote an entire commentary on "*Chad Gadya*," so they are certainly more than just "songs." One of the last is the popular composition known as "*Echad Mi Yodei'ah*?" "Who knows One?" There is a very basic *Ramban* at the end of *Parshas Bo*. I do not consider myself an expert in *Ramban*, but I suggest that this *Ramban* is, if not the most important *Ramban* in *Sefer Shemos*, it is at least among the Top Three. In a lengthy comment, the *Ramban* there explains why there are so many *Mitzvos* designated as being "*Zecher L'Yetzias Mitzrayim*", in commemoration of the Exodus from Mitzrayim. The *Ramban* beautifully explains that the whole purpose of miracles is to dispel the myth that there is no G-d, *Chas V'Shalom*, or that there is a G-d but He does not know what is going on in this world, or there is a G-d who may know what goes on in this world, but He does not *care* about what goes on in this world. This was the philosophy of the Egyptians. They either denied the existence of *Hashem*, or they denied Divine Providence. Therefore, *Hashem* made open miracles which over-ruled the "laws of nature," to establish once and for all that He is the Master of all, that He knows what people are doing, that He cares what people are doing, and that He punishes people who disobey Him and rewards those who listen to Him. The *Ramban* explains that by revealing open miracles to humanity, *Hashem* is demonstrating to us that our entire lives are miraculous. "From the open miracles one can come to recognize the hidden miracles of life. Life itself is a miracle." The *Ramban* says a person who denies that *Hashem* performs hidden miracles for us on a daily basis, "has no portion in the *Torah* of Moshe." For this reason, the *Ramban* explains, there are such severe punishments for violating the laws of the *Yom Tov* of Pesach. A person who eats *Chameitz* on Pesach is *Chayav Kareis*. Likewise, a person who does not bring the *Korban Pesach* is *Chayav Kareis*. This holiday involves the fundamentals of our faith. That is what the *Geulah* from Mitzrayim was all about. The ultimate purpose of reading the *Hagadah* every year on the *Seder* Night is to leave the *Seder* as bigger *Ma'aminim*, believers in *Hashem*. The four questions and all the various interpretations of the four sons, and everything else we say are all very nice, but the bottom line of the entire *Seder* experience is that we are supposed to have more *Emunah*, faith in *Hashem*, at the end of the night. The *Seder* is supposed to implant certain automatic associations into our minds. When we hear the word "*Echad*," One, our automatic reaction should be, "*Echad Elokeinu She'ba'Shamayim U'va'aretz*," One is *Hashem* our G-d in heaven and earth. When we hear the word "two," we think, "the two *Luchos*." "Three?" The three *Avos*. "Four?" The four *Imahos*. "Five?" The five books of the *Torah*. This means that on the night of the *Seder*, we become so attuned to *Emunah* in *Hashem*, that our word associations become such that everything we hear brings to mind the basic components of Judaism. This is why at the end of the *Seder*, we recite this popular composition "Who knows One?" It reinforces to us after a whole night of *Seder*, *Matzah*, and *Daled Kosos*, that we are to become bigger believers. Maybe the number seven means other things to us on other nights of the year, but on the night of the *Seder* the number seven means, "Seven days of the week until *Shabbos*," and the number eight means, "Eight days until a baby boy has his *Bris*." This is the natural word association of a true believer, and this is what the *Seder* experience is supposed to accomplish!

✪ Pesach Gems

Rav Moshe Meir Weiss taught that at the end of *Magid*, the *Hagadah* informs us of one of the mission statements of the *Seder*. “*B’chol Dor V’dor Chaiyev Adom Lir’os Es Atzmo K’ilu Hu Yatza MiMitzrayim*, In every generation, a person is *required* to view himself as if he left Mitzrayim.” The words ‘every generation’ is meant to convey that even if he is living in a generation of persecution, such as in a basement during the Inquisition, in the midst of the Polish uprisings, or even in a barrack in Auschwitz. This begs the question: How can he experience a feeling of freedom in the midst of such turmoil and distress? The *Ohr HaChaim Ha’kodesh* cites the *Pasuk*, “*Keil Motzium MiMitzrayim, Hashem* takes us out of Mitzrayim.” He points out that the *Pasuk* does not speak in the past tense, but rather that *Hashem* is constantly, every year, taking us out of Mitzrayim. He explains that the word Mitzrayim also means constraints, restrictions and distresses, as in the *Pasuk*, “*Min HaMeitzar Karasi Kah*, From distress I called to *Hashem*.” The *Ohr HaChaim* elaborates that every night at the *Seder* there is a power for a Jew to be released from his problems. Rav Meilech Biderman, *Shlit”a*, cites from his predecessors that the word ‘*MaZaL*,’ which means fate, is also an acronym of *Zeicher L’Yetzias Mitzrayim*, remembering the Exodus from Mitzrayim for the night of the *Seder* is a *Segulah*, has a special strength, to change one’s fate for the better. The *Hagadah Boruch Yomeiru* elaborates that in Hebrew, a year is called ‘*Shanah*,’ which also means ‘to repeat,’ as in ‘*L’Shanos*.’ This is because every year on their specific day, events of the past repeat themselves. For example, *Adam HaRishon* was judged on *Rosh Hashanah* and every year since we are judged on *Rosh Hashanah*. On *Yom Kippur* we were forgiven for the *Aveirah* of the *Eigel*, and from then onward *Yom Kippur* became a day of forgiveness. So too, on the night of the *Seder*. We were released from the sufferings of Mitzrayim, and every year it is repeated, and on this night, one can be released from his sufferings. He adds that the night of the *Seder* is called *Leil Shimurim*. While one meaning of this is that it is a ‘night of protection,’ and therefore some people abstain from locking their doors on the *Seder* night (only in a good neighborhood), there is another meaning to this. The word ‘*Shamar*’ also means to look forward to, as in the *Pasuk*, “*V’Aviv Shamar Es HaDavar*, And his father [Yaakov] looked forward to the fulfillment [of Yosef’s dreams].” We are taught that “*B’Nissan Niga’el U’b’Nissan Asidin Liga’el*, In Nissan we were redeemed and in Nissan we are destined to be redeemed.” Throughout the ages, it was a night of hope to be released from stress. It was on the night of the *Seder* that Avraham was rescued from the four mighty kings. It was on this night that the Jewish people were saved from *Sancheirev* and his four hundred battalions. It was also on this night that *Achashveirosh* had difficulty sleeping, and the seeds of Haman’s downfall were sown. Once again, we see that the night of the *Seder* is ripe for all kinds of redemptions!

✪ L’Maaseh

Rav Yaakov Galinsky, *zt”l*, shared a story he heard from Rav Yitzchok Shlomo Unger, *zt”l*, of Bnei Brak. Rav Unger said that about 30 years after the end of World War II, a Hungarian Jew came to him with a question in *Halachah*. The man was shaking as they sat down to discuss the issue. The man began to share his story. He was a Holocaust survivor. He was sent to Auschwitz in the last year of the war. While there, he slept on a plank of wood in the barracks with another Jew who was a child of *Tzadikim*, and they became very close. One day, his bunkmate, who somehow kept track of the Jewish calendar in the camp, told him, “In two more days, it will be Pesach. We have no shortage of *Marror* here in the camp, but where are we going to find *Matzah*?” Hearing this, the Hungarian Jew was so moved, that he set his mind to somehow find a way to bake two *Matzos*, one for his bunkmate and one for himself. It took much resourcefulness. He worked quickly, risking his life each step of the way. In the end, he was indeed able to bake two *Matzos* of the proper measure, one for each of them. On the way back to the barracks, he was hiding the *Matzah* in his clothes, when a Nazi officer saw that he was walking strangely. The Nazi ordered him to stop and put up his hands. He did so, and the *Matzos* fell to the ground, breaking into many pieces. Seeing this, the Nazi became furious and beat him to the point of death. After he moved on to another victim, the poor, beaten, and broken Jew picked up all of the remaining pieces of the *Matzah* that he could salvage, and hobbled back to the barracks, and collapsed. His friend helped him take care of his wounds and tried to ease his pain. The Hungarian Jew told his friend what had happened, and showed him the *Matzah* he was able to save. His friend begged him to give him the *Matzah*, as he had never missed the *Mitzvah* of *Matzah* in his life. But the Hungarian man refused. He had risked his life and had been beaten, just to fulfill this *Mitzvah*. There was only a little left of it, and he was not going to lose it. He originally made enough for both of them, but now that there was only one measure of *Matzah*, he was going to eat it himself at his *Seder*. His friend continued to beg for the privilege to do the *Mitzvah*, arguing that his entire family had been killed already, and doing this *Mitzvah* would be a slight comfort. The Hungarian Jew responded that his entire family had also been killed. The bunkmate told him that he had memorized all of the *Hagadah* and *Shir HaShirim*, and promised that if he would give him the *Matzah*, he would recite it with him. The Hungarian Jew refused, saying that he would forego the recital of the *Hagadah*, and he would rather perform the *Mitzvah* of *Matzah* instead. Broken, crying, and begging, the bunkmate finally said, “I promise you that if you give me the *Matzah*, I will give you my reward for the *Mitzvah*! I will also recite the entire *Hagadah* and *Shir HaShirim* with you as well!” Seeing the desperation and sincerity, the Hungarian Jew paused to think, and then agreed to this arrangement. Things ended better for the Hungarian Jew than for his bunkmate. The next morning, as they were trying to recite *Hallel* from memory, the bunkmate, overjoyed at being able to eat *Matzah* on Pesach in Auschwitz, was so overcome with emotion, that he yelled the *Brachah* of *Hallel* out loud. A Nazi heard and became enraged. The friend was shot on the spot. The Hungarian Jew survived the war, moved to *Eretz Yisroel*, built a family, and lived in Bnei Brak. This Jew then told Rav Unger why he asked to speak with him. The night before, his old bunkmate appeared to him in a dream, dressed in white, with his face shining. He asked the Hungarian Jew whether he remembered him and the *Matzah* he gave him that Pesach. The Hungarian Jew told his old friend that he surely remembered him and everything that happened. The bunkmate then said, “I have received reward for every *Mitzvah* that I did in my life, except for that one *Mitzvah* of *Matzah* due to our agreement. Please do me a favor. Please return the reward for that *Mitzvah* to me.” The man responded that he could not believe his old friend’s *Chutzpah*. After he had risked his life and was beaten to the point of death, at the very least, he should be entitled to the reward he bargained for in giving up the *Matzah*! After several arguments back and forth, the dream ended, and the man was confused about what he should do. He explained that he came to visit Rav Unger to ask if he was obligated to give the reward for that *Mitzvah* back to his friend. Rav Unger responded that this was a question for a *Rebbe*, not a *Rav*. So he sent him to ask the question to the *Machnovka Rebbe*, Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heshel Twersky, *zt”l*, who also resided in Bnei Brak. The man went to the *Rebbe*, told him the whole story, and asked him what he should do. After thinking for a while, the *Rebbe* told him that it is proper for him to give up the reward for the *Mitzvah* to his friend. His old friend could no longer do *Mitzvos*, but the Hungarian Jew had lived on, and was able to continue doing *Mitzvos* for many more years, hopefully until he lived until a hundred and twenty years old. Just for that reason alone, he should do this kindness for his dear friend. Begrudgingly, the man told the *Rebbe* that if that was what he is being told to do, he would do it. However, the *Rebbe* could see that the man wasn’t comfortable with it. The *Machnovka Rebbe* told him he had to do it with joy. He should immediately go to a *Bais Medrash*, put his head inside the *Aron HaKodesh*, and “remind” *Hashem* of every detail of the story. Then, he should willingly give the reward back to his friend. The Jew gathered the strength, and did as the *Rebbe* advised. Exhausted emotionally and physically, the Hungarian Jew returned home that evening and immediately fell asleep, utterly drained from all the events of the day. In the middle of the night, his friend appeared to him again in a dream to thank him for giving up the reward for the *Mitzvah* of *Matzah* from that night, over 30 years earlier. The next day, the man came back to Rav Unger and told him what the *Machnovka Rebbe* told him to do, and about the second dream he had. Rav Unger responded that he was not surprised. He told the man, “Imagine, this Jew, who was the child of *Tzadikim*, surely grew up doing *Mitzvos* his entire life, and was enjoying a place in the highest levels in *Olam Haba*. Not only that, but *Chazal* teach in *Bava Basra* (10b) regarding one who is killed sanctifying *Hashem*’s Name, that ‘No being has a stature greater than they do in *Olam Haba*.’ Yet, with all of that, it was worth it for him to leave that place of ultimate pleasure and delight in *Hashem*’s Presence and descend all the way back down into this world, to try to pick up the *S’char* for eating that one small measure of *Matzah*. We learn from this an entirely new perspective and appreciation for *Mitzvos*!”

לעילוי נשמת: אלעזר בן יחיאל אלימלך ז"ל

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