

The Chizuk Haggodoh

חייב אדם לראות את עצמו



**Messages for appreciating the value of
our unique *avodas Hashem* through the
timeless wisdom of the Haggodoh**

דברי פתיחה

After weeks of scrubbing, cleaning, *kashering* and cooking, literally transforming our homes, we are finally ready to take our place at a royal banquet. *Leil haSeder* is a magical high point in our year, the table is resplendent and we are dressed in our *Yom Tov* best. Yet we are gathered for so much more than a regular *Yom Tov seudah* and it is up to us to make the most of it.

The *Seder* starts with a simple instruction, *Kadesh*. Literally this is telling us that we start the evening's proceedings with *kiddush*. As with every *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov*, we start by declaring that the day is special, set aside and different. This one small word is really a guide for the whole night because on *Seder* night everything takes on a deeper significance. We start the evening by setting our sights, by deciding where we want to get to and what we aim to achieve. The goal of *leil haSeder* is to become *kodosh*, nothing less!

Kedushoh is best explained as being *attached* to something, for example, **Tosfos** (*Kiddushin* 2b) explain that a woman becomes married through the process of *kiddushin*; she is now attached to her husband rather than anyone else. Also, if an item becomes *hekadesh*, it is attached to the *Beis Hamikdosh*. The opposite of *kedushoh* however, is *chol*, which is the same word for sand, because grains of sand are never attached to each other. A lack of *kedushoh* is a lack of attachment.

Leil haSeder is described as being the *Rosh Hashono* for *emunoh*, the time when we can literally 'fill up our tanks' for the entire year ahead. The most incredible event that a human being can possibly experience: to become close to Hashem through becoming *kodosh*. In fact, the entire purpose of *yetzias Mitzrayim* was to become a *goy kodosh* with the giving of the *Torah* at *Har Sinai*.

This may seem like a tall order and way beyond us, but let's remember that the name of this *Yom Tov* is *Pesach* which means to jump. Put simply, tonight we have the ability to jump higher and further than we could have ever imagined and quite literally become *kodosh*.

We hope that you gain from the *divrei Torah* in this booklet. They have been designed with you in mind, to enable you to gain true *cheirus*, freedom, and become the best *oved Hashem* that you can be. Each and every one of us has our own personal *Mitzrayim* or *meitzorim* (limitations) that we need to escape from. The *Yetzer Horoh* constantly tells us that we aren't good enough, that our *avodas Hashem* is worthless and that we can never truly become *kodosh*. This is the mindset that we need to leave behind tonight as we start the journey of *cheirus* towards a renewed *kabolas haTorah*.

Wishing you and your family a *freilichen Yom Tov* and a *kosheren Pesach*!

Rabbi Shimshon Silkin
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קדש

We know that one of the *mitzvos* on *leil haSeder* is to drink four cups of wine. Why do we put such an emphasis on drinking wine, so much so that the *Haggodoh* has to be said on a cup of wine?

The **Meshech Chochmoh** explains that nothing symbolises *havdolah* between us and the other nations of the world more than wine, and that is why we make *havdolah* each week on wine. When *Homon hoRoshoh* wanted to provoke *Achashveirosh's* ire against the *Yieden*, he said, 'If a fly falls into the cup of a Jew, he would throw the fly away and carry on drinking. But if you, the King, would touch his cup, he would spill out the wine and wash the cup out three times!'

Klal Yisroel came out of *Mitzrayim* in the *zechus* of the separation that they made from the *Mitzriyim*, as *Chazal* famously say, the *Yieden* didn't change their names, dress or speech, to prevent assimilating with their Egyptian neighbours. We therefore emphasise the drinking of wine to convey that we are different to the *goyim* around us. When we say in *Kiddush*, '*asher bochar bonu mekol om, veromemenu mekol loшон, vekideshonu bemitzvosov*', we should think about how we are *Hashem's* chosen people, and that He has raised us above the nations around us. We therefore have a responsibility to make sure that the way we act, speak and dress befits our status of *bnei melochim*, princes of *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*, who have been elevated above the rest of humanity to bring the world to its ultimate *tikkun*.

ורחץ

We often wash hands before eating, so *urchatz* does not appear particularly extraordinary, yet it comprises one of the holy 15 steps of the *Seder*. True, today we only wash before bread and that takes place later in the *Seder* with *Rochtzoh* but what is the significance of *urchatz* and what part does it play at this stage in the proceeding of *Seder* night especially? Some *meforshim* explain the washing of hands before partaking of *karpas* is reminiscent of the time of the *Beis Hamikdosh* when *hilchos tumoh vetaharoh* were in practise, but perhaps we can find a deeper meaning associated with this ritual.

The **Darkei Moshe** writes that *maggid* is actually a *tefillah* in which we praise *Hashem* for His greatness. Therefore, *urchatz* inf act represents the washing of hands before *davening* as much as before eating. At this point, shortly before we start reciting the *Haggodoh*, we prepare ourselves for the special *tefillah* of the night, *Maggid*. Even though we always try to make sure we prepare for *avodas haTefillah* properly, on a night like *leil haSeder*, when the *kedushoh* is palpable and the opportunity to connect with the *Ribono shel Olom* is unparalleled, we want to make sure we don't just hurtle unaware into the main focus of the night, *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*, but rather we seek to prepare ourselves accordingly.

As we, or the *baal haSeder*, wash our hands in anticipation, we should also imagine ourselves washing away all our negative thoughts, especially those that try to convince us that *Hashem* isn't interested in our *avodoh*. Nothing could be further from the truth. Every single person young and old, learned or otherwise, is equally valuable before *Hashem* on this holiest of nights and purest of occasions. There are no spectators on *Seder* night. We all eat *matzoh*, drink the *kosos* of wine and even tell the story, everyone. In many homes every individual even makes *kiddush*. On this night, perhaps more than any other, *Hashem* desires the personal *avodoh* of each and every *Yied*. And therefore, like the *Kohein* in the *Beis Hamikdosh*, we wash our hands and prepare to offer our most sincere *tefillas* and *avodoh* before *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*...

כרפס

Although we are sitting at a resplendent *Yom Tov* table, we won't be eating much for a while and *karpas* seems like a bit of a tease. Most *poskim* hold that one should have less than a *kezayis* so as not to run into a *shaaleh* of a *brocho acharonoh*, so why are we eating something so small and insignificant? It's not like it will even fill us up.

The **Gemoro** (*Pesochim* 114b) tells us that the purpose of dipping the *karpas* is to provoke the children into asking questions. As such, we do things that are rather unusual to stimulate them, to get them to think and ask why this night is indeed different.

The **Bach** (OC 473) explains that *karpas* has another function which is to whet the appetite, what one might call an appetizer. Most of the *mitzvos* of *Seder* night involve eating and drinking, most notably *achilas matzoh* (which is *min hatorah* on the first night) but also *arba kosos*, *morrer*, *korech* and *shulchan orech*, so the humble *karpas* serves to whet the appetite for all that is to come.

Perhaps that's another reason why we don't eat much *karpas*: it's not about its size, rather it's about its purpose. *Karpas* has a vital function: to 'get the juices flowing,' both in terms of stimulating meaningful discussion about *yetzias Mitzrayim* and to prepare ourselves for our various *mitzvos* of the evening.

Tonight, of all nights, there is a no more important role to play, so this unassuming little vegetable occupies an critical place on the *kaaroh* together with all the important items that we need for our *Seder*.

It may only be a tiny little piece, but it makes everything else happen in the a big way!

יחץ

The **Sochatchover Rebbe**, Rav Dovid Borenstein gives a beautiful understanding into the significance of *Yachatz*. It says in *Parshas Vayishlach*, '*vayachatz es ho'om asher ito*', describing how *Yaakov Ovinu* split his camp into two, so that if *Esof* would come and conquer one of the camps, the other would escape. *Rashi* brings from a *Medrash* that they would escape '*ba'al korcho*', meaning, come what may. Rav Dovid explains that each and every *Yied* is split between his *chitzonius*, his externalities, and his *koach hapnimi*, his inner core. This *koach hapnimi* can never get tarnished or ruined, no matter what a *Yied* does to his *chitzonius*, as *Chazal* say, '*af al pi shechotoh Yisroel hu*'. A *Yied* may stumble but he still has a pure *Neshomoh* within him, and is always considered part of *Klal Yisroel*.

The **Zohar** explains the *possuk*, '*vehoyo machanechoh kodosh*', that it is referring to our 248 limbs which are called a *machane*, and the *Torah* is saying that we have a duty to preserve their holiness. Our *koach hapnimi* is also called a *machane*. *Yaakov Ovinu* was symbolising that even if the outer *machane*, the externalities, could be persecuted or assimilated by the *goyim*, our inner *machane*, the *koach hapnimi* of *Klal Yisroel*, will never be destroyed. '*Vehoyo hamachane hanishor lifleito*', and as the *Medrash* explains, '*ba'al korcho*', for our *koach hapnimi* will forever remain, "come what may".

This is what we symbolise by breaking the *Matzoh* into two halves. The first, smaller piece, which is the *lechem oni*, represents our *chitzonius* which can sometimes be oppressed and downtrodden by the nations of the world or the *yetzer horoh*. But the second, larger piece is the *afikomen*, it's *tzofun*, hidden away, symbolising that the hidden inner core of *Klal Yisroel* and of each and every *Yied* is pristine and shines bright, and can never be tarnished no matter the circumstances.

מגיד

הא לחמא עניא

A question raised by many is why the laws of *heseivoh*, leaning, do not apply to the *mitzvah* of *maggid* as per the *Mishna Berura*. **Rov Meilech Biderman** suggests an understanding based on the **Zohar** who writes that **on Seder night the Ribono shel Olom Himself, together with His malochim, come to visit the homes of His people** who are celebrating *yetzias Mitzrayim*. In that case, each and every one of us is considered a "*talmid lifnei rabboi*", a student before his Rebbe, during *maggid* and it would therefore be inappropriate to lean. The **Tiferes Shlomo** sees a reference to this idea in words of the *brocho* at the end of *Maggid*: "And we sing before Him a new song..." because on the night of *Pesach*, our *avodoh* of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* is "before Him", in the presence of our "Guest", the *Ribono shel Olom* Himself.

Just a word on *Maggid*. It has become customary over the years for the children to also offer insights and *divrei Torah* at the *Seder* table, even though tonight it is primarily the role of the father to be educating the child in fulfilment of the *posuk* "*vehigaetoh levinchoh*". Nevertheless "*minhag Yisroel Torah*" and we wouldn't want to change the status quo. However, as mentioned in "*Avodim Hoyinu*" **the overwhelming purpose of the night is to recount the story of Geulas Mitzrayim**, nothing more. Even if we are very wise, and have very wise things to say, tonight the goal is to relive the events and imagine ourselves experiencing them in the first person - as if we were actually there. The more we can do this, the more we will gain from this awesome night and imbue in our hearts and minds the factual and concrete basis for our *emunoh tehoroh*.

We break the *matzoh* into two unequal parts as the *matzoh* has two different roles tonight. On the one hand it is the *lechem oni*, the poor man's bread, but on the other hand it is the bread of freedom. It is this piece of *matzoh* that we display and discuss as we recite *hoh lachmoh anyoh*.

This smaller part will also remain visible for almost the entire *seder*, as the *lechem oni*, the 'bread' over which many things are said and eaten for our first *kezayis*. The other, bigger part is hidden away to be eaten at the end of the meal as the *afikomon* on a full stomach in the manner of free men.

Leil haSeder is rich with incredible symbols, and this is perhaps one of the most powerful of them all. We have the smaller part in front of us to show us where we are holding right now. We don't delude ourselves into thinking that we are greater than we really are. In fact, the greatest disappointments come in life when we confuse where we are with where we think we ought to be.

The smaller piece of *matzoh* teaches us to be honest with ourselves. We start off in a place of *aniyus*, spiritual poverty, however, **with effort and in time we will b'ezras Hashem achieve great things**. This greatness is hidden away for now and only exists in potential, but it is vital to know that it exists and just needs to be revealed, like the *afikomon*, the bigger part that serves as our dessert.

An important element in the *emunoh* that we seek to achieve tonight is *emunoh atzmis*, belief in our own potential. Perhaps the most powerful introduction to that is to know that the potential is there, even it may be concealed for now, just like the *afikomon*.

מה נשתנה

Many *meforshim* explain that the conundrum of *mah nishtanoh* is to try and understand why we do certain things which symbolise *shibud* and other things which symbolise *geuloh* on the same night. In addition, some of the *mitzvos* have within themselves an element of *shibud* and *geuloh*. *Matzoh* is a remembrance for the haste in which we left *Mitzrayim* (*geuloh*) while simultaneously symbolising *lechem oni* and the *shibud* (*golus*)? So too the *morrer*, which is supposed to remind us of the bitterness of *golus*, is dipped into a paste which is an action of *cheirus*?

The **Shloh Hakodosh** addresses this question by asking another one. If we eat *matzoh* because we left in such a hurry so that the dough couldn't rise, why did *Hashem* already command *Klal Yisroel* on *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* to eat *matzoh*? He explains that *Hashem* took us out, '*me'afeiloh le'oiroh*', from darkness to light. Therefore, the *cheirus* had to be in stark contrast to the *shibud*. The same way that the *Mitzriyim* subjugated *Klal Yisroel*, slave driving them to the extent that they couldn't even wait for their dough to rise, in that same way *Hashem* freed us from *Mitzrayim*, with such speed that our dough couldn't rise. That is why *Hashem* commanded us on *Rosh Chodesh* to eat *matzos*, for the whole *cheirus* was planned in a way to contrast the *shibud*. Therefore, in essence, there is no contradiction at all. The *lechem oni* and *lechem geuloh* both symbolise the same thing, the fact that **the hardships we suffered in *Mitzrayim* were there to make the redemption even more glorious**. So too the *morrer* symbolises '*vayimoreru es chayeihem*', the fact that *Klal Yisroel* were supposed to be in *Mitzrayim* for 400 years, but because we suffered extra persecution, we left after just 210 years. The *morrer* was in itself a symbol of *geuloh*, for through the bitterness, we merited to leave *Mitzrayim* 190 years earlier than we were supposed to.

We all suffer from our own personal *shibudim*. On *leil haSeder* we need to take *chizuk* from the fact that all the '*afeiloh*', any darkness that we may find ourselves in, is all part of the eventual *geulah*; it's a way to build us and make us stronger, so that our eventual *geuloh* can be that much sweeter.

עבדים היינו

15th Nissan, *leil haSeder*, 1943. The few surviving *Yieden* in the Warsaw Ghetto were on high alert. The uprising against the Nazis ש"י had just begun, and the sound of gunfire and smell of smoke filled the air. Nevertheless, despite the fear and worry, groups of starved but proud *Yieden* came together to partake in what would surely be their last *Seder* in this world. A young boy called Moishel started asking his father the *Ma nishtanoh*. "*Tatte zisse, ma nishtano halaylo hazeh mekol haleilos?* Why is this night so long and so much more difficult than any other night before?" Moishel's father sadly looked at his child, just a fragile boy who had already endured so much in his young lifetime, and was about to respond with *avodim hoyinu*. But Moishel had one more question....

"*Tatte zisse, will you be alive next year to answer the Ma nishtanoh? Will I be alive to ask the Ma nishtanoh? Will there be any Jewish child left on Earth to ask the Ma nishtanoh?*" The room was silent. Tears streamed down anguished faces as those gathered waited with bated breath to hear how Moishel's father would respond. Moishel's father put his arm around his young precious son and said, "I don't know. I don't know if I will be alive next year and I don't know if you will be alive next year. But I know one thing. '*Ki beshem kodshechoh nishbato lo, shelo yichbe neiro le'olom vo'ed*', *Hashem* swore in His holy name, that **His light, *Klal Yisroel*, will never be extinguished**. I know that there will always be a Moishel, someplace, somewhere, asking his father the *Ma nishtanoh*, for *Hashem* has promised that He will never forsake His precious children..."

ד' בנים

The *ba'al Haggodoh* introduces the questions and answers for the four sons with '*Boruch Hamokom boruch Hu, boruch shenosan Torah le'amo Yisroel, boruch Hu*'. The **Nesivos Sholom** explains that it says "*boruch*" four times, corresponding to the four sons, to signify that each member of *Klal Yisroel*, no matter whether he is a *chochom, rosho, tam, or she'eino yode'a lishol*, is a beloved *ben*, a son of *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*. "*Keneged arbo'oh bonim dibroh Torah*". Regardless of what level of *ruchniyus* one finds himself in, one needs to realise that he will always be a cherished child of *Hashem*.

Each child has a unique response appropriate to him. The *rosho* asks '*moh ho'avodoh hazos lochem*'. We aren't really talking about a *rosho* but rather a person who serves *Hashem* yet finds himself constantly battling his *yetzer hora*, and has many *nefilos*. Each time he falls he gets depressed and therefore asks *moh ho'avodoh hazos, lochem*. He thinks that *avodoh* should only be for those that are on a high *madreigoh* who never fall, and does not feel fit to be part of *avodas Hashem*. We therefore answer, '*ilu hoyoh shom, lo hoyoh nigol*'. When we were in *Mitzrayim* we were in the *mem tes sharei tumoh*. Yet the reason why we merited to be redeemed was because **we never lost hope in the *geulas hanefesh* along with the *geulas haguf***. Had we become *meyuosh*, despondent, we would have never left *Mitzrayim*.

Furthermore, the *Nesivos Sholom* explains that it says '*ilu hoyoh shom, lo hoyoh nigol*'. Only in *Mitzrayim* would the *rosho* not have been redeemed. But after we formed into *Klal Yisroel* and received the *Torah*, we are now all called *bonim*, and we can each merit a *geulas hanefesh*. On *Pesach*, no matter which one of the four sons we may identify with, we can all experience an *aliyah* in *ruchniyus* and take comfort in knowing that we will always be *Hashem's* beloved children.

מתחלה

Leil haSeder is the night in the year when we focus on our *mesorah*, the unbroken transmission of *Torah* throughout the generations. Our *Torah* is *emes*, 100% true and as such we do not whitewash any parts of our history regardless of how unpleasant they might seem.

The **Gemoro** (*Pesochim* 116b) says that the structure of the *Haggodoh*, the way we are meant to relate the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, is through being "*maschil bignus umesayem bishvach*", starting with our disgrace and ending with our praise. There is a well-known *machlokes* between *Rav* and *Shmuel* as to whether this disgrace and praise is something *ruchni* or *gashmi* and therefore we do both.

We start off by saying how our forefathers worshipped *avodoh zoroh*, they were bound to and by the laws of nature and sought to manipulate them by praying to all manner of false gods. We contrast that to where we are holding now, 'and now the Omnipresent has brought us close to His service.' The distinction between the two is so clear: our *Torah* tells us that *Hashem* created man and tells us how to behave. Idolaters (*lehavdil*) create their own gods who tell them what they want to hear. **Rabbi Avrohom Twerski zt"l** explains that one who worships idols can never be truly free as they are always ruled by their lowly desires and worship *avodoh zoroh* as a way of getting a '*hechsher*' for their actions. An *oved avodoh zoroh* is a person who is dominated by their impulses and is a slave to his passions. *Avrohom Ovinu* broke this trend. He was someone who was able to take control of his life and become subservient to the *rotzon Hashem*; he was able to see through the falsehood of *avodoh zoroh* and live a life of *kedushoh* and closeness to the *Ribbono Shel Olom*. As a result of this, we, his children, are charged with continuing his mission, but can only do so if we work on freeing ourselves from the *yetzer horoh*.

Each and every one of us is a descendant of Avrohom Ovinu, so we have some of his DNA within us as well as his incredible legacy of *emunoh* and *kedushoh*. This means that we really have the *koach* within us to free ourselves of the *yetzer horoh* and attach ourselves to the *emmes* and become closer to *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* through our *avodas Hashem*.

ברוך שומר הבטחתו

This line, not always given as much prominence as some of the other more "famous" passages of the *Haggodoh*, is nevertheless one of the most important: *Blessed is He Who keeps His promise to Klal Yisroel*. What a statement! Shall we quote an *eino-Yehudi* who noticed this phenomenon concerning the Jewish people? Ok then, but not the famous one you're expecting. This one is shorter: **"The Jews are as everlasting as eternity itself."**

Hashem promised to *Avrohom* that his descendants, *Bnei Yisroel*, would be His people forever. There have been times when that promise looked to the human eye close to being broken. Very close. But it's *Hashem's* promise. So of course it can't be broken and here we are, thriving once again. All the great empires, especially at the height of their powers, could not have imagined their own ultimate demise. And they certainly couldn't imagine that the weak, defenceless people they were subjugating would outlive them. But today, what's left of those empires remains behind a glass in a museum. No one can explain this most extraordinary phenomenon. Way back in the 1600s, King Louis wanted proof of the existence of G-d. His adviser, Pascal, famously said: *The Jews, your Majesty, the Jews*.

On January 1, 2000, the New York Times ran a Millennium edition of their world-famous newspaper. It was a special issue that featured three front pages. One had the news from a hundred years earlier, January 1, 1900. The second was the news of the day, January 1, 2000. And then they had a third front page, projecting events of a hundred years in the future, January 1, 2100. This page, guessing what that future would look like, included items such as a discussion as to whether robots should be allowed to vote and other fanciful stories. But at the bottom of the page, the front page of the year 2100, were the *Shabbos* candle-lighting times for New York in January 1, 2100. Nobody had paid for its inclusion, it was just added in by the Times. When the production manager of the New York Times, an Irish Catholic, was asked why he had included the Jews' candle-lighting times for *Shabbos*, his answer was stunning: "We can't really know what will happen in the year 2100. It is impossible to predict the future. But of one thing we can be certain. One hundred years from now, Jewish women will be lighting *Shabbos* candles..."

והיא שעמדה

In one of the more moving moments of the *Seder* we raise our glasses as if to drink a *lechayim* and sing about how in every generation there are those who have sought to wipe us out, but *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* saves us from their hands.

As *Yieden* we have firm *emunoh* in *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*, the infinite Creator, yet many people think that it would be easier to have stronger *emunoh* if they could just see a few miracles now and then.

One of the reasons why we are so particular about all of the *mitzvos* of *Seder* night, especially the *Haggodoh* is because this is how we keep the *nissim* alive. We know that *Hashem* does not perform open miracles nowadays so we preserve the memory of the time when He did overturn the laws of nature.

However, there is one miracle that is actually plain for all to see and all you have to do is look in the mirror to experience it.

Rav Yaakov Emden zt"l in the *hakdomo* to his *siddur Beis Yaakov* says, 'By the life of my soul! When I contemplate these wonders of our survival, they appear greater to me than all the miracles and wonders that *Hashem Yisborach* performed for our forefathers in *Egypt*, and the wilderness, and the *Eretz Yisroel*...'

The fact that we are here today as *Yieden* defies all the laws of history, sociology and anthropology. **The survival of Klal Yisroel, a tiny, persecuted, scattered minority, has no parallel in world history.** The only possible explanation for the fact that we are here today as *Yieden*, keeping the exact, same *Torah* that our ancestors did, is because *Hakodosh Boruch Hu matzlienu miyodom*.

We may not be able to see *Hashem*, but we can see what He does. The extraordinary *hashgocho* that *Klal Yisroel* have experienced, is only because of *vehi sheomdo*.

Now, that's worth thinking about the next time you see your reflection in the mirror!

וירד מצרימה...

ויהי שם לגוי - מלמד שהיו ישראל מצוינים שם

The **Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer** says that *Klal Yisroel* were *metzuyonim*, unique, by not changing their names, language or clothing, to avoid assimilating with the *Mitzriyim*. **Rav Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi** points out how remarkable this *Chazal* seems to be. *Klal Yisroel* were physically and spiritually enslaved to *Mitzrayim*, and were drowning in the *mem tes shaarei tumoh*. They even served *avodoh zoroh*, which is why the *malochim* questioned the *zechus* of *Klal Yisroel* to be redeemed. Why then do we consider it special that they didn't change their names, language or speech if they were otherwise in such a poor state of *ruchniyus*?

Rav Boruch Mordechai answers. *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* saw that despite all the *aveiros* and *tumoh* that *Klal Yisroel* were wallowing in, their inner essence was different. So much so, that was the reason they were *zoche* to be redeemed. They may have been in the darkest and most unfortunate of circumstances, but their true identity shone through.

Tzei ulmad. Hashem differentiates between actions and essence. **We may stumble and fall at times, but we have a pure *neshomoh*.** Jewish children were being slaughtered for Pharaoh's blood baths, they were beholden to the whims of every Egyptian on the street, yet they never lost their pride in who they were. The *goyim* can oppress us physically, but a *Yied's* spirit and fortitude never sways. True, the *Yieden* were doing *aveiros* and were in a terribly impure state. But *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* wanted to take out a '*goy mekerev goy*'. And *Klal Yisroel* were always a different nation.

We may find ourselves in a less than ideal place, but we will always be different. We will always be special because we each have a pure, unsullied *Neshomoh*. Every *Yied* is unique and special no matter what *matzav* he finds himself in.

וירעו אותנו

Many *meforshim* notice a grammatical peculiarity in this phrase - it ought to say "*vayoreu lonu*", they did evil to us, not "*oisonu*"? The **Alshich Hakodosh** provides a chilling answer. It wasn't that the *Mitzriyim* had committed terrible, evil things to the *Yieden*. It was worse than that. In some instances, they had made the *Yieden* themselves evil. In the most trying circumstances, faced with the daily horrors of the Egyptian *golus*, some *Yieden* lost sight of what it meant to be a *Yied* and turned against their own brothers. This is the greatest tragedy of the *golus*. To suffer physically is awful but it is transient, it only applies to This World. But if the suffering then leads to a breakdown in *ruchniyus*, then the enemy has truly won.

During the Second World War, the Germans understood that the secret of Jewish power lay in their *neshomos*. And so, beyond the unspeakable torture they inflicted upon the Jewish people's bodies, they also attempted to destroy their spirit. But *boruch Hashem*, by and large, they failed. They tell the story of one *Yied*, battered and emaciated, standing, freezing, in his threadbare clothes, staring a Nazi in the face and saying: "You can take my home, you can take my possessions, you can take my clothes. But you'll never touch my soul." The stone-hearted Nazi flinched for a moment and screamed at the *Yied*: "Run for your life!" The *Yied* survived.

This is what we must remember throughout *golus*. They can treat us poorly, sometimes devastatingly. But **as long as we cling onto our Torah, our mitzvos, and do not allow them to touch our *ruchniyus*, then we win...**

ונצעק אל ה'...

Reb Meilech Biderman tells a story that occurred with the *Apter Rov* involving a poor *Yied* who was facing a prison sentence by the town's overlord if he didn't come up with the requisite funds to pay his upcoming rent. Left with no other options, the wife sent her poor husband to the *Apter Rov* on *Shabbos HaGodol*, hoping that her husband would be able to get a *brocho* from the *Rebbe*.

On *Shabbos* afternoon the *Rebbe* said during his *drosho*, "At the *Seder*, when a *Yied* reads the words '*vanitzak el Hashem Elokei avoseinu*,' it is a time when *Hashem* performs miracles, so whatever you ask for will surely be answered. The **Ohr Hachaim HaKodosh** points out that the verse states, "*K-el motziom miMitzrayim*," which is in the present tense, meaning that **Hashem is actively, in the present moment, taking people out of their individual Mitzrayim**, in whatever form it plagues them."

Pesach arrived and the couple sat down to their *Seder*. As they reached the passage of "*Vanitzak el Hashem Elokei avoseinu*," the husband, remembering the *Rebbe's* words, rose excitedly out of his seat. Together with his wife they began crying the verse "*Vanitzak*" all the while thinking of their desperate plight and how in just two days' time they could end up in a deep cold dungeon if they didn't come up with some money.

At that moment there was a knock at the door and a non-Jew turned up with two oversized sacks of gold. He dropped them on the floor and said, "One is for me and the other for you, and if I don't return by a specific date then they are both yours."

On *Motzoei Yom Tov*, the *Yied* went straight to the *Poritz* to pay what he had owed him. When he entered, the amazed *Poritz* saw that the once poor Jew had come upon wealth and was willing to negotiate more favourable terms for the man and his wife to remain there long term...

A related story: **The Lasker Rav**, *Rav Meisels*, has a brother-in-law who runs the *Krasna* camp with 800 campers, which included one *bochur* by the name of *Manish*, a twenty-eight year old who nobody thought was marriage material. So, when the *Krasna Rov* found out that this *bochur* had become a *chossan* he couldn't believe it. He summoned *Manish* to tell his story and this is what he said:

On the night of *Pesach* he had been at his father's *seider* table in *Boro Park* together with his entire extended family. *Manish* was sitting there with a *Haggadah* which included this story of the *Apter Rav*. So, when they reached "*Vanitzak*" he banged on the table to quiet the crowd, and he began to cry and scream, "*Manish* can't take it anymore! *Manish* must become a *chossan*!"

His mother came over to see what was wrong; trying to calm him down, she said, "I will call *shadchonim* after *yom tov*," but *Manish* refused to be calmed. He defiantly continued to scream, insisting that everyone present join him in crying out to *Hashem* in order that he find his *bashert*. After complying with his request, they wanted to continue on with the *seider*, but *Manish* said that they had to do the same for his brother *Yankel* who was then twenty six. *Manish* insisted that they cry and scream, demanding that *Yankel*, too, merit to find his *zivug*.

On *Motzoei Yom Tov* of the first days, the phone in their house rang and it was someone suggesting a *shidduch* for *Manish* for the very first time. Not only that, there were calls for *Yankel* as well. On the third day of *Chol Hamoed* they went to their *Rov* to ask about *ayin hora*, as both of the boys were ready to get engaged. They consulted the *Vizhnitzer Rebbe* from *Monsey* who advised them to make *Manish's l'chaim* on *Tuesday* and *Yankel's* on *Wednesday*.

Manish today is the same *Manish*, but he is a father of two.

ויצאינו ה' ממצרים...

ועברתי בארץ מצרים אני ולא מלאך

What was the inherent benefit of *Hashem* Himself taking us out of *Mitzrayim*, rather than a *malach* or a *sorof*? Furthermore, if a person is sentenced to death, were the King himself to carry out the punishment it would give more of an importance to the executed than if he would get one of his hangmen to do it. Why then did *Hashem* show importance to the *Mitzriyim* by carrying out the executions Himself?

The **Shem Meshmuel** explains that in each *makkoh* there was an element of punishment for the *Mitzriyim* and an element of *refuoh* for the *Yieden*. However, one *malach* can't carry out two tasks, and so a *malach chavoloh* was sent to bring the *makkoh* and a *malach refuoh* was sent to heal *Klal Yisroel*. The fact that *Hashem* himself, in all His glory, came to smite the *Mitzriyim* by *makas bechoros*, also meant that the *refuoh Klal Yisroel* needed was also brought about by *Hashem bekvodo uve'atzmo*.

The *makkoh* of killing the firstborns was to attack the *reishis* of *Mitzrayim*, uprooting the *Mitzriyim* from their source of existence which was manifested in their *bechorim*. In contrast, the *refuoh* for *Klal Yisroel* was to connect their entire existence to the source of life which is *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*. The fact that *Hashem* himself meted out the punishment, and by extension the *refuoh*, enabled *Klal Yisroel* to become *dovuk* to the *Ribono Shel Olam* without any intermediaries. That is the intrinsic *maaloh* of *Klal Yisroel* and why we are called *bonim atem Le'Hashem Elokeichem*. **We are the beloved children of Hashem, even more cherished than the malochim themselves!** Therefore, *Hashem* Himself came down to smite the *Mitzriyim*, so that He could become our everlasting father and make us His precious children.

עשר מכות

דיינו

Why 10 *makkos*? The *medrash* tells us that these 10 correspond to the 10 *maamoros* with which *Hashem* created the world. The **Kotzker Rebbe** says that while for the Egyptians the *makkos* brought destruction, for the *Yieden* it re-created the world anew. *Hashem* was effectively bringing the world back into being from scratch. From the *makkoh* of *Dam* all the way through to *makkas Bechoros*, every aspect of Creation was being renewed - beneath the ground, upon the ground, above the ground, in the air, in the sky and eventually, life itself.

The **Shem MiShmuel** thereby explains that this renewal itself was the *geuloh*. The *Yieden* who experienced their world being rebuilt and refreshed all around them will have been inspired with the message that they too could start to rebuild and refresh. This, he writes, is an all-important lesson. **Geuloh is all about renewal. Regardless of what has gone before, you can start again.**

Indeed, *golus* is precipitated by decay and a gradual lack of interest, as the *possuk* says "*venoshantem boOretz, you became old*" meaning bored and stale in your *avodas Hashem*. This is what leads to *golus*. *Geuloh* is all about *hischadshus*, the ability to start afresh. The *makkos* carried this message very powerfully, both for the *Yieden* of that generation and for all time: Start over and experience redemption.

Towards the end of *maggid* we take a break of sorts and engage in an exercise of appreciation, reflecting on all the incredible things that *Hashem* has done for us by exclaiming "*kama maalos tovos laMokom oleinu.*"

We then enumerate each stage in the *geuloh* process, and at the end of each line declare that famous word: *dayeinu*, this alone would have been enough!

In life, we can become so focused on the destination that we forget what it takes to get there. Each step in the journey has its own challenges and successes and needs to be appreciated as such.

Hakoras hatov is often poorly translated as a 'debt of gratitude', but this couldn't be further from the truth. A debt is something we strive to get rid of, and it is a true *simcha* when someone pays off their *chovos*. Some people feel indebted to those who do them a favour and seek to remove that indebtedness by saying thank you or giving a gift. *Hakoras hatov* on the other hand is an appreciation of the good that is done for us. One who is *makir tov* lives with a constant sense of *simcha* as they feel taken care of by those who look out for them.

Hakoras hatov, appreciating the good, focusing on the *brochos* in our lives, is key to what it means to be a *Yied*. Ever since the *Purim* story we have been called *Yehudim* or "Jews". This is because since the destruction of the first *Beis Hamikdosh* and the *golus* of the ten *shevotim*, the majority of us are descended from *shevet Yehudoh*. The name *Yehudoh* is derived from the word *hodaah*, thanks, as his mother *Leah* exclaimed the immortal words, '*hapaam odeh es Hashem.*'

To be a *Yehudi* is to develop the awareness of all the good that *Hashem* does for us on an ongoing basis and to take pleasure in it as we utter heartfelt words of *hodaah*, thanks.

פסח

All of our *ikrei emunoh* are learned from *yetzias Mitzrayim*, including *hashgocho protis*, the elevation of *Klal Yisroel* above the nations of the world, and how *Hashem* Himself carries out His will without the need for any intermediaries.

The less-discussed *emunoh* which we learn from *Pesach* which is no less important, is the concept of *emunoh atzmis*, belief in oneself. **The realisation that we are each an indispensable part of *Klal Yisroel* and that we matter.**

The **Meshech Chochmoh** explains that the reason why we don't give *matnas kehunoh* by the *Korban Pesach* is to teach us that we are all equally precious in the eyes of *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*, and we can all reach great levels.

The **Maharal** likewise explains that the reason why we need to roast the *Korban Pesach* as opposed to cooking it, is because when one cooks something in water, the food often separates due to the moisture. A roast however stays whole, for the fire removes the moisture and the food becomes more condensed. This teaches us that *achdus* was a vital ingredient in the formation of *Klal Yisroel*. For that reason too, one may not break any of the bones of the *korban*, for it would take away its *shleimus*. So too, *Klal Yisroel* are like one body, and we each represent an organ or limb, and are each vital to the functioning of the body. *Klal Yisroel* needs each and every one of us to play our part. That is the lesson of the *Korban Pesach*. We matter. Each of us is dear to and beloved by *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*.

מצה

Rav Tzvi Kinstlicher was the *Rov* of Sebin, Romania, before the Second World War. One year before *Pesach*, he started suffering from terrible stomach pains and went to see a specialist in nearby Cluj (Klausenberg). The doctor informed him that he was suffering from an awful abdominal disease and needed immediate surgery. Rav Tzvi couldn't bear the thought of being in a hospital over *Yom Tov* and begged the doctor to postpone the operation until after *Pesach*. The doctor agreed, but warned Rav Tzvi that he shouldn't eat anything other than egg, milk and orange juice, and that he definitely shouldn't digest bread or *matzoh* which could be harmful to him.

On *leil haSeder*, Rav Tzvi couldn't hold himself back and ate *matzoh* soaked in milk. After the second *Seder* he suddenly felt no pain. The following *Shabbos* he went to the *bimoh* after *davening*, and beseeched the *Kehilla* to *daven* for the operation to be a success. He travelled back to Cluj for the operation and the doctor once again performed a scan. He was astonished to see that the disease had totally disappeared! He was sure that Rav Tzvi had been to a different specialist in the interim and asked him which doctor he had gone to see. Rav Tzvi responded that he hadn't been to any other doctor, but rather he had eaten *matzoh* which *Chazal* call *meichloh de'asvesoh*, food which heals.

מרור

מוציא

The **Maaseh Hashem** (Rav Eliezer Ashkenazi zt"l) notices that according to the *Mishna* in *Pesochim*, the *matzoh* is eaten because the 'dough of our forefathers did not have time to rise and become *chometz*' before *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* took us out of *Mitzrayim*. If so, then the *matzoh* is a symbol of freedom whereas the *morrer* is a symbol of slavery.

When the child asks the questions of the *Mah Nishtanoh*, he first asks about the *matzoh* and then the *morrer*, as this is the order of the night and indeed the order in which they are performed during the *Seder*. However, surely we should eat the *morrer* before the *matzoh* as the slavery preceded the freedom?

He answers through a *possuk* in *Koheles* (7:14) 'On the day of prosperity, be happy, but on the day of adversity, look on.' *Shlomo Hamelech* tells us that **when one remembers happiness they should magnify their joy by remembering it in contrast to the days of adversity** that they have also experienced. On the other hand, if they first remember the adversity, they may well fall into a state of sadness and even if they later remember the joy, it will be marred by the bitter memories.

By putting things in this order, the *Haggodoh* is giving us a lesson for life. We must not allow the trials and tribulations suffered in the past to bring us to a state of dejection that will mean we will be held back from meeting the challenges of the present with creativity, confidence and most importantly, *simcha*.

This is why the **Gerrer Rebbe** said that *shikcha*, forgetfulness, is one of the greatest *brochos* of all. If a person would not be able to forget their sadness and pain, they simply would not be able to carry on living. Rather we need to be able to put the past behind us and know how to enjoy *Hashem's brochos* with a far greater appreciation of the present.

At first glance, this stage of the *Seder* does not seem to have anything to do with *Pesach* itself; it merely refers to the *brochah* that we make every time we eat bread, leavened or not. Yet it occupies the 7th step in the order of the *Seder* thereby providing no less an important role than even *Matzo* or *Maggid*. It is clear therefore that *Moitzi* is not just a "by-the-way" part of the *Seder* but an integral stage in the night's proceedings.

The *meforshim* explain that the reason for this is that the *brochah* we make all year round on bread carries extra significance on *Pesach*. The words literally mean "*Blessed are You Hashem... Who brings bread out of the ground.*" Let's think about that process for a moment. It all begins with a wheat seed which is planted in the ground. To the casual onlooker, this looks like a waste. But then it bursts forth into a golden plant. Beautiful. Yet the farmer then comes and chops it down - what we call harvesting. To the casual onlooker this looks like wanton destruction. But then the farmer extracts its golden kernels. Once again, beautiful. But then they are fed into machines that crush them into powder - what we call flour. To the casual observer, again, destruction. But then the powder is mixed with water, turned into dough, kneaded, shaped into loaves and eventually placed inside a hot oven. What emerges is delicious bread. Or, if done quickly enough, *matzoh*. The point is that every stage of the process it seems as if all is lost. The kernels thrown in the mud, the chopping down of the stalks, the crushing, kneading, baking... but eventually it all makes sense. This whole process, called "*moitzi lechem min ho'Oretz*", is a metaphor for life. **So many times we think its hopeless, all is lost. Only to discover that on the contrary, Hashem is guiding the whole process for our eventual benefit.**

If there was ever a time to appreciate this process, it's *Pesach*. The *Yieden* in *Mitzrayim* went through agony after tragedy. But ultimately it cleansed them to the point that they were primed to be removed from the oven, the "*kur haBarzel*", and brought to *maamad Har Sinai*.

As we say the words "*Hamoitzi lechem min ho'Oretz*", thanking *Hashem* for bringing bread out of the land, have in mind another extraction from the land, the Jewish People from the Land of *Mizrayim*, and be reminded that even the very difficult situations we find ourselves in are merely preparation for far better times ahead...

שולחן עורך

ברך

Shulchan Orech is not simply a meal and it's not even just another *Yom Tov seudah*. Rather, it is part of the *avodah* of *leil haSeder* and has tremendous *kedushoh*. The *halochoh* is that one is not supposed to ever be *mafsik* during *hallel*. Why then on *leil haSeder*, do we have a full four-course meal right in the middle of *Hallel*?!

The **Netziv** explains that we see from here the unbelievable *kedushoh* that this *seudah* has. It is an *avodah* that we do in the presence of *Hashem*, the *Korban Pesach* in the days of the *Beis Hamikdosh*, and *Matzoh* and *Morror bizman hazeh*. When *Hashem* took us out of *Mitzrayim*, He elevated us to such dizzying heights that even mundane things like eating and drinking became *kodosh*. We thank *Hashem* for making us so holy and special, that **every single action that we do has the potential to make ourselves into holier people**. That in itself is the *shvach* and *hoido'oh* to *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*, and is the reason why it's part of *Hallel*! Our delicious meal on *Seder* night is a part of *Hallel* itself!

Other religions believe that one has to abstain from physical comforts or enjoyment in order to reach levels of spirituality. We believe in '*sulom mutzav artzoh, verosho magia hashomaymo*'. We can eat, drink and sleep. But with the right intentions, that we are doing it *leshem shomayim* to have the *kochos* to better serve *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*, we can elevate ourselves even through the *gashmius*.

הרחמן הוא ינחילנו יום שכולו טוב יום שכולו ארוך

At first glance, *boreich* is the regular *birkas hamazon*, however there is one notable difference between this *bensching* and every other one we say during the rest of the year. Tonight, we add in a special *horachamon*, brought by the **Kitzur Sheloh** in the name of the **Maharil**. We ask *Hashem*, the Merciful One to send us the *yom shekulo tov, yom shekulo oruch*, the day that is all good and all long, as it will not be bound by time.

This *horachamon* is a clear reference to *olam habo*, about which the **gemoro** (Brochos 17a) tells us the *tzaddikim* will 'sit with crowns on their head, basking in the glory of the *Shechinoh*,' the same *nusach* as our *horachamon* for *seeder* night. At this auspicious time towards the conclusion of a night jam-packed with *mitzvos* and *emunoh*, we beg *Hashem* that we too should be included in that select group.

Given that we will not have a physical head in *olam habo*, the **Rambam** (Hilchos Teshuvo 8:2) wonders what this crown will actually be. He explains that the *atoroh*, crown, that we will wear is a *moshol* for the level of *daas* that we have achieved in this world. It is this knowledge that will enable us to sit at ease in the presence of the *Shechinoh* and bask in its glory.

On this night of *cheirus* it is vital to appreciate the connection between our freedom and our *limmud haTorah*. The **Maharal** in his introduction to *Pirkei Ovos* explains that one is not considered free until there is no possibility that they will be enslaved. This freedom is only found among one who learns *Torah* because the mind is a free being and is not beholden to any external element. Indeed, the purpose of being set free from *Mitzrayim* was so that we would receive the *Torah* at *Har Sinai*.

The *daas* that we earn in this world as a result of our *Talmud Torah*, gives us the ability to unlock the most incredible amount of wisdom and knowledge. It is this *daas* that will stay with us forever and will enable us to perceive *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* for all of eternity.

The remarkable thing about this short, yet powerful *tefillah* is that we realise and recognise that each and every one of us has the ability and potential to be part of that inner circle. None of us ever has the right to sell ourselves short, to think that for some reason our actions are insignificant or worthless. Rather, whenever we learn *Torah* and perform *mitzvos* we are literally creating a *kinyan* on something far greater than we can ever imagine.

הלל

The **Maharal** points out an interesting juxtaposition. In *Hallel* we say 'kois yeshuos esoh, uvesheim Hashem ekroh', we thank Hashem for all the *yeshuos* that He bestows upon us. Yet we also say, 'tzoro veyogoin emtzo, uvesheim Hashem ekroh'. We use the exact same description of thanking *Hashem* for the pain and worry as we do for His salvations?!

The *medrash* says that when *Moshiach* comes, all the *korbonos* will cease except for the *korban toidoh*. What is unique about the *korban toidoh*?

The *Maharal* explains that the *korban toidoh* consists of *chometz* and *matzoh*, two opposing concepts, which the *korban* brings together into one unit. *Chometz* represents the bad, while *matzoh* represents the good. Their coming together in this *korban* illustrates the fact that we believe every bad thing that happens to us is ultimately for the good, even if we may not understand the reason for it. When *Moshiach* comes, the course of history, including all the persecutions, pogroms and all of our own personal *tzoros*, will become understood. Being *makriv* a *toidoh* means thanking *Hashem* for the bad things along with the good, for ultimately the seemingly bad things are all there for our benefit. By combining *chometz* and *matzoh* in one *korban*, we affirm our belief that every event that happens to us has reason and benefit to it.

The name of *Hashem* symbolises *middas horachamim*. Just as we say 'uvesheim Hashem ekroh' when discussing the *yeshuos*, so too when talking about our pain and worry, we attest to the fact that it is all 'Hashem', it is the *middas horachamim* at work and is all for our good, which will ultimately be understood when *Moshiach* comes, speedily in our days.

נרצה

אחד אני יודע

Much has been written in the *seforim* about the relationship between *Emunoh* and *Yediyoh*. On the one hand we have a *mitzvah* to use our *sechel* and recognise with clarity the existence and power of the *Ribono shel Olom*. Indeed, the *Rambam* lists this knowledge as the very first *mitzvah*. On the other hand, we have a *mitzvah* of *emunoh*, to allow our *neshomos* to feel and experience the *Ribono shel Olom* above and beyond the *sechel*.

The **Ksav veHakabolah** writes that we in fact need both. At times we may not be able to think clearly and may have questions. It is at times like these, he writes, that we rely on our unshakeable foundation of pure *emunoh peshutoh*. At other times we are able to think more clearly and understand deeper concepts and it is then that we are required to use our *sechel* properly and behold the wonders of *Hashem*, as the *possuk* says *haskel veyodoia oisi*. *Yediyas Hashem* and *emunoh baHashem* are therefore not contradictory but rather complement each other. On *seder* night, the night of *emunoh*, after having retold the story in all its resplendent detail and having sung *shira* to *Hashem* for His deliverance, we arrive at *Nirtzoh* with a blinding clarity in *metziyus Hashem*. We feel it, we believe it, we know it. And so we sing, *echod mi yodea, shnayim mi yodea...* who knows? Who knows? And in our homes, basking in the glorious light of *emunoh* generated by the *seder*, we respond with complete confidence: I know! I know!

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