

כשר ושמח

KINGSWAY JEWISH CENTER'S
HAGGADAH COMPANION



A SHARING OF THOUGHTS AND IDEAS FOR THE SEDER NIGHT
BY MEMBERS OF KINGSWAY JEWISH CENTER

The Cover Page
PURIM-PESACH, A BRIDGE
Painted by Pola Bradman. Inspired by Pesach
immediately following Purim; Going from color,
noise and foolishness to a sense of order.

We are pleased to present *Kasher V'Sameach*,
Kingsway's first Haggadah companion. We are
delighted by the response for submission, given the
short time since we announced the initiative. We
hope this companion will enhance your Seder and
we look forward to expanding this work in the years
to come.

Wishing you a Chag Kasher V'Sameach.

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Rabbi

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Table of Contents

<i>Purim-Pesach, A Bridge</i> by Pola Bradman.....	Cover Page
<i>An Inconvenient Truth</i> by Rabbi Etan Tokayer.....	4
<i>The Symbolism of Leaning</i> by Rabbi Mordechai Schiffman.....	6
<i>The Many Names of Pesach</i> by Yosef Seewald.....	9
<i>Why is Chametz Forbidden on Pesach?</i> by Ariel Habshush	10
<i>Yitzias Mitzrayim and Our National Character</i> by Dr. Barry Panzer	12
<i>Karpas: Whetting our Appetite for Redemption</i> by Jonathan Yousefzadeh.....	15
<i>Another Set of Four Questions</i> by Dr. Julian Seewald	16
<i>A Fifth Question</i> by Alan S. Fintz	17
<i>We were Slaves...</i> by Dr. Zev Stern	19
<i>Had not the Holy One taken our fathers out...</i> by Norm Lerner.....	21
<i>Dayeinu</i> by Norm Lerner.....	22
<i>In Every Generation...</i> by Stephen L. Epstein.....	24
<i>Mysteries of the Charoses</i> by Rabbi Reuven Boshnack.....	25

An Inconvenient Truth Rabbi Etan Tokayer

Consider Pesach for a moment. Not the matzah nor the marror. But consider the plethora of *kasher l'Pesach* products, like Pesach pizza, that aim to mask the fact that it's actually Pesach. The highest form of culinary compliment around this time is to say that it does not taste "Pesachdig." And this presents a dilemma.

To flesh this out, let us recall that after Yetzias Mitzrayim, the Exodus, Moshe had a reunion with his father-in-law Yisro, where he tells Moshe, "*ata yadati*," now I know that Hashem is true, and real and unique in the universe. The Mechilta teaches us that Yisro spent a lifetime investigating all the "truths" of the world. Yetzias Mitzrayim taught him that despite all he had learned, only now had he discovered The Truth. And with that realization, he joined his fate to the fate of Am Yisrael and gave up his false idols to serve Hashem.

The salient point of this Midrash is that Yisro was a truth seeker. It was this *quality* of following emes, truth, that explains why Yisro holds such an exalted place in the Chumash. After all, do we really need to know that Yisro had an awakening as a consequence of the Exodus story?

Rashi comments that the enigmatic phrase "*vayichad Yisro*" has two possible and entirely **opposite** meanings. Yisro was either happy having learned about the fate of the Egyptians in the sea, or

Yisro was pained by the death of the Egyptians in the sea. Either way, that knowledge of the fate of Mitzrayim propelled him to join our people.

Perhaps, these interpretations are not mutually exclusive to each other. Perhaps, Yisro was simultaneously pained and elated by the same news. Rashi's point may be that Yisro was a seeker of truth, and no matter how inconvenient or harsh that truth might be, he followed it wherever it led him.

Consider this: Yisro lived a life committed to pagan idolatry of one form or another. While one can imagine that the various forms of idolatry were different from one another, at the end of the day, they were all just variations of a theme – either this idolatry or that one. Now, however, Yisro was confronted with a truth that would entirely alter his world view, and if he were to take this lesson seriously, it would transform the way he lived his life. That is most certainly painful.

People don't like change, and we like it even less when we are the ones changing - be it our opinions, beliefs or actions. Our pride motivates us to keep any such change private. Who really needs to know?

Yet despite all the natural resistance to change, Yisro's sense of emes was overpowering. The knowledge that Mitzrayim was defeated by Hashem was hard to hear because someone committed to truth, like Yisro, would now need to engage the difficult task of changing his life.

Vayichad Yisro means that Yisro was pained by what he had learned, because it presented him with an enormous challenge and elated because Yisro loved truth. The trigger for both of these emotions was Yisro's unwavering commitment to emes, truth.

We live in a time when much of life is aimed at enhancing our avoidance of truth, even by something as benign as Pesach pizza. Truth today seems to be a scarce commodity. As we experience the Seder this year, let us look squarely at the story of Mitzrayim and then ask ourselves, how this Truth must impact the way we live our lives as Jews.

The Symbolism of Leaning Rabbi Mordechai Schiffman

The following can be utilized as a springboard for discussion at the Seder. You can pose the questions at the table and use the sources to guide the conversation.

Question: Why do we lean at the Seder?

Rashi (Pesachim 99b) explains that it is the custom of free people to lean while eating, and to commemorate becoming free people, we lean at the Seder.

Question: When do we lean?

The Gemara (Pesachim 108a) says that we lean while eating matzah, but we do not lean while eating marror. Rashi, consistent with his previous comment, explains that matzah

symbolizes freedom so it requires leaning, while marror symbolizes slavery and therefore does not require leaning.

The Gemara continues with a fascinating discussion about leaning while drinking the four cups of wine. The Gemara says that Rav Nachman proposed that we only lean for two of the cups of wine, but not the other two. However, the Gemara is unsure about whether he meant that we should lean for the first two or for the last two, and gives an argument for both possibilities.

Question: Which do you think makes more sense; to lean for the first two, or the last two?

The first suggestion of the Gemara is that it makes more sense to lean for the first two because they are drunk during the part of the Seder which corresponds to the time of “the beginning of the redemption.” However, we do not lean during the second two, because they are drunk at the time of the Seder which corresponds to after we are already free, which according to this opinion is the equivalent of yesterday’s news (the Gemara’s language is "מאי דהוה הוה" – what happened, already happened).

The second suggestion is that we do not lean for the first two because we are still considered slaves during the first part of the Seder, while we do lean for the last two because at that point we are already free.

Question: Which answer do you think makes more sense?

At first glance, the second explanation seems more logical, as we should lean when we are actually free!

Question: How can we understand the first explanation, that we lean at the beginning of the redemption, but not when we are actually free?

Perhaps according to the first explanation, the reason we lean is not as we originally understood, namely, that free people lean. Rather, the function of leaning is to capture the hope, anticipation and excitement of the beginning of the redemption process. While it is true that we weren't free yet, it is precisely that point of exhilaration and expectation that we are encapsulating by leaning. Once we were already free, part of the emotion and part of the passion that we felt at the beginning of redemption, dissipated.

In practice, we lean for all four cups, combining the messages of both approaches. We lean for the first two cups because they symbolize the anticipation of the beginning of the redemption, and the last two because they symbolize being in a state of freedom.

The Many Names of Pesach

Yosef Seewald

Every Jew has heard about the holiday of Pesach and its importance to the Jewish religion. There are many names by which Pesach is known - Chag Ha'aviv, Zman Cheiruteinu, Passover, Spring Cleaning, \$5000-in-debt, etc. However, many people don't know that the holiday is never called "Pesach" in the Torah. Instead, the Torah references the holiday as Chag HaMatzot. Why do we not call it by the same name that the Torah uses?

In English, Pesach means passed over (hence, Passover), which refers to when *Hashem* passed over the Jewish homes during the tenth plague and spared the lives of the Jewish firstborns. In contrast, Chag HaMatzot reminds us of when the *Jews* were so eager to follow Hashem into the wilderness that their bread did not have time to rise so they made Matzot (unleavened bread).

Thus, Hashem chose to remember the holiday by the love we showed him, while we choose to remember the holiday by the love He showed us. This holiday, therefore, is the holiday of mutual love between Man and his Creator. May we all share love and happiness with each other and with Hashem on this Pesach and Chag HaMatzot.

Why is Chametz Forbidden on Pesach? Ariel Habshush

The prohibition of eating *chametz* on Pesach is different than all other food prohibitions, *issurim*, in the Torah. *Chametz* is only forbidden seven days of the year while all other *issurim* are forbidden all year round. What is the reason behind this temporary ban? If *chametz* is permitted throughout the rest of the year, why does its status suddenly change when Pesach arrives?

Another striking difference between *chametz* and other *issurim* is how stringent we are when it comes to *chametz*. The Torah has several commandments regarding *chametz* on Pesach. They include: 1) the negative commandment of eating and deriving benefit from *chametz*, 2) the negative commandment of possessing any *chametz*, and 3) the positive commandment of destroying one's *chametz*. We don't find these commandments collectively by other *issurim*!

Aside from the explicit Torah commandments, another stringency regarding *chametz* is when it comes to mixtures. Generally, when a prohibited food item accidentally gets mixed with permitted food, if the ratio of permitted to prohibited is large enough, we permit the mixture. By *chametz*, even if the slightest amount falls into permitted food (*i.e.* a large ratio), the entire mixture is still prohibited. What is the reason for all these stringencies? I'd like to share the ideas of Rabbi Tzvi Pittinsky on this matter to answer these questions.

Rabbi Pittinsky notes that the prohibition of *chametz* is not only limited to Pesach. In fact, the Torah states (Vayikra 2:11) that all year round it is forbidden to offer *chametz* and honey as a sacrifice on the *mizbeach*. The Rambam in his *Moreh Nevuchim* explains that the reason behind this prohibition is because idolaters would sacrifice *chametz* and honey to their gods on their alters. We Jews are commanded to reject this practice, to remove ourselves from anything that reminds us of idol worship.

Just as *chametz* on the *mizbeach* is linked to idolatry, so too is *chametz* on Pesach. Rabbi Pittinsky observes that just like there is a Biblical commandment to destroy *chametz*, there is a similar commandment to burn and destroy idols in the land of Israel. Likewise, it is forbidden to get any benefit from *chametz* and idols. But what is the idolatrous characteristic of *chametz* on Pesach that renders these laws?

Rabbi Pittinsky points out that a main theme of Pesach is rejecting Egyptian gods in favor of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. For instance, we bring a *Korban Pesach* from animals that the Egyptians worshiped as gods. By slaughtering it and offering it to Hashem, we actively reject Egyptian idolatry. Similarly, by refraining from eating *chametz*, we are actually rejecting Egyptian idolatry. How is this so? Archaeological evidence suggests that around 4000 years ago, the Egyptians invented a yeast that allowed wheat bread to rise (and become *chametz*). Rabbi Pittinsky claims that the Egyptians “guarded

this secret formula from all foreigners. They considered yeast-risen bread to be a gift from the gods if not a god itself.” By not eating and actively destroying our *chametz*, we are actually rejecting an Egyptian god in favor of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

Yetzias Mitzrayim and Our National Character

Dr. Barry Panzer

Among the many foundational themes associated with *Chag HaPesach* and *Yitzias Mitzrayim* is the shaping of our collective character and the emergence of our nationhood.

Chazal note (Yevamos 79a) that the Jewish people are characterized by 3 traits: *rachmonim*, *baishonim* and *gomeli chasodim* – merciful, modest and kind. Search the details of the Haggadah and Sefer Shemos to locate numerous examples of these qualities (for example, that 4/5 of Bnei Yisroel perished during *makas choshech* – “*chamushim allu*” see Rashi, Parshas B’shalach 13:18 – meant that there were hundreds of thousands of orphans who were readily adopted and embraced by the *avodim*). It is also worth noting that these Divine qualities are first seen in our Patriarchs and Matriarchs. Therefore when David HaMelech labels these 3 national traits as “*simonim*,” we see yet another aspect of the dictum *maaseh Avos simon labanim*. But the discussion of our *maalos* as a people has another story.

The Gemara (Zevachim 116a) tells us of the varied opinions explaining Yisro's decision to join the Bnei Yisroel.

“And Yisro, priest of Midian, father-in-law of Moshe, heard everything that G-d did for Moshe and His people Israel – that Hashem had taken Israel out of Egypt.”

What did Yisro, priest of Midian, hear that made him come and convert?

Rabbi Yehoshua says: He heard about the war with Amalek, for it is written just prior to this verse: “And Yehoshua harried Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”

Rabbi Elazar HaModa'i says: He heard about the giving of the Torah and came...

Rabbi Eliezer says: He heard about the splitting of the Sea of Reeds and came...

This great man – worthy of a named *parsha* – was known to be a worldly philosopher whose life

was a search for meaning and it is reasonable to suggest that he was weighing the concepts and traditions of Judaism, as well. However, it is possible that he was really more interested in the character of the people, not their theology and hence the Gemara's opinions. For *krias yam suf* (R. Eliezer's opinion) testified to the merciful nature of the Bnei Yisroel, who were not permitted to enjoy the demise of Hashem's creations despite their torture and savagery at the hands of the Egyptians. This must have impressed Yisro. Similarly our receiving the Torah (R. Elazar HaModai's view) and our modesty of not gloating about our good fortune to the other nations of the world was also revealing. But it may have been the war with Amalek which had the most impact, for the Sifrei (Devarim 25:18) tells us that those attacked at the tail end of camp were the converts. (See Illuminations, Shemos I). That the newly freed slaves would rise up in great human kindness to protect and defend those not of their own blood, might have been the most powerful realization for Yisro and subsequently he too converted.

Perhaps Chag HaPesach is an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to living in accord with our national legacy. "*Mi k'amcha Yisroel, goy echad baaretz.*"

Karpas – Whetting our Appetite for Redemption

Jonathan Yousefzadeh

The *Talilay Orot* quotes the Sokotchover Rebbe who explains the reason we dip the Karpas at the beginning of the meal. The Rambam, in *Hilchot Deot Perek 4*, explains that people ate an appetizer before they actually had their meal. The point of this was to whet their appetite and make them look forward to the meal that was to come. The *Talilay Orot* explains how this connects to our redemption from Egypt.

Right after Moshe revealed to the Jews that they will be redeemed, he disappeared for six months. Why would Moshe do such a strange thing? Was he just teasing the Jews? Of course not! The Jews were on the lowest level of impurity when they were working in Egypt and the idea of redemption was totally lost from their thoughts. Once Moshe told them about the redemption, the Jews began to think about it and look forward to it. Moshe hid from the Jews for six months so they would begin to yearn for the redemption.

The longer we have to wait in between the appetizer and the main dish, the more we will look forward to the main dish. For example, if after the appetizer we had a two hour break before the main dish, our longing for the main dish will grow the longer we have to wait; so too by the Jews in Egypt. If the Jews were to be redeemed right after Moshe told them about the redemption, their desire to be redeemed wouldn't have been so great. However,

since the Jews had six months after Moshe spoke to them, their desire grew. The Jews looked forward to the redemption, similar to people looking forward to the main dish.

This is the point of the Seder - we are supposed to feel the redemption. The Seder isn't meant to tell us a story; it is meant for us to live the redemption over again. That is why we dip the Karpas and then have the main dish two hours later. It is meant to whet our appetite –just like we desire the main dish, so too we should desire the redemption.

Another Set of Four Questions

Dr. Julian Seewald

Where in the Haggadah is there another instance of four questions and one answer, the question starts with Mah but is not the Mah Nishtanah?

Hint: it is said after dayeinu and before the second cup of wine is drunk.

Answer: We ask the following four questions in the second paragraph of Hallel:

1. מַה-לָּךְ הַיָּם, כִּי תִנוּס? - What ails you, sea, that you flee?
2. תִּסַּב לְאַחֲרָיִךְ הַיַּרְדֵּן, תִּסַּב לְאַחֲרָיִךְ? - the Jordan, that you turn backward?
3. תִּקְדוּ כְּאֵילִים הַהָרִים, תִּקְדוּ כְּאֵילִים? - the mountains, that you skip like rams?
4. גְּבֻעוֹת, כְּבָנֵי-צֹאן? - the hills, like young sheep?

And the one answer is;

מִלְפָּנֵי אֲדוֹן, חוֹלֵי אֶרֶץ; מִלְפָּנֵי, אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב. הַהִפְכִי הַצּוּר אֶגֶם-
- מַיִם; חֲלָמִישׁ, לְמַעְיָנוּ-מַיִם

Tremble, earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob; Who turned the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a fountain of waters.

A Fifth Question

Alan S. Fintz

When our Adult Ed Chair, Norm Lerner, invited ideas for Kingsway's *Haggadah Companion*, the last such request I could recall was made by close Brooklyn College friends of Norm & Karen, then our college Hillel Rabbi & Rebbitzin, Ed & Merle Feld, 40 years ago!

On inviting several undergrads (including Leslie and me) to 2nd *Seder* at their faculty apartment, "Rabbi Ed" asked each of us to imagine a 5th question that might bear asking at the *Seder* table. Though details grow dim after four decades, I recall the gist of my "5th question" that night; the substance of it still seems worth sharing.

Basically, I asked: If the Tradition that gave us the *Haggadah* thought enough about *our* generation, to bid each of us alive today to imagine being personally present at Sinai for the giving of the *Torah*, then should we think enough about *our* remote descendants to bid them sustain this tradition, *and* should we also care enough about the

world those descendants will inherit, to make that possible?

In a small way, recalling this personal *Seder* moment 40 years ago helps capture the *Haggadah*'s larger theme – of trying to make a shared collective history alive and meaningful in each of our present, personal lives.

Of course, as history passes and knowledge grows, we could feel ever more removed from the generation at Sinai, and from the experience we're meant to relive. But our Tradition helps bridge this divide in time with divine wisdom: Just as the *Haggadah* anticipates the varied messages carried by one history for each of four different sons, it also implicitly anticipates that we will need to draw new and added meaning from ancient stories, based on emerging science and history.

Indeed, even since that *Seder* night 40 years ago – a mere blink-of-the-eye in Biblical time – issues that seemed fresh and relevant in April 1974 have taken on new meaning and urgency: Then, only months after the first Arab Oil Embargo following the *Yom Kippur* War, the need to conserve and to achieve energy independence, resonated with a *Seder* theme of breaking our bonds of enslavement to despotic Petro Sheiks. Today – after wandering in a desert of collective indecision and indifference for 40 years – we know enough about earth science to see the added urgency of ending our enslavement to fossil energy – from *whatever* source – that threatens the sustainability of G-d's creation.

Our ancestors thought enough about us to bequeath us the *Torah*, and a world in which to follow it. G-d-willing, we will strive to do the same for *our* descendants. If the hearts of the parents turn toward their children, then the hearts of the children turn toward their parents ... G-d-willing, in gratitude.

We were Slaves...

Dr. Zev Stern

One of the beautiful things about being American is different groups being able to enjoy one another's culture and learn from their positive aspects. African-Americans deliberately drew on our Torah for encouragement in their struggle against slavery and, later, against Jim Crow. And Jewish musicians, Subliminal in particular comes to mind, draw upon hip-hop to express their love of Israel and defiance of the evil forces seeking its destruction.

There is a rich trove of narratives handed down by successive generations of African-American slaves and later committed to writing (sounds like our *gemara*?). Many of these tales are included in the anthology "To Be A Slave" that is used in New York's public schools. When my sister was waiting several years for her *get* (!), she and her children would come to me for the *sedarim* and I could not rush through the *Haggadah* as I am often tempted to do when we do not have "guests." I selected several slave narratives from that book and

had each of the children read one. One of those narratives spoke of how each slave had a quota of cotton to pick, and would be beaten if he failed to meet it. When I first read that it hit me like - like a ton of bricks. Doing my best to keep a poker face, I asked the child whom I asked to read the narrative if it reminded him of anything. I got a blank look and a negative answer. Going around the table, I got the same look and the same answer. I had to explain to the kids (all three of my nephews and my niece were going to *haredi yeshivot*, but my children's *yeshivot* were no better) about the quota of bricks that *Parshat Shemot* tells us had to be made by each Jewish slave, and the whippings if the quota was not met.

Let us keep this in mind whenever racist thoughts enter our heads and whenever we are tempted to let racist words escape our lips. It is at the core of our belief system (see *Parshat Lekh-lekha*) that we did not end up in Egypt by happenstance. We were sent there for a purpose; it was all planned out centuries in advance, if not before the creation of the world. Time and again we are told to observe various *mitzvot bein adam la-havero* "because you were slaves [or strangers] in Egypt." It never ceases to amaze me that Jews in the ante-bellum South fought for the Confederacy - how did they keep a straight face when they sat their children down and repeated the age-old formula beginning with the four Hebrew words for "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt?" It was no coincidence that Jewish Americans were in the forefront of the struggle against Jim Crow half a century ago (as I tell my students, I'm old enough to

remember Martin Luther King but a mite too young to have been a freedom rider). And when the renowned sociologist, Milton Himmelfarb, said "Jews earn like Episcopalians, and vote like Puerto Ricans," I took it as a compliment: it confirms that we are being true to our calling.

***Had Not the Holy One Taken
our Fathers Out...***

Norm Lerner

Our tradition tells us that G-d "took us out." But we were not lifted up in a cloud and just transported to safety. Our ancestors had to be active participants in their own rescue. And rescue was not for them a given---there had to be doubts.

But despite these doubts they acted-- refusing their labors, they stood tall and marched out from the land of their captivity and before going they slaughtered a symbol of their oppressor's divinity smearing its blood on the outside of their homes for all to see-- this in the face of a powerful and hostile nation state.

And so our forefathers and foremothers were far from passive observers of their fate---Nachshon did have to take that leap of faith and plunge into the sea---and their willingness to act, as the Haggadah tells us, has impacted us and our children and our children's children.

And so this brings me to think about the role of the individual, or the group, in affecting change, be it change in our personal lives or change in the life of our communities. Too often I find myself thinking that I have time, that I can wait a while to work on a difficult but needed life style correction, or I find myself thinking that this or that is a terrific idea and wouldn't it be great if someone else did it.

The Holy One gave our ancestors a window of opportunity to act in order to help bring about profound changes in their lives. I hope that the telling of the Pesach story gives us a chance to reflect on the changes that we wish to bring about and that we have the courage, as they had, to act on these.

Dayeinu
Norm Lerner

“Dayeinu,” we read it, we say it, we even sing it---“that would have been enough.” We show that we are a grateful people---later on in the Seder, just after saying thanks in the Hallel we recite twenty six verses--each one giving thanks for the Deity's acts of creation and kindness.

So what can we take away from this for our day to day? After all, witnessing a sea dividing or bread falling from the skies is just not part of my normal Tuesdays. But what I can try to be aware of and feel gratitude for are those simple and even mundane occurrences that are so easy to discount---a mild day after a brutal winter, (that was an easy one),

---Dayeinu. Sharing moments with a friend---
Dayeinu. Not having to worry about being able to
pay for a doctor in time of need---Hodu. Those
myriad of petite pleasures and graces that are so easy
to take for granted. I am sure we can name more
than a few and as my friends from Bensonhurst
would say, it's "not for nothing" that morning
prayers start with a series of blessings of thanks,
blessings that try to inform us—"look around and
see what's good, now go and to try and view the
world through this positive prism."

But with the Dayeinus and Hodus and daily
blessings there comes an implied obligation---as we
have benefited from the Creator's grace so we too
have a duty to extend that grace to others. In the
Haggadah the maggid states not once, but twice that
whomever is in need, whomever is hungry should be
invited to partake in our bounty----this is spoken
even before we are allowed to bite into the matzah.

Poverty, hunger, natural disaster, disease,
war, etc., etc.-- these are our world's day to day
realities. There's much pain out there and many
would have difficulty mouthing terms that express
thanks.

During this season our tradition makes it
obligatory to give assistance to the Jewish poor.
This is a thoughtful reminder that seeks to put us on
the correct path for seasons to come. It dictates that
we should, if we can, give help to those in need so
perhaps they might also be able to say "Dayeinu."

In Every Generation ...

Stephen L. Epstein

One part of the Haggadah that is very significant for me is the paragraph that states that in every generation, attempts have been made to annihilate the Jewish people. How true this statement is. Amalek, Haman, Pharaoh, and in modern times, Hitler and the leaders of Iran have tried or have been threatening to exterminate Jews. So while we celebrate Passover, which marks the birth of the Jews as a unique people, it is important that we always remember the Divine Promise made to our Patriarchs that the Jewish people would have a homeland and would become a great nation.

Unfortunately, the people of the Jewish state of Israel--our people--continue to live under various kinds of threats. It is our responsibility to make sure that Israel survives and continues to flourish. We must combine prayers with positive activities on behalf of our people.

Mysteries of the Charoses Rabbi Reuven Boshnack

The Mishna says we bring out the Kaara, including Matzah, two cooked dishes, and Charoses even though Charoses is not a mitzvah. The Mishna then quotes Rebbi Eliezer B'Rebbe Tzadok who says it is a mitzvah. The Gemara says that since it is considered a mitzvah, it should be thick, in memory of the cement, and there should be chunks of apples in memory of the apple trees, hinting to the self-sacrifice that the Jewish women had to have children.

How could Rebbi Eliezer say it's a Mitzvah when the first opinion in the Mishna said that it isn't? The Izhbitzer Rebbe explained that earlier generations of the Mishna only looked at whether or not the matter was an out and out commandment. In Egypt, the exile was so overpowering that Israel could neither encounter, nor grasp a Mitzvah; however, there were still sparks of Jewish feeling, of self-sacrifice. These feelings which the Charoses concretize are so much more subtle, and therefore were considered negligible when measured against a mitzvah.

Let's understand the subtlety; the Jews sunk so far down that they didn't keep the Bris of circumcision. Therefore, the Mitzvah is that you also must make the Charoses thick, so that we remember the cement, and how the Jews there were drowning in their desires, until the point that they couldn't move. Despite this, we put apples to remind us, of their self-sacrifice to perpetuate the

Jewish people. Though they couldn't see it, they felt that their souls would not remain in Egypt. It is these feelings that Rebbe Eliezer B'Rebbe Tzadok sensed, and felt that the Charoses concretizes all of this, and Paskened accordingly.

Rebbe Eliezer isn't the only one who said that Charoses is a Mitzvah. The Tagrei Cherech - the merchants - in Yerushalaim would say, "come and get spices for the mitzvah." This is because the cinnamon stalks resemble straw. Why does Gemara quote this incident? Who are these people and why must Charoses have spices in it?

We know that the torrent of desires which existed in Egypt was so strong that the Jews were drowning in them. The situation was so extreme that the angels questioned what the difference was between Jews and Egyptians. But Hashem, in His compassion, showed that if He would pull them out, they would run after Him.

Hashem did so by beginning the Geula with the Revelation of his name Ekeyeh, "I will be." What, type of name is "I will be?" It means something that does not yet have its own strength - it just can receive and grow. It represents hidden strength. The name of Hashem which we are used to, "Havaya," means "I am." It describes a reality in which one has manifested his strength and placed it out in the open. Now we can understand the need for straw in Charoses. Grain is an expression of "Havaya" as it has grown and developed. The straw,

which is earlier in the development of grain, is an expression of Ekeyeh- "I will be."

The Tagrei Cherech in Yerushalaim used to say "Come and take spices for the Mitzvah." This means they perceived that even in Egypt, even though it seemed like straw, meaning potential, we can relate to it as if it has been manifested. It is specifically the Tagrei Cherech who sensed this, and said it is most fitting to use spices in Charoses to remind us of the straw.

Who are these Tagrei Cherech? The Izhbitzer says that Cherech is a lattice or screen, so the Tagrei Cherech are people who are looking to the depths. Much like the beloved in Shir Hashirim, who is watching longingly after her love between the lattices, you can't see Him, but He is watching for you.

These faint feelings of "I will be" which exist are hard to concretize and to hold on to. On the Seder night with its torrent of feelings and thoughts, may we merit to be students of Rebbe Eliezer B'Rebbe Tzadok and the Holy Tagrei Cherech of Yerushalaim, and be able to hold on to these special feelings of holiness the entire year.



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