



One connection between last week's HaftTorah & Pesach is that just as the Jews sacrificed their lives as they killed their oppressor's god, we too sacrifice when giving Tzedaka. Malachi also refers to the redemption.

A HAPPY PESACH TO ALL!

1997
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10
YEARS

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Weekly Parsha

Pesach

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"It is a positive command to tell of the miracles and wonders that were done for our fathers in Egypt on the night of the fifteenth of Nisan, as it says: "Remember this day that you went out from Egypt" just as it says: "Remember the day of the Shabbat."

(continued on next page)

from EGYPT to SINAI

Part III

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Last year we noted quite an amazing parallel between the Jews' Egyptian exodus and journey to Sinai, and the actual structure of the Temple.

The Jews left Egypt behind, with all of Egypt's animal deification. God's created pillars of cloud by day, and fire by night led their path, as they were also fed the manna: each day in proportion to their consumption. Their daily subsistence was in God's hands, and they trusted He could and would provide in the desert. They finally arrived at Sinai some seven weeks later. They received the Tablets of Stone upon a fiery mountain, upon which they were warned, and guarded from ascending, lest they die for assuming something could be seen in connection with God's Revelation.

In parallel, as one enters the Temple, he leaves the animal sacrifice altar behind him (it was outside the Temple). As he enters, he approaches the incense altar used to create smoke, the table of the showbread, and the menorah. And just as upon Sinai we received the Tablets and could not ascend, so too, the priests are

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(Pesach cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha / Passover

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(Mishne Torah, Hilchot Chametz U'Matzah 7:1)

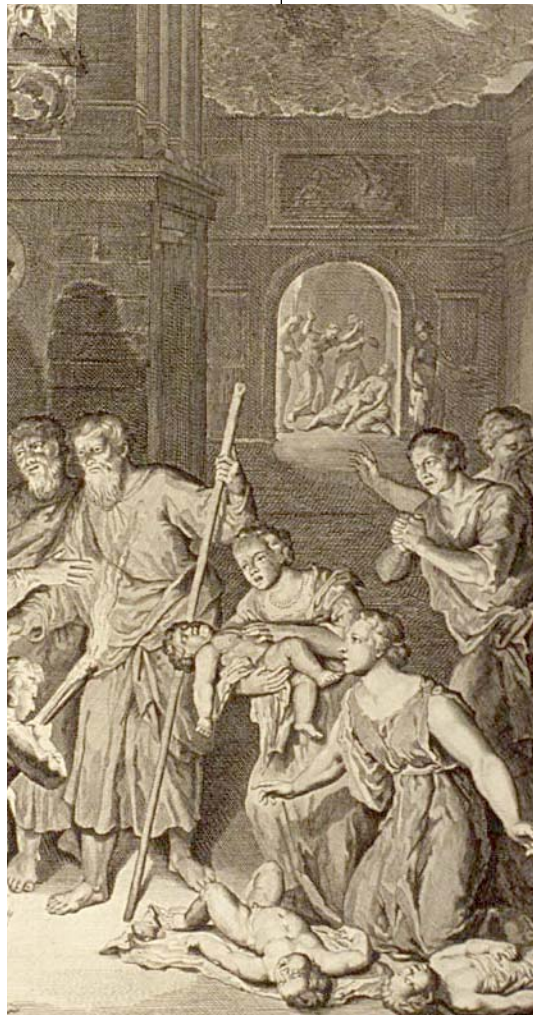
One of the most fundamental commandments that we perform on Pesach is tzipur yetziat mitzrayim – the recounting of our redemption from Egypt. The mitzvah of tzipur seems rather easy to understand. Pesach is the first of the three annual festivals. It is followed by Shavuot which recalls the revelation at Sinai and by Succot that recalls our sojourn in the wilderness. It seems reasonable that on Pesach when we renew this annual cycle of festivals we should discuss the redemption from Egypt. This discussion provides us with an understanding and appreciation of Pesach and also provides us with the fundamental knowledge needed to understand and appreciate the festivals that will follow Pesach in this annual cycle.

The Torah also presents us with a rather clear description of the manner in which the mitzvah of tzipur is to be performed. The Torah tells us that we are to retell the events to our children.[1] In other words, we are required to provide our children with an oral account of the events of our redemption.

However, Maimonides' explanation of the mitzvah of tzipur does present some troubling difficulties. Maimonides begins his explanation of the mitzvah of tzipur by indicating the source in the Torah for the mitzvah. He explains that the mitzvah is derived from a passage in Sefer Shemot. The passage tells us to recall the day that we left the bondage of Egypt.[2] Maimonides then compares this passage to the passage that commands us to recall the Shabbat. This passage is also in Sefer Shemot.[3] It is part of the Decalogue. Maimonides understands this passage to be the source for the mitzvah to recite Kiddush at the advent of Shabbat.[4] In other words, Maimonides is telling us that the mitzvah of tzipur is similar or comparable to the requirement to

recite Kiddush at the beginning of Shabbat. However, Maimonides' comments do not indicate the manner in which the mitzvah of tzipur is comparable to the mitzvah of Kiddush.

It is clear from Maimonides' comments that he regards as ambiguous the statement in the Torah that we are to recall the day that we left Egypt. He refers us to the enigmatic comparison to Kiddush to provide an explanation for this statement. Given that the meaning of this statement – that we are to recall the day of our redemption – is unclear, it



seems odd that Maimonides should select this passage as the source in Torah for the commandment of tzipur. After all, as noted above, there is a perfectly clear passage that also discusses the commandment of tzipur. We are commanded to retell the events to our children. Why did Maimonides not use this passage as the source for the commandment and instead insist that the source is the more ambiguous directive to remember the day of our redemption?

“And you should tell your son on that day saying, “Because of this Hashem did (this) for me when I went out from Egypt.” (Sefer Shemot 13:8)

“One might think that the mitzvah of tzipur can be fulfilled from the first of the month. But

the Torah tells us “on that day.” If the Torah only said, “on that day”, one might conclude that the mitzvah can be fulfilled before nightfall. Therefore the Torah tells us, “because of this.” “Because of this” only refers to the time at which matzah and marror are before you.” (Haggadah of Pesach)

The passage above is the pasuk that tells us that the mitzvah of tzipur requires that we retell the events of our redemption to our children. The Haggadah quotes Mechilta's explanation of this pasuk. Mechilta learns from this passage that the mitzvah of tzipur can only be fulfilled on the night of Pesach – at the time that matzah and marror are before us.

(continued on next page)

(Pesach continued from page 2)

Weekly Parsha / Passover

This discussion in Mechilta deserves careful analysis. Mechilta proposes that one might reasonably assume that the mitzvah of tzipur can be fulfilled from the beginning of the month of Nisan. This is a remarkable statement! Why would one make such an assumption? Either it is self-evident that the mitzvah of tzipur is related to Pesach or it is not self-evident! If we assume that it is self-evident that the mitzvah is one of the mitzvot of Pesach, then obviously it cannot be fulfilled from the beginning of the month. Alternatively, if it is not self-evident that the mitzvah is related to Pesach, why would one conclude that the mitzvah can be fulfilled only from the beginning of the month of Nisan? If one does not assume that the mitzvah of tzipur is related to Pesach, then why could it not be fulfilled any time during the year?

“This month should be for you the first of the months. It should be for you the first of the months of the year.” (Sefer Shemot 12:2)

This passage instructs us to designate the month of Nisan as the first of the months of the year. Nachmanides, in his comments on this passage, explains that Nisan is selected as the first month of the year because it is the month of our redemption. All other months are identified in their relationship to Nisan. For example, Iyar is identified as the second month of the year and Tishrei is the seventh month of the year. Nachmanides further explains that this system is designed to assure that we constantly recall and make reference to the redemption. Each time we identify the date and mention the month, we will identify the month in relationship to Nisan – the month of our redemption.[5]

It seems from Nachmanides' comments that the month of Nisan has a unique identity. It is the month of our redemption. In other words, the events that took place in Nisan actually endow the month with an identity. It is the month associated with redemption.

Based on these comments, we can begin to understand the reasoning of Mechilta. Mechilta assumes that the mitzvah of tzipur can only be fulfilled at a time that is relevant to the redemption that tzipur recalls. However, Mechilta proposes that this requirement can be fulfilled from the beginning of Nisan. Nisan has a unique identity. It is the month of our redemption. Therefore, one would reasonably assume that the mitzvah of tzipur can be fulfilled from the beginning of the month.

However, Mechilta explains that we cannot fulfill the mitzvah of tzipur from the beginning of the month. The mitzvah can only be fulfilled at the time that we have matzah and maror before us. In other words, Mechilta posits that the mitzvah of tzipur is somehow tied to the other mitzvot performed on the night of Pesach. What is this connection between tzipur and the other mitzvot of Pesach?

Let us now return to our original question. What is the connection between tzipur and Kiddush? Maimonides provides a succinct definition of the mitzvah of Kiddush. He tells us that the mitzvah of Kiddush is to describe the greatness of Shabbat, its exalted and distinctive nature that differentiates it from the other days of the week.[6] In short, the mitzvah of Kiddush is to express in words the significance of Shabbat – the day we are prepared to observe.

Apparently, we cannot adequately observe the Shabbat by simply abstaining from the activities that are prohibited on the day. We must first express in words the significance of this observance. Mere abstention from creative labor is not an adequate observance of Shabbat. We must first explain the significance of this conduct.

Perhaps, this is the basis of Maimonides' comparison between tzipur and Kiddush. Tzipur's objective is similar to the objective of Kiddush. We are required to provide – through tzipur – an explanation of the mitzvot we are to perform on the night of Pesach. Just as Kiddush provides an explanation of the observance of Shabbat, tzipur provides an explanation and framework for the mitzvot performed the night of Pesach.

We can now appreciate the reasoning of Mechilta. In order to relate Kiddush to Shabbat, we recite the Kiddush at the advent of Shabbat. However, the entire month of Nisan has the identity of the month of our redemption. The entire month is related to and is an extension of the observances performed the night of Pesach. Therefore, one might reasonably assume that the mitzvah of tzipur can be performed from the beginning of the month.

However, the Torah tells us that the performance of tzipur must be more closely related to the mitzvot of the night of Pesach. It must be performed at the time at which these mitzvot of Pesach are performed.

Let us now consider our second question on Maimonides. Why did Maimonides not cite as the source for the mitzvah of tzipur the more explicit pasuk requiring us to retell the events of our redemption to our children? The passage that instructs us to retell these events to our children provides us with clear instructions for the manner in which the mitzvah of tzipur is to be performed. However, the passage tells us nothing about the nature of the mitzvah. In contrast, the passage telling us to recall the day of our redemption provides us with an insight into the meaning and significance of the mitzvah. The passage employs language similar and reminiscent of the language the Torah uses to describe the mitzvah of Kiddush. Through alluding to this comparison, the passage reveals to us that the mitzvah of tzipur is fundamentally similar to the mitzvah of Kiddush. Both are designed to provide a framework for the observances that will follow. ■

[1] Sefer Shemot 13:8.

[2] Sefer Shemot 13:3.

[3] Sefer Shemot 20:8.

[4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Shabbat 29:1.

[5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 12:2.

[6] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvat Aseh 155.

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(continued from page 1)

Passover

prohibited from entering the Holy of Holies, in which the Tablets rest in the gold Ark (representing fire).

We concluded that just as the Jews leaving Egypt to arrive at Sinai required a process of refinement through God's provision of manna, and the pillars of cloud and fire...so too, all generations require the Temple, which duplicates phenomena that forged Jewish development. Just as the nation was formed with specific lessons, so too, each and every Jew requires those lessons if we are to be perfected as well.

We abandoned Egypt with Mount Sinai and Torah as our destination. But we traveled from the former to the latter with certain lessons. Why were the lessons of manna, and the pillars of cloud and fire indispensable to the Jews' development? The fact that animal worship is absolutely wrong (Maimonides states our sacrifices are concessions) implies that abandoning figures altogether would be the correct approach. But God in fact commanded Moses to forge two humanlike figures on the Ark, our ultimate destination after leaving the animal-worshipping Egypt. It appears counterintuitive that repudiating animal worship should engage a practice endorsing other life forms. Let us address this issue first.

Maimonides states (Guide, book III, chap VLV)

"If there had only been one figure of a cherub, the people would have been misled and would have mistaken it for God's image which was to be worshipped, in the fashion of the heathen; or they might have assumed that the angel [represented by the figure] was also a deity, and would thus have adopted a Dualism. By making two cherubim and distinctly declaring "the Lord is our God, the Lord is One", Moses dearly proclaimed the theory of the existence of a number of angels; he left no room for the error of considering those figures as deities, since [he declared that] God is one, and that He is the Creator of the angels, who are more than one."

Maimonides teaches that the cherubs – along with the Shema's opening verse – functioned to counter any notion of idolatry. We now appreciate how God refutes the notion of idolatry; by claiming He is "one", while simultaneously commanding man to create duplicate cherubs. We also learn of the truth of angels, those forces through which man gains knowledge, thus, they are attached to the housing (ark) of the law. The ark, thereby, addresses the former, corrupt mindset of the Egyptian-bound Jew who accepted animal deification. However, this transition was not that simple. The Jews required manna, and the pillars, which guided them. Why?



The manna served to create a complete reliance upon God for the Jews' very subsistence. It is evident that although these saved Jews had killed Egypt's god – the Paschal Lamb – this one-time act was insufficient. They still required an additional lesson...on a daily basis. Regular reliance on God for their lives was this lesson, afforded through the manna. Perhaps the absence of a response from God for 210 years in Egypt had conditioned those Jews into a certain mode of thinking. We hear people today complain "Where was God during the Holocaust?" Our response is "devastation does not equate to injustice, or lack of recognition". For how much have we studied regarding God's laws of astrophysics, or biology, that we can rightly claim complete knowledge of these areas? Similarly, we have not studied all there is to know about God's justice so as to justify such a complaint from Holocaust survivors. No, we can't answer every question, but let us not confuse unanswered questions with any injustice by God. This was God's response to Job's complaint if His injustice to Job. Job was taught of his ignorance of God's natural laws, thereby teaching him that he was all the more ignorant of the abstract laws of God's justice.

Now, perhaps those Jews leaving Egypt required a multifaceted approach to condition their thinking towards truths. They first required the knowledge that their fate is not in man's hands, as it was for so long in Egypt. The manna taught them to look to God each day for their very lives. But they also required a constant reminder of His presence. Besides offering shade from the desert sun, the miraculous pillar of cloud displayed God's providence at every moment. It also taught them that God is "clouded" from their understanding.

At night, again, the pillar of fire satisfied the practical need for light. But it also carried another lesson. At night, man's internal, instinctual world experiences a heightened state of passionate increase and urges. This is when the Jews required the ever-present focus on God. The Talmud teaches that one must relieve himself at night, as

he does by day. This unveils the tendency in man to be less modest at night. And this is due to man's predisposition to act based on social approval. Thus, when no one else can see man under the cloak of darkness, man tends to be less modest. Other instincts are also aroused. The Rabbis also state that one awake at night should lie on his bed and be still. This is because the instincts are stronger, and sin is much easier. Therefore, lying still on one's bed allows man to ponder his Creator, and turn from sin. Therefore, we might suggest that at night, the pillar of fire served to sustain the Jews' focus on God, when their instincts might run amok.

The 12 loaves of showbread in the Temple remind us that God is the source of our sustenance. The Jews who left Egypt required that first lesson, in the form of the manna. They needed to redirect all their energies towards God who saved them from bondage, for the sole reason that they recognize Him. We must know that our lives are due to God.

The cloud created by the Temple's incense altar teaches God's providence, as our incense worship is sensible, only if God is omniscient. We must know that God is aware of all our actions and thoughts...and did not abandon us in Egypt, or today. Yet, we cannot know Him essentially, as His nature is impossible for a human to fathom, as if a cloud intervenes. Thus, cloud teaches that awareness of God must always be coupled with His completely hidden nature.

And as in the Temple, the menorah of seven branches teaches us that our God is the only God, the God of creation who rested on Day 7. So too, the Jews who left Egypt also had to undergo this lesson. The inner world of man's instincts must be understood, and must not be allowed to run amok under night's cloak of darkness. So too, our unseen world of human emotion and instinctual urges must be brought into daylight. God's pillar of fire lit the night, illuminating the Jews to their instincts so as not to fall prey to the emotions that earned Egypt its fate. Our inner world of instincts tends to convince us of the "reality" of their pleasure. Yet, we must abandon such thinking, and recognize that the only true world is God's world, which He created. We must swap our fantasies for reality – our darker world for illuminated truth.

These lessons help all Jews – then and now – to recognize primary lessons: Manna/Showbread: Our daily lives must retain the focus on God. Incense Altar/Cloud: Our actions are under God's scrutiny. Menora/Fire: And our emotional lives must not be left in darkness, as did Egypt.

Following such a path, we too can earn the life where God directs our path from an Egyptian lifestyle of instinctual notions, to a life of Torah knowledge. ■

Letters / Passover



Letters

from our

READERS



The Sole Soul I

Reader: Consider the issue of the recent discourse regarding the superiority of the Jewish soul. There are many p'rushim from respected chachamim that support this concept, yet your position (and that of Rabbi Zucker in the latest issue) is diametrically opposed and is presented as incontrovertible, as if anyone who believes otherwise cannot call themselves an Orthodox Jew. I know that many times you are defending a position you've taken. This is where the "attitude" seems to come out more so than at other times. I'm just suggesting that maybe you should read aloud what you are writing; sometimes we write in a different tone than if the same thoughts were conveyed verbally. Just a bit of constructive criticism.

Mesora: Your input is appreciated. But you will find that anyone of the Rabbis will speak this way. Ibn Ezra calls certain people "empty brained" when stressing utterly foolish ideas. The Haggadah states that one must "blunt the teeth" of the wicked son. And Maimonides teaches that a wise man that does not respond and take revenge like a snake (meaning harshly or venomously) is not considered wise.

The lesson: attitude itself conveys the teacher's passion, and awakens the listener to attend appropriately. It teaches his student how much he cares about a given point. Unfortunately, today's leaders are weak, and this is why many Jews fall from the fold. The students seek passion and meaning in life, but their rabbis are nonchalant about Torah, so the student seeks passion somewhere else...perhaps Christianity. But had their teachers been as passionate as the original Rabbis and Sages, I guarantee you many non-religious Jews would be religious.

But primarily, when one sees an idea as clearly true, it is a joy. And one naturally and rightfully expresses this new insight with vigor and passion. Opposing baseless ideas must be honestly addressed as such. So yes, all other ideas are seen as false, and are described patently as false, when one sees clearly an idea rooted in truth. This explains why the Rabbis and Sages spoke with such force, and were never lethargic, since Torah truths excite the mind, and speech.

Reader: Fair enough. Now for a question regarding the non-superior nature of the Jewish soul. If some of the great rabbis of today and history claim as such, and I am afraid I don't have a source at the moment, based on their exegesis, how do we balance your position against theirs? I personally don't believe in the "Jewish spark" in a convert's soul, simply for the reason that Avraham Avinu was not a "Jew" at the time he had his realization of the transcendent nature of a single deity. In terms of Jew by birth, we are Jewish by dint of our mother's Jewishness. But, along these lines, there may be something inherently different (and, quite possibly one could say superior) in a soul that is capable of directing itself and its host body on the path of Torah, as opposed to one that is inherently opposed to or incapable of this. This would explain the differences between Avraham and his contemporaries, Yitzchak and Yishmael, Yaakov and Esav, Jews and non-Jews. Maybe souls such as these naturally gravitate to Jewish families, but

sometimes are also drawn to non-Jewish as part of Hashem's plan for the universe. This would explain the convert, as well as righteous gentiles.

Mesora: You write that there are souls which are "inherently opposed to or incapable" of living the proper life. But here is the flaw with this view: it renders God unjust, having created certain souls incapable of His plan that "All sons of flesh call His name" which you recite daily in Alenu. Therefore, we reject this view with both hands, and I do mean to say that there are no other acceptable views. This view violates reason, and God's just nature, and the words of the prophets. On all counts, Judaism finds the "superior soul" theory baseless, arrogant, and abhorrent. It also matters none how many "great rabbis" today claim otherwise. We follow Torah and God, not Rabbis who conflict with His view. ■

The Sole Soul II

Reader: Dear Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim, Thank you for your articles on the Jewish Soul. I am not Jewish though had very close Jewish friends growing up and married a Jewish man. We raised our children with a wonderful Jewish upbringing, usually having study groups out of our home as we lived in the country. Due to your article I now understand why my son was never counted as minyan nor asked to carry the Torah scroll, as I am a non-Jew and never had an orthodox conversion. Is my soul really looked at as coming from a Satanic sphere as I have read in a chassidic quote?

B'shalom, Chava

Mesora: Your soul is no different than mine. We all descend from Adam and Eve. God never reinvented the soul. And when He formed the Jews, it was not a change in our spiritual substance, but a mere designation and purpose that He commanded. Since man has never changed since Creation, all human beings share the same design. The difference is that the Jew has been commanded in accurately transmitting God's Torah, something the book you read has failed to accomplish since it is a fabrication based in human arrogance. ■

Passover

THE SEDER & 10 PLAGUES: AN OPPORTUNE TIME TO REACH OUT



RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

The purpose of the Ten Plagues was not to destroy Egypt, but to offer the primary lesson to that idolatrous culture: “The God of creation and of Abraham is the only God...and Egyptian deities are imaginations.” God desires the good for all mankind.

Although God knew that Pharaoh would remain obstinate, God nonetheless offers man the opportunity to express free will, as this forms part of God’s justice. Similarly, God warned Cain not to kill Abel, even though He knew the outcome. Such cases are numerous. Now, to understand the Ten Plagues, means to understand the lessons of each plague, not to simply be startled at the phenomena.

Ibn Ezra quotes Rabbi Judah HaLevi (Exod. 8:28) “The first two plagues were in water: the first turned water into blood, and the second caused frogs to ascend from the water. And in the earth were two plagues: the lice, and the mixture of beasts, as it is written, “let the earth bring forth living beasts”. And [the next] two plagues were in the air: for the death of the beasts was only due to cold or heat, some atmospheric change, and they all died in a single moment. And the second [in air] was the boils. The seventh plague [hail] was through a mixture of storms and fire. Locusts were brought from afar via wind. Darkness was delivered by the removal of light. And the tenth, the firstborn deaths was through the descending of destructive forces.”

Rabbi Judah HaLevi teaches that God’s intent was to display mastery over all “elements”. God wished to teach Egypt that their notion of animal deities controlling natural elements was false...He alone controls all elements. Thus, laws relegated to natural properties of water, earth, air, fire, wind, and light were altered at precise moments. This unveiled the fallacy of Egyptian deities to defend the Egyptians, and validated God. And the final plague displayed God’s control over laws above nature. For no natural law can selectively kill based on the order of one’s birth. Birth order is an “event”, and nature cannot attack an event. Nature can only relate to real, physical “substances or properties”. So if all humans share a common substance or biological property, a “natural” plague would affect all people, not just firstborns. But as firstborns alone were attacked, that final plague proved that God controls more than just nature. It targeted the lesson that man cannot know God, and that the human association of certain animals with certain natural laws is baseless. Egypt should have said, “If I cannot understand how the firstborns alone died, then I have no idea of how the world operates, and my selected deities are imagined, and not real.”

We have another statement by Rabbi Judah in our Haggadahs, “Rabbi Judah once gave in them [the Plagues] signs: D’tzach, Adash B’Achav”...an acronym for the Hebrew terms for each plague. The question is, is this simply a pneumonic device to recall all Ten Plagues, or is there a greater meaning to this grouping?

A Rabbi once taught that there is in fact a greater intended insight. Rabbi Judah grouped the Ten Plagues into three sections. The first group of blood, frogs and lice transpired “in the earth”: either in the water or the land. The second group transpired “on the earth”, referring to the wild beast mixture, livestock deaths, and boils. And the final plagues transpired in the “heavens”: hail, locusts, darkness and firstborns. Rabbi Judah’s lesson here is that God controls all realms of existence: the earth, the heavens, and all in between (“on” earth is not “in” earth, but in-between earth and heaven). We now have two beautiful lessons: God controls all “substances”, and God controls all “regions”.

However, these two lessons imply that the Ten Plagues were absolutes. Meaning, these specific Ten Plagues had to happen. I say this, since the two statements of both Rabbi Judahs seek to display God’s mastery over all substances, and all regions. But I wonder...perhaps these ten Plagues were not “mapped out” from the very outset...but each one was selected only once Pharaoh reacted to the previous plague. So as Pharaoh responded each time, God sent a plague that addressed his current attitude...while also addressing God’s mastery over all elements and regions.

One proof is seen from the very last verses in Parashas Va-era (Exod. 9:31,32). Moses describes to Pharaoh that the stiff plants broke under the crushing force of the hail, while the softer, flexible plants survived, since they bent. Moses is saying, in other words, “Pharaoh, if you would be flexible, you would survive and not be crushed as the stiff plants are crushed.” This means that the plague of hail was intended to parallel Pharaoh’s obstinacy. Had he not been obstinate, hail would be inappropriate. In connection with blood, we read that the Egyptians dug for water (Exod. 7:24) at the “surroundings” of the Nile, for they could not drink from the Nile. And in verse 27 God then plagues “all boundaries” with frogs. Does this mean that since the Egyptians sought to escape the limits of where water turned to blood, God responds with a plague that reaches “all boundaries”...rendering this next plague with an “inescapable” tone in response? I am not certain, but the plague of frogs does say that the frogs entered their ovens, kneading troughs, bedrooms, and beds. It is quite descript of the level of

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Passover

intrusion. And verse 8:2 says the frogs covered the land.

There is much to study in connection with the plagues. There are the plagues themselves, the precise words and interactions initiated by Moses, the responses of the Egyptians and Pharaoh after each plague, and there are God's words of instruction, and to whom He instructs, i.e., Moses or Aaron. It is no wonder that the Sages stayed up all night on Pesach discussing the Exodus.

This year, may we all learn more of God's wisdom by patiently examining His generous clues in our Torah.

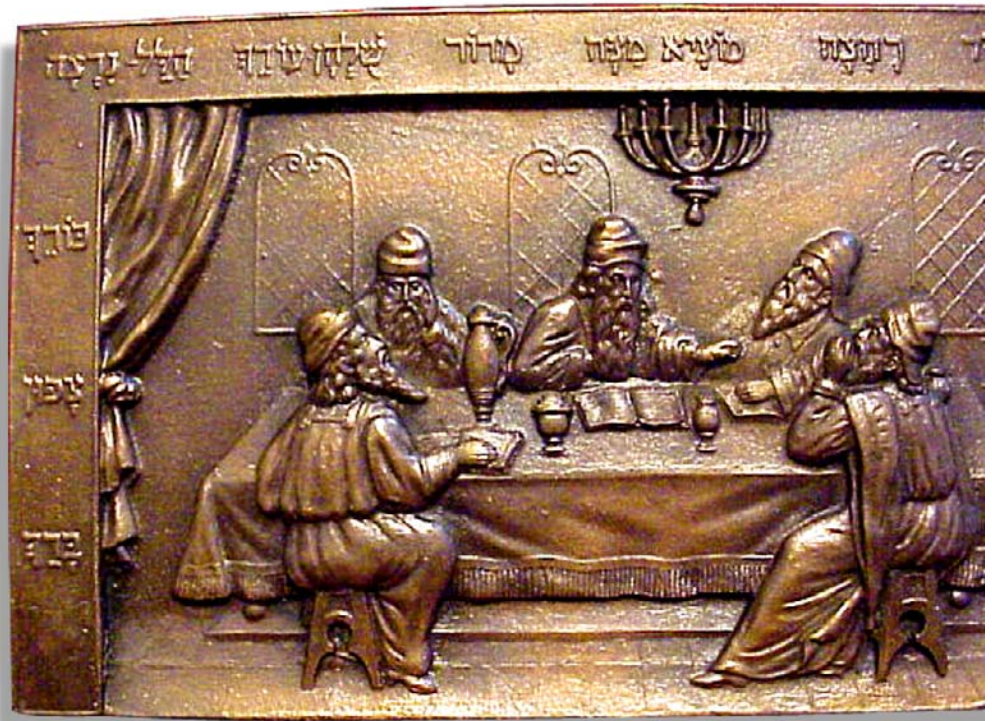
On another note, we can fulfill this Pesach on an even greater level. Last week we discussed the truth that true friendship demands that we risk friendship. We must value the good for our friends and relatives, more than we value our friendship, which is truly selfish. But that's the last resort. Of course, we try the most pleasant approach first, so we remain in good standing, should our friend or relative seek additional direction.

If we can invite a non-observant friend or relative to our Seder, we might be able to offer them a chance at true life. The opinion of the non-observant Jew is that life has a purpose without Torah or knowledge of God...or that all God wants is that "I am nice". This lifestyle is usually based on ignorance of Torah, and a desired level of convenience. They also wish pleasures, sophistication, fame, luxuries, and other motives and lusts. We must be aware of this if we engage them in discourse. Otherwise, we may be addressing the wrong issues. Their choice is not based on study, and the realization that one is a created being, with a Creator, to Who he or she owes his and her life.

Each person has but one chance at living properly, with the possibility of an eternal, blissful existence. We must make our friends aware of this inevitable fact. They must face their mortality. God desired our Exodus, so that we should not lose our true lives like the idolatrous Egyptians. God did not desire evil for the Egyptians either, and offered them ten chances.

History is undeniable, so a safe starting point is the story of the Exodus. When a non-observant Jew accepts this history, he or she must also accept the rest of this history, culminating with Sinai. Torah was the reason God redeemed the Jews. Our Torah is so undeniable; other religions retain the entire Five Books. Ask those who are non-observant to refute that. They cannot.

Now, once God's existence and His will are realized and accepted, a rational person might feel the tendency to inquire further. The Seder is an opportune event, when the conversations center on true historical phenomena, all pointing to a Creator, and His will for the Jews. You must



impress upon the non-observant Jew that God did not redeem, but killed those Jews who did not follow His laws while yet in Egypt. Those who did not reject animal deification were not spared. Rashi teaches that four fifths of the Jews died in the plague of darkness.

We must be concerned for all other Jews, and we can do something to help them not forfeit their one chance at true existence. This matter must not be light in your eyes.

You can sympathize with the non-observant Jew, that it is initially a difficult change, to follow God's will. But that is only because their energies are used to a set pattern...not because observance is painful. Breaking one's pattern always meets with temporary frustration. But the enjoyment derived from study – the primary mission of the Jew – is something which grows, and offers greater happiness than the lives of those chasing fleeting fantasies, and temporal pleasures. You must convey that part of what you ask your friends, is to take a leap, since you cannot make them experience the joy of study and wisdom in a single conversation. And since they cannot imagine what you know to be true from your own experience, you will need to use your relationship as leverage...for their own good. You can assure them that you have nothing to gain, and that you know they will enjoy the religious lifestyle more than their current life...they must trust you. Just as they trust a doctor who has greater knowledge of what makes the body happiest, your friend or

relative must admit that God knows best what will make man happiest, in all areas, and primarily regarding his philosophy in life.

Try at first to make this idea resonate: "You are a created being, and your Creator has a plan for you." Then use the events of the Egyptian redemption, protection from the plagues, God's sustained providence over us, and His gift of Torah to demonstrate that all along, God bestowed only good upon us. Describe Creation; that God set the world's stage, and then created man last after all was ready for him. God created all else...and then created man, so man might have that with which to study. And God gave us intellect – which no other being possesses – for the primary purpose of its engagement, and joy in satisfying natural, human curiosity. God laid out the heavens, and all natural laws that are fascinating, since 'fascination' is something that pleasures man over all else.

Use this Pesach, if you can, to imbue at least one other person of what great plan truly awaits each and every one of us...and that we cannot find true happiness if we reject God's plan for us. If we choose the latter, God abandons us here, and we forfeit our eternal lives in the world to come. What a tragedy.

But...something fantastic truly awaits one who at least takes a chance, and admits he or she does not have all the answers. God desires the good for all mankind, and He desires that we teach this good to others. ■

Haggadah

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Transcribed by student



Rabbi Chait commenced citing the Ran (in the Rif's pages, 25b): the Ran states that the correct manner of reading the Haggadah is that a "reader" recites it, while all others listen. The implication is that all present fulfill their obligation to 'read' the Haggadah, through the halachik mechanism of "Shomaya K'Oneh", "One who listens is as one who answers (recited)."

In his Mishneh Torah, "Laws of Chametz and Matza" 7:4, Maimonides states, "And these matters are all called Haggadah." The question is; to what does he refer - what is subsumed under "these matters"? Maimonides had already stated numerous ideas from the beginning of this chapter. Is he referring to all that he stated, or a smaller portion? Rabbi Chait first stated that "these matters" (are Haggadah) refers only to his fourth and fifth laws in this chapter, and not to anything mentioned earlier. Let us review Maimonides' laws:

Law 1: Maimonides records the obligation to transmit the miracles to our sons, when we must recite, and that no one is exempt regardless of age. Law 2: He continues to discuss 'how' we must relate the information, based on our sons' understanding. Law 3: Maimonides discusses the obligation to act in a manner that will evoke interest and questions from the child. A "question" format is required, and questions are so vital, that were someone alone, he must verbally ask himself questions.

But in law 4, Maimonides describes the obligation that one must commence with the degraded state of the Jews,

and conclude with our elevated status. Maimonides gives examples: we were first idolaters in Abraham's day, but God eventually drew us close to His worship, teaching us His Unity, that he alone is the exclusive Creator. (One must say, "God brought us to the correct idea of God's oneness". Starting with our degraded state and concluding with our 'elevated status' refers to our realization of the ultimate truth: God is One.) He continues that we must also describe our Egyptian bondage under Pharaoh, and our freedom delivered by God's miracles and wonders, provided that one explains the entire section commencing with Laban's desire to annihilate Jacob and the tribes. In law 5, Maimonides discusses the obligation to discuss the Paschal Lamb, Matza, and Bitter Herbs, and their significances, as essential to fulfilling the command retelling the Exodus (Haggadah). He concludes as we mentioned at the outset, "And these matters are all called Haggadah." So what is it to which Maimonides refers when he makes this conclusion, "And these matters are all called Haggadah"? What matters?

Two Forms of Haggadah

Rabbi Chait suggested that there are two forms of Haggadah. There is an informal retelling, and a formal retelling. This latter, formal retelling of the Exodus is what Maimonides refers to as "Haggadah." The first 3 laws describe an informal guideline as to what "elements" must be incorporated, however, there is no set format. We simply must insure that the miracles are discussed, and done so on a level where our sons may comprehend. But in laws 4 and 5, Maimonides clearly describes texts, which must be read. And it is only in regards to a text, that the concept of listening and fulfilling makes sense. This complies with the Ran, that one reads for all others present. If one merely retells the story in his own words, he lacks in a complete retell of the Exodus. This is called an "Incomplete Mitzvah". Therefore, one must also refer to texts to fulfill his "formal retell" of the Exodus. Thus, only in a formalized text may one achieve "listening is as if reciting". This is because there is a discreet and precise "entity" - a formal text - there is a "prescribed vehicle" of fulfillment. But regarding an informal retelling of the Exodus, where one uses his own words, the concept of "listening is as if reciting", or "Shomaya K'Oneh" cannot apply. For in this case, there is no universal "entity" of text prescribed by the Torah to fulfill one's obligation. By definition, a subjective recital cannot function universally: that which is subjective is not universal.

This idea of a formal text, expresses the philosophy of the Torah; it is not a loose, subjective system, but a system that is well formulated with precision. A fixed text comprises the retelling of the Exodus for this reason.

The ingredients in the formal text

It includes the following: 1) commencing with degradation and conclusion with praise; 2) explaining from Laban's attempt to annihilate us; and 3) Mitzvah's of the night, i.e., Paschal lamb, Matza and Bitter Herbs.

There are two forms of "commencing with degradation and conclusion with praise": A) discussion of the elements, and B) studying at text. Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik said that the very study of the commands is found in the Haggadah, as they contribute to the retelling of the Exodus. The command of retelling, itself, has its nature tied to the 'reasons' of the command. Thus, the laws of retelling actually form part of the command.

Why must we commence with our degradation? It is because if it is omitted, our retelling lacks in praise for God. The contrast created by discussing man's lowly nature unveils greater praise, as God is that much more praiseworthy. This is the first "commencing with degradation and conclusion with praise". However, we must note that we cannot praise God, that is a foolish idea, as man has no concept of God. This is why our praise surrounds "our" change in status, and not God.

The Mah Nishtanah

Rabbi Chait now asked on Maimonides' formulation in law 3: "And it is required that one make (behavioral) changes in this night, in order that sons may see, and ask, and say, 'why is this night different than all other nights?'" Rabbi Chait asked why Maimonides added the phrase "and say". Isn't it sufficient that Maimonides writes, "and ask"? Why does Maimonides add the phrase "and ask, and say"? Additionally, if the child "says" the Mah Nishtanah, why must the reader recite it as well?

Rabbi Chait said that the night must commence with an idea: "this night is different". Now, if there were a fixed answer, then one may simply state it. But here, there is no fixed answer; it is an "infinite" answer. Some questions have a single answer...but not so here. Here, the question about the difference of this night opens new worlds of answers of how different Passover is. The child must reach the point that he 'says'... "How different is this night?!" This is not a question, but an exclamation. It is as if a child attends a circus for the first time, and says, "How great is this?!" The child is overawed. Here too during our retelling of the Exodus, the miracles, and God's mercy in elevating us from idolatry and slavery to true monotheism and freedom, the child senses there is something different on Passover, something so grand that the child realizes it is incomparable. "Mah Nishtanah!"; "How Different?!" Similarly, Jacob said the word "mah": "Mah norah hamakome hazeh", "How great is this place?!" when he awoke from the famous dream of the ladder and the angels. This must be the opening statement of the Haggadah - both the informal and formal retelling. This explains why the reader also states "Mah Nishtanah"...as he too is about to enter the infinite answer of how different this night is.

A child commences life with an attachment to pleasure. What we desire in relation to the Haggadah is to attract and allow expression of the child's pleasure seeking nature - his pleasure should find expression and increase in the Haggadah. We desire this "What a difference" response. In general, we must not dissuade a child from enjoying pleasures, as this will retard his ability to experience pleasure in connection with Torah. ■



Egypt:

FIRST-HAND

RABBI PINCHAS ROSENTHAL



Imagine all of us were at a Seder together. Not any ordinary Seder, but the very first one in Egypt. All of us have eaten a special wrap. A wrap composed of lamb meat, a condiment of bitter herbs and “lafa” like flexible Matza. We are dressed up to leave. We are overwhelmed with emotions and are excited with the possibilities for the future. We are also afraid to leave our homeland of so many years.

Over the course of the meal we discuss all the plagues that have struck Egypt so far. Will our dream come true?

We have been told by Moshe through the elders that we can not leave our homes tonight, for at the stroke of midnight Hashem will kill all the first born men, animals and destroy all the idols of Egypt. We shouldn't rely on miracles to step outside into murderous night. “I see the blood of the Paschal Lamb which dad daubed with a hyssop bundle on the inside of each door post and the lintel. It is slowly dripping down; I guess there is nothing to the power of the Egyptian lamb gods. We will not get zapped. Moshe told us that this in

fact saves us from the plague of the first-born. My father said by publicly killing and eating the gods of Egypt as a mitzvah it shows that we are worthy of being saved.”

I see myself leaving the conversation to peek out the window. Will this plague happen, I ask myself? How can this happen? Is it really possible? Will the Egyptians take revenge and attack us for this plague? All these thoughts are swirling in my mind, when suddenly I hear screams for help. Homes are being lit up in the darkness of the night. Grown men are running down the streets with children in their arms seeking medical attention. The miracle is happening. Cries for help, despair and shock echo through the city. My fears move me away from the window. I don't know what will happen next. My family is transfixed in absolute quiet. We listen to all the noises. Are we next? Slowly, the realities of Moshe's teachings over these past months begin to ring true.

The Ramban, on his commentary on the Torah at the end of Parashas Bo asks why are there so many mitzvos to remind us of the exodus from Egypt. We have all the mitzvot of Pesach, Shabbos, tefillin, The redemption of the first born, the daily obligation to mention the Exodus from Egypt at the end of the Sh'ma, and to not afflict the convert...just to name a few.

The Ramban explains, that in that era in Egypt the prevailing philosophy was absolute materialism. They thought there was no greater cause than the universe itself and that the Universe always existed. People denied the existence of G-d, and that He is the creator, and by extension has the ability to intervene in Nature. They certainly denied Hashem's awareness of human affairs, and his ability to communicate with man through prophecy.

All these basic principles of Judaism became clear to the person looking out the window seeing the plague of the first-born unfolding. The death of the first-born was a proof to all the Egyptian and Jewish skeptics. Clearly, a G-d who can identify, locate and kill all first-borns at the same moment is working outside the laws of nature and therefore must be the cause of the system of nature. Furthermore, Hashem's covenant of kindness to the Forefathers was also shown to be true by the liberation of their children from the tyranny of Egypt. These are the ideas that I focus on as I tie my tefillin to my arm and head every day and fulfill the verse, “And it shall be for you a sign on your arm and a reminder between your eyes, so that Hashem's Torah may be in your mouth, for with a strong hand Hashem removed you from Egypt.”

The tefillin are the jewelry that are designed to refine the way I see the world. ■

Passover

The Seder

The Seder is the central focus of Passover. During the Seder, there are a number of primary laws. We read the following in the Talmud (Pesachim 117a) and in the Haggadah: "Rabbi Gamliel taught, 'Anyone who does not explain three matters on Passover, does not fulfill his obligation; 1) the Paschal lamb, 2) matza and 3) the bitter herbs'." We wonder why these three elements are so central to Passover. How do these define the nature of the holiday? Another interesting feature is that there were two Passovers: an Egyptian Passover, and all others celebrated after the Torah was given. Why are there only one Sukkos, and one Shavuot? What aspect of Passover demands two versions? The Talmud and Haggadah also teach that we are obligated to view ourselves as if we were redeemed from Egypt, and that we must also recline while eating matza and drinking the four cups of wine to express this newfound freedom. And, "even if we are all wise...all knowing the Torah", we are still obligated to recount the Exodus. But why? How can we learn more, if we already know this story inside out? We then read of every generation who attempts to destroy us, but that God saves us. We recount Laban's evil, and God's salvation; we recount at great length the Egyptians' evils, and how God heard our cry, and saved us with miracles. Another law is that when reciting the Haggadah, we must recount our history, commencing with our degraded events and concluding with our praiseworthy status: we commence with our having been slaves and idolaters, and conclude with God's redemption and granting us Torah. We follow this theme with the recital of Hallel, praising God. Astonishingly, our Haggadah that recounts so much about our life in Egypt and God's plagues, mentions Moses just once: Maimonides' Haggadah omits Moses' name altogether. We would think Moses' role in Passover should be present. Why is Moses of little or no focus? Although we have cited many laws, there is one reason for all of them...can you determine it? If not, let's investigate further.

Pesach – Matza – Maror

"Rabbi Gamliel taught, 'Anyone who does not explain three matters on Passover, does not fulfill his obligation; the Paschal lamb, matza and the bitter herbs'."

What is the significance of the Paschal lamb? As we recount our history in the Haggadah, we learn of our state as idolaters before Abraham's times, and God's oath to make us a great nation. We learn of our Egyptian bondage and God's miracles. Why did God deliver so many plagues? God desired to direct Pharaoh and his people to the error in their ways, and each plague targeted another miscon-

ception. The first three plagues displayed God's sovereignty over Earth; the next three, over Earthly events; and the last three, over the heavens. All three realms, Earth, the heavens, and all in between are shown to be under God's control: the Egyptian gods could do nothing to deflect God's plagues. Finally, when Pharaoh sustained his denial of God, God delivered a plague inexplicable by nature: firstborn deaths. Thereby, God taught conclusively of His exclusive reign as Creator and Governor of the universe: as He created everything, He alone controls all natural laws, and no realm escapes His control. We learn of our Egyptian bondage, and the central flaw of our oppressors: they worshipped something other than God. And we learn how God attempts to offer man truth before delivering the final blow.

To be entitled to freedom and accept a Torah from the true God, we must understand what "God" refers to. If we assume the Egyptian meaning, we do not deserve redemption. Thus, God commanded our sacrifice of the Egyptian deity, the Paschal lamb. It is only through this sacrifice, that we deny the false god and affirm the true God, earning our delivery from a bitter existence to taste freedom: embodied in matza, as it could not rise due to God's swift delivery.

The Paschal lamb is the Egyptian god; an idolatrous culture which projects its fantasies onto reality, also projecting its need for human domination, which caused our embittered, slave existence. For this reason, when no Temple exists and no Paschal lamb is sacrificed, the bitter herbs also cannot be fulfilled as a Torah law, but are only Rabbinic. The bitter herbs (our bitter existence) result from the lamb-worshipping culture who feels favored by their gods, and who can justifiably oppress others who devour their God, "For the Egyptians could not eat bread together with the Hebrews, for it is an abomination to the Egyptians." (Onkelos; Exod. 43:32)

Our Torah law reflects this relationship between idolatry and oppression, by commanding the bitter herbs only be eaten when the idolatrous Paschal lamb is present. Exodus 12:8 reads, "And you shall eat the flesh on that night, roasted by fire, with matza and bitter herbs you shall eat it (the Paschal lamb)." It teaches of the relationship between the matza and bitter herbs, that they depend on the Paschal lamb. Meaning, it is through the denial of the lamb-god that we earned a delivery from the bitter life, to taste freedom: the matza.

Passover's Objective

As Rabbi Gamliel teaches, explaining this triad forms our primary obligation in Haggadah: 1) killing the idolatrous Paschal lamb (Pesach) is the means by which we earn redemption from 2)

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RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

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Passover

bitterness (maror) to 3) freedom (matza). Without explaining these three, we do not fulfill our command, and for good reason.

The goal of Passover is to engender a feeling of appreciation for God, who took us out of Egypt. God transformed our slave nation into a dignified, free people who received Divine laws for our own good. To emphasize this contrast and to create our real sense of thanks, Passover is the only holiday possessing two forms: A) the Egyptian Passover, and B) all later Passovers. The objective of these two holidays is to highlight this very contrast of our having A) been slaves, and B) our present freedom. Samson Raphael Hirsch states the reason for the Egyptian Passover: we were to focus on our "current" bondage, eating poor man's bread, bitter herbs and sacrificing the lamb...to be contrasted suddenly by God's swift salvation. We must realize we did nothing to cause our salvation: it was God alone. This contrast is the key aspect of Passover. For it is only through contrasting bondage to freedom, that we might feel thankful to God. Therefore, Passover is the only holidays with two versions: since the holiday is one where "contrasting" our "bondage to freedom" is the focus, so as to engender our thanks for God's kindness.

We therefore recline to embellish our freedom, and recount our tragedies followed by our successes, again offering a 'contrast' and thanks for the good God bestowed upon us. This explains why we are obligated to view ourselves as if we were redeemed from Egypt. Now, "even if we are wise...", we are still obligated to recount the Exodus. Why is this? The answer: this is not an exercise in "learning", but in generating "appreciation", something we must and can do yearly. So it matters none that we repeat what we know already, as wise, elderly Jews. For even at that prime age, we must renew our appreciation for God who redeemed us. And as our appreciation reaches its crescendo, we recite the Hallel, as an expression of our thanks, for true thanks would be lacking, if we were not moved towards expression. We might also suggest that Moses' role is downplayed in the Haggadah, since God is to retain full focus of our appreciation.

Matza recalls poor man's bread, but also teaches of God's salvation. So when no Temple exists and the sacrifice cannot be brought, despite the absence of the means of our redemption – killing the Egyptian god – we may still eat matza, as matza embodies the "objective" of Passover. Of course we lack the complete picture portrayed in the triad of "Pesach, Matza and Maror", nonetheless, Passover's objective of matza – "redemption" – is significant enough to stand alone. So significant is the objective of freedom embodied in matza that the Torah verses command us in matza again by

itself, (12:18) in addition to the matza commanded to be eaten with the Paschal lamb and the bitter herbs.

This holiday is called the "Holiday of Matzas" and not the "Holiday of Pesach" to emphasize the matza's independent lesson, not reliant on the lamb or the herbs. However, bitter herbs are commanded only when the Paschal lamb is present, as we said, for they reflect the bitterness associated with the culture deifying the lamb-god. More precisely, our bitter bondage was a result of an idolatrous culture, devoid of Divine morality. Therefore, the two – bitter herbs and the lamb – are inseparable. We cannot talk about a bitter bondage if the cause of that bitterness – idolatry (the lamb) – is absent. So with no Paschal lamb, there are no bitter herbs. But since matza embodies the overall objective of "redemption", and since the Torah commands eating matza even when no Paschal lamb is present, matza retains an independent role.

Summary

God designed us to find the most satisfaction when we engage our highest element: our intellects. It is our intellect that we sense as our center, and it is only when we engage our intellect that we will find the most profound sense of purpose and satisfaction. For this reason, God delivered us from Egyptian bondage, with the objective of giving us the Torah. Regardless of our state of affairs, the Torah lifestyle will definitely bring us towards fulfillment and happiness. Perhaps, it is for this reason that the Talmud teaches, even a poor person must recline, for even though impoverished and with no means, he must realize that the redemption applies to everyone and affects everyone, poor and rich alike. The Torah system was given to an entire "people", not to an individual. As such, it must be God's meaning that Torah improves everyone's life. We commence the Haggadah with the words, "all who are in need, come and eat."

Torah laws target specific areas, from relationships to objects of mitzva, from seasons to daily needs, and from actions to proper thoughts. Passover, which too contains many truths, carries the broader goal of imbuing us with an appreciation for God's redemption. Truly, Passover targets the general feeling of "appreciating God". It is through all these laws that Passover leads us towards recognition that God created us, and governs us with His intervention and His gift of Torah. It is only through following Torah law and philosophy, that we will indeed become joyous in our lives.

With that thought, I wish a truly happy Passover to everyone. ■

תג
כשר
ושמח



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