



Perhaps the reason why we are to lift the matzo (and maror) when we discuss them, is to highlight the reality of the salvation. Matzo, partially cooked bread, is proof to the speed at which God caused us to leave Egypt. Lifting the matzo, we thereby say, "look for yourself". The transmission is to be as impactful on one's emotions as on his intellect (*Rav Mann*). The obligation to view ourselves as those who exited is based on this idea. Hallel is then sung as our thanks, as we realize our current state of freedom is based on God's Exodus thousands of years ago.

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## IN THIS ISSUE:

PLAGUE OF HAIL	1, 2
PASSOVER	1, 4
Q&A'S: IDOLATRY	1
PHARAOH'S ASTROLOGERS	2, 3
ARROGANCE & PRIDE	3
IDOLS	4
ADVERTISEMENT: USAISRAEL.ORG	5

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## The Plague of Hail

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

(Reprint for Passover reading)

In Parshas Vau-Ayra, at the end of the ninth chapter, we find Moshe (Moses) not only responding to Pharaoh's plea to halt the plague of hail, but also giving Pharaoh rebuke: Exod. 9:30, "And you and your servants, I know that you have yet to fear God."

Why during the plague of hail, unlike other plagues, does Moshe suddenly rebuke Pharaoh? Is there something we may derive from this story that may explain Moshe's behavior?

It doesn't appear that God instructed Moshe to rebuke Pharaoh, so Moshe's words here are his own. What then did

(continued on page 2)

## Thoughts on Passover

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Passover is the holiday where commemoration functions as the primary command, as this is the holiday of 'transmission', passing down the Mesora or tradition to the next generation. Recalling the Exodus forms the basis of innumerable other commands, even the basis of the other holidays as a Rabbi pointed out, we count from Passover to Shavuot, and we refer to the Succot holiday as a remembrance of the Exodus. We read in the Passover Hagadda of the command to discuss the story of the Exodus, even if we are wise men, and even if we are alone.

With such importance attached to Passover, I would like to enumerate some questions and offer some answers:

1) Why is matzoh, unleavened bread, essential to the Passover holiday? What is the concept behind it? Additionally, what is the significance of the Paschal Lamb and the bitter herbs, all three of which are so essential, that their omission from our discussion causes us not to fulfill our obligation?

2) Why does the passage in the Torah command us not to have leavened foods existing at the commencement of the slaughter of the paschal lamb? It is not yet Passover, so why should leaven be prohibited?

3) Why must the Paschal Lamb be eaten together with matzoh and bitter herbs? What is the concept behind this law?

4) We constantly find commands which read "do such and such, it is a remembrance of the Egyptian Exodus". Why is the focal point of so many laws the Exodus of Egypt, as opposed to the inheritance of Israel?

5) We read, "masscheel b'gnuss u'misayame b'shevach", "commence with degrading statements and conclude with praise". What is the concept behind the edict that the story

(continued on page 4)



### ASK YOUR CHILDREN:

"Why in Egypt did we have to sacrifice the calf, for God to take us out and give us the Torah?"  
Have your children email us with their answers: [questions@mesora.org](mailto:questions@mesora.org)

## Questions & Answers

E-mail us: [questions@mesora.org](mailto:questions@mesora.org)

**Question:** What exactly is idolatry?

**Response:** I would have to define it in accordance with a Rabbi's explanation: "Relating to G-d through methods foreign to G-d's prescribed modes of worship." The source, or psychological need which acts of idolatry strive to satisfy, are primal in nature. The instinct in specific I refer to is the need for an authoritarian, or parental being.

To elaborate, when one is an infant, he views his parents as "super" types of beings. As parents feed, hold, care and nurture the infant, a child develops a strong bond and need for this relationship. As an example of how powerful the need for this attachment is, we may see a lost child with the most fearful look on his face. The fear of having "lost" the parent is a dreadful one, and runs very deep.

Now, what happens as a child grows into an adult? What happens to this need? One of two things may occur: 1) The proper response is that the now grown adult will abandon his view that the parent is no more capable than he. He then moves on with mature concepts of parents. Or, 2) The physically grown adult will not abandon his overestimation of the parents being superior. He won't accept his parents are as he is; human, limited, and frail. What then happens is, this conflict of one realizing his parent's shortcomings, and his strong desire for psychological guidance, will produce projections of authority onto other objects or beings. He will seek replacements for his parents. This in short is the cause for all forms of idolatry. Throughout history we see that people have worshiped stars, animals, totem poles, and other objects not deserving of any such elevation. Nonetheless, these objects maintained high esteem in the eyes of those in need due to the aforementioned reason.

Among the many expressions of idolatry, the Torah includes enchanters, fortune tellers, and other advisors. The Torah categorizes all such projections as false, and as idolatrous. It is against reality, and it is the most harmful of sins one can commit, as one forfeits the most crucial kernel of knowledge one can attain, i.e., There is One G-d, no other object or force of nature is to be elevated to deification.

When one believes there are forces outside of G-d, his entire concept of G-d is corrupt. G-d by definition must be The Singular Existence and Sole Cause of Creation, and control of laws and matter. Assuming this is not true, or even adding gods onto G-d, is a complete denial of G-d's Unique Nature.

Therefore, idolatry - the projection of powers onto anything except G-d - ends up to be not only incorrect regarding the projected object, but the worst sin, as it is the abandonment of the true idea of G-d. I would add that the error made in projecting powers onto physical objects is an internal contradiction: If we hold that physical objects are created substances, this means that they have no power over themselves, as they were brought into existence by something other than themselves. To then claim that these very created objects can control anything, is a contradiction, and it's the best argument for disproving any assumed powers.

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