

# מעני תורה

## פסח

### The Missing Fifth Cup of Wine and its Zionist Message

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One of the goals of the *Pesach Seder* is that by its end, we should all feel as if we have been redeemed from being slaves in Egypt. However, I have always felt the end of *Seder* to be slightly anticlimactic. Throughout the night we have re-experienced slavery, the ten plagues and finally being freed from Egypt. But then, the *Seder* abruptly ends and we are left as a nation freed from slavery — relieved, yet uncertain about the future and fearful of entering the intimidating desert. Furthermore, it seems as though we are leaving out the most important part of the story - the Jewish people reaching the land of Israel. It's almost as if we have just spent two-and-a-half hours at a movie, waiting for the happy ending, just to see the words "to be continued" appear on the screen. (This happened to me when I went to see *Lord of the Rings*.) Although we know (spoiler alert) that this generation does not end up entering the land of Israel, it still seems strange to not include entering Israel in the *Seder*. Entering Israel was one of the main goals of the redemption from Egypt, as seen in God's speech to Moshe (*Shemot* 3:8): "and I will come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey."

This question is further strengthened if we look at the passage in *Shemot* (6:6-8) which describes the different *leshonot* of redemption with the terms of "ve-hotzeti, ve-hitzalti, ve-ga'alti, ve-lakachti and ve-heveti. The Talmud Yerushalmi (*Pesachim* 10) uses these *pesukim* as the source for the four cups of wine which are drunk at the *Seder*, stating that the terms are *keneged arba kosot*.

However, these *pesukim* clearly imply that there exists a fifth stage of redemption, that of *heveti*, of God bringing us to the land of Israel. Rav Menachem Kasher z"l, in his book *Haggadah Shelemah*, discusses the debate that existed over the text of the *Gemara* in *Pesachim* 118a, which states that one should finish *Hallel* over a fifth cup of wine. Some *rishonim* (such as Rashi) amend the text to read "the fourth cup," but many, including the Rambam (*Hilchot Chametz u-Matzah* 8:10), accept this *Gemara* to say that one should in fact drink a fifth cup, symbolizing the last stage of redemption.

Consequently, there are many different *minhagim* regarding whether or not people have a fifth cup. Ashkenazim tend to leave the fifth cup on the table and use it for the cup of Eliyahu, but do not drink from it. Sefardim do include the fifth cup as part of their *Seder* and will say *Hallel* over it and drink it. A rabbi from Israel today,

Rabbi David Mescheloff, has gone so far as to write his own addition to the *Maggid* section of the *Haggadah* to go along with the fifth cup, using the same style of hermeneutics to interpret the verse in *Devarim* 27:9 "and He has brought us into this place, and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey," feeling that since we have returned to an independent Jewish

state, our *Seder* must reflect this new stage of *geulah* in an appropriate way (it can be downloaded here: <http://homedir.jct.ac.il/~meschelo/haggada/haggada.html>).

In attempting to answer the question of the fifth cup, Rabbi Binyamin Lau, the rabbi of the Ramban Shul in Jerusalem, makes an important distinction between the Sefardic and Ashkenazic customs regarding the fifth cup in his book *Etnachta: Readings in the Weekly Parsha*. He comments that the two *minhagim* regarding the fifth cup represent two models for dealing with the rise of Zionism. One option is to pour the cup but not drink it, leaving it for Eliyahu, who will herald the ultimate redemption. This attitude reflects those wary of the Zionist



movement, who favor leaving redemption in God's hands, and who are hesitant to initiate any sort of action on their own. The alternative is to drink the fifth cup and fully include it as part of the *Seder*, representing that it is up to us to take the actions necessary to initiate our redemption and return to Israel.

Alternatively, perhaps the fifth cup is not obligatory, as the final stage of redemption is simply not what we are supposed to be focusing on during the night of the *Seder*. Rabbi Lau explains later in his article that the passage in *Shemot* which describes the stages of redemption distinguishes between the first four stages and the last stage of being brought to Israel. Before the term *ve-heveti* is used, a precondition of "*ve-yada'tem ki ani HaShem, and you will know that I am your God*" (*Shemot* 6:7) appears. Rabbi Lau explains that the first four stages of redemption can be done against one's will, as a slave can be freed from bondage even if he wishes to remain with his master. However, entering the land of Israel required the freed individual to want to go there, as part of his understanding of God's plan for the Jewish people. He cannot be forcibly brought into Israel, as this stage cannot happen without him taking the first step. This distinction can be applied to the *Seder* night as well. At the *Seder*, we celebrate that we have completed the first four stages of redemption where we were passively redeemed by an active God. However, we finish the night looking toward the future, hoping to complete that process and enter the land of Israel, having chosen that destiny of our own free will. This represents the ultimate transition from slavery to freedom, from having no control over our lives, no sense of time or family, to being able to now take initiative to reach the final stage of redemption on our own.

Perhaps it is fitting that the counting of the *Omer* immediately follows the holiday of *Pesach*. By counting the *Omer* and showing that we can appreciate being part of a process, we make a statement that we are no longer slaves, oblivious to the passing of time, but that we can instead count up to the next stage in our redemption, entering the land of Israel. How fitting that the days of *Yom HaShoah*, *Yom HaZikaron*, *Yom HaAtzma'ut* and *Yom Yerushalayim* all fall within the *Sefirat HaOmer* period, which allows us to realize that there are many stages to full redemption, some of which we have been privileged to experience, but others that are yet to come.

Therefore, the *Pesach Seder* may end with a "to be continued" message, which is not anticlimactic, but inspiring, motivating us to move toward achieving true redemption on our own. *Chag Kasher veSameach!*

### "*Va-yar Ki Ain Ish*" – But Was There a Woman?

Tamar Novetsky ('12)

Although women are generally exempt from *mitzvot aseh she-ha-zeman grama* (time-bound positive commandments), the obligation to drink four cups of wine at the *Pesach Seder* is a notable exception. The *Gemara* in *Pesachim* 108a says that the reason for this case's exemption from the rule is because, "*af hen hayu be-oto ha-nes* – the women were included in the miracle as well." Rashi and Rambam explain this phrase as meaning that the women had a special role in the miracle of *yetzi'at Mitzrayim*. They cite *Sotah* 11b, which states that *Bnei Yisrael* experienced salvation from the oppression of Egypt because of the righteous women, "*nashim tzidkaniyot*," in that generation.

While this is a nice idea that can help women feel more connected to the holiday and the *Seder* in particular, it doesn't quite make sense logically. Clearly, *HaShem* alone engineered *yetzi'at Mitzrayim*. If any human were to be given any credit for the Jews' escape from slavery, it would be Moshe, not some nameless women who are not even referred to in the text. How can we understand this *Gemara*?

Rav Yaakov Medan gives a possible explanation. While Moshe was the driving force of the human element of the Exodus, he would not have been alive were it not for the women behind him. His mother Yocheved hid him from the *Mitzrim* in order to save him from death as an infant, and his sister Miriam watched him as he floated down the Nile to a better life. The Jewish people as a whole were saved by two other women: Shifra and Pu'ah, the Hebrew midwives who disobeyed Pharaoh by refusing to throw the male Jewish babies into the Nile.

This explanation also meshes well with the rest of the *Gemara* in *Sotah*. The proof for the idea that *Bnei Yisrael* were saved because of righteous women is a *midrash* that explains that while the Jewish men wanted to give up and stop reproducing, the women understood the importance of perpetuating the Jewish people and took the initiative to ensure that it happened. The "righteous" actions of Yocheved, Miriam, and the midwives indeed were all related to safeguarding the continuation of the nation, on smaller as well as larger scales.

The actions of these righteous women can teach us much about how we as Jewish women should act today. Helping behind the scenes, like Yocheved, is a legitimate and important way in which we can act in history. However, it is equally as important to aid others in a more active capacity. We should also keep in mind what goals we should

strive for, like Shifra and Pu'ah: the essential humanity of every person, the absolute immorality of murder, and the importance of self-actualization and freedom. By playing these roles in our daily lives, hopefully we can bring another redemption, just as the *nashim tzidkaniyot* of Moshe's generation did.

### **Dayyenu: Enough Already?**

Tova Goldstein ('13)

Every year at our *Seder*, we read *Dayyenu* as we praise *HaShem* and list the singular gifts that *HaShem* provided to us from our Exodus from *Mitzrayim* to our entry into the land of Israel. Each event builds upon the next as we proclaim that this miracle alone would have sufficed. A common question is asked on the stanza of "If *HaShem* had brought us to *Har Sinai*, but had not given us the Torah, it would have been enough for us." Would it really have been enough to gather at *Har Sinai* in preparation for receiving the *Torah*, if in actuality the *Torah* would never have been given to us?

Something substantive must have happened at *Har Sinai*, for it to be mentioned separately from *Matan Torah* in *Dayyenu*. One common suggestion is that this "event" was the unification of *Bnei Yisrael*, a group that up until that moment was a splintered group of individuals. The Torah recounts *Bnei Yisrael's* arrival at *Har Sinai* in *Parshat Yitro* and says, "*Va-yichan sham Yisrael neged ha-har*; and *Bnei Yisrael* encamped there opposite the mountain." The verb "*Va-yichan*" means "he encamped." The word is written in the singular form, even though it is referring to the entire nation of *Bnei Yisrael*. Rashi writes that the singular form of the verb is used to show that all of *Bnei Yisrael* encamped like a single person, all with a single desire. Rashi is based on the *Mechilta*, which further expounds that *HaShem* cautioned the people against ascending the mountain while the *Shechinah* was upon it, lest they ascend and die. The *Mechilta* believes that *HaShem* meant that if one Jew were to have died, it would have been as tragic as though many Jews had died. This shows us that when *Bnei Yisrael* are united, we become even more precious and valuable to *HaShem*. R. Aharon Kotler adds that this teaches us to feel responsible for our fellow Jew, and that just as *HaShem* will not permit the loss of a single Jew, we must feel responsible and concerned with the needs of our brethren. We celebrate our gathering at *Har Sinai* because even had the Torah not been given, we became a unified nation, the best that we could be.

Many additional examples exist where *Bnei Yisrael* were unified and were therefore able to rise to their highest calling. The *Kli Yakar* explains that when *Amalek* initially came to destroy *Bnei Yisrael* in *Refidim*, *Bnei Yisrael* were invincible because they were united. However, after the incident of *Masah u-Merivah* (*Shemot* 17), when *Amalek* saw that *Bnei Yisrael* were no longer as unified as they had been, *Amalek* attacked, and this time they were nearly victorious. Similarly, Rabbi Twerski explains in his book, *Living Each Day*, that when *Bnei Yisrael* fail as a nation by committing idolatry, such as in the case of *chet ha-eigel*, they succumb to their own desires and cease to act as a unified group. Alternatively, when *Bnei Yisrael* remain united and keep *HaShem's mitzvot*, idolatry cannot exist and they succeed as a nation. According to R. Twerski, when it came time to build the *Mishkan*, only after *Bnei Yisrael* were able to come together as a group was *HaShem* able to overlook their sin of *chet ha-eigel*. The *Mishkan* could only be built once we were again a fully unified nation.



As we can see from the examples in *Tanach*, *Bnei Yisrael* are at their strongest, and can achieve their greatest potential, when they are unified. Therefore, it is truly unfortunate when different segments of the Orthodox community cannot co-exist peacefully. Not only do we waste the opportunity to grow as a nation, but we end up desecrating *HaShem* and draw negative attention to ourselves. Such is the case currently in Beit Shemesh, Israel, where the modern Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jews have failed to live together peacefully. Members of the ultra religious group have been protesting the presence of a Zionist modern Orthodox girls' school bordering their neighborhood, claiming that the girls' dress is not modest enough for their particular standards. The ultra-Orthodox men have been known to insult, curse, and yell at the young girls when on their way to school. There have also been incidents of women being attacked and threatened with rocks and bottles, throwing of bleach, stoning of non-segregated buses, and attacking of policemen. The offenses have become so dangerous that the U.S. State Department Travel Advisory updated its Jerusalem travel advisory in 2012, advising visitors to avoid visiting ultra-Orthodox communities completely.

*Pesach* is not only a time for family bonding and recounting the story of *yetzi'at Mitzrayim*, it is also a time to acknowledge how much potential *Bnei Yisrael* could have if we would unite. Despite differences among the different sects of Jews, we all share the same *Torah*, and similar *Torah* values. When reciting *Dayyenu* we should think back to the unity shared by *Bnei Yisrael* at *Har Sinai*, and think about how great a nation we can become in our current time if we can somehow manage to unify as a people. *Dayyenu*, isn't it enough already?

### Guess Who: Moshe or HaShem

Liad Arussy ('14)

The *mitzvah* of *maggid* revolves around one idea: *HaShem* took us out of Egypt. We are supposed to tell this story to our children in order for them to know the miracles God performed to free us. We emphasize this when saying, "*Ve-yotzi'enu HaShem mi-Mitzrayim beyad chazakah, u-be-zero'a netuyah, u-be-mora gadol, u-be-otot u-be-moftim* - And *HaShem* took us out of Egypt with a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terror, and with signs, and with wonders" (*Devarim* 26:8). These words differ slightly from those found in *Bamidbar* 20:16 – "*Va-nitz'ak el HaShem va-yishma koleinu va-yishlach mal'ach va-yotzi'enu mi-Mitzrayim* - And when we cried unto the Lord, He heard our voice, and sent a messenger, and he took us out of Egypt." This implies that *HaShem* sent a messenger to take us out. But the *pasuk* from *Devarim*, which is quoted in the *Haggadah*, says *HaShem* was the one who actually took us out. So who was it? Did *HaShem* send a messenger, or did He take us out on His own?



The Abarbanel suggests two explanations. First, one can look at the *pasuk* in *Bamidbar*, "And He sent a messenger and He took us out of Egypt," and view both the first and second "He" as referring to *HaShem*. *HaShem* sent a messenger, Moshe *Rabbenu*, who went to warn Pharaoh, and then *HaShem* took us out of Egypt.

Alternatively, the Abarbanel explains that *HaShem* uses messengers in two different ways. One way is that

*HaShem* instructs a messenger to do a task and leaves it up to him or her to carry out the task in whichever way he or she may choose. On the other hand, *HaShem* may choose a messenger and carry the task out Himself through the mediator, using him as a "tool." The Abarbanel compares this example to a killer and his sword. Though the sword is the tool used to physically kill the person, the killer is surely the one to blame, for it is he who is the "brain" behind the sword. Though *HaShem* chose Moshe to represent Him on earth, *HaShem* was actually the one who freed us from Egypt.

It's easy to get caught up in our own distractions, whether it's an approaching deadline or a pair of shoes you've had your eye on for a while. However, we have to remember that there is a higher purpose for our being here on earth. *HaShem* has a plan for each one of us. We are simply *HaShem*'s "tools" for His ultimate plan. Our purpose here on earth, along with enjoying the planet that we are allowed to use, is to search for *HaShem*'s objective for placing us on earth. For Moshe, *HaShem* spelled out his job by telling him that he must go speak to Pharaoh. Today, it might be a little harder to connect to *HaShem* in that fashion. Nevertheless, *HaShem* has a plan for us, and it is up to each one of us to seek that purpose.

### Makkot: Why do we Sympathize?

Elana Blanchard ('12)

We are all aware of the confusing time in the *Pesach Seder* when the ten plagues are discussed. Many of us have the custom to dip a finger in a wine glass and drop some wine ten times on our own plates, to commemorate the suffering inflicted on the Egyptians. This action raises many troubling questions. If the reason we must perform this action of sympathy is because the Egyptians received a terrible punishment, why do they deserve such punishment at all if in fact it was destined that *Bnei Yisrael* be enslaved? In *Bereshit* 15:13, the *Torah* writes, "And He [*HaShem*] said to Abraham: know for sure that your descendants will be in a land that is not theirs. They will enslave them and oppress them for 400 years."

To expand on our previous question, the *Netziv* explains in *Shemot* 1:7 that God had to punish *Bnei Yisrael* with enslavement because they assimilated. This emphasizes the fact that Egypt's enslaving us was merely their part in God's larger plan to punish *Bnei Yisrael* for their wrongdoing! The purpose of Egypt's oppression was to punish, not to be punished for. Clearly, it was God's will to have

our nation be victims of oppression, so why were the Egyptians subject to the ten painful and tragic *makkot*?

Many scholars have the same question, and Rambam offers a possible answer. Rambam explains that God needed a nation to enslave the Jews, but He did not specify which nation should do the honors. Egypt then took the obligation on itself and therefore deserved every punishment they received.

However, Ramban has a problem with this approach. If this is true, he argues, why would they be punished for acting out the will of God? He brings a *mashal* (parable) regarding a king asking his servants to bake him a cake. Should the one who bakes be punished just for accepting the task? In fact, the other servants who refuse are lazy! This is especially true when discussing the job of contributing to *Bnei Yisrael's* history.

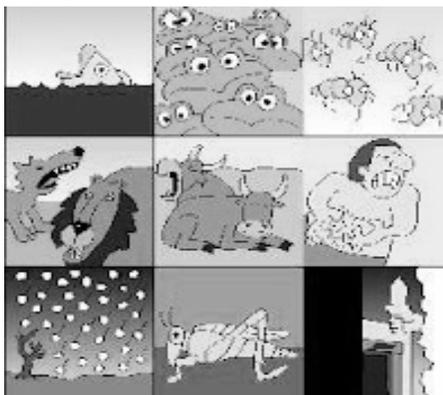
Ramban offers his own answer to this question. Slavery was our destiny, he agrees, and Egypt was designated to perform this task of enslavement, but that was just it. They were simply instructed to enslave, but when Pharaoh began taking the oppression too far and throwing Jewish babies into the Nile, their actions were no longer "predestined." Pharaoh created a society in which *Bnei Yisrael* were less than human and were forced to do tedious work. God definitely did not instruct the mass murder. We can conclude that though the Egyptians deserve much sympathy and drops of wine during our *Seder*, the punishment they received was in fact well deserved.

### Revealing HaShem through the Makkot

Tova Sklar ('15)

In the *Maggid* portion of the *Seder*, we read that Rabbi Yehudah grouped the *makkot* into three sections: *DeTzaCh*, *ADaSh*, and *Be'ACHaB*. The reasoning behind grouping them in this way is commented on by many *mefarshim*. Nechama Leibowitz writes that before the first *makkah* of each group begins, *HaShem*, through Moshe, states the message of each group to Pharaoh. As the *makkot* progress, the extremity of the plagues increases, which causes *HaShem* to be recognized on an even wider scale.

In the grouping of *DeTzaCh* (blood, frogs and lice), *HaShem's* basic existence is revealed to Pharaoh. Before the *makkah* of *dam*, *Shemot* 7:17 states, "*Be-zot teda ki ani HaShem* - In this you shall know that I am the Lord." *HaShem's* existence is being shown to Pharaoh first through the *makkah* of *dam*. We also see that Pharaoh understands that the *makkot* were *HaShem's* doing because he asks Moshe after the plague of frogs to pray to his God to make the frogs stop. Furthermore, after the plague of lice, Pharaoh's magicians recognize that the plague was "the finger of God" (*Shemot* 8:15).



In the second group of *ADaSh* (wild animals, dying animals and boils), *HaShem* reveals His supervision of the world. Before the first *makkah* of this sequence, *arov* (wild animals), *HaShem* separates the land of Goshen from Egypt. *HaShem* says to Moshe, "*Le-ma'an teda ki ani HaShem be-kerev ha-aretz* - So that you will know that I am *HaShem* in the midst of the earth" (*Shemot* 8:18). Through these *makkot*, *HaShem* becomes revealed to the Egyptians in the midst of the land and in their lives.

Finally, in the third set, *Be'ACHaB* (hail, locusts, darkness and the death of the first born), *HaShem* reveals to the Egyptians that He is unique and there is no one like Him on earth. Before the start of the seventh plague, *barad*, *HaShem* says to Moshe, "*Ba-avur teda ki ein kamoni be-chol ha-aretz* - So that you will know that there is none like Me in all the earth" (*Shemot* 9:14). These *makkot* are the most extreme and solidify the Egyptians' understanding that there is no one like *HaShem* in the universe.

The goal of the first three plagues is for *HaShem's* existence to be revealed. Then, through the discernment of the next plagues, *HaShem's* supervision of the land is revealed and finally, as the most supernatural plagues occur, it becomes obvious to Egypt that there is nobody like *HaShem*, who, as *Rashi* says, can create hail containing ice and fire together or darkness that can immobilize humans. After the most extreme plague, the slaying of the firstborn, ultimately came the most miraculous event *Bnei Yisrael* and the Egyptians witnessed so far, the splitting of the *Yam Suf*. Through this supernatural event, *HaShem* revealed himself to the maximal amount. Only now that all of Egypt is aware that *HaShem* is the ultimate God are *Bnei Yisrael* finally, miraculously redeemed.

The *galut* in Egypt can be compared to the current *galut* and thus teach us how we need to achieve three steps in the recognition of *HaShem* to bring the *ge'ulah*. The prayer of *Aleinu* that we say at the end of *davening* every day starts off by saying that we praise our Lord, just as the group of *DeTzaCh* proclaims *HaShem's* existence. Then, it goes on to say "*Ve-hu noteh shamayim ve-yosed aretz* - He extends the heavens and establishes the earth," that *HaShem* is in the midst of the heavens and the earth and is involved in daily life, an idea comparable to the set of *ADaSH*. Finally, at the end of *Aleinu*, one of the last lines says, "*La-melech al kol ha-aretz*"- *HaShem* will become the king of all the earth and, "*Yihyeh HaShem echad u-shemo echad* - *HaShem* will be one and His name will become one," which corresponds to how, before the plague of hail, it was made known that *HaShem* rules the earth and there is no one like Him.

Just like these three steps of recognition of *HaShem* were what led the Jews in Egypt to their redemption, similarly in our exile, if *HaShem* is made known via the three stages of recognition, when the final recognition that He runs the universe is achieved, then we will merit to be redeemed.

### ***Pesach: Passing Down the Tradition***

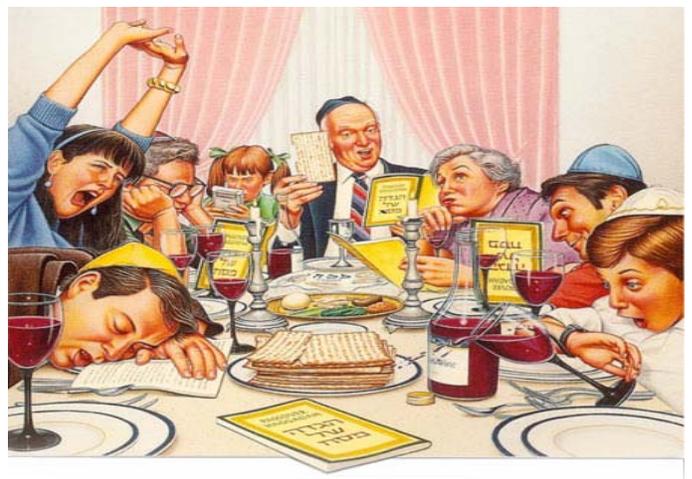
Rachel Olshin ('13)

One of the many themes of *Pesach* is storytelling, which is manifested in our yearly retelling of our ancestors' divinely wrought Exodus. The actual source for this *mitzvah* is found in *Shemot* 13:8: "On that day, you must tell your child, 'It is because of this that God acted for me when I left Egypt.'" This *pasuk* is somewhat ambiguous and confusing. What exactly is "this" referring to? What is "the reason" for God's performance of the miracles in Egypt?

Rav Kook gives a fascinating and insightful answer by connecting the word "this" to the theme of storytelling. The purpose of the miracles was not just to rescue that specific generation from slavery, but to create an eternal nation with a tradition of knowing and fearing God. Rav Kook understands the *pasuk* to say that "It is because of this" - so that "you must tell your child" - "that God acted for me when I left Egypt." As Rav Kook states, "Those great acts (the miracles) were meant to form an eternal inheritance, a memory for all future generations. Their purpose is achieved as each generation preserves these national memories and impressions, and transmits them to the next generation."

This idea is further developed in the *Haggadah*. Our *Haggadah* explains, and Rashi agrees, that "because of this" refers to the foods that we eat to remember *yetzi'at Mitzrayim*. As we say during the *Seder*, "The *Seder* ceremony may not take place until the hour when *matzah* and bitter herbs are set before you." This explanation enhances Rav Kook's idea. We commemorate our freedom and recount its story when we eat the *matzah* and *maror* on *Pesach*. Through physical action, we are able to accomplish the purpose of the *mitzvah* by passing down the historical event through a national tradition and understanding.

We must remember that the events of our past are our present and future, and that God is as much with us today as He was in the days of Egypt. We should all strive to make the story as applicable to our lives as we can and pass along the aspects of our nation that make us who we are. Hopefully at all of our *Sedarim* this year, we will be able to fulfill the *mitzvot* with the additional understanding of Rav Kook.



### ***The Seder and the Path of Avodat HaShem***

Moreet Levine ('15)

The specific order of the *Pesach Seder* shows the path of *Avodat HaShem*. When we begin with *Kadesh*, we are setting a goal for ourselves in which we will hopefully reach a true level of *Kedushah*. As a member of a unique, chosen nation, we should always strive to build the strongest relationship possible with *HaShem*. He loves us and cares about us very much, so we should therefore try our hardest to do the same to Him. Next is *Urchatz*, where just like we physically wash our hands during the *Seder*, so too, we must wash our spiritual beings of all impurities. This step is much more challenging for us nowadays

and requires much more effort because of all the negative influences that are constantly surrounding us. However, we should all try our hardest to erase that negativity from our lives. We can not allow ourselves to become absorbed among other nations. It is our responsibility to preserve our Jewish identity, and we must take that very seriously.

We now have the right mindset and are ready to move forward to *Karpas*. This is when we first start serving *HaShem* and begin to get a taste of how special the relationship is. Then comes *Yachatz* where, similar to breaking the *matzah*, we try to break our bad character traits. Now that we are both physically and spiritually ready to serve *HaShem*, we can go the next step of *Maggid* where we begin to learn *Torah*. When learning *Torah*, we are establishing a special connection with *HaShem*. This step is similar to our davening, as it is one of the closest connecting bridges between *Bnei Yisrael* and *HaShem*. After *Maggid* comes *Rachtzah* where we wash our hands, this time with a *brachah*. We are cleansing ourselves once again, but this time it is with greater intention. Not only are we physically washing our hands, but we are doing so with a proper spiritual mindset.

Now that we have properly prepared ourselves, we are ready for *Motzi Matzah*. We finally begin eating, or actually serving *HaShem*. *Maror* then represents the more difficult times that come up during our *Avodat HaShem*. Sometimes our *yetzer ha-ra* tries to veer us in the wrong direction, causing us to not want to continue on the wonderful path that we created for ourselves. *Korech* comes next which is when our *yetzer tov*, or the sweet *charoset*, is fighting against the *maror* and slowly making its way toward victory. Just like we have to wait a long time before getting to *Shulchan Orech*, so, too the preparation process for *Avodat Hashem* takes a lot of patience. However, despite that, it is worth it and pays off in the end.

Following *Shulchan Orech* is *Tzafun* when we realize that there is so much that is hidden from us. Even though we might think that we know it all, there is really always more to learn which will enhance and increase our appreciation for being a Jew. Not only is that all hidden from us, but *HaShem* is as well. It is often difficult to recognize the amazing *nissim* that *HaShem* performs, but we should try our hardest to notice them more often. By do-

ing this, we will hopefully appreciate *HaShem* and His greatness more and more. Next come *Barech* and *Hallel* where we thank and praise *HaShem* for everything he has done for us. Finally, we reach *Nirtzah*, which talks about the future and the coming of *Mashiach Tzidkeinu*. This step comes last because even though our relationship with *HaShem* has become much stronger, it is not fully complete without the coming of the *Mashiach*.

### What Is Different About These Four Questions?

By Shira Hanau ('13)

Throughout the *Pesach Seder*, we encounter a number of strange practices, including reclining while drinking, pouring drops of wine from our cups, eating *matzah* and *maror*, washing our hands before eating vegetables, and eating the *afikomen*. While many of these customs have good reasons behind them, some are explained merely by the truism, "so that the children will ask." But how is this an acceptable reason? How does this justify doing things so differently on this night?



In the centuries before the Holocaust, there was a custom in Eastern Europe that the *cheder* teachers would teach the children to memorize a line or two about each part of the *Seder*. The line that they would memorize about the first event, *Kadesh*, was: "*Kadesh*: When Father comes home from synagogue on Passover night, he must immediately recite the Kiddush, so that the little children will not fall asleep and they will ask the Four Questions beginning with *Mah Nishtanah*."

Rabbi Aryeh Leib, also known as the *Shpoler Zeide*, explains this line phrase by phrase: "When our Father" - in Heaven sees from above that all the Jews have gone to synagogue and poured out their souls in prayer and songs of thanksgiving -- even though they are all exhausted from the heavy work of preparing for Passover -- then.... "He must recite *Kiddush* right away" - the Creator must renew his betrothal, his "*Kiddushin*," [with which the word *Kiddush* shares the same root] to Jewry right away. He must redeem us from exile right away. "So that the little children will not fall asleep" - the Jews are God's

children, for it is written in Jeremiah: "Is not Ephraim my beloved son, a precious child?" *HaShem* must act quickly so that His children will not fall too deeply into the slumber of exile. He must act right away so that we will not despair, Heaven forbid, of never being redeemed.

"So that they will ask the Four Questions beginning with *Mah Nishtanah*"- God must act while we still have the strength to ask "*Mah Nishtanah*": why is this night - why is this bitter exile - different from all other nights? Why has this dark exile been so prolonged? Why does it not end?

The question, "*Mah nishtanah ha-laylah ha-zeh mi-kol ha-leilot*," is generally understood as asking why this night, *Pesach*, is different from all the other nights of the year. But the Shpuler *Zeide* explains this question as asking why this exile is different from all the other exiles. After all the other exiles, the Jewish people were returned to Israel. So why is this exile different? Why has it not ended yet?

We are the "children." On the *Seder* night, we do many strange practices so that we will ask, "Why? Why have we not been redeemed?" We must ask ourselves what we can do better this year that will make us worthy of being brought back to Israel. This time of year is an especially fitting time to ask ourselves this question. In *Rosh Hashanah* 11a, the *Gemara* says, "In *Nissan* our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt and in *Nissan* we will be redeemed." It is therefore at this time of year that we must work to end the exile and wake up from our slumber.

#### FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:

Being the editor-in-chief of *Ma'ayanei Torah* has not always been the most relaxing of my extracurricular activities, but it has by far been the most rewarding. I am so grateful that I was able to be involved not just with writing, but also with amazing words of *Torah* from my fellow students that have truly inspired me in innumerable ways. While I can't imagine not being a part of this amazing publication, I know that next year's staff is ready to take the baton and run even farther than I can imagine. Thank you so much for this experience and *hatzlachah rabbah!*

-Tamar Novetsky ('12)

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