



Pesach: Wine and Wheat Whispers Mrs. Shira Smiles

The *hagadah* tells us, “*B’chol dor v’dor chayav adam lir’ot et atzmo ki’ilu hu yatza M’Mitrayim.*” In every generation a person must see himself as if he was redeemed from Egypt. How do the wine and the *matzah*, so central to the seder ritual, help us to achieve this frame of mind? Further, why is Moshe, whose mission was to redeem us, only mentioned once in the *Hagaddah*, almost parenthetically, “And they believed in Hashem and in Moshe His servant.”

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan cites the Arizal who says that the purpose of Pesach and the *seder* is to rectify the sin of Adam. The ultimate rectification occurred at the receiving of the Torah, only to be lost again with the sin of the golden calf. We learn this from the wine and wheat of the *matzah*. We consume four cups of wine and three *matzot* during the course of the seder. The numerical equivalent of *kos yayin* is 156, multiplied by four equals 624, the numerical value of *cheirut*, freedom. *Lechem oni*, the biblical term for *matzah* equals 208, multiplied by three, equals again 624. While the *matzah* represents the immediate physical freedom of our redemption, the wine represents our spiritual freedom, of recognizing Hashem as the source of all freedom, culminating in our acceptance of *Torah* at Sinai.

Many commentators suggest that the “forbidden fruit” was the fruit of the vine. Hashem forbade Adam from eating it only until *Shabbat*, for He wanted Adam to use it for *Kiddush*. By eating it before its time, Adam subverted its purpose and blurred the line of absolute knowledge of right and wrong, which had been clear prior to his sin. Mankind’s punishment was, “With the sweat of thy brow will you eat bread.” The enslavement in Egypt, the difficult toil and sweat, were meant to be expiation for the sin, followed by the bread from Heaven without toil, the manna. But with

the sin of the golden calf we again fell into the post Eden state. We now use wine for the blessing at the end of *Shabbat*, for the *Havdalah*, emphasizing the idea that knowledge is the faculty of discernment and differentiation between objects.

We find the themes of *Havdalah* reflected in the structure of the seder. *Halekach VeHalebuv* explains that we begin the *seder* with the first cup of *Kiddush*. The first phrase of *Havdala*, “Between the holy and the profane” refers to the sanctification of time. This is followed by the second cup, “Between light and darkness” representing the light of our redemptions versus the darkness of our enslavement and exile. It is then followed by, “Between Israel and the nations.” How are we different from other nations? We have undertaken the mission of elevating the physical world to the spiritual realm. We drink our third cup of wine after the meal, bordered by the Hallel, our praise to Hashem, half before and half after we eat. Finally, we differentiate between the seventh day, the *Shabbat*, and the six days of creation. We drink our fourth cup of wine with *Nirtzah*, commemorating our earlier redemptions in anticipation of the final redemption.

The six millennia of this world will usher in the seventh millennium, the final *Shabbat*, the times of the Messiah. At that time, we will regain the pure knowledge and clear perspective that Adam compromised by eating of the Tree of Knowledge before its time.

Our patriarch, Abraham almost achieved this level of perfect knowledge. However, in one small moment of doubt, he asked God, “How do I know that I will inherit the land of Israel?.” With this question, he destined his descendants to slavery. It was only with our liberation that we regained that clear and absolute knowledge, only to compromise it again with the sin of the golden calf. It is this pure and

absolute knowledge that we had immediately after our liberation from Egypt, when we had been “shown to know that the Lord is God; that there is nothing else beside Him.”

We are required to pass on this knowledge to our children at the *seder* by telling the Passover story. Testimony, however, is generally delivered only to others who were not present for the event. Bnei Yisroel were in a bit of a dilemma the first year of celebration; all the children who were old enough to understand the message were themselves witnesses both to the slavery and to the liberation. As the Belzer Rebbe points out, only Moshe was able fulfill this *mitzva* that first year by telling his children who had been in Midyan of the strong hand and the outstretched arm with which Hashem redeemed us from Egypt. Moshe, the humblest of all men, certainly removed himself as an active player, attributing all to Hashem. Now, when we retell the story, we pay tribute to Moshe by emulating his example and giving him only the role of God’s faithful servant, reserving the role of Master Actor to God Himself.

Matzah represents this humility. As Rebbe Nachman of Breslav explains, there is really minimal difference between actual bread and *matzah* save for the air in bread. Air represents the puffing up of one’s ego and the sense of self. This desire for independent decision making led to Adam’s original sin, and it is this *chametz* that we must rid ourselves of – both in our homes and in our selves. Bread, once you mix the ingredients together, will rise on its own. *Matzah*, on the other hand, must constantly be worked on to retain its character. So too man must constantly work on himself to remain true to his purpose.

May we eternalize the messages of the wheat and the wine and merit to emerge from the darkness of exile into the light of redemption.