



PESACH EDITION

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PESACH: TRANSFORMATION

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
by Channie Koplowitz Stein

The Seder night is unique, as we are required to virtually travel back to the actual moment of redemption from Egypt, and transform ourselves into free men. All other festivals are holidays of commemoration, of rededication through memory. Pesach requires our total immersion in a mindset to help us achieve a current transformation. We are helped along this path with the symbols of the Seder, Pesach, matzoh, maror, and the Seder plate itself.

Pesach, Matzah, and Maror

The Haggadah states that one is obligated speak about pesach, matzoh, and maror in order to fulfill the requirements of the Seder service. Our Rabbis have asked why the authors of the Haggadah put the korban Pesach, symbol of our freedom, before the maror, the bitter herbs which symbolize our enslavement. They go on to clarify: If the purpose of the Seder is merely to transmit to our children the story of our physical redemption from Egypt from an historical perspective, then the maror should be discussed before the korban Pesach. However, the key to the Seder service is not the physical aspect of our enslavement. The goal of the Seder is to focus on the spiritual enslavement, our miraculous spiritual redemption, and our ability to become closer to God. Therefore, the korban Pesach, symbol of spiritual freedom, precedes the representation of slavery, the maror.

To understand what Hashem did for us, we must take a closer look at the culture of Egypt. While other nations were dependent upon rain from heaven for their sustenance, Egypt looked toward the Nile for all their needs. This led them to believe only in themselves and their own power, as they did not need to rely on G-d-given rain. We needed to be removed from this narrow, untenable point of view to the broad recognition that our powers are limited, and that Hashem rules the world.

This erroneous mindset is not exclusive to Egypt. Every human being, every culture, has its own gods. We worship money, and sacrifice time for Torah, time for family, and often our very morality in the belief that we control our finances. We worship our pride, and a myriad of other things. At the Seder, we must bring ourselves to the recognition that we

are not in control, that just as Hashem was in control at the time of the first Seder, He in control now. We must transform ourselves to act on this belief in every situation, no matter how agonizing or frustrating or even how trivial.

This is the purpose of matzoh, to nullify our will to His will, to get rid of the pride that puffs us up as yeast does the dough. Even more important, the matzoh is not something only to be put on the table. It must be ingested and become part of our physical being, and its message must be internalized and become part of our spiritual essence.

The Ke'arah: The Seder Plate

The configuration of the Seder plate is very revealing. There are six items on the plate, corresponding to six of the sefirot, the Kabbalistic method of viewing Hashem's relationship with the world. The top three items, the chazeret (bitter herb), charoset (dip for maror) and karpas (vegetable), are Torah commandments. We will not be going into them now. The other three items were mandated by the Sages. The zeroah, literally the arm, represents both the Paschal sacrifice and the outstretched arm with which Hashem always provides for us. The egg represents the holiday sacrifice as well as the physicality of the inherent life force within it. The meat of this sacrifice was to be enjoyed, but with limitations. This teaches us that we should enjoy the world God has given us, but we must do so within the parameters that Hashem has set forth. The bitter herbs represent the glory of His interaction with us, for they are the proof of Hashem's loving-kindness; if there were nothing to contrast with the good, we would soon fail to appreciate it and come to deny the existence of God.

Finally, the plate itself represents the seventh sefirah, Kingship. Within this seventh sefirah lies the balance of all the others, just as they are balanced on the Seder plate. The entire Seder is a testament to the Kingship of Hashem. Just as He brought us closer to Him then, we must endeavor to come closer to Him today, from this Seder forward. After all, the Hagaddah explicitly states, "ve'achshav kervonu..." and now He has brought us closer...

Freeing Ourselves of Desire

We are told that four fifths of the Israelites died in Egypt because they were incapable of being redeemed. The Chasam Sofer, as cited by Rabbi Tauber, offers a unique insight into their deaths. He posits that they died as a result of Divine loving-kindness, so that they would die without sin rather than after having sinned. There were two challenges with which Hashem was to test Bnei Yisroel. Hashem, in His understanding of human nature in general and of these individuals in particular, knew that these people would falter and therefore not be redeemed. He knew that avarice and/or curiosity would get the better of them, and therefore they would not obey God's command. If they were to die in Egypt, let them die sin free.

What were these two commands? The Torah states that during the plague of darkness, the Israelites had light wherever they went. They were told to go into their Egyptian neighbors' homes, see their wealth, but not touch anything. Later, they were commanded to ask their neighbors to lend them these luxurious belongings. Hashem knew that some of the Jewish people would be overcome with the wealth they saw, and would have taken of it immediately. Others may have failed to follow the second command, to stay indoors during the night of the first Seder. Hearing the wails and mayhem caused by the slaying of the firstborn, they would have succumbed to their curiosity and opened their doors to take a peek at what was happening.

These people could not put aside their own predilections in favor of complete faith and trust in Hakodosh boruch Hu; they would never be capable of establishing the exclusive and close relationship Hashem desires and demands of us.

God redeemed us from slavery, yet we must ensure that we do not remain slaves to our own instincts and desires. This is our challenge every Pesach. On the Seder night, we must work to become free men, enslaved neither to Pharaoh nor to our baser selves. We must put our complete faith in Hakodosh boruch Hu. Let us internalize the experience of the Seder throughout the year, and work to preserve our intimate relationship with our Redeemer.

Rebbetzin's Perspective Part 5:

Excerpted from Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller's Question and Answer series on Naaleh.com

Question:

How does the Torah explain bashert (the concept of a predestined marriage partner) the second time around? Is it announced in heaven that Ploni bat Ploni will marry Mr. X the first time and Mr. Y the second time?

Answer:

The Gemara says that forty days before a fetus is conceived, a voice declares, "This

man's daughter will marry this man." The Kabbalists and the Malbim both explain that the first marriage is not an actual marriage between a man and a woman but rather a match between a specific soul and a particular body. This zivug is ordained from heaven before a person is born. The second zivug, which is the actual marriage between a man and a woman, is determined according to merit. This does not mean that Hashem is

unaware of what will eventually occur, however we do have free choice. We need to take responsibility for these choices and have bitachon (trust) that Hashem will bring about whatever results need to be brought about for our benefit. In this regard, there is no difference between a first and a second marriage, as both are based on a person's spiritual level.

Shabbat Scenarios-Borer, Part V

Based on a Naaleh.com Hilchot Shabbat shiur and demonstration, by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

It's a tranquil Shabbat afternoon and the family is sitting around the table enjoying a festive Shabbat meal. There's the appetizer of zesty baked whitefish, a platter of tempting roast chicken for the main course, and sweet ripe cantaloupe and watermelon for dessert. We've got a whole lot of potential borer questions here.

Let's take a look at each course and figure this out:

- A. Fish** - Can you remove the little bones from the fish before eating it? The Mishna Berurah follows the ruling of the Rosh who is of the opinion that l'chatchila (ideally) one should not do this. One should rather put the fish in ones mouth and spit the bones out while eating. B'dieved, (if there is no other way), one can rely on the Rambam who is lenient and allows one to remove the bones before eating provided that it is done for immediate use with a fork or knife and not with a special instrument.
- B. Chicken** - One may take the skin off for immediate use with a fork or knife. Removing the bones from the meat poses the same problem as was previously mentioned regarding fish. L'chatchila it should not be done, b'dieved one can rely on the Rambam who permits this before eating.
- C. Cantaloupe** - According to Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, one can slice the melon down the middle and scoop out the seeds before eating. This relies on the same reasoning as peeling a fruit - that one would not be able to access the fruit without this action. It is therefore permitted, as long as it is done for immediate use without a special instrument.
- D. Watermelon** - Here the pits are scattered throughout the flesh, so one would need to put the melon in one's mouth and spit the seeds out while eating.

Class Spotlight: Chofetz Chaim: Laws of Speech,

The Chillul Hashem of Lashon Hara, Class 8, by Rabbi Beinish Ginsburg

Chofetz Chaim: Laws of Proper Speech



Rabbi Ginsburg is a popular teacher at Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh at the Kotel. He has taught in numerous educational institutions in the US and Israel. Rabbi Ginsburg currently lives in Ramat Beit Shemesh with his wife and family.

The Laws of Proper Speech, codified in Sefer Chofetz Chaim, are the foundation of many of the laws governing human interaction. Rabbi Beinish Ginsburg begins each class in this series on the Laws of Speech with textual analysis of Sefer Chofetz Chaim (written by Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan), and then brings practical applications of the material discussed. Rabbi Ginsburg's ultimate goal is to encourage general self-awareness and self-improvement in the areas of Mitzvot bein adam l'chavero (human relations) and specific modification and refinement in shemirat halashon. In the latest class on the laws of speech, Rabbi Ginsburg teaches several Torah prohibitions listed in the introduction to Sefer Chofetz Chaim. One who speaks lashon hara is guilty of

creating a chillul Hashem (desecration of G-d's Name).

The Chofetz Chaim states that one who speaks lashon hara also transgresses the prohibition of Chillul Hashem (profaning Hashem's name). Because the sin of lashon hara does not involve any physical pleasure, it is considered a rebellion against Hashem, if one nevertheless speaks lashon hara. This explanation is based on the Rambam's commentary in Sefer Hamitzvot which is further based on a passage in the Gemara. In the future, the animals will come and ask the snake, "Why do you bite people if you do not get any pleasure from it?" The same way, one can ask a baal lashon hara (a gossip-monger), "Why do you speak lashon hara, if you do not derive any pleasure from the act?" Rav Nebenzhal points out that the Gemara specifically uses the snake as an example, because it was the first creature to speak lashon hara about Hashem in Gan Eden.

An obvious question presents itself. Of course people enjoy speaking lashon hara. How can the Gemara say that there is no pleasure in the act? Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, zt"l, addresses this specific question in his sefer Ohr Yechezkel. Unfortunately, when a person accustoms himself to speak lashon hara, he creates an unnatural state of enjoyment inside of him. Once he has reached this point, it is very hard to stop and it would require exhaustive work to remove this desire from his heart. However, in its natural state, it is possible to conquer the temptation to speak lashon hara. Objectively, Lashon hara does not provide any kind of benefit or pleasure, and people recognize this before they become corrupted by improper speaking habits. The Gemara means that there is no objective gratification in the act. By controlling our desire to speak lashon hara, we can regain our natural recognition of the lack of benefit from improper speech.