



The Four Cups: Levels of the Soul

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The Shem Mishmuel discusses the number four, which plays a central role in the *Hagadah*. There are four cups of wine, four questions, and four sons. In Parshat Va'eira, Hashem uses four expressions of redemption – *V'hotzeiti*, *V'hitzalti*, *V'ga'alti*, *V'lakachti* – which parallel the four cups of wine. There is a fifth expression, *V'heiviti*, corresponding to the fifth step in the redemptive process. *V'hotzeiti*, I will remove the bondage. *V'hitzalti*, I will save you from their threats. *V'ga'alti*, I will redeem you. *V'lakachti*, I will bring you to Me as My people, which refers to the giving of the Torah at Sinai. Finally, *V'heiviti*, I will bring you to the land of Israel, the ultimate goal of redemption.

Instead of focusing on five levels of redemption, why did the sages only focus on four? If the expressions of redemption parallel the cups of wine we drink at the Seder, why do we not have a fifth cup?

The Shem MiShmuel explains that there are seven special names of Hashem. The primary name is the shem hameforosh written as *yud-keh-vav-keh*. This name was never pronounced except in the *Beit Hamikdash* on Yom Kippur. According to Kabbalistic teaching there's a fifth letter in this name, the *kutzo*

shel yud, the small line at the top of the yud. Chassidut teaches us that there are four levels of reality; *atzilut*, *briah*, *yetzirah*, and *asiyah*. Above these four universes stands the ultimately unknowable source of the universe, represented by the *kutzo shel yud*, the fifth line which has no sound.

The human mind can achieve a certain grasp of the four worlds. But there's a higher, infinite, fifth level beyond them. The Ein Sof is limitless, ineffable, and unfathomable. The Shem MiShmuel explains that Hashem created the world in triplicate form. Just as there are five levels of the universe, the human soul also have five levels: *nefesh*, *ruach*, *neshama*, *chaya*, and *yechida*. *Nefesh* is the biological level, *ruach* is the emotional level, *neshama* is the intellectual level, and *chaya* is the divine aspect of the soul which is the connective, pervasive, force that knits together the three levels of the soul and makes us divinely human. The fifth level is *yechida*, which is beyond anything we can grasp. In Kabbalah it is called the 50th level, the *yovel* or the *nekuda penimit*. It is the unreachable realm, our core identity which defines who we are but is beyond description or human perception. This parallels the *kutzo shel yud*.

The Shem MiShmuel explains that the five senses correspond to the five levels of the soul. When Adam and Chava sinned with the four levels of the soul they damaged their four senses and in turn the four letters of Hashem's name. The four letters were a foundation for the fifth level, *yechida*, which then had no foundation to rest on. The sin of Adam produced four evils which parallel the four major exiles. Idolatry corresponds to *neshama* and relates to Bavel. Immorality is associated with *ruach*, misplaced passion and *Paras*. *Yavan* corresponds to murder and *neshama*. Edom, the final exile, relates to *lashon hara* and *chaya*. Hashem though is the essence of goodness, Man was created in the divine image and therefore he must be fundamentally good.

We drink the four cups and focus on the number four because at the Exodus of Egypt there were four levels of redemption of the soul. The fifth level remains inaccessible. When Mashiach comes and brings us to the land of Israel, Hashem will recreate that realm of Adam and Chava before the sin. The fifth cup is the cup of Eliyahu which we do not drink. It signifies the era of Mashiach when we will finally reach *V'heiveiti*, the level of *yechida*, when evil will no longer reign.

Pesach: The Concealed Candle

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

The Gemara instructs us that on the night of the fourteenth of Nissan to search for chametz throughout the house by the light of a candle. In each generation we are obligated to see ourselves as if we left Mitzrayim. How are we to accomplish this, and how does using a candle help us in our tasks?

Rabbi G. Rabinowitz notes that in retrospect we understand that our horrific enslavement served a purpose, for it made us a compassionate people who treat of the weak and downtrodden family. Similarly we must realize that our personal challenges and troubles also serve a purpose. Hashem provides us opportunities for growth through these situations. The Seder should serve as a platform to reach out to Hashem to help us

understand what we are meant to learn from the challenges He puts us through.

The Torah tells us that Hashem saw and He knew. The Pa'amei Moed explains that He saw our suffering, and knew that within the deep recesses of our hearts we were repenting – even though we were unaware. That is why it took us a full forty-nine days from our exodus until we reached Mount Sinai to be ready to accept the Torah, one day for each level of impurity to which we had sunk.

Rabbi Moshe Schwab quoting the Chovot Halevovot notes that man is a composite of two elements, the physical body and the spiritual soul. The soul was forced to come down from its abode under the Heavenly

throne and enter a human body. However, it always yearns to return and free itself from its physical trappings. The body, on the other hand, is enslaved. If it does not accept the control of the soul, it and the soul will remain enslaved to physicality. Our soul, however, always sees God and wants to serve Him. The moment the body recognizes its true purpose and desires to serve Hashem, it sets the soul free. The soul can then lead man to a higher spiritual standard, just as the Jews are meant to lead mankind to a higher moral standard.

This struggle of the soul is symbolized best through the image of a candle, writes Rabbi Mindel in *My Prayer*, for a candle flutters and strives to move continually upward. It looks like it wants to detach itself from the wick that

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keeps it anchored. This analogy is based on the verse, "The soul of man is a candle of God." Some families have an especially long candle on their Seder table to symbolize this yearning of the soul. A more universally accepted custom is the Cup of Eliyahu. The Malbim explains that when Adam was first created, body and soul were not fused and Adam could shed his body and rise heaven-

ward at will. He lost this ability after the sin. However, when Eliyahu rose to heaven, he regained this ability. He returns to earth from time to time and is always welcomed at every circumcision and at every Seder where he bears witness to the covenant of the blood of circumcision and to the blood of the Pascal Sacrifice. The Kotzker Rebbe taught that Eliyahu does not really enter through the door,

but rather through our open hearts and souls.

Halekach Vehalebuw writes that Eliyahu can bring out the inherent holiness in each of us. As we celebrate our Seder, let us take that symbolic flame and reach inward and upward to open the door of our heart that will open the gates of heaven.

The Holiday of Pesach – Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Our forefather Yaakov was called *nirdaf*, the one who was persecuted. First he was oppressed by Esav, then by Lavan. Esav wanted the birthright. But he sold it to Yaakov and said, "What do I need it for?" Rashi tells us that he knew the birthright carried with it a spiritual heritage. It was not just a material inheritance, but demanded responsibility and accountability from its bearer. What did he need that for?

Yaakov though wanted this level of accountability, of doing things that were so significant that failure equaled death. This tells us who we are as a nation. We want to be truly free, to be spiritual, to carry the responsibility of bringing the world to its destiny.

A non-Jewish mother's goal is to have a happy, well-adjusted, a child fully capable of earning a living. That's it. Jewish mothers want more. We wish our sons to be like Efrayim and Menashe, who despite growing up in a foreign environment developed incredible spiritual capacities. We wish our daughters to be like Sarah, who had was strong, protective and modest. We wish them to be like Rivka who personified *chesed* and Rachel and Leah who signified *malchut* and *binah*. These are huge spiritual goals. We want responsibility and meaning. We want to

fulfill our roles with passion and dedication.

The most feminine of all traits is *malchut*, which is recognizing Hashem's Kingship. It's telling Hashem, "I will be whatever You want me to be. Once I've negated my own limitations before You, I will influence others." The woman in Mitzrayim personified this with their deeds. They gave birth under inconceivable circumstances. They understood the value of life and desired to actualize their mission. They proved their deep faith by bringing musical instruments with them when they left Egypt.

If a woman's life isn't centered on children, her passion should be to bring *simcha shel mitzvah* (the joy of doing *mitzvot*) into everything she does. The way to figure out how to expand your role is by asking the following questions. Who am I? What can I do? What does my life offer? Think big and think creatively. The answer may be different for everyone, but we can share the zeal and meaning.

Why did the Jews in Egypt deserve and need to be broken in exile? After Moshe killed the Egyptian, he saw two Jews fighting. He sought to end the fight and one of them asked, "Will you kill me like you killed that Egyptian?"

Moshe replied, "Now the matter is known."

Rashi explains that he meant to say, "Now it is known why the Jews are still suffering in Egypt, for they have talebearers (*baalei lashon hara*) amongst them." The enemy is negativity.

The heroines of Mitzrayim, Yocheved and Miriam, teach us great lessons. Yocheved's name can be read as *yud, vav* and *kavod*. The *yud* is Hashem's name. The subsequent *vav* is an elongated yud that takes the yud down to this world. *Kavod* is seeing the significance in every person and bringing the honor of Hashem into the world. Miriam can be read as *mar yam*, bitter water. Bitterness is unbearable, but Miriam wanted to change it. She did so with positive words. Chazal say ten amounts of speech descended to the world and women received nine.

Pesach is made up of the words *peh sach*, the mouth that speaks. Pesach is a time to internalize what we express at the Seder: the praise of Hashem, the recognition of the purposefulness of suffering, of seeing Hashem's dominance, of recognizing how much He loves us more than anything else. May the timeless words uttered on this holy night inspire us throughout the year.