

לעילוי נשמת ר' אברהם יוסף שמואל אלתר בן ר' טובי ז"ל ורעייתו רישא רחל בת ר' אברהם שלמה ע"ה

Special Double Issue

תורה תבלין

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לכבוד חם טוב

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Parshas Achrei Mos - Shabbos Hagadol - Chag HaPesach

י"ד-כ' ניסן תשס"ז - April 19-25, 2007

הדלקת נרות שבת - 7:22	(Monsey, NY)	מנחה גדולה / שבת - 1:29
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מאת הרב שלום פערל שליט"א
נו"נ בישיבת הגר"צ קושלבסקי

מאצרותיו של המגיד

לקחי חיים ודברי התעוררות
נסדרו עפ"י פרשיות השבוע

ושמרתם את הקתי ואת משפטי אשר יעשה אותם האדם וחי בהם (יה-ה)

ולהשיב בקרא כאן הוא שע"י קיום מצוות ה', יזכה האדם לחיים אמיתיים בעולם הבא (כך פירש רש"י, וכן תרגם אונקלוס). ומבאר

ה"נפש החיים" (שער א', פרק ו') "וזה שתקנו בנוסח ברכות המצות, אשר קדשנו במצותינו", וכן אומרים "וקדשתנו במצותיך", כי מעת שעולה במחשבת האדם לעשות מצוה, תיכף נעשה רישומו למעלה במקור שרשה העליון, וממשיך משם על עצמו אור מקיף, וקדושה עליונה חופפת עליו וסובבת אותו.

ולכן כתוב "וחי בהם", שכשעושה המצוה הוא מוקף אז באור המצוה וחי בתוכו, וזה יהיה לבסוף שגורו בעולם הבא (שם פרק ו'). ויש להוסיף, כיון שאנו יודעים שע"י קיום המצוות אנו זוכים לחיים הנצחיים, ודאי שנעשה אותם בשמחה ובחיות, והיינו "וחי בהם", שנעשה אותם עם חיות והתלהבות (הרבי מקוצק זי"ע).

והנה בתחילת חודש ניסן שבו נגאלו ישראל ממצרים נאמר, "החודש הזה לכם וגו'", ומבאר הספורנו שהכוונה שעתה לאחר גאולתם משעבוד מצרים, זמנם יהיה בידם להשתמש בו כרצונם, "לכם-לצרכיכם".

וכמ"ש ביוזרה (פרשת צו לא): "כתיב והתקדשתם והייתם קדושים, אי עובדא דלתתא היא בקדושה, אתער קדושה לעילא, ואתי ושריא עליה ואתקדש ביה וכו'", ועל ידי הקדושה והאור המקיף, הוא דבוק כביכול בו יתברך בחייו, וזה שאמר הכתוב, "ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם חיים כולכם היום" היינו שע"י קיום מצוותינו אתם דבקים בוגם בעודכם חיים.

וזה האור המקיף הוא לו לעזר לגמור את המצוה בשלמותה, וכשמסיים מתחזק האור יותר, עד שנדמה שהוא יושב עתה בגן עדן ממש, חוסה בצלכנפי הקדושה בסתר עליון עכ"ד.

ובהמשך דבריו כתב (פרק יב') "ואחר גומרו המצוה, הקדושה והאור מסתלקים לשרשם. והוה ענין שכר העוה"ב, שהוא מעשי ידי האדם עצמו, שאחר פרידת נפשו מהגוף, הוא העולה להתעדן

A SERIES IN HALACHAH, **הלכה למעשה** שלושים יום קודם החג שואלין גדולי פסח

Selection of some of the lesser known halachos for this Shabbos Erev Pesach and Pesach.

Disposable Utensils. Many people use disposable utensils this Shabbos so that no Chametz crumbs touch any Pesach utensils. For washing before the meal and for the Kiddush cup, one should preferably not use disposables. These two mitzvos require a "כלי" (proper utensil) and the Poskim (1) debate whether an item made to discard after one usage has that status. Also, the honor of the mitzvah might obligate us to use the nicest objects available. Even though those who use these at shul kiddushim or while traveling have upon whom to rely, at home he should avoid all doubts by using proper permanent vessels. With minimal care one can keep them away from crumbs by removing them from the table right after Kiddush. Even if a crumb would touch a Pesach Kiddush cup, it is a cold, dry, short-term contact. One can take the cup to a utility room sink, rinse off the place of contact with cold water and it's perfectly Kosher for Pesach.

The Egg Matza Method. Ashkenazim have a strict custom not to eat egg matzos all Pesach. Those who find it hard to chew regular matza may use egg matzos except to fulfill the mitzvah on the two Seder nights (2). The correct beracha for egg matza is "מוזונת" yet if one uses it like bread as part of a whole meal, it's beracha becomes "המוציא" and one can fulfill the mitzvah of the Shabbos meal with egg matza. Some people would rather get rid of their "real" chametz by using egg matzos for the meals on the assumption that using egg matza to fulfill an obligatory meal elevates its status to the level of bread (3). NOTE: Those who split the morning meal

to satisfy a minority opinion that one can fulfill the third meal in the morning should not rely on egg matzos unless they eat the first meal as a small obligatory meal and the second one as a real filling meal (4). That alone is also not so simple because the second of the three meals is supposed to be the most important meal. Also, others suggest that the egg matzos are only elevated to the level of bread if they are eaten together in the same bite as the courses of the meal (5).

Sleeping on Shabbos to be Rested at the Seder. One may sleep on Shabbos to be rested for the Seder. However, one is not allowed to say that he is doing it for that purpose (6). If one cannot get children to rest without stressing the purpose there is whom to rely on to tell them so (נשמת השבת דרצא).

Tips for the Seder. Children must be in a happy, receptive mood at the Seder. Make up that no matter what happens or spills, only soft talk prevails. Care should be taken that there are no winners or losers in stealing the Afikoman. Many take care of this by promising to all relevant parties a present for not taking the Afikoman and then effectively hiding it.

After the 4 questions and saying "עבדים היינו" (the first paragraph to answer), one should stop and explain that the basic answer (with more details to follow) has just been given. We eat Matza to remember the hurried exodus out of Mitzrayim; Maror to remember the bitter life as servants; we recline and dip like the free aristocrats we just became.

To avoid long delays the leader of the Seder or a family group should measure and give out to all before washing for the meal the amount to eat for Matzos Mitzvah. After the berachos he gives each person a small piece of the top and middle matza.

הוא היה אומר

R' Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev ZT"l (Kedushas Levi) would say: "When the Holy One Blessed be He took the Jewish People out of Egypt, they were overjoyed with the miracles He did for them for it meant the end of their slavery and the promise of a new beginning, a new life. And what of the coming redemption? It will bring with it so many miracles, so much happiness and deliverance, even more so than what occurred during the original exodus, that we as a nation will regain that overwhelming feeling of joy that we felt upon leaving the slavery of Egypt for freedom."

R' Elimelech of Lizhensk ZT"l (Noam Elimelech) would say: "On Pesach, when we tell over the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim, the miracle comes to life once again. In this way, we hope to awaken the same Divine mercy in our time, as was prevalent at the time when we left Egypt."

A Wise and Free Man would say: "This Pesach remember: Although we are now free from the physical chains of slavery, one must still be wary. False freedom leaves a man free to do what he likes; true freedom - to do what he must!"

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יש להוסיף שבמילים אלו נצטוו ישראל במצוותם הראשונה (ע' רש"י ריש פרשת בראשית), ורמזו בזה שעלינו להשתמש בזמנינו, לקיים את מצוות ה', אשר על ידם נזכה לחיים הנצחיים. וזאת אנו חוגגים בליל הסדר, כששותים ד' כוסות של יין

וכל המרבה לספר ... הרי זה משובח

רשע מה הוא אומר מה העבודה הזאת לכם (הגדה של פסח)
כאן בהגדה מצינו ששאלת בן הרשע הוא "מה העבודה הזאת לכם", ומשיבים לו "בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים". אמנם בפסוקי המקרא מצינו תשובה אחרת לקושיא זו, והיינו מדכת' (שמות יב-כו, כז) "והיה כי יאמרו עליכם בניכם מה העבודה הזאת לכם. ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא לה' אשר פסח על בתי בני ישראל וכו' ויקד העם וישתחוו". ולמה הוצרך כאן לתשובה אחרת? ועוד, שפרש"י שם "ויקד העם" - על בשורת הגאולה וביאת הארץ ובשורת הבנים שיהיו להם עכ"ל. והרי אם זה שאלת בן הרשע, שמחה וריקוד זו מה עושה - שיהיו להם בנים רשעים?

אלא מסביר הגמור אליהו מאיר בלוח זצ"ל, בס' פניני דעת, כי באמת נכלל בהפסוק "ואמרתם זבח פסח אשר פסח על בתי בני ישראל" תשובת הכתוב "בעבור זה עשה ה' לי". והיינו, כי כאן אינו כתיב "ואמרתם אליו" וא"כ אין זה תשובה אליו, אלא בהזכירו נס הפסח שפסח על בתי בני", ומתוך רוב המצריים הפליא הקב"ה את היחידים בני ישראל, מזה אנו רואים הסוד של קיום עם ישראל. כי לא כשאר אומה"ע שהרוח השורר מכניעם, אלא לעולם ימצא הקב"ה יחידים מבני" שיעמדו בנסיונות, ואפ"י אם ירבו הבנים בתוך ישראל שיאמרו "מה העבודה הזאת לכם" - לכם ולא לו שאין להם חלק בעבודה, בכל זה יפסח ה' עליהם וימצא את השרידים אשר ה' קורא ויגאלם, וזוהי בשורת הגאולה.

ולכן מתורצת גם מדוע שמחו על בשורת בנים כאלה, כי באמת שמחו על זה שבשעה שהדור הצעיר עוזב את צורנו ח"ו, מ"מ ימצאו לעולם בנים נאמנים לתורה ולתעודה - בני תורה שישמעו את התשובה הנכונה - ומהם יבנה כלל ישראל. וזוהי בשורת הבנים, כי על בתים אלו יפסח ה' וינצלו לקיים את עם ישראל עם עולם.

יורד מצרימה ויגר שם במתני מעט ויהי שם לגוי גדול עצום ורב וגו' (דברים כו-ה)

יש לפרש, כי הנה רבים שואלים מדוע מצויים אומות העולם במספר גדול בכל העולם כולו, וישראל הם "במתני מעט"? הלא הקב"ה ברא את העולם בשוב וכמובא ברש"י על הקרא "ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים" (בראשית ב-ז) שהקפיד הקב"ה שלא יהיה קנאה במעשה בראשית.

אך כתב הגמור אברהם ליכטנשטיין זצ"ל, בס' כנפי נשרים, שהענין הוא כמו שאנו רואים שאבנים טוובות ומרגליות הם

as he, does not utter frivolous or false statements. Woe is to you if I am forced to punish you for not only tricking me into sinning against Allah, but also demeaning our religion, our scholars and our holy priests as well!"

R' Yitzchok insisted. "Your eminence, give me some time and I can prove it." The Sultan grudgingly gave him three days to come up with an explanation, but with a warning that if he did not, he would be killed.

That night, while R' Yitzchok slept, he saw *Eliyohu Hanavi* in his dream, who told him to return to the palace the next day revealing to him what he must do and say to nullify the decree.

When R' Yitzchok appeared before the Sultan the next day, he asked one question. "With all due respect to the Grand Mufti, how does he know what pig fat is supposed to taste like? You and I both don't know."

The Sultan considered this for a moment. "Well, let us ask him, then," he finally responded. Together, they made their way to the Mufti's private quarters where they were told that during certain periods of the day, no one was allowed in to disturb the Mufti while he prayed and performed his sacred rituals.

The Sultan would have none of it. "I am the Sultan. Open the door now!" he uttered menacingly. The guard did as he was told and the Sultan and R' Yitzchok entered a large empty chamber. In the corner, hidden from view, was a narrow hidden staircase which they quickly descended. What met their eyes was nothing short of astonishing: A chapel filled with Christian religious artifacts filled every corner of the room, while genuflecting on his knees in front of a large wooden cross was none other than the Grand Mufti! Not only did he eat swine, but he was a practicing Christian, who payed for his blasphemy by spending his day swinging from the gallows!

משל למח הדבר דומה

ואפילו כלנו חכמים כלנו נבונים כלנו יודעים את התורה מצוה עלינו לספר ביציאת מצרים וכו' (הגדה של פסח)
משל: A villager once took seriously ill. The local doctor was called, and after a full examination, he wrote out a prescription. He he told the villager's wife, "Give your husband this prescription with water three times a day until it is finished, and he will be cured."

The family did as they were told. Every day, the simple village wife tore a small piece off the prescription, dissolved it in water and gave it to her husband to drink. Needless to say, his condition did not improve.

The doctor was called again, but he was very perplexed. "I know that this prescription works," he said. "I have prescribed it for this illness before."

Finally he requested to see the prescription. "Perhaps I made a mistake," he thought. The villager's wife explained, however, that she could not show him the

prescription because she had given it to her husband, exactly as he had instructed.

"Fool," he shouted at her. "Can a piece of paper cure your husband's illness? It's not the paper that makes the difference, but what's written on the paper that would have cured him."
גמטל: So it is with the *Haggadah*. It is not the book, nor the simple act of reading the *Haggadah* which illuminates a person's soul. Rather, one must absorb the contents of the story, incorporating into himself the miraculous events. The *mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* requires more than just reading the words. One's recitation of the *Haggadah* must also penetrate the person's heart, so that it may serve as the basis for strengthening his faith in *Hashem*.

ואתא כלבא ונשך לשונרא דאכלא לגדיא דזבין Yankel's life was in danger? Are you a *Navi*?"
Answered the *Rov*, "If he himself did not come to complain about the other man, then I figured that it could only be because he was either dead or dying."
גמטל: The *Baal Haggadah* describes in "חד גדיא" how the seemingly defenseless cat was being bitten by the dog. Yet the truth of the matter is that the cat is really the instigator of all the trouble, not a victim at all. The dog witnessed the cat biting the innocent kid; thus even though the dog looks like an aggressor, he is actually the righteous one. He who cries loudest is not always the innocent party. It takes a discerning eye to sort out truth from illusion and right from wrong.

R' Shmuel quickly turned to his *shamash* and told him to go at once and find Yankel to see if he was still alive. The *shamash* did as he was instructed, and when he returned he related to everyone in attendance that he had indeed found Yankel lying half dead in the street outside and had needed to rush him to the hospital in order to save his life.

"How did you know?" they asked R' Shmuel, "that

אבא בתרי זוזי חג גדיא חד גדיא וכו' (סדר גרצה)

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no more than three *matzos* per family. Each person gratefully accepted the *Rebbe's matzos*, happy to be able to perform the *mitzvos* of the upcoming *Yom Tov*.

When the son of the **Seret-Vizhnitzer Rebbe, R' Boruch Hager ZT"l** reached his turn on the distribution line, he made a strange request. "My father, the *Rebbe*, asks of his honor, to receive six *matzos* for *Yom Tov*." The Skulener Rebbe gently informed him that a system was set up whereby each family received just enough for *Yom Tov* so that the limited quantity could supply the maximum number of people. The young man, however, insisted that he had received specific instructions from his father not to settle for anything less than six *matzos*. The distributors, including the Skulener Rebbe, were surprised at the tenaciousness and assertiveness of the young man and his refusal to accept what everyone else was getting. Finally, the Skulener Rebbe decided not to continue the argument and gave the man six *matzos*.

Erev Pesach late in the afternoon, the *Rebbe* finally finished handing out the last *matza* - literally, he had given out every single *matza*, leaving himself and his son with nothing to fulfill the *mitzvah* on the night of *Pesach*. But before they had a chance to mull over the issue and consider their options, a messenger arrived to the home of the Skulener Rebbe to deliver a package. Upon opening it, the *Rebbe* found inside three whole *matzos*. The messenger explained to the puzzled family members that the Seret-Vizhnitzer Rebbe had purposely requested three additional *matzos* so that, on *Erev Pesach*, he could return two *matzos* to the Skulener Rebbe.

R' Boruch, the Seret-Vizhnitzer Rebbe, was indeed very intuitive. Understanding human nature and the incredible *Ahavas Yisroel* (Love for his fellow Jew) of the Skulener Rebbe, he had realized that R' Eliezer Zusia would very likely hand out his entire stock of precious *matzos* till the very last one. He wanted to make sure that both the *Rebbe's* and his son's family were provided with *matza* for *Yom Tov* If not for his foresight, and his son's persistence in carrying out his father's request, both the Skulener Rebbe's family and his son's family would have been deprived of even the barest minimum of *matza* for *Pesach*.

ושמרתם את המצות כי בעצם היום הזה הוצאתי את צבאותיכם מארץ מצרים וכו' (שמות יב-יז)

Although they are extremely careful to perform every single *mitzvah* in its best possible manner, "Briskers" are well known for their hyper-vigilance and ultra-cautiousness when it comes to the issue of *matzos* on *Pesach*. This is deeply-rooted in their value system as far back as the forebearer of the Brisker dynasty, **R' Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik ZT"l (Bais Halevi)**, of whom, it has been said, would not smile the entire *Yom Tov* of *Pesach*, so fearful he was of committing the slightest infraction which would invalidate his *matzos* and cause them to become *chametz*. Of course, he would bake his own *matzos* in a private *matza* bakery that he was permitted to "take over" for a short time, but even so, over the course of the entire *Yom Tov*, he never ate more than barest minimum of *matza* needed for the entire *chag* (*kezaysim* for the 2 *sedorim*, *Lechem Mishnah* for all the *Yom Tov* meals).

One year, it happened that the Bais Halevi was unable to leave his hometown of Brisk due to serious extenuating circumstances, in order to travel to the neighboring town to personally bake his own *matzos*. Left with no choice, he appointed a *shaliach* (messenger) to go and bake the *matzos* for him. But who could the Bais Halevi trust with such a massively important task? In fact, it was none other than his own son, the great **R' Chaim Soloveitchik ZT"l**, who willingly accepted upon himself the task of baking *matzos* with every stringency and *hiddur* that his father would want. But even as R' Chaim left to fulfill his mission, R' Yosef Dov was with him in spirit, trembling with fear and trepidation the entire time his son was gone, praying that the *matzos* would be as complete and perfect as he would like them.

When R' Chaim came back with the precious *matzos* in hand, his father eagerly rushed over to inspect them and asked, "Nu, how are the *matzos*? Is everything okay with them?"

R' Chaim took on a serious demeanor and answered, "Tatteh, what's the difference? Since we know the (Talmudic) rule of 'עד אחד נאמן באיסורים' (*The testimony of one witness is believed in cases of prohibitions*),

The effects of *שיעבוד מצרים* - *Egyptian slavery*, are felt each year on *Pesach*. The unbearable suffering of our fellow Jews and the pain they endured is remembered and analyzed on the *Seder* night. But what about the cause? We know very well that nothing happens in this world by chance. There is *Hashgacha Pratis* governing all aspects of our lives. The slavery was a heavenly decree that was declared at the *הבית בין הברית* between *Hashem* and *Avrohom Avinu*. When *Hashem* promised *Avrohom* that a great nation would come out from him, *Avrohom* asked, "במה אדע" - "How will I know (that this is true)?" The slavery in Egypt was decreed due to this question.

The **Chofetz Chaim ZT"l** explains that although *Avrohom's* words were the cause of the *שיעבוד*, they were not the cause of the terrible suffering. True, it was beyond our control that we would go down to Egypt, but the slaughtering of 300 Jewish babies each day was the result of something else! Rashi explains (שמות ב:יד) that *Moshe Rabbeinu* was very disturbed by the amount of suffering the Jews had to endure and wondered why they deserved such a terrible fate. When he understood that Jews were speaking *Lashon Hara* about one another, it was then that he realized why they deserved such affliction.

How did Moshe know that Jews were speaking *Lashon Hara*? After he killed the Egyptian, Moshe saw two Jews fighting and told them to stop. One of them said, "Are you going to kill me like you killed the *Mitzri*?" Moshe was shocked and said, "אכן נודע הדבר" - "Now it is known," that I killed the Egyptian and therefore I must run away. But on a deeper level he meant "Now it is known" - now I finally understand

why there is so much suffering. If people know that I killed the Egyptian, then people are talking about me. And if people are talking about me, then they are talking about others as well. If there is *Lashon Hara* among the Jewish people, then I understand why they deserve such a harsh punishment. We see that the enslavement of *Bnei Yisroel* itself was a decree from the time of *Avrohom*, but the extent of the suffering was a direct result and punishment of *Lashon Hara*.

Pesach is unique from all the other *Yomim Tovim* for it is when we utilize our mouths a great deal. Aside from the "eating" *mitzvos*: *Matza*, *Maror*, *Korach seudos*, etc., on *Pesach* many *mitzvos* are performed by using our mouth; *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the *Haggadah*, "והגדת לבנך", are all references to speech. The **Ariza"l** writes that the name "*Pesach*" when split into two words reads "פה" - a mouth, and "סח" - to converse. Since the letters "ס" and "צ" are generally interchangeable, we could read "*Pesach*" as "פה צח" which means a shiny (i.e., clean) mouth. As we are all so busy cleaning our homes of *chametz*, wouldn't we be wise to look back at the cause of all our pain and make equal, if not greater efforts to clean up our speech?

We are living in very special times. The decree of *Golus* is something we cannot undo. However the level of suffering we must endure is very much in our control. Let us heed the message of "פה סח" and turn our "speaking mouths" into a "פה צח" - a clean and shiny vessel from which only kind words, encouragement, *Divrei Torah* and praise and thanks to *Hashem* emerges. In this merit may *Hashem* end all of our sorrow and take us all *משיעבוד לגאולה* speedily and in our times.

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

הא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתנא בארעא דמצרים כל דכפין ייתי ויכול כל דצריך ייתי ויפסח וכו' (הגדה של פסח)

During the Second World War, shortages in every area of every-day life was the norm, both for Jews and non-Jews. People had to make do with what they had. One year before *Pesach*, however, the **Skulener Rebbe, R' Eliezer Zusia Portugal ZT"l**, made tremendous efforts, investing time and money, to locate extra supplies and amazingly was successful in obtaining several hundred kilograms of wheat for the upcoming *Pesach* holiday. Forced out of his home and living in the city of Chernowitz, the *Rebbe* still managed to set up a small *matza* bakery to supply the townspeople with *matzos*. The residents of Chernowitz were thankful for his efforts and a mere two weeks before *Pesach* he began distributing them, limiting the allocation to three *matzos* per family for *Yom Tov*, thereby allowing for the maximum number of people to benefit.

Jews from all around the city gathered daily, while the *Rebbe* and the members of his family distributed

and I declare that they are kosher, you are permitted to eat these *matzos!*”

The Bais Halevi nodded and accepted his son’s words and over the course of *Yom Tov*, he ate the *matzos* in his usual way. But within minutes after *Yom Tov* had ended, he called his son, R’ Chaim, into his private room. “Okay, *Yom Tov* is over. Now tell me what was the real story with the *matzos*, that you were forced to issue such an unusual ruling about its *kashrus?*”

R’ Chaim sighed, knowing that his father would not let it go. Then he said, “The story is like this. I went and baked the *matzos* with every stringency, just as you demanded. On my way home, I took a late-night train, and due to the exertion of the day, I felt a tremendous weariness come over me. I was afraid that I might fall asleep right then and there. But what about the *matzos*? I couldn’t let them remain unguarded. So I took a string and tied the box of *matzos* to my arm. This way, I felt secure that when I dozed off, the *matzos* would remain ‘protected’ and if anyone should try to touch them, I would feel the tug and immediately wake up.” R’ Chaim concluded, “This way, I was able to guarantee that the *matzos* were truly kosher.”

But the Bais Halevi began trembling uncontrollably. His face had turned ashen white, and he intoned solemnly, “*Oy, oy!* Had I known about this before *Pesach*, I would have never eaten the *matzos!*”

מצה זו שאנו אוכלים על שום מה? על שום שלא הספיק בצקם של אבותינו להחמיץ וכו' (הגדה של פסח)

As a close personal friend and permanent advisor to the Sultan in Constantinople, seat of power over the entire Ottoman Empire, the holy **Chacham, R’ Yitzchok Nunez ZT”L** was a frequent visitor to the palace. The Sultan welcomed these visits to discuss matters of importance with his Jewish friend, but he became perturbed when two whole weeks went by and his friend did not show up. The Sultan felt slighted and annoyed. However, rather than send a servant to go and fetch R’ Yitzchok and bring him to the palace, one evening the Sultan decided to drop in unannounced at the Nunez home and confront his friend.

Surrounded only by a small retinue of bodyguards, the Sultan knocked on the Nunez door. When R’ Yitzchok answered it, he was speechless: why had the Sultan decided to grace him with his presence at this time? Of course, he bade him come inside and when the Sultan saw the beautiful *Seder* table laden with holiday finery, the costly silverware and goblets, and the entire family gathered around dressed in beautiful holiday clothing, he understood that his friend had been busy for the past two weeks preparing for the Passover celebration. His curiosity piqued, though, he asked to be told all about the Passover holiday and its meaning.

R’ Yitzchok did better. He prepared a seat of honor at the head of the *Seder* table and gave the Sultan a golden goblet of wine. Then, he proceeded to conduct the *Seder* explaining everything in great detail for the benefit of their Imperial guest. The Sultan enjoyed himself immensely, but when it came time to eat the *matza*, he was most effusive with praise. “What is this? These crackers are the most delicious things I’ve ever tasted!” Even when the savory *Yom Tov* meal was served, the Sultan continued to eat *matza* after *matza*, and when the *Seder* was over, he was delighted when R’ Yitzchok packed him up a box of *matzos* “for the road.”

The next day, the Sultan decided to “share” his wealth a bit and called in a few of his closest advisors. He told them about the incredible crackers that he got the night before and even gave each one a piece to taste.

“Isn’t it marvelous?” he asked eagerly scanning their faces as they chewed. The advisors, though, did not share his highness’ exuberance and although they said it was delicious, the Sultan could see on their faces that they were just saying it to please him. He didn’t understand. When he had tasted it, it was deliciously sweet and pleasurable. They found it dry and brittle. Why did they not taste what he had tasted?

“You ate these crackers at the Jewish *Seder*, right?” asked the Muslim High Priest (Mufti). “Well then, its obvious. The Jews are known to smear pig fat on their crackers on the night of Passover and that’s why it tasted so different last night!” The assembled group gasped in horror. Pig fat is forbidden by Muslim law.

Enraged, the Sultan immediately sent for R’ Yitzchok and demanded an explanation how he could serve the Sultan pig fat. R’ Yitzchok vehemently denied that he had done anything of the sort. “Why, your majesty, we Jews are likewise forbidden from eating swine or pig fat. I would never do such a thing!”

But this only enraged the Sultan even more. “Are you saying that my holy Mufti is lying? A man of G-d such

ומרור" - כלומר, בסדר הזה דוקא, היינו משום שאינו מאמץ שהגאולה הקדים להגלות, אלא הוא חושב כהמהלך הא' שהזכרנו שמתוך שאר הגלויות צריכים להשלים 190 שנה, לכן עדיין הוא נשאר בגלות ו"לא יצא ידי חובתו" - ר"ל, חובת הגלות, כי אינו נשלם עוד 190 שנה.

PESACH TORAH GEMS

וידבר ה' אל משה אחרי מות שני בני אהרן (ויקרא טז-א)

We find a correlation between the premature deaths of Nadav and Avihu and one of the most integral components of the *Yom Tov* of *Pesach*. Although Nadav and Avihu never intended to sanctify *Hashem's* Name by dying as they did, nevertheless, His Name was sanctified when *Bnei Yisroel* witnessed His judgment at work. And since Nadav and Avihu played a role in this *Kiddush Hashem*, even unwittingly, it is mentioned to their credit.

In the same vein, writes **R’ Aharon Kotler ZT”L**, when the Jewish Nation was redeemed from Egyptian slavery, traveling three days to the edge of the Sea and eventually crossing through it in miraculous fashion, *Chazal* tell us (מגילה י) that *Hashem* would not permit the angels to sing a song of praise as the Egyptians were drowning in the *Yam Suf*, whereas *Bnei Yisroel* did sing. The reason is because angels can never grow spiritually. Thus, when they praise *Hashem*, it is an honor to G-d, but it has no effect on the angels’ own spiritual condition. In contrast, when man praises *Hashem*, man himself grows. *Hashem* did not want to be honored for drowning the Egyptians, so He did not allow the angels to sing. However, when *Bnei Yisroel* sang, they honored *Hashem* and, at the very same time, grew spiritually by recognizing His great powers. And the Egyptians themselves received credit in Heaven for aiding in *Bnei Yisroel's* growth because the Egyptians unwittingly played a role in that growth, just as Nadav and Avihu unwittingly caused a *Kiddush Hashem*. Since it was a benefit to the Egyptians themselves, *Bnei Yisroel* could sing.

ויהי בחצי הלילה וה' הכה כל בכור במצרים (שמות יב-כט)

The *Medrash* states that on the night of בכורות מכת, the sun shone as if it were noon (חצות). The **Rebbe, R’ Heschel of Krakow ZT”L** gives us a brilliant understanding. On the first day of creation, the *posuk* tells us: “*And G-d called the light ‘day’ and the darkness He called*

כל העבודה של ד' מאות שנה לתוך רד"ו שנה ולא היו יוצאים ממצרים מוקדם. ומש"ה אנו אומרים "פסח, מצה ומרור" בסדר זה ולא "מרור ומצה", להראות שהגאולה (המצה) הוקדם ממש להגלות (מרור) ונקדים המצה להמרור להראות חידוש זה. לפי"ז י"ל דזה מה שאמר רבן גמליאל "כל שלא אמר פסח מצה

‘night’” (א-ה) What’s interesting is that it does not say “*and the darkness G-d called night*” because the Name of *Hashem* is explicitly associated only with light, symbolizing good, and not with darkness which symbolizes evil. *Hashem* does not attach His Holy Name to evil in any way - only with goodness.

If so, one might wonder why when the *Torah* discusses the tenth and final plague on the Firstborn, the *posuk* writes: (יב-כט) “*And it was midnight, and Hashem killed every firstborn*” - if it was in the middle of the night, in total darkness, how could *Hashem's* Name be mentioned in the same *posuk*? From here, concludes R’ Heschel, the *Medrash* gleans the extraordinary fact that on that night, the sun shone in its full glory as if it were noon.

עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים ויצאנו משם ביד חזקה (הגדה)

In the history of the world, there has never been a greater example of a weak and captive people, being rescued and redeemed in miraculous fashion from the grip of a stronger and overly oppressive nation, than the case of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. Rashi tells us (שמות יח-ט) that the Egyptians “locked down” their land to the point that even a single stray servant was unable to slip away undetected. The Egyptian sorcerers, the most powerful in the entire world, even cast a spell around the borders of Egypt, denying anyone the right to leave (אבן עזרא) - and here, well over a million men, women and children just walked right out!

The **Ben Ish Chai, Chacham Yosef Chaim ZT”L**, writes that this allusion is found in the word “מצרים” - which begins with an open “מ” and ends with a closed “ם” to symbolize that when *Bnei Yisroel* came in to the land, it was open to them. Later, however, when they wanted to leave, it was closed off. Thus, the greatness of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is: “*והוצאתי את ישראל מתוכם*” - “*And I will take them out from there.*” (שמות ז-ה) The word “מתוכם” is a combination of “מתוך ם” - from within the closed off confines of Egypt, *Hashem* redeemed His chosen nation amid miracles and wonders.