

# The Pesach Seder

שְׁמֵחִים וְשִׂמְחִים יֵצְאוּ מִן הָאָרֶץ מִן הָעִיר מִן הַבְּרִיאָה מִן הַמְּדִינָה מִן הַמְּצֻרָה מִן הַמְּבִרָה מִן הַמְּבִרָה מִן הַמְּבִרָה

1. Pesach Practicals, Chametz & Matzah
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3. The Seder Journey & Haggadah Highlights

## 1. Pesach Practicals

The eight-day festival of Passover is celebrated in the early spring, from the 15th through the 22nd of the Hebrew month of Nissan. It commemorates our emancipation from slavery in ancient Egypt. And, by following the rituals of Passover, we have the ability to relive and experience the true freedom that our ancestors gained.

### THE STORY IN A (TEENSY TINY) NUTSHELL

After many decades of slavery to the Egyptian pharaohs, during which time the Israelites were subjected to backbreaking labor and unbearable horrors, G-d saw the people's distress and sent Moshe to Pharaoh with a message: "Send forth My people, so that they may serve Me." But despite numerous warnings, Pharaoh refused to heed G-d's command. G-d then sent upon Egypt ten devastating plagues, afflicting them and destroying everything from their livestock to their crops.

At the stroke of midnight of 15 Nissan in the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE), G-d visited the last of the ten plagues on the Egyptians, killing all their firstborn. While doing so, G-d spared the Children of Israel, "passing over" their homes—hence the name of the holiday. Pharaoh's resistance was broken, and he virtually chased his former slaves out of the land. The Israelites left in such a hurry, in fact, that the bread they baked as provisions for the way did not have time to rise. Six hundred thousand adult males, plus many more women and children, left Egypt on that day, and began the trek to Mount Sinai and their birth as G-d's chosen people.

### PASSOVER OBSERVANCES

Passover is divided into two parts:

- 1) The first two days and last two days (the latter commemorating the splitting of the Red Sea) are full-fledged holidays. Holiday candles are lit at night, and *Kiddush* and sumptuous holiday meals are enjoyed on both nights and days. We don't go to work, drive, write or switch on or off electric devices. We are permitted to cook and to carry outdoors.
- 2) The middle four days are called *chol hamoed*, semi-festive "intermediate days," when many forms of work are permitted.

### NO CHAMETZ

To commemorate the unleavened bread that the Israelites ate when they left Egypt, we don't eat—or even retain in our possession, or benefit from—any *chametz* from midday of the day before Passover until the conclusion of the holiday. *Chametz* means leavened grain—any food or drink that contains even a trace of wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt or their derivatives, and which wasn't guarded from leavening or fermentation. This includes bread, cake, cookies, cereal, pasta and most alcoholic beverages. Moreover, almost any processed food or drink can be assumed to be *chametz* unless certified otherwise.

Ridding our homes of *chametz* is an intensive process. It involves a full-out spring-cleaning search-and-destroy mission during the weeks before Passover, and culminates with a ceremonial search for *chametz* on the night before Passover, and then a burning of the *chametz* ceremony on the morning before the holiday. *Chametz* that

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cannot be disposed of or can be sold to a non-Jew for the duration of the holiday. Your local Rabbi can take care of this sale with you.

## MATZAH

Instead of *chametz*, we eat matzah—flat unleavened bread. It is a mitzvah to partake of matzah on the two Seder nights, and during the rest of the holiday it is optional.

## THE SEDERS

The highlight of Passover is the Seder, observed on each of the first two nights of the holiday. The Seder is a fifteen-step family-oriented tradition and ritual-packed feast.

The focal points of the Seder are:

- Eating matzah.
- Eating bitter herbs—to commemorate the bitter slavery we endured.
- Drinking four cups of wine or grape juice—a royal drink to celebrate our newfound freedom.
- The recitation of the *Haggadah*, a liturgy that describes in detail the story of the Exodus from Egypt. The *Haggadah* is the fulfillment of the biblical obligation to recount to our children the story of the Exodus on the night of Passover.

## Chametz & Matzah

### HOW DO WE GET RID OF CHAMETZ FOR PASSOVER?

Six basic steps: 1) **cleaning** the home, 2) setting up the **Passover kitchen**, 3) **selling** the chametz, 4) **searching** for chametz, 5) **burning the chametz**, 6) **nullifying** chametz.

### HOW DO WE CLEAN FOR PASSOVER?

Give your home a thorough, top-to-bottom, cleaning. Vacuum the carpets and floors, wipe clean the cupboards and bookshelves. Get into all those hard-to-reach places: under the sofa cushions.... Move aside furniture and kitchen appliances to get behind and underneath. Bottom line: if that proverbial cookie crumb could be hiding there, go after it! Other places that need to be cleaned: office, car, purse -- any space that is yours by ownership, lease, or right of use.

Places you don't have to clean: a) Rooms and areas where you're absolutely certain that no food was ever brought. b) Rooms and areas that will be sold for the entire duration of Pesach.

***“Dust is not chametz, and your children are not the Korban Pesach (Passover sacrifice)”***

- ***Rabbi Shalom Dovber of Lubavitch***

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## WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH RICE AND LEGUMES?

The medieval Jewish sages placed a ban on eating legumes (*kitniyot*) on Passover, because they are similar in texture to *chametz*—even bread can be made out of their flour—so people might assume that if, for example, cornbread can be eaten on Passover, wheat or rye bread can be eaten too. This prohibition includes rice, beans and corn. This injunction was unanimously accepted by Ashkenazic Jews; many Sephardic Jews, however, continue to eat *kitniyot* on Passover. If you are Sephardic, speak to your rabbi to determine your family and community tradition.

The prohibition is only with regards to **consumption** of *kitniyot*; there is no obligation, however, to destroy or sell *kitniyot* products before Passover.

## PASSOVER HAPPENED OVER 3,000 YEARS AGO. HOW DOES IT RELATE TO ME TODAY?

*"In every generation, each person must feel as if he personally had come out of Mitzrayim (Egypt), as the Torah says: "You should tell your child on that day, 'When I left Egypt, Hashem did miracles for me ...'" (The Pesach Haggadah)*

Partaking in the Seder on Pesach eve provides every individual with an opportunity to experience an exodus from his own personal house of bondage.

Though we may never have been in Egypt, nor experienced actual slavery, redemption can be real for us, for, as Chassidic thought explains, Egypt is not only a geographical location but also a state of mind. In fact, the Hebrew name for Egypt, *Mitzrayim*, is almost identical to the word *meitzarim*, which means straits or limitations. In other words, our personal exodus from Egypt involves self-transcendence, lifting ourselves out of our natural limitations.

There are countless ways in which people are enslaved. Someone who cannot control his anger, greed, etc. is very much a slave to them. We are slaves to technology; to our smart phones, computers and iPods. The message of Pesach is that we must strive to be free, to break the bonds of *any* kind of compulsion. Liberty must be so dear to us that we do not allow ourselves to be under the tyranny of any destructive habit. We are repeatedly reminded of the Exodus so that we can fight any destructive habits to which we may become, or are, enslaved.

The purpose of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, G-d's taking us out of Egypt, was to open the path for future personal and collective redemption. The entire purpose of celebrating the Seder is to evoke that initial power of breaking through our boundaries. So we are not celebrating something that happened 3,000 years ago, but on the contrary, what happened 3,000 years ago was a celebration and initiation of our potential for freedom today.

## NO CHAMETZ? ONLY MATZAH?

Pesach enables us to undergo a personal exodus from Egypt by transcending our individual limits. Accordingly, G-d gave us the mitzvah of eating Matzah which help us internalize that experience. Eating matzah thus converts the experience of self-transcendence into an integral part of our beings.

**Chametz:** Bloats as it rises, symbolizes self-inflated egotism and pride.

**Matzah:** Remains flat and unpretentious, represents selfless humility and ability to make space for others. Torah describes matzah as "poor man's bread" a poor man is humble and free of arrogance.

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The words Chametz & Matzah are almost identical. Chametz has a closed “Ches” with no opening for others, and the ability to “puff up” with hot air. Matzah has an open “Hay” without ego and can welcome others in.

מצה
חמץ

The Evil Inclination is represented by chametz: a) it is self centered and egotistic and b) it thrives on laziness, always seeking the path of least resistance.

\*To create matzah, the opposite of chametz, it is essential to work with enthusiasm and speed. If these are absent for even a short time, the dough will automatically become chametz. Chametz and matzah are made of the same ingredients. The only difference is in the way it baked. If the flour/ water combination is not completely baked in the prescribed 18 minutes, then it is chametz. **The lesson: every second counts.**

“When you have the opportunity to do a mitzvah, don’t let it spoil (chometz) in your hand.”  
**Chometz symbolizes procrastination.**

## WHAT’S THE DEEPER MEANING BEHIND CLEANING FOR PASSOVER?

Cleaning for Pesach is a process of ridding our homes of chametz, but it is also about taking the time to rid ourselves of “chametz”.

On a spiritual level, chametz is a symbol of evil desires, etc. For one week each year, the Torah reminds us of the importance of destroying the ‘chametz’ – the Evil Inclination – inside of us.

As we clean our houses and prepare for Passover, we take the time for introspection and self improvement, getting rid of the negative inside of us such as anger, procrastination, and narcissism.

“My grandfather, the Rebbe of Bobov, once visited Baron Rothschild, who proudly showed him a separate house that was his Passover home. It was not used all year round, and never had any chametz brought into it. My grandfather told the baron that he was missing the point.

Angels are perfect. They have no defects, and do not have to do anything to improve themselves. People are imperfect. We have faults we must eliminate.

*The point is not to never have any chametz, but rather to be able to rid ourselves of the chametz we have.*

- Rabbi Twerski

## IF CHAMETZ REPRESENTS SUCH EVIL, WHY ARE WE ALLOWED TO EAT CHAMETZ ALL YEAR?

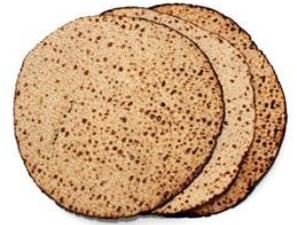
Pride in itself is not bad – it depends how it is used. Jewish pride, used correctly, is a good thing. On Pesach, we learn to destroy the negative aspects of the trait. Once Pesach is over, and we have hopefully learned the lesson and applied it to our lives, we can once again eat chametz.

Through this process we now have the ability to use pride in its right, healthy, and holy place.

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## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MACHINE MADE MATZAH AND HAND MADE SHMURAH MATZAH?

When Moshe instructed the Jews to prepare matzah for the Passover Eve feast, he said: "guard the matzahs" (Exodus 12:17). This verse is the basis of an interesting law. It is not enough to eat matzah on the Seder night; it is also a mitzvah to guard the matzah's dough as it is being prepared for baking, so that it does not rise.



*Shmurah* means "watched," and it is an apt description of Shmurah matzah, the ingredients of which (the flour and water) are watched from the moment of harvesting and drawing.

The day chosen for the harvesting of the wheat is a clear, dry day. The moment it is harvested, the wheat is inspected to ensure that there is absolutely no moisture. From then on, careful watch is kept upon the grains as they are transported to the mill. The mill is meticulously inspected by rabbis and supervision professionals to ensure that every piece of equipment is absolutely clean and dry. After the wheat is milled, the flour is again guarded in its transportation to the bakery. Thus, from the moment of harvesting through the actual baking of the matzah, the flour is carefully watched to ensure against any contact with water. The water, too, is carefully guarded to prevent any contact with wheat or other grain. It is drawn the night before the baking, and kept pure until the moment it is mixed with the flour to bake the *shmurah* matzah.

Also in the bakery itself, *shmurah* matzot are under strict supervision to avoid any possibility of leavening during the baking process. This intensive process and careful guarding gives the *shmurah* matzah an added infusion of faith and sanctity—in fact, as the matzah is being made, all those involved constantly repeat, "L'shem matzot mitzvah"—"We are doing this for the sake of the mitzvah of matzah."

It is easy to recognize a hand-baked matzah, because they are round in contrast to the square-shaped machine-made variety. Interestingly, the Torah describes the matzah that the Jews ate when they left Egypt as "ugot," a Hebrew word that also means round-shaped.

*Jewish law rules that there are two very different kinds of matzah.*

One is the matzah that we eat throughout most of Passover. That matzah is considered "optional." We don't have to eat matzah; we could eat other foods that are not chametz (leavened) such as dairy, fish, meat, fruits and vegetables. As long as we do not eat chametz, we are keeping with the rules of the holiday.

The situation is different during the two Seder nights of Passover. On those two nights it is mandatory to eat matzah, so that we recall the unleavened bread eaten by our ancestors as they left Egypt. The matzah of the Seder is called matzot mitzvah ("obligatory matzah") and there are special rules dictating how it should be baked.

Part of the mitzvah of matza is the preparation: Mixing the dough, rolling and shaping the matzah and putting the dough into the oven to bake—are all activities that must be performed by adult Jews. This is why machine-made matzah is not the best choice for the Seder. Hand-baked matzah is becoming more and more popular and many people eat them for the entire Passover. Certainly, the hand-baked matzah are the optimum choice for the Seder nights.

There is an important lesson that we can learn from matzah. **It isn't only the result that counts; it is also the effort we put into it.** In today's world of automation, we sometimes forget the beauty and value of personal involvement. A mitzvah requires human effort (and there are few mitzvot that demand as much effort as the preparations for Passover).

A machine can produce matzah that is neat and tasty, but it is human effort and hard work that makes the matzah a true mitzvah - hard effort can yield true value.

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## 2. Why the Seder?

**"You shall tell it to your son on that day, saying, it is because of this that G-d did for me when I left Egypt" – Shemos (Exodus) 13:8**

The Haggadah is simply a Rabbinical formula (the compiler of which is unknown) designed to ensure that we carry out that Biblical obligation correctly.

**"Whoever discusses the Exodus from Egypt at length is praiseworthy" – Haggadah**

So the Seder discussions are never limited to just the text! A good seder is filled with discussion, song, questions, food & joy!

## Seder Foods

### WHAT IS THE REASON FOR ALL THE DIFFERENT PASSOVER FOODS?

On Passover we are celebrating the transition from slavery to freedom. This is expressed in the items of food on the Seder plate and the table since they have associations with both slavery and freedom:

#### WINE:

Red wine = color of blood. Blood has obvious associations with slavery; our ancestors were beaten and they bled. Blood is also associated with our freedom: On the night preceding the Exodus, our ancestors were commanded to kill a sheep or goat and to smear its blood upon the door posts of their houses. This was to be a sign that the plague of the death of all the first-born sons of the Egyptians would not affect any of the Israelite homes (hence the name of the holiday "Passover").

Wine is also a drink of the free man. Throughout the Seder we drink wine reclining in our seats, the way royalty does.

#### SALT-WATER:

Salt-water reminds of the bitter tears shed by our ancestors while enslaved in Egypt. It also represents freedom as it reminds us of the splitting of the sea, symbolized by the salt-water, which was instrumental in finally freeing the Jews from Egyptian slavery.

#### MATZAH:

Matzah is the food which our ancestors ate during their long slavery in Egypt, as we say at the beginning of the *Haggadah*, "This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt..."

*Visitors to the British Museum can see loaves of Egyptian bread preserved in the tomb of some king or noble, and it looks surprisingly like the round, hand-baked, Shmurah matzah which many people use at the Seder. The bread in the museum is rather thick, since it was the food of the wealthy; the round matzah, being thin and much less substantial, is the bread which was given to slaves. It was cheap, took very little time to bake and very little time to eat, and so allowed the task-masters to get the maximum working time from the slaves.*

# Women's Torah & Tea Class - The Pesach Seder

L'ilui Nishmas Rasha bas Chaim Meir HaLevi - לע"נ ראשא ע"ה בת ר' חיים מאיר הלוי נ"י

But our ancestors not only ate Matzah while they were slaves. Ironically, on the way out of Egypt into freedom, they found themselves eating the same matzah bread that they had eaten during the years of slavery. This time, however, it was the bread of freedom.

The matzah has a double potency: the Zohar calls it both the "bread of faith" and the "bread of healing."

The Matzah that we eat at the first seder is the "bread of faith" and the matzah at the second seder "the bread of healing". The faith precedes the healing so that it is not a faith that comes in the wake of a healing from illness, but rather ***a faith that generates a healing that prevents illness from occurring to begin with.***

## WHY DO WE HAVE THREE MATZOT ON THE SEDER PLATE?

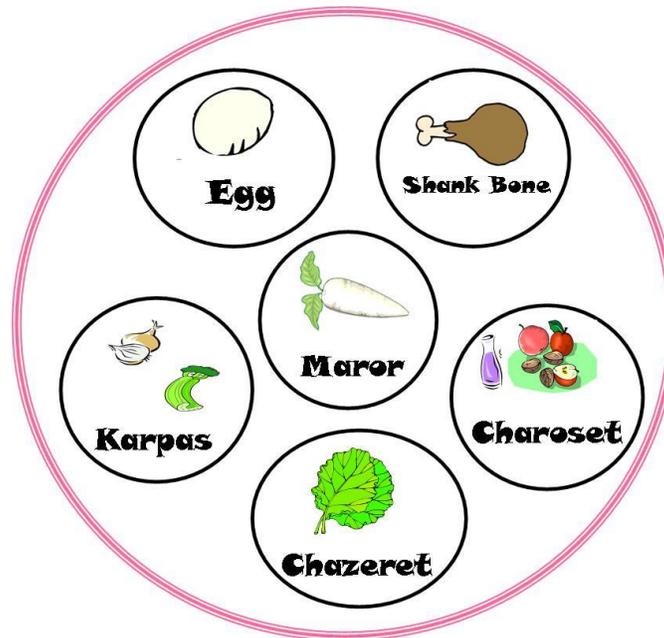
1. Allusion to the three measures of flour that Abraham asked Sarah to prepare for the angels that visited him after his circumcision. According to the Midrash, the angels visited Abraham on Passover.
2. The number three represents our Patriarchs - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
3. Every Shabbat and holiday we need two whole loaves of Challah (to commemorate the double portion of manna we received in the desert on the day before Shabbat or a holiday.) On Passover too we need two whole Matzot for the blessing. We start out with three because at the beginning of the Seder (Yachatz) we break the middle Matzah and we're left with two whole ones for the blessing.
4. Represents the Jewish people who are divided into three groups: Kohanim, Levites, and Israelites

## WHY FOUR CUPS OF WINE ON PASSOVER?

1. G-d used four expressions of redemption in describing our Exodus from Egypt and our birth as a nation (Exodus 6:6-7):
  1. "I will take you out..."
  2. "I will save you..."
  3. "I will redeem you..."
  4. "I will take you as a nation..."
2. Represents our four Matriarchs - Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah.

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## The Seder Plate



### BITTER HERBS (MARROR):

The bitter romaine lettuce expresses a very important relationship between slavery and freedom. The leaves of a lettuce are not bitter at all. In a young fresh lettuce, they are crisp and sweet. Nonetheless, the lettuce grows from a green-white stalk which is very bitter indeed. Clearly, the crisp, sweet leaves represent freedom and the bitter stalk represents slavery.

Freedom can only really be appreciated when it is rooted in slavery. We who are born free often take our freedom for granted; we do not wake up each morning and say to ourselves, "I am free! How wonderful!" Yet someone who has been in prison would do exactly this. So it was when our ancestors left Egypt, hence the use of lettuce.

### CHAROSET:

*Charoset* has the appearance and texture of river mud. It was from this mud that our ancestors made bricks. The appearance of the *Charoset* clearly calls to mind the harsh servitude to which our ancestors were subjected. But when we put *Charoset* in our mouths, we experience something quite different. It has a sweet taste, a taste such as no slave ever experienced. Its sweetness is its association with freedom.

### EGG & SHANK BONE:

It is characteristic of Jewish celebrations that there should be something to bring the Temple to mind. It might be the glass smashed under the foot of the bridegroom at a wedding or the salt on the table into which we dip our bread, or the egg and bone on our Seder table.

In this case, the egg represents the festive sacrifice which was offered on the three pilgrim festivals of Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot. The bone represents the special Passover offering, and is usually roasted over an open flame as the original sacrifice was.

\*The bone (*Zroah*) also alludes to the term used by G-d to redeem the Jewish people "*B'Zroah Netuya*" (with an outstretched arm).

\*The egg also symbolizes the Jewish people - the more we are oppressed, the stronger we become. (Unlike other foods, the longer you cook an egg, the harder it becomes)

# The Pesach Seder

## 3. The Spiritual Journey of the Seder & Haggadah Highlights

As we go through each step of the Seder, we take a spiritual journey from slavery to freedom.

### סימן סדר של פסח

קַדֵּשׁ . וְרַחֵץ . כַּרְפָּס . יַחֵץ . מַגִּיד . רְחַצָּה . מוֹצֵיא . מִצָּה .  
מְרוֹר . כּוֹרֵךְ . שְׁלַחַן עוֹרֵךְ . צְפוּן . בִּרְךְ . הִלֵּל . נִרְצָה :

| Step                  | Description   | Spiritual Meaning  |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| <b>1.<br/>KADESH</b>  | We begin the Seder with a “toast” to Someone special. We drink the wine in a reclining position.  | In the olden days, only free people were permitted to eat in a reclining position. When we recline and praise G-d at the same time, it reminds us that we can only be truly “free” if we acknowledge what G-d wants.   |
| <b>2.<br/>URCHATZ</b> | We wash our hands as we usually do for bread – except this time we don’t make a blessing. Strange!! One of the reasons we do this is to cause the kids to ask questions.                              | Sometimes people think they have to “know it all.” This is not always true. To get the most out of life we must always be willing to admit that we don’t know something, to ask questions and to learn.  |
| <b>3.<br/>KARPAS</b>  | We dip a raw vegetable into salt water. This vegetable is called Karpas – which contains the word – “perech” – crushing and purposeless labour. The salt water represents the tears of our ancestors. | Getting too involved in work for materialistic things and wealth can cause us a lot of anguish. Not only does it leave us tired – it leaves us feeling empty. Involvement in spiritual things, although it may be difficult, brings satisfaction and a sense of purpose. |
| <b>4.<br/>YACHATZ</b> | We break the middle Matza, wrap the larger piece and set it aside for the end of the meal. The story of the Exodus is discussed over the smaller piece.   | A key to freedom is to be able to share. It can be difficult for us to share our money, our resources and our time. Breaking the Matzah teaches us that just as there are plenty of needs, there are also plenty of resources, and we must learn to share with others.   |
| <b>5.<br/>MAGGID</b>  | The main part of the Seder begins with the parents telling the Story of Pesach to their children.   | To build humanity we must learn to communicate. One generation must communicate with the next one. G-d created the world through speech to teach us that in order to have a meaningful existence, there needs to be communication.                                       |

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|--|---|--|
| <p><b>6.<br/>RACHTZA</b></p>             | <p>We wash our hands, in the ritual way, for bread. This is not for physical cleanliness – it is for spiritual cleanliness. Eating, for a Jew, must be more than just a physical pleasure. Washing our hands sets the tone.</p> | <p>An important aspect of freedom is to elevate ourselves above “street behavior.” There’s more to life than meets the eye. We must make sure to bring spirituality and G-dly awareness into our every day physical lives.</p>   |
| <p><b>7-8.<br/>MOTZI-<br/>MATZA</b></p>  | <p>We hold the Matzot carefully and make the applicable brachot. We treat the Matza with respect since it is our connection to our ancestors.</p>   | <p>When we eat Matza – the symbol of humility, we are rejecting Chametz – a symbol of arrogance. Only through humility can we make the same brave choices as our ancestors in Egypt.</p>   |
| <p><b>9.<br/>MAROR</b></p>               | <p>We take at least 3/4 oz. of bitter herbs (yikes!) dip it in the Charoset and eat it.</p>   | <p>We need to have some bitterness before we can experience freedom. An ill person will not seek a cure unless he feels unwell. On Pesach, we seek ways to free ourselves from negative behaviors. In order to do so we must first recognize our “slavery” – then we can begin to perfect our lives.</p> |
| <p><b>10.<br/>KORECH</b></p>             | <p>In keeping with the custom of Rabbi Hillel, we eat a sandwich which consists of two pieces of Matza, Maror and Charoset.</p>   | <p>We Jews have had a difficult history. Many nations have hated us for this and have tried to annihilate us. But we know that even in times of bitterness (maror), we are “sandwiched” and protected by G-d. G-d is with us and He will never forsake us. Am Yisrael Chai!!</p>                         |
| <p><b>11.<br/>SHULCHAN<br/>ORECH</b></p> | <p>Here comes the good part!<br/>Fish, Soup, Meat – the works!!</p>   | <p>Judaism wants us to enjoy the world that G-d gave us. G-d wants us to have pleasure – so long as what we do is dignified and human.</p>   |
| <p><b>12.<br/>TZAFUN</b></p>             | <p>We eat the hidden piece of Matza.</p>  | <p>Tzafun means hidden. Deep inside every person lays the potential for greatness, the potential to realize the ultimate purpose for which he was created. When we tap into our inner potential, we can accomplish great things.</p>   |
| <p><b>13.<br/>BERACH</b></p>             | <p>We say Birkat Hamazon – thanking Hashem for what we have.</p>  | <p>Appreciation is an art that needs to be developed. If we truly appreciate all that we have, we’ll appreciate life in its totality.</p>  |
| <p><b>14.<br/>HALLEL</b></p>             | <p>We sing the Hallel - songs of praise to Hashem.</p>  | <p>When we praise somebody, it benefits us too. When we praise Hashem it makes us focus on His goodness and encourages us to follow in His ways.</p>   |
| <p><b>15.<br/>NIRTZAH</b></p>            | <p>We complete the Seder with wishes of “Next Year in Jerusalem.”</p>   | <p>Jerusalem means “city of peace.” Peace is more than the absence of war. It is perfection. Jerusalem inspires us to seek perfection in our lives.</p>  |

# The Pesach Seder

## Haggadah Highlights

### קדש ~ KADESH

In Kiddush (and davening) the holiday is called "Chag HaMatzos". As a matter of fact, this is the name by which Hashem refers to this holiday in the Torah; we, however, call it "Pesach."

Chag Hamatzos represents the Jews listening to Hashem's commandment to leave Egypt immediately. They were in such a rush that the dough of the bread did not have a chance to rise and instead baked as *matza* while still being carried on their backs. The name Pesach/Passover represents Hashem jumping over the Jewish homes as he killed the Egyptian firstborns.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev pointed out that G-d refers to the holiday in a way that praises the Jewish people who followed Him into a desert trusting that He would provide for them. All they had were a couple of crackers made from dough that did not have time to rise: matzot. And yet they went. By contrast, the Jewish people refer to the holiday in a way that praises G-d for sparing them during the plague of the firstborn. What a beautiful relationship, one praising the other!

The Passover names also represent a progression:

1. The first thing is to become egoless like a Matzah—flat and unbloated. (Chag HaMatzos)
2. This way you can be truly free in this Season of Freedom, since you are no longer bogged down by your limitations. (a 3<sup>rd</sup> name of the holiday – Zman Chairuseinu)
3. At that point you can make a radical leap—Pesach—a quantum change that would normally be impossible.

***We go through this process & spiritual journey through the 15 steps of the Seder themselves.***

### מגיד ~ MAGGID

We begin Maggid – the main part of the Seder where we tell the story of our Slavery & Exodus – with the paragraph "הא לחמא עניא" "All who are hungry, come and eat; all who are needy come and celebrate Pesach."

Being that this is said while sitting at the dinner table, the only people hearing it are those who are already there. What is the point of making grand invitations when the truly needy can't hear it?

That invitation is not intended for outsiders. We are **inviting ourselves** and the people around us to really be present at the Seder. While we may be sitting at the table, our minds can be miles away. But then we may miss out on the most powerful spiritual journey - the Seder.

**Each one of us is hungry, and we are all needy. We have a soul that hungers for nourishment and inspiration, and we all feel a profound need for our inner self to be freely expressed.** Our soul yearns to love, to give, to contribute to the world and to connect to Hashem. But our soul is sometimes trapped, surrounded by obstacles to its being free.

So at the beginning of the Seder we invite ourselves to really come to the Seder and experience freedom. Don't let yourself be enslaved to your Egypt any longer. "Whoever is hungry, come and eat. Whoever is needy, come and celebrate Pesach." If you hunger for inspiration, come and absorb the *Haggadah's* message of liberty. Don't just sit there - enter into the Pesach experience with your entire being. Read the story of the Exodus, taste the *Matzah*, the food of faith, and drink in the wine of freedom.

We can rush through the *Haggadah* to get to the main course. Then our souls remain trapped. Rather let's take our time, allowing the eternal story of freedom sink in and become a part of us. Let yourself go - free your soul.

# The Pesach Seder

## MAH NISHTANA ~ The Great Power of our Customs

### *The Chabad order of the Four Questions:*

1. On all nights we need not dip even once, and on this night we dip twice!
2. On all nights we eat leavened bread or matzah, and on this night, only matzah!
3. On all nights we eat various vegetables, and on this night, bitter herbs!
4. On all nights we eat sitting upright or reclining, and on this night we all recline!

Why is Chabad's 4 Questions (Mah Nishtana) in a different order?

Of all the rituals addressed by the child, dipping seems to be least important. Unlike matzah and bitter herbs, it is not a Biblical or rabbinic mitzvah; and unlike reclining, it does not express a central theme of the holiday. How striking, then, that the first of the four questions addresses neither the first ritual the child encounters—reclining while drinking the *Kiddush* wine—nor the more essential rituals of the night, but **a custom!**

The Haggadah thereby addresses a misconception regarding the place of customs in Judaism. Some consider customs to be nonessential, a "luxury." They recognize the need to make sacrifices for fulfilling G-d's commandments, but they would not do the same for "mere" customs. In regards to educating children, they argue, we ought to compromise on the customs so as to better focus on the primary obligations.

The Four Questions tells us otherwise. What is the first thing that the child asks about? What grabs his or her attention and makes the deepest impression? Jewish customs. Not only are they not expendable, they are central. For the customs have the unique capacity to sensitize a child to the sanctity of Torah and G-d's commandments. The customs give our children a strong Jewish identity and the sense that they are part of a nation chosen by G-d to be beacons of goodness and holiness in this world. - The Rebbe

## "I WILL PASS THROUGH THE LAND OF EGYPT...I, HASHEM" ~ No Shame in Delegating, Why Act Alone?

"I will pass through the land of Egypt and I will smite every firstborn, and upon all the gods of Egypt I will perform acts of judgment, I, Hashem. " – Haggadah

The sages queried the frequency of Hashem referring to Himself with the personal pronoun and explained that Hashem was promising to do it all Himself: I'll rescue them and not send an angel. I, and not a Seraph. I, and not a messenger. I'll do it all Myself.

Why was Hashem was so insistent on doing everything Himself, why not leave something for the angels to do? There is no shame in delegating, so why go to such pains to point out that Hashem acted alone?

The Rebbe explained that Hashem is teaching us how to respond to people in need.

When we meet someone who needs help, we must be ready to sacrifice personal comfort in our effort to save a fellow Jew. Going "down to Egypt"; descending from our position of comfort and ease into an ugly morass of pitfalls and personal danger, nothing is too great a sacrifice.

It would be so easy to relax and leave the heavy lifting for others. Sure, I'd play my part, offer my effort to the joint taskforce, but surely saving the world should be a joint endeavor and I am content with a bit part of the glory. No one would fault me if I waited for others to join in before I stepped forward.

But that's not the lesson we learn from Hashem. He did it all Himself without waiting for angels or agents to play their part. When you see someone waiting for salvation, don't hang back as part of the crowd, but commit yourself totally to the relief efforts. People in trouble don't have the time or luxury to wait while you quibble over the command structure; they need your help! Hashem shows us by example, commit yourself & do it right away!

# The Pesach Seder

## DAYENU ~ The Great Power of Jewish Unity!

In the *Dayenu* song we list all the wonders that Hashem did for us when we left Egypt. After each of the fifteen stanzas of this hymn we say, "*dayenu*"—"it would have sufficed (been enough for) us."

One of the stanzas says: "If He had brought us to Mount Sinai, but not given us the Torah—*dayenu*!" Now this seems puzzling. What in the world would be the point of going to Mount Sinai if not to receive the Torah? What other point is there in being there? After all, at this particular mountain there is neither food, nor water, nor skiing...

But, actually, something very special happened at Sinai even before Hashem appeared to the Jewish people. The Torah tells us that "*Vayichan sham Yisrael neged hahar*," "Israel camped there opposite the mountain." The biblical commentator Rashi points out that the word the Torah uses, וַיִּחַן (*vayichan*), is in the singular tense—"he camped" rather than "they camped."

This, Rashi explains, denotes that the entire nation encamped there as **one man with one heart**.

The *Dayenu* tells us that if all that was accomplished was the Jewish people standing united for one moment—this itself is an accomplishment of amazing worth. Coming together as one and putting aside all our differences for a greater purpose is one of the greatest mitzvot we can do. It stands on its own, and was a moment of closeness to Hashem that carried significance even if the Torah had not been given.

## MAROR ~ Why bring up the bitterness? Let's focus on the freedom instead!

What is so great about bitterness that we should want to remember it?

Our bitterness in Mitzrayim (Egypt) is what brought about the redemption. We never felt that we belonged there, we never got used to it. The bitterness brought out the feeling that we needed to change the situation.

## KORECH ~ Hillel's Delicious Sandwich – His Perspective.

The Haggadah shares some history with us: Hillel lived at the time of the Holy Temple, when eating the Pesach sacrifice was a part of the Pesach obligations. He ate the meat, the matzah, and the marmor like everyone else. But, instead of eating the three foods separately, he would make a sandwich combining the three, and eat it while reclining. To commemorate this we eat the Hillel sandwich (minus the meat) while reclining.

Symbolized in the sandwich is Hillel's **positive approach** to all the hardships in his life.

The sandwich is comprised of *matzah* and bitter herbs. *Matzah* is the thin bread that represents the freedom we have been granted, as opposed to being slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt. Inside the two pieces of *matzah* we place the bitter herbs, symbolizing life's hardships.

Hillel viewed the bitter parts of his life, particularly the hardships of poverty that G-d bestowed upon him, positively. So, while his life appeared difficult, he was able to understand that it was G-d's will and ultimately for a good reason. Therefore he placed the bitterness (bitter herbs) inside the freedom (*matzah*) and ate it while reclining.

## NIRTZAH ~ NOW in Jerusalem! לשנה הבאה בירושלים

The Alter Rebbe omitted from the text of his Haggadah the passage beginning, "The order of Pesach is now concluded," because, according to Chabad, Pesach never ends. Its influence extends continuously.

The truth is that a glimmer of every festival shines forth at least some part of the day, but Pesach's influence – the feeding of our faith – **reaches us the whole of each day**.

When we say "Next year in Jerusalem" it does not suggest, G-d forbid, that we do not imagine that Moshiach will come until next year. Rather, we expect that Moshiach will come **NOW**, and then, next year, when we celebrate Pesach we will ALREADY be in Jerusalem!"