

THE PESACH COMPANION

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When we first put together the Pesach Companion, it was an opportunity to capture something of the Bircas HaTorah experience on paper — the way we learn, the way we think, and the way Torah is meant to shape a person. Looking back now, it's striking how much of that original vision still feels present and alive.

This edition is both familiar and new. Many of the original pieces remain, because the Torah they express is not bound by time — it continues to speak, challenge, and inspire. At the same time, we've added new voices and fresh insights that reflect the ongoing growth of our talmidim and Rabbonim.

It is our hope that this Companion serves not only as something to read over Yom Tov, but as something that accompanies you — bringing the depth, clarity, and warmth of Torah into your Seder and beyond.

May we all be zocheh to receive the light of Torah with a full heart, and may this Pesach bring with it true cheirus, bracha and hatzlacha, and the zechus to witness the geulah sheleimah and the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash speedily in our days.

Rabbi Richard Jacobs
Executive Director

REASONS FOR THE EXILE IN EGYPT

by Rabbi Dov Sandler, Rosh Kollel

The commentators expatiate on the reasons our forefathers were exiled to Egypt. Rav Yitzchak Maltzin, one of the great Torah scholars of the 18th century, succinctly puts together a listing of major reasons in his commentary to the Haggadah, Siach Yitzchak. A digest of some of the major reasons is here provided:

It is a punishment for Avraham Avinu questioning Hashem's promise (Bereishis 15:8): "How will I know that I will inherit the land". This reason is given in the Gemara in Nedarim (32a).

The Seforno suggests that the Jews were punished with slavery when their spiritual level declined, after the death of the last of the 12 sons of Yaakov Avinu, and they fell into sin. The Seforno cites as support a verse from the prophet Yechezkel (20:8): "And, they rebelled against me and did not want to listen to me. Nobody threw away their idols, nor did they forsake the gods of Egypt, and I decided to pour my wrath on them in Egypt."

Rabbi Elazar Ashkenazi, the author of the work Ma'asei Hashem, suggests that the Egyptian Exile was not a punishment at all. Rather, Hashem knew that the ultimate goal of Avraham Avinu was to spread knowledge of Hashem's divinity and power. Therefore, it was an object of immense joy to Avraham Avinu when Ha-

shem informed him that his descendants will be exiled and enslaved, such that their redemption by means of incredible miracles will proclaim to the world the Oneness and Awesomeness of Hashem.

The Shl"ah HaKadosh and the Shemen HaMor maintain that the Egyptian experience was necessary in order to prepare the Jewish nation for the acceptance of the Torah. Namely, the Torah demands from the person total subjection to Hashem, and punctilious performance of all the *mitzvos*. A person's nature rebels against subjecting himself to such a regimen. By means of the harsh slavery endured in Egypt, the Jew developed the ability to accept the discipline of the Torah. The Shl"ah HaKadosh adds that the Promised Land of the Jewish nation, Eretz Canaan (ארץ כנען), is so named because it is related to the word *hachna'ah* (הכנעה), meaning subjection of oneself (to Hashem).

The Alshich HaKadosh (along with other Kabbalistics) writes that the slavery in Egypt was necessary to remove the impurity that entered the human race when Adam HaRishon ate from the Tree of Knowledge. The slavery served as a refining tool, and made the Jews eligible to receive prophecy.

The above are not an exhaustive listing of all the reasons (see other reasons in Nedarim 32a), but they are major factors to explain why we were enslaved. |

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WHAT 'PASSING OVER' REALLY MEANS

by Rabbi Moshe Krieger, Sho'el U'Meishiv

On the night of the *Lail HaSeder*, we perform many *mitzvos*: eating matzah, drinking the four cups of wine, telling the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. What does Hashem want us to achieve through the Seder night?

The Sefer HaChinuch (*mitzvah* 21) explains that the central goal of the night is to strengthen our *emunah*. The entire structure of the Seder is meant to deepen our faith in Hashem. The Ramban, at the end of Parshas Bo, teaches the same idea. Through the miracles of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, it became clear that Hashem exists, that He runs the world, that He punishes the wicked and protects the righteous. The miracles of Egypt were a revelation of Hashem's *hashgachah pratis*, His direct involvement in the world.

The Slonimer Rebbe explains that on the Seder night we return to these foundations of *emunah* in a special way. Every day we mention *Yetzias Mitzrayim* in *Krias Shema*. But there we only briefly recall that Hashem took us out of Egypt. On the Seder night, we do much more than mention it. Through the detailed telling of the story, through questions and answers, through the various *mitzvos* and symbols, we create a vivid experience. Chazal say (*Pesachim* 118b) that a person must see himself as if he himself left Egypt. The more we speak about it, the stronger the *emunah* becomes in our hearts. The Haggadah says whoever speaks more about the Exodus is praiseworthy—it means that every extra moment strengthens this foundation of *emunah*. The Rebbe said that the greatness of a person depends primarily on the strength of his *emunah*. Everything in Yiddishkeit stands on *emunah*. Learning

Torah and performing *mitzvos* are certainly important, but the depth of a person's belief in Hashem is what truly defines his spiritual stature.

The Seder is also about passing this *emunah* to the next generation. The Torah commands, "*Vehiggadta levincha*"—you shall tell your son (*Shemos* 13:8). We have to transmit our faith to the children and build a family that lives with *emunah*. When parents speak about *Yetzias Mitzrayim* with enthusiasm and clarity, that message enters the hearts of the children.

The Rambam (*Sefer HaMitzvot* 157) adds another purpose to the Seder night. Besides strengthening *emunah*, we are also expressing *hakaras hatov*—deep gratitude to Hashem.

On this night we thank Hashem for redeeming us from Egypt. In many communities Hallel is recited already in shul on the night of Pesach. During the Seder itself we drink the *arba kosos*, the four cups of wine, which symbolize redemption and praise. Later we say the *brachah* thanking Hashem for redeeming us and our forefathers. All this shows our deep gratitude to Hashem.

When we look more closely, something is puzzling. The Torah says that we bring a *Korban Pesach* to thank Hashem that He passed over the houses of the Jewish people during *Makas Bechoros* (*Shemos* 12:27). Hashem struck the Egyptian firstborns, but He passed over the houses of the Jews and did not harm them. That is why the holiday is called Pesach (Hashem passed over). Throughout all the plagues, the Jewish people were protected. Blood, frogs, lice and the other plagues affected only the Egyptians. Why is *Makas*

Bechoros singled out that we have to give Hashem special thanks that he passed over the Jews? Why is this event the focus of the Korban Pesach and even the name of the entire holiday?

Rav David Cohen brings an explanation from the Netziv in *HaEmek Davar* (Shemos 12:4). The Haggadah describes *Makas Bechoros* as *giluy Shechinah*—a revelation of the Divine Presence. Hashem Himself appeared, as it were, to carry out the plague.

When there is such a revelation of holiness, those who are spiritually impure cannot survive it. The Egyptians, immersed in the deep *tumah* of Mitzrayim, could not withstand this revelation of the *Shechinah*, and therefore their firstborn died. The Jewish people were also living in Egypt and had been influenced by that environment. In truth, they too were not fully worthy of standing before such a revelation of holiness. By strict justice, the Jewish firstborn could also have been harmed. Yet Hashem chose us as His people. At that moment He sanctified us and declared that we would be His nation. Because of that special relationship, we were able to withstand the revelation of the *Shechinah*.

This is the deeper meaning of Hashem “passing over” the houses of the Jews. It was not simply that He spared us from punishment. Rather, He elevated us and gave us a special *kedushah* that allowed us to stand in His presence. This explains why the Korban Pesach and the entire holiday are connected to this event. Our greatest gratitude is not only that Hashem saved our lives, but that He chose us as His nation and gave us the ability to connect to Him.

In his Hagaddah, Maaseh Nissim, the Nesivos Hamishpat explains a similar idea regarding the *brachah* we recite in the Haggadah - thanking Hashem not only for redeeming our ancestors but also for redeeming us. At first glance this seems strange. We ourselves were not in Egypt. Why do we say that Hashem redeemed us?

The Nesivos explains that the *brachah* refers to something deeper than physical freedom. The redemption was spiritual. When Hashem took us out of Egypt, He transformed us from slaves of Pharaoh into the servants of Hashem. He gave us a unique *kedushah* and made us His nation. That spiritual redemption did not end thousands of years ago. It continues to define us today. We are still the people

that Hashem sanctified at that moment. Therefore we can truly say that Hashem redeemed us.

The Orach Chaim (Shemos 23:22) adds another remarkable idea. He writes that every year on Pesach, especially on the night of the Seder, Hashem grants the Jewish people an additional measure of *kedushah*. The holiness that began at the Exodus continues to grow and deepen every year.

This gives the Seder night an entirely new meaning. When we thank Hashem, we are not only remembering a past event. We are acknowledging the ongoing gift of being Hashem’s people and having the privilege to serve Him.

This realization should lead us to a deeper form of gratitude and service. Reb Yerucham Levovitz, the great *mashgiach* of the Mir Yeshiva, explains that real *hakaras hatov* naturally leads to greater dedication. Whenever a person feels genuine gratitude toward someone, he wants to respond by doing whatever that person desires. If someone has done us a great kindness, we feel a strong desire to repay it. The same is true in our relationship with Hashem. When we truly appreciate the immense kindness Hashem has shown us — choosing us as His people and giving us the gift of Torah and *mitzvos* — we will naturally want to serve Him with greater devotion and joy.

This gratitude should not be limited to Pesach alone. Throughout the year we thank Hashem for many blessings — life, health, livelihood and protection from harm. But the greatest gift of all is that we have a connection with Him. We have Torah, *mitzvos* and the ability to come close to Hashem. That connection is the most precious gift a Jew can have.

Rav Shimon Green would often tell his students that the greatest thing a person should thank Hashem for is the opportunity to learn Torah; many people in the world never have that privilege.

This is really the deeper message of Seder night. Through building our *emunah* and recognizing all that Hashem has given us, we come to feel true *hakaras hatov* — not only for leaving Mitzrayim, but for becoming Hashem’s people and being able to connect to Him through Torah and *mitzvos*.

May we be *zocheh* to strengthen our gratitude to Hashem—on Pesach and throughout the entire year. |

THE REAL WAY TO PREPARE FOR THE PESACH SEDER

by Rabbi Yechezkel Lang, Ra"m

Pesach is almost here. What does the word Pesach mean? We all know that it means "Passover." However, the *sefarim* tell us that the word Pesach can also be understood as *peh sach* — "the mouth speaks." Obviously, this refers to the mitzvah of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, which we fulfill on the night of Pesach with our mouths.

And we speak, and we continue speaking: *Ve'chol ha'marbeh lesaper bi'Yetziat Mitzrayim, harei zeh meshubach*. But how do we prepare ourselves for this night of speech? Of course, we can review the Haggadah and prepare for the mitzvah of *Maggid* and *Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim*. But the *sefarim* tell us that there is also a very special way to prepare our mouths for this Yom Tov.

Each year, about a week before Pesach, falls the *yahrtzeit* of the holy Apter Rav, the *Ohev Yisrael*, a Chassidic Rebbe and a disciple of the *Maggid* of Mezritch.

He lived about two hundred years ago, and there is a beautiful story told about him. One Erev Pesach, he went to bake *matzos*. He baked them with the loftiest and holiest *kavvanos*, investing tremendous sanctity into the *matzos* he was preparing for the Seder. When he finished, he left them on the table and went out.

A short while later, there was a knock at the door. A poor man had come before Yom Tov, with nothing to eat for Pesach. The Apter Rav's wife answered the door and felt tremendous compassion for him. She opened the box and gave him the *matzos* her husband had baked with all of those holy *kavvanos*.

Then realizing what she had done she quickly took simple *matzos* and placed them in the box instead, so that her husband would not realize what had happened.

The Apter Rav returned home, and that night they sat down to the Seder with those simple *matzos*. When the time came to eat them, he ate them without saying a word.

His wife was relieved. Baruch Hashem, she thought, she would not be embarrassed.

The Seder passed, and then the rest of Yom Tov passed, and the Apter Rav still said nothing.

Some time later, there was another knock at the door. A husband and wife had come to ask the Rav for advice regarding a dispute between them. The Rav sat them down and listened to both sides. Before responding, he turned to his wife and asked, "Did you switch the *matzos* this year and replace them with different ones?"

His wife was startled. "Yes," she answered. "How did you know?"

He replied, "Even though I knew, I did not say a word. I kept my mouth shut. Before Pesach, and during Pesach, a person should never open his mouth in a way that makes his wife feel bad. That is how one prepares for Yom Tov. Our *peh* on the night of Pesach must be *kadosh*. And the way to make our mouths holy is by filtering what we say. We do not say things that hurt others, even if that comes at the expense of our own holy *mitzvos*."

The Apter Rav then said to the couple: "If I remained silent about my *matzos*, then you too — husband and wife who are fighting over something petty — can let it go. You can work it out. Make *shalom* between yourselves, and do not become overly invested in your own personal interests."

On the night of Pesach, when we fulfill the mitzvah of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, we do so in the spirit of *Ve'higadeta le'vincha*. We tell it to our children. And if we do not have children at the table, we tell it to our siblings, to our parents, to our wives. We are meant to transmit it in an atmosphere of *ahavah ve'achvah ve'shalom ve'rei'us*.

The *Korban Pesach* was brought, as the *pasuk* says, *seh le'veis avos, seh la'bayis* — a lamb for each father's house, a lamb for each household. It was a *korban* offered in a *chaburah*, in the unity of a family.

We know that one of the greatest *resha'im* in history was Stalin in Communist Russia. Part of his effort to advance communism was to destroy the trust and unity of the family. He encouraged people to inform on one another — parents against children, children against parents, brothers against sisters, sisters against brothers. He sought to break the integrity of the family so that loyalty would belong only to the regime.

Klal Yisrael, by contrast, begins at home. We are built as a nation by building the family unit: *seh le'veis avos, seh la'bayis*.

So this year, as we prepare for Yom Tov, let us build that family. Let us bring *shalom* into our homes — between husband and wife, between brothers and sisters, between parents and children. And the more *shalom* we bring into our homes, *be'ezras Hashem*, the more *shalom* we will bring into the world. May we be *zocheh* to bring the *Korban Pesach*, *be'ezras Hashem*, with the coming of the *go'el tzedek* in Yerushalayim, *bimheirah ve'yameinu*, Amen. |

SETTING US UP TO WIN

by Rabbi Yaakov Schonzeit, Ra"m

Moshe returns to Egypt to free the Jews, but, rather than easing the situation, he only makes it worse. Dejected and angry, Moshe asks G-d why He is doing bad to the people. G-d responds harshly to Moshe, but tells him to relay a message of hope to the Jews, which contains the four languages of redemption. 1) "I will **remove you** from under the oppression of Egypt." 2) "I will **save you** from your bondage." 3) "I will **redeem you** with an outstretched arm and with great judgements." 4) "I will **take you** for Me as a nation." (Shemos 6:6-7)

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains what these four expressions refer to. The first stage would lighten and ease the burden of slavery. The Jews still feared the Egyptians, so they would voluntarily offer their services. However, now the enslavement would be manageable. The second stage would be a complete cessation of all work. The third stage would be to remove the Jews from the Land of Egypt, which includes the splitting of the Yam Suf. Lastly, the fourth stage would be the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

We see that G-d assures four kindnesses to the Jews, but, that being said, the next verse contains a fifth promise, namely, "I will **bring you** to the Land [of Israel]." (Shemos 6:8)

We know that G-d's words are pure words without any trace of falsehood, and, if so, when G-d promises these five kindnesses, we should see their fulfillment without exception. However, although the first four kindnesses came true, the final promise to bring *these* Jews into the land was not kept. As a result of the Golden Calf and the sin of the Spies, the men between twenty and sixty-years-old were decreed to die in the desert without ever entering Israel. Therefore, how could G-d promise to bring *the Jews who left Egypt* into Israel, and then not fulfill His word?

The Ohr HaChaim raises this difficulty and offers the following answer. If we look at the text of these verses, we can notice a discrepancy.

"Therefore, say to the Children of Israel: 'I am G-d and I

will remove you from under the oppression of Egypt, and I will save you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgements. And I will take you for Me as a nation, and I will be to you a G-d, **and you will know that I am Hashem your G-d the One who took you out from under the oppression of Egypt.** And I will bring you to the land etc."

We see that there is a break between the fourth promise of "take you for Me" and the fifth promise of "bring you to the Land," namely the words, "you will know that I am Hashem your G-d etc." Why is this clause said here specifically? Why doesn't G-d wait until after the final promise to say this?

The Ohr HaChaim explains that this clause was intentionally stated here to make the final promise conditional. That is, G-d would *only* bring these Jews into Israel, *if* they recognized G-d's existence and involvement in the Exodus. However, if they failed to do this, then G-d would not be obligated to bring them to Israel. The first four things G-d said were unconditional promises, but the final one was dependent on us. Since the Jews sinned after leaving Egypt by worshipping an idol, they denied belief in G-d, which released G-d from His vow, and, therefore, these Jews did not merit entry into the Holy Land.

A final question on the Ohr HaChaim is why did G-d make the last promise conditional? Once He made the first four promises unconditional, why not do the same for the fifth?

We can suggest that G-d does not give *everything* to us free of effort. He sets us up with life, health, and the tools for success, but the final decision to succeed is left to us. If we choose correctly, G-d will reward us accordingly. Therefore, G-d gifted us with four stages of freedom. The final stage, however, is always put in our hands. G-d is ready to redeem us and bring us to Jerusalem. All we need is to "know that I am Hashem your G-d, the One who took you out from under the oppression of Egypt." |

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PESACH—TO BE AN EVED HASHEM

by Rabbi Dovid Lieberman, Ra"m

The Baal Haggadah tells us – “*k'neged arba banim dibra Torah – the Torah speaks of four sons*” and then attributes various *pesukim* in the Torah that express Pesach-related inquiries to each of the four sons. The wise son asks, “What are these laws that Hashem commanded you?” The wicked son asks, “What is this work that you are doing?” The Baal Haggadah comments about the wicked son that he says for you (*lachem*) and not for himself, since he dissociates himself from what the community does, he denies Hashem.

Many commentaries ask that the wise son also says “you” (*eschem*). What's the difference between their two questions? Doesn't the wise son also exclude himself? Is there a difference between the implications of the words '*lachem*' and '*eschem*'?

The Dubno Maggid suggests that there really is no difference between the words '*lachem*' and '*eschem*'. The Baal Haggadah is not basing his opinion on the word '*lachem*'. His indication is more powerful and deeper than that. The core difference can be understood with this example: - If you walk into someone's house and see a servant doing something that seems out of place such as making holes in the wall, you'll be prompted to ask the servant why he's doing this. However, there are two ways one can ask that question. One way is to simply ask the servant why he is making holes in the wall. However, the wise man knows that the servant wasn't doing this on his own. He realizes that his master told him to do it and he will ask the servant why his master told him to make holes in the wall.

The wise son at the Seder knows that devoted servants would never dream of deviating from the order of their master. Of course, his father is doing what Hashem told him. He is asking why Hashem

commanded you to do this. On the other hand, the wicked son doesn't entertain the fact that his father is a devoted servant of Hashem, faithfully carrying out his commandments. It's not part of his worldview. He assumes that each person has independence and is unburdened by the obligation to keep the *mitzvos*. He feels a person should act in a way that makes sense to him. So he asks his father, “Why are you doing this?”. This shows that his outlook on the world is that we don't necessarily need to do what Hashem told us. Rather, we can do as we see fit. His question shows that he does not include himself in the community of people who follow the archaic rituals of blindly following the commands of Hashem. That is what the Baal Haggadah means when he says that he separates himself from the community.

Pesach is a time when we focus on the seminal event of Yetzias Mitzrayim. The first of the Ten Commandments is “I am Hashem who took you out of Mitzrayim”. The Sifsei Chachamim is bothered by why Hashem describes himself as the One who took us out of Mitzrayim and not the One who created the world. Rashi addresses that question by saying that Hashem took us out so we should be subservient to him. This idea of being a servant to Hashem is a central theme of Hashem taking us out of Mitzrayim.

May we merit to intellectually understand and emotionally feel that we are indeed servants of Hashem - prepared to march to His orders. Not because it makes so much sense to us and we identify with its beauty and lofty purpose. Rather because they are the wishes and commands of our Father and we are His loyal servants. As we tell the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim, let us not pass over the opportunity to drive home this fundamental principle of being an Eved Hashem. |

THE MITZVAH OF MATZAH: RELEASING OR PURIFYING?

by R' Moshe-Simcha Sigala, Ra"m

During the course of the Pesach Seder, Rabban Gamliel in the Haggadah instructs us that there are three critical topics that must be mentioned in order to fulfill the *mitzva* of the night, namely the *korban pesach*, *matzah*, and *marror*. The Haggadah continues to detail that we should focus on each of these items, or their representatives in the case of the *korban pesach*, and explain the reason that each one in turn is present at the Seder. When it gets to the *matzah*, the Haggadah tells us that we eat *matzah* on Pesach night because, when our ancestors left Mitzrayim, their dough did not have enough time to leaven before HaKadosh Baruch Hu redeemed them and led them out of Mitzrayim; therefore, Klal Yisroel had to bake their unleavened dough into *matzah*, as

that was the only provisions that they had with them in their speedy emancipation from slavery. (Mishna, Pesachim 116a)

Many *meforshim* are troubled by the reason presented by the Haggadah because, before Klal Yisroel ever left Mitzrayim, Hashem had already commanded them to eat *matzah* on Pesach! (Shemos 12:15) So, why does the Haggadah assert that *matzah* is eaten on Pesach because, technically, our ancestors were prevented from making leavened bread and instead had *matzah* when leaving Mitzrayim? Why doesn't the Haggadah maintain that we eat *matzah* during Pesach because Hashem commanded us to?

The Shibolei HaLeket quotes the Ri"ד, who tries to tackle this issue by pointing to Hashem's omniscience, and the Ri"ד proposes that, even though Hashem commanded Klal Yisroel to eat *matzah* on Pesach, Hashem really only did so because Hashem knew that Bnei Yisroel would be rushed out of Mitzrayim without enough time to bake leavened bread. Therefore, the Haggadah informs us that the true reason that *matzah* is eaten is because the Jewish people did not have enough time to bake bread when leaving Mitzrayim, and the Ri"ד adds that, if Klal Yisroel would have had enough time, they would have actually made *chametz* bread because, on that first Pesach of history, we were only commanded to eat *matzah* together with the *korban pesach* on the **night** of Pesach.

While this explanation does address the issue at hand in the Haggadah, it creates a strange dynamic between Hashem's command to eat *matzah* and the physical reality that the Jews were rushed out of Mitzrayim. It seems difficult to understand why Hashem would manufacture a command to eat *matzah* that is based on a technical factor that Klal Yisroel just wouldn't get around to baking their bread in time, and it seems even harder to understand why we would then be told to eat *matzah* to remember the Jews being rushed out and not because of Hashem's initial command.

Furthermore, the Ri"ד appears to be in direct contradiction to the Gemara (Pesachim 96b) because, even though the Gemara initially suggests that there was only a prohibition against *chametz* for the night of the first Pesach, like the Ri"ד holds, the conclusion of the Gemara maintains that *chametz* was forbidden the entire first day of Pesach! In fact, the Ri"ד himself in the Piskei HaRi"ד (Pesachim, 116b, s.v. "*Rabban Gamliel omer...*") contradicts himself and sides with the Gemara's conclusion that *chametz* was forbidden the whole first day of the first Pesach!

The Ta"z takes a fascinating approach which sheds light on the Haggadah. On that first Pesach night when Klal Yisroel were eating the *korban pesach* before leaving Mitzrayim, the Ta"z explains that Moshe Rabbeinu along with the rest of Bnei Yisroel firmly believed that the prohibition of consuming *chametz* was connected to the injunction to eat the *korban pesach* with *matzah*, and, thus, there was only an issue with eating *chametz* on the first night of Pesach. Then, when Hashem miraculously orchestrated the events so that the Jews would be rushed out of Mitzrayim before even having a chance to bake leavened bread, Klal Yisroel understood that Hashem was pushing them out of Mitzrayim for their own good, and they took this as a message to them that the prohibition against *chametz* must really extend throughout the entire first day of Pesach.

(Divrei Dovid, Shemos 12:34, s.v. "*Terem Yechmatz...*")

The Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Tagger, *shlit"a*, once asked a very basic question on this Ta"z. Why was it necessary for Hashem to push Klal Yisroel out of Mitzrayim before they could bake their bread properly in order to show them that the prohibition against *chametz* was for the entire first day of Pesach? When Hashem initially instructed Klal Yisroel not to eat *chametz*, why couldn't Hashem just inform them from the very beginning that there is a problem with eating *chametz* for the entire day?

In the Derech Hashem (Chelek 4, Perek 8), the Ramcha"l explains that, prior to Yetzias Mitzrayim, the Jewish people were mixed amongst the other nations, and their physicality polluted and darkened their ability to connect to their spirituality. However, upon exiting Mitzrayim, the Bnei Yisroel became separated, and their bodies were purified by means of abstaining from *chametz* and eating *matzah* in order to prepare them to receive the Torah.

Based on this, the Rosh Yeshiva, *shlit"a*, proposed that, if the prohibition against *chametz* only existed during the first night, then this prohibition would be connected to the eating of the *korban pesach* and, therefore, it would serve the function of releasing Klal Yisroel from Mitzrayim. Hashem presented the Jews with two different *mitzvos*, namely *bris milah* and the *korban pesach*, in order to justify redeeming them from Mitzrayim because the Jews didn't have any merits by which to be released, so the problem of eating *chametz* would just be a detail in the *mitzvah* of *korban pesach* in order to free Klal Yisroel. However, if the issue of *chametz* really applies to the entire first day, then it serves a separate function that extends beyond Yetzias Mitzrayim, and it exists to prepare us for Kabbalas HaTorah. Now, Hashem understood that the only way that Klal Yisroel would perceive this subtle difference in the prohibition's function is if they would mistakenly assume that the prohibition against *chametz* was a releaser from Mitzrayim that only existed on the night, and then they would be graphically shown that the prohibition really extends into the next day as they ride out into the desert to receive the Torah.

So, sitting around the table on the Seder night, why do we care? If the Haggadah would attribute the *matzah's* consumption to Hashem's original command, then we would be eating the *matzah* in order to help us be set free. However, now that the Haggadah instructs us to eat the *matzah* because our ancestors were rushed out of Mitzrayim without leavened bread, we are eating the *matzah* in order to purify and prepare **ourselves** to receive the Torah. |

CHAROSES & MARROR: UNLOCKING OUR EXPERIENCES

by Rabbi Binyomin Schenkier, Ra"m

In the Gemara (Pesachim, 114a), the Mishna teaches us that we should bring *charoses* to the Pesach table, even though it's not a *mitzvah* to do so. However, Rabbi Elazar the son of Rabbi Tzaddok argues that it really is a *mitzvah* to have the *charoses*.

The Gemara (116a) questions the initial position: if it's not a *mitzvah*, then why are we bringing *charoses* at all? To which, the Gemara answers that the *charoses* is necessary because of a danger that lies within the *marror*. Rashi explains that the juices of the *marror* are (slightly) venomous, and the *charoses* neutralizes this issue. So, according to the first position of the Mishna, the *charoses* is just a technical addition that Chazal made to the Seder night for safety purposes.

With this in mind, Tosfos (114a, s.v. "Af Al Pi Sh'Ein Charoses Mitzvah") challenges this first position and asks, if the *charoses* is not a *mitzvah*, then how are we allowed to dip the *marror* in the *charoses*? Later on, the Gemara (115a) says that, if two items are simultaneously eaten, but one of the foods is not itself a *mitzvah*, then the non-*mitzvah* taste undermines the *mitzvah* taste and ruins the *mitzvah*. Here too, if the *charoses* is not a *mitzvah*, then the *charoses* should actually undermine the *mitzvah* of *marror*! However, Tosfos answers that our case functions differently because the *marror* is **only** able to be eaten by means of the *charoses* due to the venom problem, and, therefore, the *mitzvah* of *marror* remains intact despite the presence of the *charoses*.

Commenting on this Tosfos, the Maharsha proves that Rabbi Elazar, the second position in the Mishna, must also agree with this answer of Tosfos because, even though Rabbi Elazar holds that eating *charoses* itself is a *mitzvah*, he also should be wary that the *charoses* will undermine the *mitzvah* of *marror* in the times of the Beis HaMikdash when eating *marror* was a Torah *mitvah* and therefore could be undermined by the Rabbinical *charoses*.

So, since everyone must agree that the *charoses* is used to dilute the *marror's* venom, why does Rabbi Elazar argue that eating the *charoses* is also a *mitzvah* in its own right?

Rabbi Levi and Rabbi Yochanon debate what the *mitzvah* is according to Rabbi Elazar. (116a) Rabbi Levi

maintains that the *charoses* is eaten to remember the apple, which Rashi explains to mean that *charoses* recalls the kindness that Hashem did to birth Jewish babies under the apple trees in the fields of Egypt. Therefore, we make *charoses* out of apples and sour things. On the other hand, Rabbi Yochanon argues that *charoses* reminds us of the cement that was used to build in Egypt, and, therefore, we make *charoses* thick. Combining both of these positions, Abaye concludes that we should make thick *charoses* out of apples and the like.

But, what are Rabbi Levi and Rabbi Yochanon truly arguing about?

It occurs to me that Rabbi Elazar holds that the *charoses* is a *mitzvah* because he understands that the *charoses* must not merely be diluting the *marror*, but must also be enhancing the *mitzvah*. The *charoses* takes away from the experience of bitterness that we're obligated to feel by eating the *marror*, and Rabbi Elazar understood that Chazal wouldn't instruct us to do a *mitzvah* in a way that makes the *mitzvah* less effective, albeit more safe. Therefore, the *charoses* must be assisting the *mitzvah* in some way. With this concept in mind, in the Gemara, Rabbi Levi understands that the function *charoses* serves as a *mitzvah* parallels the physical effects of *charoses*. Just like it physically mitigates the bitterness of the *marror*, so too the *charoses* reminds us of Hashem's kindnesses that ensured the bitterness of the Egyptian servitude wouldn't turn us into bitter people. On the other hand, Rabbi Yochanon understands that, since the *charoses* serves to enhance the *mitzvah* of the *marror*, the *charoses* must be helping us relate to the bitterness that we experienced and, therefore, should be used to remember the details of the servitude, such as the thick cement.

Based on this, perhaps Abaye's conclusion is that, in order to fulfill Rabbi Yochanon's position and enhance our identity as Jewish people who have experienced much bitterness through the generations, we must at the same time recall that, even within those times of intense difficulty, Hashem was and is showering us with kindness and protection. This complete perspective will allow us to relate to our ancestors and our own experiences in a real way without succumbing to the venom of bitterness. |

AFIKOMAN—THE MISSING PIECE

by R' Yaakov Kaempf, Ra"m

The Shulchan Aruch (OC 477:1) tells us that one should be careful to eat the *afikoman* before midnight. This is because the *afikoman's* function is as a remembrance of the *Korban Pesach*, and one is obligated to finish eating his *Korban Pesach* before midnight.

This law originates from a Gemara in Pesachim (120b), where Rava says that according to Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah, a person who eats his *afikoman* after midnight has not fulfilled his obligation. There is some debate if the *halacha* follows Rabbi Elazar. The Rambam seems to say it does not, but the commonly accepted position is, like the Shulchan Aruch, that ideally the *afikoman* should be consumed before midnight.

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah derives his law from some interesting *pesukim* that we read in Parshas HaChodesh. First, Hashem commands Bnei Yisrael to eat the *Korban Pesach ba'layla hazeh*, on that night (Shemos 12:8). Then, a few *pesukim* later, Hashem describes the upcoming Plague of the Firstborn and says *ve'ovarti be'eretz Mitzrayim ba'layla hazeh vehikeisi kol bechor be'eretz Mitzrayim* – He will pass through Egypt **on that night** and smite every firstborn in the land of Egypt (Shemos 12:12). Rabbi Elazar says that just like Hashem's judgment on the Egyptians was before midnight, so too the *Korban Pesach* should be eaten before midnight. Meaning, in both *pesukim*, the words, *ba'layla hazeh*, on that night, refer to the half of night before midnight.

This gives rise to an immediate question. We know that the Plague of the Firstborn took place at midnight and not a moment before – which seems to be exactly the opposite of Rabbi Elazar's argument. If we connect the *Korban Pesach* to the moment that Hashem struck down all the Egyptian firstborn, it should only be permissible to eat the *Korban Pesach* (and by extension, the *afikoman*) from midnight onwards.

The Achronim suggest a number of technical approaches; I would like to suggest a conceptual approach.

We can suggest that when the second *pasuk* speaks about Hashem passing through the land of Egypt and smiting the firstborn, the passing and the smiting are not happening at the same time. Rather, first Hashem passed through the land of Egypt on that night before midnight and then began destroying the Egyptian firstborns. We can prove this idea from the wording of the *pasuk* – it inserts the phrase **on that night** in between the passing, which happened before midnight, and smiting, which happened at midnight exactly.

The question is: why? We know that the Torah does not contain any redundant words or ideas, and we must understand why it was necessary to teach us that Hashem 'surveyed' Egypt before midnight.

The Targumim, Onkelos and Yonasan, both translate the word *ve'ovarti*, I will pass, as *ve'isgaloi*, I will reveal, which means that the first half of the *pasuk* is a reference

to Hashem revealing Himself in Egypt. This accords well with the famous understanding that the goal of the plagues was not only to punish the Egyptians, but also to reveal different aspects of Him to the Egyptians and the Jews.

Once *ve'ovarti* is understood as an act of revelation, the focus shifts. The central issue is not simply the timing of the Divine act, but the points at which that revelation took hold in Klal Yisrael and found its expression in their actions.

In order to understand what about Hashem's revelation, and by extension the Plague of the Firstborn, began before midnight, we need to explain a key principle about the Exodus. Often, we think about the Exodus in terms of Hashem. Meaning, that the story of the Exodus is primarily about the wonders of Hashem, and the fact that it was the Jews that he redeemed is almost secondary. He could have redeemed anyone. However, we know that this is not true, because it was the fulfillment of Hashem's promise to Avraham – that his descendants would be taken out of Egypt.

Now, we can understand. Really, the moment the final revelation of Hashem began, the revelation that surpassed all the other revelations, was when the Jews started eating their *Korban Pesach*, as night fell. This act – withdrawing their hands from the sheep worshipped by the pagan Egyptians and consuming it in the service of Hashem – was the moment that made the Jewish people worthy of redemption.

This is why the Plague of the Firstborn began at nightfall and ended at midnight. It began at nightfall, with the Jews performing the action that Hashem's wisdom decreed they needed to do in order to merit for the redemption to take place. Then, it culminated at midnight, in the actual moment of redemption, the moment that the hold of the Egyptians on the Jews was broken forever – the Plague of the Firstborn.

If this is true of the redemption in Egypt, it may illuminate something about our own present experience as well. Over the past weeks, months, and years, we have been confronted with remarkable manifestations of Hashem's providence. The scale of the danger we have faced, and the comparatively limited scope of the devastation, should give us pause. Every death is a tragedy and must be treated with full seriousness. Even so, the overall pattern remains deeply striking, and should lead us to reflection and gratitude.

The way Hashem created the world is that it is not a story about Him. It is a story about us. This year, when we eat the *afikoman* before midnight, let us be reminded of the *Korban Pesach*. Let us be reminded that Hashem needs, as it were, each and every person to take his or her own step, and then *b'ezras Hashem*, we will all witness the complete redemption soon. |

CHAD GADYA—JUST KIDDING?

by Rabbi Richard Jacobs, Executive Director

One of the main purposes of Seder night is to learn the depths of the miracles that G-d did for us when he took us out of Egypt – G-d's strength, His ability to change nature at Will, and his eternal love for the Jewish people. These themes resonate throughout the entire Haggadah, including the songs at the very end.

At first *Chad Gadya* seems reminiscent of a nursery rhyme, but a few moments' reflection reveal hidden depths.

The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 38:13) at the end of *parshas* Noach quotes a fascinating conversation between Avraham Avinu and Nimrod. When initially challenged to worship fire, Avraham responds that it would be better to worship water which extinguishes fire. Nimrod then invites Avraham to worship water, and Avraham counters that it would make more sense to worship the clouds that bring the water. When subsequently requested to worship the clouds Avraham's rejoinder is that really the wind which carries the clouds would be more worthy. Ultimately, Avraham leads toward the recognition that there is a higher power beyond all of these. Nimrod, angered by Avraham's refusal, has him thrown into the furnace (Ur Kasdim), where Hashem saves him.

Chad Gadya follows a similar pattern.

One kid. One kid. That daddy bought for two zuzim. One kid. One kid.

And came the cat and ate the kid that daddy bought for two zuzim. One kid. One kid.

And came the dog and bit the cat that ate the kid etc. etc. until...

... And came The Holy One Blessed be He and killed the angel of death that killed the slaughterer that killed the ox that drank the water that doused the fire that hit the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid that daddy bought for two zuzim. One kid. One kid.

Except that this time the conversation is between the Egyptians and Bnei Yisrael.

The Egyptians worshipped the lamb and the goat. This is one of the reasons why the *Korban Pesach* had to be one of these two animals. In the year of the Exodus, when the Jewish people set aside the animals for the offering, they tied them to their bedsteads and left them there for several days, in order to check for blemishes. Passing Egyptians would ask what the bleating sound was and would be informed that the kid (their deity) had been set aside as an offering. When the actual offering was made it had to be roasted. This rich succulent aroma would spread through the town, pervading the Egyptians' homes. There was no avoiding the fact that the animal the Egyptians served was being offered to the G-d of the Hebrews.

Instead of succumbing to the Egyptian pressure to serve their idols, the Bnei Yisrael pointed out that the cat was their predator and as such it was more worthy of service. The cat itself was another Egyptian deity, and Bnei Yisrael were invited to pray to it. The discussion repeated itself, and passing through dog, fire, water, ox, man (slaughterer) culminates when, on reaching the *malach hamaveis* (angel of death), the Bnei Yisrael argued that if already the Egyptians were going to worship the angel of death, it was more fitting to serve G-d, to believe that He does, has done and will do, that He rewards those who keep His commandments and punishes those who transgress.

Chad Gadya. This song too commemorates that on Seder night, the night of the exodus, the night of Yetzias Mitzrayim, G-d took his people, a nation of slaves, out from the servitude of the most powerful nation on the planet. |

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THE HORSE AND ITS RIDER

by Rabbi Daryl Michel, Gabbai

After the miraculous events of Kriyas Yam Suf, Klal Yisroel open up with praise to Hashem and sing the Shiras HaYam. Then, immediately after, the Torah recounts that Miriam led all of the women out with timbrels, and the *pasuk* says that Miriam “answered them” by instructing them to sing to Hashem because He is very exalted. He cast the horse and its rider into the sea. (Shemos 15:20 - 21)

The simple implication of the *pasuk* is that Miriam was responding to the women, but the Torah never let us in on any specific question that was being asked. So, what was Miriam responding to? Furthermore, out of the entire Shiras HaYam that Moshe Rabbeinu and the Jewish men had just sung, why does Miriam specifically choose to repeat the praise that Hashem cast the horse and its rider into the sea?

The Divrei Yeshayahu (*Drasha Tet LeBar Mitzvah*, page 37) explains that, through the process of Yetzias Mitzrayim, the Jews were connected to Hashem’s miracles. They had felt the subjugation of their slavery, and now they were experiencing the hopeful sense of freedom. But, what was the purpose of their newfound freedom? It

wasn’t freedom for freedom’s sake, rather it was to bring them to serve a new master, HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and to accept the Torah & *mitzvos*. However, the Divrei Yeshayahu says that the Jewish women felt left behind in a sense because they were going to have less relevance to the *mitzvos*, seeing as women are not obligated in certain time-bound *mitzvos* and etc. Therefore, the women were searching for more ways in which to serve Hashem after Kaballas HaTorah.

To answer this question, Miriam repeated the praise that Hashem cast the horse and its rider into the sea. Why exactly did the horse need to be thrown into the sea? The Egyptian rider was chasing after Klal Yisroel after years of enslaving them, so the Egyptians definitely deserved to get what was coming to them. But, what did the horse do wrong? Miriam understood that the horse was being punished solely for its role in aiding and abetting the Egyptian’s pursuit of the Jews, and, therefore, Miriam realized that, if Hashem in His ultimate justice punishes the horse for helping the Egyptians achieve their evil goal, then surely Hashem will reward a person who encourages and supports another in fulfilling the Torah and doing the *mitzvos*. |

KRIYAS YAM SUF: CHARGING INTO HASHEM’S EMBRACE

From the *Shiurim of the Rosh Yeshiva*, Rabbi Nissim Tagger, *shlit”a*

The Egyptian army was closing in fast on Klal Yisroel from the rear, and the ocean was spread out in front of them. The Medrashim (Shemos Rabbah 21:5) teach that there were even packs of wild animals surrounding Bnei Yisroel on the sides, so the Jewish people were completely boxed in with no clear escape route.

Meanwhile, Moshe Rabbeinu was busy trying to boost morale and placate the rising panic, as the *pasukim* relate. When the Jews caught sight of the enclosing Egyptians, they were terrified, and the Jewish people cried out to Hashem. Then, in response to their fear, Moshe Rabbeinu instructed Klal Yisroel not to be afraid and to instead stand firm in order to witness Hashem’s salvation because the Jewish people would never again see the Egyptians in the way they would see them on that day. (Shemos 14:10 – 14)

So, on the one hand, Moshe Rabbeinu’s first job was to encourage and cheer on Klal Yisroel, but, at the same time, Moshe was working hard *davening* to Hashem.

(Rashi, Shemos 14:15) In fact, Moshe Rabbeinu was *davening* so intensely that Hashem responded with a very difficult *pasuk*. After all of Moshe Rabbeinu’s *tefillos*, Hashem asks Moshe, “Why are you *davening* to Me? Just talk to the Jewish people and go forward!” (Shemos 14:15)

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh (Shemos 14:15, s.v. “*Ma Titzak Elai*”) bombards this *pasuk* with questions, and the Ohr HaChaim starts off by probing Hashem’s strange language of “why are you *davening* to Me?” So, the Ohr HaChaim says that, since there is nothing else in existence for Moshe Rabbeinu to *daven* to except for Hashem, who else was Moshe supposed to *daven* to? Furthermore, Klal Yisroel were in the face of imminent danger, and the Torah demonstrates that a person is supposed to cry out to Hashem during a time of danger, as the *pasuk* says, “*Min ha’metzar karasi K-ah*” - “In distress I called out to G-d”. (Tehillim 118:5) So, why did Hashem challenge Moshe Rabbeinu for *davening* to Him when Moshe was just following the Torah’s instructions?

In the very next *pasuk*, Hashem commands Moshe Rabbeinu to raise his staff and stretch it out over the sea to split the Yam Suf, and then Bnei Yisroel will travel forward on dry land right through the water. (Shemos 14:16) So, the Ohr HaChaim concludes that Moshe Rabbeinu's *tefillos* were really answered, and, if so, why did Hashem have to yell at Moshe Rabbeinu for *davening* if Hashem ended up accepting those *tefillos*?

Finally, the Ohr HaChaim asks what was Hashem's intention in telling Moshe Rabbeinu to speak to the Jewish People and go forth? Klal Yisroel was surrounded on all sides and had nowhere to go, so where exactly did Hashem want Moshe to lead the Jews?

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh resolves all these difficulties with a single idea, which is based on the Zohar (Volume 2, 170b) and the Shemos Rabbah (21:7), and we will try to understand this point in order to apply it to our lives. At the time of Kriyas Yam Suf, the Jewish people were on the same spiritual level as the Egyptians, and the Malachim were protesting that Klal Yisroel do not deserve to be miraculously saved from the Egyptians because both the Jewish people at the time and the Egyptians were idol worshipers. The Zohar quoted by the Ohr HaChaim asserts that this was an example of the attribute of justice prosecuting, and the Zohar explains that, when the attribute of strict justice rules that a person does not deserve something, then it is impossible to undo that evaluation, unless an action is performed in this world that will strengthen the attribute of mercy.

With this concept in mind, the Ohr HaChaim explains that, when Hashem questioned Moshe Rabbeinu for calling out to Him, Hashem meant that Klal Yisroel's salvation was, in a sense, out of Hashem's control because the attribute of justice had already decreed that Bnei Yisroel deserved to be destroyed along with the Egyptians, so Moshe's *davening* was not being effective on some level. Therefore, the Ohr HaChaim writes that Hashem advised Moshe Rabbeinu how to circumvent the prosecution of the attribute of strict justice, and Hashem informed Moshe that the only way out of Klal Yisroel's predicament was for them to strengthen their *emunah* with all their heart and to dive into the sea **before** it was split.

So, when Hashem instructed Moshe to speak to Bnei Yisroel and go forward, Hashem meant that, instead of *davening*, Moshe Rabbeinu should inspire Bnei Yisroel in their *emunah* and then march them straight into the Yam Suf before it even split while relying on their *bitachon* in Hashem that a miracle would be performed to save them. Then, by way of this tremendous display of *bitachon* which defies all logic, the miracle would happen. And, the Ohr HaChaim points out that this is exactly what happened to Klal Yisroel in the end because Nachshon ben Aminadav dove into the water, and the sea split when the water reached Nachshon's throat on the merit of his actions. (Sotah, 37a)

So, what is the point according to the Ohr HaChaim? *Tefillah*, the most powerful tool, was unable to override Hashem's justice because the attribute of justice decides

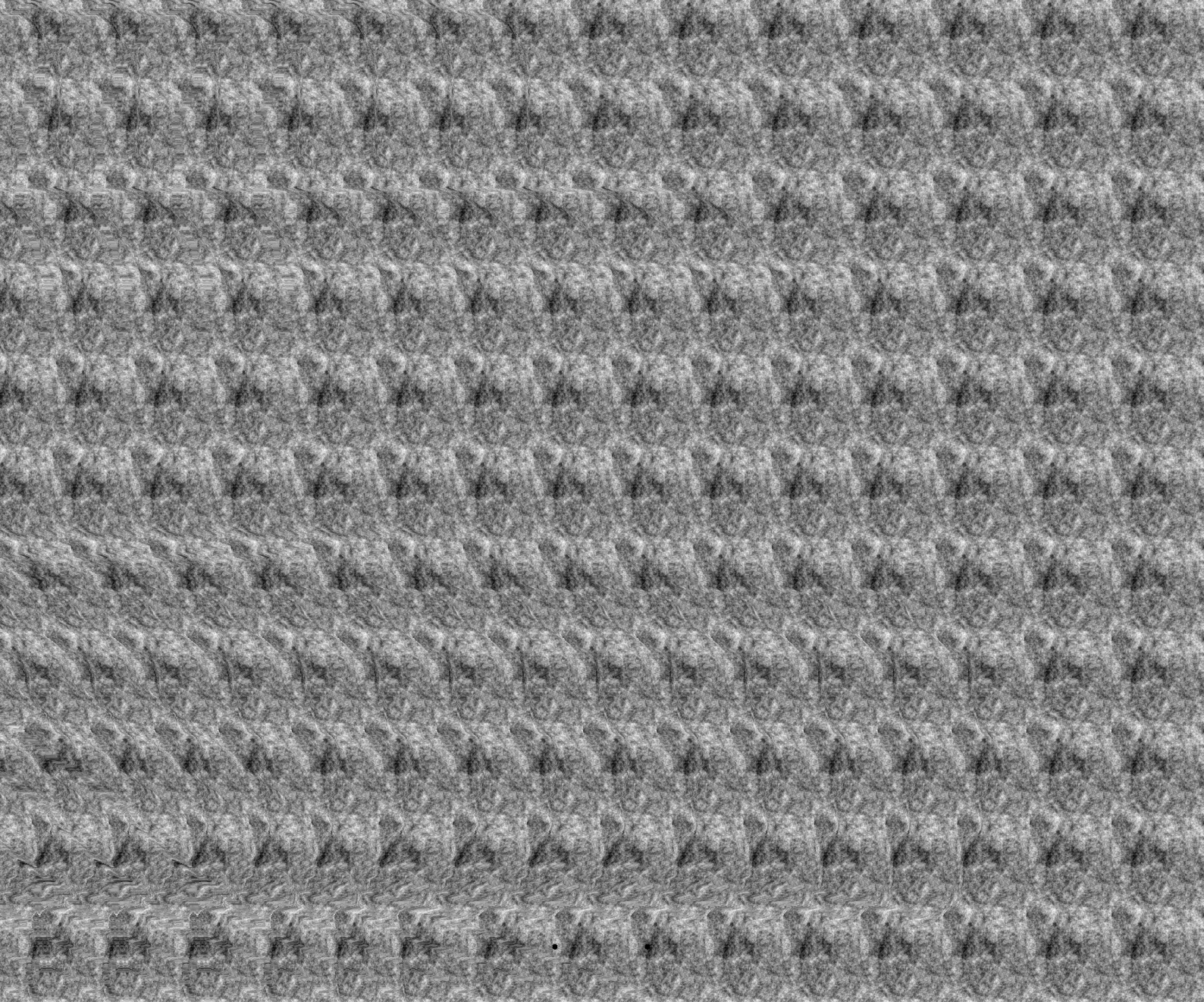
what a person rightfully deserves, and, when that evaluation is performed, *tefillah* cannot overturn that ruling. However, despite the finality of this evaluation, *emunah* & *bitachon* can undo the decision made by Hashem's justice.

This is not a mysterious *segulah* or a special trick. The attribute of justice is a very rational system. If you do 'x', you deserve 'y'. On the other hand, the attribute of mercy when put in the context of *emunah* and *bitachon* is, in a sense, an irrational approach if you will. Now, your relationship with Hashem will be determined by your approach. If you want to have a rational relationship with Hashem, then Hashem will employ the system of justice, but, if you break out into an irrational relationship with Hashem, then Hashem will respond in kind.

When Klal Yisroel decided to irrationally march forth into the sea with no logical plan other than relying on Hashem's kindness to perform a miracle, they deviated from the rational system of justice wherein *tefillah* was their only hope for reprieve, and **even** they, who the prosecuting angels were classifying as idolaters that deserved to be wiped out, were able to access this lofty level of divine intervention by means of their *emunah* & *bitachon*. Therefore, for sure, the average Jew who is unclear if he deserves to succeed or not can always shift to Hashem's system of mercy through *emunah* & *bitachon*.

But, in order to have this higher relationship with Hashem that operates with a super form of Hashgacha Pratit like Bnei Yisroel experienced at Kriyas Yam Suf, then a simple two-step process of *emunah* & *bitachon* is required. First, you have to arouse and strengthen your *emunah* until you really feel it, so go learn one of the *mussar seforim* about *emunah*. Then, the second step is *bitachon*. Now, *bitachon* is not telling yourself that Hashem is going to make everything work out how you want it to, rather, as we see from the Ohr HaChaim, *bitachon* is the performance of an action that demonstrates a recognition that Hashem is the only force that runs the world, such as Klal Yisroel charging into the ocean and expecting Hashem to split the sea. This process of *emunah* & *bitachon* in Hashem transforms your relationship with Hashem from the rational system of justice to the super relationship of mercy, which was the experiential reality of even the maidservants at Kriyas Yam Suf.

How can we apply this in our own circumstances without being reckless and irresponsible? By Kriyas Yam Suf, HaKadosh Baruch Hu *parkened* that this act of marching straight into the water and almost drowning was responsible, so, if you are unclear about the acceptable mode of *bitachon* and the right steps to take in certain situations, then call your *posek* or *rabbi* and ask for a *psak* of what is appropriate for your situation. There is a powerful concept here, and we have to figure out in each situation how to apply this process of *emunah* & *bitachon* to catapult ourselves into a new relationship with Hashem. |



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Rav Sholom Cohen ZT"L

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MOETZES CHACHMEI HATORAH,
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*In his Haskama to the Rosh Yeshiva's Sefer on
Meseches Shabbos and Meseches Kesuvos*



The student who enters the Yeshiva of Bircas HaTorah is not the same as the one who leaves. He is transformed into a disciple of another world—a world he never knew existed, a world he never dreamed of reaching...Anyone who listens to the Shiurim of the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Tagger Shlita, cannot remain in the same place—he is automatically lifted up. After a period of serious study, he will hardly recognize himself!

Rav Avraham Ziskind

ROSH YESHIVAS KESER TORAH
*Former Rosh Mesivta Yeshivas Beit
Shmuel & Yeshivas Netiv Hadaas-Kaplan*



Having had the privilege to be present at some of Rabbi Tagger's compelling shiurim—both on sugyos in Shas as well as in inyanei Hashkafa—I can attest firsthand to his unique ability to thoroughly engage his talmidim of all levels, provoking them to think honestly and be true to the nuance of the text, while at the same time encouraging creative solutions that can withstand rigorous critique. The process draws each talmid into the ever-expanding, magnificent world of Hashem's Torah, and the conclusions penetrate the heart, excite the mind, and engender a pervasive love of Torah.

Rabbi Elysha Sandler

MASHGIACH RUCHANI, YESHIVA SH'OR YOSHUV
From his Haskama on the Rosh Yeshiva of Bircas HaTorah's Mussar Sefer



I have had the privilege of getting to know Yeshivas Bircas HaTorah and its great Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Nissim, along with many of the Yungelite and Bochorim. Bircas HaTorah is an outstanding Makom Torah, with talmidim who are serious, focused, engaged, and energized. I have spoken there for the talmidim and met many of them, and I see in the atmosphere—and in each of them—tremendous she'ifus for aliyah in Torah and ruchniyus, and a desire to serve Klal Yisrael. This reflects both the Rosh Yeshiva and the talmidim themselves, who create an atmosphere of real ruchniyus growth with a seriousness of purpose.

Rabbi Aharon Kotler

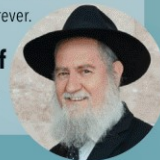
**PRESIDENT EMERITUS,
BETH MEDRASH GOVOHA
LAKEWOOD**



Many of our talmidim from Yeshiva Maharsha SA have learned under the guidance of the esteemed Rosh Yeshiva HaRav Nissim Tager shlita. I can only praise and endorse the Yeshiva, not only in terms of the level of learning but for the care, nurturing and love of the talmid which instills an ahavas haTorah in them. This stands with them forever.

Rabbi Menachem Raff

**RAV OF KEHILLAS MAHARSHA,
SOUTH AFRICA**



Valley Torah High School and Yeshivas Bircas HaTorah have had a deep relationship for many years. I personally have experienced the unique Torah atmosphere that permeates this yeshiva. The love, concern, and commitment to every talmid that they manifest—even after they leave the yeshiva—is nothing short of remarkable. For a young man mature enough to appreciate what Bircas HaTorah has to offer, there is no yeshiva like it!

Rabbi Avrohom Stulberger

MENAHEL, VALLEY TORAH LOS ANGELES



I have had the privilege of visiting the Yeshiva on a number of occasions and have witnessed the warm, family atmosphere where the Rebbeim invest in their Talmidim. Bircas HaTorah excels in the personal attention they provide for each boy and they build them and nurture them to become real Bnei Torah with a love of learning. The Rosh Yeshiva opens their minds and challenges them in learning and on their outlook in life, which develops Talmidim that are thinking and growing in their Avodas Hashem.

Rabbi Ilan Halberstadt

RAV OF BEIT KNESSES MACHZIKE HADATH, GOLDERS GREEN



Our South African Kehillah has benefited greatly from the graduates of Bircas HaTorah, who, I have found, emerge from years of learning at Bircas with a deep appreciation for the value of achrayus—responsibility—for Klal Yisrael. Their impact when returning home has always been, and continues to be, a source of chizuk for our kehillah.

Rabbi Warren Goldstein

CHIEF RABBI, SOUTH AFRICA



YESHIVAS BIRCAS HATORAH
ישיבת ברכת התורה

For more information or to apply visit bircas.org

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For the Professionals Program, please contact Rabbi Richard Jacobs 054-550-9740 - rabbijacobs@bircas.org