

הגדה  
שאל  
פסח  
Haggadah  
shel  
Pesach

*The Wise Son  
says. . .*

# *Haggadah shel Pesach*

---

The Wise Son Says . . .

ISBN 9798328919937

© 2024 by Thirtysix.org. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, whether electronic, mechanical, recording, by photocopying, or otherwise, if the intended use is not consistent with the intention of the publisher and the copyright holder. Failure to comply with the above is a violation of international copyright laws.

Please send corrections to: [pinchasw@thirtysix.org](mailto:pinchasw@thirtysix.org).

Published by:

**Thirtysix.org & Shaarnun Productions**

22 Yitzchak Road

Telzstone, Kiryat Yearim, Israel

9083800

*Dedication  
Page*



<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Seder</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Kadesh</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Urchatz</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Karpas</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Yachatz</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Maggid</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Rachtzah</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Motzi</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Matzah</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Marror</b>	<b>101</b>

<b>Korech</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Shulchan Aruch</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>Tzafun</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>Barech</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Hallel</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>Nirtzah</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>Zemiros</b>	<b>152</b>



It is a curious thing. Each year millions of Jews around the world sit down to make a *Pesach Seder* to commemorate an event that much of the world thinks never happened, including the majority of Jews. But, we make one anyhow, including Jews who question the origin of this tradition.

We are not the only people to do this. Various religions and cultures also continue to celebrate questionable historic events, the spirits of which tend to be contradicted by present-day lifestyles. It's the power of tradition that keeps alive what for many died long ago.

Hypocrisy? Sometimes. Perhaps this is what bothers the *Evil Son*, the Evil Son and main antagonist in the *Haggadah*. He's the one who has the gumption to ask, "*What does this service mean to you?*"

As the *Bais HaLevi*<sup>1</sup> explains, it's not that the *Evil Son* disagrees that the *Pesach* Offering once had meaning. A lamb

---

<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Yosef Dov[a] Soloveitchik (1820–1892) was a rabbi of Brisk (*Brisker Rebbe*), and the author of *Bais HaLevi* by which name he is better known.

## Introduction



back then was an Egyptian god, and we had to break away from that to become worthy of redemption. “But who,” the *Evil Son* asks, “makes a god out of a lamb today?”<sup>2</sup>

Though we “break his teeth” for asking his question and chastise him saying, “Had you been there, you would not have been redeemed!” the truth is, his question is a good one. In fact, it is one that the *Haggadah* each year asks all of us to answer by the end of the evening. The right answer is not only *liberating*, it is *freedom* itself.

Because the problem with the *Evil Son* is not his question, but his answer. For him, the question *is* the answer; because for him it is rhetorical: this service may have made sense back in the days of leaving Egypt, but today it is meaningless.

For that, we break his teeth and rap his knuckles. But how do we know for sure that the *Evil Son* would not have left Egypt had he been there? Would he not have had a different perspective then while actually going through redemption?

Not really. It is his approach to truth in general that reveals his Four-Fifths mentality. Had he been there, the *Evil Son*

---

<sup>2</sup> *Haggadah Shel Bais HaLevi*. Hence, when the *Haggadah* says, “to you, and not to him,” the “him” he refers is really “Him,” that is, God Himself. That is, the *Evil Son* doesn’t just say the *mitzvah* has no meaning for him, but for God as well.





would have been part of the 12 million Jews who died during the Plague of Darkness for not wanting to leave Egypt.<sup>3</sup> Despite what they witnessed, they chose to remain in Egypt because they did not get the message of the *Pesach* Offering.

Sure, we no longer worship Egyptian gods, and therefore no longer have to parade through the streets with a lamb, an Egyptian deity, to prove our loyalty to God. But that is not the entire reason for the *Pesach* Offering. The *Pesach* Offering is always relevant, even long after the Exodus is but a distant memory.

And before it as well. The *Midrash* says that Adam *HaRishon* told his two sons, Kayin and Hevel, to bring their offering on the fourteenth of *Nissan*, the destined night for the *Pesach* Offering by the future Jewish people.<sup>4</sup> The *Bais HaLevi* says that our forefather Avraham was already eating *matzah* on the fifteenth of *Nissan*, hundreds of years before Egyptian exile even began.

If so, the question becomes: Do we eat *matzah* because there wasn't enough time to bake bread when leaving Egypt? Or was there not enough time to bake bread so that we would eat *matzah* each year on *Pesach*? Was leaving in haste

---

<sup>3</sup> *Rashi*, *Shemos* 13:8; *Sanbedrin* 111a.

<sup>4</sup> *Pirkei d'Rebi Eliezer*, Ch. 21.



—*b'chipazon*—incidental or intentional?<sup>5</sup>

Contrary to the *Evil Son's* way of thinking, *mitzvos* are eternal. They are beyond everyday reality. They are not circumstantial, though specific circumstances may have led to their introduction, as in the case of the exodus from Egypt and the *Pesach* Offering. If anything, the *mitzvos* make the specific outcomes possible, such as the Exodus in Moshe's time, as they will the leaving of exile in our time.

It is the *Chacham*—Wise Son—in each generation who understands this. He might be part of the evolving world, but he also lives above it. While the *Evil Son* thinks that the modern world is where it is at, and that the Torah world is antiquated, the *Wise Son* knows the opposite is true. From the *Wise Son's* perspective, it is the modern world that is dated, and the Torah world that is eternal. Hence, the *Haggadah's* response to his question: You, in turn, must teach him the laws of *Pesach* . . .

Wait, that's it? That's the *Wise Son's* entire reward for being on the right side of the argument? Absolutely. Unlike the *Evil Son*, *halachah* (Jewish law) for the *Wise Son* is not just restrictions to keep a Jew in spiritual line. It is the path to true freedom, designed by God to help a person overcome in-

---

<sup>5</sup> You must eat it *b'chipazon*—in haste. . . (*Shemos* 12:11)



instinctual behavior that overrides the will of the soul.

In fact, it is one of the greatest ironies of life how people think they are free when they are in fact slaves to their *yetzer haras*.<sup>6</sup> *Mitzvos*, and the *halachos* for properly implementing them, are the only true defense a person has against their *yetzer hara* and the true freedom it stifles. Seeing that the *Wise Son* has bought into that truth, we further supply him with the means to achieve it.

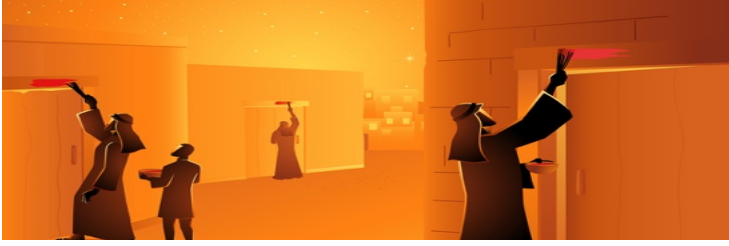
So what's it going to be, the *Wise Son's* idea of freedom, or the *Evil Son's*? That is the question the *Haggadah* poses to *all* of us each year we sit down to make a *Seder*. The rest of the evening is to decide for ourselves which path we want to follow, as the prophet said:

*Who is wise and will understand these, discerning and will know them; for the ways of God are straight, and the righteous will walk in them, and the rebellious will stumble on them. (Hoshea 14:10)*

In closing, it is more practical to read the commentary in advance of the *Seder*, and underline particular points to bring up during the *Seder*. The night is not timeless for everyone at the *Seder*; and patience varies from person to person.

---

<sup>6</sup> The evil inclination, our bodily instinct to satisfy material desires, usually at the cost of spiritual growth.



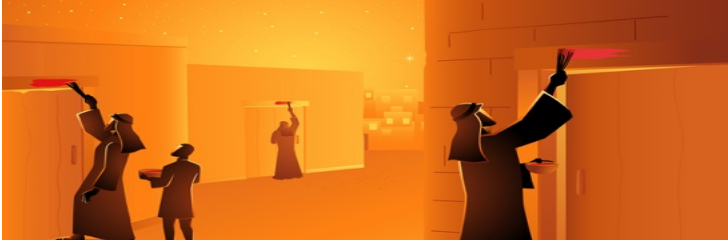
קִדְשׁ. וְרַחֵץ. כְּרַפֵּס. יַחַץ. מִגִּיד.  
רַחֲצָה. מוֹצֵיא מַצָּה. מְרוֹר. כְּוֹרֵךְ.  
שְׁלַחַן עֹרֵךְ. צָפוּן. בִּרְךְ. הַלֵּל.  
נִרְצָה.

WHEN WAS THE last time anyone sang a table of contents?  
That is the way many families begin their *Pesach Seder* each  
year. Why, and why is it called a *Seder* at all?

The Torah says:

*The earth was tohu vavohu—null and void, and there was  
darkness upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God  
hovered above the water. God said, “Let there be light!” and  
there was light. (Bereishis 1:2-3)*

The creation of light did not only illuminate a very dark  
world. It was the first step towards ending the *tohu*—chaos—  
of the first day of Creation, and each subsequent act of creat-  
ing added to that. By Day Six and the creation of man, all that  
remained to complete the process was to not eat from the  
*Aitz HaDa’as Tov v’Ra*, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and



Evil.

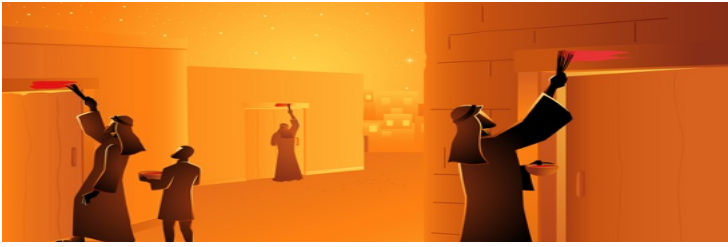
Had Adam *HaRisbon* complied, he would have banished chaos from Creation completely and *Yemos HaMosbiach*, the Messianic Era, would have begun. He didn't, and instead increased the chaos in Creation, ending paradise and leaving his descendants to struggle against the chaos of history.

History therefore is meant to be the *tikun*—rectification—of this, which is why, the *Gemora* says, the Torah was given:

Reish Lakish said: “What is the meaning of: *‘And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day—HaShishi’* (*Bereishbis* 1:31)? Why [is it not written *shishi* only? Why] do I require the extra *Heb* [which is not used for any of the other days]? It teaches that The Holy One, Blessed is He, established a condition with Creation and said: ‘If the Jewish people accept the Torah [on the sixth day of *Sivan* in 2,448 years], you will [be able to continue to] exist; and if they do not accept it, I will return you to the state of *tohu vavohu*—chaos and disorder.’” (*Shabbos* 88a)

This leads us to the answer of another important question about which we should remind ourselves every day: Why did God overtly step into history, suppress the laws of physics, and break the laws of free will to save the Jewish people? This is also something that many have come to take for granted.

## Seder



The prophet Yeshayahu said it the clearest:

*I am God; I called you for righteousness and I will strengthen your hand; and I formed you, and I made you for a people's covenant, for **a light to nations**.* (Yeshayahu 42:6)

As we saw on the first day of Creation, it is light that brings order to chaos. Without light, there can be no order. Each year the Jewish people sit down and make a *Seder* to remind us that we were redeemed from slavery for a specific mission: to bring the light of Torah to the world and order to Creation.

But it is clear from history that what God calls order and what man calls order can be very different. This brings us to the next part of the *Seder*: *Kadesh*.



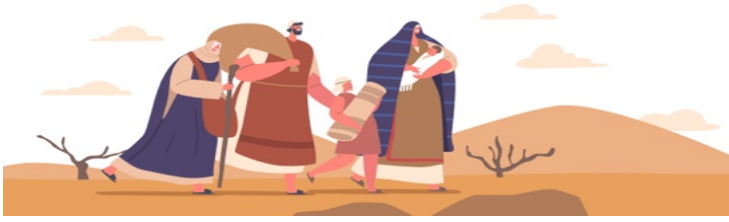
THE FOUR CUPS of wine correspond to the four terms of redemption in the Torah, derived from these verses:

*Therefore, say to the Children of Israel, “I am God, and I will take you out (**vehotzeisi**) from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will save you (**vehitzalti**) from their labor, and I will redeem you (**vega’alti**) with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. And I will take you (**velakachti**) to Me as a people, and I will be a God to you, and you will know that I am God your God, Who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.”* (Shemos 6:6-7)

Each word represents a different stage in the redemption process from Egypt.<sup>1</sup> The first term (*vehotzeisi*) refers to the

---

<sup>1</sup> *Aderes Eliyahu, VaAira* 6:6.



end of the labor, the second (*vebitzalti*) to the end of all oppression, the third (*vega'alti*) to the actual leaving of Egypt, and the fourth (*velakachti*) to the receiving of the Torah. In a more general sense, however, each stage of the redemption process can be applied on a personal level as well.

Since this is the first cup, one should have intention for the first terms, *vehotzeisi*—I will take you out.

One of the most important differences between human beings and animals is the ability to distinguish between the holy and the profane. This is what allows a person to strive for spiritual excellence and have a relationship with God:

*God spoke to Moshe, saying: "Speak to all the congregation of the Children of Israel, and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I, God your God, am holy.'" (Vayikra 19:1-2)*

If a person loses this ability, they lose their Godliness and descend to the level of *Dalet-Mem* of "Adam," the level of the "*chamor*—donkey," which cannot make such distinctions.<sup>2</sup> They descend to the lowest level of spiritual impurity, as did the Jewish people in Egypt, making them completely material.

*Adam*—man—is spelled *Aleph-Dalet-Mem*. *Aleph* is the

---

<sup>2</sup> This is explained in more detail in *Maggid*.





number one, and similar to the word *aluph*, which means “chief.” Therefore, *Aleph* alludes to God, and comprised of two *Yuds* and a *Vav*, it has a total *gematria* of 26, the same *gematria* as the *Shem Hovayah*, God’s four letter Ineffable Name.<sup>3</sup> An *Aleph* even points Heavenward.

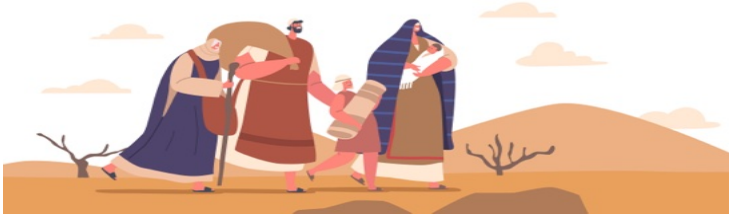
Therefore, the *Aleph* of *Adam* represents the Godly part within man, the *soul*. The *Dalet-Mem* spells *dabm*—blood, the symbol of man’s physical component (*chomer*), the physical body we have in common with animals. When in balance with the *Aleph*, the letters combine to spell *Adam*, which has the same *gematria* as *geulah*—redemption.

If a person ignores their soul, pursuing the whims of their body, the *Aleph* all but disappears, leaving only the *Dalet-Mem*. Hence, the first of the Ten Plagues was blood, to show the Jewish people what had become of them after 209 years in Egyptian exile. Since the revelation of God increased with each plague, they also strengthened the *Aleph* in the Jewish people until, fully restored, the *Dalet-Mem* became *Aleph-Dalet-Mem*, equalling *geulah*, both in *gematria* and reality.

It is the *Aleph*—the soul—in a person that provides the capacity to be *mavdil*, that is to separate between good and evil, holy and profane, pure and impure. Therefore, the abili-

---

<sup>3</sup> *Osios d’Rebi Akiva*.



ty to make such separations measures the health of the *Aleph* in a person, their level of holiness, and their capacity to relate to God, as it says:

*You must therefore distinguish between kosher animals and non-kosher ones, between unclean birds and clean ones. . . You must be holy to Me, for I, God, am holy, and have separated you from the nations so you can be Mine. (Vayikra 20:25)*

Bringing order to chaos depends upon this, as human history makes clear. Too often people do not think deeply enough into ideas to see how they are either similar or different from one another because, on the surface, the opposite seems to be true. Such mistakes have been quite costly, even deadly at times.

We acknowledge this truth and imperative by beginning *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* with *Kiddush*, a word that also means “separation.” It is an important step in the direction of true freedom.

*Like royalty, everyone at the Seder should have their cup filled with wine (or grape juice) by another person for each of the four cups.*

*The person making Kiddush should pick up their cup with both hands, and then hold it in the right hand only (or left hand if left-handed) for the brochah. The cup should sit in*

## Kadesh



*the palm of the hand so the fingers can wrap around the cup from below like rose petals around a flower.<sup>4</sup>*

*After the brochah, each person should drink the majority of the cup (at least 3.3 fluid ounces) at one time while sitting down and leaning on the left side (women do not have to lean).*

*If the first night of Pesach is Friday night, then the first cup is also Shabbos Kiddush, a Torah obligation. One should therefore drink at least 4.42 – 5.07 fluid ounces for the first cup only.<sup>5</sup>*

*Begin here on Shabbos and include the bracketed words:*

וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם  
הַשֵּׁשִׁי: It was evening and it was day,  
the sixth day.

וַיִּכְלֹוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל  
צְבָאָם. וַיִּכְלֹוּ אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם  
הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה  
וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל  
מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה. וַיְבָרַךְ: And the heavens and the earth  
and all their hosts were com-  
pleted. And on the seventh day  
God finished His work which  
He had made, and He rested  
on the seventh day from all His

<sup>4</sup> Zobar; Introduction, Os 2.

<sup>5</sup> Sefer Kol Dodi, Siman 2:6.

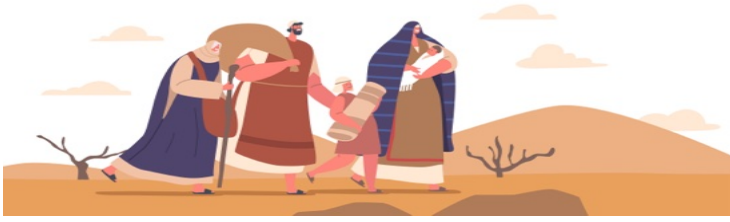


<p>אֱלֹהִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ, כִּי בּוֹ שֶׁבֶת מְכֹל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת.</p>	<p>work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, for on it He rested from all His work which God created to do.</p>
---	---

*Continue here; begin here on a weeknight:*

<p>סִבְרֵי מַרְנֵנוּ וּרְבִנֵנוּ וְרַבּוֹתֵי בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.</p>	<p>Blessed are You, God, our God, King of the universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.</p>
---	--

<p>בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל עַם וְרוֹמַמְנוּ מִכָּל לְשׁוֹן וְקִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו. וַתִּתֵּן לָנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַהֲבָה (שִׁבְתוֹת לְמִנּוּחָהּ וּ) מוֹעֲדִים לְשִׂמְחָה, חֲגִים וְזִמְנִים לְשִׂשׁוֹן, אֶת יוֹם (הַשְּׁבֶת הַזֶּה וְאֶת יוֹם חַג הַמִּצּוֹת הַזֶּה, זְמַן חֲרוּתֵנוּ (בְּאַהֲבָה), מִקְרָא קִדְּשׁ, זְכָר לְיֵצִיאַת מִצְרָיִם. כִּי בָנוּ בְּחִרְתָּ</p>	<p>Blessed are You, God, our God, King of the universe, Who has chosen us from among all peo- ple, and raised us above all lan- guages, and made us holy through His commandments. And You, God, our God, have given us in love (<i>Shabbos</i> for rest and) festivals for joy, holi- days and times for rejoicing this day (of <i>Shabbos</i> and this day) of this holiday of <i>Matzos</i>, the time of our freedom (in love) called holy, recalling the departure</p>
--	--



וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים,  
 (וְשַׁבָּת) וּמוֹעֲדֵי קִדְּשֶׁךָ  
 (בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרָצוֹן), בְּשִׂמְחָה  
 וּבְשִׂשׂוֹן הַנִּחְלָתָנוּ. בְּרוּךְ  
 אַתָּה יי, מְקַדֵּשׁ (הַשַּׁבָּת וְ)  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַזְּמַנִּים.

from Egypt. For You have chosen us and sanctified us from all the nations, (and *Shabbos*) and Your holy holidays (in love and desire) in joy and rejoicing You have bequeathed us. Blessed are You, God, Who (sanctifies *Shabbos* and) Israel and the times.

*On Motzei Shabbos, a candle with two flames should be lit from an existing flame, and this added. Since it is Yom Tov, the candle should burn out on its own.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ  
 הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ.  
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ  
 הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ.  
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ  
 הָעוֹלָם הַמְּבַדִּיל בֵּין קִדְּשׁ  
 לְחֹל, בֵּין אֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ, בֵּין  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַמִּים, בֵּין יוֹם  
 הַשְּׁבִיעִי לְשֵׁשַׁת יְמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה.  
 בֵּין קִדְּשָׁתָּ שַׁבָּת לְקִדְּשָׁתָּ

Blessed are You, God, our God, King of the universe, Who creates the lights of fire.

Blessed are You, God, our God, King of the universe, who makes a distinction between sacred and profane, between light and darkness, between Israel and the nations, between the seventh day and the six workdays. You have made a distinction between



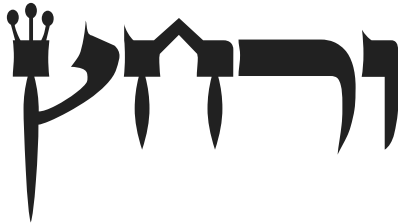
יום טוב הַבְּדִלְתָּ, וְאֵת יוֹם  
הַשַּׁבִּיעיַ מִשֵּׁשֶׁת יְמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה  
קִדְשָׁתָּ. הַבְּדִלְתָּ וְקִדְשָׁתָּ  
אֶת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִדְשָׁתְךָ.  
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הַמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין  
קֹדֶשׁ לְקֹדֶשׁ.

the holiness of the *Shabbos*  
and the holiness of the festival,  
and You have sanctified the  
seventh day above the six  
workdays. You have set apart  
and made holy Your people  
Israel with Your holiness.  
Blessed are You, God, who  
makes a distinction between  
holy and holy.

*Conclude with this brochah on the first night of Pesach:*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ  
הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ  
וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

Blessed are You, God, our  
God, King of the universe,  
Who has granted us life, sus-  
tained us, and enabled us to  
reach this time.



RITUAL WASHING IS not about removing *physical* dirt, but *spiritual* “dirt” called *tuma*. It is one thing to know the difference between holy and the profane, but a higher level of awareness to distinguish between the spiritually pure and impure, *tabor* and *tamei*.

Even the Jewish people require the Torah to define spiritual purity and impurity. Many of the underlying principles defy human logic and are *chukim*, or statutes, which, as *Rasbi* explains, are the source of derision for skeptics.<sup>1</sup>

Becoming an “*Adam Sbalaim*—Complete Person” means living with the reality of spiritual purity and impurity, and

---

<sup>1</sup> *Rasbi, Bamidbar* 19:2.



trying to achieve the former. This is why the Talmud refers to the Jewish people as “*Adam*,” and the gentile nations as the “*Umas HaOlam*—Nations of the World.”<sup>2</sup>

Spiritual purity is a “system” for making sure that one is truly living a holy life, which is why there are so many laws of *tuma v’tabarab* regarding the Temple and its service. Every Jew is supposed to be a temple in their own right so that God can dwell within them.<sup>3</sup> Even beyond the Temple a person has to try and maintain a higher level of spiritual purity.

The most severe level of *tuma* is a dead body. We were created to have a relationship with God, which a dead person cannot have, as it says, “*Neither will the dead praise God*” (*Tebillim* 115:17). *Tuma*, therefore represents a person’s limitation to connect to God and must be removed to remove that limitation. Through this washing at the beginning of the *Seder*, we do this, if only symbolically.

*Netilas Yadayim* is also a reminder of Temple times when such a washing actually made a difference. Then a person had to be careful not to impart spiritual impurity to others or to food, which hands could do to wet food. Touching *karpas* dipped into salt water makes it susceptible to impurity from

---

<sup>2</sup> *Yevamos* 61a.

<sup>3</sup> *Shemos* 25:8.



## Urchatz



our hands. Therefore, we first purify our hands, connecting us to Temple times and redemption.

*The person leading the Seder washes their hands as if for bread except without the blessing, “al netilas yadayim.” Some have the tradition of having the water brought to them at the table as royalty would.*



---

# כרפס

---

THE WORD KARPAS in reverse is *Samech-Peh-Raisb-Chof* and alludes to the 600,000 Jews who suffered hard labor during Egyptian slavery. *Samech* equals 60, and the last three letters spell the word *parach*, which means “harsh.” Therefore, the *karpas* is dipped into salt water because it represents the tears the Jewish people cried because of their slavery.

How does this part of the *Seder* help the growth process of the *Aleph* to make us an *Adam* and free? The essence of the growth process is *gilui Shechinah*, the revelation of the Divine Presence in the world, which is what the 10 plagues increasingly did. The more intellectually and emotionally tangible God’s involvement in history becomes, the more powerful a soul becomes in everyday life.

The act of dipping *karpas* into salt water and eating it re-



minds us about the impossible situation we, the Jewish people, once faced and how God overtly stepped into history to turn the tables on our oppressors and redeem us. It reminds us to not let adversity drain us of hope or make us assume that God doesn't care about us anymore. Not only will the difficult times end, but they will be followed by better times that can make us forget them.

But we shouldn't. Humility, the *Gemora* says, is one of the most important traits to develop and strengthen,<sup>1</sup> a major theme of the evening. It is the basis of self-honesty, which is central to become a *Tzelem Elokim*, someone acting in the "image of God." Recalling what it was like being down-and-out is always humbling.

Nothing stands in the way of *Aleph*-based growth more than *ga'avah*, unhealthy pride. As the Talmud says, Torah flows downward from Heaven, and only something lower can receive it.<sup>2</sup> Thus it says:

*Moshe was very humble, more than anyone else...  
(Bamidbar 12:3)*

This made Moshe *Rabbeinu* the fitting channel he was for God's Torah because it meant that he would not let personal

---

<sup>1</sup> *Avodah Zarah* 20b.

<sup>2</sup> *Eiruvim* 53b.



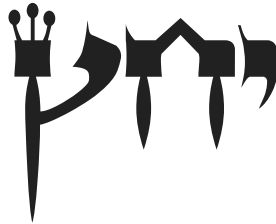
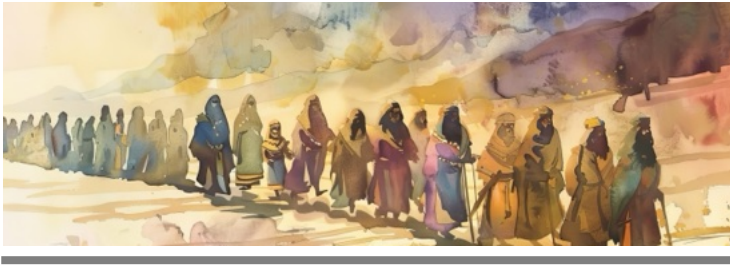
bias distort his perception of truth. It is a way of telling us that the Torah Moshe gave over was the same version God told him. That's important for freedom because it says:

Rebi Yehoshua *ben* Levi said. . . “It says, ‘*The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven—charus—upon the tablets*’ (Shemos 32:16). Don’t read *charus*—graven, but *cheirus*—freedom, for there is no free person but one that occupies themselves with the study of the Torah.” (*Pirkei Avos* 6:2)

That is, the Torah God gave to us, not the one misinterpreted by those whose lack of humility prevents them from accurately passing on the word of God.

*Everyone takes a vegetable (other than marror and often celery) and dips it into the salt water. A **piece smaller than a kezayis** (less than 24 grams) should be used to avoid a doubtful after-blessing. The blessing is said with the marror in mind since it will also be eaten before the seudah.*

<p>בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאָדָמָה.</p>	<p>Blessed are You, God, our God, King of the universe, Who creates fruit of the ground.</p>
---	--



---

IT IS THE breaking of the middle *matzah* that transforms it into *Lechem Oni*—Poor Man’s Bread. A poor person, not knowing if they’ll have food tomorrow, rations what they have today.<sup>1</sup>

The *Mabaral* goes deeper. He says that a *poor* person is actually a *free* person.<sup>2</sup> They are “free” to move at will because they are not tied down to any one place through any ownership of property. How many times throughout Jewish history have Jews lost their chance to escape danger because of their possessions? How many people might have already made *aliyah* if they weren’t “stuck” paying off mortgages? It was one of the reasons why the 12,000,000 Jews died during the

---

<sup>1</sup> *Pesachim* 115b.

<sup>2</sup> *Haggadah Shel Pesach*.



### Plague of Darkness.

Poor people tend to be humble people as well. Lacking status and worldly possessions, they have no way to compete with others, or to think more highly of themselves than they are. Humility is one of the most important traits and tools of a truth-seeker because subjective people distort truth for personal benefit.

Therefore, the *Mishnah* concludes:

This is the way of the Torah: Eat bread with salt, drink water in small measure, and sleep on the ground... (*Pirkei Avos* 6:4)

Does this mean that every Jew should divest themselves of their wealth? This would suggest the opposite:

Four are considered as if they were dead: A pauper... (*Nedarim* 64b)

The resolution is summed up here:

At the time of the death of Rebi Yehudah *HaNasi*, he raised his ten fingers toward Heaven and said in prayer: “Master of the Universe, it is revealed and known before You that I toiled with my ten fingers in the Torah, and I have not derived any benefit from the world even with my small finger.” (*Kesuvos* 104a)



That was quite a claim considering it says that *Rebi's* table never lacked anything, even during off seasons.<sup>3</sup> We can also assume that he dressed and acted the part of a prince of the Jewish people, who reportedly was close friends with Antiochus.<sup>4</sup> What did *Rebi* mean?

He meant that he only took advantage of his material wealth and position as part of his service of God and on behalf of the Jewish people. He may have enjoyed the office and all of its perks, but it is not why he took or kept it. Though he personally benefited from what he had, he never had it for the sake of personal benefit. He did not define himself by material wealth, living the life of a rich man with the attitude of a poor one.

The Talmud adds:

There is no poor person except with respect to knowledge.  
(*Nedarim* 41a)

Perspective in life is everything. The right one makes a person happy and life meaningful, and the wrong one results in constant disappointment. But perspective is based upon perception, and perceptions are influenced by the assumptions we live with. Faulty assumptions mean faulty percep-

---

<sup>3</sup> *Avodah Zarah* 11a.

<sup>4</sup> *Avodah Zarah* 10b.



tions, and a faulty perspective on life.

Therefore, what a person knows makes the difference between true and mistaken ideas about freedom. No one will argue that having a lot of material possessions means a person is financially poor. But they will argue that being financially well off is not the key to ultimate freedom, and often-times hinders it. Poor Man's Bread warns us about this and encourages a person to think deeply about what truly makes them happy in life.

*Matzah* in general teaches this. *Chometz* represents bloated pride and is associated with the *yetzer bara*, a person's evil inclination.<sup>5</sup> But though we know how to avoid *chometz* in food, it is a lot harder to avoid it in life, unless a person takes the advice of this *mishnah* to heart:

If there is no flour, there is no Torah. (*Pirkei Avos* 3:21)

Obviously. But what is less obvious is this:

Flour comes from the grinding of wheat, which the Ultimate Wisdom made for this purpose. Through this man is distinguished from the animals, as already stated in the Talmud:

---

<sup>5</sup> The *yetzer bara* is called the *se'or sb'b'issa*, the leaven that is in the dough, because just as leaven "bloats" dough to make bread, the *yetzer bara* bloats a person's personality to make them believe they are more than they actually are (*Brochos* 17a).





When The Holy One, Blessed is He, told Adam, “*It will bring forth thorns and thistles*” (*Bereishis* 3:17), a tear formed in his eye. He said before Him, “Master of the Universe! Will I and my donkey eat from the same trough?!” (*Pesachim* 118a). Thus, had it not been that his food was ground finely, he would not have been able to achieve the completion of Torah (i.e., receive Torah at Mt. Sinai 26 generations later). (*Meiri, Pirkei Avos* 3:21)

The process of refining wheat into flour symbolizes the intellectual process of breaking down an idea to refine it, something an *Adam* must do to understand its essence and implications. The deeper a person probes, the more they expand their *Aleph* and the more *Adam* they become. The *matzah* hints to this as well.

This is why *Yachatz* also produces the *Afikomen*, which is hidden and then searched for by children at the *Seder*. We are training them to be truth-seekers, to use the Talmudic process throughout life to become a *chacham*—wise son, and avoid becoming an evil one. Ultimately, evil is the absence of good, something that is not always obvious from the outside.

The *Meiri* is explaining that had Adam *HaRishon* not realized he had intellectually descended to the level of a donkey, mankind would never have possessed the intellectual capaci-



ty to receive Torah at Mt. Sinai 26 generations later. We would have intellectually and spiritually stagnated, and *kemach*—flour—represents our transformation back in the direction of an *Adam*.

The problem happened again two millennia later when the Jewish people assimilated into Egyptian society, descending to the 49th level of spiritual impurity. This meant that they, effectively, “ate” from the same trough as the “donkey.” The nine plagues helped to expand their *Aleph* and separate the Jewish people from the Egyptian people and, once again, flour in the form of *matzah* became the symbol.<sup>6</sup>

The *gematria* of *kemach*—flour—and *Pesach* are the same.<sup>7</sup> Replacing the word *kemach* with *Pesach* in the *mishnah* above, it reads: “if there is no *Pesach*, there is no Torah,” that is *Shavuot*, the holiday that celebrates the receiving of Torah, 50 days after leaving Egypt.

*The middle matzah is broken in two, and the smaller piece*

---

<sup>6</sup> The *Mabarat* explains that the Egyptian people, because of their obsession with material pleasures (*chomer*), were represented by the *chamor*, the donkey, which is also devoid of spirituality.

<sup>7</sup> *Kemach* is spelled with the letters, *Kuf* (100), *Mem* (40), and *Ches* (8), for 148. *Pesach* is spelled *Peh-Samech-Ches* (80+60+8), also totaling 148. According to *Kabbalah*, this makes the words interchangeable.

## Yachatz



*is placed back between the two other matzos. The larger piece is wrapped up as the Afikomen, and put over the shoulder as the fleeing Jews did in their time, and we say, "We leave Egypt in haste."*



# מגיד

IMAGINE THE SURPRISE and excitement on everyone's face when I came out the first time dressed up as Moshe *Rabbeinu*, dramatizing the night of the first *Seder* in Egypt. I made sure to speak with a great sense of urgency, instructing everyone there as if they too were part of that initial redemption from Egypt.

After a few moments, the surprise transitioned to amusement. Adults laughed while children watched wide-eyed, taken in by the drama of the moment. My plan had worked better than any sweets could have, hooking the attention of all those at the *Seder* table. It made going through the rest of the story so much easier...for me as well. Nothing like an adrenalin rush to get your body into the moment.

My plan worked so well that dressing up and acting out the Exodus became family legend, and everyone looked forward



to it each year after that. My challenge each *Seder* was to find a way to make it surprising and inspiring, even for those who knew what to expect. Eventually, I ordered a long, white wig and beard that allowed me to really look the part. Wrapping a broom handle in blue cellophane gave it a mystical sapphire look.

Eventually, we added a Pharaoh (my son) to the act, which added humor to the redemption drama. Then I would lead all those who would follow outside to miraculously cross an imaginary Red Sea, using my own sound effects to make it as real as possible. It was all quite tiring but also very exhilarating, and it has always provided us with momentum to get to the meal, no matter how late.

We make a *Seder* each year, not just to commemorate our redemption from Egyptian slavery, but to initiate and strengthen new generations, so that they can choose to carry on the message and the appreciation. The *Haggadah* provides the body of the *Seder*, but we have to put the soul into the evening if the tradition is to remain alive and vibrant for ourselves and our children.

It takes more than good learning habits to keep a three-millennia tradition alive. It takes inspiration, renewed each year by carrying out the *Pesach Seder* and recounting the story as if we too left Egypt.



*Lechem Oni* (Poor Man's Bread) has three connotations: affliction (*inui*), poverty (*ani*), and answer (*oneh*). One, almost tasteless piece of unleavened bread reminds us of three things: our affliction in Egypt, the role of poverty in freedom, and that we should ask and answer many questions during the *Seder*.

The latter meaning is particularly relevant to *Maggid*, the “telling” of the story,” and the questions and answers that follow. However, by this it should be clear that *matzah* itself is the answer. But what was the question?

The most obvious question is: Why do we exclusively eat *matzah* on *Pesach* as opposed to bread? The Torah answers this question with:

*They could not delay, nor had they made provisions for themselves. (Shemos 12:39)*

But why did they not have enough time to bake bread? How much time does it take to make *chometz*? Anyone who has seen *matzah* being baked knows that the problem is not too *little* time, but too *much* time. It is a frantic operation to make sure that the dough does not stay unworked for 18 minutes, at which time it becomes real *chometz*. No one had 18 minutes back in Egypt to let their dough rise while they made other preparations for the journey to freedom?

The traditional answer is that, being on the forty-ninth level



of spiritual impurity that was Egyptian society, we had to avoid sinking to the fiftieth level at which point we could no longer be redeemed. By forcing Egypt to push the Jewish people out of Egypt, God saved us from spiritual oblivion and the *matzah* recalls that close call.

So yes, we eat *matzah* on *Pesach* because we did not have enough time to bake bread. But did we really have to leave Egypt so quickly to save the Jewish people? This says otherwise:

The commentators explain that they had to leave quickly in order to avoid descending to the fiftieth level of the Fifty Gates of Impurity. However, this does not seem to be correct, but just the opposite seems true! The strength of impurity had been eliminated as a result of the revelation of the Divine Presence [through each of the ten plagues], as it says, “*Not even a dog will growl for the Children of Israel*” (*Shemos* 11:7). He judged their gods and killed their firstborn, so how can it be that impurity had any control [at that point], *God forbid?* It is only relevant to say this at the end of the oppression and the beginning of the redemption [with the first. Had the redemption not begun [with the first plague<sup>1</sup>], and they had remained slaves in Egypt, then there would not

---

<sup>1</sup> After only 209 years of Egyptian exile, and not the 400 years God told Avraham about.



have been a rectification, *God forbid*, since they had entered the forty-ninth level of impurity. . . . Once the redemption had already started however with the plagues twelve months the year before, the *Sitra Achra*<sup>2</sup> began to lose power and continued to do so from that time onward. . . . By the month of *Nissan*, and especially on the first night of *Pesach*, it was completely beaten, conquered, and on the verge of destruction. Therefore, how could there have been any more concern about falling to the fiftieth gate [the night they made the *Seder*]? (*Drushei Olam HaTohu, Chelek 2, Drush 5, Anaf 2 Siman 4*)<sup>3</sup>

According to this, the Jewish people started to leave the Fifty Gates of Impurity with the first plague. When they sat down to make the first *Seder* in Egypt as God carried out the plague against the firstborn, the Jewish people were clear of *all* impurity:

It is impossible to say that the reason why they could not remain in Egypt was because they would fall to the fiftieth

---

<sup>2</sup> Literally, “Other Side,” the name of the angel responsible for facilitating rebellion against God through sin. It is also called the “*Sattan*,” which means “obstructor” because it interferes with people performing good.

<sup>3</sup> Rabbi Shlomo Elyashiv, *zt”l* (b. Šiauliai, Lithuania, 1841–d. Israel, 1926).





level, *God forbid*, since on the first night of *Pesach* impurity had no power at all. (*Drushei Olam HaTobu, Chelek 2, Drush 5, Anaf 2 Siman 5*)

Why then did they have to leave *b'chipazon*? For the opposite reason:

Since The Holy One, Blessed is He, emanated His holy light onto the Jewish people, as the author of the *Haggadah* writes, “The King of Kings was revealed to them” they could not remain in Egypt a moment longer or the *Sitra Achra* would have become completely eradicated, eliminating free-will, the purpose of Creation. (*Drushei Olam HaTobu, Chelek 2, Drush 5, Anaf 2 Siman 5*)

How radical. Firstly, we left quickly to save the *Egyptians*, not the *Jewish People*. Secondly, we had to save evil to save good.<sup>4</sup> What does all this mean, especially since the Talmud says:

In the time to come, The Holy One, Blessed is He, will bring the evil inclination and slay it in the presence of the right-

---

<sup>4</sup> The *Lesbem* further explains: Egypt was the head of all [spiritual impurity at that time] and had it been destroyed then the *Sitra Achra* would also have been destroyed, as well as the *yetzer bara* (evil inclination). Free-will would no longer have existed, and for this reason they could not delay (*Drushei Olam HaTobu, Chelek 2, Drush 5, Anaf 2, Siman 5*).



eous and the wicked. (*Succah* 52a)

Why did God hold off on something that He plans to do later anyhow? Because:

Since this [redemption] was not the result of their own deeds, it was contrary to the purpose of Creation, and it was not possible for these wondrous lights<sup>5</sup> to remain since free-will would have ended... Therefore, the great light was removed from them immediately after the first night of *Pesach*, because it was intended that its continuation should be the result of their own deeds. (*Drushei Olam HaTohu*, *Chelek* 2, *Drush* 5, *Anaf* 2, *Siman* 5)

And we've been working on it ever since. Therefore, it says that...

One must look at themselves in each generation as if they too have come out of Egypt. (*Haggadah*)

...because each generation is just finishing what the previous ones did not, making the final redemption the last act of the first one.

This is why the final redemption is called *Keitz HaYomim*, literally “End of the Days.” *The* days? *Which* days?<sup>6</sup> The days

---

<sup>5</sup> These were high spiritual lights that are not influenced by our deeds.

<sup>6</sup> It could just say, *Keitz Yomim*—End of Days.