



Torah U'Tefilah

A Collection of Inspiring Insights

Besamei HaTorah

...Beneath the Surface

R' Shmuel Winzelberg

The *Kedushas Levi* writes that when a person finishes learning from a *Sefer* on any day of the year, and he brushes it off from any crumbs, he is fulfilling the *Pasuk* of "L'Ma'an Tizkor es Yom Tzeis'cha Mei'Eretz Mitzrayim Kol Yimei Chayecha" (*Devarim* 16:3), that one must remember the day of leaving Mitzrayim all the days of his life. By constantly keeping Pesach in mind and always keeping one's *Seforim* clean from *Chometz*, he is constantly getting reward for doing this *Mitzvah*!

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It is the custom that when we burn the *Chometz* we also burn the candle used in the search for *Chometz* as well. *Chometz* hints to the sins and the Evil Inclination, and together with the sins we have to burn the accuser that helped to search and seek out the sins of Israel. (*Mekor Baruch* as brought in *Shabbos Tish*)

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Rebbe Meir Shapiro of Lublin once said: "It is customary to place an egg on the *Seder* plate on the night of the *Seder*, and the hint here is to the Nation of Israel which is compared to an egg. Just as this egg, the more one cooks it in boiling water or roasts it in the fire, the harder it gets. It is the same with the Nation of Israel. The longer and more difficult they find it in exile, the more they constantly hope for the redemption." (*Shabbos Tish*)

⌘ Pesach Thoughts

By: Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

One of the reasons we eat *Matzah* at the *Pesach Seder* is to commemorate that our dough did not have time to rise when we left Mitzrayim. If we had about a year of anticipation for the *Geulah*, asks Rav Yissocher Frand, why were we not prepared? He suggests that we may have gotten excited for leaving Mitzrayim during the first few plagues, but after multiple disappointments, we may have given up hope of ever getting out. That is why we were not actually prepared at the time of the *Geulah*. We eat *Matzah* to remind ourselves that even when we had given up hope, we still got out of Mitzrayim, and we should never give up hope, no matter how many disappointments we experience.

Pearls of Wisdom ... A Word for the Ages

The *Talmidim* of Rav Yisroel Salanter, *zt"l*, were once on their way to bake *Matzos* for Pesach, and they had dedicated themselves to use as many *Chumros*, stringencies in *Halachah*, as possible, to make sure that their *Matzah* would be on the highest level of *Kashrus*. Before they went to the *Matzah* bakery, they made a stop at their *Rebbe's* house, to ask him which *Chumrah* they should be the most careful to observe. Rav Yisroel told them, "There is an elderly widow who works at the *Matzah* bakery. Be careful not to hurt her feelings. That's the *Halachah* you should be the most strict with!"

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Rav Meilech Biderman, *Shlit"a*, cites from his *Rebbe'im* that the word 'MaZaL,' which means fate, is also an acronym of the words, 'Zeicher Le'yetzias Mitzrayim'. We can learn from this that by remembering our *Geulah* from Mitzrayim on the night of the *Seder*, it is a *Segalah*, and it has a special strength to change one's *Mazal* and his current situation for the better!

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Compiled by: Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg

⌘ Hagadah Treasures

The *Baal Shem Tov* once told his *Chasidim* that in a certain village, there lived a *Yid* whose *Pesach Seder* was praised in *Shamayim* and brought great light to the world. The *Baal Shem Tov* wanted to find this special *Yid*, and perhaps learn what he did that made such an impact in *Shamayim*. After some searching, the *Baal Shem Tov* was told where this *Yid* lived, and he arranged to visit him on *Erev Pesach*. The *Baal Shem Tov* found the small shack of this person, and knocked on the door. A very poor appearing man answered, and when he heard that this stranger wanted to join him for his *Seder*, he was overjoyed. He thought the *Baal Shem Tov* was a poor traveler who was looking for somewhere to be for Pesach. After night fall, the *Yid* put on his frayed *Kittel* and started his *Seder*. The *Baal Shem Tov* was astounded. Nothing he heard or saw was especially remarkable. He wondered what it was about this kind, poor man's *Seder* that stood out from the many thousands of *Sedarim* that were being held throughout the world. Just then they reached the words, "Tam, Mah Hu Omer? What does the simple son say?" With a great cry, the man broke down and kept repeating these words. "Tam, Mah Hu Omer! Tam, Mah Hu Omer!" Again and again he said these words, with tears streaming down his face. After some time, the man composed himself and continued his *Seder* without any further disruptions. Afterward, he had a conversation with his guest. The *Baal Shem Tov* couldn't help but ask his host what it was about that one passage of 'Tam, Mah Hu Omer' that caused him to cry so intensely. The *Yid* explained simply, "I learned that the word 'Tam' can mean 'there'. When I reach these words, I stop and think: Where am I? I am at the same place as I was last Pesach! Nothing has changed. I haven't really grown at all! Then I think: What will I say when I arrive 'there', after 120 years, in the *Bais Din Shel Ma'alah* in *Shamayim*? I will be ashamed to have to admit that I didn't take the opportunity to become stronger in my *Emunah*. I just remained stuck in the place where I was my entire life!" The *Baal Shem Tov* had his answer. He now understood why this man and his *Seder* were so special. This *Yid* was focused on the 'Tam', and what he will say 'there', in *Shamayim*, to answer for any shortcomings in his life, and how our time can be used now while we are still here to grow in our *Emunah* and closeness to *Hashem*!

☞ Pesach Gems

Rav Moshe Feinstein, *zt"l*, would personally supervise the baking of his own *Matzos*. He would always emphasize that he came to perform the *Mitzvah*, and not because he questioned the *Kashrus* of the bakery. There were some people who wanted him to change and use a different *Matzah* bakery, as it would be much easier to use a larger, newer, and more efficient bakery, but Rav Moshe always refused. He explained that people might misunderstand why he made the change, and they might think that something was wrong with the *Kashrus* of the older bakery. Those who accompanied Rav Moshe to the *Matzah* bakery observed his *Zerizus* in performing this *Mitzvah*, and his joy when the finished *Matzos* were taken out of the oven. There was someone who had made a number of appeals for funds on behalf of Rav Moshe's *Yeshivah*, Tiferes Yerushalayim, and one year, Rav Moshe asked a *Talmid* to bring some of these special *Matzos* to him. Rav Moshe knew that this man was not looking for anything in return for his efforts on behalf of the *Yeshivah*, but Rav Moshe wanted that the very personal gift of his *Matzos* that he was sending would be accepted as a token of his appreciation!

☞ Pesach Treasures

Rav Avigdor Miller, *zt"l*, taught that one of the lessons we can learn from the *Korban Pesach* is that in the *Hagadah* we say '*B'Damayich Chayi*', with the blood of the *Korban Pesach* you will live. Rav Miller said, "What does that mean? Listen to me because this is of the utmost importance. Just because we were willing to throw away the ideas of the environment around us and to demonstrate that we are the servants of *Hashem*, that alone gave us the right to live forever. By slaughtering the god of the Egyptians, we were demonstrating that we disregard completely, all of the ideals of the gentiles, and because of the blood of the *Korban Pesach*, *Hashem* said, 'You will live.' We shouldn't lose sight of this great significance of the *Korban Pesach*. It's two ideas but they are really one. Number one is that *Hashem* skipped over us. And why did he skip over us? Because we slaughtered the god of the Egyptians in their presence. Moshe *Rabbeinu* said, "Won't the Egyptians stone us if we slaughter their *Avodah Zarah*?" But we did it anyhow. And that's why *Hashem* skipped over the *Am Yisroel*, and that's why we're going to live forever. That's what the *Navi* says, '*B'Damayich Chayi*', 'You will live forever because of the blood that you shed.' There was *Dam Milah*, blood from the *Bris Milah* there too, but the blood of the *Korban Pesach* was a much more perilous thing to do. And it's a symbol, actually, of what is expected of us. We are expected to slaughter *all* of the ideals of the nations of the world. You have to slaughter the ideal of literature. Literature is false. The literature of the gentile world is all false literature. It never happened. It's fiction. People today have accustomed themselves to fiction, to drama, and it's all false! People are being paid to act in a certain way. It's all false. You have to slaughter their movies. You have to slaughter their music. You have to slaughter all their sports. A Jew is not interested in sports. No interest at all, unless he's exercising for himself, for his health. Otherwise, it's nothing. When I was in Slabodka, somebody needed a visa to be able to come to America. Today he is one of the *Gedolei HaDor* (Rav Miller was referring to Rav Elya Svei, *zt"l*). I was an American boy and I spoke a good English, so I went to the Consul to ask for the visa. I spoke with the Consul and then he said, 'Oh, you come from America? Do you know what the score was?' There was a big baseball game going on in America, and he asked me if I know the score. The first thing you ask when you see an American is, 'What's the score?' *A Meshugas! Meshuganehs!* When I came back from Europe, I was walking in Baltimore on the street, minding my own business, and somebody shouts out at me from across the street, 'Mister, what's the score?' He's asking me for the score! People live with the idea that that is what's important. A man with a stick and he's hitting a ball. That's important. That's the big news. Newspapers have whole sections devoted to that. So the *Am Yisroel* slaughtered this *Avodah Zarah* of all the things that are important to the gentiles. And they were demonstrating that it's a sin to be like a gentile. It's a sin to be Americanized. You can be a good, loyal citizen, but don't Americanize! As much as possible, you must rid yourself of all these gentile ideas. There's so much that you have to slaughter. There are many worse things than sports. And when the *Am Yisroel* is able to slaughter all the *Avodah Zarah*, that is, all the ideals and ideas and attitudes of the *Goyim*, then *Hashem* says, 'If that's the case, then I'm going to skip over you. The destroyer will destroy everybody else, but will skip over you.' And that's one of the most important lessons that you can learn from the *Korban Pesach*!"

☞ L'Maaseh

Rav Moshe Meir Weiss spoke about the great opportunity we have to ask *Hashem* for our needs on the night of the *Seder*. When, specifically, should one ask for their needs during the *Seder*? One ideal location is when we say the *Pasuk*, "*Va'nitzak el Hashem Elokei Avoseinu, Va'yishma Hashem es Koleinu, And we cried out to Hashem the G-d of our fathers, and Hashem heard our voices.*" Rav Weiss related a story from the *Apter Rav*, the legendary *Ohev Yisroel*, *zt"l*. One of his *Chasidim* rented an inn from the gentile *Poritz*. This inn served as both his home and his livelihood. The particular winter of this story was icy and frigid. The inn had no customers, and the innkeeper fell severely behind in his rent. The *Poritz* sent his agent who told the innkeeper that if he didn't pay within a month, he and his family would be thrown into the dungeon to rot. The innkeeper decided to travel to the *Ohev Yisroel* to ask him what to do. He arrived right before *Shabbos HaGadol*, and to his disappointment, he learned that the *Rebbe* was not seeing people due to his *Pesach* preparations. The innkeeper had no other options, so he stayed for *Shabbos HaGadol*. On *Shabbos*, he went to the *Shabbos HaGadol Drashah*. He didn't understand the *Pilpul* section, the deep and analytical part of the *Drashah*. But then, the *Rebbe* started explaining the *Hagadah*. When he got to the *Pasuk* of '*Va'nitzak el Hashem*', the *Rebbe* proclaimed that this is where we can ask *Hashem* to solve all of our problems. The *Rebbe* added, "Even if the *Poritz* wants to throw you into a dungeon, cry out to *Hashem* for help!" The innkeeper got the message. Right after *Shabbos*, the innkeeper left to go home without even speaking privately with the *Rebbe*. But he had already received his answer. During his *Seder* that year, he and his wife cried out and begged *Hashem* by *Va'nitzak* for assistance. They didn't hold back their tears or their *Tefilos*. After about half an hour, there was a loud banging on the door! The innkeeper opened it and saw a disheveled *goy*, and with rushed words, he quickly and quietly said that he had just killed his wife, and he was fleeing from the police. He then placed two chests in front of the innkeeper. He explained, "These chests are filled with money. One of them, I'd like you to keep safe for me, and I will come get it when I can return, and the other chest is payment to you for protecting the first chest." He then disappeared into the night. On *Chol HaMo'eid*, the innkeeper was able to use the money to pay the *Poritz*, and he was saved from the dungeon! Rav Moshe Meir relates from Rav Melech Biderman, who told over a much more recent *Va'nitzak* story. There was a childless couple who had longed for a child for many years. They knew about the *Segulah* of *Va'nitzak*, but they always had company for the *Seder*, and they didn't feel comfortable crying and wailing to *Hashem* in front of others. Then came the frightening *Pesach* of Covid a few years ago. This couple were in protective quarantine, and therefore, they were alone for the *Seder*. When they came to *Va'nitzak*, they cried their hearts out for a half hour, and about nine months later they were *Bentched* with a child!"

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