

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

FOUR MORE QUESTIONS

EXPLORING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE NUMBER 4 AND PESACH

BY RABBI NOTA SCHILLER

For significant numbers of non-traditional Jews, the Pesach Seder is their last connection to ritual. Jews who build no succah, who don't know when Shavuot is, faithfully assemble year after year to eat matzah and tell about the going out of Egypt.

Mrs. S., an eighty-year-old woman from Ann Arbor, Michigan told me that one year at her Pesach Seder she had forgotten the "shank bone" that traditionally goes on the symbolic Seder Plate, and her grandson went over to her refrigerator, took out a pork chop, and placed it on the Seder Plate.

Even at this home, however contradictory, some confused semblance of Pesach ritual stubbornly persists. More than with other traditions, some mysterious spiritual energy emanating from Pesach cuts deeper and longer into the collective Jewish conscience. Why?

Another question: The dominant recurring number in the Haggadah is four: We drink four cups of wine, we ask the "Four Questions," we tell of the "Four Sons." What is the connection between Pesach and the number four?

King Solomon says in Proverbs "Listen, my son, to your father's ethic, and do not abandon the law of your mother." Without an investment of focused effort one does not acquire the ethic of one's father. Hence the phrasing, "Listen to the ethic of your father." The "father's ethic" is encountered externally, like a voice. It must be engaged, admitted, and assimilated. Only then to be internalized.

"The law of your mother," on the other hand, is axiomatic. Innate, coming with the territory of being born Jewish, it functions intuitively. Hence the negative phrasing, "Don't abandon the law of your mother." Every Jew is imbued with this given intuition; to aban-

don it requires an active rejection. When passive, it lingers at least subliminally.

This "law of your mother" can be described as minimal Jewishness. The Hebrew word "Uma" - nation - is from the same root as "Ima" - mother. Jewishness (apart from conversion) is established by having a Jewish mother, the given of one's being. Whereas "listening to the ethic of one's father" is presented to us as choice, with accountability; an act of freewill, at times realized and at times not.

Under the yoke of Egyptian slavery, only an elite core of Jews exercised this option, listening to "the ethic of your father." For the rank and file, the vast number of Jews, there remained only some vestiges of Jewish identity. Minimal Jewishness, the "law of one's mother," the matriarchal mode.

Yet, this very "minimal Jewishness" was the pivot upon which the salvation would swing. That residual lingering consciousness sufficed to connect to the heritage and redemption. Without this minimum Jewishness, the floodgates of total assimilation would have burst open.

Providential guidance determined that history take another course. In Egypt, minimal Jewish identity remained; and the precariousness of that identity heightened the urgency for immediate exodus.

Why is the number four a dominant recurring theme in the Haggadah? The number four symbolizes the Matriarchs Sara, Rivka, Rachel and Leah. This, "the matriarchal four," this "law of our Mothers" is what sustains us in exile.

Egypt would be a paradigm for all future exiles. Having built up sufficient antibodies to resist the malady of Egyptian exile, the Jewish nation could then sur-

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Precious Jewels

“The entire assembly of Yisrael...” (4:13)

Nowadays if you mention the words “religious court” to many people, a picture of a cabal of fanatical ayatollahs will come floating in to their minds. Indeed, political parties in Israel have been founded and thrive on no broader a mandate than the promise of the limitation and eventual destruction of the “religious coercion” that these courts represent to them.

From the religious viewpoint, however, the opponents of this “coercion” are creating a crisis in Jewish marriage and divorce. In the wider Jewish community we are witnessing a mushrooming problem of non-halachic divorces. A Jewish wife who receives a non-halachic divorce from her Jewish spouse is still considered to be married to her husband. If she then re-marries, the children of that union may be prohibited from marrying virtually all of their fellow Jews. And this prohibition applies not only to them, but their offspring down the generations. While everyone has the right to make his own life-choices, there must be a realization that these choices have the potential to impact generations yet unborn. And very often, Jews seeking secular divorce are left uninformed as to the potential consequences by their Reform and Conservative rabbis.

TZAV

Kaballa-Wallah

“Command Aharon and his sons, saying, “This is the law of the elevation-offering...” (6:2)

One of the great confusions of our age is to mistake feeling spiritual with being spiritual. The other day, someone showed me an ad for “Kabala Water.” Judging from the photograph, “Kabala Water” bares an amazing similarity to a regular bottle of mineral water. However, since its price is more than five times that of a six-pack of regular bottled water, obviously it must contain some pretty heavy-duty ingredients.

Kaballa means literally *receiving*. You can’t buy *kaballa*. You can’t “learn” *kaballa*. You can’t even drink *kaballa*. You can only receive. How do you receive *kaballa*? You make yourself into a vessel pure enough to hold its secrets.

Kaballa is received through the medium of seemingly anodyne tales. No golem-building instructions here. If the disciple is worthy, he will be able to remove the “garments” that clothe the secret and penetrate to its core. To the less worthy, *kaballa* will seem either bland or unintelligible. Everything depends on the purity of the receiver.

The more spiritual something is the more it requires

There are more than a few heart-breaking cases of young men and women from secular families who have returned to Torah Judaism only to discover that one of them was halachically ineligible to marry the partner of their choice.

The rejection and resentment of rabbinic authority is a classic symptom of our *galut* — exile.

“The entire assembly of Yisrael...”

The Sages derive that “the entire assembly of Yisrael” refers here to the Great Sanhedrin of seventy-one Sages that resided in Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin was the supreme legislative organ of the Jewish People. The Jewish People’s classic view of their Sages is an expression of the people themselves. The Great Sanhedrin is the entire assembly of Yisrael; its aspirations are identical with those of the people. The word for assembly here, *eidah*, is related to the word meaning “an ornament.”

The Sanhedrin was our precious jewel. It gave splendor and glory to the Jewish People. If we reject the counsel of the great Sages who are always in our midst, if we no longer choose to wear the vestige of those beautiful adornments, can there be any surer sign that we are deep in exile?

We await the day when for our precious jewels will be dusted off and brought out to shine in a better world.

• Based on the *Sifra* and *Ha’Ktav V’haKabbalah*

covering. The more sacred something is the more it needs to be wrapped in seeming ordinariness and blandness. In fact, spirituality can only survive in this way. Spirituality is like a piece of unexposed film that can be fogged by the bright light of the sun.

The most spiritual place in the world was the Beit HaMikdash, and yet to the physical eye it looked like a giant abattoir. The very physicality of the process of bringing *korbanot* sacrifices masked and obscured its sublime spirituality. Moreover, the fact that much of the *korban* was eaten or utilized by the *kohanim* and the person who brought the *korban* increased the appearance of its physicality.

However, in the case of the *korban olah* — the “elevation-offering”— where nothing was eaten and it all rose up in smoke on the altar, the fact that it was “elevated” created a certain lacking to its mask of physicality.

“Command Aharon and his sons ...” (6:2)

Rashi comments that the word “command” here implies a higher level of alacrity. “*Rabbi Shimon says the Torah requires a greater decree of alacrity where there is a lack of cover.*” It is for this reason specifically that with regards to the *korban olah* the *kohanim* are instructed to work more quickly. For when interior spirituality is lacking its protective cover it requires much greater care.

• Based on *Chidushei HaRim*

Action and Reaction

“And it was on the eighth day...”

Every relationship is founded on mutuality. Be it in the relationship between nations or individuals, the laws of action and reaction always operate. If you're engaged to be married and you don't call your fiancé for a week and half, don't be surprised if the relationship cools off considerably. If you take a loan from the bank and don't meet your repayment schedule, don't be taken aback if the next time you apply for a loan the bank manager's secretary always seems to say, “he'll get back to you...”

“And it was on the eighth day...”

For each of seven straight days, Moshe assembled and dismantled the Mishkan. Moshe obviously wasn't putting in a little building practice, so what was the significance of this daily rebuilding?

G-d created the world in order that His *Shechina* (Presence) should have a dwelling place in the lower worlds. When the generations that preceded Avraham

disobeyed G-d, the *Shechina* withdrew stage by stage, until It ascended to the Seventh Heaven.

Then there came seven generations that managed to bring the *Shechina* down gradually to this world again. These generations were: Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Levi, Kahat, Amram and Moshe.

“And Hashem descended onto Mount Sinai” means that the *Shechina* finally returned to this lowest of worlds.

With the sin of the golden calf, however, G-d's relationship with man reverted to its previous remoteness. To dispel this estrangement, Moshe set up and dismantled the Mishkan for seven consecutive days, thus completing the spiritual repair of the seven generations that started with Avraham.

On the eighth day, his work was complete. He set up the Mishkan without dismantling it. This is the understanding of the statement that “G-d's happiness on that day was equivalent to the day on which the Heavens and the earth were created.” For on that day, G-d's original purpose in the Creation, that He should have a dwelling in this netherworld, was finally actualized.

• Based on Chessed L'Avraham

PARSHA Overview

Vayikra

The Book of *Vayikra* (Leviticus), also known as *Torat Kohanim* — the Laws of the Priests — deals largely with the *korbanot* (offerings) brought in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). The first group of offerings is called *korban olah*, a burnt offering. The animal is brought to the Mishkan's entrance. For cattle, the one bringing the offering sets his hands on the animal. Afterwards it is slaughtered and the *kohen* sprinkles its blood on the altar. The animal is skinned and cut into pieces. The pieces are arranged, washed and burned on the altar. A similar process is described involving burnt offerings of other animals and birds. The various meal offerings are described. Part of the meal offering is burned on the altar, and the remaining part is eaten by the *kohanim*. Mixing leaven or honey into the offerings is prohibited. The peace offering, part of which is burnt on the altar and part eaten, can be either from cattle, sheep or goats. The Torah prohibits eating blood or *chelev* (certain fats in animals). The offerings that atone for inadvertent sins committed by the *Kohen Gadol*, by the entire community, by the prince and by the average citizen are detailed. Laws of the guilt-offering, which atones for certain verbal transgressions and for transgressing laws of ritual purity, are listed. The meal offering for those who cannot afford the normal guilt offering, the offering to atone for misusing sanctified property, laws of the “questionable guilt” offering, and offerings for dishonesty are detailed.

Tzav

The Torah addresses Aharon and his sons to teach them additional laws relating to their service. The ashes of the *korban olah* — the offering burnt on the altar throughout the night — are to be removed from the area by the *kohen* after he changes his special linen clothing. The *olah* is brought by someone who forgot to perform a positive commandment of the Torah. The *kohen* retains the skin. The fire on the altar must be kept constantly ablaze. The *korban mincha* is a meal offering of flour, oil and spices. A handful is burned on the altar and a *kohen* eats the remainder before it becomes leaven. The Parsha describes the special *korbanot* to be offered by the *Kohen Gadol* each day, and by Aharon's sons and future descendants on the day of their inauguration. The *chatat*, the *korban* brought after an accidental transgression, is described, as are the laws of slaughtering and sprinkling the blood of the *asham* guilt-*korban*. The details of *shelamim*, various peace *korbanot*, are described, including the prohibition against leaving uneaten until morning the remains of the *todah*, the thanks-*korban*. All sacrifices must be burned after they may no longer be eaten. No sacrifice may be eaten if it was slaughtered with the intention of eating it too late. Once they have become ritually impure, *korbanot* may not be eaten and should be burned. One may not eat a *korban* when he is ritually impure. Blood and *chelev*, forbidden animal fats, are prohibited to be eaten. Aharon and his sons are granted the breast and shank of every *korban shelamim*. The inauguration ceremony for Aharon, his sons, the Mishkan and all of its vessels is detailed.

TALMUDigest

Pesachim 72-78

- When slaughtering the Pesach sacrifice on Shabbat requires atonement of sin offering
- The *mohel* who circumcised the wrong child on Shabbat
- What constitutes a mitzvah to exempt an unintentional sin from need of atonement
- The mysterious mitzvah of Rabbi Tarfon
- Three sins in one slaughtering
- What is done with a disqualified sacrifice?
- How the Pesach sacrifice was broiled
- The problem of blood in broiling meat all year round
- The different definitions of fire
- When there is contact between heated permitted and forbidden things
- Communal sacrifices offered despite ritual impurity
- The power of the *kohen gadol's tzitz* (headband)
- When the blood of the Pesach sacrifice can be applied to the altar despite the ritual impurity affecting a part of the animal
- Is the eating of the sacrifice's flesh an indispensable factor?

Uncommon Features with a Common Denominator

Communal sacrifices, both the daily ones and those of the special days, were offered even on Shabbat or when the *kohanim* were ritually impure. In regard to the daily sacrifice, the Torah command (*Bamidbar* 28:3) states that it be offered “in its set season,” and the same phrase is used *ibid.* 9:3) with regard to the Pesach sacrifice. This is interpreted by our Sages as an indication that these sacrifices must be offered in all situations, Shabbat and ritual impurity notwithstanding.

In regard to other communal sacrifices offered on holidays, there is another passage (*ibid.* 29:39) spelling out the need to offer them “in your set seasons” in all circumstances. The question arises, however, as to why separate

passages are required for each of these categories rather than have any one of them serve as the prototype for all communal sacrifices. The answer given by the *gemara* is that each of these categories has a special characteristic which would have set it apart from all the others as qualifying for the special status of rising above the obstacles of Shabbat and ritual impurity.

The daily sacrifice would have been considered as unique both because of its frequency and because it is completely consumed on the altar, features that are absent in the Pesach sacrifice. Had only the Pesach sacrifice been mentioned we might have attributed its uniqueness to the fact that one who fails to offer such a sacrifice is punished by extirpation, something that does not apply to any other sacrifice.

But once the Torah has spelled out the need to offer both of these sacrifices under all circumstances, why is it necessary to once again communicate this rule regarding all other communal sacrifices?

The *gemara's* answer is that we would not have been able to learn from the daily and Pesach sacrifices because they have a common denominator setting them apart from other communal sacrifices.

The version of the answer that appears in our text is that the common denominator is that each has a unique feature missing in the other sacrifices. The version that *Tosefot* had, however, is that the common denominator is that Jews already offered both of these sacrifices before the Torah was given. This is in accordance with the opinion (*Mesechta Chagigah* 6a) of Beit Hillel that the burnt offerings mentioned (*Shmot* 24:5) before the giving of the Torah were the daily sacrifices. Since the first Pesach sacrifice was also offered before the Torah was given while they were still in Egypt, there is a common denominator of uniqueness that would have made it impossible to extend to other communal sacrifices, and made it necessary to assign a passage for them as well.

PARSHA Overview

Shemini

On the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan, Aharon, his sons, and the entire nation bring various *korbanot* (offerings) as commanded by Moshe. Aharon and Moshe bless the nation. G-d allows the Jewish People to sense His Presence after they complete the Mishkan. Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, innovate an offering not commanded by G-d. A fire comes from before G-d and consumes them, stressing the need to perform the commandments only as Moshe directs. Moshe consoles Aharon, who grieves in silence. Moshe directs the *kohanim* as to their behavior during the mourning period, and warns

them that they must not drink intoxicating beverages before serving in the Mishkan. The Torah lists the two characteristics of a kosher animal: It has split hooves, and it chews, regurgitates, and re-chews its food. The Torah specifies by name those non-kosher animals which have only one of these two signs. A kosher fish has fins and easily removable scales. All birds not included in the list of forbidden families are permitted. The Torah forbids all types of insects except for four species of locusts. Details are given of the purification process after coming in contact with ritually-impure species. *Bnei Yisrael* are commanded to be separate and holy — like G-d.

TALMUDigest

Pesachim 79-85

- How much of a sacrifice must remain ritually pure to allow its blood to be applied?
- When the Pesach sacrifice can be offered despite ritual impurity of *kohanim* or of majority of the people
- When the pure and impure are equal in number
- When the *tzitz* (headplate of the *kohen gadol*) can nullify ritual impurity effect on sacrifice of Pesach and of the *nazir*
- The special status of these two sacrifices regarding an uncertain state of impurity
- When and where the flesh of a disqualified sacrifice was burned
- Causing and eliminating shame and suspicion
- Burning of the leftover bones of the Pesach sacrifice
- What qualifies as edible part of Pesach sacrifice for the fulfillment of mitzvah to eat
- The ban on breaking bones of Pesach sacrifice
- How to deal with the limb of the sacrifice which became disqualified
- What constitutes being in one area for eating the flesh of the sacrifice and for a quorum for prayer

From Slavery to Aristocracy

If a Jew broke the bone of the Pesach sacrifice he was eating he was guilty of violating the Torah prohibition (*Shmot* 12:46) against doing so, and if he did this intentionally after being warned of the consequences, he was punished with lashes.

If there is a positive mitzvah for a Jew to eat the flesh of the Pesach sacrifice, why is it so wrong for him to break a bone in order to add the marrow in that bone to his consumption of this sacred food?

The *Sefer Hachinuch* offers an explanation of this prohibition, which applies as well to three other prohibitions

connected with the manner in which the sacrificial flesh is to be eaten.

The first Pesach sacrifice was slaughtered, broiled and eaten on the threshold of the exodus from Egyptian bondage. But Jews were not just another nation of slaves released from bondage. They had been designated by G-d to receive the Torah and to be a nation of royal aristocracy. To impress this upon His chosen people, G-d commanded them to behave like aristocrats in their manner of eating. One of the ways to do so was to avoid behaving like dogs who break the bones to get to the marrow within because that is all they have at their disposal.

Two questions arise in regard to this perspective.

If this same lesson was also communicated by the other three prohibitions, why was it necessary to have so many commandments to achieve the same goal? And if this lesson was necessary for the people about to be freed from slavery, what is its purpose for future generations?

“Man is what he does” is the famous rule of human behavior repeatedly applied by the *Sefer Hachinuch* in explaining the purpose of *mitzvot*. The more a person fulfills the commands of the Torah the more he develops his spiritual personality. To achieve the maximum sense of aristocracy and the responsibility that goes with it, there was a need for so many guidelines in how to eat the Pesach sacrifice.

In regard to the relevance of the lesson for future generations, we must recall what we say in our Haggada on Pesach eve about the obligation of every Jew on that holiday to visualize himself as if he himself was taken out of Egypt. Since Pesach is a reliving of the Exodus, it was necessary for Jews to relive the experience of being instantly transformed from slavery to aristocracy and to appreciate their special place in the world.

• *Pesachim* 84a

FOUR MORE QUESTIONS... continued from page one

vive all future exiles. The covenant guaranteeing Jewish continuity was made with the Patriarchs. Yet, the mechanism by which the pact functions is the matriarchal mode. Wandering through the bleak valleys of dispersion, minimal Jewishness would be the bridge connecting to the next peak of mitzvah performance, to the next moment of “listening to the ethic of your Father.”

Returning to our original question: Why does Pesach linger so much longer in the collective unconscious of even so-called secular Jews? Just as a given space has its special combination of topography, minerals and climate, so time has its own unique landscape. When the calendar rolls around to that place in time called Pesach, the mystical minerals of that spiritual lode can be mined. Returning to the “time-station” called Pesach, G-d reaches out to Israel

just as He did that first Pesach. Every Jew feels, senses, a reactualization, a reawakening of the matriarchal root core, of his personal, and our national, identity.

When describing the father's dialogue with the son “who does not know how to ask a question,” the Haggadah directs us: “You begin for him.” The word “you” here is written in the feminine “aht.” Here too, we see the matriarchal mode as the mechanism for maintaining minimal connection, even for the son who does not know enough to ask. That will bridge to the moment when the father can fulfill the mitzvah of “you shall tell it to your son.” Ultimately, there will be that reunion of “listen my son to the ethic of your father, and do not abandon the Torah of your mother.” The mitzvah of the Haggadah is just such a moment of reunion.

TALMUDigest

Pesachim 86-92

- Status of roofs and upper floors of *Beit Hamikdash* and houses in Yerushalayim
- Eating the Pesach in two companies
- Some rules of etiquette in eating and in being a good guest
- The woman, orphan and slave for whom a Pesach sacrifice has been slaughtered
- The lesson G-d taught the critical prophet
- Why Jews were sent into exile and where
- Three names for the *Beit Hamikdash*
- The slave of two masters and the one who is half free
- The slave sent to slaughter a Pesach sacrifice and the variations of his carrying out his mission
- When one of five animals is discovered to have been unfit after they have all been slaughtered and it is not known which
- A father's strategy to train his children in hurrying to do a mitzvah
- Subscribing to a company for Pesach sacrifice, withdrawing the subscription and dividing the flesh among the members
- Selling one's subscription and one's sacrifice
- For which ritually impure person can the Pesach sacrifice be slaughtered?
- Slaughtering for a single owner and who can make up a company
- The convert and his Pesach sacrifice
- The sacrifice offered on behalf of one who is unable to because of distance but who can arrive in time to eat its flesh

What is a Jew Doing in Jail?

Imprisonment is not legislated by the Torah as a punishment for violation of the law. Lashes, or capital punishment for more serious offenses, are the only penalties that serve as atonement for the sinner, and as a deterrent for others. It is therefore surprising to read in our *gemara* a reference to a Jew in a Jewish prison just before Pesach.

The *mishna* states that if a Jew has been promised a release from prison in time for Pesach we may include him in a group with others for whom a sacrifice will be slaughtered. We cannot, however, slaughter one for him alone, since the promise may not be kept, and the sacrifice will be disqualified for lack of someone to eat its flesh. Rabbi Yochanan distinguishes between a Jewish prison and a non-Jewish one. If it is Jews who have promised to release him we can slaughter the sacrifice for him alone because we can absolutely rely on the fulfillment of their promise in

the spirit of what the Prophet states that "The remnant of Israel will not do injustice or speak lies." (*Tzefaniah* 3:13).

But what is a Jew doing in a Jewish prison altogether?

Three possibilities are suggested by Rashi in his commentary:

The court has ordered a man to divorce the woman he has married against the law and he is imprisoned in order to coerce him into compliance.

The court has ordered him to fulfill a financial obligation and in certain cases has imprisoned him to induce compliance.

If a Jew seriously injures another during a fight, as described in *Shmot* 21:18-19, he is kept in prison until it is determined that the victim will not die from the wounds. Although there is no explicit mention of prison in the Torah, our Sages (*Ketubot* 33b) deduce this from the above-mentioned passages.

• *Pesachim* 91a

What the SAGES Say

"When the Torah commands us 'to love the other like yourself' (*Vayikra* 19:18) it includes even carrying out the execution of one deserving the death penalty in a dignified manner."

• *Rabbi Nachman - Pesachim* 75a

"Even an iron curtain cannot separate between Israel and their Father in Heaven."

• *Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi - Pesachim* 85b

"The passage in *Shir Hashirim* 8:10 describes the security of Israel as founded on 'I am a wall and my breasts are citadels'. Torah is the protective wall and Torah scholars are the breasts (which nurse others with knowledge – Rashi).

• *Rabbi Yochanan - Pesachim* 87a

"Silence is good for the wise and even more so for the fools as is written (*Mishlei* 17:28) 'And even the fool who remains silent may be thought of as a wise man.'"

• *A beraita lesson learned from a mishna - Pesachim* 99a

TALMUDigest

Pesachim 93-99

- Pesach *Sheini*- a second chance to offer the Pesach sacrifice a month later – for whom is it intended?
- Is Pesach *Sheini* a new holiday or a compensation for the first?
- What is considered being distant to exempt one from offering Pesach sacrifice?
- How large the earth, how high the Heavens
- Different views on movement of sun and constellations
- How the Pesach *Rishon*, the one offered in its set time, differs from Pesach *Sheini*
- Who can eat from the Pesach sacrifice offered when most of the community is ritually impure?
- How the Pesach sacrifice in Egypt differed from the later ones
- The need to inspect a sacrifice for four days before offering
- Who is disqualified from eating Pesach sacrifice and who from *terumah*?
- The lost animal which was designated as a Pesach sacrifice
- When an animal not qualified for a Pesach sacrifice is designated for such a purpose
- The Pesach sacrifice animal that became mixed up with animals designated for other sacrifices
- The company which delegated one of its members to search for the lost animal designated for their sacrifice
- When silence pays
- The limit on meals the day before Pesach

What Could We Eat Anyway?

One should not eat on the day before Pesach too close to evening, states the *Mishna* at the beginning of the last *perek* of *Mesechta Pesachim*. The reason given in the *gemara* is that it is important for a Jew to save his appetite for the matzah that he is obligated by the Torah to eat at night.

But what could we eat anyway?

This is the question raised by Tosefot. We are forbidden to eat *chametz* after the first third of the day as we learned in the earlier part of this *Mesechta*, so there is no need to mention a prohibition on eating a *chametz*

meal in the last quarter of the day. As regards eating matzah we find in the Talmud Yerushalmi a prohibition against eating matzah the entire day preceding the holiday because the time for the mitzvah has not yet arrived. The *Mishna* cannot be referring to foods which are neither *chametz* nor matzah because such foods are explicitly permitted (*Pesachim* 107b) up until the evening.

So what could we have eaten at this late hour if not for our *Mishna*?

Two solutions are offered to this problem.

Tosefot suggests that what can be eaten up until the last quarter of the day is *matzah ashira* (literally rich matzah), which is baked from flour mixed with liquids other than water (what we know today as egg matzah). Since water is not used, no leavening action takes place and it is not considered *chametz*. Such matzah cannot qualify for the mitzvah of eating matzah at night because matzah is described in the Torah as *lechem oni* – bread of poverty – which excludes such “rich matzah”. Since such matzah does not qualify for the mitzvah, the above-mentioned prohibition found in the Talmud Yerushalmi does not apply. It is therefore this sort of matzah that would be possible to eat on the day before Pesach up until the late hour mentioned in our *Mishna*.

(While this solves the problem it should be noted that it is the custom of Ashkenazic Jews to refrain from eating matzah baked with liquids other than water, because we respect the ruling of some authorities that even such liquids can create *chametz*, especially if even a drop of water is in the mixture. See *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 462:4 where the Rama writes that the custom is to use such matzah for those who are too ill or too old to eat regular matzah.)

Another approach emerges from the commentary of Rambam on this *Mishna*. While it is permitted to eat food which is neither *chametz* nor matzah on the day before Pesach, one must be careful to avoid eating excessive quantities of even such food at a later hour of the day in order to preserve his appetite for the matzah at night.

• *Pesachim* 99b

ASK! the Jewish Information Service

Pesach Search

From: Alicia in New Haven

Dear Rabbi,
If we clean the house of chametz before Pesach, and then particularly the day before the holiday, why do we then hide pieces of chametz around the house before checking that night. Doesn't that seem to defeat the purpose?

Dear Alicia,

On a strictly practical level, once we've endeavored to clean the house of all unknown chametz by the eve of Pesach, the search at night might be done superficially, since the members of the household already "know" that the house is clean for Pesach. Hiding pieces of chametz encourages the person who's checking to be more thorough. Also, even though the mitzvah is to search even though one doesn't find, nevertheless, since a blessing is recited upon commencing the search, it is befitting that some chametz be "found".

That being said, it's important that people who perform this custom be careful not to lose the chametz they've hidden. It is advisable that before the search the person who hides the pieces should write down where they are placed, since sometimes because of the rush to finish so many different preparations for the festival, one may forget. Preferably, the pieces should be wrapped in paper or in small plastic bags so that they may be easily disposed of without leaving crumbs. In any

case, one should be careful to prepare only small pieces (less than a *k'zayit* each) so that if any get lost, they may be verbally nullified.

The following is an explanation on a more symbolic level. The search for chametz teaches us to seek for the evil inclination in hidden places. Putting down pieces of chametz after cleaning and before searching indicates that even if a person has made every effort to cleanse himself of impurity, he must not consider himself free of iniquity. For if he were to continue his search, he would certainly find room for improvement and repair. This is the meaning of the verse, "For there is no man so righteous in this world that he does only good and never sins." He who prides himself that he has corrected all his faults can be certain that he hasn't completed the search.

From: Andrew in Paris

Dear Rabbi,
I am studying abroad this year and will be observing Passover for the first time without my family. I seem to remember something about first-borns fasting on the day before the holiday. Do I have to do this if I'm not in my parents' home? Thanks.

Dear Andrew,

It is an ancient and widespread practice for the first-born to fast on Erev Pesach in memory of the miracle that saved the Jews from the plague that slew the first-born of the ancient Egyptians. This fast should really

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WHAT'S the Right Thing TO DO?

Bilingual Seder

Question: I am expecting guests for my Pesach Seder whose knowledge of Hebrew is practically non-existent. Conducting it entirely in English will be unfair to my Hebrew-speaking children. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The need to translate the Haggada into another language is already mentioned in our halachic sources. (See *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 473:6 where Rama mentions that one of the early commentaries, Rabbi Yitzchak of London, translated the entire Haggadah for his wife and children.)

Many families in Israel share your problem because their children understand only Hebrew while their guests understand only English.

The right thing to do is to say the Haggada in its original Hebrew and supply your guests with an English translation to read while you are doing so. You can cite any additional commentaries, rotating between Hebrew and English so that everyone feels they are taking part.

It might also be a good idea to supply your guests with a transliterated version of popular songs like *Dayeinu* so that they can sing together with everyone else in the same language.

ISRAEL Forever

Transformation

“We begin by recalling our shame and conclude by remembering our praise.” This is the pattern that our Sages set for the very beginning of our Haggada on the night of Pesach.

One opinion of the Sages is that this refers to our transformation from the idol worshiping generation preceding our Patriarchs to a nation of monotheistic believers.

A second opinion is that the reference is to our transformation from slaves in Egypt to free men.

Why, it may be asked, is it necessary to recall our shameful past on the night we celebrate our freedom?

It has been suggested that when a person is exposed to

a negative environment and survives its influence he develops an immunity to such spiritual illnesses. Because Avraham grew up in the home of his idol-manufacturing father and saw the absurdity of idol worship, he developed the spiritual strength of the classic iconoclast. Because our ancestors were exposed to the spiritual corruption of Egypt they were capable of developing the resistance to evil, which qualified them to be the receivers of the Torah.

There is a Chassidic insight in regard to the above-mentioned pattern. Even if one begins the Seder night on the level of shame arising from his spiritual shortcomings, he will be worthy of praise by the time the Seder ends.

The HUMAN SIDE of the Story

Jumping to the Wrong Conclusions

“Nobody called for you!” This was the strange manner in which Rabbi Eliezer Hager, the son of the Monsey-Vishnitz Rebbe, was greeted by the Jew from Bnei Brak who was marrying off his daughter in Monsey. This seemingly rude greeting upset some of Rabbi Hager’s followers and other guests who began to grumble about the arrogance of the Bnei Brak visitor.

When Rabbi Hager learned of the commotion, he

calmed everyone down with this explanation.

“The *mechuten* from Bnei Brak and I have been close friends for many years. When he arrived from Eretz Yisrael for the wedding, he told me that he needed a cellular phone, and asked me if I have a spare one to lend him. As I handed him my spare, I asked him to notify me if anyone tried to contact me at that number. When I arrived here he informed me ‘Nobody called for you.’”

LOVE OF THE LAND

THE SAGES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

“About Rabbi Yehoshua it was said – fortunate is she who gave birth to him” (Avot 2:8)

Rabbi Yehoshua’s mother was responsible for his becoming a Sage. When she was expecting, she went to every Beit Midrash in her town and asked the Sages to pray that the child she bore would also become a Sage. From



the day he was born she never removed his cradle from the Beit Midrash so that his ears should hear nothing but words of Torah.

• Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura

PARSHA Q&A

VAYIKRA

1. Who does the word “*eilav*” in verse 1:1 exclude?
2. Name all the types of animals and birds mentioned in this week’s Parsha.
3. What two types of sin does an *olah* atone for?
4. Where was the *olah* slaughtered?
5. What procedure of an animal-offering can a non-*kohen* perform?
6. Besides the fire the *kohanim* bring on the altar, where else did the fire come from?
7. At what stage of development are *torim* (turtle-doves) and *bnei yona* (young pigeons) unfit as offerings?
8. What is *melika*?
9. Why are animal innards offered on the altar, while bird innards are not?
10. Why does the Torah describe both the animal and bird offerings as a “satisfying aroma”?
11. Why is the term “*nefesh*” used regarding the flour offering?
12. Which part of the free-will *mincha* offering is burned on the altar?
13. The Torah forbids bringing honey with the *mincha*. What is meant by “honey”?
14. When does the Torah permit bringing a leavened bread offering?
15. Concerning *shelamim*, why does the Torah teach about sheep and goats separately?
16. For most offerings the *kohen* may use a service vessel to apply the blood on the *mizbe’ach*. For which *korban* may he apply the blood using only his finger?
17. Who is obligated to bring a *chatat*?
18. Where were the remains of the bull burnt while in the wilderness? Where were they burnt during the time of the *Beit Hamikdash*?
19. What two things does a voluntary *mincha* have that a *minchat chatat* lacks?
20. What is the minimum value of a *korban asham*?

Answers to Vayikra’s Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 1:1 - Aharon.
 2. 1:2,14, 3:12 - Cattle, sheep, goats, turtledoves (*torim*), and doves (*bnei yona*).
 3. 1:4 - Neglecting a positive command, and violating a negative command which is rectified by a positive command.
 4. 1:5 - In the *Mishkan* Courtyard (*azarah*).
 5. 1:55. - Ritual slaughter.
 6. 1:7 - It descended from Heaven.
 7. 1:14 - When their plumage turns golden. At that stage, *bnei yona* are too old and *torim* are too young.
 8. 1:15 - Slaughtering a bird from the back of the neck using one’s fingernail.
 9. 1:16 - An animal’s food is provided by its owner, so its innards are “kosher.” Birds, however, eat food that they scavenge, so their innards are tainted with “theft.”
 10. 1:17 — To indicate that the size of the offering is irrelevant, provided your heart is directed toward G-d.
 11. 2:1 - Usually, it is a poor person who brings a flour offering. Therefore, Hashem regards it as if he had offered his *nefesh* (soul).
 12. 2:1 - The *kometz* (fistful).
 13. 2:11 - Any sweet fruit derivative.
 14. 2:12 - On Shavuot.
 15. 3:7 - Because they differ regarding the *alya* (fat tail). The lamb’s *alya* is burned on the altar but the goat’s is not.
 16. 3:8 - The *chatat*.
 17. 4:2 - One who accidentally transgresses a negative commandment whose willing violation carries the *karet* (excision) penalty.
 18. 4:12 - a) Outside the three camps. b) Outside Jerusalem.
 19. 5:11 - *Levona* and oil.
 20. 5:15 - Two *shekalim*.
-

PARSHA Q&A

TZAV

1. What separated the *kohen's* skin from the priestly garments?
2. How often were the ashes removed from upon the *mizbe'ach*? How often were they removed from next to the *mizbe'ach*?
3. If someone extinguishes the fire on the *mizbe'ach*, how many Torah violations has he transgressed?
4. The portion of a flour-offering offered on the *mizbe'ach* may not be *chametz*. But is the *kohen's* portion allowed to be *chametz*?
5. When a *kohen* is inaugurated, what offering must he bring?
6. What three baking processes were used to prepare the *korban* of Aharon and his sons?
7. What is the difference between a *minchat kohen* and a *minchat Yisrael*?
8. When is a *kohen* disqualified from eating from a *chatat*?
9. What is the difference between a copper and earthenware vessel regarding removing absorbed tastes?
10. Can an animal dedicated as an *asham* be replaced with another animal?
11. How does an *asham* differ from all other *korbanot*?
12. Unlike all other *korbanot*, what part of the ram or sheep may be placed on the *mizbe'ach*?
13. What three types of *kohanim* may not eat from the *asham*?
14. In which four instances is a *korban todah* brought?
15. Until when may a *todah* be eaten according to the Torah? Until when according to Rabbinic decree?
16. How does a *korban* become *pigul*?
17. Who may eat from a *shelamim*?
18. What miracle happened at the entrance of the *Ohel Moed*?
19. Other than *Yom Kippur*, what other service requires that the *kohen* separate from his family?
20. What are the 5 categories of *korbanot* listed in this *Parsha*?

Answers to Tzav's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 6:3 - Nothing.
2. 6:4 -A) Every day. B) Whenever there was a lot.
3. 6:6 - Two.
4. 6:10 - No.
5. 6:13 - A *korban mincha* — A tenth part of an *ephah* of flour.
6. 6:14 - Boiling, baking in an oven and frying in a pan.
7. 6:15 - The *minchat kohen* is burnt completely. Only a handful of the *minchat Yisrael* is burnt, and the remainder is eaten by the *kohanim*.
8. 6:19 - If he is *tamei* (spiritually impure) at the time of the sprinkling of the blood.
9. 6:21 - One can remove an absorbed taste from a copper vessel by scouring and rinsing, whereas such a taste can never be removed from an earthenware vessel.
10. 7:1 - No.
11. 7:3 - It can only be brought from a ram or sheep.
12. 7:3 - The tail.
13. 7:7 - A *t'vul yom* (a *tamei kohen* who immersed in a *mikveh* yet awaits sunset to become *tahor*); a *mechusar kipurim* (a *tamei* person who has gone to the *mikveh* but has yet to bring his required offering); an *onan* (a mourner prior to the burial of the deceased).
14. 7:12 - Upon safe arrival from an ocean voyage; upon safe arrival from a desert journey; upon being freed from prison; upon recovering from illness.
15. 7:15 - a) Until the morning. b) Until midnight.
16. 7:18 - The person slaughters the animal with the intention that it be eaten after the prescribed time.
17. 7:19 - Any uncontaminated person (not only the owner).
18. 8:3 - The entire nation was able to fit in this very small area.
19. 8:34 - The burning of the *parah adumah* (red heifer).
20. *Olah* (6:2); *mincha* (6:7); *chatat* (6:18); *asham* (7:1); *shelamim* (7:11).

PARSHA Q&A

SHEMINI

1. What date was “yom hashemini”?
2. Which of Aharon’s *korbanot* atoned for the Golden Calf?
3. What *korbanot* did Aharon offer for the Jewish People?
4. What was unique about the *chatat* offered during the induction of the *Mishkan*?
5. When did Aharon bless the people with the *birkat kohanim*?
6. Why did Moshe go into the *Ohel Mo’ed* with Aharon?
7. Why did Nadav and Avihu die?
8. Aharon quietly accepted his sons’ death. What reward did he receive for this?
9. What prohibitions apply to a person who is intoxicated?
10. Name the three *chatat* goat offerings that were sacrificed on the day of the inauguration of the *Mishkan*.
11. Which he-goat *chatat* did Aharon burn completely and why?
12. Why did Moshe direct his harsh words at Aharon’s sons?
13. Moshe was upset that Aharon and his sons did not eat the *chatat*. Why?
14. Why did Hashem choose Moshe, Aharon, Elazar and Itamar as His messengers to tell the Jewish People the laws of *kashrut*?
15. What are the signs of a kosher land animal?
16. How many non-kosher animals display only one sign of *kashrut*? What are they?
17. If a fish sheds its fins and scales when out of the water, is it kosher?
18. Why is a stork called *chasida* in Hebrew?
19. The *chagav* is a kosher insect. Why don’t we eat it?
20. What requirements must be met in order for water to maintain its status of purity?

Answers to Shemini’s Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 9:1 - First of Nissan.
2. 9:2 - The calf offered as a *korban chatat*.
3. 9:3,4 - A he-goat as a *chatat*, a calf and a lamb for an *olah*, an ox and a ram for *shelamim*, and a *mincha*.
4. 9:11 - It’s the only example of a *chatat* offered on the courtyard *mizbe’ach* that was burned.
5. 9:22 - When he finished offering the *korbanot*, before descending from the *mizbe’ach*.
6. 9:23 - For one of two reasons: Either to teach Aharon about the service of the incense, or to pray for the *Shechina* to dwell with Israel.
7. 10:2 - Rashi offers two reasons: Either because they gave a halachic ruling in Moshe’s presence, or because they entered the *Mishkan* after drinking intoxicating wine.
8. 10:3 - A portion of the Torah was given solely through Aharon.
9. 10:9-11 - He may not give a *halachic* ruling. Also, a *kohen* is forbidden to enter the *Ohel Mo’ed*, approach the *mizbe’ach*, or perform the *avoda*.
10. 10:16 - The goat offerings of the inauguration ceremony, of *Rosh Chodesh*, and of Nachshon ben Aminadav.
11. 10:16 - The *Rosh Chodesh chatat*: Either because it became *tamei*, or because the *kohanim* were forbidden to eat from it while in the state of *aninut* (mourning).
12. 10:16 - Out of respect for Aharon, Moshe directed his anger at his sons and not directly at Aharon.
13. 10:17 - Because only when the *kohanim* eat the *chatat* are the sins of the owners atoned.
14. 11:2 - Because they accepted the deaths of Nadav and Avihu in silence.
15. 11:3 - An animal whose hooves are completely split and who chews its cud.
16. 11:4,5,6,7 - Four: Camel, *shafan*, hare and pig.
17. 11:12 - Yes.
18. 11:19 - Because it acts with *chesed* (kindness) toward other storks.
19. 11:21 - We have lost the tradition and are not able to identify the kosher *chagav*.
20. 11:36 - It must be connected to the ground (i.e., a spring or a cistern).

ASK! the Jewish Information Service

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take place on the actual date that it occurred, namely the fifteenth of Nisan, which is Passover night. But by then the festival has already begun and we do not fast on a festival.

There are different customs associated with this fast. Less common practice intends to recall that at least one person of every Egyptian household died and therefore has every firstborn fast: male or female, whether from the father or the mother. Accordingly, even if there is no firstborn, the oldest of the children fast. The prevalent custom is that only firstborn males of the mother fast. A person who fits this criterion fasts even when not in his parents' home, and even when he has his own home and children.

This fast is generally treated with leniency so that if there is a meal connected with a mitzvah such as a *brit milah* or a *siyum* (a completion of the study of a Talmudic tractate) the firstborn participate in this. It has become the usual practice to arrange for a *siyum* to take place in the synagogue after the morning prayers so that the firstborn who are present may partake of this meal (usually consisting of light foods), and having broken their fast for a mitzvah, are then allowed to eat during the day.

From: Marc in Belgium

Dear Rabbi,

I've been looking over the Haggada and there is a section that is not so clear to me. The passage reads, "And it is **this** that has stood by our fathers and us, for not one alone has risen up against us to destroy us, but in all ages did they rise up to destroy us, but the Holy One, blessed be He, delivered us from their hands." What I don't understand is, what is the "**this**" that has stood by our fathers etc.? Does it refer to G-d? If so, why does-

n't it say, "And He has stood by our fathers..."? Thank you for your reply.

Dear Marc,

On a simple level, perhaps the "*this*" is referring to a promise or a pact that G-d has made with the Jewish people, that no matter what happens to the Jewish people in any generation, despite the persecution of the nations, G-d will ultimately be with us, protect us and redeem us. Accordingly, the intention is as follows, "The promise made by G-d to our forefathers and which He keeps with us, their children, is still binding and in effect, even though in all ages the nations rise against us, He will deliver us from their hands."

However, there is a deeper and very beautiful explanation based on the idea that it is the Jewish people's eternal dedication to the Torah that is the basis for our affirmation of G-d's protection. This explanation is derived from the Hebrew term used for "*this*": "*v'hee*" - spelled '*vav*', '*hey*', '*yod*', '*alef*'. The letter '*vav*', which has the numerical value of six, indicates the six orders of the Mishna, the oral teaching. This takes precedence because the oral tradition reveals to us the meaning of the written teachings. The letter '*hey*', which has the numerical value of five, indicates the five books of the Torah. The letter '*yod*', with the numerical equivalent of ten, indicates the Ten Commandments, which are the essence of the moral teachings of Judaism. The letter '*alef*', with the numerical equivalent of one, indicates the One G-d, whose unity it is our duty to declare.

According to this, if we abide by the oral teachings, study the written Torah, base our code of conduct on the Ten Commandments, and proclaim our faith to the One G-d, the Almighty will ultimately redeem us from all our foes.

The Ohr Somayach family wishes
you a Chag Kasher v'Somayach.

שמע ישראל

Dear Family...

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Dear Family,

I'm sure you all know the four questions that begin the Seder. But there's also a fifth question that follows them. What's this fifth question? "When do we eat?"

In order that we all derive the maximum from the Seder this year, could I make a few requests?

Please make sure that you have enough to eat before we sit down to the Seder. I suggest a substantial meal of chicken and potatoes, or potatoes and potatoes around 3 to 4 PM. I don't think we will eat much before 10:30 PM.

One of the most important parts of the Seder is to tell over to the children that G-d brought us out of Egypt to be His special people. I will try my best to convey this to the children and to us. But the telling should not be hurried (you'll have to leave the judgment of speed to my discretion).

Every year on Pesach we have both an opportunity and an obligation to re-charge our beliefs that:

- a. G-d created the world ex nihilo.
- b. He knows everything that can be known.
- c. He cares what we do.

He supervises everything that happens to the Jewish People in general and to each individual Jew specifically.

The experience of the Seder and the telling of the Exodus will affect us on a very deep level if we allow them to. We must be careful to do the mitzvot as prescribed: the correct amounts of matza, maror and the cups in the permitted time.

However, in addition, we should try and conduct ourselves throughout the Seder with a mixture of seriousness and great joy. We should, at all costs, avoid any discussion of mundane and/or secular matters; i.e. where we're going on holiday, what the flight was like, what the hotel is/isn't like. We have a once-a-year opportunity, so let's not miss this spiritual "launch window"! If we were watching the sunset over the Everest, we wouldn't be discussing the price of sandals in Katmandu. (However cheap they were!)

The Seder is a spiritual experience that dwarfs any vista in the world. But it's a lot more subtle too.

Looking forward to see you all!