

A SEDER GUIDE

By The Learning Group of

**Kehillas Bais Yehuda
Wesley Hills, New York**

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PREFACE MARCH 2012

While recently reviewing the Torah notes of my father, of blessed memory, I came across the following observation:

The Midrash relates that the entrance to Pharaoh's chamber was quite low - so low in fact that one needed to bend to get in. Alongside the entranceway was an idol so that lowering oneself to enter the chamber also had the appearance of seeming to bow to the idol.

However, the Midrash notes, when our ancestors, Jacob, Moshe and Aaron entered, the opening was enlarged and it was not necessary for them to bow their heads to enter. They entered standing fully upright.

This Midrash may plausibly be interpreted allegorically.

The smallness of the entrance conveys the terrifying fear and smallness one felt as he made ready to enter before the greatest and most powerful king in the world - a king who by all appearances held power over life and death.

That "fear", that "smallness", was really the "idol" - the false deity - that stood alongside the entrance and to which one payed homage when he feared. It was to the idol of fearing one of flesh and blood that all who entered Pharaoh's chambers bowed.

But not Jacob, Moshe or Aaron.

They understood that they were part of the the chosen people - who could reach the spiritual level of angels, and who feared none other than G-d. They bowed to no man and fearlessly broke with society and convention when belief in HaShem so warranted. For them, there was never a low passage - only a gateway of great dimensions through which they walked fully upright. As the Torah notes of Moshe: Moshe stood fully upright before Pharaoh.

This year, as perhaps too often in recent memory, the Jew is challenged yet again by intimidation and threat and ugly terror. And once again the Passover Seder reminds us, we need fear no man and no nation. Our fate is in the hands of HaShem. May we be worthy of His redemption and celebrate Pesach next year in Jerusalem.

PREFACE APRIL 2011

In his new book, "The Novelist and the Physicist", Herman Wouk quotes Richard P. Feynman, the renowned Jewish physicist expressing his religious doubts by saying,

"It doesn't seem to me that this fantastically marvelous universe, this tremendous range of time and space and different kinds of animals, and all the different planets, and all these atoms with all their motions, and so on, all this complicated thing can merely be a stage so that God can watch human beings struggle for good and evil - which is the view that religion has. The stage is too big for the drama."

Despite the skepticism, in his formulation Feynman succinctly captures the Jewish view of the importance of mankind. That all of the vastness of the universe and everything it contains, is but a backdrop for man's spiritual quest. As we recently saw in our Shiur in Tractate Brochos:

All creation exists only to support man's struggle to ascend. The entire universe exists only as the stage on which man's mission is enacted. Judaism believes that the stage is so large because the drama is in fact so important - and - there could be nothing more important.

With that in mind, it is therefore not surprising to find that the moment of the birth of the Jews as a people finds them in a life and death struggle with Egypt, the most powerful empire in the world. And that all of the elements of nature itself - the heavens and the earth, the animals and the insects, plague and disease, and the sea itself, are the props that are used in this greatest of all dramas.

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, several members of our weekly learning group asked for help in conducting a Seder that is spiritually meaningful and halachically correct for their families and guests – particularly for those who are not observant.

This guide was created to help meet that need. It contains some of the material that we covered during our weekly study sessions in the Wesley Hills community. We hope that you will find it as useful as some of the members of our community and that we will be able to add to it, as time allows, to continue to help fill this need.

In the review we have attempted to capture some of the flavor and the core insights of our pre-Pesach sessions and discussions, albeit in a much shortened form. Please allow that we frequently spent one or more sessions on just one of the multiple points addressed herein and the written form as presented is necessarily abbreviated.

Comments and suggestions are welcome.

Please note that any omissions, errors, grammatical typos and just plain mistakes are solely mine to claim, as was the pleasure of having had the opportunity to lead this fine group of dedicated “learners” for the past several years.

Yosef Rosenholtz

THE BASICS

PREPARATION

Passover is the YomTov of Jewish survival and continuity. It is the holiday that many Jews keep, even when they are scarcely recognizable as Jews and all other vestiges of practice have been lost.

It survives as a holiday because of the genius of its celebration, the eternity of its message, and the brilliance of its structure.

Prepare early for the Passover Seder and have all foods ready, and the table set, so that the Seder may begin as soon as halachically permissible. Because a central theme of Passover is the continuity of the Jewish people and their traditions it is critical that the children assume a central focus of the evening. Delaying the start of the Seder makes it difficult for young children to fully play their role and makes it hard for some adults to keep their interest up too.

Finally, the Seder night is not the time for financial humility. Our very best should adorn the table. This is a royal evening – and we should play the part.

PARTICIPATION

As mentioned above, all adults are required to fulfill the mitzvot of the evening and children who have reached the age of instruction must participate too.

Encourage participation among adults by assigning a particular topic or passage for research prior to Passover, to each of the adults. Make sure each person understands what he/she reads. The Haggada must be understood and may be read in any language that correctly translates the Hebrew. Translate and explain when appropriate, but save the extended discussion for the meal, or even later.

Extended and long-winded discussions early in the Seder before the children have asked the four questions and while less committed Jews wait desperately for something to eat, does not encourage future Passover commitment. (Even fully committed Jews have been known to stare longingly at food hoping for a quick end to over-extended discussion).

Real participation and making the elements of the Passover Seder concrete are essential steps of any educational program and this is especially true of the Seder. Play acting by the children, and making the events of the Passover story come to life are key ingredients for inspiring children – and maybe adults too!

FULLFILL THE REQUIREMENTS

Each adult – male and female – must fulfill the requirements of eating matzo, drinking four cups of wine and reciting the primary elements of the Haggada. Children able to be instructed, (above the age of six or seven) are also required to participate. One engaged in preparing, cooking and serving the meal is not exempt from this requirement! Although females are frequently freed from time-bound positive commandments, the requirements of the Seder night are different, since to paraphrase the Talmud, “...they too were participants in the miracle”. For this reason, men and women are equally liable to participate in and fulfill the mitzvot of the evening! Be prepared to help your spouse participate in and fulfill the mitzvot.

UNDERSTANDING

The Haggada must be understood. If someone does not understand the Hebrew, encourage them to say it in English. Try to find translations that are true to both the meaning and intent of the passages, and if necessary, explain it to them.

RECLINING

Reclining is not optional. Make sure to recline when eating the matzo, drinking the four cups of wine and, if possible, when eating the meal. The Seder is above all experiential. Reclining has historically been associated with freedom, and we need not just mouth these words, but to feel them.

The Sefer HaChinuch explains that Judaism is a religion that emphasizes personal growth but that spiritual growth does not come simply as a result of our having good thoughts or intentions alone. It is only through a combination of both having good thoughts and actually taking action – through combining both word and deed, that man is elevated spiritually.

Fully participating in the Passover Seder therefore involves both thought and deed. So many of the mitzvot are associated with Pesach, because it is the central theme and bedrock of the Jewish experience and we need to participate in both thought and deed to truly appreciate the Seder experience.

HISTORICITY

The Hebrew word Haggada literally means 'telling'. The basis for the Haggada is the passage where the Torah says:

"And you will tell your child on that day, saying: 'It is because of this that HaShem did for me when I came out of Mitzraim'".

The Sefer HaChinuch explains that this is the basis for the twenty first mitzvah of the Torah - to relate the story of our exodus from Egypt. To tell our children of the events we experienced, the miracles done for us and the comeuppance of our enemies. And that we ourselves ought to be moved by this telling, so that even if, sadly, we have no one to share the story with, we can tell it to ourselves!

Most of the form of the Haggada is outlined in the tenth chapter of the Talmud Pesachim where the Mishnah details what needs to be said, including Rabban Gamliel's famous dictum that:

"Whoever does not say these three things on Pesach does not fulfill his obligation; and these are: Pesach, Matzo and Marror."

THE NAME

The Torah refers to the Passover holiday as "The festival of Matzos" . But the Rabbis of the Talmud refer to it as "The festival of the Pesach" - the holiday of Pesach, as evidenced by the name of the Talmudic tractate that deals with the holiday - "Pesachim".

Why is that?

We find in other contexts that the Jews take pride in their relationship with HaShem, while HaShem revels in joy with the Jews - His people. For example, the Talmud in Brachoth tells us that whereas the Tfillin of the Jew contains chapters of the Torah that declare the unity of HaShem - the Shema -, HaShem, so to speak, wears tfillin that talk of the uniqueness of the Jewish people, "Who is like you Israel, one nation in the land".

In a similar vein, G-d and his people take pride in different aspects of the holiday. For the Jew, the holiday is known as "Pesach", since that refers to the mercy of HaShem when He "passed over" the Jewish houses while killing the first-born Mitzrim. But for HaShem, the holiday is "The festival of the Pesach" for despite all the difficulties, the Jews hurried to fulfill the commandment and leave Mitzraim, not even allowing their bread the time to bake.

THE SEDER

THE NUMBER FOUR

Why are there so many allusions to the number four?

There are four letters in the name of HaShem – We drink four cups of wine to allude that each aspect of the Jewish redemption was conceived and orchestrated by an all-knowing and ever-present Creator.

Also, there were four unique and essential stages in the Jewish return to freedom - "And I sent you out", "And I saved you", "And I redeemed you", "And I took you".

Each of these stages allowed another degree of separation from the physical and psychological torment of hundreds of years of slavery.

First came the cessation of physical enslavement and torture. Then came political freedom and independence. But even freedom from physical abuse and political independence could not totally break the psychological hold of slavery on the psyche. The Jews were only fully and unconditionally freed when they saw their former Egyptian masters drowned in the Red Sea. And finally, full spiritual freedom was achieved when the Jews were presented with the covenant of HaShem at Mount Sinai.

In fact, the language of the Midrash supports this idea of redemption in stages since it states that these terms, "And I sent you out", "And I saved you", "And I redeemed you", "And I took you" are not just four different expressions of redemption, but that each represents a distinct "redemption" – *each represents another rung on the road to full and complete freedom.*

THE CUSTOM TO EAT AN EGG

Chasam Sofer explains the reason for the egg on the Seder Plate. An egg is different from most foods. Most foods soften when cooked, but the more we cook an egg, the harder and tougher it gets. This symbolizes the Jewish people. The more we face trials of fire and water, the tougher and more faithful we get to our beliefs.

The Ramah, in the Shulchan Aruch writes that there is a custom to eat an egg on the night of Passover. The reason for the custom is because the night of Tisha B'av always falls on the same day of the week as the first night of Passover. The Beis HaLevi finds this odd. Isn't the fact that the first day of Pesach always falls on the same day as Tisha B'Av just a coincidence? And if so, why should that coincidence be a cause for unpleasant associations on this remarkable and happy holiday?

Why introduce a symbol of mourning on a festive day? It seems particularly incongruous to remember and mourn for the tragedies of Tisha B'Av, the day of national memory of exile and suffering, on the very night of the year we most conspicuously commemorate our liberation and freedom from those very oppressions and exiles!

Beis HaLevi explains this by saying that the Jewish nation was supposed to have been enslaved in Egypt for a period of four hundred years. But in actual fact the Jews were freed after two hundred ten years.

While there are several explanations for the discrepancy, he quotes one opinion from the Medrash that in truth the Jews left early - before the allotted time that had been decreed for their enslavement was actually complete. HaShem's hand was forced, so to speak, because the spiritual exigencies of the Jewish nation necessitated that they be rescued earlier than planned, in order to save the Jewish spirit from total and absolute extinction in the pagan and corrupt Egyptian culture.

- The Seder -

Yet the spiritual debt of the remaining years of slavery would not be forgotten but would still have to be paid. And this is the allusion of the fact that Tisha B'Av always falls out on the same day of the week as the first day of Pesach. It is not coincidence. The Jewish freedom on Pesach had to come early – but the remaining years of exile would need to be experienced over the coming millennia in further exiles, marked as they are by the day of Tisha B'Av. And that is why we eat the egg on Pesach. To remind us that the redemption of Pesach, as great as it was, was not complete, and that there will be a final and more complete redemption that is yet to come.

WINE

While in many respects the Jewish people had assimilated into Egyptian culture, in some important respects they maintained a separate identity. The Medrash says that they did not change their mode of dress nor did they modify their names to an Egyptian form. Neither did they intermarry. Maintenance of their independent identity as a people was the critical factor in allowing the Jews to be eventually redeemed because it meant that Jewish values were kept alive despite their overwhelming immersion in the pagan world of Egypt.

Wine, on the other hand, is frequently used to break down social barriers between people and is a common staple at parties and social interactions. In fact, this is why the Chachomim imposed restrictions on the use of non-Jewish wine - to prevent just such unreserved interaction and any potential assimilation. Wine is therefore used on Passover as the medium to celebrate the separation and on-going independence of the Jewish people and their ability to resist the allure of Egyptian society and maintain their independent identity.

Wine is mentioned four times in the Prophets, particularly in reference to salvation.

Since each of the four stages of redemption changed the psychological and physical condition of the Jews, the Chachomim declared that wine be used to experientially commemorate the redemption, *since wine actually induces a feeling of change and best expresses this feeling.*

RECITING THE HAGGADA

The point of the mitzvah to tell of the exodus is so that we should better remember it. In fact, as mentioned earlier, it is only when asked a question that the Torah commands us to verbally speak and tell of the experience. Otherwise, we could fulfill the mitzvah of the Haggadah by thinking of what happened.

ALL WHO ARE IN NEED

The recitation of the Haggada begins with - "This is the bread of my affliction", and continues with the invitation to all those who are hungry to eat with us, and we affirm that although we are now enslaved, next year we will once again be free in the land of Israel.

This passage was added by the Rabbis during the period of the Babylonian exile, as is evidenced by the fact it is written in Aramaic - the language of Babylonia.

Why does the Haggada begin with this passage? Why begin with an invitation to the hungry to join us? After all, the mitzvah to invite the poor to join us is not specific to Passover but is a mitzvah for every holiday? Why should this passage be the opening statement of the Haggadah?

The fundamental distinction of the Jewish people and the other nations of the world is one of kindness. That was the unique strength of Abraham, the patriarch, and it is on the basis of that trait that the Jewish people were founded.

The love of good that characterizes the Jew is not some extrinsic sensation that on occasion arises within us. Rather it is intrinsic to the nature of what the Jew represents and what he yearns for in life.

This feeling, of wanting to help, to do good for our fellow man, goes right to the core of what it means to be Jewish and is the foundation of Jewish character.

It is not surprising then, that having been freed to act in accord with their own conscience for the very first time after centuries of slavery...

*...the very first sensation the Jews experienced was the feeling that had been so long repressed... "How can I help others -
Let all who are hungry come and join with me..."*

The Haggadah therefore begins with this passage that best expresses the essence of what it means to be a Jew - "All who are in need come and eat"

THE UNUSUAL STRUCTURE OF THE SEDER

The Pesach Seder is unique in Jewish celebrations. The entire structure of the ceremony as well as its obviously didactical nature is built to engage both adults and children. To paraphrase Rav Eliyahu Dessler of blessed memory:

The Haggadah was arranged by the G'dolai Yisroel to enable us to fulfill the mitzvah of "Telling over to our children". It is therefore possible to learn from its structure educational methodology, as they understood it.

A TORAH APPROACH TO EDUCATION

For example, much of the Haggadah is arranged in the form of question and answer and there is much effort expended to engage a child's curiosity so as to provoke questions. There is also the notion of making the experience concrete. Examples of this are when we raise the matzo, point to it and say: "this matzoh" and similarly with the morror.

Likewise, it is difficult to fully appreciate a large complex multi-dimensional experience, so in the section "It would have been enough..." the experience of the exodus is separated into multiple individual elements. This is done so that each individual aspect and element of the Pesach experience may be independently understood and appreciated. Then, at its conclusion, all of the many aspects of the experience are, in a logical contrast, pulled together to allow us to sense the greatness of the whole.

All of these are elements of a Torah approach to pedagogy.

Further, the Talmud states even if one is unmarried and has no children, he must ask the four questions of himself. Even when there are two talmidei chachomim they must ask themselves the questions.

What could be the point of asking yourself anything?

And how could identical questions be meaningful to both a child and an educated scholar?

In fact, the essence of the evening is to help us feel the experience of that night. And even if in our minds we may be scholars, in our hearts there is always still something of the child. *And we need to reach both the children, and the child within us, to allow us to fully experience the meaning of the night of Pesach.*

THE EMPHASIS ON CHILDREN

The emphasis on children is especially strong, as we have just seen. Rav Dessler, quoting the famed ethicist and Torah scholar Rav Israel Salanter, makes another point about children that is relevant here.

"A child may be playing and imagining that a broken box is his ship at sea and that he himself is its captain as he sails the ocean."

While thus playing, the child's imagination is vividly real to him. It is so real in fact, that Rav Israel Salanter, of blessed memory, commented, "One who takes away a toy from a child is as though he sank the ship or destroyed the property of an adult".

For a child, imagination is reality and ought be respected. We must be as considerate of the child's fantasy as of an adult's reality, because, *for a child, fantasy is in many ways reality.*

Respect for a child's feelings and understanding them is part of education. An adult needs to care for the concerns and feelings of his children if he wants to succeed in passing to him the heritage of his ancestry. The love of a child for his parents is inextricably bound to the feeling that they want only what is best for him.

We may have the notion that the emphasis on children was somehow later added to the celebration of Pesach because of its importance and our wish to communicate that to our children.

But in point of fact, children were at the very center of the Torah's design for the ceremony from its inception. So much so, in fact, that according to the Rosh, the mitzvah of verbally telling the story of the Haggada was only commanded by the Torah when a child first asks a question! If there is no child to ask a question, we could fulfill the mitzvah of remembering the exodus simply by thinking about it, and there would be no need to verbalize our thoughts.

While the position of the Rosh may not be decisive halachically, his thinking reveals an important insight into the centrality of children in the Passover ceremony.

FOUR QUESTIONS – MORE LESSONS ON EDUCATION

The structure of the Haggada is unusual in that it is designed as a didactic tool. This has no parallel in the services of the other holidays.

Why is that?

Passover is the basis of Jewish experience. It established the Jewish nation as the people of one G-d, concerned with mankind, who rewards good and punishes evil.

It is therefore critical that this theme continue to be transmitted from father to his son, as it has been, for over three thousand years. But not all children think alike nor can they be taught the same way. Some children grasp ideas quickly, while others require more patience and deliberation.

The Torah considers the instruction of Passover so vital that that it repeats this idea in four different ways to drive home that each child must be taught in the way he or she could best understand it. The Passover experience must be passed on – and it is our responsibility to make it happen.

The Rabbis constructed the Seder as we have it to help instruct future generations of Jews with the central experience of Judaism. Because of that, we can learn how they understood teaching to be most effective. We see in its construction the central role of dialogue – of question and answer and how important it is for a teacher to elicit questions in his students.

Only one interested enough to ask a question, can be stimulated by an answer. *The greatest truths will not move someone who is not searching for an answer.*

We also see the necessity of bringing teaching to life. We don't just talk about matzo or morror – we point to them on the table and say “this matzo” and “this morror”.

“Judaism insists that HaShem reveals himself to the man who seeks after and thirsts for G-d. We want to initiate the child into the Masora community that seeks out the Al-Mighty and yearns for His presence and illumination. We want the child to become a “Mevakesh HaShem” - a seeker of G-d.”

MATZOH – THE CENTRAL ELEMENT OF THE STORY

Nothing is more symbolic of the Passover holiday than matzoh. Yet why the enormous emphasis on eating this particular food? While it may help us recall leaving Egypt when there was insufficient time for the dough to rise, is the rush of our exit the most dramatic and significant aspect of the experience? Is that to suggest that if sneakers had been in vogue in ancient Egypt, a strong case would have been made for their exclusive use while sitting at the seder table?

Other possibilities certainly come to mind, not the least of which is the great wealth showered upon us by the Egyptians as they urged us to leave. Could not that have been a point to be remembered?

Beis HaLevi adds profundity to this question when he points out that, as any traveler knows, leaving your home in a rush is not the most elegant or desirable way to travel. In fact, the Navi promises that when the final redemption does come, we will be redeemed with great deliberation.

Why then so emphasize the haste? Further, in the Haggadah we recite:

“This is the bread our fathers ate in Egypt”

Yet in fact, the Torah seems to say, as just mentioned, that matzoh was eaten in the rush to leave, not in Egypt itself. The Torah calls matzoh, “Lechem Oni” – poor man’s bread. It writes:

"You shall not eat chometz , seven days you shall eat matzoh, poor man’s bread, because you left Egypt in a rush, so that you remember the day of your leaving Egypt all the days of your life."

Rashi comments:

"It is the bread that reminds us of the suffering we endured in Egypt". But in fact, the above verse seems to be saying that we ate matzoh when leaving Egypt because of the great rush – not in Egypt itself!

In fact, the Shla’ explains, matzoh was very much eaten in Egypt itself. Under the terrific pressure of the Egyptians to fulfill their daily quota, the Jews were forced to always eat on the run. Even in Egypt there was insufficient time for the enslaved Jews to eat real bread. They just couldn’t spare the time waiting for the dough to rise.

TIME AND PERSONAL FREEDOM

In other words, the essential difference between matzoh and bread is not just that bread has risen and contains chometz while matzoh does not. The larger, and more significant difference is that bread takes time to make. But time is the one thing a slave doesn't have. He has no say in how he spends his time or how it is used. The cycle of the day, from sunrise to sunset, is built on his master's demands and becomes a repetitive ritual of a recurring nightmare.

More than anything else, matzoh, then, represents not only the image of the Jew rushing to leave Egypt, but also brings to mind the horror of the slavery of Egypt itself, because *there is nothing more personal, nor more important, than being able to decide for ourselves how we spend our time*. Used properly, time represents the key to accomplishment, change, personal growth and, ultimately, to find real meaning in living. Stripped of the ability to use his time the Jew remains unable to do anything with his life but remain a slave.

This is why Matzoh so perfectly symbolizes both the terror of the slavery and the sweetness of freedom and is, more than any other aspect of the Seder the central theme of the story. More than anything else, the Jews suffered from a lack of time. They didn't have it and they could not control it.

Then, in a stunning and ironic turnaround, after the tenth and final plague the irony of the Egyptian position is displayed via midah-kaneged-midah, as the Egyptians one final time mercilessly rush the Jews and force them to eat quickly, allowing them only the time to eat unleavened bread. But this time they do it not to demonstrate their mastery over the Jews but out of fear for their lives and in order to set them free!

HaShem then forever immortalizes this newfound freedom of the Jews with the very first mitzvah He gives them - "The sanctification of the new moon". *HaShem gives the Jew, who previously had no control of even his own time, the keys of control over the rule of time throughout the entire universe, representing the final and ultimate repudiation of the slavery of Egypt.*

A STRATEGY OF CAPTIVITY

There is an additional, yet generally overlooked, dimension to the story of the Jews in Egypt that is crucial to fully understanding the experience.

The terrible rush of time and their inability to even be able to bake bread was not just the byproduct of a cruel Egyptian attempt to squeeze more and more work from their slaves.

In fact, Pharaoh understood that the best way to keep the Jews enslaved was by depriving them of the time to think. But not just to stop them from being able to pay attention to what was happening to them, or to plan a rebellion against him. He wanted to make sure that they didn't have the time for any kind of thinking at all! His entire strategy to keep the Jews enslaved was built on making sure that they simply had no time for any kind of thinking. Pharaoh understood that given time to think, the Jews could never be kept enslaved, neither physically nor psychologically. That only by not allowing them even the slightest time for thought or reflection, could the Jews be kept as Egyptian slaves. And the Egyptians carried out this strategy of not allowing us time by continually piling on the work.

In other words, the reason we did not have time to eat bread in Egypt was not because the Egyptians gave us so much work. Rather, it was the overall plan of the Egyptians to overwhelm us with work *because more than anything else, they feared what we would do if we would only have the time to think!* Time and reflection, are the keys to personal growth, accomplishment and ultimately freedom.

AN ATTEMPT TO ASSIMILATE THE JEWS

The Bais HaLevy adds that Pharaoh's real intent was directed specifically to limit the Jewish practice of the Mitzvot. While pretending to enslave the Jews for financial profit, Pharaoh's true motive was to force the Jews to assimilate to relieve themselves of the struggle and pain which was promised if they would agree.

"FREEDOM"

...AS EXPRESSED BY THE HAGGADA

Slavery is not, therefore, as many think, solely the state of physical bondage of one human being to another. Rather, it exists primarily in the limitation of the ability to think and imagine great thoughts. Pharaoh, despite his role as ruler of the most powerful nation in the world, and the entire Egyptian people, are considered, from the Torah perspective, enslaved, since they were descendants of Cham, cursed by Noah for all time to be slaves. This is true despite the power of the Egyptian kingdom, the state of their culture and the knowledge they had!

Freedom is the power to appreciate the limitless possibilities of man and his personal relationship with HaShem.

The difference between the slave and the free man is not purely situational. We can find slaves of intelligence whose spirit is full of freedom and conversely we find ostensibly free men whose spirit is enslaved. *True freedom is that spirit which lifts a person up and allows him to be true to his inner strivings – to that which is particular and unique to each individual and that derives from his inner soul, from his G-dly format.*

This freedom allows man to realize his innermost sense of purpose and allows him to feel his life has direction and meaning, since he is able to do that for which he has been created. The enslaved spirit, on the other hand, never finds his true calling and is always bound and limited by what those around him wish him to do.

Slavery is best defined as one who is forced to labor, but will not see for himself the benefits of that labor. That being the case, every temporal act in this world that is not a spiritual act, may be seen in fact as the act of a slave, since there will be no ultimate benefit to accrue to the one who performed it. As the Talmud states, "The only free man is one who labors in Torah".

A free person is one who is guided by his intellect without subverting his good judgment because of his emotions.

THE REQUIREMENT TO FEEL WE OURSELVES HAVE BEEN LIBERATED...

The Mishna in the tenth chapter of Pesachim says:

"In every generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he went out from Egypt, as it says in the bible - 'Because of this G-d saved me in the exodus from Egypt'".

Many commentaries understand this Mishna to mean we must relive the experience of our people and take it to heart. We need to feel the difference it has made in our own lives.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchek ז"ר said that trying to feel that we as individuals have ourselves been set free from slavery is one of the most difficult mitzvot to keep on the night of Pesach.

Others, however, have an alternate reading of the Mishna. They read the Torah as meaning not that we need to feel as though we ourselves went out of Mitzraim, but rather that we must act as though we did. This Rambam is the basis for the Sephardi custom of wrapping matzo up and tying it to the shoulder of a child while reciting the "This is the bread of affliction". Afterwards, the child knocks on the door. When the parent asks who is there, he answers, Yisroel. And where are you coming from? The child answers, "from Mitzraim". The parent asks, "Where are you going?" And the child responds again, "Yerushalayim", etc...

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS OF THE SEDER

THE PESACH Offering

For the world at large the exodus of the Jews from Egypt openly showed that there is not only an omnipotent G-d but also one who is omniscient and takes interest in the affairs of man and that man's actions carry consequences.

But on another level, the exodus was also designed to declare the meaninglessness of pagan worship. The Jews took sheep, worshipped as deities by the Egyptian people, and openly slaughtered them for the Passover Offering. This was an act of great defiance – and great courage on the part of the Jews.

Once again, the Jews were following their patriarch Abraham, the original iconoclast and destroying pagan icons without fear, right before its practitioners. The sheep, worshipped by the Egyptians, was also the first in the order of the twelve signs of the zodiac, and as such, might have been expected to be especially protective of them during the month of Nissan, when it reigns. This is why the Jews were freed particularly during the month of Nissan, once again showing the emptiness of the “sheep” as deity.

THE CONCLUSION

How can we fathom the overwhelming national experience represented by Pesach? Because of its size, scope and complexity, it is almost too large and too overwhelming to fully comprehend.

The section of "Dayenu" - "It would have been enough", helps us fathom what happened.

The creators of the Haggadah broke all of the many aspects of the exodus experience into their component parts, and allow us to reflect on them individually.

At its conclusion, the Dayenu allows us to consider the extraordinary combination of all of these amazing experiences and what they truly represent as a shared national and spiritual experience.

THE DESERT CHALLENGE

A central theme of the forty-year period in the desert was the continual dependence of the Jews on miraculous intervention by HaShem for survival.

The notion that G-d would perform a miracle, time and time again, just for the sake of the “average” Jew was almost too much to accept – especially for a people who were nothing more than slaves only the shortest time before.

As a result, it was assumed by many that the survival of the nation as a whole depended on, and was a result of, the greatness of their leader Moshe. It was difficult for them to imagine that the extraordinary protection and care of G-d they experienced would be so beneficent as to regularly perform outright miracles were it not for the continual and direct intervention of Moshe.

Time and again, therefore, the Jews sinned not because of malice, but because they could not believe that HaShem would perform, for them, yet again, a miracle.

Even the gravest sin – that of the golden calf – was a desperate search for help, when it appeared that Moshe was no longer there to assure the intervention of G-d. And the constant goal and instruction of Moshe to his people was to help them understand that he was only an intermediary between the people of Israel and G-d. *That the miracles they witnessed were not because of him. They were for the sake of the Jewish people. And that the Jewish nation as a whole, carried the inner spirituality that drove the protection and guidance of HaShem.*

This is as important a lesson today as it was then and is something we need to understand for ourselves and give to our children.