

THE CHOPP HOLDINGS EDITION
IN MEMORY OF MRS. CLARA CHOPP A"H AND MENUCHA MARKOWITZ A"H

TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE
RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

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PESACH

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

PESACH, MATZOH, MARROR

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Part I. Pesach – Rescuing A Nation

Three Great Lessons

The three symbols that are most conspicuous on Pesach night, are *pesach*, *matzoh*, and *marror*. Now, since these are the three central symbols it is worth discussing each one of them separately.

The festival of the *korban Pesach*, when we bring and eat the Pesach offering, is called “Pesach” and that is on the fourteenth of Nissan. But the festival that follows it, which is the seven days of yomtiv, that is called *Chag HaMatzos*; not *Chag HaPesach*. “Pesach” is only erev Pesach - the 14th day of Nissan - when they slaughter the *korban pesach* and at night when they eat it. And henceforth, it’s “*Chag HaMatzos*,” you’re finished with the Pesach. You can’t eat from the *korban Pesach* the next morning;

you have to finish it before daybreak and make sure that nothing remains. So we see a difference between *Pesach* and *matzos*. There are two separate principles involved here, and we have to study both of them. And then there's *marror*, the bitter herbs. We'll study that as well.

The Destroyer Wipes Out Civilizations

Pesach means to pass over, to skip over, and it symbolizes Hashem skipping over the homes of the *Bnei Yisroel*. And we must understand what was so important about this episode of the Destroyer passing over the houses of the *Bnei Yisroel* and sparing them. What is so significant about that event, that it deserves to become a separate Yomtiv, on the fourteenth of Nissan?

So we'll say like this. *B'pshuto*, understanding it in its most simple meaning, it signifies that when the Destroyer is let loose by Hashem - and that happens not only once in history, but many times - it is his function to wipe out nations and civilizations. Again and again, one nation after the other has been destroyed, has been obliterated. And today, their remains are not even in evidence. Over what was once a flourishing civilization, is now either a desert or a jungle.

Lost Empires

It's difficult for us to imagine, but if we would travel through Central America and find one of the most dense jungles on the globe, a profusion of vegetation which seems to have been in that place from *sheishes yemei bereishis*; it's difficult for us to even imagine that underfoot lie the ruins of what was once one of the densest populations in the world. HaKadosh Baruch Hu has created His world in such a way, that if you don't hustle to get rid of nature's abundance, then in a short time nature is going to choke out and overgrow every vestige of man's work.

In downtown Manhattan, if they wouldn't interfere, then in a short time you'd be amazed, because the streets would become jungles. All you need is a crack in the sidewalk; a crack between the sidewalk and the paving of the street; and a seed blows in and lodges there. And the seed has the power of breaking macadam. It breaks concrete and in the course of time, it becomes a forest. It's amazing what HaKadosh Baruch Hu's creations can do. And grass and trees would be growing on Broadway and Times Square. And it wouldn't be such a bad thing at that. I think it would be an improvement. But that's how Hakadosh Baruch Hu works.

And today, a green jungle covers all of Central America, where once the great empire of the Incas had roads and flourishing cities.

And we all know about the great city of Bavel, a city which was built with stupendous splendor. The ancient writers marveled in their time at the height of the walls of the city, and at the magnificence of the palaces of the city of Bavel. It was once the metropolis of the world; and yet, if you would be there today you wouldn't notice a thing because of the sand that covers it - if not for the archaeologists that have had some digs that have exposed some of the ancient ruins. And even then, it's a pretty sorry site.

And that was once the magnificent metropolis of Bavel. And the *Nevi'im*, living at a time when Bavel flourished, foretold of its destruction at a time when it was unthinkable. It was long after the Tanach had been concluded, it was hundreds of years later, that Bavel was transformed into a desert.

The Destroyer Makes Himself Known

Now, the hand of the Destroyer comes sooner or later to every land, every people. And nobody is going to escape it. And not only are cities destroyed, and nations wiped out, but languages are destroyed. Nobody today speaks ancient Latin as their tongue. Ancient Greek? It's a dead language; that's how it's called in the schools. Nobody speaks ancient Babylonian. The old languages are also wiped out by the hand of the Destroyer.

And even national stocks, the strains of natural breeds of a nation, are wiped out in the course of time. They become a motley mixture of every kind of people mixed together. And that's why today you won't find a pure people anymore, except perhaps in some places where it seems to us pure. In some isolated islands, you might find some savages, who have been living alone and secluded for a long time. But don't be deceived. Because even those savages have been so mixed, so mongrelized, by other tribes, that their original features are no longer recognizable.

So the Destroyer wipes out localities and cities. And he wipes out national identity, as well as peoples and languages. And in the episode of Pesach, when the Destroyer was striking right and left, **אין בית אשר אין שם** - "There was no home that did not have a dead one" (Bo 12:30). Every house was visited. Whether it was the first born boy, or a first born girl - the *malach* raised his sword - whatever it was that he did - but he left over somebody dead as he passed by.

Hashem Passes Over The Eternal Nation

And when he passed over the houses of the *b'nei Yisroel* it was more than just a one time event. It was a prophecy. It was a portent for the future - telling us that the Destroyer will always pass over the people of Yisroel. That's what Pesach means. "You are eternal," Hashem says. "You are the *Am Olam*." Of course, every community must be apprehensive, lest HaKadosh Baruch Hu decide, *chas ve'shalom*, that He no longer needs them. It could be that He can get along without a certain community of Jews. But even when the Jews were being transported to the ovens, they could have been assured that the Jewish people is going to survive. **אני ואתם בני יעקב לא כליתם** - **השם לא שנית** - "I Hashem have never changed," "And you the sons of Yisroel, the sons of Yakov, you will never come to an end" (Haftorah Shabbos Hagadol). That's a promise.

And it was this promise that was demonstrated on that night of Pesach. And that's what the *korban Pesach* is saying. So when you eat a piece of matzoh instead of a *korban pesach* - that's what you do; you take a piece of matzoh, and you eat it as a memorial to the *korban pesach*. So what is a *kavanah peshutah* to have in mind? It means that we are the eternal people, and nobody else. And monarchs and tyrants can do their best and make attempts - like Ahashveirosh and Haman, and like others - but the Am Yisroel is going to survive either way, and eventually will step upon the graves of its enemies.

However, although this should certainly be remembered when we talk about Pesach - this promise for the eternity of the Am Yisroel - there's another element that usually is not noticed and that therefore deserves to be emphasized.

Part II. Pesach – Birth of A Nation

North and South

About the *korban pesach* it states, **זאת חקת הפסח** - "This is the law of the *korban pesach*," **כל בן נכר לא יאכל בו** - "A stranger, an alien, cannot eat from it" (Bo 12:43). Now we have to understand the importance of that statement. In reality, it's such an immense teaching, that it's very difficult for us to grasp it even after we hear it explained. And it takes years and years for it to sink in, even superficially.

And so we'll start with a Gemara. The Gemara quotes a *posuk* from Shir Hashirim, עורי צפון ובואי תימן - "Awake you north wind, and come you south wind" (Shir Hashirim 4:16). And the Gemara (Zevachim 116a) explains this *posuk* in a very queer way, but it's a way that's illuminating, it's startling. And it'll need all of our energy, to apply ourselves in order to assimilate it properly. עורי צפון, the Gemara says: "Bestir yourselves, you people of the north." ובואי תימן - "And come, you people of the south." Now, who are these "people of the north"? All the gentiles, all the nations are called "people of the north." And who are the "people of the south"? The Am Yisroel. That's what the Gemara says. Now that's hard to understand. What do the north and south have to do with the difference between us and the nations?

The Original Offering

Now listen to what our Sages tell us: There is an offering called the '*korban olah*' - a burnt offering. That's what you call the 'holocaust' - that's what holocaust means, *holo* means completely, and *caust* from the old Greek *kausten* which means burnt, destroyed. That's the *olah*, the offering that is burned entirely on the *mizbayach*. This was the form of offering that all the peoples of the world used from the beginning of time. In all of history, there was only a *korban olah*. There was never an offering that anyone ever ate. Adam offered up a *korban olah*, Noach offered a *korban olah*. If you look through the beginning of the chumash, that's all there was. There was never anything but a *korban olah* - a burnt offering.

It never entered the mind of a human being that he could eat of an offering. What business does he have with an offering? He slaughtered whatever he had to slaughter, and he put it on the *mizbayach* and he burned it. And as the fire went up, so it symbolized a form of allegiance, of loyal devotion, to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. He's bringing to Hakadosh Baruch Hu something to demonstrate his love and his gratitude to Him. And he added to this the vicarious symbolism, that he would like to burn himself as an offering. He would like to burn himself, but instead, as a substitute, as a symbol, he burns a lamb to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Or maybe he burns a bullock. He brings it up to Hashem. But to eat from the *korban*?! No one ever thought of eating the offering.

The First Korban To Be Eaten

The first time in history that we find that an offering was eaten, was the *Korban Pesach* in Mitzrayim. It was a revolution; but it's even more

revolutionary than we think. The first time that anyone was authorized to partake of an offering that was sacrificed to Hashem was in Mitzrayim, by the *korban pesach*. And thenceforth, the Am Yisroel had offerings in addition to the *korban olah*, burnt offerings. In addition to the burnt offerings, they also had offerings that they ate. And that was revolutionary. A people that can eat the offerings?! To eat from the *korban* to Hashem? What does that mean?!

What it means is that this nation is not one of the nations of the world. It means the Am Yisroel was singled out - they parted company with Mankind. When you talk of "Mankind" you don't include the Am Yisroel. Now that's not easy to think, especially if you're a liberal. If you're accustomed to being a cosmopolitan, a universal fellow, then you'll have to do a lot of reappraising of your ideas. The Am Yisroel is not a nation, and the Jew is not a human being!

Now, I don't care what you say - you didn't come here to hear your own opinions echoed. You came here to hear something, whether you like it or not. And we are being taught by the Torah that the Jew is not a member of the human race! Because no human would dare eat of an offering of Hashem.

Hashem's Favorite Child

And it was in Mitzrayim that Moshe Rabbeinu came and spoke to Pharaoh those bold words - words that were never heard before: **כֹּה אָמַר ה' - "So said Hashem:" בני בכורי ישראל - "My favorite child is Yisroel"** (Shemos 4:22).

Now, it sounded just as offensive to Pharaoh's ears as it does to your American ears. And if you had been Pharaoh, you would have bridled. You would have been indignant. It's enough if Pharaoh would concede that the bnei Yisroel also have rights - that they're just as good as the Egyptians. That alone would have been a very big concession. Even that concession was difficult for him to make, because the Egyptians were the aristocrats - they were the cultured and the wealthy ones. "And you dare claim to be our equals?!" said Pharaoh. "You tribal people who came from Syria!" They called the Jews 'Syrians'; they called them 'Ivrim' - they didn't call the Jews 'Yisroel'. Yisroel is a great and noble name. This name 'Yisroel', such a name they would never call the Jews.

When we spoke to the gentiles, we didn't say, **אלוקי ישראל נקרה עלינו** - "The G-d of Yisroel came to us." No, we say **אלוקי העברים** - "The G-d of

the *Ivrim*.”(Shemos 5:3) That's all the Egyptians would acknowledge. They won't recognize you as 'Yisroel.' You belong to the *Ivrim* - certain tribes, poor and lacking in culture. Disorganized tribes, who came somewhere out of the east. The gentiles would never recognize you by any other name.

And that's why when Yonah was asked who he is, he said, “*Ivri anochi*.”(Yonah 1:9) He didn't say, “*Yisroel anochi*,” because that meant nothing to the *goyim*; they never wanted to hear the word, 'Yisroel'. Yisroel!? You know what Yisroel means?! It's a name that signifies the highest of aristocracy! It's a superman - that's what Yisroel means. כִּי שְׂרִית עִם אֱלֹהִים וְאִנְשִׁים וְחוֹכֵל - “You're going to win out against angels and against men” (Vayishlach 32:29). You will win out against all the forces of nature. That's what Yisroel means: “You are going to conquer all the forces of the universe.” So therefore, all that Yonah can say to the captain, when he inquires about his nationality, is “*Ivri anochi*” - “I am an *Ivri*.” A *goy* can't even begin to fathom what a Yisroel is.

The Jew's Body Is A Mizbeach

And when Moshe Rabbeinu came and told Pharaoh: בְּנֵי בְּבוּרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל it's a miracle that Pharaoh didn't have him beheaded on the spot for such impudence. But that's what the *korban pesach* is saying. It's saying that from now on, the body of a Jew - I say Jew - the body of a Yisroel is so sacred, that it is now a counterpart to the *mizbeach*. And just as you burn on the altar an offering to Hashem, so too you can put *kodshim* inside the Jewish body and you consume it. That's an offering; the Yisroel is holy enough to be a *mizbayach* for Hashem. If you can eat from the *korban*, then you're not part of Mankind. You're something much much more.

Now, some people are accustomed to *pshetelach*, so when they hear this, so they'll tell me a *pshetel* of their own. That's what happens when you get two Jews together - you tell him a *pshetel*, and he tells you a *pshetel*. So keep your *pshetelach* in abeyance for some other time - first listen to my *pshat* which is the plain *pshat*.

The Chosen People

This is what it means when the Gemara says, עוּרֵי צְפוֹן - “Bestir yourselves, you northern ones.” The *korban olah* is slaughtered only עַל יָרֵךְ - “the northern ones” refers to the nations of the world who only have the north of the *mizbeach*.

So you nations, עוּרֵי, bestir yourself, and make way for a new kind of people that is going to appear now. וְבוֹאֵי תִימָן - “Let come that people

who can slaughter offerings on the south too.” Because they have other *korbanos* that they can eat. And that’s because they are no longer among the company of nations. They are an *Am Kadosh* and their bodies are so sacred that they can consume the *korban* in their bodies. And that’s why they have to make way for us. עוּרִי צַפּוֹן, bestir yourselves, you nations of the north, וּבּוֹאֵי תִמְנָן, and make way; because now comes the Chosen People.

But not the Chosen People the way you think. It’s like a certain writer who writes about the “Chosen People.” Because he’s a Jew, and it happens to be his people, so he calls them the Chosen People. The same like an Italian calls *his* people the chosen people. And the Puerto Rican, calls *his* people the same. But that’s not Chosen People. You chose your people, that’s all. That’s nothing! Now we’re talking about something that’s not even a people; they are chosen from among all the peoples, and they are elevated far above them. They were chosen *from* the peoples to be lifted up above the rest of Mankind. There’s no comparison. That’s what the *korban pesach* is saying.

Part III. Pesach – Not Just A nation

Greater Than Galaxies

Now if you want to realize the impact of this teaching a little more, pay attention to what our Sages say: חֲבִיב אִדָּם שֶׁנִּבְרָא בְצַלְמֵם - “How beloved is man, because he was created in the image of Hashem” (Avos 3:18). What does it mean ‘man’? It means that if you go among the Puerto Ricans, and you go among the Eskimos, you have a right to tell them this teaching, that he has to know how beloved he is. He is more important than the sun! One Eskimo, one Apache is more important than the world.

We’re not talking now if he engages in criminal ways. If they go in their criminal ways, then they’re less important than a wasp, than a fly! They have no importance at all. We’re talking about a decent Apache who doesn’t believe in taking any scalps, and he sticks to his own family and he earns an honest living. So we say to him: You have to know, that the Torah teaches that you are more important than the sun. Not only the sun. You are more important than a galaxy of suns.

A galaxy has millions of stars, and some of those stars even dwarf the sun; the sun becomes a little baseball compared to them. And one man, one human being, is more important, not than a galaxy; he is more

important than the Milky Way. The Milky Way has so many galaxies, that each galaxy is like a drop of light. But there's so many of them that it looks like a river of light in the distance. So you have billions, trillions of huge worlds, and one man, one Eskimo, is more important than all of them put together. That's what the Torah teaches. That's the meaning of "Chaviv Adam" - How beloved is a man - any man!"

Fill The World

And now, to understand this properly you would have to sit down in solitude and meditate on this for the rest of your life. The Alter of Slobodka, *zichrono l'vracha*, spoke forty years on this subject - and he didn't exhaust it. It's so profound, what the Torah teaches about the greatness of Mankind.

And that's why only one man was created at the beginning instead of having the whole globe populated with people all at once. Why didn't Hashem populate the globe with many people, varieties of people, at the beginning? Was it that He was stingy and didn't want Mankind to increase? On the contrary, He said: **ומלאו את הארץ** - "Fill up the world!" (Bereishis 1:28). Fill it up! "Get busy," He said. You old bachelors, hurry up and get married! You old girls, what are you waiting for? HaKadosh Baruch Hu is waiting! **לא נברא העולם אלא לפריה ורבייה** - the world was created just for that - to help bring even more people into the world (Gittin 41b).

What do you think, that you can come into the banquet of this world and just keep a seat for yourself and forget about others? You have to keep on popping out of the banquet hall, and calling in new people. That's your job. Of course, once in a while you can take a bite from what they are serving you, but in between the dishes you must make sure to run out to bring in another guest.

Reflection Of Divinity

So if that's what HaKodosh Boruch Hu wants, then why did He only create one pair of people? He could have gotten the ball rolling by populating the world with people, like He did with all of the animals and fish and birds and trees. And the answer is, the *Mishnah* says (Sanhedrin 37a), **כי נברא האדם יחיד**, - "Therefore Adam was created all alone, **כי בשבילי נברא** - in order that every human being should say, **כי נברא העולם** - I am so important and so great; I am of such vast importance that the whole universe was made solely for me." It's to teach us this lesson.

That's why HaKadosh Baruch Hu held back His hand, His cornucopia of abundance of humanity, and He let only one couple be created. Because He wanted to give them this great understanding of what man is. Man is of such enormous importance, that the whole universe is worth creating just for him.

And that's the first statement. Again, "Chaviv Adam" - A man is beloved. But the mishna tells us more. Why is he beloved? Why was he created only one? Why is it that the whole universe is only for him? And the answer is given: שֵׁנִבְרָא בְצַלֵּם - "Because he was created in the image of Hashem." Now tzelem doesn't really mean "image". It's from the word צַל, shade, reflection. So tzelem means that he is a reflection of Hashem. Just as in the word חַנּוּם we add the letter mem to the word חָן, and כַּנּוּם comes from בָּנָה, so too צַלֵּם is from the word צַל. It's a reflection of Hashem. There's a reflection of the Divinity in every human being. And that reflection is so important that he is worthy that the whole universe should be created just for him.

An Earth Shaking Idea

Now pay attention to the next step; but hold onto your seats, because this is earth shaking. שֵׁנִבְרָאוּ בָנִים לַמְקוּם - "Beloved is Yisroel," חֲבִיבֵיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל - "They are called 'children of Hashem.'" What's he saying? It sounds like a repetition. We already said that all of Mankind is tzelem Elokim. No, no, it's not repetition. We're starting where he left off, from the previous statement. You know what Mankind is? You think you know what it means to be a "reflection of Hashem"? Think about it for the next hundred years and maybe it will penetrate a little bit. And now, after you understand that, after you understand what Mankind is, the Mishna is building a second story on top of that. A skyscraper on top of a skyscraper! However great Mankind is, much greater than Mankind is Yisroel.

Because not only are they נִבְרָאוּ בְצַלֵּם like all of Mankind, but they are called בָּנִים לַמְקוּם. Now who called them בָּנִים לַמְקוּם? It was Moshe Rabeinu when he came to Pharaoh and spoke in the name of Hashem: כֹּה אָמַר ה' הֵם בְּנֵי בְכוּרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל - "So said Hashem: They are My most beloved son" (Shemos 4:22).

Now this lesson takes a lot of learning, a lot of thinking. But the best way to learn it, is if it goes into you. And it goes into you when you chew the *Korban Pesach*, and understand that you're eating food from the table of Hashem.

Thoughts for Afikoman

And our forefathers, as they ate that little piece of roasted lamb, they were putting this lesson into them. They weren't just hearing it like you're hearing now. They were chewing the meat of the *korban*, and the lesson was going into their bones. And what's the lesson? That we can eat the offering! This was the first offering to Hashem that anyone ever ate and *we* are the ones who are eating it. We are the only ones who can eat from a *korban*, and that demonstrates *chavivin Yisroel*, how great is a Yisroel! שלא עשנו כגוי הארצות - "You didn't make us like You made the nations of the lands." Not because we disparage them; that's a different story whether or not we disparage them. That has nothing to do with the subject. We are not one of the nations! והבדלתי אתכם מן העמים - "I separated you from the nations." Because you are My people, you're a separate thing altogether. You're not human beings! You're My people now! And that's what the *Korban Pesach* comes to teach.

Now I'm sure it teaches other things as well, but this is certainly included. And therefore, although we don't have the *Korban Pesach*, but when we eat the piece of matzoh that symbolizes the *korban*, that's the *afikomen*, that's what we are demonstrating. Now you see how important the *afikomen* is; so don't gorge on the kneidelach during the meal. Leave a little room, like it says in the little letters in the *hagaddah*: that a חכם עיניו בראשו - "A wise man should have eyes in his head." Not eyes in his belly - but eyes in his head. He should look ahead and leave a little space for the *afikomen*.

And then, while you're eating the *afikomen* - while you're chewing that piece of *shemurah matzoh*, the *afikomen matzoh*, you'll be thinking about what it signifies. It signifies the greatness of the Am Yisroel. Not 'greatness' like a Jewish writer would put it; not the 'greatness' that some Jewish columnist would say it means. But it's a greatness that is far beyond our ability to comprehend. It's a greatness the way HaKadosh Baruch Hu understands it.

Part IV. Matzoh – The Beautiful Nation

The Lowest Level

And now we move on to the *Matzoh*. Now, there are many significances that are included in *matzoh* - and many more have been inserted that

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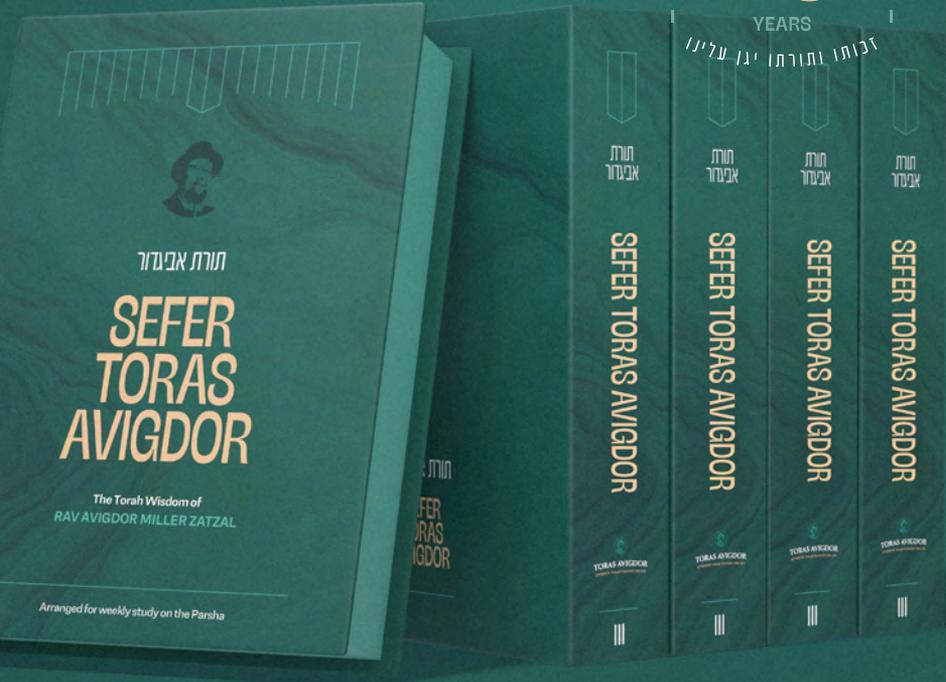
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weren't originally intended. But we'll listen to what the Torah has to say on this matter, **ושמרתם את המצות** - "You have to guard the matzos" (Shemos 12:17). Now everybody knows why you guard the matzos. Because *matzoh*, if it's not guarded, can become *chometz*. And so let's now understand what the *matzoh* is trying teach us.

Everybody learned that our forefathers in Egypt had sunk pretty low. Who doesn't know the statement that "our fathers had reached **מ"ט** **שערי טומאה** - The forty-ninth degree of impurity." And there was only one more degree to go. So according to this, they were pretty far gone. And it should occur to us: Why were they rescued if that's the case? Why did they deserve to be chosen?

Now, first we have to ask another question. At what degree of *tumah* were the Egyptians? If our forefathers were at the forty ninth level of *tumah*, so then which one of the *sha'arei tumah* were the Egyptians on? There's only one *sha'ar* left! So where were the Egyptians?

I'm going to explain this to you now because the whole thing is misunderstood. When we measure the degrees of heat and cold in this world, on this earth, we should realize that it's actually nothing compared to the possible degrees of heat and cold, because the variation and fluctuation here is a very small range. Only that we could not exist if it would be a little colder or a little warmer. But our thermometer is only a little thermometer. It measures only about a hundred degrees. But if you would have an absolute thermometer, it wouldn't be a hundred degrees, it would be a million degrees. Because even zero is nothing, because there's below zero; and it's unlimited below zero. And above zero, it's unlimited too. It's only that on this huge thermometer we are acquainted with only a little area, and it's along that small area on the thermometer that "our" temperature fluctuates.

Different Thermometers

Now when it's stated that our forefathers had reached the forty-ninth degree of *tumah*, it means there was a special thermometer that HaKadosh Baruch Hu used only to measure His people. There are different thermometers for different uses. I'll give you a *mashal*. Here you have a thermometer that you use when you bake. Now that baking thermometer, you're not going to push into a child's rectum - because it wouldn't register. Even if the child has a high fever, it will never register on an oven thermometer. And if you have this baking thermometer, and now you have an oven where you're going to melt metal - you're melting

ore - then even the baking thermometer won't register. So it depends what the thermometer is used for.

For the Am Yisroel, there was a special thermometer that HaKadosh Baruch Hu had, and it was a very strict thermometer. And according to that thermometer it was the forty ninth level of *tumah*. And where were the Egyptians? Egypt was on a different thermometer altogether. A very long thermometer, way down on the bottom. They were a thousand degrees minus.

The List of Names

Don't think that our people in Mitzrayim were, *chas veshalom*, disloyal people. I'd like to read to you a list of some names. We have a record of some names of the Jews in Mitzrayim and it's so important, this list of names. It's so enlightening: **אליצור בן שריאור**. Do you know what that means? "Hashem is my G-d, He's my strength." And his father's name was, "The Almighty is my light." Now these names were not given because there was an uncle who had that name! These were original names! And they gave these names because they meant it.

And their fathers had such names as well. Let's find somebody today who gives a name that really means a prayer and a praise to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, a name that expresses love of Hashem. **שלומיאל בן צורישדי** - Ahh, what a glorious name! "Hashem is my Peace; my Welfare." And his father's name was "Hashem is my Rock." Here's a name! **עמינרב** - My nation volunteers to follow HaKadosh Baruch Hu, to serve Him. Now that's a name! Aminadav! Ahh! These are names! It tells us what the people were thinking. It's the pulse of our people!

By the way, women gave these names. Women gave these names. They didn't give them names of actresses. Grace and Betty. Or Jeffrey and Mark after a great-uncle. They gave names that were filled with ideals and prayers. **נתנאל**, Nesanel. That's a name that was invented in Mitzrayim. "Hashem gave." **אליאב**, Eliav. "Hashem is my father." **אלישמע**, Elishama. "Hashem has heard; He has listened to our prayers." **עמיהוד**, Amihud. "My people's pride; my people's majesty. Hashem is my people's majesty. The glory of my people." Ahh! What names! That's the Jewish people. These are the ones who went out of Mitzrayim. **גמליאל**, Gamliel. "Hashem has bestowed upon me." It means, **כי גמל עלי** - "He has given me great happiness, blessings. And **פרהצור**, PadahTzur. "My Rock has redeemed me." **אבידן**, Avidan. "My father strives for me." It means, "My Father - that's

Hashem - takes up for me.” **כי דנני אלוקים**. Follow the names! And **פגעיאל**, Pagi'el. “Hakadosh Baruch Hu, that's the One who fights for me.”

Now these names are only a sampling. They were mentioned in the Torah because they were leaders of their tribes, but they weren't chosen as leaders because of their names. The Jewish nation was head over heels in love with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. This you have to know.

And they loved Hashem because they were children of Avraham Avinu: **זרע אברהם אוהבי** - “These are the children of Avraham, My friend.” Avraham is Hashem's friend and his children loved Hashem - no question about it. We were a beautiful nation. Only that Hashem was measuring us with His thermometer, and He therefore took us out before we would cool off even a little bit more. And if we are told that somebody wasn't so good, you have to know that we are measuring him with *that* thermometer.

Desecrating Shabbos in The Wilderness

I'll explain this some more. You know that the Navi Yechezkel states as follows, **את שבתותי חיללו מאד** - “They profaned My Shabbos very much.” When the people went out of Mitzrayim and they went into the wilderness, “they profaned My Shabboses very much,” said Yechezkel Hanavi.

Now the question is, what kind of *chillul shabbos* did they commit in the wilderness? It was forty years in the *midbar* and in all those years we have only two instances of *chillul shabbos*. One instance was the *mikosheish*. It wasn't a party, it wasn't a movement; it was one man. And he didn't do it a hundred times. *One* man did something *once* on Shabbos. And they put him to death! The other instance was **יצא מן העם ללקוט**. Some people went out to look for the *mann* on Shabbos - and they didn't find any. So they didn't even do anything because they didn't find any *mann* to gather. Now it's these two instances that Yechezkel is referring to. About that Yechezkel says: **את שבתותי חיללו מאד** - “They profaned My Shabbosos very much.”

Now this is very important and you have to get this point into your head. A nation that numbered in the millions - they numbered in the millions when they went out of Mitzrayim. Because just the males alone, between twenty and sixty, were 600,000. But the males had wives and there were many who were younger than twenty and there were many older than sixty as well. So there were millions. So in a nation of millions, over forty years, you had two instances, *two lone* instances. Which means that never again was there ever so much *shmiras Shabbos* as there was in

that generation. Never again did you have such Shabbos observance as you had then. But the *Navi Yechezkel*, he speaks like a *Navi* is supposed to speak, with a magnifying glass. Now you understand what kind of thermometer was used for the *Bnei Yisroel*. That's called **שבתותי חיללו מאד**!

High Expectations

However, even that was already too much for *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. Because He didn't choose a 'people amongst peoples'. He was choosing a nation that would separate, that would be lifted up far above the rest of Mankind. And to be His chosen sons, He requires perfection. That's what *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* desires - *shleimus*, perfection. And even if the Jew is always superior to the best of the nations of the world, even if the Jew is better than the best of the peoples of the world, it's not good enough.

And that's why the *Am Yisroel* must always be on guard for the slightest change in temperature. Because *Hashem* won't sit back. Something is going to have to happen - something is going to have to impede the *matzoh* from turning to *chometz*. That's what we're learning here. That there's a different thermometer for the *Am Yisroel*, and that thermometer notices the slightest differences in temperature, changes which among the *umas ha'olam* would mean nothing.

So the *Am Yisroel* were at the forty ninth level of *tumah*. And so it states that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* was **חישב את הקץ** - *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* calculated the end, **לעשות כמה שאמר לאברהם אבינו** - He had to fulfill what He promised to *Avraham Avinu*. He had said that at a certain time He was going to take them out. But He calculated that certain time. How did He calculate it? Now, He could have calculated it in a number of ways. When He said four hundred years, it could have been four hundred years in *Mitzrayim*. It didn't have to be four hundred years from the birth of *Yitzchak*. It could have been four hundred years in *Mitzrayim*. And it could have been even more, because when *Yosef* was alive, they really didn't suffer bondage. It could have been four hundred years starting from after *Yosef's* death. That's when the years of bondage began. It could have been any number of calculations because when *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* gives a prophecy, we don't know exactly what He means. It's only after it's all done and we look back retroactively, then we discover what He meant.

Guarding The Matzos

So what does it mean that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* calculated the 'keitz'? It's like *matzoh*. You know *matzoh*, if you let it stand, so up to a certain

degree of development, it's still *matzoh*. But if it's going to ferment a little bit beyond a certain stage, then it's *chometz*. It's not just a little bit. It's not a *mitzvah* anymore! On the contrary - it's *koreis*, a very big sin. And it says, ושמרתם את המצות - "You have to guard the *matzos*." And the purpose of guarding your *matzos* is to act as a symbol: that HaKadosh Baruch Hu was חישב את הקץ. And He saw that in Egypt we were inching along the thermometer in the wrong direction. We weren't getting better. And that was a big problem.

Now, we were very good. Compared to the best of the Egyptians, we were excellent. We were way above them. But that wasn't good enough. It's like a man who is sinking in a quagmire and if he sinks down to his knees, so you can wait before you extricate him - it's no emergency. When he sinks down to his thighs, they're still not alarmed. When he sinks down to his shoulders, there's still an opportunity to save him. But when he sinks down to his neck, it's a little late. And when he starts sinking down to his nostrils, then it's the last moment and you can't wait anymore. And they were now at the forty-ninth level of defilement. Now don't get any wrong ideas! They were best of all the peoples in the world, but for the Am Hashem they weren't good enough.

Now up until now, Pharaoh had been stubborn as a rock. Moshe had gone to him once, and again and again. He had been lambasted by *makkos*. His land was rocking and reeling under the *makkos*. The land was going to ruin under the *makkos*. But Pharaoh refused to budge. But when HaKadosh Baruch Hu came to that moment that He had calculated - when He decided that they can't remain any longer - then Pharaoh got up in the middle of the night. He himself got up, and he came to Moshe and banged on his door and he said, "Go out!" When HaKadosh Baruch Hu pressed the button, you didn't have to go to Pharaoh and ask him for favors. No; Pharaoh got up, and he came with his officers and he knocked on the doors looking for Moshe Rabeinu. He knocked on the door and he said, "Go out": -"כי גרשו ממצרים." They were driven out of Egypt." Pharaoh drove them out. It would have been good enough for us had Pharaoh reluctantly said, "Alright, you can go now." No, he didn't say, "You can go." He drove them out!

We Couldn't Wait

And do you know why? Because לא יכלו להתמהמה. They couldn't wait any longer. And that's why they made *matzos* that night. Now we think *matzos* are because they didn't have a chance for their dough to sour.

That's good for *matzos* that you make today, after the story of Pesach. But what about the *matzoh* of that Pesach night - the *matzoh* that they ate in Mitzrayim at the *seder* - why did they have *matzos*? They weren't driven out yet! Why couldn't they eat the old bread that they had, the leavened bread that they had in their homes?

And the answer is that they were told to eat *matzos* in order for them to realize it's late. You have to leave Mitzrayim now because a little bit longer and you would be too far away from perfection. **ושמרתם את המצות** means that now is the last moment; you can't wait another moment. When the signal comes, you must get up and get out of Mitzrayim to save yourself. Otherwise, you'll perish as a nation. You'll be a nation, and maybe you'll even be the best of the nations, but that's not what the Chosen People means. Hashem wants us to be *the perfect nation*, separated from Mankind completely. So Hakadosh Baruch Hu calculated that moment when they must rescue themselves. And that's why they came out of Mitzrayim in a hurry, **בהפזון**. They were in a hurry. You can't waste any time when a man is sinking down to his nostrils.

Now the Egyptians didn't sink down to their nostrils. The Egyptians were already far far underground. All the nations were miles underground. But the Am Yisroel, their nostrils were beginning to touch the level of the mud; and now HaKadosh Baruch Hu went into action. And it was quick action! It was **בהפזון** and **כי גרשו**! They were kicked out of Egypt; they're were ejected. Quick action was needed. **כי לא יכלו להתמהמה**. And that's what took place. That's why the *matzos* of that night were eaten. In order to symbolize that there's a time when it becomes almost too late for our nation, and quick action has to be taken, so that we should remain *the perfect nation*.

Pharaoh Loses His Free Will

Now, there's a time in the life of a nation, and there's also a time in the life of an individual. And the individual must know too: there comes a time when it's pretty late, and if you wait another minute then it's lost forever. The Rambam says: Why is it that Pharaoh was forced to obey the prophecy of **פרעה את לב פרעה** - "I'm going to make Pharaoh's heart stubborn"? Pharaoh lost his free will. How do you take away free will from somebody?! Pharaoh couldn't let them out beforehand because Hakadosh Baruch Hu made him a prisoner. He was a prisoner! He couldn't say anything other than, "No." HaKadosh Baruch Hu changed him; He changed his free will.

Pharaoh couldn't speak - he was in chains. All he could say was "No." He was a puppet.

So the Rambam asks: Doesn't this contradict the principle of free will? Free will means every man can choose between right and wrong. And so the Rambam tells us something very important. He says that Pharaoh lost his free will as a punishment. He was doing wrong things beforehand and as a punishment for what he had done beforehand, he was placed in chains and he lost his free will. Pharaoh was scheming beforehand.

Now, I'm sure that Pharaoh had all the excuses in the world. He said "It's self-defense and we have to save ourselves. Suddenly a nation we took in as refugees; they're beginning to increase. It's terrible - they'll drown us out with their fecundity, having so many children. So in self-defense we have to practice birth control on them. We'll have to throw the children into the river." But Hashem knew exactly what was going on in his head. כִּי הָיָה עִלְיָהֶם - "For You Hashem knew that [the Mitzrim] acted with evil intentions" (Pesukei D'zimrah from Nechemia 9:10). Hashem knew that it was *b'mezid*; it was only wickedness. It was *rish'us*. He knew that.

Free Will Can Be Lost

And so Pharaoh was made a prisoner. Why did he lose his free-will? It was because of his wickedness that he lost his free will. And the Rambam says that this can happen to anybody.

HaKadosh Baruch Hu gives you a chance. He says, "Look; you were young and you were in Yeshiva once. You had an opportunity to learn. But you frittered away the opportunity and you left the Yeshiva. But you can still learn. You're not lost yet. But there will be a time when I'll make it My business," HaKadosh Baruch Hu says, "that you'll lose your free will."

You'll never know it. You'll be hurried and harried all the rest of your life, all the way to the end; you'll hurry towards your grave. You'll hurry and you'll have so many things to do - whether it's success or troubles, but all your life you'll be on the run from now on. Because you had the opportunity and you neglected it. ושמרתם את המצות. Be careful and guard your life. Because past a certain stage, it's not *matzoh* anymore. It becomes *chometz*. You lose your free will and you're cut off from any more opportunities.

That's what we learn from *matzoh*. Our nation was snatched out from the jaws of destruction just in time, just before they reached the last degree.

Part V. Marror – Sweetening The Nation

Sweet Beginnings

In order to save time, because we're near the end, we'll cut it short - and we'll move on and talk about *marror* for a moment. זה מרור זה - "These bitter herbs," we say and we point at the *marror*. And our Sages say, that this *marror* is a certain species - a certain type of leafy vegetable - that originally is not bitter at all. But if you let it stand in the ground and you don't pick it for some time, then it turns bitter.

And that *marror* is a symbol of the nations among whom we live. We try to fraternize with them and in every land they seem so sweet at first. In every land, at first, the nations all seem sweet. But if that fraternizing continues, then it's going to turn bitter. That's what the *marror* is. Chazal say that the species of the *marror* that is the choicest is the Romaine lettuce because, תחילתו מתוק וסופו מר - "It's sweet in the beginning, and then it turns bitter." And the best time to pick that *marror* is when it's still fresh. It means, not to fraternize! We have to be friendly to the *umas haolam* and always be polite, but we have to keep aloof from them. Like Avraham Avinu kept aloof from the *umos*. You can be friendly and polite, but don't let that attitude sit in the ground and grow any more than that, because it'll turn very bitter.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu Incites The Gentiles

That's very important for us to learn, and the *marror* symbolizes what happened. When they started becoming friendly to the nations in Egypt, so what happened? It states in Tehillim in chapter 105, הפך ללבם לשנוא עמו - "[Hashem] turned their hearts to hate His people." - "to scheme against His servants."

Yosef was admired in Mitzrayim. He was a hero to them. And Yosef's people therefore all basked in the reflection of Yosef's glory. And they loved it; you know it's natural. And there's no question that, to some extent, they considered the Egyptians as friends; they looked upon them with kindly eyes. But HaKadosh Baruch Hu didn't want that. Like it was explained here recently: that hostility, any kind of hostility, is sent by HaKadosh Baruch Hu for a purpose.

The Gemara in Mesichta Kiddushin tells us this. אם ראית שתי משפחות - שמתגרות זו בזו - If you see two families that can't get along and we don't understand why. It seems like trivial things; no real cause. So the Gemara

says that it's of a mysterious source. HaKadosh Baruch Hu has sent this hostility as a barrier. **שְׂמֵךְ פְּסוּל יֵשׁ בְּאַחַת מֵהֶם** - "There's something wrong with one of the families." And HaKadosh Baruch Hu is protecting one of the families, the family that has *yichus*, the aristocratic family, against mingling with the other one. That's what hostility comes for, as a barrier: **אִם רֵאִית שְׁתֵּי מִשְׁפָּחוֹת שְׂמֵתִגְרוֹת זֶו בְּזוֹ שְׂמֵךְ פְּסוּל יֵשׁ בְּאַחַת מֵהֶם וְאִין מְנִיחִים אוֹתוֹ לְדַבֵּק בְּחִבְרִיתָהּ** - "Hashem won't permit them to marry." That's why there is hostility.

The Sweet Bitterness

When Jews forget to be aloof from the gentiles around them; they mingle with them, they use their names - they use names of the *umas ha'olam*. And they identify with the *umas ha'olam*. So HaKadosh Baruch Hu sees that there's a danger; they're sinking into the quagmire, they're sinking and sinking. The knees, the shoulders, the neck. So what does Hakodosh Boruch Hu do? He erects a barrier, a barrier of hostility, **הִפְךָ לִבָּם לְשׂוֹא עִמּוֹ** - "He turns over their hearts so they begin hating His people now." And that's their salvation! And that *marror*, this bitterness, this hostility towards us, is very good for us.

It's very healthy for us, and that's why we sit down and eat *marror* on Pesach night. The truth is, the choicest *marror*, Romaine lettuce for instance, is quite pleasant. So you sit down Pesach night and you munch Romaine lettuce and you're thinking of the bitterness that could happen if you let it stand too long. So you're learning the lesson that this bitterness, this *marror*, that HaKadosh Baruch Hu raises up between us and the goyim is very good for us.

Romaine lettuce, the green leafy vegetable, it's healthy to eat. It has vitamins, it has iron; it's good to eat. So as you eat a wholesome meal of whole wheat *matzoh* and you're eating green leafy vegetables, so you're eating a very refreshing meal. Very good! It has all the elements of a good meal. And the protein will follow eventually. And that's to teach us that *this marror* is good for us! *This marror* is healthy for us!

And therefore, when you walk down the street and some *umas ha'olam* hurl an epithet at you, they say something to you, you should feel that this is vitamins for you. That's what *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* does to preserve us. And the best way of learning this lesson is by eating the *marror* on Pesach night, and thinking these ideas.

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The Innermost Neshamah of Shabbos

Chazal tell us about the special light that filled the world at the beginning of Creation. With it, Adam HaRishon could see from one end of the world to the other. But Hashem hid this wonderful light, lest the evil generations use it. It is stored away for the tzaddikim.

Torah sources say that this special light is hidden in the holidays. When a holiday comes, the light shines forth and illuminates a person's *neshamah*. That's why the holidays are called *Yomim Tovim*, "good days," since it is written about this light: "And God saw the light that it was good." During the rest of the year, this light is hidden in the Torah.

There are many stories about *gedolei Yisrael* who, by virtue of their great Torah learning were able to see from one end of the world to the other. This is because someone who delves deeply into the Torah discovers within it the same light that enlightened the eyes of Adam HaRishon.

Each *Yom Tov* has its special *masechta* that speaks of its nature and Halacha. *Chazal* tell us that Moshe Rabbeinu enacted a special decree that the Jewish people should study the day's topics on the appropriate day. (*Megillah 4a*) The *Yomim Tovim* and other holy times have three parts. There's the external part —the mitzvos of the holiday — such as eating matzah, sitting in the sukkah, reading the megillah, etc. Then there's the *neshamah*, the spiritual benefit we gain from the holiday. And there is a third, deeper part: the *neshamah's neshamah*.

The *neshamah* of the holiday lies in its *tefillah*, and the *neshamah's neshamah* is in its Torah study. This includes any Torah learned that day but specifically the *masechta* devoted to the topics and halachos of the day. Simply speaking, Moshe Rabbeinu decreed the study of the day's topics on the appropriate day so we would know how to conduct ourselves on the holiday. But there's a deeper point here: The essence of the holiday is found within the *masechta* that discusses its topics and halachos.

We attain the *neshamah* of Shabbos only through *tefillah*. Some people mistakenly think Shabbos is not really a time of prayer, since on this day we don't make requests for our personal needs. But the opposite is true - Shabbos is a special time of prayer. We connect with the inner nature of Shabbos through its *tefillos*. That's how we attain the *neshamah* of Shabbos.

The Shabbos prayers are worded differently from the weekday prayers. Instead of requesting, "*Selach lanu*," etc., on Shabbos we request, "*Sab'einu mituvecha*." The latter relates to matters of *Olam HaBa* and is much loftier than our requests on weekdays.

And what about the *neshamah's neshamah*, the innermost soul of Shabbos *Kodesh*? This we attain through study, mainly of *hilchos Shabbos* and *maseches Shabbos*. Thus, on Shabbos there is special importance to Torah learning in general and to learning *maseches Shabbos* specifically.

On Shabbos *Kodesh*, let us strengthen our Torah learning! This study will enable us to tap into the innermost *neshamah* of Shabbos, connecting ourselves to the source of all blessing!

לרפו"ש נחום יהודה בן צפורה

Adapted by R' Y. Levy from *Nefesh Shimshon, Shabbos Kodesh*, Rav Shimshon Pincus, Feldheim

For a FREE Sefer *Nefesh Shimshon* on Shabbos please email our friends at cbhass@agudah.org

