

TorahFax: Vayikro

Rabbi Zalmen Marozov

Monday, Adar 27, 5783 (Hakhel Year) / March 20, 2023

The Exodus from Egypt, for which we celebrate the holiday of Pesach – Holiday of our Freedom, took place 3,335 years ago. This year, Pesach begins Wednesday night, April 5. Although the Exodus from Egypt took place so many years ago, it is a mitzvah that we today, at the Seder, should know and feel that just as our forefathers were liberated from their Egyptian bondage, WE too, in a spiritual sense, are liberated every year when celebrating the Pesach holiday.

Q. During all other times of the year, after reciting the blessing over the first cup of wine, we can drink as many cups of wine as we want, without reciting a blessing over each cup. Yet, at the Seder we drink four cups of wine, and we recite the blessing over the wine (“Borei Pri Hagafen”) before each cup. Why?

A. The reason we drink four cups at the Seder is to commemorate the four expressions of redemption which G-d used in connection with the Exodus. Each cup represents a different expression and is a separate mitzvah, thus a separate blessing is required for each cup.

Q. At the Seder, when we eat the matzah and drink the four cups of wine, we are required to sit in a reclining position. One of the Four Questions is why we recline at the Seder. What is the answer?

A. In ancient times, noblemen would eat in a reclining position. The average person, especially a servant, did not recline. At the Seder, when we celebrate our freedom from slavery, the Rabbis instituted that we demonstrate our freedom

through various actions which exhibit freedom. Thus, we recline when performing the special mitzvot at the Seder.

Q. Why don't we recline for eating the Maror (bitter herbs)

A. The Maror is not a sign of freedom. It is to remember the bitterness of our slavery in Egypt. Thus, we do not recline when eating Maror.

Q. Before reciting the Hagadah, we break the middle matzah. We hide the bigger part for the Afikoman, to be eaten at the end of the meal. The smaller piece we put back onto the Seder plate. What is the reason for breaking the middle matzah before reciting the Hagadah?

A. In the Torah, Matzah is called, "Bread of affliction." Although, at the Seder, we celebrate our freedom, we also remember and recall our slavery and affliction. One can appreciate the miracle of freedom even more, after remembering the pain and suffering before becoming free. Thus, we recite the Hagadah over the broken matzah – which represents the bread of affliction, which our forefathers suffered in Egypt.

Tuesday, Adar 28, 5783 (Hakhel Year) / March 21, 2023

The highlight of the Pesach holiday is the Seder when the family gets together to celebrate the holiday of our freedom. In Israel one Seder is performed. In the Diaspora we make two Sedarim.

Q. Why is the celebration of our freedom called "Seder?"

A. "Seder" means "order." On all other holidays, as well as Shabbat, we recite the Kiddush and continue with the Shabbat or holiday meal. On Pesach, however, there is an order. After Kiddush we wash our hands, dip the "karpas" in salt water, we break the middle matzah, we recite the chapters of the Hagadah, etc. After the second cup of wine we wash again for the matzah, we eat the matzah and maror and then a sandwich of matzah and maror together. After the meal we eat the Afokoman, etc. The entire evening is celebrated in a specific order – a Seder.

Q. Why is this night of Pesach different than all other holidays that we celebrate with a Seder?

A. The Pesach Seder teaches us that a Jew can truly appreciate freedom only with order in one's life. True freedom is not when one does whatever one wants, whenever one wants, without any restrictions. That is anarchy and chaos. Freedom comes with responsibility. The ability to choose right from wrong and to do what's right. Thus, on Pesach when we celebrate our freedom, we remember the importance of putting order (Seder) into our lives.

Q. When did Jews celebrate their first Seder?

A. On the night before the Exodus. It was the night of the plague of the first-born. G-d commanded them to eat the meat of the Pascal offering together with matzah and maror that night. The Jewish people were confident that they will be liberated the next day.

Q. What is the reason and significance of the four cups of wine which we drink at the Seder?

A. As mentioned previously, various reasons are given for the four cups of wine. According to one opinion in the Talmud, they represent the four expressions of redemption (Exodus 6:6-7) which G-d used regarding the liberation from Egypt.

The four expressions are: "I will bring you out... I will deliver you... I will redeem you... I will take you." They represent different stages in redemption. According to the MaHaRaI, the four cups of wine represent our four matriarchs: Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah. It was in their merit and in the merit of the Jewish women of that generation that G-d liberated the people from Egypt.

Thursday, Nissan 1, 5783 (Hakhel Year) / March 23, 2023

Today is Rosh Chodesh Nissan – the first day in the new month, Nissan. We celebrate Rosh Chodesh every month of the year. But, Rosh Chodesh Nissan is special because it was Rosh Chodesh Nissan when G-d gave the Jewish people in Egypt this special mitzvah. Thus, Rosh Chodesh Nissan, fifteen days before the Exodus from Egypt, was the first Rosh Chodesh which the Jewish people celebrated.

Pesach is celebrated every year on the 15th day of the Hebrew month Nissan, because it is the day in which G-d liberated the Jewish people from Egypt.

Although the secular dates for Pesach will vary from year to year, the Hebrew date is always the same – 15 of Nissan. It is due to the difference of the number of days in a year between the Hebrew and secular calendars that they don't conform from year to year. This year, Pesach begins Wednesday night, April 5.

Q. Did the 15th day of Nissan, the day of the Exodus, have any significance before the Exodus?

A. Yes. On the 15th of Nissan, 400 years before the Exodus, Yitzchak (Isaac) was born to Abraham and Sarah. It was a great joyous time, as Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90. In fact, the name Yitzchak, means laughter. The birth of Yitzchak brought great happiness to Abraham and Sarah.

Q. Is there any connection between these two events which took place 400 years apart? Was the 15th of Nissan chosen to be the day of the Exodus at random or was there any significance that G-d chose that particular date?

A. G-d told Abraham 430 years before the Exodus, about the Egyptian exile where his descendants will be enslaved. G-d said to Abraham, "Your children will be strangers in a foreign land for 400 years." (Genesis 15:13). The 400-year count began with the birth of Yitzchak. Thus, the 400 years were up on exactly the 15th of Nissan, G-d didn't leave us in Egypt even one extra day. He took us out exactly 400 years to the day.

Q. The book from which we recite our prayers all year long is called, Siddur. Why is the book from which we recite at the Seder called, Hagadah?

A. The Pesach Seder is especially designed with our children in mind. We speak of the four sons; the children ask four questions; we are told to begin the Seder as soon as possible after the evening service, while the children are still up. The children are major players at the Seder.

The Hagadah gets its name from the commandment in the Torah, "V'higadta L'bincha" - "You shall tell your son." The Torah commands us specifically to make sure to tell our children, on the night of Pesach, about the Exodus. "Hagadah" comes from the word, "V'higadta" - to tell.

Thursday, Nissan 1, 5783 (Hakhel Year) / March 23, 2023

Pesach begins Wednesday night, April 5. In addition to the prohibition of eating "chametz" (leavened foods), it is also prohibited for a Jew to own chametz during Pesach. We are prohibited to have any benefit even after Pesach from chametz which was owned by a Jew during Pesach.

For this reason, in addition to cleaning the house before Pesach and searching for chametz (bedikat chametz), we also "sell" our chametz to a non-Jew before Pesach. This custom is called, "mechirat chametz."

Every year, we search for the chametz, with a candle, on the night before Pesach. This year, we do the searching for chametz (bedikat chamets) on Tuesday night, April 3.

Chametz which we intend to keep for after Pesach (such as not kosher for Passover food or alcohol, etc.), must be sold to a non-Jew before Pesach. All chametz sold should be stored out of sight during Pesach.

This sale must be performed according to the Torah-Halachic specifications. We recommend that you perform the sale of chametz through your local rabbi. However, if you need our assistance to sell your chametz, please fill out the following form and we will look after your sale of chametz. Please return the form via e-mail (torahfax613@gmail.com) by Monday, April 3.

Contract of sale of Chametz

I, the undersigned, fully empower and permit Rabbi Zalmen Marozov to act in my place and stead, and on my behalf to sell all Chametz and mixtures thereof possessed by me. He is also empowered to lease all places wherein the Chametz owned by me may be found. Rabbi Marozov has full right to appoint any agent or substitute in his stead and said substitute shall have full right to sell and lease as provided herein. This power is in conformity with all Torah, Rabbinic and Civil laws.

Name:.....
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Home
Address:.....
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City:.....
State/Province:.....

Business address:.....

City:.....
State:.....

e-mail:

Signature: (if possible):

Please return by Monday, April 3.

Friday, Nissan 2, 5783 (Hakhel Year) / March 24, 2023

This Shabbat we read from the Torah, Parshat Vayikra. With this Parsha we begin the third book of the Torah, which is also called, Vayikra – Leviticus. Each of the five books of the Torah (Breishis, Shmot, Vayikra, Bamidbar, Devarim) carries the name of the first Parsha in that book.

Parshat Vayikra speaks about the various sacrifices and offerings which were to be brought upon the altar in the Tabernacle and later in the Holy Temple.

There were basically two kinds of offerings. One which the congregation or an individual were duty-bound to offer, like the daily morning and evening offerings. Also, the sin offering, when someone committed certain transgressions, they had to bring a sacrifice as an atonement.

The second category are the offerings which a person brings as a contribution - as a goodwill gesture to G-d. It is about this category, which the Torah speaks about in the beginning of this week's Parsha.

Within this category of offerings, there are various kinds of offerings which one can choose from. They vary from cattle offerings, a fowl offering or even an offering made out of flour. It all depended on how much the person can afford. A wealthy person brought an offering from cattle, while a poor person would bring a fowl or a flour offering.

The Torah tells us that each of these offerings, no matter whether expensive or cheap, will bring great satisfaction to G-d. The Torah uses the same expression of satisfaction to G-d for the fowl or flour offering, as for the much more expensive, cattle offering.

The fowl offering was burnt on the altar with its feathers. Our sages explain that G-d says, "Even the smell of burnt feathers, which people cannot tolerate, being that its an offering of a poor person, it gives a great aroma and brings great satisfaction to Me."

"From here we learn," say our sages, "that G-d's measurement is not in quantity, but in quality. Whether one gives more or one gives less, as long as a person does the best they can afford, and they do it for G-d's sake, not for ulterior motives, they are both equal in G-d's eyes."

The Talmud tells that once there was a wealthy person who was leading a big ox to the Holy Temple to be offered on the altar. At some point the ox stubbornly wouldn't continue. Nothing they did would make him go forward. A poor man carrying a bundle of grass happened to pass by. He fed the ox the grass and thus was able to lead him to the Temple. The sages said that the poor man's bundle of grass was as good an offering as the rich man's ox. G-d wants from us the best WE can do according to our means.

Correction to yesterday's Torah Fax: Searching for Chametz is Tuesday night, April 4.