

# Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"



## PESACH

### IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

### Gems of Tefillah and Praise from the Haggadah

#### Urchatz – Before Reciting the Haggadah

נוטל ידיו לצורך טבול ראשון ולא יברך על הנטילה (שו"ע תע"ו)

The question is well known: Why are we strict specifically on the night of the Seder to wash our hands before eating *karpas*, even though the rest of the year we do not observe the custom of washing hands before eating "something that is dipped in liquid", whose amount is less than a *kezayis*? (See *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 158 4, and *Mishneh Berurah* there, *se'if katan* 20)

By way of *drush*, **Harav Yissachar Dov of Belz** explains:

Because the order of the *Haggadah* we recite at the Seder is the essence of "tefillah," it requires one to wash his hands before reciting it. Therefore it was established that we wash our hands for *karpas*. This way, we will fulfill our obligation to wash our hands before davening.

Admorei Belz, Vol. III, p. 280

#### Next Year in Eretz Yisrael

"השתא הכא, לשנה הבאה בארעא דישׂראל"

The **Chasam Sofer** explains:

On this night, which is all praise and song to the Creator, each Jewish home becomes a miniature *bais knesses*, resonating with the sounds of joy, praise and song as we recite the *Haggadah*. Even the short meal eaten between the first and second halves of the night is part of this.

Thus we can explain the words we say in the *Haggadah*: "This year we are here, next year in Eretz Yisrael." *Chazal* said (*Megillah* 29a): "The *batei knesses* and *batei medrash* in Bavel are destined to be established in Eretz Yisrael," and that is what we yearn for now while in exile. But when the Redemption arrives, very soon, we will merit to recite the *Haggadah* in this house that will be established in Eretz Yisrael.

Drashos Chasam Sofer, Vol. II, p. 236

#### The Main Objective of the Story of Yetzias Mitzrayim is Gratitude

"ואפילו כלנו חכמים, כלנו נבונים...מצוה עלינו לספר ביציאת מצרים"

The question seems self understood: What difference does it make if we "are all wise"? Does that exempt us from a *mitzvah d'Oraisa*?

It is a widespread custom among Chassidim and *anshei maaseh* to recite *Shir Hashirim* on the eve of Pesach after the Seder. (*Shelah, Pesachim*, and others). Here are several beautiful allusions from the *pesukim* of *Shir Hashirim* about the virtues of replying amen:

#### Birchos Hashachar Bechavrusa

"משכני אחרך נרוצה הביאני המלך חדריו" ("שה"ש א ד) "*Mashcheini acharecha narutzah*" is an acronym for "amen," to teach us that with the reward for being careful to reply amen, a person merits the fulfillment of "*heviani haMelech chadarav*, the king brought me to his room." As the Gemara says (*Shabbos* 119b): "Anyone who answers amen with all his might – the gates of Gan Eden are open to him."

*Divrei Torah (Munkacz)* 9, 18, and see *Meah Keshitah [Rema MiPano]* 86

Furthermore: the second letters in the words "*mashcheini acharecha narutzah*" are an acronym for "*shachar*" as an allusion to the great virtue of replying amen after *Birchos Hashachar*, a very early custom in history.

See *Einei Ha'Eidah, Shir Hashirim* 1:4

#### When You Return to Tzion With Mercy

"תשורי מראש אמנה...ממענות אריות מהררי נמרים" ("שה"ש ד ח)

"*Arayos meiharerei namerim*" – is an acronym for "amen". From here we learn that with the reward of answering amen in shuls and *batei medrash* the Shechinah is destined to return to dwell in Yisrael, as the *Mechilta* says (*Beshalach* 6) "The exiles only gather in the merit of *amanah*, as it says...*tashuri meirosh amanah*."

*Nachal Eshkol (Chida) Shir Hashirim* 4:8

[It is further hinted in this *passuk* that a person needs to be daring as a leopard and strong as a lion when it comes to fulfilling the *mitzvah* of replying amen, and not to be ashamed of those who mock him for his *avodas Hashem, chalilah*.

Harav Yaakov Dov Marmorstein, Chairman of Bnei Emunim

**Harav Avraham Erlanger**, one of the *roshei yeshivah* of Kol Torah, explains:

We could have thought that the main purpose of the *mitzvah* of recounting the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is describing the miracles that happened to us. Thus, it would seem that it does not apply to anyone who is not fully proficient in the details of what happened. Therefore, the author of the *Haggadah* emphasizes that even those who are wise and brilliant and are proficient in the stories of the miracles are obligated in this *mitzvah*. This is to teach us that the objective of the *mitzvah* is to praise and express gratitude to Hashem. As the Rambam says (*Simanei Hamitzvos Aseh* 157) "He commanded us to relate the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* on the eve of 15 Nissan...and one should expound on the words of the greatness of what Hashem did to us...and to thank Him for the *chesed* He performed with us."

*Birchas Avraham – Pesachim, Beiurei Haggadah Shel Pesach*

#### One Who Recounts a Miracle He Experienced Is Praiseworthy

"וכל המרבה לספר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משבח"

The **Sfas Emes** asks: Why do we praise one who recounts the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*? Does it not say in *Maseches Brachos* (33b) that Rabi Chanina rebuked the *shaliach tzibbur* who added to the *nusach* of davening words of praise to Hashem, and said that the addition does not praise Hashem—just the opposite?

He explained: Indeed, one who expounds on the praise of Hashem more than what was established by the *Anshei Knesses Hagedolah* violates the honor of Hashem. But that is different from a person who experienced a miracle, and then praises Hashem for what he experienced. On the contrary, the more he praises the more he has a chance to fulfill his obligation to praise Hashem.

For that reason we precede by declaring: "And if HaKadosh Baruch Hu would not have taken us out...then we...would be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt." Because we ourselves are considered to have experienced the miracle, then "*kol hamarbeh lesaper...harei zeh meshubach*," the more one praises the more praiseworthy.

Sfas Emes, Pesach 5647

On the holy night of the Seder, as we sit around the holiday table, passing the torch of *emunah* down to the next generations, let us remember to renew the holy words of Rabbeinu Bechaye on his commentary on *Shiras Hayam (Shemos* 14:1):

**"And because *emunah* is the foundation of the entire Torah, Chazal established in *tefillah* and in *brachos* that we reply amen, which is derived from the word *emunah*."**

On the festival of *emunah*, we are all Bnei Emunim





## Reciting the Haggadah on Shabbos Hagadol

The Shabbos before Pesach is called Shabbos Hagadol by Chazal because of several miracles that were performed for Bnei Yisrael on this Shabbos (*Shulchan Aruch* 430). There is a widespread custom to stop reciting *Barchi Nafshi* as of this Shabbos, and in the afternoon, to recite the Haggadah from *Avadim Hayinu* until *Lechaper Al Kol Avonoseinu*. (*Rema*, *ibid*)

The roots of this custom brought down by the *Rema* are found in the *sefarim* of the *Rishonim*, but over the generations, the *poskim* have been divided about it. Many praised the custom, while others claimed it was not proper. Following are the main opinions, and their reasons:

### Those who support the custom

1. The Ravy"i, one of the eminent *Rishonim*, cites in his rulings (Vol. II, *Pesachim* 425) in the name of Rav Amram Gaon: "The children had a custom of preceding and reciting the Haggadah on Shabbos Hagadol." He explained: "This seems to be in order to make it familiar to them and they should understand about Pesach and ask." Meaning, by saying the Haggadah and the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* earlier, they would be fluent in it, and this would make it easier for them to ask the questions of the Seder night properly. The Maharshal (*Shu"t*, 88) adds that everyone (not only the children) customarily recited it because of this reason.

2. The *Mishnah Berurah* cites the *Acharonim* that the reason for this custom of reciting the Haggadah on Shabbos is because that is when the Redemption and the miracles in Egypt began. That is when Bnei Yisrael were commanded "and each person should take a lamb for each household..." Because the lamb was the god of the Egyptians, the Egyptians wanted to harm Bnei Yisrael for taking it, and Hashem performed a miracle that they were unable to harm Bnei Yisrael. (See the explanations of the *Gra* and the *Levush*, *Orach Chaim* 430)

3. Another reason is cited in the name of Rav Pinchas of Koritz: Because on Shabbos Hagadol the *avodah zarah* of Egypt was annulled, when Bnei Yisrael tied their deity to their bedposts as commanded by Hashem, therefore, each and every year, there is a new essence of annulling *avodah zarah* on that day. Therefore we recite the order of the Haggadah until "*lechaper al kol avonoseinu*" because the sin of *avodah zarah* is equivalent to the entire Torah. Shabbos is also equivalent to the entire Torah. Combining the two of them together [i.e. annulling *avodah zarah* on Shabbos] has the power to atone for all our sins. (*Imrei Pinchas*, Vol. I, 160)

### Those who disagree with the custom:

By contrast to the above opinions, some *Acharonim* disagreed with this custom, for several reasons:

The *Yaavetz*, in his *sefer Mor Veketziah* (*Orach Chaim* 430) argued against the custom because it contradicts what we say in the Haggadah: "*Yachol meiRosh Chodesh...yachol mibe'od yom...Talmud lomar 'baavur zeh' - I said only at a time when matzah and maror are resting before you.*" This implies that it is forbidden to say the Haggadah unless *matzah* and *maror* are resting before you."

The Vilna Gaon opposed this custom for the same reason, as his *talmid* writes

in *Maaseh Rav* (177): "On Shabbos Hagadol, at *Minchah*, we do not say '*Avadim Hayinu*' because of the reason stated in the *Mechilta* and established in the Haggadah: "*Yachol meiRosh Chodesh...when matzah and maror are before you.*" (See more in the notes on "*Pe'ulas Sachir*" there)

In his *siddur Amudei Shamayim* (commentary on Haggadah *Shel Pesach*) the *Yaavetz* expresses surprise at the performance of this custom, because the objective of reciting the Gemara is in order to arouse the soul to marvel at the miracles of Hashem. If a person practices saying it ahead of time, his heart will not feel that marvel on the night of the Seder and he will not be able to perform the mitzvah of *vehigadeta bebincha*. Nevertheless, it is certainly worthy to peruse the commentaries on the Haggadah ahead of time; it is only not right to read it in order.

### Supporting Arguments for Those Who Permit It

In actuality, most communities do observe this custom. The *Acharonim* resolved the question of the *Yaavetz* in several ways:

1. From the language of the *Mechilta* (which we recite in the Haggadah) it indeed implies that the obligation of reciting the Haggadah is only when *matzah* and *maror* are resting in front of you. But it is still permitted to recite it at any time. (Rav M. Y. Katz, *Vayaged Moshe*, 19)

2. One who peruses the words of the *Mechilta* will note that this relates to the mitzvah of *vehigadeta lebincha* that is not performed at any time other than the Seder night. But a person is allowed to relate the miracles of Mitzrayim as much as he wants. (*ibid*)

3. There are those who said that this is why we stop reciting the Haggadah that we recite on Shabbos Hagadol by "*Lechaper Al Kol Avonoseinu*" before saying "*Rabban Gamliel omer*: anyone who has not said these three things on Pesach has not fulfilled his obligation, and they are: Pesach, *matzah* and *maror*." As Rabban Gamliel's words imply that reciting those three things is the crux of the Haggadah, and on Shabbos Hagadol we do not say them, so it is as though we did not recite the Haggadah at all. (*Ohr Yisrael - Yanovsky*, 430, *Taam HaPesach*, 4)

The second question of the *Yaavetz* is answered by the Pnei Menachem of Ger. He says that there is a rule in *divrei Torah*: "*Im shamoa beyashan - tishma bechadash.*" (*Brachos* 40a). This means to say that the more one repeats the words, they are more understood. Therefore, even if one recites the Haggadah before Pesach, he will still find more meaning to it on the Seder night.

Thus we can understand why some communities were strict not to eat *matzah* in the period leading up to Pesach (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 471 2), while at the same time, they were not as strict regarding the mitzvah of relating the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* before Pesach. That is because by contrast to physical eating, when one eats something over and over, it becomes "*achilas gassah*" gluttonous eating, when it comes to spiritual matters - the more one repeats them the more meaning he finds in them. (*Pnei Menachem, Shabbos Hagadol* 5754)

## One Brachah In Distress Is Better

Harav Moshe Yehudah Leib Diskin (the Mahari"l), *zt"l*, of Brisk, was famed in Yerushalayim, where he settled towards the end of his life. From the time he settled in the city, residents streamed to seek his counsel. He was treated with the greatest awe and respect.

He was respected by the simple Jews of Yerushalayim, and much more so by its scholars and *gedolim*, of which there was no small number at the time. While Yerushalayim at the time suffered extensively from hunger and lack, the glory of Torah thrived nonetheless. Torah giants walked the streets; some of them born and raised in the city, and others, like the *gaon* from Vilna, were jewels in the crown of European Jewry who wished to live out their days in the holy city and be buried there.

When Rav Moshe came to Eretz Yisrael, his home attracted the most erudite of the city's residents. The *gedolim* and *lamdanim* of the city would gather around his table and thirstily drank in his words. Everyone knew that his learning and teaching were not to be disturbed unless it was for a matter of utmost urgency.

One of the "*yoshvim*" around the Rav's table was the young *tzaddik*, Rav Dovid Baharan, the son-in-law of Harav Akiva Yosef Schlesinger, author of *Lev Ha'Ivri*. Rav Dovid was one of the founders of Yeshivas Toras Moshe, of which the Mahari"l was Rosh Yeshiva.

Nine year old Zalman'ke, Rav Dovid Baharan's oldest child, was a *masmid* with many talents. He had only one request, and he nudged his parents constantly to try and get them to grant it: he wanted to receive a *brachah* from the *gaon* of Brisk that he merit to grow in Torah and *Yiras Shamayim*.

You may be wondering what was preventing Rav Dovid from fulfilling the pure request of his dear son, but as mentioned, the disciples of the Mahari"l would not disturb him from his endless learning unless it was of vital importance. Certainly such a trivial thing as this did not fall into that category, and thus, Rav Dovid had to reject his son's request time after time.

Distraught, the child appealed to his mother, who also tried to persuade her husband to comply. But Rav Dovid emphasized that even *gedolei Torah* were reluctant to disturb the Rav on matters that did not relate to learning. How much more so would a young *avreich* such as him not do it.

As he spoke, Rav Dovid expounded to his wife about the greatness of the Brisker Rav, but his efforts had the opposite effect: the more he described the sage, the more she wanted their child to merit a *brachah* from him.

Pesach was nearing. Little Zalman'ke never stopped asking for his request, hoping that perhaps he would finally merit to have his wishes filled. His righteous mother was a partner to his expectations, and sure enough, an opportunity arose. "What do you think," the mother asked Zalman'ke one day before the holiday, "about taking your father's *afikoman* and not giving it back before you receive a clear promise that he will go with you to the Rav of Brisk and ask for a *brachah*?"

Indeed, that is what the child did. When the Seder arrived, Zalman'ke hid under his father's place, and while Rav Dovid was

busy relating the story of the Haggadah, the child grabbed the *afikoman* and hid it away. When it came time to eat the *afikoman* and Rav Dovid groped behind his pillow and realized it was not there, he understood that Zalman'ke had taken it and immediately began to negotiate with him. Rav Dovid tried to offer his son various tempting prizes, but the child determinedly refused; he had only one request: take me to get a *brachah* from the holy Rav of Brisk.

It was already near *chatzos* when Rav Dovid realized he had no choice. He called Zalman'ke and promised that on the very first day of Chol HaMoed he would make an effort fulfill his request. As soon as his father said this, the boy ran to get the *afikoman* from his hiding place, and Rav Dovid ate it in time.

On the first day of Chol HaMoed, Zalman'ke reminded his father about his promise. Rav Dovid realized he had no choice, and he began to walk the short distance from his home to the Rav's home, little Zalman's hand tucked into his own. The child's face was glowing with happiness.

When they arrived at the door to house, Rav Dovid peeked into the room, where, as always, the eminent scholars of Yerushalayim were sitting and drinking in the words of their Rav, whose face was aflame. Rav Dovid took in the scene and recoiled; he felt like he was unable to fulfill his promise to his son, and was about to turn back to return home.

But the child could no longer suppress his distress, and burst into tears. His crying brought the Rebbetzin rushing out from inside the house. She had mercy on the child and offered him some sweets, but the boy just cried harder. When the Rebbetzin turned to ask his father why the boy was crying, Rav Dovid replied that he longed to receive a *brachah* from the *tzaddik*, but he could not fulfill his son's request.

"If he sheds so many tears to merit a *brachah*, he must realize its value," she said. She immediately took the boy and stood him before her husband. The Mahari"l looked up from his learning and the Rebbetzin asked that he bless young Zalman'ke.

A smile crossed the face of the Rav of Brisk when he placed his hands on the boy's head and warmly *bentsched* him: "May it be Hashem's will that you grow to be a *Yid* with *Yiras Shamayim*."

With great emotion, the boy replied amen after the Rav's *brachah*, and his father and all the *talmidim* in the room echoed amen fervently, with tears of emotion in their eyes. It was a rare scene for them as well, and it was apparent that their amen contained the full faith in the power of the Rav's *brachah*, which never went unfulfilled.

Many years passed, and under the aura of the Rav's *brachah*, little Zalman'ke rose to great spiritual heights until he became renowned all over the world for his piety and exceptional brilliance.

When he was 44 years old, he fulfilled his task in this world, and departed to the Heavenly worlds. But his pure memory remained in the heart and minds of the residents of Yerushalayim, who for many years afterwards would speak of his greatness with reverence.

Yerushalayim Shel Maalah, Vol. I, p. 187