

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

FREEDOM!

It was a momentous occasion; Simon was finally under the Chupa with his dear bride Sarah. Hundreds of people eagerly looked on as the final smash of the glass occurred accompanied by music and large chants of Mazal Tov!

The Rabbi stood there and said "I pronounce you man and wife". Both Simon and Sarah raced their hands to their pockets.

As they took out their phones, the Rabbi continued – "you can now update your Facebook status!"

This is the year 2016!

In October 2014 research was carried out showing that there were more mobile devices in the world than people, and that they were multiplying five times faster than us! No other technology has impacted us like the mobile phone. It's the fastest growing manmade phenomenon ever – from zero to 6.5 billion in three decades.

Out of the world's estimated 7.2 billion people, 6.5 billion have access to mobile phones. Far fewer – only 4.5 billion people – have access to working toilets.

In a blessed generation of technological advance the question has to be asked, how do we feel? I am sure you feel blessed with the affluence of this generation, but living in this generation comes with its baggage, are we really free, or are we subservient to our surroundings and the ever increasing techno advance?

It was the custom of ancient Royalty to recline on their left (since one holds food with their right hand, or alternatively to prevent the

epiglottis from covering the trachea) when indulging in delicacies.

On Pesach we consider ourselves as not only a free nation, but a nation of Royalty. Thus our Sages enacted that on Pesach when participating in the Mitsvot of the night one should lean like Royalty.

Rabbi David Yosef Shlita (son of Rabbi Ovadia Z'l) told me of a case where a person had been a prisoner for many years. He was still in prison and asked the Rabbi whether he should also lean on Pesach. On the one hand Pesach and particularly the leaning is a celebration of freedom, yet in reality he was not free. Was it really necessary for him to lean?

Rabbi David Yosef answered that he was still obligated to lean. Although he was physically in prison, that did not impede on his mental freedom and celebration of Pesach.

Freedom is a choice of mind. If you are in control of your mind, you have the ability to be free even in the most daunting of places.

However, 'Freedom' itself has different dimensions, a point reflected in the two Hebrew words used to describe it - Chofesh and Cherut. Chofesh is 'freedom from' and Cherut is 'freedom to'.

Chofesh is what a slave acquires when released from slavery. He or she is free from being subject to someone else's will. But this kind of liberty is not enough to create a free society. A world in which everyone is free to do what they like begins in anarchy and ends in tyranny. That is why Chofesh is only the beginning of freedom, not its ultimate destination. One only needs look around at the world and in particular the Middle East to understand that 'freedom from' is not the end game.

Conversely, Cherut is collective freedom, a society in which my freedom respects yours. A free society is always a moral achievement.

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Pesach 2nd day in 20:43 out: 20:45

DVAR TORAH
Freedom!
By Rabbi Jonathan Tawil

DVAR TORAH
The voice of Pharaoh vs...
By Rabbi David Baadani

DVAR TORAH
By Rabbi Danny Fisher

DVAR TORAH
Pesach
By Rabbi Benji Stone

HALACHOT
By Rabbi Eli Mansour

This newsletter contains Divrei Torah and may contain Sheimot - Please dispose of accordingly

It rests on self-restraint and regard for others. The ultimate aim of Torah is to fashion a society on the foundations of justice and compassion, both of which depend on recognising the sovereignty of G-d and the integrity of creation. It is for this reason that we say, 'Next year may we all be Bnei Chorin, rather than Bnei Chofshim. We are stating, 'May we be free in a way that honours the freedom of all'.

In January 1945, fearing the Russian advance, all prisoners of Auschwitz who could walk were taken on the brutal 'death marches'. The only people left in the camps were those who were too ill to move. Those remaining were liberated on January 27 1945, a day now commemorated as International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Primo Levi was a survivor of Auschwitz. In his book 'If This is a Man', he describes how the worst time of all was the last ten days that they were left alone with only scraps of food and fuel. One day he managed to light a fire and bring some warmth to his fellow prisoners, many of them slowly dying. He writes, "When the broken window was repaired and the stove began to spread its heat, something seemed to relax everyone and at that moment Towarowski (a Franco-Pole of twenty-three) proposed to the others that each of them offer a slice of bread to the three of us who had been working. And so it was agreed. Only a

day before, a similar event would have been inconceivable. The law of the Lager said, 'eat your own bread and if you can, that of your neighbour,' and left no room for gratitude. It really meant that the law of the lager was dead. It was the first human gesture that occurred amongst us. I believe that that moment can be dated as the beginning of the change by which we who had not died slowly changed from prisoners to men again."

The sharing of food was the first act through which slaves became human beings. That was the time they were able to attach themselves to humanity, enabling their free will, conquering their 'natural tendencies' in order to give of themselves to become Bnei Chorin.

The Midrash has a fascinating commentary on the location of the first meeting between G-d and Moshe. It was at the Sneh (the burning bush), that Moshe was delegated to deliver the Jews from the slavery of Egypt. Our Sages relate it was because of the Sneh that the very spot would eventually be called Sinai. The place where the mission began defined its purpose. The goal was not simply to get the Jews out of Egypt, but rather to bring them to the mountain where they would receive the Law. Freedom without Torah (law) is inconceivable.

That is why Moshe subsequently told Pharaoh not only to "let my people go", but added the all-important phrase "so that

they may serve Me." This is the freedom of Pesach, wedded to the moral covenant of the Torah.

From a Jewish perspective, to speak only of the ideal of freedom – while ignoring its necessary partner of responsibility – is to pervert its true meaning.

This is what Abraham Lincoln understood so well in his famous words, "Freedom is not the right to do what we want, but what we ought."

And this is the real message of Pesach; G-d granted us the gift of physical freedom, so that we might become truly free to be guided by our spiritual selves.

The Hebrew word for Egypt is Mitzrayim, the root of which is Metzar, meaning constriction, narrowness, and limitation. Spiritually, as Pesach approaches, the same energy of freedom that existed at the time of the Exodus is available for us to tap into. It's the ideal time to ask ourselves: What am I enslaved to that is holding me back from achieving my potential? What are the blockages, constrictions and limitations that stand in the way of accomplishing my goals in any area of my life? Am I a slave to my physical appetites, to social media and devices?

At the Pesach Seder we read, "In every generation we must each regard ourselves as though we personally had just left Egypt." The goal is to use the tools we have been given to make this happen in the context of our own lives.



RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

THE VOICE OF PHARAOH VS. THE FREEDOM OF NIRTZAH

It's after midnight. The Seder is complete. You have eaten the matzah, drunk the four cups, listened to the children sing Ma Nishtana, hidden and found the afikoman, recited Birkat Hamazon and Hallel. Now, you've reached Nirtzah—the moment when everything you have done tonight is accepted by Hashem. You feel joy, satisfaction, and a deep sense of fulfillment.

But then comes the doubt. Did I get it right? Was my matzah eaten properly? Did I drink the four cups in the best way? My children had questions, and I wasn't sure how to

answer them all. I wanted to feel accomplished, to feel accepted—but what if I didn't measure up? What if this isn't Nirtzah? This voice is none other than Pharaoh, still trying to enslave you. Because being a slave means that nothing truly belongs to you—not your joy, not your achievements, not even your sense of freedom. And so Pharaoh whispers: This happiness you feel? It's not really yours. You're not truly free. Who do you think you are to feel accomplished? To feel powerful? To celebrate like a free person?

This is the same Pharaoh who, upon hearing that Bnei Yisrael had fled, immediately set out in pursuit: "Vayugad le'Melech Mitzrayim ki barach ha'am"—It was told to the king of Egypt that the people had fled (Shemot 14:5). Pharaoh, the king of

Mitzrayim—the place of limitations, restrictions, and boundaries—cannot tolerate their escape. He refuses to accept that they have broken free, so he chases after them, seeking to drag them back into slavery.

This voice still echoes in our lives today. Every time we try to move forward, to experience joy, to grow, to believe in ourselves, the voice of Pharaoh comes running after us, trying to pull us back into a mindset of limitation and self-doubt. But tonight, we break free.

Tonight, we recognize that Hashem redeemed us b'yad chazakah—with a mighty hand. Not because we were perfect, but because we are His children. Hashem declares: No matter where you are, I have the power to lift you up and set you free.

Tonight, we silence the voice of Pharaoh. We choose the path of true freedom. We declare

with confidence: I am a child of Hashem. I am a prince. I am a princess. I am an

ambassador of the Divine. I am accepted. I am Nirtzah.



RABBI DANNY FISHER

Director - TAL Boys After School Programs

"Leil Shimurim" is described as a time when Hashem is mindful of His promise to redeem the Jewish people from Mitzrayim. Rashi's interpretation emphasizes that Hashem's promise was not just a declaration but a signal for the people to maintain unwavering Emunah and Bitachon, knowing that through their belief, Hashem's promise would come to fruition.

The Posuk references the faith of the Avos especially Avraham, whose Bitachon in

Hashem was counted as righteousness, even when the fulfillment of divine promises was not immediate. The teaching underscores the relationship between Emunah and the eventual realization of Hashem's promises. This Emunah and Belief are seen as necessary for the fulfillment of the divine plan.

Moreover, the Posuk reflects on the balance of Yom Tov observance, where Pesach's first night is framed as a time when Hashem is hopeful for the Geulah, and the rest of the Yom Tov is for the people to connect with

their own spiritual growth, divine service as well as enjoying the Yom Tov meals.

It's a beautiful reminder of the power of Emunah and Belief in Hashem, especially during Pesach when we commemorate the Geulah from Mitzrayim and Daven for a complete Geulah in the future. The Posuk invites us to renew our Emunah and Bitachon in Hashem's promises, and to approach the Yom Tov with a mindset of gratitude and spiritual awareness.

Wishing you a wonderful Yom Tov!



RABBI BENJI STONE

PESACH

ברוך שומר הבטחתו לישראל

Why did the Jews go into exile in Egypt for two hundred and ten years? We are supposed to be Hashem's chosen people, his am segula – surely we deserve better treatment than that?

In order to consider this question we need to review the Bris Bein Habesorim, the original contract between Hashem and Avrohom Ovinu.

Avrohom had famously sought tangible confirmation from Hashem of his inheritance of the land of Israel:

"How can I know I will inherit (the land of Israel)?" (Bereishis 15,8)

Hashem responded by entering into a covenant with Avrohom which guaranteed the granting of the land of Israel to the Jews. However, and as is often the case with contractual dealings, the promised benefit came with conditions: The Jewish people would indeed take hold of Eretz Yisroel – but only after four hundred years of suffering. Furthermore, Avrohom himself would never inherit the land

(Bereishis 15;13-17).

Avrohom's conduct in asking Hashem to formalize his verbal promises could be viewed as reprehensible and indeed the amorah Shmuel tells us (Nedarim 32a) that Avrohom's conduct actually resulted in the punitive terms of the covenant itself. Because Avrohom did not simply trust Hashem at his word, the Jewish nation was punished with exile in Egypt, with the inheritance of the land being delayed for four hundred years.

Shmuel's opinion needs explanation. In the first instance, it seems disproportionate in the extreme that in return for a slip in his emunah, Avrohom should be punished so harshly. Furthermore it beggars belief that through no fault of their own, four generations of Jews should be subject to slavery and persecution in Egypt.

Rabbi Elazar Fleckeles (Prague, 1754-1826; Masseh D'R'Elazar) writes that Shmuel's opinion should not be taken at face value.

Without a doubt, Avrohom Ovinu, a key innovator in the field of emunah, was not lacking in trust that Hashem would keep his word. However, Avrohom was concerned that if the Jews would march straight into Eretz Yisroel without adequate preparation, they would settle

down, relax, prosper and ultimately forget their national purpose as ambassadors of the Almighty. In asking "How can I know I will inherit (the land of Israel)?"

Avrohom was seeking reassurance that the land would be inherited in the way it was meant to be – as an arena of opportunity for avodas Hashem and not as a means of achieving material wealth.

In response Hashem promised Avrohom that he need not worry about the Jewish people losing focus on their spiritual mission. Prior to their entry into Eretz Yisroel the Jews would be sent into slavery in Egypt where they would be broken down and brought to a level of suffering from which there would be no real hope of escape. Their Egyptian captors would then gradually be brought to their knees by means of a series of a supernatural events and the Jews' escape would be equally miraculous, culminating in the splitting of the Red Sea. The transition from hopelessness to redemption would serve to cement in the national consciousness the knowledge that Hashem controls all happenings in the world and that material success comes to a person only if Hashem considers that person deserving of such success.



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Passover- Halachot of Maggid at the Seder

Reciting the Maggid section of the Haggada at the Seder fulfills the Torah obligation to tell the story of Yetzi'at Mitzrayim (the Exodus), as the Torah writes, "Ve'higadeta Le'vincha Ba'yom Ha'hu" ("You shall tell your children on that day" – Shemot 13:8). The importance of this Mitzva is expressed in a passage in the Zohar which comments that anyone who tells the story of Yetzi'at Mitzrayim on the night of Pesach with sincere joy will one day rejoice together with the Shechina (Divine Presence) in the next world. Moreover, God Himself experiences immense joy, as it were, upon hearing the Jewish people telling this story, and He summons the Heavenly angels to come and listen to the story. The angels assemble to hear the story of the Exodus and rejoice over the great wonders and miracles performed by the Almighty in redeeming Am Yisrael, and they give praise to God for His great nation on earth that so joyfully celebrates His redemption. The Zohar concludes that we thereby increase God's power, so-to-speak, to deal kindly with Am Yisrael. (Hazon Ovadia page 56.)

As mentioned earlier, the Torah introduces this obligation by instructing, "You shall tell your children on that day..." Thus, the essential obligation is for parents to tell the story to their children. Ironically, in many families the precise opposite occurs: children are encouraged to share with their parents some ideas and insights that they learned about the Haggada. Although it is admirable for children to share their knowledge, it is the parents who bear the obligation to teach their children.

Furthermore, in many homes the children go to sleep immediately after asking the questions of the "Ma Nishtana." It must be emphasized that the "Ma Nishtana" consists only of the questions; the parents must then provide the answer, clearly, patiently, and in accordance with each child's level of understanding. The father must

clearly explain to the child the paragraph of "Avadim Hayinu," as well as the section of "Pesach, Matza U'marror," where the reasons for these three Mitzvot are explained. If a parent sees that the child is falling asleep or losing interest before he reaches the section of "Pesach, Matza U'marror," then he should quickly explain to him that section so that the child will hear the explanation of these Mitzvot.

The obligation to tell the story of Yetzi'at Mitzrayim requires doing just that: to talk about the events of Benei Yisrael's subjugation, the plagues, the Exodus, and the splitting of the sea. One should focus on the Midrashim relevant to these events, and not on other topics upon which many people make the mistake of elaborating during the Seder. One should not only focus his attention on singing "Dayeinu" or offering insights into the introductory sections of "Ma Nishtana," the four sons, "Ve'hi She'ameda," and so on. Nor is this the time for reconciling contradictory rulings of the Rambam or explaining complex, intricate passages in Masechet Pesachim. The Mitzva of "Sippur Yetzi'at Mitzrayim" requires spending time at the Seder discussing the events of the Exodus, and this should be the point of our focus at the Seder. Indeed, the Haggada tells of the Rabbis in Bnei-Brak who spent the entire night telling about the Exodus; this shows that there is enough material relevant to Yetzi'at Mitzrayim itself to occupy a person for an entire night. Of course, one who so wishes is certainly encouraged to remain awake after the Seder to discuss the many other aspects of Pesach; the Seder itself, however, should be devoted to the story of the Exodus.

It must also be emphasized that properly fulfilling this Mitzva requires preparation. Just as we prepare for the other Mitzvot of Pesach by cleaning the home, purchasing wine and Matza, cleaning the Marror, and so on, so must we prepare for "Sippur Yetzi'at Mitzrayim" by studying commentaries on Maggid before the Seder.

The Ritva (Rabbi Yom Tov Ashbili, Spain, 1250-1330) writes that one person may recite the Haggada on behalf of the others at the Seder, who fulfill their obligation by carefully listening to the leader's recitation. This ruling is based on the Halachic principle of "Shomei'a Ke'oneh," which allows for fulfilling one's obligation to recite a given text by listening to somebody else's recitation. This was indeed the practice of the Gaon of Vilna (Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna, 1720-1797). Our practice, however, is for everybody to recite the Haggada in unison, with the leader offering explanations and insights at various points during the recitation. (Hazon Ovadia page 47.)

The obligation to read Maggid applies to both men and women. (Hazon Ovadia page 52.) Although the authorities debate the question of whether women are obligated on the level of Torah obligation or Rabbinic enactment, all agree that they, too, must recite or hear the Haggada. One must ensure not to begin reading Maggid until nightfall on Pesach eve, or 45 minutes after sundown (in the New York City area). If one began reading Maggid before nightfall, he must repeat it after that point. One must be particularly careful in this regard in years when Daylight Savings Time begins before Pesach, in which case the Seder begins quite late; one may nevertheless not begin reading the Haggada before nightfall. (Hazon Ovadia page 47.)

One should not lean or recline during the reading of Maggid. Instead, it should be read in an upright position, and with a sense of awe and reverence. The reading of Maggid should be completed before Chatzot (midnight as defined by Halacha). This means that one should recite the concluding Beracha of "Asher Ge'alenu" before Chatzot. BeDiavad, if he finished after Chazot, he still may make the Beracha of "Asher Ge'alenu". After the Seder, one should continue learning and discussing the Exodus and the laws of Pesach until he feels the need to go to sleep.