

YOUR SEDER COMPANION

An inspirational and thought provoking guide for each section of
the Haggadah:



Dedicated in memory of Sheindel bat Meiril. My biggest inspiration

INTRODUCTION:

We begin pesach with the "seder", recounting the miracles God performed during the exodus from Egypt. Seder means "order", but although there is a set program for the evening, it often feels anything but orderly. Even the story we share in itself seems unplanned and unorganized. The Maimonides on his commentary on *Pirkei Avos* comments that every nuance in creation was planned. Everything might seem chaotic for us, but it's all planned out by God.

Rav Pinchas of Koretz writes that every blade of grass in the world is under God's control. The way it moves in the wind or how it grows is planned by God. The Talmud in Shkalim explains further that even when you take out a certain amount of change from your pocket and you accidentally took out a few extra coins, even that seemingly insignificant act is planned by God.

The pesach seder is teaching us that all worldly events are directly planned by God. Even though it might seem out of control and coincidental, we are constantly in God's hands and through that recognition we will always maintain our own seder.

In the Purim story, it was the first night of Passover when Esther and Mordechai told the Jews of Shushan to fast. Part of that decree was not to perform the seder. But, if the decree to kill the Jews was going to be in the Jewish month of Adar, eleven months later, why not decree the fast to be after pesach or even wait until Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to repent? Seemingly picking the night of the seder is unnecessary when you have another eleven months to pray to nullify the decree! Mordechai and Esther specifically picked the night of the seder because of the power of prayer we have on that night. The Rabbis teach that the night of the seder has the ability to forgive sins that Yom Kippur cannot even undo. The *Medreish* states that God goes into the Garden of Eden every night to spend time with the

righteous people in heaven, except for the night of the seder. On seder night, God goes into the house of every Jew and rest his Divine Presence in that home. So tonight, when we have the immense power of prayer, perhaps stronger than any other night, let's tap into this tremendous ability to be thankful of God's miracles that He performed and will continuously preform which will eventually lead us into the times of complete redemption.

KADEISH:

Kiddish, the blessing over wine, is the first step of welcoming in *Pesach* as we sanctify the time we are entering. The preparation to make the seder can be exhausting, with hours going in to cleaning and cooking for just eight days. But even though we might become a “slave” to this work, the decision to do so was from our free will. The first mitzvah God commanded to us in the desert was *Rosh Chodesh*, to sanctify the beginning of every Jewish month by our calculation. This was the first step in showing the Jewish people that they were a free people, no longer slaves bound to anyone else’s schedule.

The Jerusalem Talmud explains that we have four cups of wine at the seder because of the four words the Torah uses to describe our redemption. Another understanding is the four cups represent the four types of redemption we face daily: physical, financial, spiritual and psychological. So, we begin with kiddish, further expressing the idea that we are no longer slaves and preforming the following *mitzvah* as free people.

When you preform your daily task, do you feel like a free person or you are “enslaved” to your commitments?

URCHATZ:

At this point in the seder, everyone washes their hands. But it is a seemingly odd point to be washing our hands. Jewish law states that we usually wash our hands after going to the bathroom, and before eating bread and praying. But here, none of these apply, so why do we wash our hands? Most explain that before dipping the vegetable in saltwater, we need to wash our hands. But another explanation is that the Haggadah seemingly is one long prayer where we discuss and praise God's greatness. The Noam Elimelech of Lizenzk explains that the night of the seder is beyond just a prayer, rather the entire story is a time when the gates of heaven are open and filled with mercy. Because of that, we need to prepare ourselves just as we do before a prayer service by washing our hands.

What does *netilah*, washing, truly mean? If you trace back to the root of the word it means aramaic for *kli*, a vessel. Another meaning for *netilah* is to remove. Therefore, *netilas yadaim* means the removal of hands. Hands represent power, and our ability to build and destroy. By removing our hands from the equation, we are nullifying ourselves before God, embracing where all of our blessing come from. Before we eat or pray, we wash our hands showing God is in charge, and He is the one giving us food and everything we have.¹

How do you properly prepare and get into the right head space before doing something spiritual or important?

¹ Adapted from Rabbi Shlomo Rosner

KARPAS:

Washing your hands usually is the precursor to a big meal. Here we wash our hands without a *Bracha* and then eat a little piece of parsley - why?

A person is always motivated with a will and a desire that is special. He/she wants to reach a place of greatness and see the results of how much he has grown. But often we judge ourselves and others solely based upon if we are successful in actualizing those goals. Having this perspective can be a large mistake and contrary to our entire goal. Sometimes we build a perfect image in our mind, and if don't live up to that, we consider ourselves a failure. Often things don't turn out the way we want, and because of that the world becomes filled with disappointed people.

A person has to learn how to balance and be patient with the goal he had. Often the goals are even unreasonable. Therefore, there are times that the main purpose of our life is to switch from the picture of perfection and to look carefully and rejoice in the small success we have achieved. In the journey of life, we have to shift our focus to understand this notion. We should have goals and aspirations, but when are not able to achieve them, our focus has to shift to the small victories. A person should be able to come to a place when washing their hands and expecting a big meal but being happy with just a little piece of parsley. We should be grateful for all that we have, no matter how much or how little, and taste how good that is.

So, as we begin this festive and elaborate meal, focus and rejoice on what you have accomplished as opposed to what you have not. This time it's important to even be happy with the simple piece of celery or parsley you have. Motivate yourself for large aspirations but it's even more important to be happy with the small accomplishments as well.²

How do you try to not get bogged down by all your goals?

How do you define success?

² Adapted from Rabbi Moshe Weinberger

YACHATZ:

During Yachatz we break the matzah and separate the smaller piece as the *lechem oni* - the poor man's bread and hide the bigger piece as the "dessert" for later. One purpose of the seder is to tell over the exodus from Egypt, reminding all of us that God constantly redeems us. But once we finish the seder, are we done talking about the miraculous nature of God? An important trait to embody is that we are never finished in our praising of God. Rav Soloveitchik explains that we finish our prayers on Shabbat with *Adon Olam* or *Yigdal* (traditionally said at the beginning of praying) to show that even when we are "done" with our prayer, there is still so much more praise we can give and thus have to start again.

During Yachatz break the matzah and hide it to show that there is so much we can say but we can't do it all, therefore we save the remainder for later.

If God is limitless, why does he need our praise? Do our prayers make a difference to Him?

MAGGID:

Introduction to Maggid:

God commands us daily to remember the exodus from Egypt, and tonight we have the additional commandment to retell the story through the Maggid section of the seder. As with almost every other commandment, we perform a blessing before performing the action. But, before starting the Maggid section, we don't recite a blessing – why? When making a blessing, we are supposed have the proper concentration during the entire action the blessing is about so we don't mention

Gods name in vain. Therefore, the Rabbis explain that since we probably won't have proper concentration during the entire time of Maggid, we don't make a blessing.

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Orbach gives a deeper idea behind this question. He explains that one of the goals of the seder night is to give thanks to God for redeeming us.

Because of that, making a blessing without proper concentration is against Jewish law, but to say thank you without the proper concentration is even worse. That's why on this night, whose focus is to thank God, we don't say a blessing.

Rabbi Avraham Shore illustrates the need for the proper concentration during the maggid portion. He explains that during maggid we continuously discuss the miracles God preformed for us because when you love something you can't stop talking about it. The root of maggid is to spread these miracles and to tell everyone about it. When Abraham introduced monotheism, he didn't wait for people to approach him, rather he sought after them. That is most truthful way to show your love to God, by running to do His will and talk His praises.

As we proceed through the Haggadah, we continuously thank God for not making us into a free people. However, we often find ourselves in our own "exile", being a slave to something else. So, at the seder, how can we be happy if we are still in our personal "Egypt?" The Brisker Rav adds to this notion that this is the hardest mitzvah of the year. By focusing on the exodus and being in our own exile, we can then fully appreciate the gravity of the exodus miracle. By focusing on this exile, it can give us hope for the future and final redemption as well. By reciting *Ani Hashem Elokeichem* – *I am Your God* daily in the *Shema* prayer, it reminds us that just as God took us out of one exile, he can take us out of another one as well.

The Maharal asks, why do we tell the same story with the same songs every year, shouldn't we change it up a little bit? The reason we continue with the same Haggadah is that even though it's the same story each year, everyone has different feelings or ideas than the year before. You're not the same person you were a year ago; you've gone through different experiences, tests, and challenges, making you a new person sitting at the Passover seder this year. Everyone expresses feelings differently and connects to different parts of the seder. Hopefully this year, as we are about to recount the slavery of the Jews, we will be free from our own bondage

by realizing that God can continuously redeem us from whatever challenge we are struggling with.

הַ לַחֲמָנָא עֲנִיא

Maggid opens with *Ha Lachmanya*, welcoming in anyone who needs to join the seder. But, why is the introduction of maggid in Aramaic when the rest of the text in Hebrew? The Talmud teaches that angels don't understand Aramaic. In parshat *Acharei Mot* when discussing the offerings and work for Yom Kippur it says "Kol Adam", in plural when only Aharon enters the Holy of Holies. The Rabbis explain that it is in plural to teach us that angels were not allowed in when Aharon was there, it was solely for humans. Therefore, when we are inviting people to the seder, we are only speaking in Aramaic, the language angels don't understand, to illustrate they are not allowed at our seder. The night of the seder is an auspicious time just between humans and God. It is all about our relationship with God tonight.

An obvious question arises that if we are only inviting people into our home, why are we doing it now? Shouldn't this have been done weeks ago, not when we are already in the middle of the seder? Rabbi Soloveitchik explains that the act of inviting someone now isn't a reflection of wanting a guest; rather it is a reflection of acting free. By being able to invite someone it shows we are in charge and no longer slaves.

Additionally, when offering the invite, we initially mention the poor man's bread, then the meat. But if we want people to come, shouldn't we mention the meat first, to make it more enticing? It is written in this sequence to show that it's about being happy with what we have. The first sentence is about us being happy with what we have. The second sentence is what we are offering to the guests. This teaches us that we have to go above and beyond for others, indulging them more than we do ourselves.

As we recite *Ha Lachmanya*, it is the time when we not just usher in the special time solely between us and God but, realize that the first step is to prioritize others and then God will enter our home.

Do you feel that you can have a godliness experience or encounter in your own home?

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות?

As we ask the question that “*why is this night different from all other nights*”, why do we give four different answers when one could suffice? We learn an important lesson that one should not give the same answer to everyone. We should educate children depending on their individual needs, catering to what works best for them. Therefore, it is customary that children ask these questions. The Hasidic Rabbis explain it can also allude to the fact we are God’s children as well. Therefore, when the children are sitting at this point and asking questions, we should be doing the same and beseech our requests from God. At this point, think about what you want from God, and use this time to pray for others as well.

If you had to prioritize your wishes or the wishes of those around your table, which one would you pick?

עבדים היינו

The Haggadah says that if we were not redeemed, we would still be slaves to Pharaoh today. But how is that possible? After thousands of years we would have eventually rebelled or escaped. The wording of this paragraph changes from *Avadeim* to *Meshubadim*. Meshubadim means to beholden, being under someone else's control. Even if we left at one point in history, we would have still been under control of the Egyptian ideology forever unless God saved us as He did. But why does it not say *avadei pharaoh hayunei* - *We were slaves to Pharaoh*? In order to fully understand, we have to go back to the beginning of the story. The first time Moshe meets God it was at the burning bush. Initially Moshe had his doubts

about redeeming the Jewish people, but God commanded Moshe to follow His plan. The entire servitude was from God and He decided when we would be redeemed. It doesn't say *avadei pharoah hayunei* because we weren't slaves to Pharaoh, rather slaves to the situation. Often times we believe that find ourselves in a situation for unbeknown reasons.

Rabbi Lord Jonathn Sacks tells the story of when he first met the past Lehavitcher Rebbe. They were discussing Jewish life at the University of Cambridge. Rabbi Sacks made a comment about how the Jews "find themselves in various situations" and the Rebbe, known for his patience immediately jumped in and corrected him. The Rebbe explained that no one finds themselves in a situation, rather we make our own situation. This left a lasting impact on Rabbi Sacks, illustrating that we have the ability to take control of each situation ourselves in.

Do you feel God's hand directing your actions – if so, is that a good or bad reality?

וְאַפִּילוּ כִּלְנוּ חֲכָמִים

Why does the Haggadah state that even if we were all chachamim – smart people, we would be obligated in telling the story of *yitziat mitzrayim*? In the commandment to tell the story of the exodus, it does not differentiate between intellectual levels! Because of the magnitude of the miracles, we are unable to fully internalize and comprehending the exodus. It is a mitzvah that we can't accomplish through intellect. The Talmud describes the story of the exodus as, *masiach l'fi tumo* – a casual conversation. Understanding this story isn't rational or comprehensible, rather it is completely from God. This conversation should flow from the deepest points inside of us, not from rational intellect. That is why this mitzvah is not dependant on intellect or wisdom, rather it's a casual conversation all can partake in.

How are we supposed to believe something if we can't fully comprehend it?

מַעֲשֵׂה רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר

Besides from the Rabbis staying up all night discussing the story of the exodus, a bigger question arises - why did all the Rabbis come to Rebbe Akiva? They specially went to him because they know he was the ultimate optimist. The Talmud tells a story that when a few rabbis and Rebbe Akiva saw a fox emerge from the destroyed holy of holies after the destruction of the second temple, Rebbe Akiva laughed amidst the other rabbis sobbing. They questioned him why he was laughing after seeing such a terrible sight. Rebbe Akiva explained that just as the prophets prophesized that animals would roam the Temple Mount, they also prophesized that the Temple will be rebuilt. Just as one prophecy became true, it must mean the other will as well...

Years removed from the destruction of the temple the rabbis went specially to Rebbe Akiva to be with someone that would give them positive reinforcement.

What is your perspective on negative situations? Do you prioritize surrounding yourself amongst positive people?

אָמַר רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן-עֲזַרְיָה הָרִי אֲנִי כָּכָן שְׁבָעִים שָׁנָה

When Rabbi Elazar Ben Azaria was asked to be appointed to the head of the *sanhedrin*, the main Jewish court, he asked his wife if he should accept it. She asked, "what is the point if you may be demoted in the near future?" He answered, "it is better to be a glass cup for one day than an earthenware vessel forever", meaning it is better to be or do something great for even one moment than to not do so at all.

The *meidrish* states that the night before the exile God took the entire Jewish people to the land of Israel to sacrifice the Passover offering, and then miraculously brought them back to Egypt in the morning. What is the purpose of celebrating a temporary redemption and bringing them to Israel for just one quick moment? On the seder night as we celebrate the large redemption, we must also remember that the little redemptions must also be valued. Temporary redemption for a second is better than none at all.

Do you give up on yourself if you know you might fail or won't be able to reach your entire goal?

בְּרוּךְ הַמָּקוֹם, בְּרוּךְ הוּא

One of God's names, *HaMokom*, is used here. It is taught that *HaMakom* always represents God's hidden presence. The usage of that particular name was to emphasize that when you feel distant from God and it seems the redemption will never come it is showing us that God is with you even here in the darkness. Therefore, when we are about to talk about the son that doesn't feel connected, we say "*HaMakom*" showing that God is connected to every Jew, even those that don't feel connected themselves.

When do you feel a divine presence in your life?

כְּנִגְדֵי אֲרֻכָּעָה בְּנִים דְּבָרָה תוֹרָה:

Rashi, the 11th century sage, explains that each question the sons ask is from a verse in the Torah. The "wicked" son's question is from *Parshat Bo* where he quotes, "*mah avodas ahseh lachem – what is this bothersome ritual to you?*" The context of the verse is that a child is going to ask their parent a question, thus it's a positive verse since it foreshadows the Jewish people having children. So why did the wicked son

quote this positive verse? It is teaching that although he is "wicked", he is still asking questions. It shows that there is innate holiness in every Jew. No matter how we perceived the wicked son, every Jew has something inside of them that is special and holy.

At first glance we assume that these four attributes are four different children, but Rabbi Aaron Lichtenstein explains that in reality, it might be one son in four different stages. But these stages aren't mutually exclusive. At any point in our lives we have a bit of each of the four sons in our lives and therefore need to respect everyone at whatever stage they are in now without any judgement.

How do you think people perceive you - why?

מִתְחִלָּה עוֹבְדֵי עֲבֹדָה זָרָה הָיוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, וְעַכְשָׁיו קָרְבָנוּ הַמָּקוֹם
לְעִבְדָתוֹ

The entire theme of Pesach is gratitude to God for redeeming us from Egypt. But a huge question arises - why are we thanking God for saving us if he is responsible for putting us in Egypt in the first place?

Life's challenges are imperative for our growth. Just as a surgery, which is painful and requires recovery but is ultimately beneficial, life's struggles are to our benefit even though it might not seem that way in the moment.

God knew we needed to go through the slavery and exile in Egypt to bring us to Israel in order to experience a bigger redemption. Through all the tortures, we never gave up. God needed to put us into exile to appreciate the redemption. Sometimes we don't have the hindsight to realize why our troubles happen, but the worst point in our history was imperative to our growth.

Do you feel or see the hand of God in your struggles? How do you maintain happiness in times of difficulty?

וְהִיא שְׁעֵמֶדָה לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וְלָנוּ.

Why do we lift up our cup? The VeHe alludes to the previous paragraph, that God will save us in every generation. The greatest miracle is that even with constant prosecution for thousands of years Jews are still alive today.

Wine according to Jewish law has many intricacies, mainly to insulate the community from assimilation. Dr. David Pelcovitz explains that when we lift up the glass of wine, it is showing us that the laws are what keep the Jewish people going.

Do you think following all of Jewish law is necessary in today's society?

צֵא וְלִמַּד מֶה בִּקְשׁ לָבוֹן הָאֶרֶמִי לַעֲשׂוֹת לְיַעֲקֹב אֲבִינוּ

On the night of the Seder we dip twice. The first dipping is to remind us of the exile. This is in reference to the reason for our exile, which stemmed from Yosef's brothers selling him to the Egyptians and dipping his coat in blood. The second dip on Seder night is to remember the blood we dipped on the door posts the night before the exodus, which represents the redemption.

We are still in exile without the Temple because of *Sinas Chinam*, baseless hatred of fellow Jews. That is the point of the *halach manah* the poor man's bread and why we invite people into our house. We demonstrate that we are trying to change, and we are working to eradicate *Sinas Chinas* to usher in the final redemption

What are you doing to usher in the redemption?

בְּמַתִּי מֵעֵט. כָּמָה לְשֹׁנְאֵימֶר: בְּשִׁבְעִים נֶפֶשׁ יָרְדוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִצְרֵימָה, וְעַתָּה שְׂמֵךְ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ כְּכֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם

The Rabbi's teach that the Egyptian exile is the template for all future redemptions, therefore we must re-act their actions. When we mention how the Jews in Egypt cried out to God, we must internalize this message and also cry out to God in prayer to be redeemed from our suffering. When the Jewish people were in Egypt, they felt there was no way to escape it, even through supernatural means. But now after receiving the Torah, we understand the connection we have to God and through that we can merit salvation. Now, after accepting the Torah, we can always call out to God in prayer and be answered, thus we can never be in the same exile as in Egypt. Sometimes there is no natural solution that can help us; God made the world in a way that we must turn to Him. The only redemption is to turn solely to the Only One who can take us out from this situation.

Throughout the Haggadah, we rarely quote verses detailing life in Egypt or how the process of the exodus took place. The focus tonight should be on God, realizing it was not Moshe who took us out, rather it was God who orchestrated everything.

***Do you really feel or believe the Jewish people are in a
"exile" today?***

וַיֹּצֵאֵנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיָד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֵרַע גְּמוּלָה

Any history book highlights the battles and victories. Usually the focus is on an individual, the brave soldier who risked everything to win the war, not the generals. When it comes to Jewish people, the focus is on God. We emphasise that Moshe was a part of God's plan but only God is the real saviour. The verse states, "God brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand, with an outstretched arm" to stress that only God took us out. But, in order to necessitate that, we first had to call out to God. In

psalms, 118:5, the verse states, *"In my distress I called out to God. God answered me and set me free."* We see that the prelude to any redemption, big or small first requires us to call out to God. By reaching out to God, we will see His hand leading us to our personal exodus.

When you are in distress, who do you rely on?

צא ולמד מה בקש לָבֹן הָאֲרָמִי

What did Lavan have against Yaakov? Anti-Semitism doesn't have an explanation. We have our ups and downs in relation to the world; some countries hate us, some like us. But there will always be anti-Semitism.

We have a commandment to be an *Or Le'Goyim*, a light onto the nations. Even when Lavan would trick and deceive Yaakov, he still held himself in the highest amount of composure. Yaakov is teaching us that although we cannot control the behaviour of others, we are always in charge of our own.

What does your Jewish identity mean to you? Do you think that comes with additional responsibilities?

דָּם, צִפְרִידֵּעַ, כְּנִים, עָרוֹב, דָּבָר, שְׁחִין, בָּרָד, אֲרָבָה, חֲשָׁךְ, מַכַּת
בְּכוֹרוֹת

During every plague, God differentiated between the Jews and Egyptians, making sure to only punish the latter. This showed the Egyptians it was the God of the Jews orchestrating each plague. But, during the plague of darkness, the Egyptians couldn't see and is even explained the darkness was so dense they couldn't move. If they couldn't see that God was only blinding them, what was the point?

When Moshe and Aharon went to Pharoah the first time the *medreish* states that Pharoah asked, "what does your God look like? What cities has he conquered?"

When Moshe and Aharon didn't have an answer to that, Pharoah replied "If you don't know him, you haven't met him, then he doesn't exist!"

God decided to have one plague where it was so clearly an act of God, but people were unable to see it. This teaches us that just because you can't see something, it doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. This alludes to our relationship with Him as well, even though we don't see God on a daily basis, it does not mean He is not there.

Do you feel a connection to God even though His actions are hidden?

וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּה וַיִּמְשָׁה עֶבֶד

Throughout the Haggadah, we see no mention of Moshe, the leader of the Jewish people up until this point. Why do we only introduce Moshe at the end? Additionally, why does the Haggadah introduce Moshe using the three stories of him standing up to defend the Jews?

Moshe couldn't stand idly by during these injustices. He grew up in Pharoah's palace and had every luxury. But, when he saw the Jewish slaves crying, he knew he had to do something. The Haggadah singles out Moshe in this instance to show us that we too need to help people and fight against injustices that we see around us. Moshe warranted to be our leader from his respect and determination to help everyone.

Would you give up everything to fight an injustice?

דַּיִינוּ.

In our lives, we have so much that we can accomplish so why do we say *Dayeinu*, enough? If God had only brought us out of Egypt would that have really been

enough? In the world, the way society measures success is by the completion of the job. Somewhere in the beginning of our life someone decided to define what success is and we continue to follow that path. We've come to measure ourselves based on what someone else said is the purpose of life. This way of living is dangerous and can certainly bring one to a feeling of despair. Therefore, saying *Dayeinu* portrays a way of life where a person isn't fixated on reaching to the end zone and the finish line, but rather places emphasis on the value of effort. Any progress a person takes going forward is big even if it's a small step. When a person internalizes this, then he is able to tap into the good in this world. We will understand that true success is the entire journey, not just the end. If can begin to think this way, then *Dayeinu*.³

What does success mean to you? How do you value yourself?

מצה

The Maharal says that Matzah is the simplest thing we have. One of the purposes of the seder and discussing the Haggadah is to get to know God on a more personal level. Too often people miss the point of the seder. People think that the longer the seder lasts, the better it was. Rabbi Menachem Penner clarifies this misconception and explains **the most important thing to say during the Haggadah is that God cares about me, He loves me, He has saved me, and He will again**. If Maggid takes too long, then we may miss the point. Tonight, we don't need to share a thousand ideas, we just have obligation to talk about the miracles and wonders God performed for the Jewish people.

We sit at the table and exclaim that the transmission from the Rabbis is real and it goes all the way back to Moshe. We can direct the conversation to discuss questions and descriptions of what God does and did for us.

Eating matzah on seder night is a biblical commandment, yet it is the simplest food. Matzah is the focal point and symbol of the Passover holiday. It is showing us that

³ Adapted from Rabbi Moshe Weinberger

the most important thing can be the simplest thing. Tonight, we should fixate on the important things.

The Rabbis allude that *chametz* is all of our negative habits and on Passover we begin to clean out those negative traits and the person we truly are, with no embellishments. After cleaning out the *Chametz* we lose our old inflated appearance and become a flat simple matzah. This is why Matzah is a symbol of freedom; by appreciating and focusing on the important things in our life, we can forge our own path to personal freedom.

What is your ideal self and what is prohibiting you from achieving that?

KOREICH:

The *Koreich* sandwich is an odd combination of essential ingredients. Rabbi Norman Lamm explains that this is to show us that life is all about balance. We must take many things and combine them because we can't have extremes of anything. It's imperative to have Matzah and Marror, representing bitterness but also freedom.

How do you maintain a healthy balance between the commitments in your life?

SHULCHAN ORECH

At this point in the seder, it's usually late and everyone is tired. We've just finished eating the Koreich sandwich, and we aren't hungry for the upcoming meal. Some are

always rushed as we are supposed to eat the Hillel sandwich before certain time. Although we have many excuses to rush the meal, it is important to remember all the hard work and others put into it.

How do you express gratitude in your life?

TZAFOON:

In life we try to excel in many areas, but we often don't see results. Even when we are trying to progress forward, despite our best efforts we could feel that we are moving backwards. Our nature is to want to see results immediately; we want to know how we did immediately. But our job is to keep moving and doing good, regardless if we see results.

The symbol behind breaking the matzah and hiding the larger piece is to teach us that the best is yet to come. Rebbe Nachman of Breslov teaches that we can go our entire life without checking our goals or aspirations. However, this could hinder our growth. To be constantly thinking about where we want to be, as opposed to where we are, can be counterproductive. At some point in this life or the next we will see the results of all the good we did, but it doesn't need to be now.

Children constantly try new adventures, without the fear of failure. They don't pay attention to the inner critical voice. It is customary that children find the afikomen and bring back what we "lost." This teaches us that we have to summon our inner child, and continuously restart, without fear of failure.

Therefore, the Afikomen, the dessert, is the bigger half of the matzah, symbolizes to the good we achieve. But its hidden and covered; only revealed at the end.

What in your life can you look back on and see that you brought goodness or light to a dark situation?

BARAICH:

We now open our doors, symbolically welcoming in Elijah the prophet, our ministering angel who will usher in the final redemption. It is a custom to open our door for a period of time to remind us that just as God protected us in Egypt, He will continue to protect us from any harm. An additional purpose of opening the door is so when Elijah arrives, he will find the door wide open and we can greet him quickly.

When the Jewish nation sacrificed the *Korban Pesach*, the sacrificial lamb, they had a party because they were anticipating their redemption. The verse explains that they were ready to leave as they ate it. When they were commanded to leave, they ran without having to delay.

Just like in Egypt, we have to prepare for the final redemption in our time, demonstrated through our positive actions and thoughts.

How do you perceive the final redemption? What does it look like to you?

NIRTZAH:

CHAD GADYAH:

The purpose of *Chad Gadyah* is to teach us that God is in charge of the world. The song alludes to various episodes in Jewish History. Chad Gadyah starts with the goat, which symbolizes the sale of Yosef. But the entire time Yosef was gone, his father Yaakov cried but he never gave up hope.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks gives the parallel to the Jewish people today continuing to cry over the destroyed Temples. Even though we are sad and mourn, we never give up hope of it being rebuilt. When we stop crying, that is when we give up. We end the seder by demonstrating this endless hope and the refusal to give up.

It's a fitting end for a people that will continue to fight for the final redemption. May it be in the coming days...

Next year in Jerusalem!