

re-established kehillos after the war. One of the goals of the Nazis was to dehumanise the Jews and to completely demoralise us. At the end of the day, they would bring out a tasteless watery broth for all the members of the camp. However, there would not be enough for everyone there. Because of this many would walk around all day with their bowls attached to a string around their necks in order that when the food would come they would be able to have a greater chance of getting some soup and easing their hunger. R' Leibel writes how he refused to allow himself to stoop to become like an animal, and how even when his hunger was extremely painful, he would not allow himself to be pulled down to that level. He kept his bowl on his shelf and would only take it out when the soup was served. He writes "Very often I was left without soup but I retained my dignity. I was a בן חורין". There have been many generations since יציאת מצרים and many desperate times for כלל ישראל, but at all times we remain בני חורין and perhaps this is the secret to our survival. Even when times have been tough, Yidden have been able to stick to their principles and to persevere against great pressure and remain Yidden, remaining עובדי ה'. On Seder night when we discuss פדות נפשות, the redemption of our souls, we are thanking Hashem for giving us this great gift, the ability to be real kings!

Living the Seder, One Feeling at a Time Asher Richman

Do you ever find yourself at the Seder slightly... all over the place?

"Wait, did I lean?"

"No, properly lean."

"Was that enough maror?"

"Was that enough matzah?"

"I zoned out during Maggid, am I still yoitzez?"

Somewhere between trying to follow the Haggadah, keeping the kids awake (or asleep), and remembering how many kezaysim you've had, it can all feel a bit chaotic.

And then there's everything else going on around the table.

Your cousin, who's been in yeshiva for about six months, is confidently eating two matzos at once, staring at his watch, like he's discovered a new chumrah no one else knows about.

Across from him, your grandfather, who learnt in Radin and finished Shas last year, is carefully eating his quarter of a matzah, looking at him slightly bemused.

The kids each have what they're calling a "short Dvar Torah," which turns out to be a detailed presentation on every paragraph of Maggid. And you... you haven't eaten properly all day. Just that one slightly undercooked potato you confidently told your wife was "delicious" last year.

(It wasn't. But at that point, anything tastes good when the lingering flavour in your mouth is mostly bleach spray.)

It's a lot.

But maybe that's not just the people.

Maybe that's the night.

Because if you step back for a moment, the Seder itself feels exactly the same.

Not just practically, but emotionally.

One minute we're talking about slavery, dipping a vegetable into salt water, tasting the maror. It's heavy, serious, and a little uncomfortable.

And then suddenly we shift, reclining, drinking wine, speaking about freedom, singing Hallel.

It's not one mood.

It's many.

And maybe that's the point.

As it says in Koheles, "For everything there is a season and there is a time for everything under the heavens... a time to cry, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance."

Chazal didn't create a system where we switch off our emotions. They built a derech where we use them.

There's a time for awe, and a time for joy. A time for crying, and a time for singing. Different moments in life, each coming with their own emotional avodah.

And these feelings aren't distractions from avodas Hashem.

They are part of it.

Maybe that's why the Seder comes with... people.

Different personalities. Different styles. Different approaches.

Just like the Four Sons, each person, curious, skeptical, simple, or still learning, brings their own way of engaging with the night, and each is essential to the Seder.

The intense cousin. The calm grandfather. The overly enthusiastic children... The tired adults.

That's not background noise.

That's part of the avodah too.

To appreciate each one for who they are.

To smile at the chumros, even if they're not yours.

To admire the steadiness of a previous generation.

To listen, at least a little, to the 15 minute "short" Dvar Torah.

To engage each child (and adult) al pi darko, according to their way.

To know when to smile and when to hold back a tear.

Because being a Yid isn't just about doing the mitzvos by rote.

It's about living them fully.

With people. With feelings. With all the complexity that comes with both.

The Seder is where we practice that in one night.

We don't just talk about bitterness, we taste it.

We don't just mention redemption, we lean, we drink, we sing.

Because real emunah isn't just something you think about.

It's something you feel and live.

So if the Seder feels a bit all over the place...

Between the matzah, the maror, the personalities, and the running commentary in your head...

That's not you getting it wrong.

That's you experiencing what it means to live a full, real Yiddische life.

Keep Climbing

Bentzy Goldman

When going through the Haggada, there is an order which Chazal tell us to follow. First it's Kadesh, then Urchatz followed by Yachatz etc. Each of the stages are important but from all of them there is only one which has a vav. That is Urchatz. The vav attaches it to the one before which is Kadesh. The question is what do Kadesh and Urchatz have to do with each other? There is an explanation that Kadesh is teaching a person to sanctify oneself and Urchatz is to wash oneself from sin. The problem is There is a famous Posuk in Tehillim. סור מרע ועשה טוב which means 'Turn from bad and do good'. We see the way to elevate ourselves is by first turning away from negative and then doing actively good things. If so, then the order for the סדר should first be Urchatz referring to turning away from sin and then Kadesh meaning make oneself holy. But the Baal Haggada chose exact opposite.

I saw a beautiful explanation in the Seder Secrets Haggadah by Rabbi Dovid Meisels, about the Yidden in מצרים with a מוסר teaching for all of us to connect to the Yom tov. We have to understand Am Yisroel were at the lowest point they had ever been. The 49th level of טומאה and any longer in מצרים meant they would not have a merit to leave. They were not able in their situation to turn away from sin straight away. But they had to do the opposite, to do Kiddush. To sanctify themselves amongst all the טומאה to do the will of Hashem even whilst not so pure. Then Am Yisrael was able to reach the surface and then separate themselves from the impurity. But first they made Kiddush.

Sometimes you're stuck in a very hard situation anything and it's hard to see a way out. You want to be free. You know how you really want things to look. But many times you tried and it didn't work. Why try again when You will just fall again says the יצר הרע?

What's the advice for anyone?

The answer to the יצר הרע is, you're right! If I'm only going to do an Urchatz, which means a complete separation from the test, then you're true. Who says I will manage to separate forever? But the actions that make me successful, i.e. Kadesh to make myself holy, that I don't have to stop. I can do what I can and guaranteed the more good actions I do automatically our heart will follow and we will get better and better and then I can do Urchatz which means to be washed off entirely.

I never understood why in Yeshiva there were always simple schoolboys who went to Yeshiva from regular homes and after a few months they were just different. They actually changed. Not just, you know, the 'shtarke tekufa' in yeshiva. But they actually CHANGED and are now currently Talmidei Chachomim. How?? The answer is they learned and learned and davened and the path led them that way. I asked one time a big Masmid, did you choose to become a Masmid? He said no. I just started learning, then stopped shmuzzing, then started coming on time etc etc. Then started waking up earlier.

The lesson to take from Pesach is wherever we're holding, start making actions that make us pure. Doing positive actions makes you do more positive actions. Those actions will make you greater and greater once again.

What's In An Acronym

Richard Danziger

דְּצִ"ר עַד שֶׁשׁ בְּאֲח"ב

There is a strange line in the Haggadah following the listing of the 10 plagues:

רַבִּי יְהוּדָה הָיָה נוֹתֵן בָּהֶם סְמֵנִים: דְּצִ"ר עַד שֶׁשׁ בְּאֲח"ב - Rabbi Yehuda gave an acronym for these 10 plagues. I always found this a strange statement. Do we really need a siman to help remember a list of 10 makkos, something that every little child knows? Furthermore, there is a midrash that states that דְּצִ"ר עַד שֶׁשׁ בְּאֲח"ב was engraved on Moshe's staff, along with the Sheim Meforash and the names of the Avos and Imahos. Seemingly this acronym is more significant than just an easy way to help people remember the 10 makkos.

There is a Kli Yakar on Parshas Va'era that gives a beautiful explanation of this acronym and the groupings of the makkos. He explains that Paro refuted three aspects of HaShem. When Moshe and Aaron first approached him Paro said that he doesn't know Hashem - לֹא יָדַעְתִּי - 'אתה', that is a complete kefirah of the existence of HaShem. Secondly that even if HaShem does exist, he is completely removed from day to day existence and doesn't take note of any minutiae in the world. Thirdly, he refuted that HaShem is completely in control and above the normal running of the world, being just another "power" in the pantheon of Egyptian gods. The three groupings of the makkos came to refute each of these erroneous beliefs of Paro.

The first grouping of the makkos (דְּצִ"ר - blood, frogs and lice) come to introduce the existence of HaShem. Before this group begins, HaShem says to Moshe וַיֹּדַעְנוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי־אֲנִי הִי - "Mitzrayim will know what I am HaShem". Paro initially denies the existence of HaShem. The wave of the first 3 makkos is an intentional lesson - the plagues of blood and frogs are centred around the Nile which was part of the Egyptian pantheon, being something that the Mitzriim worshipped. The plague of lice was something that the Egyptian sorcerers couldn't emulate - this introduced the idea that the koach of HaShem was beyond their skill or understanding.

The second grouping (עַד שֶׁשׁ - wild animals, pestilence and boils) show that HaShem is intimately involved in our day to day lives and distinguishes between the tzadik and the rasha. Before this grouping begins, HaShem tells Moshe לִמְעַן תִּדְעַ כִּי־אֲנִי כֹה בְקִרְבְּךָ הָאָרֶץ - "in order that they shall know there is none like HaShem within the land". These three plagues centred on geography, ownership and nationality. The plague of wild animals stopped at the border to Goshen. The plague of pestilence only affected animals fully owned by Mitzriim. The plague of boils only affected the Mitzriim themselves - despite covering the entire country, and started in particular with Paro's sorcerers.

The final grouping (בְּאֲח"ב - hail, locusts, darkness and the death of the firstborn), came to refute the ideas that HaShem is just another "power" within the pagan pantheon and that He is bound to the normal laws of the world. Before this grouping starts, HaShem tells Moshe בְּעֶבְרַתְךָ יִדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי כֹה בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ - "through this they will know that there is none like Me in the world". The hail fused two opposing elements (fire and water) which showed how HaShem is completely above natural laws. The plagues of hail, locusts and darkness all completely covered the sun, moon and stars which represented other aspects of mazalos and the Egyptian pagan pantheon. Regarding the death of the firstborn, I heard an explanation of this plague many years ago. The firstborns who died weren't only the legitimate, obvious firstborns. Since Mitzrayim was an extremely promiscuous country,

any first child born from a unique set of parents was considered a firstborn - people were dropping left and right. This showed HaShem's complete knowledge and mastery of the bloodlines of the country.

Good Yom Tov.

Walls of Water, Walls of Fear

Dani Epstein

It's a pretty hairy moment, and that's an understatement. I was one of Moshe's errand boys in Mitzrayim, and right now I'm standing next to him at the shore of the Reed Sea. We can see the dust cloud in the distance, and it can only be one thing. Pharaoh is chasing us.

This is causing havoc amongst the people. They are splitting into factions, one crazier the next. We managed to bring weapons with us, and one group wants to form a militia and fight. They have no idea what to do with these weapons and quite frankly they are going to die before killing any Mitzriyyim. Another group wants to negotiate a surrender, as if that is going to help. There is a group that wants to commit mass suicide by jumping into the sea. Another group thinks we can swim to safety. The fear is driving them to insanity.

My master Moshe is yelling at all of them. I'm not sure he is getting anywhere. He is trying to stop them sowing panic, but everyone is just shouting.

Ah, I can see Moshe has stopped answering them and has that distant look on his face, which usually means Hashem is telling him something. All of a sudden, he snaps out of it, and turns to the loyal band around him.

"We are going to cross the sea."

You have to be joking. We don't have any boats. I can't swim. Never mind that, how are we going to get our baggage and children across? The problem is, this is currently the best solution, and it looks terrible. His brother Aharon is looking quite confident, however. Aharon is always calm, mind you. Always trying to help people, sort out their problems, no matter how rude people are to him. If his cloak caught fire, he would probably stay completely calm and deal with it as if it was a water spill or something.

To be fair, those of us who were close to Moshe (I don't mean we were friendly or anything, just that we worked for him in Mitzrayim and saw up close what he was doing) are not panicking either. There is little point panicking around Moshe. He always delivers; he always has a solution.

Moshe is now holding up his staff and pointing it over the sea. I'm not really sure what that's supposed to accomplish...Oh, my goodness. The sea is starting to split. Currently, everyone is busy screaming and yelling at each other or sitting on the ground wailing, and almost no-one has noticed what's happening.

I cannot believe my eyes. OK, Moshe is pretty impressive, what with the ten plagues and everything, and also ticking off Pharaoh (Not many people have survived that sort of thing. In fact, basically no-one has. His crocodiles are well-fed). But this is something next-level. I mean, the sea is still splitting. If it continues for much longer, there will be plenty room for all of us.

I do hope Moshe hurries up, mind you. I can almost see the horses of the chariots now, and let me tell you, we have no way of fighting these warriors. They tie the harnesses to their waists so they can control the carriages with their bodies, and then they shoot arrows while steering! They are as terrifying as it gets!

Finally, the people are noticing. Moshe turns to me and my merry men.

"Go through the crowds and tell them we are going into the sea. Don't argue with anyone. Inform them and move on."

My chevra start running and shouting. This is the easiest way of getting the message across. It rapidly becomes exhausting, but we have no choice. I push my way through the crowds, yell the message and move on. People look at me like I'm a lunatic. I'm beginning to feel that way as well. What a crazy stunt! Run into the sea? What next. But I keep going. I trust Moshe with my life, and right now my life - and everyone else's - is on the line. As I get to the back of the massive crowds, I can see the Egyptian army is less than an hour's ride away. I run back to Moshe, thoroughly exhausted. He finally steps forward, and the crowd at the front are stunned by what they see. A clear, dry

path through the sea, with water heaped up on either side. They are reluctant to enter.

I walk behind Moshe, Aharon and the Seventy Elders. The moment my foot makes contact with the seabed, I instinctively hold my breath. It just feels so wrong. So precarious. Walls of water on either side, and we're just walking through this!

As I make my way forward, I glance back to see the people starting to get the idea. They surge forward and soon we are roughly half-way across.

We have two reasons to be terrified.

One: we are now on the seabed, and between us and a watery death are several million tons of water. All piled up. It's just mind-blowing.

Two: The Egyptians are getting closer now. We are literally defenceless. Moshe picks up the pace, and this propagates to the rear. No-one wants to feel the cold steel of Egyptian swords or be shot by their arrows.

Suddenly, someone starts singing. Here. Right in the water. With death behind us and on either side of us. Someone else joins in. Well, if you can't beat them, join them. So I'm singing now as well. The words and melody are simple, and in no time the sound of millions of voices echo off the watery walls.

Finally, people have gotten the message: it's not just Moshe, but as he has said all along, Hashem really is behind all this. There's no denying it. This is not simply another miracle; this is an epic-level wonder!

People are now pulling out instruments, and now we have become one vast choir.

I cannot wrap my head around it. We are about to be shot by Egyptian arrows, and despite that, the joy of the song and this astounding miracle has lifted everyone out of their gloom and doom. The sound of the singing and the music is defiant and proud; the people are praising Hashem and Moshe.

In the back of my mind a small voice nags me and says: "Yes, but they will start complaining the moment they get the chance." But I ignore it. I'm living in the moment. And there's nothing like it.

I manage to catch up to Moshe at the front, making myself ready in case he needs me for another of the endless errands.

And this is our leader. Right here, in the midst of this incredible miracle he has wrought, his concern is for his people. All his people. Even the least important, such as myself. He realises just how nervous I am, despite this incredible miracle. He smiles at me and pats me on the shoulder.

"Not long now, my boy. Not long."

Having served him for over a year, I understand his message. Stay calm, Hashem will deliver.

All the nay-sayers have been proven terribly wrong. The whiners, the complainers, the doomsayers, the numerous instant experts predicting even more numerous disasters.

Moshe is all powerful, and Hashem is truly on our side.

We finally get to the other shore. Several million people are still going to have to exit the sea, so this is not over yet. On the far side, the Egyptians are about to enter the water. They are getting ever closer, and it's impossible not to panic if you are at the back.

As the people exit the sea, they spread out along the beach, calling out to those still walking on the sea bed to hurry up. That's easier said than done. But the Mitzriyim are getting closer, and this is becoming a rather hair-raising situation. There are still thousands of people streaming through the walls of water, and the Egyptian riders have already entered the far side. They are whipping their horses and yelling war cries. My heart is in my mouth.

Only a few hundred to go, and ten minutes later the last person steps on to dry land.

Now what? The Egyptians are halfway through the seabed, hundreds of them. We can hear the hooves of the horses thundering on the dry seabed. They are already tying the reins around their waists in order to prepare their bows for shooting at us. What exactly are supposed to do now? We have no-where to run. We certainly cannot fight back. This is going to be a bloodbath.

And Moshe is just standing there. Calm. Focused. Waiting. Serene. I do not know how he does that under these circumstances.

A silence falls. No-one knows how to react. A few hours ago, we saw the miracle of the sea splitting, and now here we are, as vulnerable as we were before we entered the sea. But now we can see the Egyptian horde thundering towards us. It is both incredible and terrifying. On either side of the approaching army there are walls of water, and the sun is glinting off the burnished gold of their decorative armour and chariots. And they want us dead. I can't look away, and my feet are rooted to the spot. My instincts are screaming for me to run away in the odd chance I will survive, but my brain is telling me to stay put. My conflicting emotions are now driving me mad.

I look at Moshe again. He has not budged a millimetre. Not a twitch.

All of a sudden, he is raising his staff again. And then it dawns on me just a moment before it actually happens.

In the blink of an eye, the sea starts dramatically collapsing. Oh, it's not rushing in the way one would expect. It's falling down in two vast waves. Within moments the sea is a churning maelstrom. I briefly look around the silent masses, and they are standing there bug-eyed. No-one can believe what they are seeing.

The all-powerful Mitzri army are looking upwards, horrified as they see the sea pouring down towards them. Two vast waves crashing towards them, and they realise they have a moment left to live. They are so close, I can see the horror in their eyes as they scream out to their false gods.

It's incredible. Moments later, the sea has collapsed, and the waves are throwing soldiers, horses and carriages into the air. It's clear that many of them are still alive, and they are being tossed around like rag dolls, screaming their horror at their rapidly impending demise. Some are trying to swim, but the undertow pulls them down and then spits them out again.

They are thrown up and down, all over the place, and some minutes later the sea starts calming down and there is not a soldier to be seen. Everyone is still silent, speechless at the miracles they have witnessed in the past few hours and their dramatic and terrible culmination.

To my astonishment, Moshe starts singing. He sings out a verse – the tune is simple enough that we can repeat it, the lyrics are poetic. We repeat every verse with the same tune. Millions of voices now are calling out in praise of Hashem. Thanking Him for the utter destruction and defeat of their enemies. It seems that in the moment, everyone has forgotten the trials and tribulations that brought us here. We are just singing. Praising. Thanking Hashem, and never mind what it took to get to this point.

I cannot wrap my head around everything that I've seen; it's all a blur, and my voice joins loudly with everyone else's. We sing gratefully; proudly; loudly. We survived! We are unvanquished! What an epic, momentous turnaround.

The singing goes on for a while. Miriam starts singing too, and everyone joins in with her.

I'm in a mild state of shock. Here we are, on the banks of the Reed Sea, having just survived a near-massacre, walked through the dry bed of a sea with walls of water on either side, and now we are singing the praises of Moshe and Hashem. What a strange and wonderful people we are.

Eventually the singing dies down. People are starting to process what just happened, but the shock of it all keeps them almost silent. We are all massed along the shore, watching the waves subside, when all of a sudden someone yells out and dashes into the shallows.

Oy vey, not another meshuggenne now! What is he doing?!

He's holding up something gold. A golden sheath, from one of the soldiers. Now everyone is surging forward. The sea is coughing up actual gold. The Mitzriyim had stacked their carriages with gold. Ornamental armour, the weird military jewellery they wore, and much more.

I look at Moshe, and he smiles at me, then gives me a gentle shove.

"Go on, lad. Get something while the going is good."

I do not need to be told twice. The shore is littered with treasure, and I pick up some bits and pieces. I have no idea what I'm going to do with them, but by the time I've finished, I have a small hoard. I ask my fellow runners if anyone has seen my parents and finally discover

them not far away.

"Look what I have!" I cry as I hold up the gold I have scavenged. I playfully drape the stuff around my mother's neck, and my father is laughing as he opens a small sack. He also had some impressive success.

Imagine that. We were slaves a year ago, and now we are free and have the gold of our Mitzri overlords. And they are thoroughly dead. What a turnaround!

Breathless with joy, I run back to Moshe and ask him: "What are your orders now, my master?"

He frowns briefly, and I realise that I tripped up. Moshe does not like being called "master". Only Hashem is our Master. In my excitement, I forgot myself, and I apologise hastily.

"Sorry, Moshe. Do you have any orders for us?"

He smiles at me, understanding my eagerness.

"No, not right now. We need to pause briefly to let everyone catch their breath. There will be much to do soon."

"Oh?"

"Yes. We are going to march on for a few weeks, and then we will receive a tremendous gift from Hashem. Now is not the time to discuss it. Go back to your parents and celebrate the miracles we have just witnessed."

So I nod my head and turn back. Everyone is hyped up. Even the moaners, the nay-sayers and the altogether grumpy are fired up. Their eyes are gleaming with the powerful feeling of victory and miraculous salvation. I cannot express it in words. Being at the brink of death and everything turning around in moments.

And everyone is comparing their treasure finds. Even my father who generally remains unruffled cannot believe the sheer amount of loot we have. He is a bit mystified because although it's very valuable, it is utterly useless. What on earth is he going to do with a gold-handled gem-encrusted sword in the middle of a desert? Cut the bread?

But no-one cares. We are just delighted – overjoyed – that we have survived a massacre, and that our salvation was brought about through an epic miracle.

I have no idea what the future holds, but if the past year is anything to go by, we are in for some incredible times.

A Pesach Message

Rabbi J Rubinstein

The following true story, recorded in the autobiography of Rabbi Yisroel Meir Lau, has a strong connection to today's Haftarah. After the Second World War, a group of Jewish children who had survived the Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps, were taken to a kind of transit camp in Ecouis in France. They were looked after by a lady called Mrs. Rachel Mintz. One day she called the children together and told them that a group of distinguished visitors was coming to see them, and they should gather at 5p.m. in a nearby field, to receive them. These children who had endured unimaginable horrors, were very cynical, and suspicious of people. They said, "We are not coming to this meeting, where were these people when the Germans killed our parents? They are just coming, so that a photograph, of them with us, can be taken, which they will use for their own public relations purposes". Mrs Mintz who had been very kind to them, begged them to come for her sake. They relented to the extent that they agreed to come, but said they would not cooperate in any way. There is in fact a photograph extant, of five hundred children sitting in the field with their heads down, staring determinedly at the ground, with the speaker being forced to address the tops of their heads.

At the end, Mrs Mintz announced the last speaker, saying he had been through Auschwitz, he had lost his wife and children, and since the war he had spent all his time trying to help Jewish children. Suddenly, as if by a pulled by a magnet, all the heads went up, they realised this man was one of them, he had been through what they had been through. When the speaker saw himself confronted by five hundred pairs of eyes, he was overcome by emotion. Holding the microphone, all he could manage to say in a shaky voice in Yiddish was, "Kinder tayre kinder" (Children beloved children), and then he burst in to tears. Then as the sound of his crying echoed across the field, an amazing thing happened. The children began to cry, all of them hardened children who thought it unmanly to cry, trying to

wipe away their tears with their sleeves, until they realised that their neighbours were crying too. Then the whole field turned in to a sea of tears. Unexpectedly, one of the older boys of the group stood up. He said, "I want, on behalf of us all, to thank you; not for coming, we did not want this visit. I want to thank you for giving us the ability to cry. When they took away my parents, I did not cry, when they beat me, I did not cry. For years I have not laughed or cried. I began to think I was not a human being. Now that I have cried such a lot, I know that I am a human being and will go on to live".

Then he told them, "Before I was taken to the concentration camps, I learnt some verses from Thach (Bible) off by heart. I have not seen a Thach for six years but I still remember some of them, and I want to say them to you". He then quoted the incredibly dramatic words from this morning's Haftarah. And Hashem led me (the prophet Ezekiel) to a valley, and it was filled with bones. And He said to me; "Son of man, will these bones live?"..... And He said to me....."Prophecy over these bones and say to them, O dry bones, listen to the word of Hashem. So says Hashem G-d, Behold I will bring a spirit in to you and you shall live, and I shall put on you sinews, and bring flesh on you, and draw skin over you, and I shall put spirit into you, and you shall live! and you will know That I am Hashem" The youngster said, we are the dry bones but now we have spirit in us, and he expressed his confidence in the future.

The Festival of Pesach is a Festival of hope. As we say in the Hagadah, "For in every generation they arise against us but Hashem saves us from their hands. The above prophecy was also a message of hope. There is a discussion in the Talmud, whether it actually happened or was a kind of parable. But it was definitely a message of hope, from which every individual can learn. Even when the future appears bleak, Hashem can breath "a spirit" into the "dry bones". May Hashem soon bring us the greatest salvation of all.

Plan to Achieve Freedom

Rabbi Label Lam (Torah.org)

This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come in and eat; let all who are in need come and join us for the Pesach. Now we are here; next year in the land of Israel. Now – slaves; next year we shall be free. – Haggadah

THIS MATZA – that we eat: what does it recall? It recalls the dough of our ancestors, which did not have time to rise before the King, King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself and redeemed them, as it is said: "They baked the dough that they had brought out of Egypt into unleavened cakes, for it had not risen, for they were cast out of Egypt and could not delay, and they made no provision for the way." – Haggadah

Matzah delivers a mixed message at the Pesach Seder. On the one hand it is presented as the "bread of affliction" and then again in the Seder as the boarding pass, the ticket to freedom? Which is it?! Is it meant to evoke bitter and harsh neuro-associations or a completely positive and hopeful message?!

Matzah is made out of two primary ingredients; 1) flour from any of the 5 grains, wheat, barley, oat, spelt, or rye. 2) water. There are two other hidden factors that determine whether or not the product is Matzah or not; fire and time. When the flour and water come into contact with one another, the clock begins. There are 18 minutes and not a second more to roll the mixture into a dough, flatten it out, and bake it in an oven before it qualifies as Matzah for Pesach. After 18 minutes the Matzah is not only disqualified, it is rendered Chometz, an absolutely forbidden element on Pesach.

In Jewish homes around the world right now, on the cusp of Pesach, and for thousands of years, great Jewish mothers happily and frenetically rid their holy homes of Chometz, which is considered poison for the Jewish Soul on Pesach. If a single Cheerio is found a Hazmat team might need to be called in with flame throwers to destroy that deleterious agent. It's only a slight exaggeration!

The Torah spells out a strict consequence for consuming Chometz on Pesach and every good and decent mother desires to protect their children and family from moral and mortal harm.

What are the ingredients that comprise Chometz? 1) flour from any of the 5 grains, wheat, barley, oat, spelt, or rye. 2) water. After 18 minutes that same admixture naturally becomes Chometz. The same stuff that

goes into Matzah is the same stuff that Chometz is made out of. Wait a second! If Chometz is so destructive and dangerous, representing the negative inclination and everything threatening and harmful then the last thing you would want to bring onto your table on the Sacred Night of Pesach is Matzah. Not only that but it crowns the Seder table and it is required to be eaten by everyone.

Matzah and Chometz are literally separated by seconds and yet they are worlds apart. The letters that spell Chometz and Matzah in Hebrew are also almost exactly the same. CHES – MEM – TZADI =CHOMETZ. MEM – TZADI –HEY = MATZAH. Two letters are exactly the same, MEM and TZADI and the two different ones are HEY and CHES which are visually, in their shape, almost identical. The difference between HEY and CHES is a little space that allows the breath to flow or not.

So, what is MATZAH? It is disciplined CHOMETZ! What is CHOMETZ? It is undisciplined MATZAH! This is the lesson of freedom on Pesach. We do not retreat from anything negative. We discipline it and make proper and appropriate use of all the ingredients in life. Fire is not bad, atomic energy is not bad, and technology is essentially not bad. It depends on how it is used. Good fences make good neighbors and potential CHOMETZ can be converted into something glorious if we employ discipline, and we remain loyal to a prescribed plan. It's been said, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail!" MATZOS, the same letters as MITZVOS, like any other diet or discipline, is not easy, but that's our plan to achieve freedom.

Gifts From the Sea

Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein (Torah.org)

"Israel saw the Great Hand that G-d used upon Egypt. The people feared Hashem, and they believed in Hashem and in Moses His servant."

The Torah's ordering of the two phrases suggests cause and effect. The people believed, because they saw. But do we really need to believe in what we know and have directly experienced? Belief usually fills in when its object is hidden or obscured. What need is there to speak of the people's belief, after Hashem made His existence open and manifest to them, through the miracles at the Sea?

There is another reason why the Torah should not speak here of the people's emunah. They were hardly new to steadfast belief in G-d! Well before the crossing of the Sea they had believed. It was, in fact "in the merit of belief that our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt." Having already believed at an earlier time, why does the Torah take note of it here?

Belief, we must begin to realize, is not a simple response to a yes-or-no question. It is complex, variegated, nuanced. It knows many levels, each of which is an important accomplishment.

Two of these are fairly apparent to us. We can easily understand the difference between believing something with one's mind, and believing it in one's heart. (Yesod Hoavodah cites a disciple of the Magid of Mezerizh, who claimed that the distance between belief of the mind and of the heart is greater than the distance between Heaven and earth!)

We should add to these a third kind of emunah – believing with one's body. "All my limbs will proclaim, Hashem – who is like You? When emunah matures, it penetrates all parts of a person's body. Every fiber of him understands that there is nothing besides Hashem.

Picture in your mind's eye a person you know has great belief in Hashem. Now imagine him overcome by an unexpected terror, thrust instantly into a life-threatening situation. Does he not act troubled? Does he not tremble and shake? He would not if belief thoroughly suffused all his body. He would remain calm and unperturbed.

In his first dialogue with Hashem, Moses challenged G-d. "What if the Jews will not believe me?" Hashem reassured him that they would show themselves to be believers. Emunah is firmly rooted in the Jewish soul, a dependable legacy from our ancestors. Its presence within us can be relied upon with confidence. (Rav Noach of Leuchovitz had this advice for a Jew who claimed that he could not feel emunah working within him. "You should believe that you believe! Clouds cover the light of your emunah, and darken your world.") This belief, this birthright from our ancestors, while powerful and cherished, is still incomplete.

A nation of believers left Egypt. Their belief was of the usual varieties,

belief of the mind and the heart. The Egyptians were still able, therefore, to pursue them with all their terror – their chariots and hordes. Pharaoh himself was able to "draw close," i.e., his impending attack disoriented and confounded them. They reacted with fear, and cried out to Hashem.

All this changed at the sea. When the Jews saw their persecutors lying dead before them, when they saw that Great Hand outstretched mightily against their enemy, they grew immeasurably in their belief. "There remained of them [the Egyptians], not a single one." This does not just mean that all the soldiers died, but alludes to the complete devastation of Egypt in a spiritual sense. It means that the kelipah of Egypt had been shattered and smashed. When this happened, Klal Yisrael was able to traverse the distance to the far end of the emunah –continuum.

How did they achieve this elevation? Belief in mind and heart were all that was necessary for them to escape the Egyptian borders. Standing at the edge of the sea, the ground rumbling as the fastest chariots approached, they cried out to Hashem. Moses took their cry to G-d, and He offered only one route. They were told to move on, to jump into the water.

The miracles at the Sea began only when their bodies and minds acted in concert. Emunah needed to enter their physical being, not just their psychic space. They rose to the level of belief with their bodies.

We can explain the difference in their belief – before and after the splitting of the Sea – in yet other terms. The Baal Shem Tov once said, "After all the levels I have achieved, after all the things I have comprehended, I am but a simple youngster in belief." We are mystified by this declaration. What room is left for "belief" after reaching the clarity of the Baal Shem Tov? He understood – he surely did not need to believe!

This is an error. The mitzvah of emunah relates to everyone. It applied to the Baal Shem Tov, and it applied to Moses, who encountered, as it were, the true countenance of Hashem, and understood more than other human beings.

G-d is called Ein Sof – without end. Whenever we think that we have grasped some new insight into what He is, we realize how much more there is that we do not understand. This process is endless.

Emunah transcends all levels of comprehension. It applies precisely to that which is beyond our grasp, to that which we cannot comprehend. Moses, the Baal Shem Tov, grasped much. But much of what Hashem is eluded them. They – and we – need Emunah to relate to what we sense is remote and unattained.

While still in Egypt, the Jews believed. They believed within the context of an arena they had entered earlier, and with which they were familiar. At the sea, their understanding soared. But at the same time, they were able to believe in levels they knew nothing of at all.

Having come this far, there is still something elusive and troublesome in the order of the verses describing Jewish reaction to the splitting of the Sea. "Israel saw Egypt dead on the seashore. Israel saw the Great Hand that G-d used against Egypt." This seems to be an inversion. The Great Hand brought the sea crashing down at the right moment. They saw it churn up from the deep those Egyptians who were the most guilty, so that they could be punished longer. It was only later that the bodies of the Egyptians were cast up on the shore. Why are these two images presented out of chronological order?

Above, we posited that the essential Exodus was the escape from the Egyptian kelipah. So far, we have considered only one of its effects. Pharaoh's initial exchange with Moses showed him mocking the existence of Hashem. Pharaoh was an unbeliever; his disbelief was part of the kelipah. Jewish belief was its antidote, and for this reason, Chazal pointed to it as the cause of their redemption.

The Egyptian poison had another form as well. Egypt was also the "nakedness of the land." It was a place of complete moral depravity, the polar opposite of Jewish kedushah/ holiness.

Belief and kedushah are a matched set. They are not only the foundational elements of Jewish life, but they are interdependent. A person's belief will be clouded and marred if he does not purify his conduct and experience personal holiness. On the other hand, it is

difficult to motivate oneself to live a holier life without the impetus of clear emunah.

The Exodus was only the beginning of Jewish redemption. Through their emunah, the Jews left, having escaped the kelipah of rejection and disbelief. The remaining part of the Egyptian arsenal of evil was still intact.

"What did the sea observe that it split? It saw the casket of Joseph." Joseph's escape from the clutches of Potiphar's wife is the symbol of the triumph of holiness over the spiritually tawdry and ugly, of personal morality over personal tumah. What belief was to the Exodus, kedushah was to the splitting of the sea. Here, the second element of the kelipah was humbled and destroyed. As kedushah triumphed, Jewish emunah was able to surge forward! The process of redemption, begun a week before, could now proceed.

The verses we considered are really not reversed. To be sure, the Great Hand operated before the Egyptians lay dead. What changed was how much of that Hand the Jews appreciated. Since emunah and kedushah are linked, the completeness of their belief had to await the death of the Egyptians, which we understand to mean the shattering of the kelipah of unholiness and tumah. From that point on, blinders on their belief were removed. They now not only sensed the Great Hand with their intellects, but they understood it as clearly as something manifest, obvious and visible. Looking back, they saw the Great Hand.

Each holiday offers us easier access to something that is ordinarily harder to attain. Pesach is the holiday of emunah. Its first day is a Rosh Hashanah of belief. The seventh day is the holiday of advanced, perfect emunah.

Chazal tell us that the Jews of the Exodus enriched themselves by despoiling the Egyptian army cast up from the Sea. Surrounded by his chassidim on the last day of Pesach, the Saba Kadisha of Slonim asked them if they, too, would like to share in that wealth. An old chassid replied affirmatively. "We want the emunah that the Jews gained at the sea." The rebbe praised the response. There is no greater gift than the clarity of belief of emunah at the highest level. Nothing can make Man happier. It is the true richness that we took away from the Sea.

We emphasize on the Seder night that "in every generation, a person is obligated to see himself as if he exited Egypt." On the seventh night of Pesach, each person should see himself crossing through the Sea. He should take advantage of the treasures this day offers.

The Bais Avraham argued that the seventh day of Pesach holds promise for all the aspects of life that can be described as "difficult as the splitting of the Sea." Certainly, the fullness of emunah and kedushah are among those aspects.

Each year, the seventh day of Pesach allows a Jew the opportunity to burst all the barriers that divide him from his Creator. With their disappearance, we come closer to where we belong, and where all difficulties vanish.

Matzah and Maror – Worthy Mechutanim

Rabbi Eliyahu Hoffmann (Torah.org)

As much as we are told that Purim is a Yom Tov of opposites – "ve-nahapoch hu," the Pesach Seder has more than its own share of opposites. It can be confusing: Are we commemorating our freedom and the Exodus from Egypt and slavery, or are we remembering the bitterness of our years as slaves under the cruel rule of the Pharaohs of Egypt. We recline, to demonstrate we are free. Yet we dip our food in salt-water to remind ourselves of the tears of our slavery. We drink the "Arba Kosos – four cups" of wine, which represent the "four languages of redemption," but we eat charoses to commemorate the mortar bricks we were forced to make. Maror reminds us of the bitter times we spent in Egypt, yet we recline to demonstrate our liberty.

The explanation, however, is obvious. As our Sages put it, "Light is only fully recognized when emerging from darkness." One can only appreciate the importance of freedom after he fully understands what slavery entails. To truly praise Hashem for taking us out of Egypt, we must first learn about slavery, and even perform physical symbols to bring home to us how bitter it actually was.

Matzah and maror can also be seen as "opposites," as the following

story illustrates.

One Seder night, the holy Rebbe R' Yissachar Dov of Belz was walking through the alleyways of his town Belz. As he passed by the house of a simple yet G-d-fearing Jew, he stopped by the window to listen in on his Seder. He overheard the Jew saying the section of the Haggadah which establishes the correct time to remember the Exodus:

"One might think that the obligation to discuss the Exodus commences with the first day of the month of Nissan... therefore the Torah adds (Shemos 13:8), 'It is because of this that Hashem did so for me when I went out of Egypt,' [the pronoun this implies something tangible, leading us to conclude that] I have commanded you [to discuss the Exodus] only when matzah and maror are lying before you [at the Seder]."

The simple Jew, it seems, was not very learned. Instead of saying, "I have commanded you only when matzah and maror lie (munachim) before you," he said, "I have commanded you only when matzah and maror are mechutanim (i.e. relatives through marriage) before you." It was all his disciples could do not to break out laughing. Yet to their surprise, R' Yissachar Dov took his blunder quite seriously. After pondering the simple Jew's words for a moment, he remarked, "Indeed, matzah and maror are mechutanim!" Seeing his disciples' amazement, he related the following story.

Reb Zelig was a rich and important Jew whose daughter's time had come to marry. Her father searched far and wide for a young man worthy to take his daughter's hand in marriage, yet it seemed that every boy he met just didn't suit the bill.

One day, while travelling on business, he came across a young man sitting and learning in beis ha-midrash. At first, R' Zelig was put off by the boy's shoddy clothes and impoverished appearance. The more they spoke, however, the more impressed he became. "This young man is a diamond in the rough," he thought to himself. R' Zelig wasted no time, and immediately arranged a shidduch, with a date for the wedding to be arranged later.

So excited was R' Zelig by his chassan that he began to become paranoid lest someone else "discover" him and steal from him his catch. He sent an urgent telegram to the young chassan. "Come right away," it said, "the wedding must take place immediately! Do not worry about clothing or wedding expenses, I will take care of everything."

Alarmed, the chassan promptly gathered his meagre possessions, and travelled to the city of the kallah. When he arrived, he was whisked off to the tailor to have a new suit made for the chassunah. The tailor was instructed save the chassan's old torn suit for the father of the kallah, who was footing the bill. Then, not even taking the time to prepare a lavish wedding banquet, as would normally befit a man such as R' Zelig, a hasty chassunah took place.

In later years, when R' Zelig's son-in-law disagreed with him, or refused to take his advice, R' Zelig would go to his closet and remove the old, tattered clothing his son-in-law had worn before marrying his daughter. "You forget," he would say, "that I'm the one who made you what you are today. Look at your regal clothing – this is what you used to wear!"

Not to be outdone, R' Zelig's son-in-law had his own trick up his sleeve. He had put aside a stale piece of bread from the hastily prepared leftovers which had been served at his chassunah meal, saving it for just such an occasion. Taking it out, he would say, "Ah, but you too forget just how anxious you were to have me as your son-in-law. Why, you didn't even take the time to prepare a normal meal – you just couldn't wait!"

"So, you see," said the Belzer Rebbe, "they were mechutanim worthy of one another."

"The same discussion," concluded the Rebbe, "takes place between the Jewish nation and Hashem on the Seder night. Hashem, so to speak, takes out the maror, showing it to us. 'You see,' He tells us, 'this is how bitter your lives were before I took you out of Mitzrayim. Without Me, you would still be there!' But, not to be had, we too have what to say. We take out the unleavened matzos before Hashem, as if to say to him, 'Ah, but remember the rush you were in to have us as your nation. Why, you couldn't even wait until our bread had time to bake!' Indeed, matzah and maror are the finest of mechutanim."

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Rabbi Shmuel Livshin
of Kollel L'Dayonus

7th Day
Rabbi Danny Kirsh

קדושה קדושה
אור ירושלים
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Davening Times

עניית בכורים

Shacharis & Sijum	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Eat Chometz Until	10.26am
Burn Chometz Before	11.50am

ליל א' פסח

Candle Lighting	7.29pm
Mincha & Kabbolas Yom Tov	7.29pm
צאת הכוכבים	8.28pm

REMEMBER עירוב תבשילין

יום א' פסח

Shacharis	9.15am
Mincha followed by a Shiur by R' Shimon Boruch Glickman	7.30pm

ליל ב' פסח

Maariv	8.37pm
Candle Lighting	No earlier than 8.37pm

יום ב' פסח

Shacharis	9.15am
Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	6.50pm
Candle Lighting	6.57pm – 7.00pm

שבת חול המועד

Shacharis	9.15am
Mincha followed by a Shiur by R' R' Shmuel Livshin - Kollel I'Dayanus	7.30pm
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	8.41pm

חול המועד

Sunday - Tuesday	7.00 / 8.30am / 9.30am
Mincha & Maariv	7.40pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

ליל ז' פסח

Mincha & Kabbolas Yom Tov	6.50pm
Candle Lighting	Not Before 7.03pm

יום ז' פסח

Shacharis	9.15am
Mincha followed by Shiur by Rabbi Danny Kirsh	7.45pm

ליל ח' פסח

Maariv	8.49pm
Candle Lighting	No earlier than 8.49pm

אחרון של פסח

Shacharis	9.15am
Mincha followed by הרגו נעילת החג	7.30pm
Maariv & Motzei Yom Tov	8.51pm

אסרו חג

Friday Shachars	6.45 / 7.20 / 8.00 / 9.30am
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פרשת שמייני

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	6.55pm
Candle Lighting	7.07pm – 7.20pm
Shacharis	9.15am
Mincha	6.00pm / 7.50pm
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	8.55pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am
Mon/Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues/Wed	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Fri ראש חודש	6.30am / 7.00am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.05pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm