

the previous generations, gives us strength, character and adds extra warmth to our avodas Hashem by often going beyond what the halacha demands. Dor vdor alludes to a link with previous generations. Vav is the letter that joins – vav hachibur.

The pasuk in parshas Vayetze describes Amalek with the words asher karcha baderech, [Amalek] chanced upon you on the way. Rashi there explains that karcha is also an expression of coldness. Amalek were the ones that tried to quash the inspiration that the world received through the splitting of the sea. They cooled down the fire. To combat their effect we must have an enthusiasm in our avodas Hashem. This can be achieved through putting back the vav into the dor dor. Amalek do not want a dor vdor. They do not want enthusiasm. Our war with them is medor dor, to attempt to stop the dor dor. It is difficult to remain enthusiastic and warm about one's yiddishkeit without minhagim and links to the previous generation. We must provide and involve ourselves in a Judaism that is dor v'dor.

Rashi notes that the name of Hashem in the pasuk is only spelt with a yud and hei, but is lacking the vav, hei. It comes out that the letter of the shem Hashem-shem Hevaye that is not represented at all with Amalek being around is the vav. Perhaps we can suggest that the manifestation of it missing is in the expression of dor dor that lacks a vav. The way to complete the name is by fuelling our avodas Hashem with minhagei yisrael that have been developed through the generations, culminating in us being Jews that connect the generations and returning to an atmosphere of dor vdor.

At the beginning of Parshas Bo Hashem tells Moshe that He is performing all these miracles "Imaan tsaper b'aznei bincha uven vincha es asher hisalalti bmitzrayim", in order that you should tell to your children and grandchildren how I played with Egypt. In the next parsha in Beshalach the pasuk describes a fathers chiyuv of repeating sippur yetzias mitzrayim and it uses an expression of v'igadta lvincha bayom hahu lemor... you shall tell your son.

Is the chiyuv to tell one's son like it seems from Beshalach or even ones grandchildren as it seems from Bo?

I saw R Michel Feinstein suggest that there is a difference between hagada and sippur. Hagada is the action of the mitzva whereas the sippur is what is being achieved.

Based on that definition we can answer as follows. The pasuk in Beshalach is describing who the chiyuv needs to be performed with. A father has an obligation to repeat over the wonders that happened at yetzias mitzrayim only to his son. The outcome is Imaan tsaper, in order that it will be told over further from generation to generation. The pasuk continues viyedatem ki ani Hashem. The whole purpose of seder night is in order that there will be a hemshech hadoros, generations continuing to have an emuna in Hashem, realising that He controls everything and loves klal yisroel.

This is achieved through a parent allowing his child to relive on seder night the experience that kall yisroel went through, describing the Nissim that Hasadosh Baruch Hu did for us.

We say in the hagada Bchol dor vdor chayav odom liros es atzmo kilu hu yatza mimitzaryim.

One needs to feel as if he has gone out of mitzrayim. This is what is being achieved through seder night. We say bchol dor vdor. The way to do this is through connecting the generations, through dor vdor, with the vav hachibur through continuing the mesorah, the minhagei yisroel, being machshiv the ways of the previous generation.

GUT YOMTOV!

Yetzias Mitzraim 5785

Dani Epstein

I'm young enough that I do not have much life experience, but old enough to remember the horrors that barely ceased a year ago. The beatings, the hunger, the constant yelling and threats from the taskmasters, the sleep deprivation, and unceasing fear of what the next minute would bring; watching people collapse around me and being unable to help.

Then Moshe arrived on the scene, and things started to change. At first, for the worse. People were angry. But when the plague of lice arrived, we saw the Egyptians changing. For the first time, there was real fear in their eyes. You can pull off one or two magic tricks, but this was something else. For the third time the entire country shut down for seven days as they suffered miserably, exactly as Moshe predicted. If this was magic, it was the sort of magic they simply could not understand, let alone replicate.

During the plague we had a genuine breather. There were no taskmasters whipping and yelling at us at dawn, no back-breaking labour. We still lived in fear, but at least we knew it was being deferred for a few days.

But when the taskmasters returned, their attitude had changed as well. They were pleading, cajoling, offering us more food and better conditions. The whips had gone. The beatings stopped. The sneering brutality ceased.

But that's when we rebelled. Oh, it was not a dramatic uprising with us rioting in the capital. We simply refused to work anymore. We had Egypt over a barrel. Almost.

We knew we could not go anywhere. We did not have the food to sustain us or anywhere to live outside of Egypt; so, we just hung around. Did our thing. As it is, we knew that if we did try to escape, we would have to fight the Egyptian army, and that's not something we were willing to contemplate.

It was a standoff. We were not working, they were not enslaving us, but we were forced to stay. Eventually, we all had to work anyway, if only to keep body and soul together. We sold produce to the Egyptians so that they would not attack us from hunger after the next couple of plagues. Life was far better, but we were still legally slaves, even if effectively we were working for ourselves now.

Six more plagues. Six more weeks of unceasing horror for the Egyptians, and every time they occurred, they learned to respect Moshe that much more. He was a man of his word. He warned them to take their cattle in before the skies opened to blazing fire and battering ice.

Then came that dramatic night. I was sleeping in a street in the capital having sold some of my garlic produce that day, and was planning on returning the next morning. Huddled under a blanket, I was sleeping deeply in the warm night air.

It was the screams that woke me up. Terrible, piercing screams. People came running out of their homes shrieking that their child had died. They stumbled out carrying their dead children in their arms, cursing the gods, cursing Pharaoh, cursing the stars, weeping and shouting. The mayhem and chaos with the awful sound of their expressed agony was terrifying. I had no idea what was going on, and what to do.

It took me a while to gather my bearings. For a few minutes, I simply lay on the ground trying to figure out if I was going to die as well, having no idea what was happening. Why were they screaming? Who was dying? Finally, I sat up and my head cleared, and it soon dawned on me that this was the last plague that Moshe had promised. He actually carried it out. These must be the firstborns, and they were dying like flies.

I lay back down on the ground and tried to hide under my blanket, terrified that the Egyptians would realize there was an Ivri amongst them. Who knows what revenge they will want to wreak? That worked for but a few minutes, and then someone pulled the blanket off me roughly. I saw the anger in their eyes and thought that this was going to be my last.

"Go," the man yelled harshly. "Go and tell your Moshe we give up. We have nothing left to sacrifice."

A few very angry-looking men came over as well.

"He is an Ivri," shouted the man who discovered me. "Do not touch him! We are already in a terrible situation, don't make it worse. Plead with him! Beg him to ask Moshe to stop this! We can't continue like this anymore!"

This was a rather bittersweet moment. My erstwhile tormentors were pleading with me to intercede on their behalf having brutally

enslaved me for my entire life, and I was still technically their slave. Discretion being the better part of valour, I mumbled something about going to speak to our leader and sped off in the direction of Goshen. During my hurried flight, I was mulling over the situation. How amusing it was that they imagined I could somehow intercede for them with Moshe when I had never seen him in my life, had no idea where he was at the moment, and quite frankly would have asked him to kill a few more people while he was at it.

When I got back to Goshen an hour later, the streets were alive. People were standing around holding torches and rush lights, talking their heads off in great excitement. I couldn't make sense of what anyone was saying, but the anticipation and exhilaration in the air was palpable. The mood was electric, and everyone seemed to be expecting some major event to occur.

Just as I was about to enter my house, I saw this tall, majestic figure striding down the road, with a long staff in his right hand and a small entourage struggling to keep up with his measured pace. It took a few moments to register that I was looking at Moshe for the very first time. I must have been staring because he looked back at me and then pointed.

"You, boy, come here." My feet were rooted to the spot in fear. This was the man who had just wreaked terrible justice on an entire country with a simple wave of his staff. I eventually plucked up the courage and managed to hurry over.

"I have a job for you. Go and gather a few more lads like yourself and start spreading the message. Everyone is to go to the Egyptians and borrow whatever gold, silver, and clothes they can. Then be ready for midnight. We are leaving."

With that, he strode off, presumably to recruit more messengers elsewhere.

My mother hurried out of our home, of which the doorway had been splashed with blood. She handed me a pita filled with meat, right in the middle of the street!

"Go, my son," she said. "Listen to Moshe and eat this on the way. It is shawarma from the Korban Pesach!"

I was already embarrassed at having forgotten about the sacrifice and feast, and now I was eating food in the street. Only animals eat in the street. But I had no choice. I ran while chewing, and every time I found a friend of mine, I handed over the message and told them to pass it on. Along the way, I was yelling out Moshe's missives. I was pretty convinced that everyone thought I was crazy, but despite that, they still listened.

A vast horde of people made their way into Egypt, and Goshen became a ghost country in a matter of hours. While the Ivrim were chattering and laughing, the Egyptians were in absolute turmoil. On the one hand, they had just lost hundreds and thousands of children. On the other hand, they felt compelled somehow to smile wanly at the Ivrim and acquiesce to their every request, even sometimes pushing more into our hands.

After a while, I happened to meet my parents while staggering with a sack over each shoulder.

"I hope we are not going far, Aba, because there is no way I can carry this much further!" I said, gasping.

"What do you have in those sacks?" asked my mother. Wordlessly, I opened them both and let her look inside. Fine linen clothing, gold chalices, silver plates, gem-studded jewellery. It was a small treasure trove. Her eyes opened wide.

"What use are these trinkets in the desert?" asked my father gruffly. "What we need to carry is the food your mother brought." Ever practical, he looked rather grumpily at the small fortune I had hauled, that would have to be carried with great difficulty. My mother had a large sack filled with raw dough. If this is all we were going to eat for the next few days, I was going to be rather hungry. I cast my eyes around and spotted a donkey tied up in a front yard, and decided to take it. My mother saw me untying it and called out.

"Don't take that! You can't just help yourself to the animal!"

Worse yet, with all the hullabaloo, the owner popped his head out

of the door. He looked grief-stricken and simultaneously terrified. For a moment I thought he was going to attack me. He yelled at me to take the donkey and leave him alone. I was quite happy to oblige.

We strapped the food my mother had brought, along with everything I had gathered, onto the back of the donkey, who did not seem to be concerned one way or another. Despite it being the middle of the night and the streets full of noisy people, all it seemed to want was a feed. I found some hay and placed it into a bag which I tied around its mouth. All was well in donkey land.

As we were finishing off tying everything down, I glanced up to see my parents' eyes widen as if they would pop out of their heads, and there was a tap on my shoulder.

"Well done, lad." I whirled around and almost fainted.

"Follow me," said Moshe. "And get everyone around you to follow as well. Pass on the message. We are leaving."

I turned around and yelled into the seething crowd and waved my arms in what I hoped was a useful gesture. Those of my friends that I had recruited into my little network understood, and starting ushering people along as well. Behind me was a sea of torches, rush lights, and people all surging forward. I hurried after Moshe, pulling the donkey's lead, and my parents followed suit.

"You never told us you knew Moshe," hissed my father.

"I don't," I replied.

"Then how does he know you?" asked my mother.

"He doesn't."

That cryptic answer did not satisfy her, so I told them what had happened before, and that when she had pressed the shawarma into my hand, it was the first time I had met Moshe.

We hurried after Moshe into the night. There were so many torches and rush lights that the stars were almost hidden. Millions of people were streaming out from everywhere, forming a vast sea in the dark night, with millions of flames bobbing in the dark.

Just as we were setting off, a war chariot came hurtling into view, with Pharaoh at the bridle. He was yelling almost incoherently, shouting at Moshe that we must leave immediately. It did not take long for him to realize that we were doing just that, and he left like a dog with its tail between its legs. People were laughing openly at him.

The moment we crossed the border out of Egypt, an incredible column of fire appeared ahead of us. I simply cannot describe it in ordinary terms – but just imagine a flaming pillar taller than a hundred men, maybe more. No one had ever seen anything like it. It was swirling and blazing and lit up the ground all around it. There was no fuel source or explanation for it. It simply floated there, lighting up the night.

Moshe turned to me and said, "Pass this message along. The pillar is our guide in the night. We will have a cloud during the day. Everyone should remain calm. This is all part of the plan, and Hashem's doing."

I handed the donkey's lead to my father and set off on my task. I had already developed a small network from my previous encounters with Moshe, so the message spread like wildfire.

During the plagues, Moshe had said the same thing to Pharaoh. His power came from Hashem. He was quite consistent about this, despite no-one really knowing if this was the truth or not. Perhaps he was a messenger or prophet of Hashem, or maybe he was just the most powerful magician anyone had ever seen. We weren't concerned either way; we were just happy to be free.

When I returned, I was planning on keeping my distance from Moshe. After all, he was the most fearful and powerful man one could imagine. Who knows what he could do in a flash of anger? I knew nothing of him other than he was the man who brought a superpower to its knees. But it was not to be. To the astonishment of my parents and myself, Moshe beckoned me over.

"I need you near me. I will have many instructions over the next few days, and you will be part of the team passing them around. Stay nearby. Be ready at all times."

The next thing he said to me was astounding.

"Do you have any questions?"

Me, questions? He must have seen the astonishment on my face. He smiled at me and laid his hand on my shoulder.

"If you don't ask questions, you will not understand. If you do not understand, then you are a liability, and not very useful either. So, ask me something."

My brain simply froze. What exactly am I supposed to ask him? I stammered, trying to come up with a question. Finally, I managed to get something out.

"Where are we going to?"

Moshe smiled. "I have no idea. For the moment, we follow the column of fire." He patted me on the shoulder. "Don't worry, I don't bite. When you have another question, just ask."

This was the first of my encounters with our leader. He is not humble in the conventional sense. He knows exactly how powerful and unique he is. But he does not hold himself above everyone else. Training me to question him was one such facet of his incredible humility. Just because he was who he was did not mean that he thought he was infallible. That in itself is astonishing.

With that, I did my best to keep my pace up with him. I looked back to check on my parents, and they were managing fine, but I could see how confused they were, so I dropped back for a moment.

"What did he want from you?" asked my mother. I explained the situation to her, and she looked much calmer and quite chuffed as well. I was clearly going up in the world. Moshe, the most powerful man on Earth, had given me an official job!

For three days, we trudged through the desert without much in the way of food other than the dough my mother had brought with her. Everyone was in the same situation. We would stop off, bake some flatbread over a small fire, eat hurriedly, and then move on. I spent a great deal of time with a pita in one hand, running around passing out messages to my network on behalf of Moshe. Move now, stop now, bake some pitta, don't bake some pitta. Every few minutes something else had to be dealt with. With millions of people on the go, even something simple becomes an entire operation in and of itself.

We eventually arrived at the shores of some sea, which I later discovered was the Reed Sea – what did I know about geography? I had been a slave all my life. Everyone was happy to breathe a sigh of relief. We all needed a break. I was exhausted from constantly running errands for our leader, and the cool breeze coming off the water calmed everyone down.

Night had fallen, and I was sitting by a fire near Moshe when one of my runners hot-footed it towards us breathlessly.

"The Egyptians are coming!" he yelled out wildly between gasps of breath. "They have hundreds of war chariots!"

In an instant, the mood shifted dramatically. Some people screamed out in horror; others stood up angrily and confronted Moshe.

"Is this what you brought us out here for? To die in the desert? Were there insufficient graves for us to die in Egypt? Couldn't we have just stayed in Egypt and worked there? It would have been better for us to work for them than die here in the desert!"

I was shocked at how quickly people forget their own lived history. After all, it was but a few months ago that we were being starved and beaten, and it was Moshe who saved us! And what chutzpah they had. Hadn't Moshe destroyed Egypt with ten incredible plagues? Surely he could beat an army?

In almost a blink of an eye, various factions sprung up, each with their own solution. One group wanted to negotiate a return with the Egyptians. Another wanted to wage war, waving the swords and spears they had taken with them. What was clear was that they would injure themselves before any Egyptian would die. They had no idea how to fight. Yet another group wanted to jump into the sea and die, and one group just wanted to pray. They were all deluded, but their panic did not allow them to see sense. The scene was rapidly becoming chaotic.

Moshe rounded on them furiously.

"Just calm down! Don't panic. Don't even imagine trying to fight them. Just stay still and see how Hashem will save us, what He will do to get us out of this situation. You see them now? Well, this is the last time. Let Hashem fight for you, and be quiet!" Arguing with panicked people is an exercise in futility. They were refusing to see sense. The whole situation was becoming frustrating.

A moment later, Moshe seemed to be listening to something, and then I saw a cloud appear right at the end of the encampment, and it lit up the night.

Moshe lifted up his staff towards the sea, and a fierce wind started to blow. The surface of the water was whipped into a frenzy of waves, and we stood there for a while just watching in awe. Just a simple movement and Moshe could control the sea and the wind. It appeared that the cloud was keeping the Egyptians away from us for the moment. Everyone calmed down, but there was fear in their eyes. The arguments quietened down to muttering.

Then, to everyone's amazement, the sea started splitting apart in front of our very eyes. Waves crashed upwards, and the water started forming a clear channel. We soon were able to see the seabed, which rapidly started drying. No-one had any idea what to do. Even Moshe was just standing there, presumably waiting for something to happen.

The moment there was enough dry seabed to walk on, a man I did not recognise simply stepped forward and started walking. Right into the sea. On dry land. How incredible was that?

The sea was now splitting faster, and within a few minutes, everyone was streaming forward, with the water piled high on either side like vast, towering walls. Despite our nervousness, everyone followed Moshe into the sea. There was simply nothing else to do.

It was not long before the nervousness gave way to elation, and everyone burst into song. Moshe sang out a phrase, and everyone repeated it. The voices of millions of people filled the night, echoing off the walls of the watery canyon, which were glittering with the reflections of hundreds of thousand of torches. Right at the front, where I was, the column of fire almost made things look like daylight. It was a breathtaking sight. A sea of people inside a sea of water.

It was clear now that Moshe was the real deal. Hashem really did want to protect and save us, and Moshe was His true messenger. A miracle of this order can mean nothing else.

Meanwhile, far behind us, the Egyptians were finally on the move, making their way into the water. For hours, millions of us streamed through the seabed onto the far bank, and far behind us, the Egyptians were back on the chase.

When everyone had finally exited the sea after several hours, instead of leading the people further on, Moshe waved them forward while he waited by the shore. Everyone spread out along the beach, and as dawn broke, we could make out the Egyptian chariots thundering across the dry seabed, with walls of water piled high on either side. We watched with our hearts in our mouths, but Moshe had gotten us this far, and clearly, Hashem did not intend for us to die here.

As the light grew and the war chariots thundered ever closer, we witnessed yet another miracle. One by one, in rapid succession, the wheels of the chariots suddenly fell off, throwing the Egyptians out of them. As they recovered and stood up, we could see their confusion. They seemed to realize that Hashem was fighting them now, and they attempted to start running back to the shore, screaming for their lives.

At that point, Moshe raised his staff yet again. A moment later, the walls of water finally collapsed and started rushing towards the Egyptian horde. We could hear their cries of horror as their rapidly impending doom approached. Before they could get far, the water fronts crashed together, and the Egyptians were tossed and turned; the carriages were thrown into the air and then sunk; bodies were hurled into the air and then swirled into the depths.

The noise was terrible. Millions, billions of amphoras-worth of water were roiling and frothing, and in the maelstrom, we could see Egyptians being thrown around and drowning.

Even as I was watching this, Miriam had gathered the women, and with timbrels in their hands, they danced and sang.

How the tables turned so rapidly. The former slaves were now free and made rich by their very own captors.

Well, this was the story my parents told me, and their parents told them, for over three thousand years now. In the intervening years, we have seen our triumphs and losses, and we have been dispersed throughout the Diaspora for over two thousand of those years, suffering a pantheon of horrors.

Now, however, I am sitting with my night vision goggles, with my .338 Lapua Magnum sniper rifle cradled in my arms, scanning for the enemy in pitch-black darkness. If I see any movement, I will sound the alarm then open fire. In the darkness, the enemy will have no idea what is happening.

Hopefully, I will get the opportunity to get a short break and hold the seder in record time. Whereas my family will be seated around a splendid table with a gleaming white tablecloth, silverware, and clinking glasses, I will be lucky if I can say a few verses from the Haggadah and drink four very small cups of grape juice from a plastic cup. I might even have time to wash and eat some very small pieces of matzah. The army even supplied me with a special seder kit, and a Haggadah written especially for soldiers, with a super short, short and minimal seder.

But I am neither sad nor bitter, even if the herbs I have are. I am here to serve and protect Am Yisroel and Eretz Yisroel, even on this holy night. And I have witnessed countless miracles with my own eyes, miracles of the level we have not seen since our forefathers crossed the sea with walls of water on either side. It is on this night of miracles I recall some of what I saw.

I was pulled out from a collapsed building, and aside from some nasty bruises, I was fine. My friend was in a narrow hallway when a grenade blew up in front of him. As a rule, you don't get to eat a grenade and then walk away to tell the story. Despite his injuries, he managed to kill the terrorists who threw it and survived.

On one patrol, the sun was setting and one of my comrades wanted to daven Mincha. If we spot somewhere suitable and conditions allow, we usually get permission to stop and hold a few minyanim. He turned around and looked back to find somewhere to stop, and saw a sudden movement. A head popped out of a tunnel. Then the shoulders, and an RPG. My friend yelled out, and started shooting. We turned round and unleashed holy hell on the target. After a few seconds we stopped shooting. There was not much left to see. Mincha saved our lives.

There are so many more stories, one crazier than the next.

Yes, I lost friends too, and that was very painful.

But what has kept me going was the clear Hand of Hashem throughout this terrible war.

Anyone who has watched the Iron Dome during a heavy attack does nothing but wonder and awe. In my civilian life, I am an electronics engineer. I have some idea how the Iron Dome works, which is why every time I see a multiple interception working flawlessly, I offer up a small prayer of thanks. It is as close to magic as possible. The fact that it has operated like clockwork for almost every single interception is a miracle almost as great as crossing the sea.

Then there was the Day of Glory – Operation Grim Beepers. This is when was when I realized what the "Finger of Hashem" meant. That Hashem is not simply helping us; He is fighting the war for us. A million things had to happen for that operation to work smoothly. Only one or two things had to go wrong for it to fail badly. Yet, it was an epic Purim-level success. How our enemies trembled after that. Anything that caught fire or exploded was attributed to the Mossad. For a while, Hezbollah were warning their people not to use solar panels, microwaves and probably electric kettles too. We are now in the same position as when our ancestors entered

the sea in trepidation. At that juncture, they were still uncertain as to what fate awaited them. They saw the walls of water, but it was not until they were deep into the sea that they suddenly realized that this was their salvation and broke into song.

But know this: just as Hashem did not inform even Moshe about what was going to happen at the sea, so He has not seen fit to show us what will happen to us at the end of this war. But just as the Egyptians eventually drowned in a colossal trap, so our enemies will be devoured by their own evil. They will be the architects of their own downfall. And we too will sing a song of joy!

My radio is crackling. I just got a message that I am being stood down. There is a group in my unit who need someone to lead a "proper" seder – the full 45-minute military version. My orders are to wait for the change of guard, then hotfoot it to the tent and take charge. I have to run! I have an important mission to undertake!

הבנויה ולשונה הבאה בירושלים הבנויה and the Bayis Shlishi!

Searching for Chametz

Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein (Torah.org)

Ask anyone who has readied a home for Pesach. Getting rid of the spaghetti and chocolate éclairs is easy. The tough part is ferreting out chametz in its insidious forms: a trace contribution here, a product prepared in chametzutensils there. It takes focus and concentration to keep track of all the placeschametz ghosts could be lurking. Hunting them down takes energy and perseverance.

This is precisely the way it is supposed to happen. A phrase straight from the gemara and Shulchan Aruch defines both what halachah asks of us, and how we can wrap our heads around the underlying concept. We are told to search forchametz even "in crevices and cracks."

Chametz, we are told, represents the evil impulse within us. The complex, laborious, time-consuming activities of searching for and destroying our chometz demonstrate to ourselves how meticulous we need to be in purging ourselves of our inner evil. We can begin by ridding ourselves of the obvious and apparent evils we harbor within, but we cannot end there. Evil is insidious. Like the invisible spores that waft through the air, settle on dough and ferment it into chametz, a microscopic contaminant of evil can sour an entire personality. Nothing less than dogged persistence must be applied against the more subtle forms of evil within us.

We are even less inclined to act against evil that remains entirely undetected. R. Mendel of Vitebsk's words are telling. He cautions against feeling confident of a deep bond with Hashem when we find ourselves transgression-free. Such a finding is meaningless. Perhaps, he argues, we have not sinned simply because the challenge hasn't presented itself. Or perhaps we remain untainted by a particular transgression because some external pressure, like embarrassment, prevents us from doing what we secretly would like to do, and not because we have harnessed or extirpated our evil impulses. It is quite possible, he says, that a person could live a righteous life, avoiding any activity that requires punishment, and yet learn that he failed in the chief task for which his neshamah descended to earth – addressing some evil trait that lurked within!

This is what Chazal mean when they say that biur chametz requires sereifah, burning. In dealing with our active misdeeds, it is often enough to firmly resolve never to commit the sin again. Evil roots within us, however, must be cauterized and burnt out.

Pesachim opens with the words, "On the eve of the fourteenth, we search forchametz." R. Chaim Vital read this beyond its apparent meaning. Having completed thirteen years since his birth, a young Jew stands on the threshold of responsible Jewish adulthood. Going into his fourteenth year, he must examine himself for any faults that prevent him from becoming a full Jew. When a Jew utters the berachah in the morning thanking Hashem for not creating him as a non-Jew, he should ask himself if that berachah is fully merited. Is he entirely the Jew he is supposed to be? Is he truly free of foreign influences and habits?

Similarly, as a Jew readies himself for the approaching holiday of Pesach – the holiday that renews our peoplehood and special

place each year – he must search for the internal chametz that blocks him from being the complete Jew that is his true role in life. How can the search be effective, when we are supposed to go beyond looking for the evil that we know about? How can we recognize the more insidious evil roots, when a person often does not even know what he is looking for? Some of the answers emerge from the formal details of the halachah.

The law instructs us to search by the light of a lamp. We might have preferred the brightness of daylight, or the intensity of a large torch, but we turn down these options in favor of the simple, small lamp. Ner, the word for lamp, is spelled nun reish. These letters form an acronym for neshamah ruach, or two parts of the soul. If a person struggles as best he can to discover his primary root of evil, if he "searches as far as the hand can reach," his soul will take him the rest of the way, and guide him to the truth. "The soul of a person will teach him." A Jewish soul contains much wisdom; it knows the stuff it is made of, and can communicate back to its possessor.

Similarly, help comes from the Torah and mitzvos we have performed. The Zohar comments on the verse "or if he finds out that he has sinned:" "Who tells him? The Torah tells him!" The Zohar means that when a man's power of reasoning is insufficient to discover the source of evil within him, he can expect help beyond the limits of his own intellect. The Torah he has studied, the mitzvos he has performed all leave an imprint within him. While a person may not feel their presence, they can be relied upon to light up the path of discovery for him. (This is alluded to in the Mishnah's instruction to search for chametz "by the light of a lamp," which resonates with "A mitzvah is a lamp, and Torah is light.")

Other halachic details fall into place. While most forbidden items become permissible when mixed in with a much larger quantity of permitted material, chametz is different. The smallest amount of chametz contaminates a much larger mixture on Pesach.

Evil corrupts. No amount of it can be tolerated or safely dealt with. The yetzer hora acts like rot. The smallest quantity can infect healthy material, and spread its disease. Like gangrene to the body, it must be stopped, or it will take over.

We also understand, in a different way than we did above, why one opinion insists on eliminating chametz specifically by burning it. Toras Avos offers an analogy. Imagine a person who must clear a large stand of trees. Laboriously, his axe fells them, one at a time. After a while, he realizes that he can never complete the job in his lifetime.

He has another option. A controlled burn can clear a huge tract in a small amount of time. He can light a large fire that can burn all the unwanted trees in one vast conflagration.

Shabbos Hagadol - Peace

Jonathan Groskopf

הנה אנכי שלח לכם את אליה הנביא לפני בוא יום ה' הגדול והנורא והשיב לב-אבות על-בנים ולב בנים על-אבותם

The last Posuk of this haftorah, which concludes Malachi's prophecy, says that the prophet Eliyahu will come and "return" the hearts of fathers to their sons and vice versa.

Rashi indicates that fathers will return to Hashem's ways and keep the mitzvot because of their children, who have "rediscovered" their religion.

Bino Hamikro'os notes that fathers will "rediscover" Hashem and inspire their children to become religious.

Redak says that Eliyahu will usher in a time of peace between the generations, as both parents and their children will be at peace with each other.

May we experience inter-generational peace, and Eliyahu on Pesach night be the harbinger of the final redemption. Omein!

Chodesh Nissan - Lucky 13

Richard Danziger

(Based on a shiur by Rabbi Daniel Glatstein)

בְּיוֹם־הַחֲדָשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּאַחַד לַחֲדָשׁ תִּקְוִים אֶת־מִשְׁכַּן אֱהֶל מוֹעֵד

This possuk is unusual but also almost impossible to translate

simply. This possuk refers to the Mishkan being erected on Rosh Chodesh Nissan – "on the day of the first month, on the first of the month". But it doesn't say "on the first month, on the first day" – why the strange order for the possuk?

Another question on Chodesh Nissan. Very famously (and well loved) there is no tachanun the whole month. Meseches Sofrim asks why do we not say tachanun the whole month? The first 12 days of Nissan were when the Nissim brought their korbonos at the inauguration of the Mishkan, so each of the first 12 days is like a mini-Yom Tov. Erev Pesach is another mini-Yom Tov (as we see we have some halachos of Yom Tov after chatzos on erev Pesach), followed by the chag of Pesach itself and then isru Chag. The Beis Yosef says since the majority of the month has no tachanun, we therefore don't say it the entire month.

But we can ask a basic kasha - since when does the halacha of tachanun of a month follow the rov? Many Acharonim comment on this and ask why don't we say tachanun on the 13th? The 13th of Nissan seems a "vanilla" day. Seemingly we have no rov – it seems like we are combining from the 1st to the 12th and then the 14th to Isru Chag to create a rov, but we have a gap of the 13th in the middle?

We have a similar issue in Chodesh Tishrei. Really between all the days of Rosh Hashana, erev Yom Kippur and Yom Kippur, the days between Yom Kippur and Sukkos and Sukkos itself we have a rov – however we still say tachanun during the Aseres Yemei Teshuva, and following Sukkos (according to many minhogim – ed.). There are 15 days in Tishrei without tachanun – we can answer either 15 out of 30 isn't a rov, or we don't follow rov when it comes to tachanun – or we don't make a rov from miut and miut.

Therefore, there must be some lynchpin simcha that occurred on the 13th of Nissan for which we don't say tachanun that makes a full, consecutive non-tachanun month until after Pesach.

Several reasons are brought by the mefarshim why we don't say tachanun on 13 Nissan.

Sefer Haminhagim says the 13th is the isru chag of the korbonos of the Nissim.

The Shla Hakodesh says the 13th is knegged Shevet Levi – even though shevet Levi didn't bring a korban at the inauguration, their chelek was the menorah and that is commemorated on the 13th. The Chasam Sofer says the 13th is when Avraham Avinu performed his bris mila (since the melachim came on 1st day Pesach which was the 3rd day following his bris). Or the last nassi to bring his korban was actually brought over 2 days.

R' Chaim Portowicz brings a gemara in Pesachim (daf י"ג!) that says the 13th of Nissan had more korbonos offered than other day in the year. This was the day when people came to offer all their various nedarim, todos, shlamim etc before they couldn't do so on erev Pesach.

R' Glatstein himself says the 13th of Nissan was the day that Haman drew his goral to schedule the annihilation of the Jewish people for 11 months later in Adar. He thought he was scheduling destruction but really he was scheduling Purim!

The Sefer Rokeach argues on the Beis Yosef when it comes to rov for tachanun. Rather he says that we know in the future the Beis Mikdash will be rebuilt in Chodesh Nissan (may we see it soon!). Based on his understanding of the gemara, the geulah will occur on 1st day Pesach, since that day is when we were originally redeemed. The last 7 days of Nissan are reserved for the inauguration of the Beis Hamikdash since we can't mix the simcha with the existing simcha of Chag HaPesach. Therefore we don't need to rely on the Beis Yosef's svara of rov – according to the Rokeach, every single day of Nissan has some aspect of simcha and we don't need to rely on rov.

A Lesson Learned

Rabbi Raymond Beyda (Torah.org)

"Go and ascertain what Laban the Aramean intended to do to Yaakov our Patriarch" Hagaddah Shel Pesach

The instruction given by the author of the Hagaddah to go and

learn from the story of Laban requires that we ask "What is the great lesson that he expects us to learn?" Furthermore, he does not give us an answer. Instead we are presented with a recital of the history of Yaakov Abinu a'h from his days living with Laban until he descended to Egypt with his family. What do I learn from that well-known series of events?

Rabbi Don Yitzhak Abarbanel zt'l points out that Laban did not perpetrate any acts of destruction upon Yaakov and his family – all of his evil was in his mind. It was only through an analysis of his words that we understood his wicked intentions. It was through the kind intervention of G-d that the destruction was prevented. The promise to Abraham Abinu – that his offspring would live and prosper through the special providence of Hashem – was the factor that saved Yaakov from harm and that same Hashgaha – protection – has protected Jews throughout history.

The Vilna Gaon takes this point one step further. The thing we must "Go out" to learn is that Hashem does miracles for us – even though we are not aware of His intervention on our behalf. There are "Ten Mentions" – zekhirot – that a Jew should remember to say every day. They include the Exodus from Egypt, the Shabbat and what Hashem did to Miriam when she spoke Loshon Hara about her brother Moshe Rabenu. One of the things we must keep on our minds daily is "What Balak and Bilaam attempted to do to us when we were in the desert." Why is this on the list with other more outstanding events with obvious lessons?

The story of Bilaam is one of a gentile prophet hired by a King to curse the Jews. The King, Balak, saw that military might could not stand up to the Jews and so he devised a plan to fight fire with fire. The Jews were known for the power of their mouths – prayer – and so he hired one who was known for the power of his mouth – cursing. The one thing he did not take into consideration was G-d's divine intervention for His beloved Chosen People. Every curse turned out to be a blessing. The Jews never met Balak and they were not privy to his failed attempts. G-d's miracle on their behalf was unbeknownst to them – just as Yaakov's rescue from Laban by G-d was without his knowledge of what Laban was really thinking. This is the lesson of our history.

In every generation they rise up against us to destroy us. Sometimes it is an open display of hatred and actions that physically attempt to wipe us out. At other times it is wicked plans that we never discover because our Lord in His mercy derails the enemy's efforts and scuttles his plans without making headlines. "Go out and learn" to be thankful to G-d for all that He does to protect us from annihilation in every generation whether we see it or not.

Reaching the Level of Ahavas Chinam

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)

Rav Avraham Yitzchok HaKohen Kook (1865-1935), the first Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael in modern times, was an outstanding genius, but he was a controversial figure. Certain rabbinic personalities of the "old yishuv" took issue with many of his ideas and positions. Rav Kook was speaking somewhere, and one of the zealots started yelling at him in the middle of his drasha. The outburst did not faze Rav Kook – he continued with his drasha – but it was certainly a bizayon for this Torah giant.

Later that same year, Pesach time rolled around. Rav Kook distributed maos chittim [kimcha d'Pischa – i.e., charity funds for the Passover holiday] to those with financial needs for the upcoming holiday. He presented hisgabbai[secretary] with a list of the poor people to whom the charity funds should be distributed. Lo and behold, this very zealot who had so inappropriately embarrassed the Chief Rabbi earlier that year, was on the list to receive maos chittim.

The secretary told Rav Kook, "I refuse to give him the money! How could you give such a person money after what he did to you?" Rav Kook told hisgabbai, "If you do not deliver the money to him, I will!" The Chief Rabbi explained his rationale for giving him the money: Chazal say that theBeis HaMikdash was destroyed

because of sinas chinam. There is a famous maxim that if theBeis HaMikdash was destroyed because of sinas chinam, the only way it will be rebuilt is with ahavas chinam.

Rav Kook explained: Ahavas chinam means that you like the person for no reason, just like sinas chinam means that you hate the person for no reason. But Rav Kook analyzed as follows: When one Jew loves another Jew for "no reason," that is not really ahavas chinam, because there is amitzvahof vahavta l'reyacha ka'mocha [love your fellow Jew like yourself]. I need to love every Jew according to Biblical law. Thus, the fact that I love another Jew cannot be called ahavas chinam – that is an ahava for which we are bound by oath from the time of Har Sinai! What then is ahavas chinam, asked Rav Kook? It is when a person insults you and embarrasses you, and you have every justification in the world to put him on your 'enemies' list and to totally ignore him, and nevertheless you show him love and compassion, and give him money when he is in need. That is ahavas chinam.

Pesach is approaching. During Nisan, the Jews were redeemed, and in Nisan we are destined to be redeemed. This is the time to practice "ahavas chinam." This is conjecture on my part, but perhaps this is why Rav Kook waited until before Pesach to give him money. He specifically wanted to do an act of ahavas chinam for which we will merit the rebuilding of theBeis HaMikdash – during the month that we are destined to be redeemed.

The Ben Ish Chai cites an insight on the following question from the Mah Nishtana: "On all other nights we do not dip even once; tonight, we dip two times." The Ben Ish Chai explains that one dipping commemorates "And they dipped the tunic in blood" [Bereishis 37:31], and the other one commemorates "You shall take a bundle of hyssop and dip it into the blood..." [Shemos 12:22]. One time we dip at the Seder to commemorate the brothers taking Yosef's coat and dipping it in blood; the second time we dip at the Seder commemorates the bundle of hyssop (agudas eizov) that we dipped in blood in Egypt on the night prior to the Exodus. The Ben Ish Chai comments: If we want to atone for the sin of hatred between brothers, the way to do this is to take an "agudas eizov", i.e., to come together as an agudah achas (a unified group) which will do Your Will with total dedication.

Tisha B'Av is normally the time that we talk about ahavas chinam. However, as we all know, the truth of the matter is that there is a tremendous connection between Tisha B'Av and Pesach. The first day of Pesach always falls on the same day of the week as the coming Tisha B'Av. Please G-d, Pesach this year will start on a Friday night, the first day of Pesach is Shabbos. That is also the day on which Tisha B'Av falls this year (although the fast and other observances are pushed off until Sunday). We know, likewise, that we eat an egg by the Seder, to remind us of the Destruction of the Temple, to remind us of Tisha B'Av. There is thus a thematic connection between Pesach and Tisha B'Av.

This is the connection, says the Ben Ish Chai: If we want to achieve atonement for the sin of dipping Yosef's tunic in blood, if we want to merit the promised redemption in Nisan, the way to achieve that is "and you will take a bundle of hyssop" – to forget some of our petty differences, and to in fact come together b'agudah achas, so that, Please G-d, "we will eat there from the sacrifices and the Paschal offerings" speedily in our days, Amen.

Telling Others

Rabbi Yehudah Prero (Torah.org)

Question: Why, before we start with the four sons, which illustrates our obligation of telling to others, do we bless Hashem in the passage of Baruch HaMakom?

Answer: This section really begins with the Four Sons. Before we discuss the four sons, the Hagada blesses Hashem and his Torah in Baruch Hamakom. The reason for this, the Ritva explains, is because all that we know about the four sons does not come from one location in the Torah. It comes from three different verses, Pesukim, which are located in different parts of the Torah. Yet, we see that the Torah does contain all that is to be said on this

subject, and therefore we bless Hashem for giving us a complete Torah, Torah Shelaimah.

The second son mentioned is the Rasha, the wicked son. When asking his question, the Rasha excludes himself from being part of the nation of Israel. Therefore, our response to him is that if he had been in Egypt and had been redeemed for this very reason. If one looks closely at the verses used to answer the four sons, one would notice that the same verse is used to answer both the Rasha and the She'aino Yode'a Lish'ol – the one who does not know how to ask. However, by the She'aino Yode'a Lish'ol, the negative and exclusionary implications are not present. Why is this so?

The Sifsei Chachamim notes that in Egypt, Hashem only performed miracles for the righteous, who knew and observed the Torah. The ignorant were saved and redeemed only in the merit of the righteous. The wicked, however, were not to be taken out at all. The merit of the righteous could not save them. Therefore, the response to the Rasha and the She'aino Yode'a Lish'ol are the same: The miracles were performed for me -Li- and not for you. For the Rasha, this meant dying in Egypt. For the She'aino Yode'a Lish'ol, this meant redemption in the merit of the righteous. It is for this reason the exclusionary implications of the verse are only mentioned by the Rasha.

The third son that is mentioned is the Tam, the simple son. The Abarbanel comments that if one examines the context of Parshas Bo, from where the answer to the Tam was taken, one can tell what motivated the question. The verse says V'haya ki yish'alcha bincha..., "and it will be when your son asks you by saying 'What is this?' and you will say to him 'Hashem took us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.'" The Tam was asking his question with a pure heart, innocently, without any evil implications. He wanted to know "What is this?" The only thing holding the Tam back from understanding the mitzvah is his simplemindedness.

The verse quoted as the answer to the "She'aino Yode'a Lish'ol is "Ba'avur Zeh...". Rashi says the meaning of the verse is "Because I will keep the mitzvos such as Pesach and matzo, Hashem took me out of Egypt." This understanding seems odd. One would think we do the mitzvos of Pesach, matzo, and maror BECAUSE we were taken out of Egypt. Rashi, however, seems to say that we were taken out of Egypt because of the mitzvos. How can this be?

Reb Yerucham Levovitz answered this question. He explained that one must truly understand why miracles are performed. In the case here, Hashem performed miracles for us so that we would be able to fulfill the mitzvos of Hashem. The fact is not that we were taken out and therefore we perform mitzvos. We were taken out of Egypt because and in order for us to do mitzvos. Hence, we were taken out of Egypt because of the mitzvos of matzo and maror. Our departure was a means to an end.

This section of Maggid concludes with the source of the obligation of Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim, telling about our departure from Egypt, in conjunction with V'higadita L'vincha, telling your son Rashi explains that one might think he has to speak to his sons about the departure at least by Rosh Chodesh Nissan. This is because of the fact that in reality, we have an obligation to discuss the laws of Pesach, Sho'alim V'Dorshin, 30 days beforehand. This would hold true if the verse had only said V'higadita L'vincha. With the addition of the words Bayom Hahu, on that day, we might say that from the time on that day we become obligated to bring the Korban Pesach, the Pesach sacrifice, we also have an obligation of telling to our children. Therefore, the Torah adds the words Ba'avur ZEH...: you are not obligated to tell your son the Hagada until you are visibly able to show him Matzo ZU, Maror ZU, THIS matzo and THIS maror. This is only when they are sitting before you at the Seder. Hence, this is the only time the mitzvah of V'higadita L'vincha applies.

After demonstrating the first difference in the Mitzvah of telling over about the redemption from Egypt tonight, that being the obligation to tell others, the Hagada will continue with the second difference: the relation of the chain of events leading to our

redemption.

A Whole World

Rabbi Label Lam (Torah.org)

"And you shall tell your child on that day ..." Shemos- Quoted in the Haggadah Shel Pesach

Regarding four sons the Torah speaks, One Wise, One Wicked, One Simple, and One who does not know how to ask... Haggadah Shel Pesach

The Haggadah is presumably in its words. Why then, when counting the four sons does the Haggadah need to say the word "one" before each of the four sons. Either count them 1 2 3 4 or don't count them at all! Why refer to each one as "one"?! A story is told about two brothers living different lives. One lived in America and he was a successful businessman and he an extremely wealthy person. Unfortunately, though, he and his wife did not merit having any children. His brother lived in Meah Shearim in Jerusalem. He was very poor and living under the most austere with his wife and twelve children. Their lives and lifestyles could not have been more different.

One day the brother in America called his brother in Jerusalem and offered him a "business" deal that was hard to resist. "You have twelve children and you are living in poverty. I am a multi-millionaire but I have no children. I propose that you give me one of your twelve children and I give you a million dollars. That way your life will be greatly improved and my will be enriched by having one of your twelve children."

The brother in Jerusalem talked it over with his wife and thought about it deeply and decided that they would agree to the "business" deal. Lawyers were subsequently engaged and papers were drawn up and signed by both sides. A date was set that the transaction would be required to occur. A child would be sent to the brother in America and then the money would be released into the bank account of the brother in Jerusalem.

The fateful night arrived and the brother living in Jerusalem with twelve children was tasked with choosing which child they would part with. When all the children were fast asleep he and his wife made their rounds. Peeking at each one under the covers one after one they looked at each other and shook their heads with a "no". They made the circuit again and again and were unable to choose a child to part with. After agonizing for the entire night, at dawn they made a dramatic decision.

They called the brother in America and told him that the deal was off. The brother in America was irate. "We have a deal. We signed legal documents binding us to the deal. By tomorrow you can have a million dollars in your bank account. You just can't back out like that! Everybody is legally bound to the agreement. You signed!"

The brother in Jerusalem acknowledged that he had signed a legal document but he pointed out a faulty premise that he had discovered in the agreement. He explained, "It begins by describing that I have twelve children. It's not true! As my wife made our rounds that night agonizing over which child we would send away, we realized that we don't have twelve children. We have One Shmuli, One Racheli, One Dovi, One Rivky, One Chaim etc. Each one is a ONE!"

So too on Seder Night we have a sacred obligation to speak not to an aggregate of children or to lecture and pontificate to a family but rather to speak each and every child. Each child is a one. We cannot afford and dare not risk leaving go of, and parting company with even one. Here are two signs I hung in the teachers' room. One read, "Every child in your class is somebody's entire world." The other one says, "A parent is only as happy as their unhappiest child!" Scoring 11 out of 12 in general education may be OK but in parenting each one is – a whole world.

Forget Your Belt... It's Time to Go

Rabbi Moshe Peretz Gilden (Torah.org)

Every year around early July, Eitan Aronovitch and his family in the Har Nof neighborhood of Jerusalem prepare for a large feast. The kitchen bustles with activity as the finishing touches are added

to the succulent spread. All are dressed impeccably; a holiday spirit is in the air. By all appearances this is a normal pre-holiday scene. But something is strangely missing: belts. No one is wearing belts! There is not a belt to be found anywhere in the home. They are preparing to celebrate "The Holiday of the Belt".

Eitan Aronovitch was one of the hostages from the Air France flight hijacked in the summer of 1976 and brought to Entebbe. The Jewish passengers were immediately separated and shepherded into a different room in the airport. They spent their nights on the cold, hard floor. Eitan removed his glasses and his belt to afford himself minimal comfort while he slept.

Suddenly, the door crashed open! Everyone woke up with a frightful jolt. "Israel Defense Forces! Everyone out! GO! GO! GO!" Eitan, in a panic, groped through the dark and found his glasses. "Where's my belt?" "Forget the belt!" shouted a soldier. "The plane is leaving." Eitan raced out and joined the flight to freedom.

When Eitan returned home, he asked his Rabbi how to appropriately celebrate his appreciation of G-d's Divine Providence and obvious miracle. The Rabbi explained the parallel to our celebration on Pesach (Passover) of the Exodus from Egypt. Pesach is known as the "Holiday of the Matzos" because, as the Torah describes, the Jews were in such a hurry to leave they did not have sufficient time for the dough to rise. Thus, we eat matza, unleavened bread. In the same way we use matzos to celebrate our swift salvation, so, too, Eitan was instructed to celebrate the swiftness of his rescue with an absence of belts.

The month of Nissan is intrinsically a time of redemption, and the Messiah's arrival, which is due to occur in Nissan, will mirror the exodus from Egypt in its suddenness. We will be called upon to drop our possessions and greet him wherever he may be.

The illustrious Chassidic legend, Rabbi Nochum of Chernobyl, was spending the evening at an inn and awoke at midnight to recite the Midnight Prayer. The innkeeper, frightened by the impassioned crying, ran in asking for an explanation. "I am mourning the destruction of the Holy Temple and am praying for the Messiah to come." The innkeeper's wife wanted the rabbi to stop; they had just finished paying for their farm and livestock and had no desire to leave it all behind to go to Jerusalem. Rabbi Nochum reminded her that the Cossacks could come at any time and confiscate all of their possessions, so she might as well look forward to redemption. "Rabbi," she responded, "you may continue to pray for the Messiah. Just tell him to come and bring the Cossacks to Jerusalem!"

We recite at the beginning and end of our Seder, "Next year in Jerusalem!" but are we REALLY waiting for the Messiah to come? Are we ready to leave everything behind? When the door bursts open and it's time to go, let us be sure not to miss the plane while we grope for our belts.

The Symphony Of Life

Rabbi Pinchas Avruch (Torah.org)

"For a six-day period you shall eat matzos and on the seventh day shall be an assembly to the L-rd, your G-d; you shall not perform any creative work." (Deuteronomy/Devarim 16:8) This seventh day is the day that G-d split the Sea of Reeds (often mislabeled the Red Sea) for the Jews, and drowned the Egyptians who chased after them. After the Jews were saved, the Torah records the song they sang as thanks to and praise of G-d. This song is prominent in Jewish life; it is repeated in its entirety in our daily morning prayers. The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 23:4) states that prior to the splitting of the sea no one had sung to G-d as the Jews did in response to this miraculous salvation. Many commentators are troubled by this Midrash since we do have records of earlier songs, including Psalm 92, the psalm honoring the Shabbos day, which is attributed to Adam. What was so unique about the Song at the Sea that our Sages' consider it the first? And why is there a continued emphasis on that song today?

Rabbi Gedaliah Schorr explains that this song excels because it is the first time that the depth and magnificence of the message

draws on the full essence of the beauty of music. A song is comprised of many notes – some high, some low, some euphoric, some discordant. Each note on its own is nothing special. The beauty of song is bringing together all the individual notes and chords to create something magnificent. A song without the low notes would lack richness and beauty. Similarly, our own lives are replete with many experiences – high points and low points – that comprise the symphony of life. With our finite, human perspective we do not appreciate the reason for the low points and would prefer the song of life to be without them. All of the songs written in praise of G-d prior to this one were expressions of gratitude for the evident blessings and high points in life.

With the Egyptians drowned in the sea and real freedom finally at hand, the Jews now appreciated there was a reason for the decades of suffering they had endured. The low points helped testify to the glory of G-d in the song of life; the song would be incomplete without them. For the first time, a song praising G-d included praising Him for the events one may perceive to be bad. Thus, we continue to emphasize that song today. It constantly reminds us that whether we understand it or not, there is a purpose behind life's challenges and in due time we will understand and appreciate the beauty of every aspect of our lives.

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.

Sfas Emes on Pesach

Dr. Nosson Chayim Leff (Torah.org)

The Sfas Emes on Pesach is very rich: 69 double-columned pages in small Rashi script. The Sfas Emes has so much to say on Pesach that my best effort to transmit here is like taking a spoonful of water from the ocean.

Why do I mention how much more Sfas Emes is available? Because being aware of how much more Sfas Emes is out there, some members of this Chabura may realize that the time has come to

purchase their own set of Sfas Emes. I suggest that you view this purchase as an investment in mind-stretching Divrei Torah – an afikoman present for the entire family. Owning your own copy of the Sfas Emes will increase your access to his ideas. And better access to the ideas of the Sfas Emes will help you (and your family) avoid a malady to which observant Jews are all too susceptible – religious stagnation.

Before we begin this ma'amar, it helps to have an idea of what to expect. The ma'amar is crafted along three themes: past and present; the individual and the klal (the collectivity); emes (provable truth) and emuna (unprovable truth). These three themes weave in and out of the ma'amar, giving it a rare beauty. Finally, toward the end of the ma'amar, expect an extraordinary khap – intellectual coup – such that only the Sfas Emes could deliver.

In his very first ma'amar on Pesach, the Sfas Emes quotes a text from the Haggada: "Bechol dor vador chayav (!) ahdam lir'os es atzmo ke'ilu HU yatza miMitzrayim." That is, in each generation, a person must (!) view himself as having personally experienced the Redemption from Egypt. The Sfas Emes takes this mandate seriously. This leads to a basic question: what should a person do to reach this esired – more accurately: mandated – goal? The Sfas Emes answers that a two-step process is involved. The first step is to realize that, in reality, every generation experiences its own version of the Redemption from Egypt. With that belief under our belt, the Sfas Emes tells us, we can in fact relive the original, prototypical ge'ula as a personal experience.

The Sfas Emes now elaborates on this idea: i.e., that we are enjoined to relive the experience of our Liberation from Egypt. That Liberation involved much more than escape from physical and political subordination to the Egyptians. Redemption also included escape from the tum'a of Egyptian culture and intellectual life.

Continuing with this theme of experiencing Redemption, the Sfas Emes quotes a statement of the Maharal. The Maharal tells us that "bevadai" ("certainly") we all participated in the experience of the Redemption from Egypt as a klal (i.e., the Jewish People as a collectivity). But the Haggada is telling us more than the fact that we experienced Redemption as a collectivity. In mandating: "ke'ilu HU yatzami Mitzrayim", the Haggada is telling us that we must also experience Liberation on an individual, personal level.

How does a person achieve that much more difficult goal of reliving the Redemption from Egypt at an individual, personal level? The Sfas Emes answers: by joining the collectivity. (Note: The idea that an individual can achieve personal religious fulfillment by joining the collectivity is a startling paradox. Anyone but the Sfas Emes would steer clear of such an apparent internal contradiction. By contrast, the Sfas Emes explicitly recognizes the seeming inconsistencies that HaShem built into the world. In fact, he gives them center stage.)

How does an individual become part of the collectivity? With emuna! by truly believing that we were redeemed from the galus of Mitzrayim, we can re-live the actual experience. Once we affirm our membership in the collectivity, we can access this experience on an individual basis. A fair question here is: how does this process work (in the real world)? That is, how does having emuna enable an individual to become part of a collectivity?

I suggest the following explanation. By definition, emuna involves affirmation of ideas that cannot be proven. Hence, choosing to accept a given set of ideas sets a person apart from people who do not give credence to those ideas. By the same token, choosing to accept those ideas puts the person together with people who affirm the same thoughts as he. Thus, affirming a set of unprovable ideas – i.e., emuna – enables an individual to join the collectivity of klal Yisroel. (Notice how commonsensical are these ideas of the Sfas Emes once we make the effort to take them seriously.)

The Sfas Emes has articulated two conditions for experiencing personal liberation. He makes it clear that both conditions involve emuna; i.e. affirmation of an unprovable truth. Note that mesora

(father to offspring tradition) is not enough for the Sfas Emes. As he sees the world, emuna is necessary to arrive at the emes. What are the two conditions for which – in this context – emuna is required? A person must view himself as having participated (past tense) in the Redemption. And he/she must have the emuna to recognize that, were it not for the Redemption, he/she would not have a relationship with HaShem. With these two emuna conditions satisfied, a person will realize that indeed he is (present tense) being liberated.

We can now sum up on this line of analysis. The Sfas Emes has told us that every generation has its 'Yetzi'as Mitzrayim' (Exodus from Egypt). The Redemption varies with the specific situation and needs of the generation. (Note: Redemption implies prior enslavement. What do you see as the nature of enslavement of the present generation?) Further, the Sfas Emes has told us that, to the degree that a person has emuna that he experienced (past tense) the Liberation from Egypt, so too, can he feel (present tense) the Redemption of his own generation. And so, too, can each individual experience Liberation from his own personal constraints.

"Constraints"? How did "constraints" get into this discussion? The answer stretches one's mind, for it is a typical Sfas Emes chidush. To understand the answer, we must go back to basics. The word "Mitzrayim:" is usually translated as "Egypt." But with ko'ach ha'chidush such as only the Sfas Emes can deploy, he reads the word 'Mitzrayim' in a totally innovative way. The Hebrew word "meitzar" means "constraint" or "limit". The Sfas Emes is reading "Mitzrayim" as being the plural of of the word "metizar". Thus, "yeti'as mitzrayim" has become: "liberation from one's constraints". The Sfas Emes does not spell out what he has specifically in mind when he refers to personal constraints that Pesach teaches us can be overcome. I suggest that he is referring to long-standing attitudes, ingrained assumptions, and habits that too often constrain a person's growth.

A final question. Viewing Pesach as a time for Liberation from one's personal constraints is fine and good if the constraints are in fact loosened. But does it make sense to talk of "Liberation" in a case where the constraints are NOT loosened? For example, consider a case in which the constraint derives – cholilo (God forbid) – from an incurable medical handicap. Does the Sfas Emes's perspective on Pesach as a time for Liberation from a person's individual constraints apply there too?

I believe the answer is: yes! How so? A major theme in the Sfas Emes's Torah is the need to pierce the Hester with which HaShem cloaks Himself. Piercing the Hester enables a person to view reality accurately. A prominent case in which the Sfas Emes applies this insight is in the context of seeing the hand of HaShem where an untutored eye would see only Nature (teva).

This observation implies that the Sfas Emes's perspective certainly does apply to the case of the person afflicted with an incurable handicap. Knowledge that his condition comes from HaShem (rather than from mindless Nature) implies that his condition is purposeful. This awareness gives meaning to what the person is undergoing. It transforms his experience, and makes it a wholly different condition. Thus, getting the metaphysics of the situation right provides Liberation in its own special way.

This Sfas Emes is rich – in fact, so rich that one cannot hold on to it. One way to handle this situation of overflowing insights is to focus on some thoughts that speak to one with special force. Tastes, interests, and background vary, so there is no single list of Sfas Emes thoughts that will serve for everyone. But to stimulate your own thinking about "take home" Sfas Emes thoughts, here are two suggestions. One unique and powerful Sfas Emes idea is the notion that every generation experiences its own enslavement and Redemption. Another powerful new idea is the thought that Pesach is a time for individuals to break out of their personal constraints and grow.

Ohr Yerushalayim
invites you to
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On last day Yom Tov between
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Shammai Fletcher

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**Ohr Yerushalayim is
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1st Day

R' Elchonon Newman

2nd Day

R' Shimon Kaplin

7th Day

Saul Bursk

Davening Times

תענית בכורים

Shacharis & Siyum	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
בדיקת חמץ	8.46pm

Friday

Burn Chometz Before	11.42am
Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.00pm
Candle Lighting	7.09pm - 7.25pm

שבת פ' צו

Shacharis	7.00am
Eat Chometz until	10.12am
Say Kol Chamiroh by	11.41am
Mincha followed by דסר לימוד	7.45pm

ליל א' פסח

Maariv & Kabbolas Yom Tov	8.57pm
Candle Lighting	No earlier than 8.57pm

יום א' פסח

Shacharis	9.15am
Mincha followed by a Shiur by R' Elchonon Newman	7.50pm

ליל ב' פסח

Maariv	8.59am
Candle Lighting	No earlier than 8.59pm

יום ב' פסח

Shacharis	9.15am
Mincha followed by a Shiur by R' Shimon Kaplin	7.50pm
Maariv & Motzei Yom Tov	9.02pm

חול המועד

Shacharis Tues - Fri	7.00am / 8.30am / 9.30am
Mincha & Maariv	8.00pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

ליל ז' פסח

Mincha & Kabbolas Yom Tov	7.10pm
Candle Lighting	7.20pm - 7.25pm

יום ז' פסח

Shacharis	9.15am
Mincha followed by Shiur by Saul Bursk	7.55pm

ליל ח' פסח

Maariv	9.12pm
Candle Lighting	No earlier than 9.12pm

אחרון של פסח

Shacharis	9.15am
Mincha followed by נעילת החג	7.45pm
Maariv & Motzei Yom Tov	9.14pm

Mon אסרו חג (Bank Holiday)	7.10am / 8.10am / 9.30am
Tues / Wed / Fri	7.20am / 8.00am / 8.30am
Thurs	7.10am / 8.00am / 8.30am
Mincha & Maariv	7.20pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm