



Pesach 5775

April 3, 2015

A Taste of Torah

Baby Food

By Rabbi Akiva Stern

A young boy is taken by his parents to the airport for the first time. After passing through security, the boy stands, nose pressed to the window, fixated by the sight of enormous planes roaring off into the sky. After some time, his parents motion to him that it is time to go. The child begins to weep, as he doesn't want to leave this amazing sight. His parents lovingly explain to him that they are taking him somewhere far greater! They are taking him on the plane!

The *Moadim* (Jewish festivals) are not but celebrations of historical occurrences. They are times when we can harness the essence of every Yom Tov in a very real way. Sadly, much like the young child, we often watch those opportunities come and go and we lose the opportunity to take the ride of our lives. As spectators, we lose the chance to journey to new vistas and to access the personal growth each holiday offers us.

So the question begs, what is the essence of Pesach?

Generally, on the *Moadim* we focus on an ideal or activity which is normally considered valuable and praiseworthy. For instance, on Shavuot we focus on Torah study; on Rosh Hashana, G-d's kingship; on Yom Kippur, repentance, and so on. Rabbi Shimshon Pincus (1945-2001) notes that it is strange that on Pesach, something which is certainly permissible the rest of the year is proscribed with the strictest of prohibitions. Why is it that bread (leaven), the life giving substance generally so central to our Yom Tov meals, is considered so terrible on Pesach?

In addressing this question, Rabbi Pincus highlights for us one facet of the essence of Pesach. He begins by explaining that Pesach celebrates the formation of the Jewish Nation. During this time, we are likened to a newborn infant. An infant is born delicate and immune-compromised. The same hearty food that is healthy and provides sustenance for an adult would likely severely harm an infant. An environment that would be safe for a healthy adult, such as going outside

in 20-degree weather or being in proximity to someone who is mildly sick, could be disastrous for a newborn!

Anyone with taste buds will tell you that bread is more flavorful than matzah. The truest reason that human beings eat is for sustenance. Bread is the most basic food staple and provides the greatest sustenance. But, essentially, matzah provides the very same sustenance. Hence, the leaven in the bread which is prohibited on Pesach can be described as the nonessential flavor of the food. It makes the bread fluffy and delicious, but, really, the bread is no more nourishing than its matzah (no leaven) counterpart. The Sages liken the Evil Inclination to the leavening agent added to dough. This is because he consistently pressures us to focus on the non-essential "flavor" of life. He convinces us that the pursuit of fleeting pleasure is primary. But while these pleasures are certainly not our *raison d'être*, they are not generally forbidden. Within the parameters of Halacha, we are welcome to partake of both bread and the normal pleasures of life. When administered properly, these simple pleasures can actually bolster our spiritual state. Through allowing our bodies to enjoy the world G-d gave us, we can better focus our minds and spirits on G-d. But on Pesach, we are required to abstain from leaven.

In light of this, the picture begins to emerge. On Pesach, when we begin our yearly growth yet again, our spiritual constitution is fragile. It behooves us during this time of year to reflect upon our daily habits. If and when we recognize that we have a particular behavior which is dangerous or destructive to our overall goals (albeit totally permitted), it is within the spirit of the holiday to try and limit or quash those activities temporarily. By doing this, we align ourselves with the potential growth that can be found in the holiday of Pesach. We maintain our spiritual health and are able to take the Yom Tov of Pesach with us into the new cycle.

Stories For The Soul

A Bitter Seder

Two beggars, one a Jew and one a gentile, were traveling together. As they approached a town, the Jew informed the gentile that Pesach was fast approaching, and they'd be able to get a fine meal if they'd be invited to the home of one of the Jews of the town. "Just pretend you're Jewish, do as everyone else does, and you'll be treated to a fine meal," said the Jewish beggar, and gave the fellow a few tips on how to act.

The two of them were invited to different homes for first night of Pesach, and the gentile arrived hungry and looking forward to a fine feast. Much to his chagrin, however, after hearing kiddush and washing his hands, all he received a piece of celery dipped in salt water. His hosts then began to recite the Haggadah as he sat there longing for the meal. When the matzah was served, he was very happy; finally, now he'd get to eat!

Then they gave him a piece of horseradish for the *maror* (bitter herbs). The gentile, thinking it was a delicious food of some sort, took a big bite. What a shock when he discovered it was horseradish! The gentile had had quite enough; he fled the house, thinking that the entire meal consisted of bitter herbs.

Later, he met up with his Jewish comrade, who was happy and full from a good meal. The gentile, still quite upset, berated the Jew for having pulled the wool over his eyes. "Oy!" said the Jew. "If you had waited just a little longer, you would have had a fine meal, as I had!"

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov used this parable to describe life. Sometimes, we sit and wait for our big meal. We wait and wait, and we are rewarded with *maror*. But we need to realize that the *maror* is but a step before the feast! We need to have the patience and foresight to wait for the goodness that is to come later.

Kollel Happenings

INSIDE THE ALEPH-BAIS

There is a unique fascination with the Hebrew language and the aleph-bet. Mystical sources explain that the letters of the aleph-bet are the building blocks of the whole world. Discover the world of the aleph-bet with Rabbi Heyman in this informative, dynamic class. For time and location, contact rmh@denverkollel.org. Class will resume after Pesach break.

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Adopt-A-Bubby Program

Do you know of a senior – a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, neighbor, fellow congregant – who would benefit from a weekly phone call to schmooze, share a thought on the parsha or Jewish calendar, or just say hello? Do you have a few minutes a week to call a senior in the community and make a difference in the life of another? Contact the Denver Community Kollel's M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Adopt-A-Bubby program! Call Joyce Litzman at the Denver Community Kollel, at 303-820-2855, or email jlitzman@denverkollel.org.

A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SHACHNE SOMMERS

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Sunday nights, 7:40-8:30 pm, at the Kollel for men, 1516 Xavier, and Tuesday nights at the Southeast Kollel Torah center, 8-9 pm, for men and women. Class will resume after Pesach break.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By: Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Can you explain the reasoning for the four aforementioned customs of reciting *sim shalom* and *shalom rav*?

A: 1) The Sefardic custom to always recite *sim shalom* is straightforward; it is always the same. 2) The custom to recite *sim shalom* at *shacharis* only is because *Birchas Kohanim* (or the prayer in lieu of it) is recited then only; *sim shalom* is recited in conjunction with *birchas kohanim*. 3) The custom to recite *sim shalom* at *mincha* is because *birchas kohanim* could, at times, be recited at *mincha* (such as on a fast

day). At *ma'ariv*, though, *shalom rav* is said, since *birchas kohanim* is never recited at *ma'ariv*. 4) Those who recite *sim shalom* at *mincha* only on Shabbos is due to the reference to Torah in *sim shalom*, as the Torah is read at *mincha* on Shabbos.

This week's question: Which Torah readings are split up differently in Eretz Yisroel than in the Diaspora?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org

Ask the Rabbi

Pesach, Storage Boxes

Joseph Cohen wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

My wife and I are kashering are home for Passover for the first time this year. We are now purchasing Passover dishes, utensils, etc. My question is, when we remove the everyday dishes, where do they go? May we put them in the boxes that held the Passover dishes? Is it better for the Passover dishes to not come in contact with any surface that was touched by everyday dishes? Do we change the plastic containers in our kitchen drawers? Do we cover the inside of the cabinets?

Dear Joseph Cohen,

First of all, congratulations on you first "kosher for Passover" home. Many happy returns.

You can store clean everyday utensils in the Passover containers. After

Passover, you can put the Passover dishes back into the same containers. Just be careful not to get them mixed up.

It is customary to cover cupboards and utensil holders that were used during the year and will be used on Passover. If you can't do this or can't obtain new utensil holders, then remove the inserts, clean the drawers completely and put the Passover cutlery directly into the drawer.

And by the way, I must warn you about one of the mysteries of Pesach: The Pesach utensils come out of a specific amount of storage space, and yet they never seem to all fit back in again! I have never found a rational explanation for this phenomenon!

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