

Pesach 2017 – Vorts for the Seder

1. Rav Shimshon Pincus (Tiferes Shimshon Haggadah pages 28-29): one of the main foundations of the Jewish religion is preparation. This is analogous to someone who is traveling a very far distance. When he reaches his destination he will be very tired. His maariv will most likely not have the most enthusiasm and intent. Let's offer a similar analogy with different results. There was a bachur (Yeshiva student) who traveled to his Yeshiva for Rosh Hashana. Let's say he made it right before Rosh Hashana, his maariv will most likely have a lot of enthusiasm and intent. What's the difference? The entire time he was traveling he was mentally preparing for Rosh Hashana. He was contemplating and anticipating what he should do. The Segula (omen) for having success is having proper preparation. Another example of this is a doctor who prepares, premeditates and thinks about the open heart surgery he is about to perform. So too, we need to prepare for our learning and davening. Before we daven we need to take time to think about what we are about to do. We need to take time to get in the proper mindset for serving Hashem. If we don't prepare we are limiting our potential for success.

This concept applies to the Seder as well. The only way we will have a successful Seder is if we prepare in advance. Could you imagine someone who is getting married but starts preparing the night before his wedding? We should minimally learn the basic explanation of the entire Haggadah. We should additionally prepare something to say.

2. Rav Chaim m'Brisk says Mah Nishtanah is part of the mitzvah of sipor (speaking about) yitzias (leaving) Mitzrayim (Egypt). It needs to be done specifically in question and answer form. The Shulchan Aruch Harav (siman 473 os 14) explains **the mitzvah of the Haggadah is to say it in question and answer form** as the pasuk says "your children will ask and you'll answer." (אמירת ההגדה מצותה לאומרה דרך תשובה על שאלות ששאלוהו שנאמר "כי ישאלך בנך וגו' ואמרת לבנך" (עבדים היינו וגו'. The Gemara in Pesachim (116a) says a fascinating Halacha. **The Gemara asks; does someone who has the Seder alone need to ask the questions of Mah Nishtanah? The Gemara answers he does. Why? What's the point of asking himself these questions? Rav Noah Oelbaum** (Minchas Chain on the Haggadah pages 87-88) suggests the following answer. The Haggadah says (see also Gemara Pesachim (116) and Rambam hilchos chametz and matzah perek 7 Halacha 6) in every generation a person is required to view himself as if he left Egypt! בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים, שנאמר "והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה" (עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים." The obvious question is; it really possible to view ourselves as if we left Egypt? This depends on feelings and is extremely difficult! However, since this is a chiyuv gamor (complete obligation), we therefore know it is possible. Leaving Egypt isn't just an occurrence of the past; rather it is something constant (at least annually). Therefore **in order to reach this level we need to have Pesach. The only way to view ourselves as if we left Egypt is through contemplating the redemption and miracles that Hashem performed on behalf of the Jews. Only by doing this we will be able to reach the level of seeing ourselves as leaving Egypt. This is why we specifically need to talk about the redemption in question and answer form. This format alludes to the reality that even after everything we learned the previous year; we still nevertheless didn't reach the pinnacle and summit of completely understanding the redemption from Egypt.** Even after we learned about the redemption in depth, we still nevertheless need to ask these questions. The more knowledge a person has, the more he needs to ask. **That's why we need to ask questions even if we are alone. By asking,**

we humble ourselves because we are essentially informing ourselves that there is so much more to learn. (The more knowledge a person has, the more he realizes there is so much more to learn.)

An additional answer is offered by the Sefer Lekach Tov (on the Haggadah) page 16. He quotes **Rabbi Reuven Melamed** (Tefilas Chana) who says listening is not the main point; rather, understanding what is being said is the main point. **Questions and answers lead to clarity. When someone asks a question he gains clarity, and similarly the one who answers also gains clarity. Even if someone asks and answers himself, he still gains clarity.** Let's offer a proof to this concept. Yaakov Aveinu asked himself "I raise my eyes upon the mountains; whence will come my help?" He answered himself "My help is from Hashem, Maker of heaven and earth." (Tehilim 111, 1-2) "אשא עיני אל ההרים מאין יבוא עזרי? עזרי מעם ה' עושה שמים וארץ."

3. Another fascinating question regarding Mah Nishtanah is, why are there are many other questions that aren't asked? **It is true that four important questions are asked, but why don't we ask why we drink four cups of wine? Why don't we ask why we say Hallel at night?**

a) The Rashbeitz answers that **children will only ask questions on major changes. For example, not being able to eat regular bread and needing to eat matzah. Similarly, the obligation to eat bitter maror is an apparent change. However, minor changes such as drinking wine, they will not question. Meaning, on any night of the year one could drink multiple cups of wine. Furthermore, we don't ask why we drink four cups of wine because these questions are asked only after drinking one cup of wine.** The kids will recognize inconsistencies and subsequently ask questions. However, if merely one cup is consumed, they will not ask a question.

b) The Vaygid Shmuel answers that **the answers to the questions of Mah Nishtanah is Avadim Hayenu (we were slaves). Only questions that will be answered this way are asked.**

4. **Regarding the afikoman the Rama (siman 476 sif 2) says that in a pressured circumstance you don't need to eat the matzah that was hidden, you can eat any Matzah.**

The Tur (siman 476 sif 6) relates the minhag (custom) of hiding the afikoman. He says to place the afikoman under the tablecloth. The Shulchan Aruch as well paskins (rules) this way. The Maharshah (Shailas and Tshuvos siman 88) says it's fitting to wrap the afikoman and put it between your pillow and chair. (Assuming it will not break) The Chaim L'Rosh says you should hide it between your pillow and chair by your head. (Assuming it will not break) The Pesach m'uviv says you put it under the table. The Chaim L'Rosh explains that we don't put food under tables, rather hide it in a place where it can be safely stored. **We clearly see from the aforementioned information that there is a custom to hide the Afikoman. Why?**

A. The Tur writes that this minhag is based on a pasuk in Shemos (12, 34). The pasuk states **when the Jews left Egypt "the people picked up its dough before it could become leavened, their leftovers bound up in their garments upon their shoulders."** ("וישא העם את בצקו טרם יחמץ") (משארתם צררת בשמלתם על שכמם). **Therefore to commemorate this we hide the afikoman.**

B. The Kol Bo (quoted by the Beis Yosef siman 473 sif 6) offers three answers. **We do this in order that the children ask why we are hiding the matzah and not eating it.** We answer them

to commemorate what we did when we left Egypt. (Similarly regarding many other questions that are asked regarding discrepancies on the Seder night, many times the answer is to get the children to ask!)

C. Another answer he suggests as to why we hide the matzah is **in order that the matzah will not accidentally get consumed before the time we should eat the Afikoman.**

D. Lastly, he says Yachatz is done early by **הא לחמא עניא**. **Just as a עני (poor person) doesn't have a full piece of bread; so too we hide the matzah to show that we don't have a full piece of bread as well.** This is done in order to demonstrate this is lechem (the bread of) oni (poor people).

E. Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum (Satmer Rebbe in his Haggadah Mahari Tov) explains that at the time of the Beis Hamikdash, the korban pesach was eaten when they were already satiated. However, due to our sins, the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed and we don't have a korban pesach anymore. We therefore have an afikoman which commemorates the korban pesach. **The afikoman is essentially a reminder that we sinned and don't have the korban pesach. That's why we hide the afikoman, to hide our sins.** As the pasuk in Tehilim (32, 1) states "Praiseworthy is one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered over." "אשרי נשוי פשע כסוי חטאה." When one sins he needs to remove and forget that sin. (The Chinuch (mitzvah 95) explains that the korban we bring for a sin offering gets completely burned. Similarly our sins need to be completely discarded.) Similarly regarding the afikoman, we need to hide our sins and then get rid of them!

F. The Meiri writes (Pesachim (114a)) that **the korban pesach was stored until after the korban chagigah in order that when we eat the korban pesach we will be satiated.** (The korban pesach is similar to dessert.) Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank (Mikrei Kodesh chelek beis siman 41) says **the afikoman corresponds to the korban Pesach. Just as the korban pesach was stored, so too we store the afikoman.**

Some have the custom to hide the Afikoman in a tallis. The Gnezai Yosef (siman 94) explains the reason for this. He says that Tefillin have four parshiyos, the Tallis has four corners, the lulav has four minim, and on pesach we drink four cups. On Pesach however we only have three matzos. We therefore break one matzah and put it away so it will be as if we have four matzos!

The Kaf Hachaim (siman 473 os 119 and 123) relates a minhag of some who wrap the matzah and tie it on a child's back. Subsequently the child knocks on a door and we ask who are you? He says I am a Jew. We ask where are you coming from? He says from Egypt. We ask where are you going? He says I'm going to Yerushalayim. We ask what are you carrying? He says matzah. Afterward, he says Mah Nishtanah and the others say Avadim Hayenu and we put away the afikomen.

5. The Haggadah quotes Rabbi Gamliel, who says **'anyone who did not say pesach, matzah and maror does not fulfill his obligation.'** (רבן גמליאל היה אומר כל מי שלא אמר שלשה דברים אלו) Hashem is praising the Jews who celebrate freedom via eating something bitter. Rabbi Gamliel says not only do we need to eat this bitter herb, but

also anyone who doesn't say maror doesn't fulfill his obligation. **The question arises, why is maror mentioned last? The bitterness happened first! These three are seemingly out of order!**

The Shemen Hatov (page 135) explains that **this serves as a warning. We shouldn't only retrospectively think that the bitterness, trials and tribulations we endured were logical. Rather, the maror was the geulah (redemption) itself and was a kindness bestowed upon the Jews by Hashem. It was only due to the maror that we didn't intermarry with the Egyptians.** 210 years in a foreign land, how did they remain pure and not intermarry? How did they remain like olive oil that doesn't mix with other liquids but rather floats atop? It was only because of the maror as the Pasuk in Shemos (1, 14) says the Egyptians made our lives bitter! ("וימררו את חייהם בעבדה קשה בחמר ובלבנים ובכל עבדה בשדה את כל עבדתם אשר עבדו בהם בפרך.") The Egyptians became our enemies. The obvious norm is to distance oneself from one's enemy. It goes without saying that they didn't want to marry their enemy! The maror was good for us. **We thank Hashem by putting the maror at the end of the phrase to show that pesach and matzah only came because of the maror!**

6. Rav Shimshon Pincus (Tiferes Shimshon page 233) discusses the uniqueness of matzah. The mitzvah of eating matzah is different from other consuming mitzvahs that we have. **Other mitzvahs that are dependent on eating are placed upon the gavra, the person. For example,** when we eat erev (the eve of) Yom Kippur there is a commandment for a person to eat, but there is no obligation to eat anything specific. There is a mitzvah to eat, but nothing specific. Another example is that we are commanded to eat in the Sukkah (medeoriasa (on a Torah level) on the first night of Sukkos) and we fulfill that by eating bread. The bread itself isn't the mitzvah, the mitzvah is placed upon us. **If a person eats korbanos however, the korban itself is a cheftzeh (object) shel (of a) mitzvah; it is a mitzvah to eat that meat. The mitzvah goes into our body and subsequently gives us life. When we eat matzah we are eating a cheftzeh shel mitzvah. That's why it is so geshmak! This is why we acquire such a great love and endearment towards mitzvos. We are eating a mitzvah! It becomes part of us. It gets absorbed in our blood and limbs. The matzah injects kedusha (holiness) into our body. It becomes a part of us and changes us.**

Thank you Yair Moshe Ausabel for typing this up.