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SHABBOS HAGODOL DROSHA 1981

The comparison between the recital when you brought Bi Kureem and the Haggadah. If you did not bring Bi Kureem you could still eat your crop but you would miss something. If a Jew does not celebrate Pesach he can still exist as a human being but he will miss something. Why don't we say a Brocha before we say the Haggadah? The two obligations a Jew has to the community and to personal Mitzvahs. The structure of the Haggadah. Zos Chukas HaPesach and Zos Chukas HaTorah. We are not sure he will stay a Jew until he makes a commitment.

SHABBOS HAGODOL 1983  
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

Pesach is a holiday which teaches us how to save the Jewish people from death. We do not say a brocha when we begin the Hagaddah because we are not sure that we will be able to secure the future of the Jewish people, but we do say it after we complete the reading before dinner. The central reading of the Hagaddah is the prayer for first fruits which is found in Deuteronomy. It speaks about how an Aramian tried to wipe out our father. This was more throught assimilation than physical death. We Jews must be willing to have a sign outside our doors, to be willing to stand up as Jews, not to feel inferior. We read the Zos Chucasa Torah. We also read the Zos Chucasa Pesach. The Chok of the Torah allows us to overcome the depression, etc. of death, and Zos Chucasa Pesach allows us to overcome the death of the Jewish people. A Chok is something which is immutable. You must just get in harmony with it. The Hagaddah teaches us how the Jewish people shall remain eternal.

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Pesach and Yomeem Naroem have a big hold on Jewish people. Yomeem Naroem concerned with individual. Zos Chukas Hatorah. An individual in order to overcome death needs others. That's why we gather together in big multitudes on Yomeem Naroem. Pesach concerned with our commitment to make sure that Israel doesn't die. We're not grouped together in large groups but as family. Every family has the obligation to make sure Jewish people lives. We can't put it on anyone else. The telling of the Hagadol based on Arami Oveed with the bikireen. Why? Because the peril of slavery even from a labor from assimilation. We must have hagoles Keikin before Pesach. Each of us must assume commitment to Mitzvas Zos Chakeen HaTorah and to Jewish people - Zos Chukas HaPesach. We also concerned about Eretz Israel. Argument about five cups. Didn't have fifth cup because we still don't have Israel. Hagaddah begins now here, next year is Israel. Why do we say Hallel on Pesach night? Because we're elevated. We've committed ourselves to Torah, to the Jewish people, and to the land of Israel.

In the Torah we have written out the commandment for saying the Haggadah. We learn it says "and you should tell your son on that day saying." This teaches us that we are to recite the Haggadah on Pesach. There is another sentence which says, "Remember this day that you went out from Egypt." Maimonides says that we need both these sentences to teach us the commandment of reciting the Haggadah. The sentence "and you should tell your son" you might think only applied if you have children. What happens if you have no children? What happens if you are alone? The other sentence tells us that even if we are alone you have to remember the Exodus from Egypt. In fact, the question can be asked, what is so special about remembering the Exodus from Egypt on the first night of Passover? We do it all the time. We do it in the Shma, when we put on Tephillin, in the Kiddush, etc. The Minchas Achinuk says that the difference is that on Pesach we have to do it in dialogue fashion. We have to ask questions. We have to delve deeply into it and even if there is nobody at the Seder you have to ask yourself the questions. The Rambam says that the word "Zochor" which is used for "remember this day" is the same word used for remembering the Sabbath. The Sabbath is different than the holidays because we have the authority to set the holidays. We can play with the calendar so that Yom Kippur never comes out on a Friday or a Sunday. Sometimes the new moon will actually be on a Sunday and we will not declare the new moon to be until Tuesday. The Torah gives us this right. However, Shabbos is different. Shabbos always has to come on the 7th day. Shabbos is an immutable law. Shabbos is a Chuk. Even if the United Nations would declare that two days of the year have no weekday so that Sunday will always come on the first and Saturday on the 7th, we could not accept it. Pesach, too, has some of the element of Chuk. That's why the Torah refers to Pesach as Zos Chukas HaPesach. This is the Chuk of the Pesach. We also learn the same expression, Zos Chukas HaTorah, with the red heifer. In Judaism death is the highest form of ritual defilement. Ritual purity has nothing to do with moral culpability, with doing wrong. Ritual impurity is really a psychological state. When a person feels helpless, that he cannot act

in the world, when he feels depressed, when he feels nothing is worth the effort, then he becomes ritually impure. This is what happens when you touch a dead body. It is a very great Mitzvah to touch a dead body, but it cannot help but leave you depressed. Our job in this world is to act, to be G-d's partner in creation. That's why we wake up after we sleep we have to wash our hands, not just for cleanliness, but because we become in a certain sense impure. We are passive. We cannot act. We are supposed to continue to act. The Chukas of the Torah allows us to act. They allow us to feel that we can accomplish things. This, too, is the meaning of the Korban Pesach. It tells us we are not slaves to some malevolent forces. Aries does not control us. The lamb does not control us. We can act. We can accomplish things. The Haggadah starts with Genus and ends with Sheva. The question is asked, why don't we say a Brocha before we begin the Haggadah? After all, we just cannot say that it is just because we are saying words. A lot of time when we say words we say a Brocha, like when we read the Megillah. We do not make a Brocha before the reading of the Haggadah because we are in a state of degradation and slavery, and we cannot be a part of G-d in creation. You have to first be filled with hope. We first must feel that we can accomplish things. When we make a blessing and we say, "Blessed are You, G-d, Who has redeemed us and our souls." Pesach talks not only about a physical redemption, but also about a redemption of our souls. Jews now believe that they can make a difference. They can act. Even in Auschwitz they had a Seder. Why should they have had a Seder in Auschwitz? They were not free until 1946, yet they continued to make a Seder because we are free inside. Since the time of the first Pesach we have known that we have been free inside. We can make a difference. The question is also asked, why don't we make a Brocha over Halel? We split Halel in half. The first part we say before the meal. This part deals with slavery, with Egypt. We cannot say a blessing because psychologically we are still slaves. The second part of the Haggadah deals with redemption, with making us know and feel that we do make a difference. We can act. We can be G-d's partner in creation. That's

why Pesach is known as Leil Shimureem, the night of watching. On this night we are not afraid. We do not even say the special prayers of the Shma when we go to bed because we know we have the capacity to act. We know that Judaism's message will eventually get through to the whole world. We know we will finally be a great redemption. That's, too, why we have to Hagoles Hekeleem, we have to clean all our vessels symbolic of cleaning ourselves from depression and passivity and feeling that we are useless and hopeless. That's the chometz we have to clean out of our system so that we can truly work with G-d to bring the great redemption, a day which we speak about in the second part of the Haggadah, a day in which even death will be overcome, when happiness and joy and naches will reign supreme. May this day soon come. Amen.

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This year the first day of Pesach comes out on a Shabbos. The question can be asked, why do we still eat matzah on Pesach since it comes out on Shabbos? After all, when the first day of Rosh Hashonna comes out on Shabbos we do not blow the shofar. When the first day of Succos comes out on Shabbos we do not take the lulav. Why should we eat matzah on the first day of Pesach since that is the main commandment of the day, as is blowing the shofar for Rosh Hashonna and taking the lulav on Succos? The Torah commands us to blow the shofar on Rosh Hashonna and to take the lulav on the first day of Succos just as it commands us to eat matzah. The rabbis have the power to negate a positive commandment if they think it will lead to violations. The rabbis cannot negate a commandment which has both a positive and a negative side, but they can a positive commandment. The rabbis tell us that we do not blow the shofar when it comes on Shabbos because a person will take the shofar to an expert to learn how to blow. The same applies to a lulav. Why shouldn't the same apply to matzah? There are special brochas to learn, etc. Why shouldn't we say a person cannot eat matzah on the first day because he will take it outside the prescribed limits because he will take it to an expert to learn how to say it properly? There is a difference between Rosh Hashonna, Succos, and Pesach because on Pesach we make the seder at night. On Rosh Hashonna we blow the shofar during the day, and on Succos we take the lulav during the day. This means that there would be no opportunity to violate Yontif by taking the matzah elsewhere since the very beginning of the holiday we eat the matzah. However, the question still is, is there, though, a deeper reason why we eat the matzah on Shabbos? Shabbos is different than the other holidays because Shabbos was set by G-d. We can never change it. There was a proposal years ago to make a uniform calendar, where the first day of the year would always be a Sunday and January 7th would always be a Saturday. This means there would always be two days a year that would not be counted and would always be holidays. This proposal was anathema to us because the 7th day would appear at different times in different years, sometimes Wednesdays and sometimes Thursdays. It would cause businesses to have a rough time and would be impossible for school, etc. The holidays are different. We declare the holidays. The rabbis have been given the authority to

declare the holidays. We can manipulate with the months' start so that Yom Kippur never comes on a Friday or Sunday. Sometimes the Molad will be declared on Tuesday and Rosh Chodesh will not come until Thursday. The holidays were given to teach us specific messages: Rosh Hashonna to improve ourselves, Succos to always feel joy in life, Shavuot the importance of the Torah. Pesach was given to teach us that we must be G-d's partner in perfecting this world. In fact, that is the message of Shabbos, too. We say we are given Shabbos for two reasons: to remember the creation of the world, and also to remember the Exodus from Egypt. Shabbos, the rabbis say, is a foretaste of the world to come. Shabbos not only commemorates G-d's creation, but the way the world can be if we will but do our job. This is the message of Pesach, too, to take the world from darkness to light. That's why the seder is held at night. The matzah is the symbol of our desire to go from darkness to light. We eat the matzah on Shabbos because Shabbos is also to remember the Exodus from Egypt. On Pesach on the night of the seder we again experience the symbolic slavery and its evils and reaffirm our desire to make this a better world. That's why, too, Pesach is different from Rosh Hashonna and Yom Kippur. On Yom Kippur we invite all sinners to come and daven with us, even apostates, those who have given up the Jewish religion, but on Pesach we will not allow an apostate or an uncircumcized Jew to eat of the Korban Pesach, to participate fully in the seder. Rosh Hashonna and Yom Kippur talk about a people changing, improving, making themselves ready to serve G-d's purposes. We encourage everyone to come. Perhaps it will awaken in them the desire to change, to be more what G-d wants them to be. The message of Pesach, though, is different. On Pesach we actually commit ourselves as a people to help G-d bring about the redemption of the world. This requires commitment. We are committed to help G-d bring light to the night. Pesach is a symbol that G-d will never forsake us, and that if we do our share as a people we will eventually bring the time when everyday will be like a Shabbos. Therefore, we eat matzah on Shabbos because that is also part of the message of Shabbos. We commit ourselves to help G-d bring light to the night.

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In the Mishnah in Pesachim we learn that we are not supposed to eat matzah on erev Pesach, on the day before Pesach. We all know that from approximately 3:30 p.m. on on all holidays and the Sabbath we do not eat a meal so that our Sabbath and holiday meal will be eaten with good appetite. We know that for Pesach the rabbis add approximately another half hour, to 3:00 p.m., in which they say that you should not eat a meal after that time so that you can eat the Pesach seder with an appetite. However, there is a special law on erev Pesach which says that you should not eat matzah erev Pesach. The Rambam says that anybody who violates this law should receive stripes. If you normally eat before a holiday or Shabbos after 3:30 p.m. it is not considered nice, but there is no punishment. The Rambam, though, gives this very severe punishment to one who eats matzah the whole day before Pesach. Why should this be so? What's more, we learn in the Talmud Yerushalmi and in the Tosvos to the Talmud Bavli that one who eats matzah on erev Pesach is like one who had intercourse with his fiance while she still was in her father's house. Why do they use this strong expression and this type of imagery to describe one who eats matzah on erev Pesach?

In ancient days the Jewish wedding ceremony was split in two. An engaged person in ancient times is not like an engaged person today. Today we combine both parts of the wedding ceremony; that's why we have two cups of wine at our wedding ceremony. The first part of the wedding ceremony is called Arusin or Kedushim. During this first part of the wedding ceremony the groom gives a ring to the bride and says, "Behold, you are sanctified to me with this ring according to the law of Moses and Israel." At this point the groom becomes

an Arus, and the bride becomes an Arusa.

In Talmudic times approximately a year separated the first part of the wedding ceremony, called Arusim, from the last part of the wedding ceremony, which was called Nissium. During this time the engaged girl lived at home and the groom spent the year gathering money and obtaining position so he could adequately provide for the bride. At the end of this time at the Nissium, the Sheva Brochas were said and the bride then moved into her husband's home. During the period of Arusim the groom did not have intercourse with the bride and he also did not have to support her. She was banned, however, from any other man. If she would have intercourse with any other man, it would be considered adultery. If, for any reason, they broke up during this time they would need a Jewish divorce, a get. Arusim then prohibits and separates; Nissium permits and joins the husband and the wife.

Erev Pesach, the eve before Pesach, is really a holiday, part of Pesach. The Korban Pesach, or paschal sacrifice, was brought from 12:00 noon on until nightfall. During this time no chometz was allowed. That's why we are not allowed to eat chometz from 12:00 noon. Actually the holiday of Pesach began then. The rabbis have added another two hours to make sure we do not violate the prohibition of eating chometz.

What does the bringing of the Korban Pesach mean? It meant that we were rejecting all forms of idolatry. We know at this time of year the Constellation Aries holds sway. The Egyptian people believed that the spirit of Aries would become incarnate in the lamb at this particular time of year. They, therefore, believed that anybody

who would touch a lamb, the potential dwelling place of the spirit, was endangering the very existence of Egypt and should be dealt with harshly, even killed. We rejected all these type of ideas. We said that only G-d was worthy of worship, not these spirits and superstitions. In effect, we became an Arusa to G-d at this particular time. Most sacrifices, after you brought them, you would eat them immediately, but the Korban Pesach you could not eat until nightfall. Only at the seder do we have the Nissium, do the Jewish people assume the positive uniting aspects of them with G-d. During erev Pesach we still are stressing the negative aspects. We are showing that we reject all others, but we have not formed a positive relationship with G-d yet.

The matzah we eat on Pesach has a double meaning. It means the "bread of affliction". It was the main diet of the slave. They did not have the time, energy, or wherewithal to make real bread. It was the symbol of degradation. Matzah was also the symbol of freedom, of the Jewish people's willingness to leave Egypt quickly even without bread and to trust G-d and follow Him into the wilderness with very little provisions. It was also a symbol of faith and confidence. Two weeks before the Jewish people were to leave Egypt they were commanded about the seder. We learn also that Moshe told them to leave the cities so they should not be polluted with the idol worship of the Egyptian people when they make the seder, and they should eat the Korban Pesach with matzah. Certainly they would have had enough time to have made the matzah before the seder and even bread.

Why then weren't they prepared? The answer is, to my mind, that they did not realize that G-d would take them out so quickly. They

did not realize they would leave in the middle of the night, that the Egyptians would chase them out. They thought the Egyptians would wait a little bit. They would discuss and parlay like they did before, but the very night the Angel of Death passed over they expelled them. Why, though, can't we eat matzah the day before Pesach? It is true that some authorities say that we can eat matzah up until noon when we could bring the Korban Pesach. The HaMaor says this. Maimonides and almost all other authorities say we cannot eat it all day, the reason for it being that the night before we were commanded to destroy all chometz. Since we are now under obligation to destroy all chometz we are now prohibited to eat matzah before the seder, the reason being that matzah and chometz are intimately related.

The definition of matzah is dependent on what is chometz. During the rest of the year there is no such thing as matzah or chometz. Matzah is just a form of bread or chometz. It is only when we define something as chometz and prohibit it that the category of matzah comes into play. Chometz is any of the five species of flour which have touched water for more than 18 minutes. It is for this reason, too, that women are obligated to eat matzah on the seder night. You could claim since this is a time-bound position commandment to eat matzah that women should be free from it, but since they are included in the negative commandment not to eat chometz, they are then obligated to eat matzah at the seder because matzah and chometz are intimately related. Some people do not eat matzah from the beginning of Nisan and some even from Purim. This, of course, is only a custom and not a law. They do this because this is when they become concerned about the whole concept of chometz and matzah. The concept, though, does not come into being until erev Pesach. It is only then that

we are forbidden by law not to eat matzah.

The Zohar says that the matzah is "Nachal Mehem Nuso" which means "the faithful bread". It is the bread which proclaims the Jewish people's faithfulness to G-d and G-d's love of the Jewish people. Why can't we eat matzah erev Pesach? Because on erev Pesach the matzah is still a negative concept. The matzah stands for affliction, for slavery. On erev Pesach we Jewish people are an Arusa. We are prohibited to all other gods. We negate all other people's religious and culture values which are based on violence and cruelty. However, we are still not a Nissua. We still do not have the positive relationship with our lover, so to speak, with G-d. It is only at the night of the seder that we have this relationship. That's why the custom in many communities to sing Shir Hashir, the Song of Songs, which speaks of G-d's love for Israel and Israel's love for G-d on the night of the seder. It is only on the night of the seder that the matzah becomes a positive symbol.

One of the major lessons of the seder is to teach the Jewish people that they were not to just change places with the Egyptians. Usually what happens in successful revolutions is that the oppressors and the oppressed change places. Many times a people concentrate so much on the negative aspects of their suffering that they fail to take advantage of the positive effects of freedom. They no longer believe in freedom. They just believe in revenge. This G-d did not want to happen to the Jewish people. That's why we do not begin the Haggadah with a brocha because we do not want to dwell on the slavery. We want to emphasize our deliverance. It is only before we eat that we say a brocha in the Haggadah, and we thank G-d for

redeeming us and redeeming our souls.

This is true even in the way we describe the symbols. When we describe the Korban Pesach at the seder we discuss its positive aspects, not that it was the symbol of rejection of idolatry, but that because we put its blood on our door G-d saved us. The matzah, too, we stress that it was a bread of affliction when we speak about the bread of faithfulness, that we were willing to go out into the desert with only unleavened bread. Even the bitter herbs we do not stress just the negative. We dip the bitter herbs in Harosis, which is sweet. Slavery was terrible but work, itself, was good. The Jewish people still took pride in their work. Work is good. It is only when you do it as a slave that it is bad.

On erev Pesach we could not eat the matzah or the Korban Pesach because we were only an Arusa. We were only in a negative relationship with G-d. We proclaim by our sacrificing the lamb that we reject all other gods. At the seder, though, we, in effect, became married to G-d or, as the rabbis say, there was "Gelus Schintel". That's why the seder is at home. It is the Nissuin ceremony. We use the chupa as a symbol of the bride coming into the groom's home. There are also seven blessings before we eat the matzah, which remind us of the seven marriage blessing. The matzah is also covered, like the bride is veiled. Until the night of Pesach the Jewish people did not know whether G-d could provide for them, like the Arusa does not know whether her Arus can support her. G-d, though, by taking us out of Egypt, proved He can take care of the Jewish people. He proved that He can always help us. We now are no longer Arusim; we are a Nossua.

