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RABBI YITZI'S
**DIVREI
TORAH**

PESACH EDITION #2

PART 1
THE SEDER | THE FIRST DAYS

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The Seder

Unbreakable

In the story of the Exodus from Egypt we read about the burning bush. “The bush was on fire but the bush was not being consumed.”

What is the meaning of this symbolism? What can we take from this to help us in our lives?

For the Jewish people in Egypt, the bondage had reached an all time low. Pharaoh, afflicted with a skin ailment, was told by his doctors that to cure it, he needs to bathe in the blood of Jewish children. This was the blow that broke the Jewish people.

Until this point there was the hope, the understanding that as difficult as things are, there is a purpose to the suffering and soon will be an end to the bondage. But with their children being murdered, all hope of a future is gone.

Yet the Jewish people did not despair, when they had nothing left they remembered that a Jew always has Hashem and they cried out to Hashem with all their hearts. Hashem then heard their cries.

This is when Hashem shows Moshe the burning bush and this is the start of the redemption.

The bush burns but it is not consumed. This is the Jewish people. When there seems to be no fuel left we remember that we have Hashem and burn bright and strong and we are not consumed. This is what kick starts our redemption.

At times, life is so difficult, we can see no hope, but there is no reason to despair, rather it is time to shine brighter than ever and cry out to Hashem from a place far deeper than what we ever imagined, from the inner fire that can never be extinguished. And then Hashem gives us true redemption.

I am amazed every day by my wife Dina, I don't know what keeps her going. The struggle to take care of the family and being there

for me. It used to be burning the wick at both ends, but now there is no more fuse. I always wonder how she does it, but now I think she is the real thing, a Jewish mother, unbreakable and with an open connection to Hashem.

I think we have already suffered enough, Hashem please send Moshiach.

Three Matzahs & Four Cups of Wine

Our sages¹ established, that we drink 4 cups of wine at the Seder, for the 4 expressions of redemption that Hashem commanded Moshe to convey to the Jewish people, at the beginning of parshas Vaera, “I will take you out... I will save you... I will redeem you... And I will take you (to Myself as a nation)...”²

If these 4 expressions of redemption are so significant, that they should be symbolized by the Seder, why not have 4 matzahs which are a biblical commandment, as the Mishnah³ tells us, that the reason we have matzah, is “because our parents were redeemed from Egypt,” as opposed to 4 cups of wine that are only a rabbinical enactment?⁴

Why do we need 3 matzahs? The simple reason is, that 2 whole matzahs are for hamotzi, just like on every Yom Tov we make the blessing of hamotzi on 2 whole challahs or matzahs, and an extra broken piece of matzah, poor man’s bread, to recite the Haggadah over.⁵

However, being that everything in Torah is perfect and we know that the reason we have matzah, is “because our parents were redeemed from Egypt,” the 3 matzahs must represent redemption as well.

With this understanding, we can conclude that there are two aspects of redemption, one is connected to the number 3 and is represented by matzah, and the other is connected to the

1 Talmud Yerushalmi, Pesachim 10:1. Bereishis Raba chapter 88 par. 5. Shemos Raba chapter 6 par. 4.

2 Exodus 6:6-7.

3 See Talmud, Pesachim 116b. See also Shulchan Aruch Harav, Orach Chaim 472:14.

4 This general question is asked by the Mordechai, in the Tosafos to Arvei Pesachim near the beginning. Similarly asked in Mateh Moshe chapter 607, and in Yefei Tohar to Bereishis Raba chapter 88 par. 5.

5 Tur and Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 473:4. Tur end of chapter 475. Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 473:1. Shulchan Aruch Harav, Orach Chaim 473:3, 20.

number 4 and is represented by wine.

What are these two aspects of redemption? And why are they represented by wine and matzah?

We are told,⁶ that the Jewish people had sunken to such a low in Egypt, that if they would have stayed a moment longer, they would have been totally lost, with no chance of redemption. It was only that Hashem pulled us out in the nick of time. In other words, it wasn't on our merits or through our efforts that we were redeemed, rather it was a one sided redemption, Hashem did it himself.

This is what the Exodus was all about, being redeemed by Hashem himself, without our effort. Being that it was from Him, and we had no involvement, we have no pleasure in it. This is represented by matzah, which doesn't have much flavor, it is poor man's bread, symbolizing that we were poor in understanding and poor spiritually. We have 3 matzahs, representing the first 3 expressions of redemption, "I will take you out... I will save you... And I will redeem you..." These are all one sided, they are all from Hashem himself without our involvement. Being that these 3 actually happened at the Exodus, they are represented by matzah, a biblical commandment.

The fourth, "And I will take you to Myself as a nation," didn't reach completion until we received the Torah at Mount Sinai, after 50 days of working on ourselves to be worthy of receiving Hashem's Torah. Being that it came about through our effort and on our merit, we have pleasure in it, therefore it is represented by wine that has flavor. Because it only reached completion 50 days after the Exodus, it is not totally connected to Pesach, and therefore, only a rabbinical enactment.

So you have 3 that is given, and the fourth that is developed by the recipient. This will help us understand a few other things.

⁶ See Tzror Hamor to Exodus 12:40. And see Zohar Chadash beginning of parshas Yisro.

This is one of the reasons that we have 3 fathers and 4 mothers⁷. In producing a child, the part of the father is to give, but the mother takes what she received, and with her body's effort, she develops it into a complete baby. Being that 3 represents giving, there are 3 fathers, and since 4 represents taking and developing through our own effort, there are 4 mothers.

The same thing is with Torah. The written Torah, which is called, "The mussar (discipline) of your father,"⁸ because it is given to us completely by Hashem, we have no input. It is similar to redemption from above, symbolized by matzah a biblical commandment.

However, the oral Torah, the Mishnah, Talmud, etc. is called, "The Torah of your mother,"⁹ because our great rabbis develop and complete its details, showing the importance of personal involvement in the Torah¹⁰. This is similar to redemption through our effort, symbolized by wine, a rabbinical enactment.

You may ask, the fourth is only one, so why do we have 4 cups of wine?

Because through our effort, we reveal that the essence and the purpose of the first three is for the fourth, so our effort begets all

7 See Talmud, Brachos 16b, that only 3 are called fathers (Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov) and only 4 are called mothers (Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah).

8 Proverbs 1:8.

9 Ibid.

10 See Lekutei Sichos volume 26 p. 267. Egeres Hakodesh chapter 29 p. 151a in the name of the Zohar. Torah Ohr, Vayakhel p. 88c. Lekutei Torah Shemini Atzeres p. 85b.

Rashi to Proverbs 1:8 explains it differently, that the "discipline of your father," refers to both the written and oral Torah, because they were both transmitted at Sinai, and "Torah of your mother," refers to safeguards enacted by the rabbis. The teaching remains the same. The "discipline of your father," refers to that which was given from above, and "Torah of your mother," refers to that which we have involvement in.

4. Hence 4 cups of wine¹¹.

May we soon merit to see the final redemption, which we deserve and earned. The time has come.

¹¹ Lekutei Sichos volume 26 pp. 43-48.

First Blood Then Frogs

Dogs & Frogs

On Chol Hamoed we will read in the Torah, that a trayfa should be thrown to the dogs.

Why do the dogs get this treat? It is brought down, that because the dogs remained silent when the Jews were leaving Egypt, they get a treat, they get the meat.

The Question is: What about the frogs? During the plague of frogs, we learn that the frogs jumped into the ovens, total self sacrifice for Hashem. Why don't the frogs get a treat?

The answer is: Because as it is for many, it is far easier to kill yourself than to keep your mouth shut.

At the Seder we read about the plagues inflicted on Egypt. The purpose of the plagues was not only to punish the Egyptians, but to break their ego and false notions and outlook on G-dliness. The plagues also served as the blows that broke us free from the constraints of Egypt.

Every story in the Torah is meant to teach us how to serve Hashem better.

In the Haggadah we read, "In every generation, a person is obligated to see himself, as if he went out of Egypt." Because each of us has a personal Egypt to break free from. Whether it be physical or spiritual constraints, we need to go out of our personal Egypt and we can learn from the plagues how to break out of these constraints.

There are two types of spiritual constraints. There is when a person finds himself stuck in the physical pleasures of the world, not having any feeling towards holiness and G-dliness. And then there is when someone find himself stagnant in his spiritual growth, because his connection to Hashem is based on his reason and understanding, and therefore, limited. How does one break

free from his spiritual Egypt?

Let us see what we can learn from the first two plagues, blood and frogs.

In Egypt they worshiped the Nile River, so to break their pride, the first plague hit the waters of the Nile, turning the water into blood. The nature of water, is that it is cold and wet. This was the way of the Egyptians to be cold or apathetic to G-dliness and holiness. It was turned into blood, which is warm and full of life, as it says, “because the blood is the life force.”¹

The opposite of holiness is coldness, apathy, because holiness is warm and full of life. As it stays in Avos D’rav Nassan², “Ten are called alive,” and the first one listed is Hashem, all the others are connected to Him.

When we are apathetic to G-dliness and holiness, it opens the door to everything that is unholy, and we are stuck in an Egypt. How do we break out of apathy towards holiness?

On the other hand, Egypt had a great fervor and passion for everything unholy. Meaning that there is also an unholy warmth, when someone has a passion for the physical.

To cool off their passion, Hashem sent the second plague, frogs. The frogs went everywhere, even in the ovens, and our sages learn from them the idea of self sacrifice³.

You may ask, there were other creatures that came as plagues, there were lice, wild beasts and locust, but they didn’t go into the ovens. What is the meaning of the frogs going into the ovens?

Ovens have fire in them, they symbolize the heat and passion for the physical. Frogs are from the water⁴, cold and wet, but

1 Deuteronomy 12:23. This idea is also found in Leviticus 17:11, 14.

2 Avos D’rav Nassan 34:10.

3 Talmud, Pesachim 53b. See Zohar volume 2 p. 29b.

4 Shemos Raba chapter 10 par. 3.

at the same time, they did Hashem's will, to the extent that they went totally against their nature. The cold water creatures went into the fiery ovens and cooled them off. In other words, there is also a holy coldness, when one fosters a coldness towards the physical and the unholy.

The frogs came to deflate Pharaoh's ego, they went into the ovens extinguishing the passion and the false importance of the unholy, that existed in Egypt.

Holy fervor breaks you free from unholy coldness, and holy coldness breaks you free from passion for the unholy.

To break free from a spiritual Egypt, one must first take a lesson from the blood and bring life and warmth into holy matters, because the beginning of all kinds of evil comes from coldness.

It is a mistake to think that just positive action is enough, if you don't bring warmth and passion into holiness, ultimately you will end up in the unholy.

This is why the evil inclination tries so hard to cool off your fervor towards holiness, because he knows that trying to get you to do something wrong is futile, but if he could get you to be cold towards holiness, then you will end up doing wrong on your own.

Just as one needs to bring a warmth and life into holiness, blood, so too, one should foster a coldness towards the unholy, frogs.

In general, when it comes to doing what Hashem wants, there are two approaches. They are, "refrain from bad," and "doing good." The plague of frogs, coldness towards the unholy, falls in the category of "refraining from bad," and the plague of blood, passion for holiness, falls in the category of "doing good."⁵

Normally the order is first "refrain from bad," and then "do good." However, here the order is reversed, first blood and then frogs. Why? And what are we meant to learn from this reversal?

5 Psalms 34:13.

It is true that when it comes to us, refraining from bad comes first. Because we are in the world, so we work from the bottom up. However, when it comes to Hashem, He is coming from the top down. He floods the world with G-dliness, and automatically there is no bad, so the order is reversed, first blood and then frogs.

Since the Torah tells us this story, that first came the blood and then the frogs, it means that we should take a page from Hashem's play book, doing good first. How does this work?

Flood your life with warmth and holiness and there won't be room for bad.⁶

May you and your families be filled with warmth and holiness, and may we break free from our personal Egypt. That will lead to us breaking free from the Egypt we are all suffering from, this dark and bitter exile, with the coming of Moshiach. May he come soon.

6 Lekutei Sichos volume 1 pp. 121-125

Chametz vs. Matzah

In Parshas Bo it tells us the Mitzvah of eating Matzah, “Seven days shall you eat Matzah.”¹

At the Seder there are three important things, Pesach (Paschal lamb) Matzah and Maror (bitter herbs). We offer lip service for the Pesach, because we can’t do it. Matzah remains a biblical mitzvah to this day. And Maror is a rabbinical mitzvah nowadays.²

There are two differences between Chametz and Matzah.

The first difference is in the way it acts. Chametz rises, it blows up, this is symbolic of a big ego and Matzah remains flat, symbolic of the self nullification of the ego. And on Pesach the only Matzah we can use for the Mitzvah of Matzah is egoless poor man’s bread, which is made from only flour and water.³

The second difference is in the way it is spelled, they both have three letters, two of which are the same (they both have a mem and a tzadik), but Chametz has a ches at the beginning and Matzah has a hei at the end.

נ

Ches

ה

Hei

The letters ches and hei are very similar, they both have a line on top, two legs coming down on the sides and they are open on the bottom, but the ches is totally sealed from three sides and the hei is open on the top of the left leg.

The opening on the bottom means that it is easy to go down, to fall into doing what is wrong in the eyes of Hashem.

And this is where the two differences come together. The person with the big ego, chametz, is stuck in the ches, the only way he

1 Exodus, 12:15.

2 Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 475.

3 Ibid., 454.

can go is down. The person who is humble, Matzah, is not stuck, because the hei has an opening on the top, he has a way to go out and up, he has an opportunity to do teshuva⁴.

Even though the opening on top of the hei is small, our sages say that Hashem says, “Make me an opening like the eye of a needle and I will open up for you like the entrance of the Ulam,”⁵ which was a huge doorway in the Temple.

When a person is humble, he will realize that he did something wrong, and he will do teshuva, on the other hand, when someone has a big ego, he is always right and he could never find any fault in himself, just the opposite he convinces himself that everything he does is good if not great, and because of that he is stuck and he won't do teshuva⁶.

Even more. He finds arguments for his bad behavior and feels justified in doing them.

For example the Mitzvah of tzedakah, which is a general Mitzvah and is inclusive of all mitzvos⁷.

He doesn't give tzedakah, because if Hashem wants them to have, why doesn't He give them? In his arrogance he thinks that he is better than the poor person. In his pompousness he asks, “If Hashem wants them to be poor, who am I to get in His way by giving them tzedaka?”

On the other hand, a humble person makes a true calculation that he is no better than the other person, and he knows that Hashem wants him to give the other, so he gives.

And even if he thinks that Hashem wants to punish the other for whatever reason, he knows that every Jewish person is a prince or princess of Hashem, and when a king punishes his children, he

4 See Talmud, Menachot 29b.

5 Shir Hashirim Raba, 5:2.

6 See Kuntres U'Maayan, Maamar 15. Lech Lecha, 5702.

7 Bava Basra, 9a. Yerushalmi Peah, 1:5. Tanya, ch. 37.

is happy when you show kindness to them. So he gives tzedaka⁸.

The same is with all other Mitzvahs.

Not only all this, but if he can't find a way to make himself right, he makes excuses for himself. All of the reasons we are taught in Tanya⁹, to find merit in other people and to excuse away their bad behavior, he finds in himself. And if all else fails, his self love covers over all his flaws¹⁰. And so he never says I'm sorry and he doesn't do teshuva. He is stuck in the ches, and he has no way out other than down. That is chametz.

The humble person doesn't make any of these excuses, he realizes that he is wrong, says I'm sorry and does teshuva. He is not stuck, he is in the hei, which has an opening to go up. That is Matzah.

May we all take the attitude of Matzah, say I'm sorry and mend our relationships. See our wrong ways, do teshuva and become closer to Hashem. If we do this, we will be closer to our families, our people and Hashem. This will surely bring Moshiach closer and this dark and bitter exile to an end, and oh how we need it to end. May it happen soon.¹¹

8 See dialogue between Rabbi Akiva and Turnus Rufus in Bava Basra, 10a.

9 Chapter 30.

10 Mishlei, 10:12.

11 Based on Lekutei Sichos vol 1 pp. 129-132.

The First Days

When You Can't Bear to See the Suffering

Parshas Vaera begins with Hashem's response to Moshe's question, "Why have You made things worse for this nation (the Jewish people)?"¹ In other words, Hashem sent Moshe on a mission to Egypt to begin the redemption, and things only got worse. How is it possible for Hashem's mission to make things worse for the Jewish people? Hashem, Who is all good, is sending Moshe, who is all good², on a mission to start the redemption, which is supposed to be all good³, and it only became worse for the Jewish people. How is that possible?

Hashem responds, "I Am Hashem. And I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov..."⁴

Our sages⁵ say that this was a rebuke to Moshe. Hashem was saying that the forefathers were tested over and over again, and they didn't ask Me "why?" They just accepted My will and they didn't question. You, on the other hand...

We have to understand, why, in fact did Moshe ask, "Why have You made things worse for this nation?" Moshe was at a higher level than the forefathers, he was the one who received the Torah directly from Hashem. He was the seventh in line from Avraham, and our sages say, "all sevenths are favorites."⁶ So how could Moshe, who was so great, be questioning Hashem?

Also, if Hashem wanted to extol the virtues of the forefathers, why does He call Yaakov by his lower name Yaakov, instead of his greater name Yisrael?

1 Exodus 5:22.

2 See Exodus 2:2. Talmud, Sota 13a. Ohr Hatora Shemos p. 60 and on.

3 See Torah Ohr Vaera 56d.

4 Exodus 6:2-3.

5 Shemos Raba 6:4. Talmud, Sanhedrin 111a. Brought in Rashi to Exodus 6:9.

6 Vayikra Raba 29:11.

And finally, every story in the Torah is meant to be a lesson to every one of us⁷. It seems from here, that we are meant to choose between our forefathers and Moshe our teacher, and that we should choose the way of our forefathers over Moshe. How could it be that we are meant to choose between our forefathers and Moshe? How can it be, that we are not meant to choose the way of Moshe, rather the ways of our forefathers?

To understand this, we first have to understand the difference between the service to Hashem of our forefathers and Moshe.

Moshe's served Hashem through chochma, wisdom, as he was the teacher of Torah to the Jewish people. Torah is the greatest wisdom that exists, it can only be understood with the mind, therefore, it was given through Moshe, whose way was through wisdom.

The forefathers service to Hashem was through their emotions. Avraham's emotion was chesed, loving-kindness, his service to Hashem was through love. Yitzchak's emotion was gevurah, strength and discipline, his service to Hashem was through fear and awe. Yaakov's emotion was tiferes, beauty, which is the ability to know when to apply chesed and when to apply gevurah, it is a mix of the two. Beauty is a blend of features, sharp and soft. His service to Hashem was through love and fear.

Of course the forefathers also had wisdom, they studied Torah, and Moshe had emotions, as we see in the story of the Egyptian taskmaster beating the Jew⁸, and the two Jews fighting⁹, it really bothered him, and he sprung into action. However the main thrust of their service to Hashem, was for the forefathers, through their emotions, and for Moshe, through his intellect.

Since Moshe served Hashem through wisdom, and Hashem's actions posed a question that bothered him, he couldn't continue until his question was answered. That was the way he served

7 Zohar volume 3 p. 53b.

8 Exodus 2:11-12.

9 Exodus 2:13.

Hashem.

The forefathers, on the other hand, served Hashem through their emotions, they felt what Hashem wanted and they did it, questions of why Hashem did something, didn't stand in their way of them serving Hashem.

One of the differences between emotions and wisdom, is that emotions are a direct cause to an action, you feel like doing something and you do it. On the other hand, wisdom, doesn't cause direct action, it really doesn't have an effect on one's actions at all, only when the wisdom is applied to the emotions, does it result in an action through the emotions. That is why you see very smart people who are in the clouds unaware of reality, and other smart people that do the stupidest things, because their wisdom is aloof and detached.

When Hashem said to Moshe, "I Am Hashem. And I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov..." He was telling Moshe, that with the redemption, a new mode of service is needed, and it will include the path of our forefathers as well as the path of Moshe, wisdom and emotions.

The main reason for the Exodus, was to receive the Torah at Mount Sinai. The Midrash¹⁰ tells us that what happened at the giving of the Torah, was that, "What is above could now go below, and what is below could now go above." Before the giving of the Torah, spiritual and physical didn't mix, G-dliness remained above, meaning separate, it wasn't able to permeate the physical. With the giving of the Torah, all that changed, now the spiritual can permeate the physical and that is the main service of the Jewish people, to infuse the physical with G-dliness through using the physical for Torah and mitzvahs, and to serve Hashem.

This was also true when it came to emotions and wisdom. "What is above could now go below," meaning that wisdom, which resides in the brain, above, has to permeate the emotions, which reside in the heart, below. And it works the opposite way as well, "What is below could now go above," that wisdom should be affected

¹⁰ Shemos Raba 12:3.

by the emotions, and accept the will of Hashem without question.

Hashem is not asking of us to choose our forefathers over Moshe, rather, to mesh the two, and serve Hashem through both wisdom and emotions.

Now we will understand why Hashem uses the name Yaakov here. Yaakov is the name that represents permeating the physical world with G-dliness. Yaakov could be divided into yud eikev¹¹, yud stands for Hashem, above, and eikev, which means a heel, the lowest part of a person, meaning, that the lowest place should be permeated with G-dliness, the emotions should be affected by wisdom.

The lesson here for us is that it is not enough to serve Hashem through our nature, rather the business man should set times to study Torah, below should come above, and the scholar has to be involved with the needs of the layman, above should go below.

We see that Moshe took upon himself this way of life, although he was the greatest in wisdom, he was involved in the day to day lives of the Jewish people. He brought his intellect into his emotions and into action. He did exactly what Hashem was telling him in this parsha.

This is often our challenge, and this is my challenge as well. How do we reconcile our sense of right and wrong with Hashem's ways? We all are trying to do our best, and we all suffer beyond what makes sense to us. Why do we need to suffer so much? On one hand, we have to accept Hashem's ways, on the other hand, we need to learn from Moshe, to ask and demand, that things should get better for us and the entire Jewish nation once and for all.

I am certain that Hashem put me in this position for a reason, and I accept His will, but at the same time, I see how much my wife and children are suffering and I am suffering too. I can't bare to see it, so I ask and pray that the suffering stop.

We each have our mission to infuse the physical world with

¹¹ Torah Ohr beginning of parshas Vayeitzei.

G-dliness, however, we must also feel the pain of our brothers and sisters, and ask, pray and even demand, that Hashem send Moshiach and bring an end to this exile, and our suffering once and for all. May it happen soon.¹²

¹² Based on Lekutei Sichos volume 3 pp. 854-862.

The Greatness of Our Generation

First Day of Pesach - Haftora

On the first day of Pesach, the Haftora is from the book of Yehoshua. It tells about the crossing of the Jordan into Israel, then called Canaan. It tells how all of the men were circumcised in preparation for the Pesach sacrifice, the first Pesach celebrated in the land of Israel, and how on the second day of Pesach the manna ran out, forcing them to start eating the produce of the land. It tells how Yehoshua met the angel that was the Chief of G-d's Hosts at Jericho¹.

Most of the time, the Haftora is connected to the Torah reading, other times, it is connected to the time of year. In this Haftora you have both.

The Torah reading speaks of the first Pesach sacrifice that was done in Egypt, prior to the Exodus. It has the plague of the first born, by Hashem Himself. It has the laws of the Pesach sacrifice, one being, that males had to be circumcised to be able to eat from it. From here we know, that every Jewish male that left Egypt was circumcised.

During the 40 years in the desert, they were lead by Hashem himself, but they didn't do circumcision, and they only did one Pesach sacrifice.

The Haftora tells about the third Pesach sacrifice, done by the Jewish people upon entering the land of Israel. How all the males were circumcised, and how Yehoshua met the angel that would lead the Jewish people from now on.

All these things mentioned in the Haftora, parallel what we read in the Torah, and are connected to the holiday of Pesach. However, the Haftora adds one more thing, that is not mentioned or even hinted to in the Torah reading. That the manna ran out, and that they started eating the produce of the land. And you can't say that it is incidental, being, that this specific Haftora spans 4

¹ Joshua 3:5-7, 5:2-6:1, 6:27.

chapters, skipping twice over many verses. It is clear that this Haftora was tailored for the first day of Pesach. Why does the Haftora mention this?

Perhaps, because we had to rely on Hashem every day, that the manna would come. This taught us to put our trust in Him. The same is true about the produce of the land of Israel, it is all in the hands of Hashem. Being that on the first day of Pesach we say the prayer of Tal, which is a prayer for sustenance, it makes sense to mention the manna in the Haftora.

In the Haftora, we see that from the time of Yehoshua, the Jewish people were lead by an angel, as opposed to Hashem himself. We read in the Haggadah, that Hashem himself took us out of Egypt, not an angel. The Haftora tells us, that Yehoshua was near Jericho and he saw a man with a sword drawn in his hand. And he said, "I am the chief of the host of Hashem, now I have come." He was an angel, that would lead the Jewish people and fight their wars. The Midrash tells us, that the angel said, "now I have come,"² but Moshe refused to accept the angel³. He wanted Hashem Himself to lead the Jewish people, as Moshe said to Hashem, "If Your Presence does not accompany us, don't take us up from here."⁴ Hashem also fought our wars, as Moshe said, "Hashem will fight for you."⁵ Why did Moshe and his generation merit Hashem Himself, while Yehoshua and later generations didn't? What quality do we have over Moshe's generation?

Those who experienced the Exodus, were called the generation of the desert. They were a generation of knowledge, and they lived a utopian existence. They were a great and lofty generation that experienced miracles daily, and the most sublime spiritual event in history, the Giving of the Ten Commandments. The miracles that they experienced were so miraculous, that they had no connection to nature. Their souls were from the highest spiritual realm, above angels. Moshe was greater than all of them, the

2 Joshua 5:14.

3 Bereishis Raba chapter 97, 3. Tanchuma, Mishpatim 18.

4 Exodus 33:15.

5 Exodus 14:14.

Talmud says, that his face was like the sun⁶. It was specifically this great generation that would be able to put an end to the Egypt of that time, because Egypt was also steeped in knowledge, but of an impure and evil nature. It took the great generation of the desert, to counter and overcome Egypt.

At such a high level of spirituality, it was no wonder, that Hashem himself lead them. However, although they were basking in the light of Torah, they did not partake in making the physical world into a dwelling place for Hashem. They were not involved in the physical, but only the spiritual, and while that sounds lofty, it is not what Hashem wants. He wants us to infuse the physical world with G-dliness, and in the desert that wasn't so possible.

The generation that entered Israel was not at the level of those of the desert. Their souls came from a lower realm, where the chief of hosts, who is an angel, comes from. The Talmud says about Yehoshua, that "his face was like the moon."⁷

The difference between the sun and the moon, is that the sun gives direct light, while the moon reflects light. The light originates from the same place, but how it comes to us is different.

The same is true about our souls, they originate in the same place, but while some take a direct route, most travel through many spiritual realms before entering our bodies. While the lofty souls aren't affected by the lower spiritual realms, they don't affect them either, because they have no connection to them. The souls that come through the lower spiritual realms, are able to draw the G-dly light from the its source in the highest realm into the lower realms, by learning Torah and doing mitzvahs.

Those who entered the land, had to deal with the Canaanites, a more base society. It took specifically their souls to overcome the Canaanites.

The same is true for all subsequent generations. Though each

6 Baba Basra 75a.

7 Baba Basra 75a.

gets progressively lower, they are able to draw G-dliness into lower and lower realms. And every generation is equipped to deal with, and overcome the negative forces of their time⁸.

You might ask, if the great and holy people of previous generations couldn't bring Moshiach, how could we? Because it is specifically our souls that can bring G-dliness into the lowest level. And it is specifically our souls that are equipped to deal with, overcome, and break through the terrible darkness at the end of the exile, and usher in the light of Moshiach. May he come soon.

⁸ Or Hatora vol. 2 pp. 740-741. Sefer Hamaamarim Meluket (4 volume set) vol. 2 pp. 400-401.

Cry Out and Demand

Second Day of Pesach - Haftora

The Haftora for the second day of Pesach is from the book of Melachim Beis (II Kings). Chilkiyahu the Kohen Gadol had found the Torah that Moshe himself wrote. This find sparked an awakening and a yearning in the king, Yoshiyahu, to return to Hashem. The Haftora begins with all of Jerusalem joining the king, as he read from the Torah, and reaffirmed the covenant between Hashem and the Jewish people. King Yoshiyahu now turned the whole nation away from idolatry, cleaned up the Temple, destroyed the idols, and the vessels used for serving the idols. He also did away with the moral depravity that was rampant even in the Temple itself. After the clean up, in the 18th year of his reign, he called for all of the Jewish people to do the Pesach sacrifice. It was the greatest Pesach sacrifice done from the beginning of the era of the Judges, through all the kings of Yisrael and Yehuda. The Haftora ends with saying that there was no king before or after him, that returned to Hashem, with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his means¹.

This Haftora is special, in that it is only read outside of Israel, as we have an extra day of Yom Tov.

The Haftora is connected to the Torah reading, to Pesach, and specifically to the second day of Pesach.

The most obvious connection, is that the Haftora speaks of the Pesach sacrifice done in the time of King Yoshiyahu. The Pesach sacrifice is in the Torah reading and it is the sacrifice of the Yom Tov. However, most of the Haftora speaks about the Jewish people returning to Hashem and getting rid of idolatry. How does this connect to the Torah reading and to Pesach?

In the beginning of the Torah reading, it speaks of the mitzvah of sanctifying Hashem, which refers to allowing oneself to be killed rather than serving idols.

¹ II Kings 23:1-9, 21-25.

Another connection is chametz and matzah. On a deeper level, chametz represents arrogance, as it is dough that rises and is blown up. Matzah represents humility, as it remains flat. Arrogance is akin to idol worship, when one's ego is blown up, he leaves no room for anyone else to exist, not even Hashem. Even when he learns Torah, prays, or does mitzvahs, it is all about him, "look at how holy I am." He can't see past his own nose. In his arrogance, he has become in total denial of anyone but himself. This is the essence of idolatry, it is a self centered, pleasure seeking, no responsibility, what is in it for me? Attitude. Unfortunately, many people are like this today. Before Pesach we are meant to rid ourselves of all chametz, spiritually as well, getting rid of our own arrogance which is akin to idol worship.

On the second day of Pesach we start counting the Omer, which is also mentioned in the Torah reading. The idea of counting the Omer, is to work on our spiritual makeup, every day reaching a higher plateau, in preparation of receiving the Torah on Shavuoth. This process is cleaning up the negative and getting closer to Hashem, similar to the Haftora, where they cleaned out the idolatry and got closer to Hashem. And this is also the specific connection to the second day of Pesach.

One may ask: In the First Temple era, we had the Aron (the Holy Ark), the Urim V'Tumim, and it was a time of open G-dliness, when miracles were witnessed daily in the Temple. How is it possible that they fell so low, as to serve idols?

The question is the answer. Because it was a time of open G-dliness, and great holiness, the negative was also very powerful, and therefore, there was a powerful pull and lust to idol worship. The Talmud says, that in a dream, Rav Ashi asked King Menashe, who was wicked, and served idols, "If you were so wise why did serve idols?" Menashe responded, "Had you been there, you would have pulled up the bottom of your garment and ran after it."² In other words, the pull towards idol worship was extremely powerful, and it was hard to fight it.

Every era has its vice that pulls us to go against Hashem's will.

² Sanhedrin p. 102b.

Now too, we are pulled away from our objective, and by wise people who are drawn by the powerful negative forces. We are now, according to the great and holy Tzadikim of our era, at the end of the exile. Our job now is to cry out to Hashem and demand that He send Moshiach and put an end to the exile. Just as our ancestors did in Egypt. As we read in the Haggadah, “And we cried out to Hashem our G-d, the G-d of our Fathers, and Hashem heard our voice, and he saw our suffering...” This is what brought the redemption then, and this will bring it now.³

Through our efforts, to strengthen our Judaism, and through embracing our calling in these last moments of exile, to cry out to Hashem and demand that He send Moshiach. We will surely merit the ultimate redemption just as our ancestors did. The time has come.

3 Torahs Menachem Hisvaduyos p. 101.

