

## SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

AHAREI MOT/SHABBAT HAGADOL

APRIL 12, 2014

12 NISAN 5774

**DEDICATIONS: Happy Birthday Choux**

By Monday we had 75 reservations for the Seder. To be safe we planned for 100. Once we hit 100 plus, we unfortunately could not accept additional reservations and we apologize that some people will be disappointed. If you would like to sponsor a family or a person for the Seders, please send me a note with what you can pledge. Thanks – See Pesach Schedule below

Candle lighting this Friday evening is at 7:11 p.m. Shir Hashirim 6:40 Mincha at 7:00  
Please note that Shir HaShirim at 6:40 and Mincha at 7:00 will remain throughout the summer

SHABBAT Class at 8:30, Relevant Daily Halachot based upon the teaching of HaRav Ovadia Yosef Hashem Melech at 9:00 AM - Please say Shema at home by 8:57AM

We will endeavor to keep it to the 7 aliyot, somech, samuch and maftir each week.

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30

Ages 0-5 - in the Playroom/ Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library / Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

Mincha at 6:30 –

Seuda Shelishi at 7:00 with Rabbi David – Halachot Pesach – The Seder

Birkat HaMazon at 7:45

Arbit at 7:55 - Shabbat Ends – 8:11

### WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE - Men and Women are Invited

Monday Night Class with Rabba Yenai – Resumes after Pesach

Daily class with Rabbi Colish - Weekday 6:30 AM (ADDITIONAL NEW TIME Sunday Mornings 7:30)

Kaballah as a Guide to Spiritual Growth based upon the teachings of Likutei Moharan

Please note that Rabbi Colish will be away for Pesach

Birkat Ha'llanot - Don't miss this Once in a Year Opportunity

Please join us Sunday April 27th after Shacharit for the Birkat Ha'llanot. We will leave after Shacharit (~8:45am) and make the blessing in Phyllis Wagner's backyard, which has several budding fruit trees, followed by a prayer and a few inspirational words with Rabbi Colish.

Holocaust Remembrance Rally

Sunday April 27th at 11:30 AM in front of the UN Iranian Mission

622 3rd Avenue & E 40th Street

"More than 6 Million Reasons to Show Up and Speak Out!"

For more information please email [hashoah.mail@gmail.com](mailto:hashoah.mail@gmail.com)

This Yom Hashoah Make a Kiddush Hashem in the World

Sunday April 27th at 5:30-7:00pm

Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach

161 Lafayette Boulevard, Long Beach, NY 11561

Please join Chantelle, Mikhayla and Mariyah Bibi as we decorate the shoes that will be distributed to the needy via Rodef Shalom, an organization dedicated to distributing shoes to kids all over the world.

**PESACH SCHEDULE**

**Monday, April 14 - Ereb Pesah –  
Fast of the 1st Born  
Shahrit 7:00  
Siyum- Conclusion of Talmud Tractate 8:00am  
Refrain from Eating Hamess 9:58 am  
Burn Hamess no later than 11:13am  
Candle Lighting 7:14 pm  
Minha followed by Arbit 7:00 pm  
Those joining for the seder should arrive by 7:45**

**Tuesday, April 15 - First Day of Pesah  
Shahrit (Begin Morid Hatal in Musaf) 9:00 am  
Minha 7:00 pm  
Arbit (Begin counting Omer after Arbit) 7:30 pm  
Candle Lighting 8:15 pm  
Those joining for the seder should arrive by 8:00**

**Wednesday, April 16 - Second Day of Pesah  
Shahrit 9:00 am  
Minha 7:15 pm  
Arbit (Begin Barekhenu) 8:00 pm  
Habdalah-End of Holiday 8:15 pm**

**Thursday, April 17 - Third Day of Pesah / Hol Hamoed  
Shahrit - 7:00 am**

**Friday, April 18 - Fourth Day of Pesah / Hol Hamoed  
Shahrit – 7:00 am  
Candle Lighting 7:19 pm  
Minha 7:00 pm  
Kabbalat Shabbat and Arbit 7:20 pm  
Candle Lighting and Kiddush blessings like any other  
Shabbat**

**Saturday, April 19 - Shabbat Hol Hamoed Pesah  
Shahrit 9:00am  
Minha 6:45 pm  
Seuda Shelishit 7:15 pm  
Arbit 8:05 pm  
Habdalah-End of Shabbat 8:19 pm**

**Sunday, April 20 - Sixth Day of Pesah / Hol Hamoed  
Shahrit 8:00 am  
Minha followed by Arbit 7:00  
Candle Lighting 7:20 pm**

**Monday, April 21 - Shebi'i Shel Pesah (7th Day)  
Tikkun Shebi'i Shel Pesah 7:30 am  
Shahrit 9:00 am  
Minha 7:15 pm  
Arbit 8:00 pm  
Candle Lighting after 8:20 pm**

**Tuesday, April 22 - Eighth Day of Pesah  
Shahrit 9:00 am  
Minha 7:15 pm  
Arbit 8:00 pm  
Habdalah – End of Holiday 8:20 pm**

**Allow Rabbi Mann until 9:30PM to purchase back  
Hametz**

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**Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue,  
17th Floor, Artistic Frame. Mincha at 4PM through  
October 30<sup>th</sup> – Please join us! 212-289-2100**

**Editors Notes**

**Sorry we missed last week.**

**Transforming the cacophony of chaos**

How does one filter out the static in life? Sometimes the noise becomes overwhelming. It's like trying to sleep while there is a loud party next-door and all we can hear is that pounding beat repeating again and again. The noise can relate to questions on health, finances, social issues, responsibilities; issues that may be affecting us, our families, our friends, our communities or our entire people. The din impedes our thinking process. The static causes us to feel that everything we do or touch may strike back and shock us. We become in many ways enslaved.

We begin this portion with the words, "After the death of the sons of Aaron." As we read a few weeks ago in the portion of Shemini, On the day the Mishkan was inaugurated and Aaron began his work as Kohen Gadol or High Priest, his two eldest sons, Nadav and Avihu, took a pan, and placed fire within, and put incense upon the fire. The verse explains, that they brought before G-d a strange fire which they had not been commanded to bring. At that moment, a fire came out from in front of G-d and consumed them; they died in front of G-d. Moses said to Aaron, 'This is what God had referred to, "I will be sanctified by those close to me, thus I will be honored by the entire people,"' and Aaron was silent.

At the height of his joy and honor, Aaron is struck with the unimaginable in tragedy. The contrast of rising to one level and then falling so low, compounds the calamity even further.

I can understand the silence. What is there to say, and who is there to say it to? I can even understand continuing at the task at hand. Many people might

find some comfort in going on in some sort of robotic way so as not to face the reality of what just happened. But what I find difficult to understand is that no matter the verbal silence, no matter the mechanical movements, how can the mind stay silent? Can we hold back our minds from thinking even when our voices remain quiet? Can the cacophony of chaos bleating internally have no effect on how we function?

As human beings, we have the ability to do one thing while thinking something else entirely. We can smile externally while crying inside. We can hug someone while bearing them a grudge deep down in our hearts. We can even complete tasks while we are so preoccupied in some automatic way that when done we don't even realize we've done them. Often, our actions can be wholly separated from our heart.

Not so for Aaron. Not so for the high priest. In the tabernacle the mind could not wander. In the tabernacle the action had to follow and be united with the thought. The inside and the outside had to match. The rabbis explain that, "an essential aspect of the kohen's service is kavanah – intent or directed thought. If the kohen misdirects his focus while performing the ritual, even if every possible detail of the prescribed rite is performed with absolute precision, the service is invalidated. The smallest stray thought of partaking of the offering at the wrong time or place, for example, nullifies the entire offering." The silence that the Torah prescribes to Aaron could not only be external it had to be an internal silence as well. Aaron had to be at a level of complete peace. His thoughts needed to be focused with no room for complaining or doubts. How?

We sometimes are privileged to meet people who have complete faith and trust in G-d. I remember a woman going through terrible difficulties, some that could break almost anyone, and she turned to me with complete calm and said, "I must accept that this is what Hashem says is best for my Neshama – my soul - today". She displayed a faith so strong that I could hear her blessing Hashem for the bad just as one blesses Hashem for the good. Bad and good were simply our perception of something we could not understand. She refused to allow what she called her "inability to see the good in something", mar any situation.

Few of us can get to that level. But it's worth a try. Too many of us have expectations and place demands on life and unfortunately those expectations when they go unrealized or when those demands are not met, result in disappointed.

We often build a cage of expectations and demands and place ourselves within that cage. At that point anything outside the cage, anything outside the plan becomes overwhelming. We become enslaved within the cages we build.

Each year we celebrate Passover as the time of our freedom. The Rabbi would explain that it's not simply an anniversary of what occurred then. We don't simply recall that we were slaves and we were freed. Passover represents the time when we can free ourselves of our present day shackles. It represents a date on the calendar when G-d says, "I'm here to take you out. I'm here to release you. I'm here to give you freedom. Leave the cage and hitch your trailer to mine. This is not simply history. This is today!"

Aaron may have been in Egypt and he was redeemed with the rest of the nation, but he was never a slave. The Levites remained dedicated to G-d and were absolved from serving Pharaoh. Did his freedom give him strength? Was he always hitched to G-d's trailer? Isn't it that connection that allows us to accept and move forward? And isn't it faith that transforms an external silence and a mechanical movement into a true acceptance and resolve to go on and grow?

Aaron was my ancestor. My maternal grandfather and my maternal grandmother were part of his unbroken chain of descendants. Yet I was still a slave and in many ways I still am a slave to so many things. I am a slave to habits, honor, expectations and demands. I am a slave to the cage I constructed.

But I have a plan for this Passover. And that is to leave slavery behind and to emerge without the baggage; if not all the baggage, than at least one piece or maybe two. To do this I have to see myself as free even before I am. I need to see myself opening the bars of the cage and stepping out. It's the lesson of the first Pesach Seder being held before we even left. To be free we need to see ourselves as free and the night of Pesach is the night where we get a helping heavenly hand.

Can the cacophony of chaos bleating internally be transformed into the sweet sound of life? Can the crackling static be transformed into a symphony?

It's worth a try! Why not join me?

Shabbat Shalom and Hag Kasher VeSameyach

David Bibi

I have not read the following but I want to and included it in the newsletter ....

**'Open Orthodox' or 'Neo Conservative'?**  
**Can America's 'Open Orthodox' movement claim to be Orthodox at all?**  
**And do Orthodox rabbis have a duty to save it from itself?**  
**By Ari Soffer – Arutz Sheva**

Beyond the pale, or just more inclusive?

"Open Orthodoxy", the Jewish movement which has been kicking up a storm in the US, has faced considerable opposition from the Modern Orthodox establishment there.

The term "Open Orthodoxy" was coined by Rabbi Avi Weiss, himself ordained as an Orthodox rabbi, who argues that "Orthodoxy" or Halakhic Judaism (i.e. faithful to Jewish law/Halakha) needed to be more "inclusive" and "flexible" to innovation than his contemporaries believed.

The movement has gained some traction in recent years, even as it is shunned by most other Orthodox rabbis, and has courted controversy by testing - and, as many respected rabbis insist, by outright crossing - the boundaries of Halakha.

Much of the criticism to the movement has come from the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA), the main body of American Modern Orthodox Rabbis and the largest rabbinic organization in the world.

One of Weiss's most vocal critics is Rabbi Steven Pruzansky, a former Vice-Chairman of the RCA and Arutz Sheva contributor.

Rabbi Pruzansky has written numerous articles opposing Open Orthodoxy, and insists that - contrary to the claims of its founder - it does not qualify as "Orthodox" at all, due to what he says is a complete abandonment of Torah values and a gradual abandonment of Halakha altogether.

Arutz Sheva sat down with Rabbi Pruzansky to get to the opposition to the Open Orthodox movement in the US.

Let's begin with the basics: why are you so vehemently opposed to the Open Orthodox movement?

"Whenever you qualify Orthodoxy with an adjective clearly you're trying to do something that is different

and most often antithetical to the Torah, and I think that's the issue here.

"Anything that's 'open' has to eventually close, or has to be filled with something - and what they're trying to fill their movement with are ideas that are nothing new... they're actually very old, that's why I call it in my writings "neo-Conservatism", because they're going down a path that the Conservative Movement started a little over 100 years ago.

"It's not quite the same - it had to be updated for our era - but [the two movements are] almost identical in terms of the various issues: the integration of women in a public role in shul (synagogue); the more lenient and even lax standards when it comes to conversion; certain ideological departures that were very characteristic of the Conservative Movement as well."

"All of that might not be the official policy of Open Orthodoxy as a movement," Rabbi Pruzansky concedes, but he goes on to note how many leading members of the movement have embraced ideas "which are antithetical to the Torah," for example, by "denying the very authenticity of the Torah itself."

"One of their most prominent ordained rabbis has even argued that the Avot [Biblical Patriarchs] never really existed."

Positions such as these are what makes Open Orthodoxy "almost a replication of the road that the Conservative Movement took over 100 years ago", Rabbi Pruzansky reiterates.

"I think the public opposition to it is an effort to put up a roadblock, so they are not lost to the Torah world as was for the most part the Conservative Movement.

"What they [the Conservative Movement - ed.] tried to do was to 'modernize' the Torah; but what they ended up with was a diluted Torah that is indistinguishable from the secular value system of the western world."

Despite the bitter opposition to Rabbi Weiss's movement, Rabbi Pruzansky is careful to explain that the attacks are not personal.

"A lot of us have tremendous respect for the founders of Open Orthodoxy for all they've accomplished in the Jewish world," he says.

Rabbi Weiss was a leading activist in the fight to free Soviet Jewry, and has been an outspoken campaigner for the freedom of imprisoned Israeli agent Jonathan Pollard.

Instead, Rabbi Pruzansky compares the very vocal opposition to "putting up a big sign which says: 'Halt! You're going down a very dangerous road - don't take others with you like the Conservative Movement did!'"

You mentioned not "qualifying Orthodoxy" with adjectives, but what about Modern Orthodoxy?

"The term 'Modern Orthodoxy' is not a copyright title and even that requires definition.

"Every group tries to define itself differently, but I don't think that Modern Orthodoxy is an attempt to integrate secular values into Torah; rather, it represents a great appreciation or awareness of the Jew's place in the modern world.

"I don't think most Modern Orthodox Jews or rabbis for that matter would say that there is a parallel in importance between Torah values and secular values. Nobody [in the Modern Orthodox world - ed.] would argue that... I'm not sure that's the case in Open Orthodoxy."

He adds that the term "Modern Orthodox" is more "an attempt to distinguish it from hareidi-Orthodoxy, where involvement in the modern world is frowned upon or in some way 'unideal' on any level."

Where Modern Orthodoxy differs with hareidi streams of thought, he elaborates, is its belief that normative Halakhic standards can be strictly adhered to without shutting oneself off from the rest of the world. They are simply two different approaches, but share the same fundamental Torah values.

But despite all that, clearly there are many Jewish people who see Open Orthodoxy as filling a need... that something is missing in their Judaism. How do you respond to that?

For Rabbi Pruzansky, this question drills down to the fundamental error committed by movements such as Open Orthodoxy: an attempt to adapt and rewrite Torah values to suit every demand or ideal of the contemporary western world.

"You can't slake every thirst, that's the bottom line," he explains.

In particular, he says the domination of Open Orthodoxy and similar fringe movements by feminist activists is an indication that they are not drawing their fundamental values from the Torah, but looking outside of it.

"When it comes to feminism especially, it's a secular value, an un-Jewish value, and for the most part it's an anti-Torah value.

"When you mix something impure into a pure system, they don't go together... something will have to give... either the Torah or feminism."

He points out that he often meets Orthodox women who "see themselves as feminists in terms of the right to receive equal rights in the workplace and wages, etc... But not a single one is interested in wearing tefillin, being a hazan (cantor), because that's just a man's role in shul.

"The bottom line is that egalitarianism isn't a Torah value, so if you ask how it can fit with Torah - it's not going to be a natural fit!

"We need to be able to derive our values and our worldview from the Torah. Anything that's not there just isn't our values."

So is there perhaps a failure by the Orthodox leadership to communicate that message? Because clearly there are people seeking "Jewish values" from outside the Torah.

"Yes - there is actually double failure:

"The first failure is education - the notion (still entertained by many Orthodox educators) that everyone has to be educated the same way is fundamentally flawed.

"But there is a much broader point," he stresses, namely that "there are some Orthodox rabbis who have encouraged these expectations" because of pressure to cave into "secular values".

Like any legal system, he explains, "There is a limit to how much Halakha can tolerate."

"The failure to reach those expectations has engendered an industry of grievance; those grievances that are unassuageable are responsible for the creation of Open Orthodoxy and other fringe movements in the Torah world."

The phenomenon is helped along by the media, he says, which allows relatively fringe groups to punch well above their weight.

"They have the ear of the media so their influence is exaggerated.

"The Jewish media in America is by and large... hard-left, with very few exceptions, and even those with some connection to Orthodoxy - those with Orthodox publishers and the like - don't have appropriate respect for rabbis. Granted they thrive on controversy - that's also part of it - but they simply do not know or accept any limits.

"And that is also part of the problem: Western man does not accept any moral limits at all," he says, echoing the famous American saying: "Don't tread on me!"

In contrast, however, "Transposing that sentiment onto Torah is absurd.

"In Torah we surrender to the system, we don't conform the system to our desires."

So how is Orthodox world responding... how should it be responding?

"Right now we're in the realm of simply protesting.

"But there is a movement of thought that is gaining ground - it hasn't swept through all Orthodoxy - to actually ostracize and declare openly that these movements are not Orthodox - with all that entails for conversions, taking part in prayer quorums, etc...

Do you think that's the right route?

"I would much rather have some kind of rapprochement, reconciliation. The Torah world is small enough. It can accommodate the left-wing but it can't accommodate a female hazan, a female rabbi, dilution of conversion standards, mixed church choirs...

"There is only so much that the Torah world can accept; but nevertheless, rather than ostracizing or alienating I'd rather draw [them] near - but it has to be because we all accept the same terms of reference.

Do you think there is any hope for reconciliation at all?

"There's always hope. I'm not confident in the short term but in the long-term more so... except a number of adherents to this group will inevitably eventually leave Orthodoxy altogether.

"Even though it's not a large number of people they are still Jews and we want them part of the Torah world."

The reason for his optimism? "The mechitza" - the physical partition which separates between the men and women sections in Orthodox synagogues.

"The mechitza will naturally be a big stick in the craw of the feminists," he says, but an intriguing American legal precedent dating back to the 1950's means that the Orthodox "brand" is defined by the presence of a mechitza in shul.

Known as the Mt. Clemens case, it occurred when an Orthodox Jewish man named Baruch Litvin successfully sued his congregation for depriving him of his right to worship by introducing mixed seating.

The case means that "ironically, that which should be the first thing the feminists remove is actually the last thing."

So curiously enough, the decision as to which side of the Orthodox-non-Orthodox divide Open Orthodoxy falls into may rest upon it choosing which side of the fence, quite literally, its adherents sit.

#### **EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN**

##### **"It would have sufficed for us." (Haggadah of Pesah)**

On the Seder night we sing the song of "Dayenu." It's a great song that speaks about all the wonderful things Hashem did for us. For instance, the first stanza says, "If Hashem would have taken us out of Egypt but didn't punish the Egyptians, dayenu (it would have been enough. If He punished the Egyptians but didn't destroy their gods, dayenu." The song goes on and on. If Hashem didn't give us the Torah, if He didn't give us the Shabbat, etc., it would have been enough for us. But would we really be satisfied with that?

Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l explains that this song is said by Dayenu Jews." This song was sung by Jews that weren't matured yet, Jews that first got out of Mitzrayim. They would have been satisfied with no Torah and no Shabbat. We would have been happy just to get out of Egypt and would not have cared if Hashem didn't punish the Egyptians. We would have been happy to go to a land of freedom and would not have cared about the impression left on the rest of the world, as if it's ok to be wicked and get away with it. It would have appeared as a world without justice, but Hashem wasn't happy with that; He wanted to show the world that there is a Leader that runs the world. Hashem wanted to destroy their gods to show that true redemption doesn't begin until idolatry is wiped out.

Had Hashem not killed the first born the world would not know that there is a justice system of measure for measure. The Egyptians enslaved the Jews who are Hashem's first born, so He killed their first born. Hashem gave us great wealth because He promised it to Abraham. But us? We would have been satisfied without all of this. The Dayenu Jew is satisfied with very little spiritually, doesn't mind so much about Hashem's image in the world. The Dayenu Jew would like to get by with the minimum observance.

But, Hashem wasn't satisfied. He knew that without Torah, without Shabbat, a nation with a minimum appetite for these things would never remain a redeemed people. Baruch Hashem today we are a nation who would never make do without all of these spiritual gifts. We sing an unending thank you to Hashem for all He has done for us. Happy Holiday. Rabbi Reuven Semah

**"G-d has bestowed many favors upon us."  
(Passover Haggadah)**

Gratitude and appreciation are virtues that are not simply praiseworthy, they are essential traits. On the Seder night we are enjoined to recount the many wonders and miracles that Hashem wrought for us. Ibn Ezra contends that appreciation goes a step further. We are to remember how it used to be, how we suffered, the pain and affliction to which we were subjected, the thirst and hunger which accompanied us and the depression and hopelessness that ruled our lives. Hashem rescued us from all that. He took us out of misery, granting us the opportunity to live as free people.

Harav Mordechai Gifter, shlita, explains that one must appreciate and give gratitude where it is due. Does one, however, analyze the good that he has received? Does one ever think about what life would have been like had he not been saved? Do we ever really evaluate the good? Do we simply say, "Thank you," and continue with "business as usual?" One must remember what it had been like; think back to the days of misery and pain, feel some of the frustration and grief that used to be so much a part of his life. Then and only then will he truly understand the essence of the favor he has received. All too quickly we pay our respects to our benefactor and forget about him. If we pay more attention to our past we might more fully appreciate the present.

This, according to Harav Gifter, is the purpose of the Dayenu format of the Haggadah. We must delve deeper into the "good" that we have received, reviewing it, analyzing every aspect of it, so that we will experience greater appreciation at the present time. Let us appreciate all that we have so

that we may merit to be blessed continuously. Happy Pesah. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

**Little Mistake, Big Mistake  
(One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)**

Everyone suffers from different phobias. Some people are afraid of dogs. Others won't fly in airplanes. Still others are afraid of the dark, or petrified of enclosed places. Some fears are rational and others irrational – but fear is part of almost everyone's life.

Fear is much like pepper. A little can enhance the taste of a meal, while too much can spoil the efforts of even the greatest chef.

Fear of making mistakes fits into this category. A mistake is part of life. After making an error, the best reaction is to consider what caused it, and then develop a plan to avoid repeating it. A mistake can be productive if you learn from it, and destructive if you deny the error and proceed without change.

When you make a mistake, don't deny it and don't justify your behavior. You can shrink the mistake into something small by revising your behavior to eliminate repeating the same error in the future. But should you rationalize it away, you will probably do it again and, in doing so, magnify even a little mistake into a big one.

The size of your error is determined by your reaction. A minute of honest evaluation will convert a mistake into success by helping you learn from it.

**RABBI ELI MANSOUR  
The Lesson of the White and Gold Garments**

We read in Parashat Ahareh-Mot of the special service which the Kohen Gadol would perform on Yom Kippur in the Bet Ha'mikdash. One of the many fascinating features of this service is the special garments worn by the Kohen Gadol. Yom Kippur marked the only time any human being would enter the Kodesh Ha'kodashim – the innermost chamber in the Bet Ha'mikdash – and before entering the Kohen Gadol would change out of his ordinary priestly vestments and wear plain white clothes. The reason, as the Gemara explains, is "En Kategor Na'asa Sanigor," which literally means, "A prosecutor cannot become a defender." The standard garments of the Kohen Gadol contained gold, and gold is reminiscent of the Egel Ha'zahab (the golden calf). And thus as the Kohen Gadol enters the sacred chamber to beseech G-d for compassion and forgiveness on behalf of the Jewish people, he must not wear gold garments, which bring to mind the grievous sin of the golden calf. He therefore changes out of his ordinary

gold vestments and wears special white garments when he enters the Kodesh Ha'kodashim.

The question, however, arises, why does the Kohen Gadol wear his ordinary gold garments for the rest of the Yom Kippur service, when he is not in the Kodesh Ha'kodashim? If wearing these garments will have the adverse effect of bringing to mind the golden calf, then why does the Kohen Gadol not avoid them altogether throughout the entirety of the Yom Kippur service?

Many stories are told of great Sadikim who always looked to see the positive, admirable qualities of their fellow Jews. The most famous of these is likely the great Hassidic master Rabbi Levi Yishak of Berditchev (1740-1809), who always came to the defense of other Jews. It is told that once on Tisha B'Ab he happened to pass by a gentile-owned eatery and saw a Jew sitting there and eating. The Rabbi approached him and asked if he was aware that it was Tisha B'Ab, when eating was forbidden. The man apathetically answered that he was fully aware that it was a fast day. The Rabbi proceeded to ask if the man was aware of the fact that the food he was eating was non-kosher, and the man again calmly acknowledged that he knew he was eating non-kosher food.

Rav Levi Yishak turned to the heavens and said, "Master of world, look how wonderful Your children are! Even when they disobey You, they still speak the truth!"

Stories like this one are certainly inspiring and set a crucial example for us to follow, but they also raise an important question: what happened to the Torah obligation to reprimand our fellow Jew? In the next Parasha, Parashat Kedoshim, the Torah commands, "Hoche'ah Tochi'ah Et Amitecha," that we must point out mistakes made by our fellow Jew in order to help them improve. Needless to say, this must only be done in a way and in a context that offers the realistic possibility of effecting positive change. If one has reason to suspect that his criticism would be ignored or rejected, then he must not say anything. Nevertheless, the fact that the Torah requires criticizing under the proper conditions necessarily means that we must take note of wrongful behavior, and we cannot always look only at the positive aspects of our fellow Jew. How, then, do we reconcile these two values – offering constructive criticism, and focusing our attention on the positive qualities of other people?

The answer can be found in the Yom Kippur service. Rav Zalman Sorotzkin (1880-1966) commented that

there is a difference between the way the Kohen Gadol approached G-d, and the way he appeared before the people. When he came before G-d, he, like Rav Levi Yishak of Berditchev, spoke only positively about the Jewish people. G-d does not want any of us complaining to him about His other children. He wants us to love and respect one another and pray for their wellbeing, without paying attention to their faults and mistakes. Therefore, the Kohen Gadol could not wear gold when he came before G-d. But outside the Kodesh Ha'kodashim, when the Kohen Gadol appeared before the people, it was certainly appropriate for him to wear gold and subtly remind the people of their sins and the need to improve. The gold garments that have no place in the Kodesh Ha'kodashim were perfectly acceptable and played an important role outside, when the Kohen Gadol faced the people.

The lesson of the Kohen Gadol's garments, then, is that we must exercise great caution when casting judgments about our fellow Jew. On the one hand, if we see wrongful behavior and we are in a position to correct it, we are not only entitled, but obligated, to do what we can, in an appropriate manner and setting. Otherwise, however, when there is no practical purpose intended, we must follow Rav Levi Yishak's inspiring example and look only for the admirable and praiseworthy qualities of all our fellow Jews.

### Rabbi Wein

The glorious holiday of Pesach is upon us once more. With all of its rituals and wonder, Pesach marks the uniqueness of the Jewish people – a people delivered from centuries of bondage through miraculous Heavenly intervention. So, one of the main functions of Pesach is to connect us to an event that occurred millennia ago in a distant land.

The natural inclination of people is to feel disconnected to that event. This is implicit in the questions raised in the section of the Hagadah devoted to the four sons. Their basic question is: "What is the relevance of this long-ago event to me?" And this has remained the basic question in all of Jewish life throughout the ages.

The enormous number of Jews who are completely disconnected from their faith and their people, from their homeland of Israel and from the values and observances of Torah, testifies to the intensity of doubt and difficulty posed by this question. If the Exodus from Egypt does not speak to me, then the rest of Judaism is pretty immaterial to me as well.



And that is basically the statement and question of the evil son in the Hagadah. In effect he is saying that the whole rite of Pesach as well as all of the other rituals of Judaism are meaningless because he has no connection to the Exodus from Egypt or to Jewish history generally. It is this disconnect that creates rampant assimilation and a constantly diminishing connection to the past and destiny of the Jewish people.

The answer of the Hagadah to the seemingly irrelevance of the Exodus from Egypt to our current world, three thousand, three-hundred, twenty-six years later, is difficult for us to understand. We tell that evil son that had he lived at the time of the Exodus from Egypt he would not have been redeemed and would have died in Egyptian captivity.

Midrash teaches us that a majority of the Jews in Egypt did not survive, spiritually or physically, to participate in the Exodus. The clear message here is that Exodus denial means spiritual annihilation as far as the individual Jew is concerned. In order to be able to achieve freedom – inner and lasting freedom – as a Jew, one must first feel connected to the Jewish people and to its past and committed to its future.

Ritual is one of the proven methods to achieve such a connection. Every bite of matzo brings me closer to my people and to its eternal mission in world civilization. One of my grandsons when he was a little boy said to me at the Seder: "Zaidy, tell everyone to be quiet I want to hear what the matzo is saying to me." In his wise, childlike way he encompassed the message of Pesach to all of us.

We have to listen to what the matzo is saying to us. By so doing, we connect ourselves to the Exodus from Egypt and thereby to all of Jewish history and Judaism itself. Without listening to the matzo, we will be disconnected from our past and all of Judaism will appear to be irrelevant to us.

Pesach teaches us many basic lessons about life generally and Jewish life particularly. It teaches us that we are a unique people and therefore have to behave in a unique fashion. It teaches us that the past has to always live in our present and that memory is the key to wisdom and survival. It teaches us never to despair and to always hope and trust for better times and salvation. It teaches us of the power of an individual – even one individual alone, such as our teacher Moshe - to affect and alter all of human history.

It points out to us the inherent danger of Jews not feeling Jewish and distancing themselves from their people and their own individual destiny. It proclaims for us God's rule over nations and the omnipresence of His Divine hand, so to speak, in human affairs. Many times this guidance is an unseen force but there are times in history, such as the Exodus from Egypt and perhaps even in our time in the miraculous resilience of the Jewish people after the terrible events of the past century, when God's direction of events is more visible to us.

Pesach and its matzo have a great deal to say to us if we are prepared to listen and understand the message. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov was reputed to have said: "Every step that I take brings me closer to Jerusalem." We can also say that every bite of matzo that we take brings us closer to the experience of the Exodus from Egypt and to the great redemption of Israel that yet awaits us.

### **Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks**

It was a unique, unrepeatable moment of leadership at its highest height. For forty days Moses had been communing with God, receiving from him the law written on tablets of stone. Then God informed him that the people had just made a golden calf. He was about to destroy them. It was the worst crisis of the wilderness years, and it called for every one of Moses' gifts as a leader.

First, he prayed to God not to destroy the people. God agreed. Then he went down the mountain and saw the people cavorting around the calf. Immediately, he smashed the tablets. He burned the calf, mixed its ashes with water and made the people drink. Then he called for people to join him. The Levites heeded the call and carried out a bloody punishment in which three thousand people died. Then Moses went back up the mountain and prayed for forty days and nights. Then for a further forty days he stayed with God while a new set of tablets was engraved. Finally he came down the mountain on 10 Tishri carrying the new tablets with him as a visible sign that God's covenant with Israel remained.

This was an extraordinary show of leadership, at times bold and decisive, at others slow and persistent. Moses had to contend with both sides, inducing the Israelites to do teshuvah and God to exercise forgiveness. At that moment he was the greatest ever embodiment of the name Israel, meaning one who wrestles with God and with people and prevails.

The good news is: there once was a Moses. Because

of him, the people survived. The bad news is: what happens when there is no Moses? The Torah itself says: "No other prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut. 34: 10). That is the problem faced by every nation, corporation, community and family. What do you do in the absence of heroic leadership? It is easy to say, "Think what Moses would have done." But Moses did what he did because he was what he was. We are not Moses. That is why every human group that was once touched by greatness faces a problem of continuity. How does it avoid a slow decline?

The answer is given in this week's parsha. The day Moses descended the mountain with the second tablets was to be immortalised by turning its anniversary into a holy day, Yom Kippur. On it, the drama of teshuvah and kapparah, repentance and atonement, was to be repeated annually. This time, though, the key figure would not be Moses but Aaron, not the prophet but the High Priest.

That is how you perpetuate a transformative event: by turning it into a ritual. Max Weber called this the routinization of charisma.[1] A once-and-never-again moment becomes a once-and-ever-again ceremony. As James MacGregor Burns puts it in his classic work, *Leadership*: "The most lasting tangible act of leadership is the creation of an institution – a nation, a social movement, a political party, a bureaucracy – that continues to exert moral leadership and foster needed social change long after the creative leaders are gone." [2]

There is a remarkable midrash in which various sages put forward their idea of *klal gadol ba-Torah*, "the great principle of the Torah." Ben Azzai says it is the verse, "This is the book of the chronicles of man: On the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God" (Gen. 5: 1). Ben Zoma says that there is a more embracing principle, "Listen, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." Ben Nannas says there is a yet more embracing principle: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Ben Pazzi says we find a more embracing principle still: "The first sheep shall be offered in the morning, and the second sheep in the afternoon" (Exodus 29: 39) – or, as we might say today, *Shacharit*, *Mincha* and *Maariv*. In a word: "routine." The passage concludes: The law follows Ben Pazzi.[3]

The meaning of Ben Pazzi's statement is clear: all the high ideals in the world – the human person as God's image, belief in God's unity, and the love of neighbours – count for little until they are turned into habits of action that become habits of the heart. We can all recall moments of insight or epiphany when

we suddenly understood what life is about, what greatness is, and how we would like to live. A day, a week, or at most a year later the inspiration fades and becomes a distant memory and we are left as we were before, unchanged.

Judaism's greatness is that it gave space to both prophet and priest, to inspirational figures on the one hand, and on the other, daily routines – the halakhah – that take exalted visions and turn them into patterns of behaviour that reconfigure the brain and change how we feel and who we are.

One of the most unusual passages I have ever read about Judaism written by a non-Jew occurs in William Rees-Mogg's book on macro-economics, *The Reigning Error*. [4] Rees-Mogg (1928-2012) was a financial journalist who became editor of *The Times*, chairman of the Arts Council and vice-chairman of the BBC. Religiously he was a committed Catholic.

He begins the book with a completely unexpected paean of praise for halakhic Judaism. He explains his reason for doing so. Inflation, he says, is a disease of inordinacy, a failure of discipline, in this case in relation to money. What makes Judaism unique, he says, is its legal system. This has been wrongly criticised by Christians as drily legalistic. In fact, Jewish law was essential for Jewish survival because it "provided a standard by which action could be tested, a law for the regulation of conduct, a focus for loyalty and a boundary for the energy of human nature."

All sources of energy, most notably nuclear energy, need some form of containment. Without that, they become dangerous. Jewish law has always acted as a container for the spiritual and intellectual energy of the Jewish people. That energy "has not merely exploded or been dispersed; it has been harnessed as a continuous power." What Jews have, he argues, modern economies lack: a system of self-control that allows economies to flourish without booms and crashes, inflation and recession.

The same applies to leadership. In *Good to Great*, management theorist Jim Collins argues that what the great companies have in common is a culture of discipline. In *Great By Choice* he uses the phrase "the 20 mile march," meaning that outstanding organisations plan for the marathon, not the sprint. Confidence, he says, "comes not from motivational speeches, charismatic inspiration, wild pep rallies, unfounded optimism, or blind hope." [5] It comes from doing the deed, day after day, year after year. Great companies use disciplines that are specific, methodical and consistent. They encourage their

people to be self-disciplined and responsible. They do not over-react to change, be it for good or bad. They keep their eye on the far horizon. Above all, they do not depend on heroic, charismatic leaders who at best lift the company for a while but do not provide it with the strength-in-depth they need to flourish in the long run.

The classic instance of the principles articulated by Burns, Rees-Mogg and Collins is the transformation that occurred between Ki Tissa and Acharei Mot, between the first Yom Kippur and the second, between Moses' heroic leadership and the quiet, understated priestly discipline of an annual day of repentance and atonement.

Turning ideals into codes of action that shape habits of the heart is what Judaism and leadership are about. Never lose the inspiration of the prophets, but never lose, either, the routines that turn ideals into acts and dreams into achieved reality.

[1] See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, University of California Press, 1978, 246 ff.

[2] James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*, 454.

[3] The passage is cited in the Introduction to the commentary HaKotev to Ein Yaakov, the collected aggadic passages of the Talmud. It is also quoted by Maharal in *Netivot Olam*, Ahavat Re'a 1.

[4] William Rees-Mogg, *The Reigning Error: The crisis of world inflation*, London, Hamilton, 1974, 9-13.

[5] Jim Collins, *Good to Great*, London, Random House Business, 2001. *Great By Choice*, London, Random House Business Books, 2011.

### **AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL** **"Tam ma hu omer?" (Pesach Haggada) What** **does the Simple Son say?**

He is a straight boy, doesn't know much, but he is a sensible boy. He says, "what is this? Ma Zot?". He wants to know. He is not eager to know Halachot or Talmud, but he is a straightforward fellow. There are a lot of straightforward Jews. What do you tell them?

You should say, "that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim with a strong hand".

Now pay attention to these words, what are you telling him?

We say to this son, "My son, you must know, what happened to us never happened to any nation before. When Hashem demonstrated His Presence in the events of Yetziat Mitzrayim it was something that never was permitted to take place before, and

never again.

Why did it take place then?

For all future history, as Hashem says, "I'm doing this for the purpose that you should talk about it"; In order that you will tell it to your children.

The reason for the miracles of Mitzrayim is not because they were necessary, we didn't need miracles to go out of Mitzrayim. When Pharaoh was pursuing us to bring us back into slavery, he could have caught pneumonia, and they could have gone back again and let us go on. We could have been saved by natural means.

Why did Hashem have to split the sea, and drown Pharaoh and his army in the sea?

Only for one purpose: That we should have something to talk about.

So my son, you should know, Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim with a strengthened hand.

It made such a supernatural demonstration, once and forever, for all generations to talk about.

That, my son, you should know, is the entire reason for our being Jews.

The entire Torah stems on that greatness that Hashem showed us at that time.

Quoted from "The Making of a Nation" recorded lectures R' Miller ZT"L

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