



חגים וזמנים

The Festival Times

A Community Kollel of Dallas publication

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FROM THE EDITOR

“והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא” - “You shall tell your son on that day” (Shmot 13:8). The festival of Pesach is the ultimate learning and teaching experience, and the focal points are the lessons and experiences that are imparted by parents to their children. From the formalized Ma Nishtana to the spontaneous questions posed by our children, we, as adults, have a unique opportunity to further our connection and deepen our children’s relationship to our history and heritage.

With this in mind, we are pleased to present to you a collection of articles by members of the Kollel, as well as Judaic faculty members of Akiba and Yavneh academies on the subject of the Pesach experience.

We have included a selection of laws and customs about Pesach, the search for *chametz* and the counting of the *omer*.

As always, we have included sections for you and your children to enjoy, with activities and readings on the theme of Pesach and parent/child relationships, responsibilities and obligations, as seen through the eyes of our Talmudic sages.

We would like to thank the Radunsky family for once again sponsoring this publication in memory of David’s father, Mr. Marvin Radunsky, ob”m.

We wish you, your families, friends, and all of Israel a חג פסח שמח וכשר, a happy and *kosher* Pesach.

Rav Benjy Myers

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*This publication is dedicated to the memory of **Marvin Radunsky**,
Moshe ben Tzvi, ob”m, in observance of his Yahrtzeit.*

May his memory serve as a blessing and inspiration for his entire family.

GREETINGS

Rav Hanan Schlesinger, *Rosh Kollel*

Pesach is about creating memories. Not in the sense of scrapbooking or putting together a photo album, but rather in the most literal meaning of the term. We are creating memories for ourselves and our children. You see, memory is a pliable thing. Memories can be implanted and nurtured, just as they can be erased. And our efforts on Pesach are geared towards the implantation of memories of our liberation from slavery by the hand of God. That is what the rabbis mean when they say that each of us must see himself as if he personally went out of Egypt. We must create memories of our redemption 3000 years ago.

‘But I wasn’t there, I didn’t go out of Egypt’, you protest. ‘How can I be asked to implant false memories?’ The answer is that it all depends on who you are. If you define yourself as the particular physical body which is here today and gone tomorrow, then indeed the project is futile at best and disingenuous at worst. But if you understand yourself as part of a larger whole that stretches back throughout the generations, such that you are just as much the entire chain as you are one of its links, then whatever one of those links lives through is part of the life experience of all of those links. And then the assimilation of that link’s experiences into the memory of all the other links is a legitimate and necessary step in the endeavor of strengthening the chain.

In this age of the individual, it is hard to see ourselves as going beyond our time and our place. It is difficult to break down the barriers that prevent us from expanding our consciousness of self to include all the Jews who have come before us as well as all those who will come after. But to be a Jew in the fullest sense of the word, that is exactly what we have to do. And such is certainly one of the primary foci of all of our holidays and, in particular, of the Festival of Our Freedom.

Please accept from us this new Pesach edition of The Festival Times. We hope it will be of assistance to each and every one of you in the memory building of this joyous season.

In the name of all of the members of the Community Kollel of Dallas, I wish you a *Chag Pesach kasher v’samei’ach*.

SELECTED LAWS OF PESACH

Selling the *chametz* – In order to comply with the Biblical prohibition of possessing *chametz* on Pesach, the Rabbis instituted a system whereby a Jew sells his or her *chametz* to a non-Jew before the onset of Pesach. Rather than finding individual buyers, most people arrange to transfer power of attorney over their *chametz* to a rabbi, who then sells the *chametz* to a gentile friend, acting as agent for an entire community. Please call the Kollel office if you would like assistance in arranging for the sale of your *chametz*.

Eating and disposing of *chametz* - See page 7 for further details on the search for *chametz*. The restriction on eating *chametz* begins on the day before Pesach, when in Temple times, the Pascal Lamb offering was brought. This year, the final time for eating *chametz* is Shabbat, 4/19 at 11:15 AM, and the final time for disposing of *chametz* is Shabbat, 12:19 PM.

Fast of the Firstborn - On the day before Pesach, first born males are obligated to fast, in recognition of being spared the fate visited by God upon the Egyptian firstborns during the final plague. Because fasting is normally discouraged on the day before a festival, if a firstborn is invited to participate in a festive meal marking the fulfillment of a *mitzva* (like a *siyum* - the festive celebration that marks the completed study of a section of Talmud, a *Brit Mila*, etc.), he may partake of the festive meal and is no longer obligated to fast during that day. This year, because the eve of Pesach is on Shabbat, the fast takes place on Thursday, 4/17.

Chol haMoed – While the first two and last two days of Pesach are similar to Shabbat in their observance, the four intermediate days do not have quite the same restrictions on activity. Nonetheless, these days are festive in nature, marked by rejoicing, feasting, special outings and other celebratory activities.

Counting the Omer – Beginning with the second night of Pesach, we count forty nine days of ‘the Omer’. This count serves as a bridge, linking Pesach - the holiday of our freedom - to Shavuot - the festival marking the revelation at Sinai and the transformation of a lowly slave nation into sublime servants of God. The proper time for counting is at night, although if one did not count at night, he or she may count during the following day without a blessing. See page 8 for further information.

בְּרִיקַת חֵמֶץ - SEARCHING FOR CHAMETZ

The search for *chametz* normally takes place on the evening before Pesach. This year, it should take place on Thursday evening, 4/17, after nightfall (8:35 PM). It is customary to place ten pieces of carefully wrapped bread in various places to be collected during the search. The search should cover the home, car and any other places for which a person is responsible and into which he or she may have brought *chametz* during the year.

Before beginning the search, recite the following blessing:

ברוך אתה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוֵּנוּ עַל בְּעוֹר חֵמֶץ.

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al bi-ur chametz.

Blessed are You, God, King of the Universe, who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us regarding the removal of *chametz*.

* * * * *

Upon completing the search, the *chametz* is set aside to be burned the following morning, and the following declaration is made. It should be said in a language that one understands:

כָּל חֲמִירָא וְחֲמִיעָא דְאַפָּא בְּרִשׁוּתֵי דְלָא חֲמַתְתָּהּ וְדְלָא בְּעַרְתָּהּ וְדְלָא יָדַעְנָא לָהּ לְבָטֵל וְלִהְיוּ הִפְקָר כְּעַפְרָא דְאַרְעָא.

Any leaven that is my possession that I have not seen, that I have not removed, and that I do not know of - may it be nullified and ownerless like the dust of the ground.

* * * * *

On the morning following the search (Friday, 4/18), the *chametz*, along with the feather, candle, spoon and bag that have been used to collect it are burned. Although the following declaration annulling all of one's *chametz* is normally recited at this time, this year, it should only be said on Shabbat morning, 4/19. It should be said in a language that one understands:

כָּל חֲמִירָא וְחֲמִיעָא דְאַפָּא בְּרִשׁוּתֵי דְחֲזַתְתָּהּ וְדְלָא חֲזַתְתָּהּ, דְּחֲמַתְתָּהּ וְדְלָא חֲמַתְתָּהּ, דְּבַעַרְתָּהּ וְדְלָא בַעַרְתָּהּ, לְבָטֵל וְלִהְיוּ הִפְקָר כְּעַפְרָא דְאַרְעָא.

Any leaven that is in my possession that I have or have not seen, that I have or have not recognized, that I have or have not removed - may it be nullified and ownerless like the dust of the ground.

COUNTING THE OMER

The following blessing is recited prior to each day's counting:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל סְפִירַת הָעוֹמֵר

*Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu al s'firat haOmer.*

Blessed are You, God, King of the Universe, who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us regarding the counting of the Omer.

Use this chart to cross off each day of the Omer (in bold) as we head toward the festival of Shavuot and the receiving of the Torah.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Shabbat
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
4/20 <i>Pesach 1</i>	4/21 <i>Pesach 2</i>	4/22 <i>Pesach 3</i>	4/23 <i>Pesach 4</i>	4/24 <i>Pesach 5</i>	4/25 <i>Pesach 6</i>	4/26 <i>Pesach 7</i>
Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13
4/27 <i>Pesach 8</i>	4/28	4/29	4/30	5/1 <i>Yom HaShoah</i>	5/2	5/3 <i>Kedoshim</i>
Day 14	Day 15	Day 16	Day 17	Day 18	Day 19	Day 20
5/4	5/5 <i>Rosh Chodesh Iyar</i>	5/6 <i>Rosh Chodesh Iyar</i>	5/7 <i>Yom HaZikaron</i>	5/8 <i>Yom HaAtzmaut</i>	5/9	5/10 <i>Emor</i>
Day 21	Day 22	Day 23	Day 24	Day 25	Day 26	Day 27
5/11	5/12	5/13	5/14	5/15	5/16	5/17 <i>Behar</i>
Day 28	Day 29	Day 30	Day 31	Day 32	Day 33	Day 34
5/18	5/19 <i>Pesach Sheni</i>	5/20	5/21	5/22	5/23 <i>Lag BaOmer</i>	5/24 <i>Bechukotai</i>
Day 35	Day 36	Day 37	Day 38	Day 39	Day 40	Day 41
5/25	5/26	5/27	5/28	5/29	5/30	5/31 <i>Bemidbar</i>
Day 42	Day 43	Day 44	Day 45	Day 46	Day 47	Day 48
6/1	6/2 <i>Yom Yerushalyim</i>	6/3	6/4 <i>Rosh Chodesh Sivan</i>	6/5	6/6	6/7 <i>Naso</i>
Day 49						
6/8	6/9 <i>Shavuot Day 1</i>	6/10 <i>Shavuot Day 2</i>				

Gagging Over Matza

Rav Hanan Schlesinger, *Rosh Kollel, Community Kollel of Dallas*

It is almost like slapstick comedy, but the Talmud is absolutely serious. It is the night of the Passover Seder. Preparations have been underway for weeks. Everyone has arrived; they are all at their seats. The table is decked out with all the symbols of the holiday, matza, bitter herbs, *charoset* – everything is ready. Kiddush is about to be heard, or perhaps it has already been recited ... and suddenly there is a terrible commotion. The front door is broken down, and three thieves confront the celebrants at knifepoint. The guests are tied to their chairs and the intruders begin to ransack the house. They are obviously nervous, for when the hapless victims begin whispering among themselves, the thieves immediately search for a way to gag them. The more resourceful one among them comes upon the matza lying on the table, and – after moistening it under the faucet – makes a number of jumbo matza-balls and stuffs them one-by-one into the mouth of the victims who are now unable to make a sound. Soon after the criminals make a speedy get-away.

And the Talmud proclaims: ‘If bandits forced him to eat matza, he has fulfilled his obligation’.

And we are incredulous – How did the rabbis come up with such a scenario! But more to the point, why do they rule that under such circumstances, the commandment has been legally executed? It was performed under extreme duress! There was no thought or intention, certainly no focus on the meaning of the mitzva or the significance of freedom and slavery! What is our tradition trying to tell us? Don’t we have to focus our attention and understand our actions for them to have any real meaning? Aren’t they just empty shells when we do them by rote – or are forced to perform them by parents or teachers

*Our Rabbis taught:
Scripture says
concerning a man who
guides his sons and
daughters in the right
path, "And you shall
know that your home
is in peace."*

Yevamot 62b

(or thieves!)?

Of course the Talmud is speaking in hyperbole here. And of course it is true that our deeds are much more significant when our bodies function in tandem with our minds

*Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said:
One who teaches his grandchild Torah, it is as if he [the child] received it directly from Sinai.*

Kiddushin 30a

and hearts. But let this not blind us to the great truth here, one of the foundational messages of the Torah tradition - and also one of the great divides between Judaism and classical Christianity: Deeds always matter. Even divorced of mindfulness, they matter. They affect the world. They make a difference, for good or for bad.

And they matter because we live in a corporeal world, and the condition of this world matters. It matters to us and it matters to God whether there is poverty and sickness, or affluence and health. The state and the progress of mankind matters. Deeds done or left undone make a difference in the physical world in which we live, and it is of the very nature of reality that very often they make a difference no matter what intention or consciousness was attached to them.

Had man been only soul or spirit, had he had no body or had the body been inconsequential to who he is, it might then have been the case that only purity of heart would count, only faith, only feeling. What you could have done or what you meant to do or what you lusted to do might have counted for as much as what you actually did. But that is not the case. Man is no less body than soul; he is more than just a heart, more than just a mind. Our physicality is an essential part of what it means to be human.

Salvation is not merely in the next world, not merely in the world of the spirit - it is just as much in the here and now. Our mission is just as much in this physical world as in any other spiritual one. This world is not unredeemable; it may be unredeemed as of yet, but our mission is to work within it to redeem it. Mankind may not be perfect, not by a

long shot, but human society is certainly perfectible. Perfectible – one deed at a time. Now you might object: In the sphere of interaction between human beings actions count. Terrorism or violence has a concrete effect not matter what the motivation, and charity aids the needy no matter why it is given. Adultery left uncommitted, despite the lust in the heart, leaves the women un-violated. But ritual deeds? Shouldn't we look at things differently, and only value that which is performed with a full heart? No, not necessarily. All deeds have an effect upon the environment. They change the world in which we live. They have ramifications for others. Good deeds may inspire, transgressions may demoralize, lack of deed may leave a void. Who knows the myriad levels of effect that our deeds have?

And they even change those who perform them. The medieval author of Sefer HaChinuch (#16), in dealing with the almost overwhelming number of mitzvot connected to Pesach, records this deep truth in a pithy aphorism: “*Acharei hape'ulot nimshachim halevavot*” – “The hearts are pulled along in the wake of the deeds.” Our inner world is molded by our outer world. The movement of our limbs may engender movement in our hearts. You are how you act - for good...and for bad.

When Rav Yosef heard his mother's footsteps he would say: "Let me stand in honor of the approaching Divine Presence."

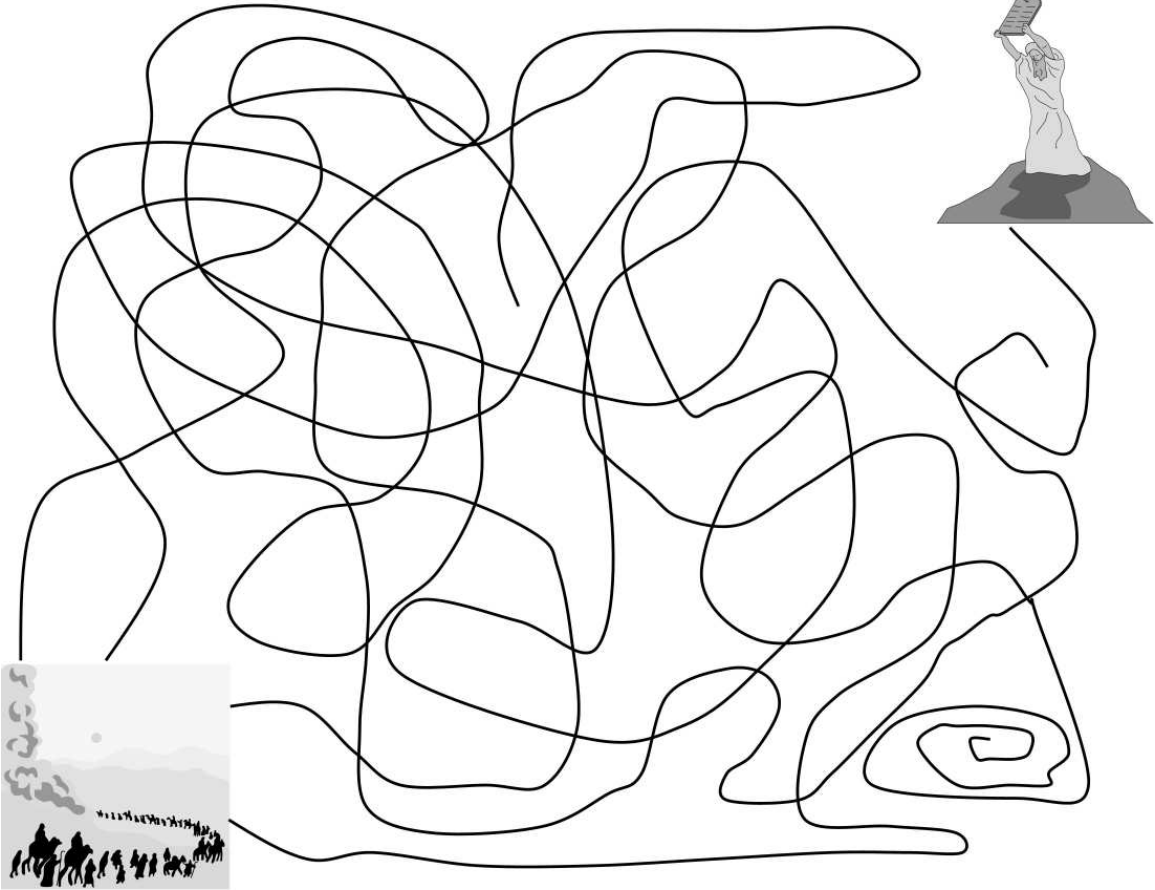
Kiddushin 31b

In preparation for Pesach there is much to do, as well as during the holiday itself. And we will strive to do what has to be done through a fusion of mind and body, with total awareness and full intentionality. But when we fail to reach this lofty goal, let us not become demoralized. God may demand our hearts, but our first priority is to give Him the allegiance of our limbs and our bodies. No good deed – however devoid of soul - is meaningless. Even ‘If bandits forced him to eat matza, he has fulfilled his obligation.’

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KIDS KORNEN

Can you help the Jewish people get from Egypt to Mount Sinai in time to receive the Torah?



Divorce and Kids

Rabbi Herbert J. Cohen, *Executive Director, Community Kollel of Dallas*

This is an excerpt from Rabbi Cohen's book, *Kosher Parenting, a Guide for Raising Kids in a Complex World*.

Divorce creates all sorts of problems for kids; but within the context of Judaism, there are several unique issues that arise. The mitzvah of honoring parents still applies to both parents, and, generally speaking, the child needs to be sensitive to the wishes of both. Problems surface, however, when the requests of both parents conflict with one another and the issue at hand relates to religious observance.

Jerry's Passover Dilemma

Jerry, a 10th grade student at our Jewish day high school, came to me to discuss a problem. His divorced parents, both of whom are remarried and live in the same city, each want him to be with them for the Passover holiday. Although he lives with his mother, his father has regular

Three partners in a person:

God, his mother and father.

When a person respects his parents, God says:

"It is as if they have lived with me and honored me."

Kiddushin 30b

visitation rights, and the relationship with both parents is reasonably strong. Jerry and his mom are observant Jews and his dad is not. Jerry feels that if he stays with his mother, his Passover Seder will be properly observed according to Jewish law. If he goes to his dad's home, he will not be able to observe the holiday properly. What should he do?

I commended Jerry for his mature statement of his religious dilemma. The reality is that the mitzvah of honoring parents must always be observed unless it conflicts with God's laws, to which all Jews are subject.

Hard as it may be, his obligation to observe Passover, a Torah law, overrules his obligation to honor a parent. Therefore, he should tell this father in as gentle a way as possible, reassuring him of his love, that he would feel more comfortable at holiday time spending it with his mom. Perhaps he can arrange to spend part of the holiday with his dad doing some special activities when food and observance matters can be handled more easily.

The commandment to honor parents is one of the few in the Bible for which a specific reward is mentioned: long life. Children are obligated to honor parents while they are alive and also after they die, through the performance of good deeds in their memory and through the recitation of the Kaddish, a prayer said by mourners glorifying the name of God. However, there are a number of exceptions to this rule, the most important of which applies to the situation of a parent asking a child to transgress a Torah law. In such a case, the child does not have to comply, for both parent and child are subject to God's higher law. Parents of divorced children, in particular, should consider this fact when they ask their kids to do things that may not conform to Jewish law.

Once Rabbi Avahu asked his son for a drink of water. While his son was getting the water, Rabbi Avahu fell asleep. His son, Avimi, stood and waited until his father woke up, and then gave him the water.

Kiddushin 31b

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Pesach: Holiday of Faith

Rabbi Maury Grebenau, *Judaic Studies Instructor, Yavneh Academy*

When we arrive at the *Ma Nishtana* (the four questions) during the Seder, our immediate reaction is to look towards the younger members of our table expectantly. The custom for the youngest child at the *seder* to recite this paragraph is widespread and well understood. The entire *seder* seems focused on the education of the next generation, and this custom seems to be just another example. However, if one looks at the Mishna, the source of these questions, one would find an intriguing law about the *Ma Nishtana*. The Talmud (Pesachim 116a) relates that if two Torah scholars are having the *seder* together, they must ask of one another the four questions. At first glance this is puzzling. Could we not correctly assume that these scholars could dispense with the formal simplistic questions and move on to more in-depth analysis of the *seder* night?

The Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, gives an insightful explanation for this facet of the *seder*. He reminds us that although we can always grow in our sophistication and our rational understanding of Hashem and our History, we need to return to the basic belief in Hashem. The *emuna* (belief) of a child, while simple, is integral for a Jew of any age. The *seder* is the time when we renew this simple belief. Even the greatest sage who is well versed in all the esoteric rational proofs of God's existence also needs to renew his simple faith in God. The matza itself is referred to as the bread of faith.

The three *avot*, forefathers, are archetypes of three different ways to approach Hashem - Avraham searched for God in a philosophical and systematic way. His approach to finding God is more rational. The *midrash* relates Avraham's search in a parable form. Avraham saw that there was a light in the palace and decided that there must be an owner of the palace. The parable refers to Avraham's perception of the world as being

full of order and clearly having a purpose and Designer. Yitzchak was the polar opposite. He learned of Hashem at his father's knee and had an unshakable faith in Hashem. This was a far more emotional and simple faith, devoid of rational and sophisticated proofs of God. Yaakov was a synergy of those who came before him. Yaakov took the unshakable simple faith of his father and added the rational approach of Avraham. It was Yaakov who was the father of the twelve tribes, the seeds of the nation of Israel.

Once Rabbi Abahu asked his son for a drink of water. While his son was getting the water, Rabbi Abahu fell asleep. His son, Avimi, stood and waited until his father woke up, and then gave him the water.

Kiddushin 31b

As we watch our children grow intellectually, and as we ourselves become more sophisticated in how we think about God and our purpose, we need to keep both of these approaches in mind. On one hand there is a need to continually deepen the level of sophistication of our approach to Hashem and the Torah. We must be sure that we study the stories of the bible and Talmud continually throughout our lives but that we are always able to deepen the level of our understanding. If we look at our patriarchs the same way when we are five, twenty five and forty five, then we are robbing

ourselves of valuable lessons which can be gleaned from the Torah for every stage of our lives. However, intellectual sophistication is necessary, but not sufficient. To be the best Jew we can be we also need the bedrock of simple faith in Hashem anchoring us as we grow in our sophistication. Like Yaakov we must merge these two approaches to create an intellectual, growth-oriented relationship with Hashem which is firmly rooted in a simple *emuna*. The *seder* night is our chance during the year to renew our foundation of simple faith for ourselves and for our families.

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Three Terms, Two Approaches

Rabbi Howard Wolk, *Community Chaplain, JFS / Judaic Studies Instructor, Yavneh Academy*

This article was being written on 7 Adar II, one week after the massacre of eight students at Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav in Jerusalem.

Halachic terminology presents a richness of perspectives. Each term describes an important concept in the actions of Jews. There are different idioms which describe a person's possessions and his relationship to them. Several of these terms are utilized regarding our ownership of *chametz* in advance of Pesach. Specifically, as we sever our connection to our *chametz* before the holiday, Jewish practice employs different terms which have great underlying lessons for us.

The Talmud introduces the concept of *yei'ush*. A person realizes that he has lost an object and holds no hope of having it restored to him. He is then experiencing *yei'ush* - hopelessness in having his article returned to him.

Hefker describes cancellation of ownership of an object. The owner ends his relationship with the object. The object itself has value but the person ends his ownership of it.

Bittul describes when an object itself is nullified; it is rendered valueless and no longer worthy of being owned.

These three terms present three perspectives of material possessions and three approaches to Pesach in particular and Jewish life in general.

Yei'ush – describes the reaction of an individual following loss.

Hefker – the object is intact; the owner severs his relationship with that object.

Bittul – the item is not worthy of possessing.

Which of these three approaches do we adopt? How do others relate to these three principles?

If we look at other nations we see quite clearly that

A person is obligated to circumcise his son, redeem him, teach him Torah, and to teach him a profession.

Kiddushin 29a

they did adopt the concept of *Hefker*. There are nations who gave up their homeland to others who then became the owners of those lands. The people rendered their homelands ownerless and as a result *yei'ush* set in. They initially had little hope and then no hope of ever regaining their homeland. After several generations, full *yei'ush* set in. They became downtrodden and dispirited. They ultimately took up permanent residence in other lands and continents with no desire to return to their ancestors' homeland. They became fully imbedded in their new countries of residence.

Down through history our approach has been quite different. And our unique approach is encapsulated in our approach to ridding ourselves of the *chametz* we own shortly before the onset of Pesach.

When we conclude our Search for the Chametz and recite the full *Bittul Chametz*

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said: Honoring parents is so great, that God prefers for a person to honor his parents than to Honor Him.

Yerushalmi Pe'ah 1:1

(Nullification of ownership to *Chametz*) we state: Any leaven that is in our possession...*li'bateil v'leihevei hefker...* - Let it be nullified and ownerless like the dust of the earth."

Bittul – Nullification – Yes! We nullify the transitory things that *chametz* represents. We are *mevateil* (nullify) the values of the world. We nullify the values of those who equate Hamas attacks on civilians with IDF defense of Israelis. We nullify the values of those who weaken the Jewish people through assimilation and intermarriage. We nullify the transitory values of the world around us.

Hefker, yes! We have often been forced to declare our homes ownerless. We have been forced to go to strange lands in far away places. We have been forced by others to declare that all we had was now rendered *hefker*, ownerless. We have been often made to feel like *hefker*.

Egypt, the First Temple, Babylonia, Persia, the Second Temple, Greece, Rome, the

Diaspora, Spain, Europe – whole cultures and civilizations made into *hefker* for us by others.

Bittul – Yes!

Hefker – Yes!

Yei'ush – Never!

No matter how dark things became. No matter how bleak the future looked – the Jewish response is not to give up hope.

There are the Soviet Jews who did not despair. They never invoked *yei'ush*.

Our brothers in sisters in Sderot, Ashkelon – under constant attack and threat. Despair is not a part of their vocabulary.

Bechol dor va'dor omdim aleinu lechaloteinu – In every generation they rise up to destroy us (Haggada). Even in the solemnity of a yeshiva *beit midrash*, our young boys are killed and wounded. But, the tones of *yei'ush* are never heard.

This Passover night marks the 6th anniversary of the Seder Night massacre in Netanya. Yet, Passover continues to be celebrated in Netanya and throughout the world.

We experience terrible losses – yes.

But, we reject *yei'ush*. It is not part of our vocabulary or national personality. To give up hope, to be despondent – those emotions are not part of our national psyche.

Hashata hacha – Now we are here (Haggada). Next year may we be free of our enemies and may we celebrate Passover in the fully rebuilt Jerusalem.

Chag kasher vesamei'ach – A kosher and happy Passover.

Ben Azai said: a person is obligated to teach his daughter Torah.

Sotah 20a

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KIDS KORNEN

Find the following Pesach related words (up, down, forward & diagonally)

CHAMETZ • EGYPT • CLEANING • ELIYAHU • EXODUS • HAGGADA •
HALLEL KIDDUSH • MAROR • MATZA • PESACH • SEDER • THANKS •
WINE • AFIKOMAN

W	L	K	C	L	E	A	N	I	N	G	J	U	H	G	F	D	S
S	Q	V	M	B	M	E	G	Y	K	M	S	H	A	H	C	M	A
G	E	F	H	A	J	A	T	C	J	A	N	A	H	A	A	Y	X
H	K	A	A	N	R	A	H	L	G	R	K	Y	E	G	V	P	O
H	U	I	G	D	Z	A	A	E	R	O	A	I	V	G	S	T	D
L	H	Y	D	T	W	F	N	M	D	R	H	L	O	A	B	C	U
E	E	D	A	D	E	I	K	O	S	E	D	E	R	D	D	H	D
L	C	M	D	F	U	M	S	S	W	E	R	B	P	A	N	A	H
L	H	G	R	Z	L	S	E	H	X	I	R	G	L	A	F	M	C
A	M	P	E	S	A	C	H	G	O	R	N	E	W	E	M	E	F
H	L	E	D	W	L	E	R	N	D	E	J	E	G	Y	P	T	S
I	P	S	K	X	L	M	F	I	F	R	S	R	A	G	G	Z	R
N	Z	A	L	A	F	I	K	O	M	A	N	Z	C	U	L	L	Y
G	A	C	W	N	B	Z	S	C	E	E	N	A	V	L	H	L	K
E	X	I	G	N	K	E	X	O	D	U	S	I	N	G	E	R	T

A New Perspective on Frogs

Rabbi Jay Weinstein, *Adult Education/Special Programs, Community Kollel of Dallas*

In the book of Daniel, we learn about the Jewish people who were gathered up in the valley of Dura by Nebuchadnezzar and given the ultimatum: to bow down to an idol placed before them or be killed. All the people present bowed down to the idol except for three individuals: Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah. As the story continues, Nebuchadnezzar threw them into a fiery furnace but miraculously they were not burned and came out completely unharmed.

The Talmud in tractate Pesachim asks, ‘from where did these three people get the courage to risk their lives and refuse to practice idolatry?! It was from the FROGS!!’ One of the ten plagues that hit the Egyptians was a massive inculcation of frogs into the lives of the Egyptians. The thought process of these three individuals was about the mindset of the frogs. The *tzfardei'im*, frogs, were not commanded in the mitzva of Kiddush Hashem, sanctifying God’s name, but yet they jumped into the Egyptian’s ovens to fulfill Hashem’s will. Kal vachomer, how much more so, we who are commanded in Kiddush Hashem should give up our lives and not bow down to the idol! What a strange midrash! Of all the places that Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah could have gotten courage, why pick the *tzfardei'im*, the frogs?!

The Torah tells us that the frogs went into the Egyptians’ houses, beds, rooms and ovens. Of course, if you were a frog you’d pick one of the first three options and not the fourth! No individual frog was commanded to go into the ovens. So if I was a frog, I’d probably sign up to be the frog that jumps into the bathtub or the refrigerator. I certainly would not be the frog who takes on the mission of jumping into their hot ovens! However, when it came to the “heroism of the frogs,”

***Our Rabbis taught:
Scripture says
concerning a man who
guides his sons and
daughters in the right
path, "And you shall
know that your home
is in peace."***

Yevamot 62b

even though all frogs in the group were commanded to jump into the oven, these frogs took it upon themselves to be the ones to perform this difficult task.

We can now understand the Talmud in Pesachim when it explains that Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah looked to the frogs for inspiration in their difficult situation. Standing with the rest of the Jewish people who made the decision to bow down to the idol, our three leaders could have easily rationalized that it was their job to stay alive with the rest of the people. **THEY** shouldn't be the ones giving up their life! They should be like the frogs that jumped into the beds and couches but not the ones to go into the ovens. Yet, they realized the importance of this mission and made the ultimate sacrifice.

The lesson that we should take from the frogs is the dedication and devotion that one can reach in their religion and connection to God.

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KIDS KORNER

The Haggada tells us about four different types of children: the wise, wicked, simple and the one who does not know how to ask.

Together with your parents, can you think of the best ways to involve each of these different personalities at the Seder?

Are there any other types of personalities besides these that could be guests at your Seder? How would you approach each one to make them feel a part of Pesach?

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Towards the beginning of the Seder, the middle matza is broken into two parts, and the larger part is then hidden and kept for afikoman - dessert.

Below is a picture of a child at a Seder who has just broken the middle matza, and is getting ready to hide it.

Can you find the two identical pictures?

1



2



3



4



5



6



Answers on page 26

The True Cost of Freedom

Rabbi Joe Hirsch, *Judaic Studies Instructor, Akiba Academy*

For a holiday that supposedly exalts our free status, Pesach is replete with surprising restrictions.

Let's assume you've successfully purged your home of *chametz*, stashed your collection of kitchen utensils, and vacuumed the deepest and most imperceptible crevices of your car. Now *seder* night arrives. Did you remember to purchase *shmura matzah*, biblically mandated for at least one night and perhaps more? Speaking of *matzah*, did you consume it within the prescribed time limit? Don't forget to recline while imbibing the four cups of wine – according to many authorities, this omission will cost you. And keep a watchful eye on the time – as soon as the clock strikes *chatzot* (*halachic* midnight), the dance is over. Even Cinderella seemed to have an easier time.

Suddenly, the constrictions of Egypt don't seem as vexing. Wasn't our redemption supposed to herald a more relaxed lifestyle, one without the limitations of being told what to do and how to do it?

Faced with an apparent assault on our time, we should revisit the issue of freedom. The first rule of freedom, ironically, is that there's nothing "free" about it. In fact, freedom carries a steep price. Almost as quickly as the Jews hoisted their unbaked matzot onto their shoulders, the heavenly edict proclaimed: "*Hachodesh hazeh lachem rosh chodashim*" – This month shall be for you the first of the months" (Shmot 12:2). The first commandment assigned to the nascent nation concerned the use of their time. Each month, the Jewish people must sanctify the New Moon (*Kiddush Hachodesh*) in thought and deed. Time would cease to be a luxury, but an opportunity. In a symbolic show of our personal freedom, we actively designate the new month and prepare to undertake any and all mitzvot that reach our able hands. Like the moon, renewed in its might, we pledge to fortify our spiritual potential each Rosh Chodesh. Idleness is not an option.

Not exactly the kind of *ge'ulah* (redemption) those Egypt-less Jews might have imagined. In fact, the fourth of God's redemptive utterances – "*velakachti*," and I will take you – may be more appropriately rendered as I will designate you, an indication that by redeeming the Jews from an Egyptian autocracy, God replaced their old sovereign with a new one. Freedom, by all appearances, still proves elusive.

Here, as always, an examination of the manner in which the Torah articulates freedom may prove instructive. When the Torah relates the laws concerning freeing slaves (Shemot 21:26), it states that the master must release his former slave "*Lachofshi yeshalchenu*" – free of any further responsibilities and obligations. This slave's release is irrevocable and unhinged from any future action. The notion of *chofesh* presumes a total severance of responsibility on the part of the one who is freed. Yet when the Hagadda describes our post-slavery status, it abstains from the Torah's construction of *chofesh*, and opts instead for the subtler notion of *cheirut*: "*Atah ben chorin* – now you are a free people." *Cheirut* projects a different kind of freedom, one that is endowed with responsibility. Unlike the freed slave, whose release creates a vacuous existence, our freedom provides a framework for sublime service. We are indeed free...to follow God's will and imbue our life with spiritual meaning.

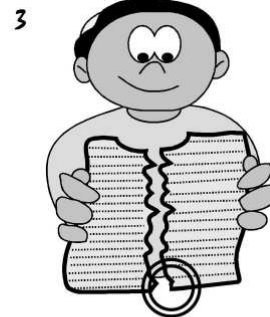
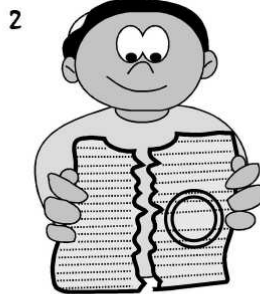
This remodeled notion of freedom finds expression Pirkei Avot (6:2): "The only *ben chorin* is one who studies Torah." An integral component of our free status is Torah study and observance of its underlying mitzvot. Paradoxically, the natural limitations placed on us through observance of the mitzvot uplift rather than confine. How appropriate, then, that the holiday of Pesach presents more mitzvot ha-chag (commandments specific to the festival) than any other festival – sixteen, in fact. We celebrate our newfound freedom by immersing ourselves in God's commandments.

With great responsibility comes great distinction. Perhaps this realization led King Shlomo to formulate the following: "*Ashreich erez shemalkeich ben chorim*" – "Praised

is the land in which the King is a *ben chorin*” (Kohelet 10:17). In this context, *cheirut* cannot simply mean “free,” as this description would appear obvious. Rather, it refers to the distinctiveness of the ruler. His prestige emanates from the responsibilities of leadership that pose daily challenges and opportunities. This Pesach offers another chance for all of us to rediscover the distinctiveness of our mission and renew our experience as a free nation.

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KIDS KORNER



ABOUT US

The Community Kollel of Dallas seeks to strengthen our Jewish community through the shared experience of Torah study in a non-judgmental environment. A unique combination of worldliness and Judaic scholarship characterizes the men & women of the Kollel, who are wonderful ambassadors of Jewish living and learning in our modern society.



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