



PESACH SEDER *with the* REBBE


The Pesach Seder is filled with customs and traditions laden with layers of depth and meaning. Towards the beginning of his commentary on the Haggadah, the Rebbe cites from the *minhagim* of the Maharil:

“יהא כל אדם חרד באימה לקיים מאמר חכמים שתקנו מצות הסדר והגדה, ולא יהא הדבר קל בעיניו, אף אם כמה דברים יש בסדר שנראה בעיני האדם שאין הקפדה בהם, ישכיל בדעתו לקיים שאין שום דבר ריק בהן...”

“Every person should be filled with awe when approaching the instructions of our Chachamim to perform the Seder and recite the Haggadah. Let it not be taken lightly. Even if there are some details that don’t seem significant, one must be wise and fulfill them, for there is no meaningless detail in [the Seder]...”

In the following essay we collected 15 short insights from the Rebbe’s vast writings and *sichos* on the Haggadah, one for each step of the Seder.

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מוקדש לחיזוק ההתקשרות לכ"ק
אדמו"ר בקשר עם יום הבהיר י"א ניסן
מאה ועשרים ואחת שנה

נדפס ע"י הרה"ת ר' שלום דוב בער
וזוגתו מרת חיה מושקא
ובנותיהם ברכה ליפשא, עליזה ושיינדל
ובנו מנחם מענדל שיחיו
שוחאט



In the *kiddush* for Pesach we refer to the Yom Tov as *Chag Hamatzos*, but we find that it actually has three names:

1. Pesach
2. *Chag Hamatzos* (the Festival of Matzos)
3. *Zman Cheiruseinu* (the Season of Our Freedom).

These three names are interrelated:

Matzah (*Chag Hamatzos*) represents *bittul*, selflessness. It symbolizes the element of *kabbalas ol* which is a foundation of *avodas Hashem*. This quality leads to true freedom (*Zman Cheiruseinu*), for it allows a Yid to express his true self—which is to serve the Hashem with joy through Torah and mitzvos. This, in turn, allows for Pesach (lit. “a jump”), a radical leap forward, incomparably higher to the previous standing (“*b’ein aroch*”) in *avodas Hashem*.

Likkutei Sichos vol. 17, p. 71

KADESH

This *siman* is the only one that begins with a *vov*. One reason for this is that we want it to have two syllables, just as the rest of the *simanim*, and the extra *vov* accomplishes that. Another reason for the added letter is to emphasize the order of events—first *Kiddush*, **then** *Urchatz*. Meaning that even someone who during the rest of the year may follow a different *minhag* in this regard—on the night of Pesach he follows the above order. Similarly, even someone who follows the opinion of washing one’s hands before *Kadesh* needs to wash again now.

The Rebbe’s Haggadah, p. 35

URCHATZ

KARPAS

“שבכל הלילות אין אנו מטבילין אפילו פעם אחת, הלילה הזה שתי פעמים”

One might ask: What in fact is so extraordinary in the dipping that we do on the night of Pesach if one is able to dip his food on any other night of the year too? Indeed, we find that in the times of the Gemara the custom was to dip one’s food during a meal—and more than just one time!

The explanation is: On one hand, dipping food is an act of *bittul*, since some of the food’s own taste is negated in order to receive the taste of the dip. In fact, the word in *Lashon Hakodesh* for “dipping” is “טיבול”, which has the same exact letters as the word

“ביטול”. On the other hand, the act of dipping food demonstrates that one is a connoisseur who understands that the food on its own is lacking and knows just what to add to get the right flavor—clearly an act of feeling oneself as an important being—a “*metzius*.” In other words, the **food** that is being dipped has *bittul*—the *person* dipping does not.

This paradox exists the rest of the year.

The dipping on the night of the *seder*, however, is “different from all other nights.” For on this night, even our act of dipping demonstrates *bittul* in the *person*.

Toras Menachem 5748 vol. 3, p. 83-84

The Frierdiker Rebbe relates: Before his father—the Rebbe Rashab—put away the larger half of the matzah for the *afikoman*, he first broke it into five pieces. At first, the Frierdiker Rebbe continued, he was not sure if the number of pieces was intentional. But then on one occasion, the matzah broke into six pieces, and he noticed that the Rebbe Rashab put one piece aside in order for the *afikoman* to specifically consist of five pieces. At that point, he asked his father for the meaning behind his actions, and the Rebbe Rashab responded, “*Az men vil altz vissen, vert men gech alt*—Wanting to know everything makes one grow old quickly.” The next day, while walking together with his father, the Frierdiker Rebbe let out an anguished sigh over the previous night’s exchange. “[If] it is that important to you [to know the reason]...” the Rebbe Rashab said, and began to explain the significance:

The middle matzah corresponds to Yitzchak, which is why the letters of the word “*yachatz*” are the same as in the name “Yitzchak.” The *afikoman*—the larger half of the middle matzah—symbolizes the *chesed* of Avraham, for the word “*afikoman*” is a combination of two words—*Afiku man*—“to give forth food.” This is expressed in the kindness performed by Avraham, feeding and providing for whomever passed by his tent, even complete strangers.

The idea of *breaking* the *afikoman* is to draw down the energy of Yitzchak (*gevurah*) into *keilim* (i.e. to ground the energy of *gevurah*, whose nature is to otherwise rise upwards). This is done through *breaking* the matzah, which symbolizes the “*breaking down*” (*shevira*) of *gevurah*. Since there are “five levels of *gevurah*,” we break it into five pieces, which also causes a “*sweetening*” of the severity of Yitzchak through the “five levels of *Chesed*” of Avraham.

Likkutei Sichos 3, p. 1016



MAGGID

The Frierdiker Rebbe related that when he was a child, his father—the Rebbe Rashab—asked him why we do not make a *bracha* before performing the *mitzva* of telling the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* at the *seder*.

He did not know the answer, and the Rebbe Rashab shared with him that when he was a young boy, his father—the Rebbe Maharash—asked him the same question, and he, too, did not have an answer. The Rebbe Maharash then told him that when *he* was a child, *his* father—the Tzemach Tzedek—asked him the same question, and he also did not know what to answer. The Tzemach Tzedek then shared with him that when he was a little boy, his grandfather—the Alter Rebbe—asked him this question, and when he, too, did not have an answer, the Alter Rebbe explained that it is for the same reason that we do not say a *bracha* “*Lvarech birkas hamazon*” before reciting *birkas hamazon*.

Meaning, since the *Haggadah* is essentially one long *bracha* where we thank and *bentch* Hashem for the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, therefore, just as at *bentching* after a meal one does not make a *bracha* before reciting *birkas hamazon*—for that would mean making a *bracha* on a *bracha*—the same can be applied to the *mitzvah* of reciting the *Haggadah*.

Likkutei Sichos 3, p. 1016

YACHATZ

There are those who wanted to amend the name of this *siman* to “Rechatz” and take out the *Hei*, thereby making it the same as “Urchatz” (see above *Urchatz*). But in many authoritative versions it is spelled “Rachtzah,” which is how we spell it in practice.

A reason is given in *Pri Eitz Chayim* for this specific way of spelling: There are two times during the *seder* that we wash our hands—*Urchatz* and *Rachtzah*. The first washing corresponds to “*Chochma d’Za*,” and the second one corresponds to “*Binah d’Za*.” Kabbalah explains that *Chochma* is *zachar* (masculine energy) and *Binah* is *nekeiva* (feminine energy). Now we can understand the difference in the spelling of these two *simanim*: *Urchatz* is simply the masculine form of spelling the word, while *Rachtzah* is the feminine way of spelling it.

There is a fascinating response written by the Rebbe to Dr. Asher Heilman in answer to his letter with comments on various points in the Rebbe’s

commentary to the *Haggadah*. One of the points he suggests is a possible answer to the question of why these two *simanim* are spelled differently: The *simanim* of the *seder* form a poem of sorts, where words rhyme with one another. That, he proposed, is why it is specifically spelled “*Rachtzah*,” so that it should fit into the rhyme (i.e. *Maggid*, *Rachtzah*, *Motzi-Matzah*).

The Rebbe responds that, on the contrary, if the intent was to make all 15 of the *simanim* rhyme, then it actually should have been written “*Rechatz*.”

To explain, there are two options for making the *simanim* rhyme: 1. Spell the sixth *siman* “*Rachtzah*,” thereby making it rhyme with the eighth *siman* “*Matzah*.” In this case, however, the last of all the *simanim*, “*Nirtzah*,” will not rhyme with any of the others. 2. Spell it “*Rechatz*,” and have it rhyme with the fourth *siman* “*Yachatza*,” and then the last *siman* “*Nirtzah*” would rhyme with the eighth *siman* “*Matzah*.”

Igros Kodesh vol. 2, p. 364.

The *bracha* of *Hamotzi* comes first, and then we make a special *bracha* for the *matzah*. This is because of the rule that when two time-bound *mitzvos* present themselves at the same time, the one which occurs more frequently—in our case, the *bracha Hamotzi*—takes precedence and is performed first. Another rationale to begin with *Hamotzi* arises when one takes into account the process of making the *matzah*: First the wheat has to grow, and only then can flour—and eventually *matzos mitzvah*—be produced from the wheat. Hence, the *bracha* of “*Hamotzi lechem min ha’aretz*”—literally “Who brings forth bread from the earth”—comes first in the process of making the *matzah*.

The Rebbe’s Haggadah, p. 80



Someone once asked the Rebbe if he can feed machine-made matzos to his young grandchildren during Pesach. The Rebbe responded: Regarding *gebroks* and other *hid-durim*—”*macht nit ois*”—one may be lenient with regards to small children. But with regards to choosing between machine-made matzah and hand-made *shmura* matzah, one must be stringent even with small children! Matzah is the “food of *emunah*,” and one must begin working on their *emunah* from a young age (“*fun kind'veiz un*”).

When discussing this quality of *emunah* found in matzah, Chassidus connects it with the statement in Gemara: “A child does not know how to call out ‘Father!’ until he tastes the taste of grain.” This symbolizes the idea that matzah (“grain”) has a power to instill in a person *emunah* in Hashem, our father. Obviously, the Rebbe concluded, when we are talking about “grain” it is not referring to machine-made matzos (“*mashinove matzos*”)...!

Toras Menachem 5711, vol. 2, p. 7

MATZAH

KORECH

”כן עשה הלל בזמן שביית המקדש ה' קיים...”

Seemingly, the fact that we mention that Hillel would eat the *Korech* sandwich during the era of the *Beis Hamikdash*, is superfluous. When else would he have eaten it?! The *Beis Mikdash* stood throughout his entire lifetime.

Perhaps, this is said to make a point: It was only *because* he lived during the *Beis Hamikdash* era that he introduced *Korech*. These days, however, one does not fulfill the mitzvah of *achilas matzah* with the *Korech* sandwich.

The Rebbe's Haggadah, p. 85

MAROR

Why is the *maror* placed in the middle of the *ka'ara*? The *maror*—which possesses a very harsh and bitter taste—is eaten as a reminder of the intense suffering the Yidden experienced during *galus Mitzrayim*. In Kabbalah terms, *maror* is *gevurah* (severity). Seemingly, then, it would have made more sense to place the *maror* on the *left* side of the *ka'ara*, since, kabbalistically speaking, the attribute of *gevurah* is associated with “the left” (versus *chesed* which is on “the right”).

The Rambam explains that eating *maror* is not a separate mitzvah but rather a detail in the mitzvah of *korban Pesach*. As it says in the *possuk*: “על מצות ומרורים יאכלוהו”; when eating the *korban Pesach* you need to have matzah and *maror* with it as well. The deeper meaning behind this is, that in order to fully taste freedom, it must be preceded by darkness, bitterness; only then can one truly appreciate the light which follows. The *korban Pesach* represents light and freedom, while the *maror* is the bitterness of *galus*, which comes first. The reason for the existence of *maror* is not an end for itself, but rather a means to an end—to accentuate the *cheirus* aspect of the *korban Pesach*. So the *maror* is not so bitter, after all.

Toras Menachem 5720 vol. 2, p. 56-57

In Shulchan Aruch it states that at the second *seder* night, it is appropriate to commemorate in some way the feast of Esther, which was held at this time, because it was following this feast that Haman was hanged.

One might ask: Why should the miracles of Purim be remembered on Pesach? The miracles of Pesach were far greater, since the Purim miracles were enfolded in nature and therefore hidden, as opposed to the miracle of Pesach. Also, the *nes* of Purim did not free the Yidden entirely from Persian rule.

There is, however, a superior quality to the Purim miracles: In contrast to the Pesach miracles, they came as a result of the *avodah* of Yidden. As Chazal state in Gemara, it was as a prelude to the *nes* of Purim that “קיימו מה שקבלו כבר” (the Yidden accepted what they had already begun by *matan Torah*)—through their *avoda* of *mesiras nefesh*, the Yidden merited a salvation from their enemies. This results in the miracle having a long-lasting effect, since the Yidden prepared themselves spiritually through their *avodah*, they were deserving vessels to receive the *gilui Elokus* in a *pnimius*. The story of Pesach lacks this quality.

The complete and final *geulah* will combine the positive dimensions of both the *geulah* from Mitzrayim and the *geulah* of Purim. We will indeed experience “Pesach-like” miracles transcending the natural order, and yet they will need to be preceded by the *avodah* of Yidden in order to be internalized in a *pnimius*. On Pesach, as we prepare for Eliyahu Hanavi to announce the arrival of *Moshiach tzidkeinu*, we emphasize both of these dimensions.

Likkutei Sichos 3, p. 1016

Once, during a *seder* with the Frierdiker Rebbe, *Shulchan Orech* had concluded and it was time for *Tzafun*, when one of the guests announced that it was time for *bentching*. The Frierdiker Rebbe heard and remarked that one only needs to take a look inside the *siddur*, then he will know where he is holding.

This is a *hora'a* for all of us: When it comes to areas in life that are in the category of “*tzafun*,” it is unclear and “hidden” from us which path to take, we cannot rely on ourselves but we must see what it says in the “*siddur*”—we must seek guidance from the Rebbe. And even if one has already heard from the Rebbe many *hora'os* in the past, one must nevertheless continue to turn to the Rebbe in each situation.

The truth is, that even in situations in which it seems to be obvious and “revealed” which direction to take, “עס איז גלייכער אז מען פרעגט,”—it is better to ask regardless. But in a situation where one is unsure of what to do, then it is an *obligation* to turn to the Rebbe!

Toras Menachem 5711 vol. 2, p. 26

TZAFUN



Chazal state that whatever Hashem commands Yidden to do, He Himself does. The *minhag* of opening the doors on Pesach night indicates that in the Heavens too all the doors are opened. Every Yid, regardless of his conduct throughout the year, has the potential to reach the highest levels. He can leap (the definition of the word “Pesach”) to heights totally beyond his current spiritual state.

Likkutei Sichos, vol. 4 p. 1298

One may question: Why does the *siman* of *Hallel* appear only now in the *Haggadah* when we are *finishing Hallel*? It should have been put at the end of *Maggid* where we start *Hallel*.

The explanation is that the *perakim* of *Hallel* that were recited earlier in the *Haggadah* are actually a part of *Maggid*. Included in the mitzvah to relate the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* is to mention the praise the Yidden offered to Hashem for all the wondrous miracles He performed. Therefore, as part of *Maggid*—when we tell the story— we also say the first few *perakim* of *Hallel* which talk about the praise that the Yidden gave to Hashem at *yetzias Mitzrayim*.

The *siman* of *Hallel* is not (only) referring to the last *perakim* of *Hallel* which we now say, but (also) to the passages which we say afterwards; *kapitel* קל"ו (“*Hallel Hagadol*”), *Nishmas*—all the way to the end of the *Haggadah*.

Toras Menachem 5723 vol. 2, p. 283

HALLEL

The Frierdiker Rebbe once stated that his father, the Rebbe Rashab, would be very careful regarding the way he accented the syllables of the phrase “*Lshana haba'ah*” in the *piska* of “*Hei Lachma Anya*.” He did not take such precise care, though, with regard to the *tefillah* which we say at the end of the *Haggadah*, “*Lshana haba'ah b'Yerushalayim!*” This is because here the proper *dikduk* is not so important; what is important is that by next year we should actually be in Yerushalayim, celebrating Pesach together with *Moshiach tzidkeinu*, *בְּעֵגְלַי דִּידן*!

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, p. 543

NIRTZAH

