

חג הפסח

Do you remember this Posuk from Chumash? It is found in Parshas Voeschanan (D'vorim Perek 6/Posuk 23):

וְאוֹתָנוּ הוֹצִיא מִשָּׁם לְמַעַן הֵבִיא אֹתָנוּ לְתֵת לָנוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְתָּיִנוּ:

Hashem took us out from there-Egypt in order to bring us to give us the land that He swore to our fathers.

Even if you don't remember this verse, the context of our writing it this week should give you a significant hint.

If still not, let's first learn the context of the Posuk and then we will answer the question.

The entire section (P'sukim 20-25) reads:

כִּי יִשְׁאַלְךָ בְנֶךָ מָחָר לֵאמֹר מָה הָעֵדוּת וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ לַקִּינוּ אִתְּכֶם: וְאָמַרְתָּ לְבְנֶךָ עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפַרְעֹה בְּמִצְרָיִם וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרָיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה: וַיִּתֵּן ה' אוֹתוֹת וּמִפְתֹּיִם גְּדוֹלִים וְרַעִים בְּמִצְרָיִם בְּפַרְעֹה וּבְכָל בֵּיתוֹ לְעֵינֵינוּ: וְאוֹתָנוּ הוֹצִיא מִשָּׁם לְמַעַן הֵבִיא אֹתָנוּ לְתֵת לָנוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְתָּיִנוּ: וַיִּצְוֵנוּ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת כָּל הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה לִירְאָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְקִינוּ לְטוֹב לָנוּ כָּל הַיָּמִים לְחַיֵּינוּ כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: וַצִּדְקָה תִּהְיֶה לָנוּ כִּי נִשְׁמַר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת כָּל הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּנוּ:

When your son will ask you tomorrow, 'What are these testimonies and these statutes and these laws that Hashem our G-d has commanded you?' You shall say to him, 'We were slaves to Par'o in Egypt and Hashem took us out of Egypt with a strong hand. And Hashem gave signs and wonders, great and bad, against Egypt and against Par'o and against his entire household, before our eyes. Hashem took us out from there-Egypt in order to bring us to give us the land that He swore to our fathers. Hashem commanded us to do all of these statutes to fear Hashem our G-d so it will be good for us all of the days to give us life like we are living this day. It will be considered as *Tzedakah*-righteousness for us when we guard to do all of this Mitzvah before Hashem our G-d like He commanded us.

I think that even if you didn't identify the verse with which we began, the second and third verses in this section rang a bell. They are most likely so familiar to you that even at a time far removed from Pesach you would instantly associate עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ with the Haggadah and the question posed

by the son being the query that is raised by the ‘wise son’ of the Haggadah shel Pesach.

The wise son desires to understand the meaning of the Yom Tov of Pesach as well as possible and thus the Torah presents the response to his question: the longest response that we find that is given to any of the four sons.

And, as part of that answer we read:

וְאוֹתָנוּ הוֹצִיא מִשָּׁם

Hashem took us out from there-Egypt.

However, this answer requires a questioning response from this child. He has more than one reason to object.

First: In an earlier verse that we have brought, the father has already said:

וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה:

Hashem took us out of Egypt with a strong hand.

What is the need for the repetition? Why does this wise son have to be told the same piece of information twice?

Furthermore, when we read one of the commentaries of Rashi on the beginning of these verses, the second question will surface immediately.

כי ישאלך בנך מחר - יש מחר שהוא אחר זמן:

When your son asks you tomorrow – there is a ‘tomorrow’ that will happen after a long time.

That is, the Torah is telling us that the answer that the father gives is one that is fit for all times throughout history.

And, thus the son is expected to reply: ‘Abba, we were never in Egypt! The answer that you gave me is incorrect.’

But Abba will say, ‘That is what the Torah writes’.

So, what is the answer? Certainly, the Torah does not instruct the father to lie to his son.

The answer is found in the Haggadah Shel Pesach with a quotation from a Mishnah at the end of Masseches Pesachim.

We read there (116 b):

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים¹:

In each and every generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he went out of Egypt.

The wise son's two questions are both answered by these few words.

Had the Torah only written the first Posuk:

וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיָד חֲזָקָה:

Hashem took us out of Egypt with a strong hand,

I would have thought that we are being told a general statement that G-d took the Jewish People out of Egypt and since we are part of *Am Yisroel*, we say that He took *us* out, even if we don't mean it literally.

Once the Torah repeats this very same idea a few P'sukim later:

וְאוֹתָנוּ הוֹצִיא מִשָּׁם

Hashem took us out from there-Egypt

I can no longer attribute the earlier explanation to this verse. *We* were taken out of Egypt.

But since *we* weren't – what could the verse mean?

That is what the Mishna teaches us, and the Haggadah has us recite:

¹ The Mishnah continues with a Posuk that establishes this obligation. The verse (Sh'mos Perek 13/Posuk 8) reads:

והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים.

You shall tell your son on that day saying, 'Because of this, Hashem did for me on my going out from Egypt.

In our ensuing discussion in the Gemara, we will see that there are suggestions of additional P'sukim to give support for this Mitzvah. The various commentators discuss the various offerings.

Seemingly, though, if the Mishnah itself offers the Posuk that we bring here as the source for this obligation, what room is there for alternative suggestions? The Mishnah is teaching the source of a Halacha!

Thus, it may be that there were different *nuschaos* in the Mishnah regarding the identity of the verse that establishes the obligation of seeing oneself as if he left Egypt or, perhaps, there were *nuschaos* that brought the Halacha only, without any verse whatsoever as a source. If the latter is correct, then it is not difficult to understand why there would be many and various suggestions of verses to back this Halacha.

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים:

In each and every generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he went out of Egypt.²

When bringing this Halacha, Rambam (Hilchos Chometz uMatza Perek 7/Halacha 6) continues:

² If we merit a budding *Talmid Chacham* for a son, he will not let us off so easily. If he will look up the Gemara in Pesachim, he will look up the Gemara and find that there is a continuation to our citation. The complete citation reads:

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים, שנאמר (שמות יג/ח) והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים:
In each and every generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he went out of Egypt as it says, 'You shall tell your son on that day, because of this, Hashem did this for me when I went out of Egypt.'

This *drasha* is not difficult to understand. The verse says, 'when I went out of Egypt'. A person can say *I* only if he truly sees himself as having personally participated in the Exodus.

However, when Rambam brings this Halacha, we find a most significant change. He writes in his Mishneh Torah (Hilchos Chometz uMatza Perek 7/Halacha 6):
בכל דור ודור חייב אדם להראות את עצמו כאילו הוא בעצמו יצא עתה משעבוד מצרים שנאמר ואותנו הוציא משם וגו':

In each and every generation a person is obligated to show himself as he in and of himself went out now from the servitude of Egypt, as it says, Hashem took us out of from there'.

A search of the commentators there and in the Haggadah will discover a great deal of discussion of the Rambam's choice of a proof-text other than that which the Gemara uses as well as the distinctions between these two phrases:

לראות את עצמו

To *see* himself:

and

להראות את עצמו

To show himself:

ועל דבר זה צוה הקדוש ברוך הוא בתורה (דברים ה/טו³) וזכרת כי עבד היית כלומר כאילו אתה בעצמך היית עבד ויצאת לחירות ונפדית.

And about this, Hashem commanded in the Torah: ‘you shall remember that you were a slave’.

This means to say that you need to see yourself as if you yourself were a slave and *you* went out to freedom and *you* were redeemed.

Let us contemplate how we are to fulfill this Mitzvah. How are we to fulfill the obligation to see ourselves as if we went out of Egypt?

And let us immediately emphasize: the fulfillment of this obligation is not meant to be done by mere lip-service, as sincere as it may be.

Were it to be that saying ‘G-d took me out of Egypt’ would have been sufficient to fulfil this obligation, then Rabban Gamliel’s famous teaching would had to have a fourth component.

Rabban Gamliel’s teaching is a Mishnah that the Haggadah Shel Pesach quotes for us verbatim.

We read (Masseches Pesachim 116 a):

רבן גמליאל היה אומר: כל שלא אמר שלשה דברים אלו בפסח לא יצא ידי חובתו. ואלו הן: פסח, מצה, ומרור. פסח - על שום שפסח המקום על בתי אבותינו במצרים, שנאמר (שמות יב/כז⁴) ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא לה' אשר פסח וגו', מצה -

³ The entire verse reads:

זָכַרְתָּ כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּצֵאֲךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִשָּׁם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֵרַע נְטוּיָה עַל כֵּן צִוְּךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת:

You should remember that you were a slave in the Land of Egypt and Hashem your G-d took you out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm; therefore, Hashem your G-d commanded you to do the Shabbos Day.

⁴ The entire verse reads:

וְאָמַרְתֶּם זֶבַח פֶּסַח הוּא לַה' אֲשֶׁר פָּסַח עַל בְּתֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּנִגְפוֹ אֶת מִצְרַיִם וְאֶת בְּתֵינוּ הִצִּיל וַיִּקַּד הָעָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ:

You shall say, ‘It is a Pesach offering to Hashem Who had mercy upon the homes of B’nei Yisroel in Egypt and He plagued Egypt and He saved our homes; the people knelt and prostrated

על שום שנגאלו אבותינו ממצרים, שנאמר (שם שם לט⁵) ויאפו את הבצק אשר הוציאו ממצרים וגו', מרור - על שום שמררו המצריים את חיי אבותינו במצרים, שנאמר (שם א/יד⁶) וימררו את חייהם וגו'.

Rabban Gamliel was wont to say, 'Whoever does not say these three things of Pesach has not fulfilled his obligation of *Haggada* – the Seder night Mitzvah of discussing the Exodus elaborately. They are: The Korbon Pesach, Matzah and Maror.

Pesach: because Hashem had mercy upon us as passed over the homes of our fathers in Egypt, as it says, 'You shall say it is Pesach offering to Hashem Who had mercy, etc.'

Matzah: because our fathers were redeemed in Egypt as it says, 'They baked the dough that they took out of Egypt, etc.'

Maror: because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our fathers in Egypt, as it says, 'They embittered their lives, etc'.

Rabban Gamliel did not include 'saying' that we have to see ourselves as if we left Egypt. In particular, since that obligation of seeing ourselves as if we left Egypt follows immediately after Rabban Gamliel's words, their exclusion is most significant.

And the reason for that exclusion is evident: one does not fulfill this obligation by talking. The fulfillment of the obligation of

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים:

In each and every generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he went out of Egypt

must be more profound than mere speech.

⁵ The entire verse reads:

וַיֹּאֲפוּ אֶת הַבֶּצֶק אֲשֶׁר הוֹצִיאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם עֶגֶת מִצּוֹת כִּי לֹא חִמֵּץ כִּי גִרְשׁוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם וְלֹא יִכְלוּ לְהַתְמַהֵמָה וְגַם צִדָּה לֹא עָשׂוּ לָהֶם:

They baked the dough that they took out of Egypt into Matza cakes, but it was not leavened because they were banished from Egypt and were not able to tarry and, also, provisions they did not make for themselves.

⁶ The entire verse reads:

וַיִּמְרְרוּ אֶת חַיֵּיהֶם בְּעִבְדָּה קָשָׁה בְּחֹמֶר וּבְלִבְנִים וּבְכָל עֲבֹדָה בְּשָׂדֵה אֶת כָּל עֲבֹדָתָם אֲשֶׁר עָבְדוּ בָּהֶם בְּפִרְהָ:

They embittered their lives with hard work, with mortar and with bricks and with all of the hard work in the field, with all of their work that the Egyptians worked them with backbreaking work.

And therefore, we must ask ourselves how do we fulfill this obligation?
How are we to *see ourselves* as if we personally left Egypt?

Now, it is evident that there are two aspects of the Mitzvah of *hagada* –
the elaborate telling of the Exodus that is a Pesach requirement.

The two beginnings of the *Maggid*-section present them to us.

The first beginning writes:

עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים ויוציאנו ה' א...ל'קיננו משם:

We were slaves to Par'o in Egypt and Hashem our G-d took us out
from there.

The second beginning reads:

מתחילה עובדי כוכבים היו אבותינו ועכשיו קרבנו המקום לעבודתו:

In the beginning our fathers were idolaters and now Hashem has
brought us close to His service.

Both of these 'beginnings' fulfill the instruction that Chazal (Masseches
Pesachim ibid.) gave regarding *Maggid*:

מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח

One begins with criticism and concludes with praise.

Both of the 'beginnings with criticism' follow that formula. And that
formula is inherent in Rabban Gamliel's dictum as well.

Matza itself contains both aspects of the first 'beginning' of *Avodim
hoyi'nu*. We read in Parshas R'eh (D'vorim Perek 16/Posuk 3):

לא תאכל עליו חמץ שבעת ימים תאכל עליו מצות לחם עני כי בהפזון יצאת מארץ
מצרים למען תזכר את יום צאתך מארץ מצרים כל ימי חייך:

Do not eat *chometz* with the Korban Pesach; seven days you shall
eat with it matzos, the bread of affliction because you left from the
Land of Egypt in haste, in order that you will remember the day of
your exodus from the Land of Egypt all the days of your life.

Bread of affliction is the sign of slavery; bread that is unleavened due to
the haste necessary to exit Egypt is a sign of freedom.

The Korban Pesach is the sign of freedom and Maror, of course, is the
sign of the servitude with all of its bitterness.

So, it is certainly true that the Seder night embodies the slavery and servitude and the redemption and the freedom.

And thus, when we see ourselves as going out of Egypt, we need to incorporate both aspects.

Our question is are one of those aspects most important? Both aspects are required, but should an emphasis be placed on one of them?

I think that the answer is clear – because the Halacha directs us in a particular direction and Halacha is the ultimate arbiter of the Torah outlook⁷.

Let us see a few selections from Shulchan Aruch.

We read in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim (Siman 472/s'if 2):

יסדר שלחנו יפה בכלים נאים כפי כחו ויכין מקום מושבו שישב בהסיבה דרך
הירות.

He should set his table beautifully, with pleasing dishes according to his ability and prepare the place where he sits so that he can sit leaning, a sign of freedom.

Mishnah Brurah writes there (s'if koton 6):

בכלים נאים וכו' - ואף על גב דבכל השנה טוב למעט בזה משום זכר לחורבן בליל
פסח מצוה להרבות שזוהו בכלל דרך הירות ואמרו על מהרי"ל שכשהיו בידו
משכנות של נכרים כלים נאים לא היה משתמש בהם בשום פעם רק בפסח היה
מנהגו להשים אותם על שולחן מיוחד לשמוח בראייתם:

Pleasing dishes, etc. – Even though during the rest of the year is best to limit [setting nice dishes] as a remembrance of the

⁷ See, for example, *Emunah U'Vitachon* of the Chazon Ish. He writes there at the very beginning of Perek 3:

וההלכה היא המכרעת את האסור ואת המותר של תורת המוסר:
Halacha is the decisor of the forbidden and the permissible in matters of
musar-ethics.

destruction of the Beis HaMikdosh⁸, on Pesach the Mitzvah is to add nice dishes because that is part of the sense of freedom.

It was said about the *Maharil*⁹ – that when he had nice dishes among the collateral that he received from non-Jews, he would only use them on Pesach. His custom was to put them on a separate table and to enjoy looking at them.

The Halacha here provides us with an outlook that is most clear – the celebration is one of freedom. Certainly, the commemoration of our servitude and suffering is not inconsequential. Many times in the Torah we are commanded to remember that we were slaves in Egypt. The Torah commands us to eat Maror on the first night of Pesach and that reminds us of the bitterness of slavery. But that is not the central focus.

In fact, the Mitzvah of eating *Maror*, unlike the Mitzvah of Matzah which is always *d'oraiso*, is only required when we eat the *Korban Pesach*.

That is what we read at the very end of Masseches Pesachim (120 a):

⁸ We read in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim Siman 560, s'ifim 1-2):

מִשְׁחַרְבַּב בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ תִּקְנֵנו חֲכָמִים שֶׁהָיוּ בְּאוֹתוֹ הַדּוֹר שֶׁאֵין בּוֹנִים לְעוֹלָם בְּנֵין מִסּוּיֵיד
וּמְכוּיֵיר כְּבָנֵין הַמְּלָכִים...
וְכֵן הִתְקִינוּ שֶׁהַעוֹרֵךְ שֶׁלְחַן לַעֲשׂוֹת סְעוּדָה לְאוֹרְחִים מִחֹסֵר מִמֵּנו מַעַט וּמְנִיחַ מְקוֹם
פְּנוּי בְּלֹא קַעֲרָה מִן הַקַּעֲרוֹת הַרְאוּיֹת לְתֵת שָׁם...
וְכֹל אֱלֹהֵי הַדְּבָרִים כְּדִי לְזַכּוֹר אֶת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: אִם אֲשַׁכַּח יְרוּשָׁלַיִם וְגו' אִם לֹא
אֶעֱלֶה אֶת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עַל רֹאשׁ שְׂמִחָתִי (תְּהִילִים קל"ו).

When the Beis HaMikdosh was destroyed, the Chachamim in that generation established that one should not build a painted and decorated building like that of the kings.

They also established that one who sets a table for guests should leave a little missing and a setting without one of the dishes that would have been appropriate to set there.

And all of these measures were enacted to remember Yerushalayim as it says, 'If I forget you, Yerushalayim...if I do not place Yerushalayim above my most important happiness.

⁹ Maharil was a Rishon, one of the *Chasidei Ashkenaz*. His Sefer established the principles of the Minhagim of Ashkenazic Jewry.

אמר רבא: מצה בזמן הזה דאורייתא ומרור דרבנן. - ומאי שנא מרור דכתיב (במדבר ט/יא¹⁰) על מצות ומררים בזמן דאיכא פסח - יש מרור, ובזמן דליכא פסח - ליכא מרור. מצה נמי הא כתיב על מצות ומררים! - מצה מיהדר הדר ביה קרא (שמות יב/יח¹¹) בערב תאכלו מצת.

Rovo said, 'Matzah nowadays is a Torah requirement. Maror [nowadays] is a Rabbinic requirement [only].

Why is Maror different? [If Maror nowadays is only a Rabbinic requirement] because it says, 'eat the Korban Pesach with Matzah and Maror' – and we learn only when there is a Korban Pesach there is there a Torah requirement to Maror and when there is no Korban Pesach there is no Torah requirement to eat Maror. If that is so, Matzah nowadays should also be only a Rabbinic requirement because it says 'eat the Korban Pesach with *Matzah* and Maror'?

Matzah is different because the Torah comes back and writes a separate verse, 'in that evening you should eat Matzos'. [And thus, Matzah is an independent stand-alone Mitzvah. Maror is dependent of the Korban Pesach.]

¹⁰ The entire verse reads:

בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי בְּאַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם בֵּין הָעֶרְבַּיִם יַעֲשׂוּ אֹתוֹ עַל מִצּוֹת וּמִרְרִים יֹאכְלֶהוּ:
In the second month on the 14th day, at twilight, they shall do it; it [the Korban Pesach] shall be eaten with Matzos and Maror.

If the question arises, that this verse may seem to be a dubious proof since its context is *Pesach Sheini*. Perhaps this is a Halacha that is unique to that *Korban* and not to the Korban Pesach Rishon?

Rambam, based on the Gemara, teaches (Hilchos Korban Pesach Perek 10/Halacha 15):

שנאמר (במדבר ט/יב) ככל חקת הפסח יעשו...ישוה השני לראשון...אלא בדברים שנתפרשו בו, והן המצות שבגופו והם חקת הפסח...

It says in regard to Pesach Sheini, 'according to the statutes of the Korban Pesach [Rishon] you shall do.'

The Torah makes the Korban Pesach Sheini equivalent to Korban Pesach Rishon only in regards to those things that are written explicitly and they are the Mitzvos that are done to the animal itself; they are the statutes of the Korban Pesach.

¹¹ The entire verse reads:

בְּרֵאשִׁון בְּאַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּעֶרְב׃ תֹּאכְלוּ מִצַּת עַד יוֹם הָאֶחָד וְעֶשְׂרִים לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּעֶרְב׃

On the first day, on the night of the 14th day of the month, you shall eat Matzos until the twenty-first day of the month until nightfall.

Maror, therefore, the Torah commemoration of slavery and its bitter nature, is only a Torah requirement when it is brought together with the *Korban Pesach* – the symbol of redemption.

Thus, the Mitzvah of Maror does not contradict whatsoever the thesis that we are attempting to develop.

Perhaps, though, the *minhag* that the Rama writes does raise a question.

We read in Shulchan Aruch (Siman 476, s'if 2):

הגה: נוהגים בקצת מקומות לאכול בסעודה ביצים, זכר לאבלות ונראה לי הטעם משום תשעה באב נקבע בליל פסח ועוד זכר לחורבן שהיו מקריבין קרבן פסח.

Rama – there is a custom in a few places to eat eggs at the seuda [of the Seder] as a commemoration of mourning. I think that the reason is because *Tisha B'av* is fixed to be the same day of the week as the first day of Pesach¹². Additionally, it reminds us of the destruction of the Beis HaMikdosh – because it was there that the *Korban Pesach* was offered.

Furthermore, Mishnah Brurah points out here (s'if koton 11) that the Vilna Gaon says that the reason for this egg that we eat is similar to the reason for the egg that is upon the Seder Plate, a commemoration of the

¹² The sefarim point out that combining the first and last letters of the *alef-bet* and then going forward from the first letter and backwards from the final letter, the days of Pesach correspond to other significant days on the calendar:

תא stands for א, the first day of Pesach is the same day of the week that תשעה באב will fall on later in the year.

בש - the second day of Pesach being the same day of the week as שבועות.

גר -the third day of Pesach being the same day of the week as ראש השנה in the beginning of the coming year.

דק-the fourth day of Pesach being the same day of the day of קריאת התורה which is Simchas Torah in Chutz La'aretz in the following year.

הז-the fifth day of Pesach being the same day as *the Fast Day*, צום, which is יום הכיפורים in the coming year.

זפ-the sixth day of Pesach being the same day as the previous פורים.

There are other combinations as well. A modern addition that follows is זע – when the seventh day of Pesach is the same day as the modern יום העצמאות.

Korban Chagiga that was brought on Yom Tov and was eaten at the Seder¹³.

Thus, if the egg that is standard in *Ashkenazic* families, even if it represents mourning, it does not symbolize anything inherently related to Pesach¹⁴.

It is thus very clear that when we are told to see ourselves, or show ourselves, as if we went out of Egypt, the principal remembrance is that of our delivery from Egypt and the ensuing freedom that HaKodosh Boruch Hu bestowed upon us. The value of that gift of G-d is underscored and enhanced when we remember the servitude of the House of Bondage when we were freed.

This Pesach 5780 is being observed under conditions with which the vast, vast majority of us are thankfully and blessedly unfamiliar. Whether it is

¹³ In Masseches Pesachim (114 a) we learn that the *Korban Chagiga* was brought as a supplement to the *Korban Pesach* at the Seder.

When there were many members of the household and one *Korban Pesach* for them all, the *Korban Chagiga* was eaten first so that the consumption of the *Korban Pesach* could be על השובע, at satiation.

When there were few members in the household and thus each of them had a large portion of the *Korban Pesach* that would eat little or none of *Korban Chagiga* so that when eating the *Korban Pesach*, it would be על השובע, but not more than that.

¹⁴ Mishnah Brurah gives expression to the relative unimportance of the egg that many eat at the beginning of *Shulchan Orech*. He writes (s'if koton 13):

צריך לידע שלכל הטעמים הביצים שאוכלין בתוך הסעודה הוא רק זכר בעלמא ודלא
כהמון שחושבים זה למצה ומחמת זה ממלאים כרסם עד שאוכלין אפיקומן על
אכילה גסה ולכן צריך אדם לידע בנפשו [חיי אדם]:

It is important to know that whatever the reason, the egg that is eaten in the meal is just a general commemoration and not what the masses think that it is a Mitzvah. Since they think it is a Mitzvah, they stuff themselves to the point that their eating of the *Afikomen* is gluttony [and not what it is supposed to be - topping off one's appetite - על השובע.] A person has to know himself and not fill himself up - this is from the *Chaye Odom*.

Of course, this message of the Mishnah Brurah refers to the entire *Shulchan Orech* as we remember it constitutes only 1/14th of the Seder.

being separated from the large family gatherings that bless our annual Sedarim or the limited freedom of movement of our lives all of the rest of the year, this מה נשתנה is likely to receive many expressions of identification at this year's Seder(im).

I have seen comments that 'this year' it will be easy to see ourselves as if we left Egypt 'because of the hardships that we are undergoing'.

Besides the fact, that it is almost sacrilegious to compare the restrictions that are imposed upon us this year with the suffering that *Am Yisroel* suffered through the ages¹⁵, the approach itself is in error.

Suffering is not the command of

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים:

In each and every generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he went out of Egypt.

We remember the יד החזקה והזרוע הנטויה – His strong Hand and His outstretched Arm.

We remember the אותות ומופתים – the signs and miracles.

We remember that Hashem took us out of Egypt to give us the Torah.

We remember the *Luchos* that were given to us at the fulfillment of the Redemption.

We remember the *Luchos* that the Torah (Sh'mos Perek 32/Posuk 16) describes:

והלחת מעשה א... לקים המה והמכתב מכתב א... לקים הוא חרות על הלחת:

The tablets were an act of G-d, they were; the writing was the writing of G-d, it was; חרות-engraven upon the *Luchos*.

Chazal (Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer Perek 46) teach us:

אל תקרי חרות אלא חרות.

¹⁵ We are not oblivious to the illness that has stricken many and רחמנא ליצלן the fatalities that have stricken our communities and the world at large.

We continually pray for our communal and global health and healing.

Nonetheless, historical perspective is called for.

Do not read the word חרות as *cho'rus* [with a *kometz* vocalizing the letter *ches*], meaning *engraved*, but as *cheirus* [with a *tzerei* vocalizing the *ches*], meaning freedom.

That means that engraved and inherent within the Luchos, with the Torah, which were given as the culmination of the Exodus, Israel was crowned with freedom.

What was that freedom?

Yalkut Shimoni provides us with multiple answers that complement each other. We read there (419):

רבי יהודה אומר חרות ממלאך המות, רבי נחמיה אומר חרות מן המלכות, רבנן אמרין מן היסורין.

Rabi Yehuda says, 'freedom from the angel of death'. Rabi Nechemia says, 'freedom from the oppressive monarchy'. Rabbanan say, 'freedom from suffering'.

Those are the freedoms that we are to celebrate as we sit at our Seder, even if we are forced to be by ourselves. These are the freedoms that were bestowed upon Israel, of which we are all an integral part. We were on the trek to freedom on that first Pesach night 3332 years ago.

On the sixth Shabbos following the Yom Tov of Pesach, the Shabbos that precedes the Yom Tov of Shavuot, זמן מתן תורתנו, we will read in the appended Sixth Perek to Masseches Ovot, Perek *Kinyan Torah* (#2):

אל תקרא חרות אלא חירות שאין לך בן חורין אלא מי שעוסק בתלמוד תורה

Do not read *cho'rus*, but *cheirus* – The person who is truly free is the one who is involved in Torah study.

When we sit at our Seder, G-d willing in good health with our loved ones in good health and in safety, and have our cups of wine and our Matzah and know that we have freedoms that the Ribono Shel Olom has granted us, then we fulfill the Divine command

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים:

In each and every generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he went out of Egypt.

The Yom Tov of Pesach is for all of us. Let us not forget for a moment the source of that preciousness so that we may celebrate it fully this year and fulfill the prayer we say at the Seder's end:

לשנה הבאה בירושלים ונאכל שם מן הזבחים ומן הפסחים:

Next year in Yerushalayim! And we will be in the Beis HaMikdosh, partaking of the offerings and the Korban Pesach, all of Israel together, with HaKodosh Boruch Hu and His Torah at the center of our lives.

A very Healthy and safe Chag Kosher v'Sameach

Rabbi Pollock