



CHICAGO RABBINICAL COUNCIL

מועצת הרבנים דשיקגו



# Divrei Torah for Pesach 5783



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# Short Haggadah Insights

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## 1. קדש ורחץ. Sanctify and Wash<sup>1</sup>

The Seder begins with a short sing song in which we summarize the fifteen different aspects of the Seder. It all begins with קדש – making kiddush. Fundamentally, the word קדש could be understood as being about “sanctifying” the Seder. This idea of sanctification is underscored by the passage in the Haggadah that states יכול מראש חדש – that – if not for a scriptural verse indicating that the mitzvah of reciting the Haggadah is only on the first night of Pesach – we would have thought that the mitzvah of recounting the Exodus should already have begun on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. Why would we have thought this to be the case? Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik explained, based on the Rambam (*Chametz u'Matzah* 7:1), that the same way that when we are told to remember the Shabbos, we begin remembering it at the beginning of the week (we say “today is the first day towards Shabbos,” etc.), we would have thought that the same rule applies to recounting the Exodus from the beginning of the month of Nissan

(see *Shiurim L'Zecher Aba Mori*, vol. 2, page 154).

We can add that the preparations for the Exodus began with the advent of Rosh Chodesh Nissan, at which time we were given the mitzvah of החדוש הזה לכם (*Shemos* 12:2), of sanctifying the new moon. The month of Nissan is singled out for redemption – בניסן נגאלו ובניסן עתידין להיגאל (*Rosh Hashana* 11a) – and therefore there is already a redemptive feeling in the air beginning with Rosh Chodesh. Although the final ruling is that the mitzvah of recounting the Exodus takes place only on Seder night, we can still learn about the way to approach the mitzvah from its underpinnings which began on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. When the mitzvah of sanctifying the new moon was given at that time, Hashem showed the moon to Moshe Rabbeinu and said כזה ראה וקדש – when you see the moon in this shape and size, it is time for sanctification (see Rashi, *Shemos* 12:2). This may be part of the idea of starting with קדש – we remind ourselves that כזה ראה וקדש – we should look at the experience of our forefathers in preparing for redemption with all the mitzvot

<sup>1</sup> Most header translations are taken or adapted from Rav Asher Weiss on the Haggadah

that preceded the Exodus from the beginning of the month of Nissan and thereafter, such as sanctifying the new moon and bringing the Paschal offering, and understand that what we are doing as well, both leading into and at the Seder, is for the purpose of וקדש – of preparing for and conducting all the steps of the Seder meticulously for the purpose of our individual and collective sanctification.

## 2. כרפס

### **Eat a vegetable dipped in salt water**

Famously, the letters of כרפס spell out פרך – ס' – that 600,000 of our ancestors were subjected to back-breaking slavery. The Aleksander Rebbe explains that the first food that we eat at the Seder as כרפס is a simple vegetable, such as celery or parsley, which is generally viewed as insignificant and incidental to the main meal. At the Seder, this simple food is thrust into the limelight and becomes the first dish of this majestic evening. This catapulting of the כרפס into stardom is symbolic of the transformation of our forebears from lowly slaves to a ממלכת כהנים – a kingdom of priests and princes, imbued with eternal sanctity as a גוי קדוש, the chosen nation of Hashem (see *Shemos* 19:6).

## 3. והגדת לבנך

### **“You shall tell your son on that day”**

The entire Haggadah is premised

upon the phrase in the Torah (*Shemos* 13:8) – והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר – that there is a special fulfillment on this night of retelling the Pesach experience. The Steipler Gaon was fond of the explanation that the term hearkens to the Talmudic dictum that כיון שהגיד שוב אינו חוזר ומגיד – after witnesses render testimony in Bet Din, they may not be מגיד (i.e., render the testimony) again (see, e.g., *Kesuvos* 18b). In our case, the term הגדה serves as a contrast to this principle. We are supposed to repeat the testimony over and over. While the text of the Haggadah remains the same, each year we are supposed to find new insights. This idea is also borne out by the special passion that the Jewish people possess to purchase and pore over new Haggadah commentaries each year, something that seems to have no equivalent with respect to other holidays and occasions around the year.

## 4. ואפילו כלנו חכמים כלנו נבנים כולנו יודעים את התורה מצוה עלינו לספר ביציאת מצרים

**Even if we were all men of wisdom, understanding and knowledge of the Torah, it would still be an obligation for us to recount the Exodus.**

Rav Asher Weiss notes that although the *Yerushalmi* (*Berachos* 8a) states that a person who is תורתו אומנותו – a person whose occupation is constant

Torah study – is exempt from reciting the Shema, even the *Yerushalmi* does not exempt anyone, regardless of Torah erudition and occupation, from the mitzvah of reciting the Haggadah. The reason for this is because the primary purpose of the Haggadah is to recite thanksgiving to Hashem, and nobody is exempt from saying thank you. The *Gemora* (*Pesachim* 116a) bears out this central theme of the Haggadah with a story about Rav Nachman and his servant Daru. During one Pesach Seder, R. Nachman asked Daru what a slave should say if his master frees him and gives him lots of gold and silver. Daru answered that he should praise his master and say thank you. Rav Nachman promptly exclaimed that “you have exempted us from the need to say *מה נשתנה* (how is this night different from other nights).” However, even R. Nachman only relied upon Daru’s statement in terms of omitting the preamble of *מה נשתנה*, as he immediately launched into the recitation of *עבדים היינו* (“we were slaves in Egypt, and Hashem freed us”) to express his individual appreciation to Hashem for the miracle of the Exodus.

**5. וכל המרבה לספר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משובח**

**The more one tells about the discussion of the Exodus, the more he is praiseworthy.**

The commentary *Simchas HaRegel* contrasts the statement that one is praiseworthy for elaborating upon the kindnesses of Hashem in taking us out of Egypt with the *Gemora* (*Berachos* 33b) that says that it is improper to expound upon the attributes of Hashem. While it is presumptuous for us to detail Hashem’s attributes, it is never considered improper or excessive to detail the myriad of kindnesses that Hashem bestows upon us.

**6. הרי זה משובח**

**The more “he” is praiseworthy, or literally, “this one is praiseworthy.”**

The standard translation of the words *הרי זה משובח* is that the **person** recounting the story of the Exodus in detail is praiseworthy. There is, however, another possible understanding. We are told later in the Haggadah that the words *בעבור זה* (“because of this”) teach us that the mitzvah of recounting the Exodus is *בשעה שיש מצה ומרור לפניך* – when the Matzah and *Maror* (bitter herbs), about which we say *מרור זה מצה* and *מרור זה מצה* (“this” Matzah, and “this” *Maror*), are in front of us, which is on the first night of Pesach. The Ramban writes (*Milchamos, Berachos* 2a), that when Rabban Gamliel (*Pesachim* 116b) famously said that one who has not spoken at the Seder about the *Pesach*, Matzah and *Maror* has not fulfilled his obligation (as cited

in the Haggadah), this means that the mitzvot of the Paschal Offering (which was brought when the Temple was still standing and is today commemorated though the eating of the Afikomen), the Matzah and the *Maror* are not fulfilled in optimal fashion unless their sources and underpinnings are discussed and elaborated upon at the Seder. Thus, when we say about one who elaborates upon the story of the Exodus that משובח – “this one is praiseworthy,” we can also interpret this as meaning that the word זה (“this”) in the scriptural phrase בעבור זה (“because of this”), representing observance of the mitzvot of *Pesach*, Matzah, and *Maror*, becomes משובח (praiseworthy) through a detailed explication of the Haggadah.

**עד שבאו תלמידיהם ואמרו להם רבותינו הגיע זמן קריאת שמע של שחרית**

**Until the students came and said to them, “our teachers, the time has come for the reading of the morning Shema.”**

The Haggadah recounts the story of the five *Tanaim*, including R. Yehoshua and R. Akiva, observing their Seder in B’nei Brak and describing the Exodus from Egypt the entire night until their students came to them in the morning and declared, “our revered Rebbes, the time for the morning recitation of the Shema

has arrived.” R. Yosef Zvi Rimon notes that this incident took place during the time of terrible Roman prosecution, and the opportunity for the Rabbis to regale in the mitzvah of remembering the Exodus also served as an avenue to escape the harsh realities of their time. However, the students pointed out to them that at a certain point the sun rises on the next day, and the Rabbis had no choice but to confront the reality of their circumstances and to discharge their relevant responsibilities in guiding their students and communities even in difficult times. On this note, I vividly remember what was perhaps the most powerful mussar schmooze that I ever heard. Fifteen years ago, the Rabbi of the Young Israel of Scarsdale, Rabbi Jacob Rubinstein z”l, and his Rebbetzin a”h, were tragically killed in a fiery blaze at their home on Shabbos HaGadol, immediately prior to Pesach. At the conclusion of the funeral service the following day, one of their sons declared to the throngs of teary-eyed members of the Jewish community in Scarsdale and beyond who had gathered to pay last respects: - רבותינו - !הגיע זמן קריאת שמע של שחרית - “my parents would want you to carry on now with your Pesach preparations – the sun is shining, and it is a new day.”

**מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח.**

**The one reciting the Haggadah begins with the story of our**

## **disgrace and concludes with the story of our glory.**

The *Mishna* (*Pesachim* 116a) states that the proper way to recite the Haggadah is to be מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח – to begin with a reminder of our state of degradation and then end with a recounting of our triumphant ascension. The *Gemora* (*ibid.*) records a dispute between Rav and Shmuel regarding whether this relates to beginning with a description of our spiritual degradation, i.e., how our forefathers were idol worshipers, or with a description of our physical degradation, i.e., how we were slaves in Egypt. In the actual text of the Haggadah, we follow both opinions, beginning our discussion with עבדים היינו – we were slaves in Egypt, and continuing to recall that מתחלה עובדי עבודה זרה היו אבותינו – our ancestors were originally idol worshipers. The important message is that people should not be embarrassed to speak about their humble origins, whether material or spiritual. What is impressive about a person is not his or her pedigree, but how much the person grows and advances in life. The Rambam (*Teshuva* 7:4) rules like the opinion in the *Gemora* (*Berachos* 34b) that a *ba'al teshuva* is on a higher level than a person who has always been perfectly righteous. I once heard from Rabbi Zevulun Charlop *shlit"א* that the verse in *Koheles* (7:20) which states כי אדם

אין צדיק בארץ אשר יעשה טוב ולא יחטא (“*there is no person who is a tzaddik in the land who does only good and never sins*”) - teaches us that once a *tzaddik* ventures בארץ – interacts with the world, it is impossible not to occasionally make mistakes. The true sign of greatness is to learn from those mistakes and become greater as a result. On Seder night, we celebrate our ability to rise above our humble origins to become a people worthy of redemption by Hashem.

**9. ויהי בימים הרבים ההם וימת מלך מצרים ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבודה ויזעקו**

**“It happened in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died and B’nei Yisroel groaned because of the servitude and cried.” - Shemos 2:23**

The *Gemora* in *Sanhedrin* (*Sanhedrin* 97a) states that אין בן דוד בא עד שיתייאשו מן הגאולה - the Mashiach will not come until we give up hope at redemption. Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky (*Emes L'Yaakov, Devarim* 32:36) asks that the opposite statement should be true. We are obligated to never give up hope for redemption, as we state each day (*Siddur for Shacharis*), in the articulation of the last of the thirteen principles of faith, עם כל יום - each day I expectantly await the arrival of the Mashiach (though he may tarry). Rav Kaminetsky explains that the



meaning of the Talmudic statement is that Mashiaich does not come until we despair from relying upon natural forces and mortal beings to bring redemption. It is wrong to turn to political leaders of any sort to expect them to be our redeemers. Only when we have the realization that אין לנו על מי להישען אלא על אבינו שבשמים (see *Sotah* 49b) - can we be assured of redemption. Along these lines, Rav Itzele of Volozhin explained that in Egypt, there was a hope and expectation that when Pharaoh died, things would be better for the Jews. Thus, our suffering in Egypt reached its nadir when Pharaoh died, and we discovered that his successor was no better. Since this despair was in recognition that we could not rely on mortal leaders but only on crying out to Hashem as the verse states – ותעל שועתם אל ה-אלקים מן העבודה, this resulted in וישמע ה' את קולנו – Hashem heard our sincere and heartfelt cries that were directed solely to Him.

**10. ובאותות – זה המטה**  
**“With signs” – *Devorim* 26:8 – refers to the miracles performed with the staff.**

What was the great sign of the staff? The *Gemora* (*Sanhedrin* 67b) states that the witchcraft of Egypt could be tested by taking an item and throwing it into water. If something had been transformed into a different object through sorcery, it would return to its original state when it

came into contact with water. Thus, when Moshe had turned his staff into a snake and this act was then duplicated by the Egyptian sorcerers with their staffs, after which Moshe had his staff turn back into a staff and then devour all the magicians' snakes (see Rashi, *Shemos* 7:12), Pharaoh could have dismissed this feat by stating that the staff of Moshe had originally been a snake and this is why it was able to devour the other snakes. However, once Pharaoh saw that when Moshe's staff encountered the water (to turn the water in the Nile River into blood) it remained a staff, he was able to appreciate that the swallowing of the sorcerers' snakes by Moshe's staff was not merely a sorcerers' stunt but an actual miracle.

**11. רבי יהודה היה נותן בהם סימנים: דצ"ך עד"ש באח"ב**  
**“Rabbi Yehuda abbreviated the plagues by their Hebrew initials.”**

What is the significance of the fact that R. Yehuda provided a shorthand mnemonic for the ten plagues? Rav Ovadia Yosef explains that the *Gemora* (*Shabbos* 33b) tells us that R. Yehuda was the ראש המדברים בכל מקום – he was always chosen to be the first and main speaker at every communal function. The abbreviation of the plagues by R. Yehuda reveals the reason that he was chosen for this distinction. A good speaker

is brief and to the point. Another explanation is based on the *Gemora* in *Moed Kattan* (18a) which teaches us that a person must be exceedingly careful not to say anything with a negative connotation based on the principle of ברית כרותה לשפתים – that the words that we speak can end up coming true in ways that we had not anticipated. Accordingly, R. Yehuda preferred to avoid mentioning specific plagues to the extent not necessary. Finally, there is a tradition (*Midrash Rabbah*, *Shemos* 5:6) that these letters of דצ"ך עד"ש באח"ב were engraved on Moshe's staff. According to this tradition, R. Yehuda's message may be (as some commentators have suggested) that each individual letter did not need to end up standing for bad things, such as the plagues, but could have ended up standing for auspicious things, had the Egyptians repented. This serves as a reminder for us as well that we can change bad situations or omens for good through our virtuous actions, and thus "change the script" in our lives for the better.

## 12. פסח... על שום מה

### **Why did our fathers eat the Pesach?**

An essential part of the Seder is to explain each observance that we perform in terms of its Torah origins. Rabbi Abba Bronspiegel zt"l, who passed away this past Adar, would often emphasize the words of the Ramban towards the end of *Parshas*

*Bo* (*Shemos* 13:16), in which he explained that the reason that we have so many mitzvot that serve as a reminder of the Exodus from Egypt, including Tefillin, Mezuzah, remembering the Exodus every day, and finally, the mitzvah of the Haggadah itself, is because it is necessary to transmit the *mesorah* – our tradition – of the revealed Divine manifestation at that time to all future generations. In other words, a central theme of the Haggadah and everything it represents is the paramount importance of preserving and transmitting our *mesorah*. As Rav Bronspiegel said regarding the teaching of Torah to each new generation, "a Rebbe without a *mesorah* is not a good Rebbe." The precise way in which we observe the Pesach rituals every year and observe the Seder in accordance with the age-old traditions of our family and communities is a reminder to all of us that every Jew, every Jewish family unit, and every Jewish community, are essential flagbearers of our sacred tradition, and that we serve as the guardians of our religion through our careful observance of each and every aspect of the Seder. The Seder thus constitutes first and foremost a celebration of the *mesorah* of the Jewish people.



# The One Not at the Seder

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As Pesach is approaching, we are *Im Yirtzeh Hashem* looking forward to sitting down at another Pesach Seder. We will sing the songs, retell the story and wait with anticipation for the Matzah and *Maror* to be followed by the *seudah*. There will be only one glaring omission, the name of Moshe. We proclaim at the beginning of the Seder, כל דכפין ייתי ויכול כל דצריך ייתי, ויפסח, *whoever is hungry come and eat, who is needy, come have Pesach*, but Moshe the faithful shepherd is, so to speak, not invited to the Pesach Seder. The obvious question is why not? Moshe was the chosen of Hashem and had the single biggest role to play in *Yetzias Mitzraim*. Why not give credit where credit is due? You can't simply answer that Moshe left himself out like some sort of ghost writer or anonymous author, because the Haggadah text was formalized many centuries after Moshe's death. So why is Moshe, save for one passing reference not mentioned in the Haggadah?

Many answers, probably in the hundreds, have been given to this

question. Let us focus on a few to hopefully gain some lessons for our own Seder. During the Seder the main *pesukim* that we dissect are not from the *Pashiyos* of *Shmos*, *Vaera*, *Bo* and *Beshalach* where we tell in great detail the *Yetzias Mitzraim*, but rather from *Parshas Ki Savo* where we discuss the bringing of the *Bikkurim*. The focus of this declaration, and by extension, the Haggadah, is our national heritage and our eternal relationship with Hashem. Moshe is not mentioned in this declaration and is not a crucial piece for this discussion of our eternal relationship with Hashem. The Klausenberger Rebbe *z'ya* notes that not every generation merits a leader like Moshe. While the Jewish people will never be completely bereft of leaders, it may seem at times that we do not have the leaders we need. It is at those times and in every generation that we must reassert אין לנו על מי להשעין אלא על אבינו שבשמים (see *Sotah* 49b), *we have no one to rely on except our Father in heaven*. So Moshe was left out to remind not to rely on leaders or be crestfallen

when those leaders don't measure up, because ultimately we are under the guiding and protected presence of Hashem Himself.

Another possible answer is that Moshe is always referred to as *Moshe Rabbenu*, our teacher. His primary lasting role for generations is that of a teacher to a student. On the Seder night we are primarily concerned with fathers and children. We are trying to transmit a *mesorah* which travels from parent to child, not teacher to student. We are focusing on the activities in the home i.e, the parents to their children, and not the role of the teacher. So Moshe, the ultimate teacher, is not mentioned on the *ליל הבנות* night.

In fact, Moshe was himself a prime example of this. The question can be asked, who was the first person to transmit to their children the story of Egypt? All of the children who left Egypt lived through the *Makkos* and the Exodus itself, and had their own memories. One answer given is Moshe himself. *Moshe Rabbenu's* kids were with Tzipora in Midian, as we are told they rejoined Moshe and Klal Yisroel in *Parshas Yisro*. So Moshe had to retell to his children the events of *Yetzias Mitzraim*, to children who had not seen it. Even he himself had to step out of his role of *Rabbenu* and take on the task of *בן* *ישאלך* בןך לאמר.

The Chofetz Chaim (*Chofetz Chaim al Hatorah Parshas Bahaloshcha*) suggests Moshe's omission from the Haggadah is due to Moshe's great *anivus*, humility. Moshe was the most humble of all men and would want the Exodus to focus back on Hashem. While Moshe did have a significant role in *Yetzias Mitzraim*, he would not want it mentioned. Just as he was concerned for Aharon's role, he would have been similarly concerned that his role did not overshadow the unique connection between *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and *Klal Yisrael*. In general, *Yetzias Mitzraim* is the archetype of the *Geulah* for generations to come. The formula is simple; all you need is Hashem and the Jewish people. While the Jews are never devoid of leaders, not every generation merits a *Moshe Rabbenu*. So when we sit down to the Seder, we recognize Moshe, we can even discuss his role but the formal text leaves him out as if to say the lasting bond of *Klal Yisrael* and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* does not depend on a *Moshe Rabbenu*. *Leil Haseder* is such a powerful time that it is worthwhile to remember that *ישראל ואורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא חד הוא* (*Zohar, Acharei Mos*), *Hashem, the Torah, and the Jewish people are one*. May we all merit to have an uplifting and transformative Seder and *חג כשר* *ושמח*!

# The Deeper Meaning Behind Heseiba at the Seder

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There is a puzzling *Gemara* in *Pesachim* that discusses which aspects of the Seder require *heseiba*, and seems to be filled with contradictions. I would like to propose a creative solution to understand this *Gemara* which can also offer a window into the deeper meaning of *heseiba* at the Seder and other *mitzvot* as well.

## **Gemara Summary**

The *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 108a) begins by saying that Matza unequivocally requires *heseiba* while *Maror* does not. However, with regard to the *arba kosot*, there is a debate centered around two traditions of Rav Nachman's opinion. Some said in the name of Rav Nachman that wine at the Seder requires *heseiba* and some reported in Rav Nachman's name that wine does not require *heseiba*. However, the *Gemara* continues, there is no contradiction between these two reports; one report was referring to the first two cups, and one report, to the second two cups.

The *Gemara* then goes on to say that there were two ways in which the

sages interpreted this distinction within Rav Nachman. Some thought that Rav Nachman required *heseiba* for the first two cups since "it is at this time that we are going free" while for the latter two cups "what was, was." Others, however, thought that Rav Nachman required *heseiba* only for the latter two cups for it is "at this time that one is free," while during the first two cups "we are still *avadim hayyinu* (enslaved)." The *Gemara* then concludes that now that we have heard both of these positions, *heseiba* is required for all four cups.

## **Questions on the Gemara**

There are many questions we can ask on this piece of *Gemara*. We will focus on two:

- 1) How are we to understand the logic behind the two interpretations of Rav Nachman? They both seem to agree that the Seder is a reenactment of the Exodus which begins with slavery and moves to freedom, and that the four cups create a structure for this process. How then do they cite the same process and logic and

yet wind up at opposite conclusions about the requirement to lean for the first or second set of cups?

2) The conclusion of the *Gemara* seems very odd. Why require leaning for all four cups? The *Gemara* is clear that Rav Nachman only required leaning for two - we are just unsure which two. Since *arba kosot* is a *mitzvah derabanan*, this is a case of *safek derabanan*, which should be decided leniently (*l'kula*) and not *l'chumra* (stringently)!

### **Answer to Question 1: *Siman* vs. *Siba***

To answer the first question, I would like to suggest that this *Gemara* can be understood through the lens of a well known *chakira* (intellectual inquiry) distinguishing between *siman* (sign) and *siba* (cause). At the heart of this dispute within Rav Nachman is whether we view the act of leaning at the Seder as a *siman* (sign) or a *siba* (cause).

The first view requires leaning for the first two cups since “it is at this time that we are going free” because it views the act of leaning as a “*siba*” - as an act which causes and activates our feelings of freedom. Drinking wine while leaning helps generate within us feelings of freedom and moves us from a state of slavery to freedom. This is needed during the first half of the Seder when we are working to extricate ourselves

from the bondage of Egypt. Once we have left Egypt and are free (last two cups), we no longer need this “booster rocket” and leaning no longer serves a purpose.

The second view requires *heseiba* for only the latter two cups for it is “at this time that one is free” – because it views the act of leaning as a “*siman*,” a sign and outward reflection of our internal state. At the start of the Seder, while we are still enslaved (*avadim hayinu*), how can we lean? However, at the end of the Seder, once we have been freed, then we can outwardly demonstrate our inner feelings of freedom by leaning.

According to this interpretation, both views within Rav Nachman accept that the Seder entails a progression from slavery to freedom. They disagree, however, on the function of *heseiba*. Does *heseiba* help us become free (*siba*) and therefore has its place at the start of the Seder, or is it a reflection of our freedom (*siman*) and thus belongs at the end of the Seder.

### **Answer to Question 2**

In terms of the second question, how to understand the *Gemara*'s unusual conclusion that we should lean for all four cups, the Ran (page 23a in *dapei haRif*) offers two possible explanations: a) In truth, since this is a *safek derabanan* we shouldn't have to lean for all four; however,

since it's not hard to do so, it is good to fulfill both views (Rashi).  
b) Ruling leniently in this particular case would result in leaning for neither set of cups which would cause the whole mitzvah to be lost! To avoid this, we therefore lean for both (Ran's own view).

### **A new way to understand the Gemara's conclusion**

Using our *siman-siba* paradigm, we can offer an additional interpretation of the Gemara's conclusion, which preserves Rav Nachman's underlying progression of the Seder from slavery to freedom. When the Gemara concludes "now that we have said this way and this way, both require *heseiba*," what the Gemara is saying is that both views (*siman* and *siba*) make sense, and, in fact, we can and should adopt them both! In other words, the Gemara is concluding that *heseiba* can function as both a *siba* and a *siman*, albeit at different times. At the start of the Seder, while we are just getting ready to leave Mitzrayim,

*heseiba* functions as a "*siba*," as a catalyst that helps us start to feel more free, then, during the second half of the Seder, once we have left Egypt, the same act of *heseiba* now functions as a "*siman*," as a reflection of our inner mood of freedom.

### **Application to other Mitzvot**

This *siman/siba* paradigm can enlighten our understanding of the function of other *mitzvot* as well. Take *tefillah* for example. *Tefillah* can be a *siba* (cause) in that performing the actions of *tefillah* can help uplift and inspire us. However, it can also be a *siman* (sign) in that it provides words for us to express our innermost feelings. And, similar to *heseiba*, at times, it can function as both a *siman* and a *siba* in the very same *tefillah*, creating a mutually reinforcing cycle.

*Yehi ratzon* that this Pesach we should all be able to increase our internal experience of *cherus* and connection with the *Ribbono Shel Olam*.



# Roots and Resilience

Rabbi Yehuda Meyers

Rabbi, Lincolnwood Jewish Congregation A.G.

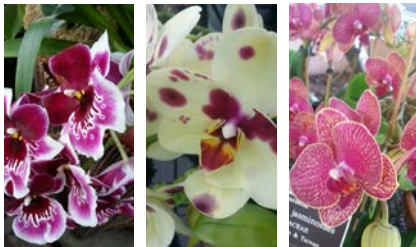
Beth Israel



א"ר יודן לפי שאין הגאולה של אומה זו  
באה בבת אחת אלא קימעא קימעא.<sup>1</sup>

**Rabbi Yudan said: The redemption of this nation [of Israel] does not come all at once, but rather bit by bit.**

**T**his year, I was fortunate enough to attend the Chicago Botanic Gardens Orchid Show and admire the impressive assortment of stunning flowers showcased. There were orchids of every shape and color, from lavender Dendrobiums to burnt orange Catasetums. As I strolled through the garden witnessing the magnificent beauty of nature reawakening during the spring season, I was overcome with a sense of awe and humility at the beauty of G-d's creation. I share



this vignette with you not as an advertisement for the orchid show. Rather, it was during this visit that I learned a fascinating detail about orchids that not only deepened my appreciation for the flower, but more importantly shed a new light on *Z'man Cheiruseinu*, the season of our freedom.

Orchids are one of the most popular house plants, due not only to their elegant beauty, but to their ease of care and minimal effort and attention required. "Just one ice cube a day, keeps the orchid okay." It was therefore quite shocking to learn that their initial growing process is far from easy. Many of the most popular orchids, including the Vanilla, Cattleya, Masdevallia, and Phragmipedium, require intense patience and dedication from their farmers, who must provide the optimal conditions for many years before they bloom. Oftentimes it can take up to a **decade** before they produce their first flower.

But the committed orchid farmer

1 מדרש תהילים יח:כג



stays the course, day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year. Then, almost out of nowhere, a tiny bud tucked within the folds of the plant's glossy green leaves begins to swell and stretch, preparing for its moment of glory.

The day finally arrives as the bud opens slowly, almost imperceptibly at first. But as the petals unfurl, they reveal a detailed pattern, as the flower begins to take shape and color. Day by day, the petals grow until the flower is in full bloom. This process repeats itself as each bud blossoms one by one; week by week, month by month, year by year, reflowering even after the petals fall away. This unique ability to regrow is due solely to the original commitment and dedication of the farmer who cared for it for all those years that it didn't bloom or blossom. Because, in fact, all the while it "wasn't growing," the orchid was building an intricate root system that gives it the resilience to bloom again and again.

This is precisely what Pesach teaches us.

While we commemorate the slavery and celebrate our freedom in one compact Seder evening, that freedom did not come quickly or easily. Generations of Jews were born and died as slaves, never witnessing

the light of day. But despite their struggles, they never lost faith, persevering through the pain; transmitting eternal hope to their children and grandchildren. Finally, after decades of suffering, they saw that their fountains of *tefillos* and tears weren't for naught. They too were planting roots of faith and resilience. Slowly but surely, freedom began to blossom, until it ultimately bloomed *היום הזה*, בעצם היום הזה, on that fateful day, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, with the Exodus from Mitzrayim.

As the Navi Yeshayahu proclaimed,<sup>2</sup> "כי לא בחיפזון תצאו ובמנוסה לא תלכוּן," "For you shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight." Freedom is a slow and arduous process that requires patience and perseverance. But when we commit to growing and tending to our roots, even when we do not see the flowers right away, we empower ourselves, our families, our communities and our people to have the resilience to keep growing for many years, no matter how many petals may fall. This is the lesson of the orchid and that is the story of Pesach.

May we all be blessed with the same courage, faith, and perseverance instilled within every orchid so that we too may blossom and bloom for many years to come.



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