

PESACH STORY

❶

What is the
Pesach Story?

❷

Why is the Pesach
Story important?

❸

How do we tell the
Pesach Story?

What is the Pesach Story?



In a Nutshell

Yetzias Mitzrayim, the Exodus from Egypt, was one of the most pivotal moments in our nation's history. Retelling its details at the Pesach Seder reminds us of Hashem's complete control over the world and our lives and renews our emunah in Him.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN...

When Yaakov brought his family of 70 down to Mitzrayim², Yosef was viceroy and Pharaoh rolled out the red carpet.³ Under his rule, the Jews multiplied and prospered,⁴ spreading throughout Egypt and succeeding in business.⁵ But success came with a price: assimilation. After the original generation died, many Jews started blending in - attending Egyptian entertainment and stopping to do mitzvos like *bris milah*. That's when Hashem turned things around. To keep the Jews from assimilating entirely, He turned Egyptian admiration into paranoid hatred. Suddenly, Egyptians saw Jewish landlords everywhere and panicked: "They're taking over!"⁶

THE CON JOB OF THE CENTURY

Pharaoh was desperate to control the Jews and decided to enslave them. However, he knew you can't just enslave an entire successful population overnight. So he pulled off history's greatest bait-and-switch. Pharaoh himself shows up at a construction site, sleeves rolled up, making bricks alongside everyone else for a "national project" with "generous pay". The Jews participated (except the Leviim), their quota was counted, and boom, the trap snapped shut.¹ The next day, not only did they not get paid, but they had to make yesterday's quota of bricks or they'd be beaten mercilessly. As the days went by, the slavery became steadily worse.



Spotlight

Every time we remember the wonders of Yetzias Mitzrayim, we imbue ourselves with emunah.

10 MAKKOS

Eventually, the slavery became unbearable and the Jews cried out to Hashem to save them.⁷ Hashem sent Moshe to bring 10 makkos (plagues) to punish Pharaoh and the Egyptians while showing His mastery over the world.

דָּם (Dam) - Blood: All the water in Egypt turned to blood.⁸

צְפַרְדֵּי'א (Tzefardei'a) - Frogs: Frogs swarmed Egypt.⁹

כִּנִּים (Minim) - Lice: All the dust turned into lice that tormented the Egyptians.¹⁰

עֲרוּב (Arov) - Wild Animals: Wild animals invaded the land.¹¹

דָּבָר (Dever) - Pestilence: Disease struck the Egyptians' livestock.¹²

שִׁחִין (Sh'chin) - Boils: Painful boils broke out on the Egyptians.¹³

בָּרָד (Barad) - Hail: Severe hailstorms destroyed crops.¹⁴

אַרְבֶּה (Arbeh) - Locusts: Locusts ate all the remaining greenery.¹⁵

חֹשֶׁךְ (Choshech) - Darkness: Thick darkness covered Egypt for six days.¹⁶

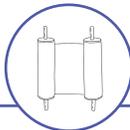
מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת (Makas Bechoros) - Death of the Firstborn: Every Egyptian firstborn died.¹⁷



GEULAH!

Makas Bechoros finally knocked Pharaoh his senses - he was terrified he would die. Together with the Mitzriyim (Egyptians), he begged the Jews to leave, but Hashem said they should wait until morning, when they could walk out in broad daylight and accentuate the miracle of their release.

A few days after they left, Hashem lured Pharaoh to chase after them, by making it look like the Yidden were lost. The Egyptians caught up with the Jews while they were encamped by the sea, completely trapping them.¹⁸ But the Jews davened to Hashem, and He performed a great miracle by splitting the sea so the Jews could travel through on dry land. The Mitzriyim charged right after the Jews, but the Yam Suf crashed down over them, and they drowned. Seeing their tormentors die, the Jews finally felt truly free, and they burst into song, praising and thanking Hashem for His miracles.



The Miracle Called Moshe

Moshe's life was a miracle from the very beginning. Before he was born, Pharaoh dreamed that a Jewish child would one day save the Jews and his advisors confirmed this through astrology.¹⁹ Terrified, Pharaoh first ordered the Jewish midwives, Yocheved and her daughter Miriam, to kill all newborn boys.²⁰ When they refused, Pharaoh commanded that every Jewish baby boy be thrown into the Nile.²¹

Into this terrifying world, Moshe was born. Yocheved saw that he was special because he gave off a holy glow. Unable to hide him, she placed him in a basket among the reeds of the Nile.²²

At that moment, Hashem arranged another miracle. Basya, Pharaoh's daughter, had rejected idol worship and recognized Hashem as the true Creator. She went to the Nile to immerse herself and quietly convert. Precisely then, she saw a crying baby in a basket. Though saving him meant defying Pharaoh, she had compassion and decided to save Moshe. When her attendants objected, Hashem caused them to die, leaving no witnesses. Her arm then stretched miraculously to reach the basket.

Basya tried to find an Egyptian wet nurse, but Moshe refused. He was destined to speak to Hashem and would not allow his mouth to be sullied. Moshe's sister Miriam, watching nearby, offered to find a Jewish nurse and brought her mother - Yocheved. In a breathtaking twist, Yocheved was paid to nurse and raise her own child! This was a reward for defying Pharaoh's command. News of these miracles spread quickly throughout the Jewish nation. Together with other hidden wonders, these events whispered hope: Hashem had not abandoned His people.

Moshe grew up in Pharaoh's palace, raised lovingly by his own mother and Basya.²³ The child meant to be drowned now lived under Pharaoh's very roof. Yet Moshe never forgot who he was. He went out to see the suffering of his brothers.²⁴ When he saw an Egyptian

beating a Jew to death, Moshe intervened and killed the oppressor. When this became known, Pharaoh ordered Moshe's death.²⁵ Once again, Moshe escaped by a miracle and fled, eventually reaching Midian, where he became a shepherd for Yisro, a former advisor to Pharaoh.²⁶

Years passed. Pharaoh died and the Jews hoped for respite, but the suffering worsened. The Jews finally realized they had no one to rely on but Hashem and cried out to Him.²⁷ At Pharaoh's funeral, they wept outwardly for the king but inwardly for themselves, praying for redemption.²⁸

Hashem heard their prayers, appeared to Moshe, and told him to go to Pharaoh and tell him to let the Jews go. Moshe hesitated, worried that Aharon would feel slighted that his younger brother had been given this honor, but Hashem assured him that Aharon would rejoice.²⁹

Moshe returned to Egypt with a secret code passed down through generations: "*Pakod yifkod*—Hashem will surely remember you".³⁰ When he said these words and performed miraculous signs, the Jews recognized that their true redeemer had arrived.

Then came the ultimate confrontation. Moshe and Aharon approached Pharaoh's heavily guarded palace, protected by soldiers, wild animals, and powerful witchcraft. Yet they calmly walked straight into the throne room unopposed and demanded: "Let my people go!"³¹ Pharaoh, furious at their audacity, refused and made the Jews' work even harder.

Upon Hashem's command, Moshe and Aharon returned to Pharaoh to show him a miracle to show they were sent by Hashem. Aharon threw down his stick, which transformed into a snake. Pharaoh laughed – even Egyptian children as young as four could perform such tricks. But then Aharon's stick swallowed all the Egyptian staffs without getting fatter, proving this was genuine miracle, not just magic. Though Pharaoh grew nervous, he stubbornly refused to give in.³²

The stage was set for the ten plagues. This is how Moshe, whose birth and survival were based on miracles, became the redeemer. Raised in the palace of evil, he became Hashem's servant. His life itself proclaims the message of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*: even in the darkest times, Hashem is guiding every detail, preparing salvation long before we can see it.

What can we learn from the fact that Moshe grew up in Pharaoh's house?



TORAH CHALLENGE

אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
 "I am Hashem your G-d Who took you out of the land of Egypt."

This is the first of the *Aseres Hadibros* (The Ten Commandments). Why does Hashem introduce Himself with *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and not as the Creator of the world?



Why is the Pesach Story important?

FOR ALL GENERATIONS

Yetzias Mitzrayim was meant to become the foundation of *emunah* for all generations. Hashem usually runs the world in a hidden, “natural” way so people can have free will, but in *Mitzrayim*, He revealed Himself openly, showing that He alone controls nature, and can change the world at any moment.³⁵ One reason for the *makkos* was so that the Jews would learn lessons from them and tell them to their children, creating an unshakeable faith for all time.³⁶ As the Torah records: “So that you may tell into the ears of your son and your grandson that I made a mockery of Egypt and My signs that I put amongst them - that you may know what I am Hashem.”³⁷ Since the entire nation experienced these events, they cannot be denied. They prove that Hashem created the world, continues to run it, and chose Klal Yisrael as His special nation.³⁸

AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Yetzias Mitzrayim was the physical and spiritual birth of Klal Yisrael.³³ Hashem did not merely help us - He chose us. For this, we are eternally indebted. Our gratitude is meant to be the foundation of our entire relationship with Hashem: accepting the Torah and serving Him out of love and appreciation.³⁴ To forget *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, or to live without recognizing what Hashem did for us, would be a denial of the good we received. Remembering *Yetzias Mitzrayim* reminds us that our very identity as a nation is a gift. That *hakaras hatov* (recognition of good) inspires us to remain loyal to Hashem and His Torah.

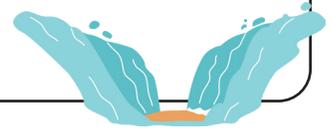


Corny Corner

Mitzrayim is the only place where “It can’t get any worse” was proven wrong ten times.

BIG AND ‘SMALL’ MIRACLES

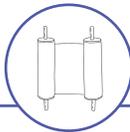
Hashem doesn’t perform open miracles in every generation for every doubter or heretic. However, He commanded us to constantly remember *Yetzias Mitzrayim* since by remembering those great miracles, we come to recognize the hidden miracles that happen in our everyday lives. Our bodies, livelihoods, and the successes of our day-to-day lives are all miracles from Hashem, not natural events. Hashem is constantly running the world, whether that means splitting the sea or allowing us to wake up in the morning.³⁹ In addition, numerous sources tell us that the final redemption will mirror *Yetzias Mitzrayim* in many ways. This gives us tremendous *chizuk* (strength) because we can rest assured that just as Hashem was with the Jews in *Mitzrayim* and saved them just at the right moment, He is also here with us through this long, bitter *galus*, and when the time is right, He will save us once again.⁴⁰



IT’S ALL IN THE DETAILS

Why does the Torah and Medrash dedicate so much space to the details of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*?

The reason Hashem made so many *makkos* and provided us with all the details was for us to learn something from those details. When we learn the story in detail, it comes to life and shows us just Who is in control of everything. For example, did you know that every *makkah* was *middah keneged middah* - measure for measure? They weren’t just a random concoction of punishments. The *Mitzrayim* suffered from blood, frogs, lice, wild animals, plague, boils, hail stones, locust, darkness, and death of the firstborns because they had tormented the Jews in every one of these aspects. They bathed in Jewish blood and tormented us with wild animals. Furthermore, each detail of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* reveals more of Hashem’s precision and power - it’s a goldmine of *emunah*!



10 Makkos In Depth

Let's delve into the unforgettable lessons that the 10 makkos taught us about Hashem's control over creation.



BLOOD: The Nile River turned to genuine blood with a terrible stench.⁴¹ Even bread made with water became inedible, and walls oozed blood. This was retribution for the Egyptians spilling Jewish blood by throwing babies into the Nile. Pharaoh even bathed twice daily in the blood of 300 babies trying to cure his leprosy.⁴² Remarkably, when a Jew and Egyptian drank from the same cup, it was water for the Jew but blood for the Egyptian.⁴³

Lesson for day-to-day life: Don't take water for granted – it's Hashem providing it and He can remove it at will.

FROGS: A giant frog emerged from the Nile, and every time the Egyptians hit it, it spat out 6 more.⁴⁴ These aggressive frogs bit people, created deafening noise, and could jump through walls.⁴⁵ Had they stopped hitting the frog, the plague would've been harmless. Their blind fury made everything worse, which was a lesson from Hashem that if He sends us a sign that we are doing something wrong, we should not ignore it.⁴⁶



Lesson for day-to-day life: Peace of mind comes from Hashem. When things feel chaotic, be grateful for moments of calm.



LICE: All dirt turned to lice, causing unbearable itching with no escape or cure.⁴⁷ This plague couldn't be replicated by magic, forcing even Pharaoh's magicians to admit Hashem's power.⁴⁸ This served the Egyptians right as they had forced Jews to live in cramped houses without bathing which caused them to have lice⁴⁹ and beat them if they dared scratch while working.⁵⁰

Lesson for day-to-day life: Hashem controls the Earth and makes it produce—or not.

WILD ANIMALS: All types of wild animals appeared with their natural habitats, making them more at home and extra aggressive.⁵¹ Even pets turned on their owners.⁵² The Egyptians had forced Jews to catch wild animals for zoos⁵³ and pitted them against beasts for sport.⁵⁴



Lesson for day-to-day life: Thank Hashem that wild animals are generally held in check.

PLAGUE ON ANIMALS: All Egyptian livestock died, which was the equivalent to having every car and machine suddenly break.

This punished the Egyptians who had forced Jews to graze their animals and even harnessed Jews to plows while their animals rested.⁵⁵ Lesson for day-to-day life: Hashem controls our transportation. Be grateful when it works.

BOILS: Moshe threw ashes skyward that scattered across Egypt,⁵⁶ causing painful boils that left permanent scars.⁵⁷ The Egyptians had forced Jews to heat bathing water but wouldn't let Jews bathe.⁵⁸



Lesson for day-to-day life: We're not the boss of our own bodies—Hashem is. Be thankful when healthy and daven for those who aren't.

HAIL: For seven days, massive hailstones of ice and fire rained down into a country that had never before had a thunderstorm.⁵⁹ This destroyed orchards and fields that the Jews had been forced to tend.⁶⁰

Lesson for day-to-day life: Hashem rules the skies and all of nature.

LOCUSTS: An enormous swarm devoured all remaining crops, bit people, and even destroyed clothing and jewelry.⁶¹ The Egyptians had forced Jews to plant while feeding them only tiny rations.⁶²

Lesson for day-to-day life: Food abundance shouldn't be taken for granted. Let's be thankful for what we have.

DARKNESS: For three days, unearthly darkness descended that no candle could banish, yet the Jews could see. The next three days, darkness became solid, freezing Egyptians in place. Meanwhile, Jews had x-ray vision to search Egyptian homes.⁶³ Jews who did not merit leaving Egypt died during the beginning of this darkness so that the Egyptians would not mock them.⁶⁴

Lesson for day-to-day life: Blackouts happen. Thank Hashem when we have light and power.

DEATH OF FIRSTBORN: At exactly midnight, every Egyptian firstborn died, which was punishment for trying to kill the Jews, Hashem's "firstborn nation."⁶⁵

Lesson for day-to-day life: Only Hashem creates and controls life.

The ten makkos – intricately designed with perfect justice against the Mitzriyim and with infinite love for the Jews, teach us to recognize Hashem's Hand in every part of our lives.⁶⁶

Can you think of anything good in your life that you tend to take for granted?



How do we tell the Pesach Story?

TELL THE STORY!

We have a mitzvah from the Torah of **וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ** (*v'higadeta l'vincha*) - "And you shall tell your son".⁶⁷ This refers to the mitzva to tell over the events of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* on the night of the 15th of Nissan - seder night. This is primarily done through questions and answers. The youngest child at the table recites the *Mah Nishtanah*, which is four questions on the unusual things we do at the seder, which the Haggadah then answers. We even do some interesting things at the seder for the primary purpose of prompting questions, like by karpas, when we dip/eat a vegetable in salt water.⁶⁸ All this is to engage people in the seder so that they will be focused and come away enriched with the *emunah* of the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.



THE MORE THE MERRIER

We say in the Haggadah **וְכֹל הַמְרִבֵּה לְסַפֵּר** - **בִּיְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם הָרִי זֶה מְשֻׁבָּח** - "Whoever elaborates in telling over *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is praiseworthy. This means that although one can fulfill their basic obligation by explaining the mitzvos of **פֶּסַח, מַרְוֵר, וּמְרוֹר**," the more detail one goes into, and the longer one spends enumerating Hashem's kindnesses and miracles, the better they fulfill the mitzvah of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*. This applies even if there are no children at the seder and even if all the attendees are great sages who know all the details of the story already. In fact, the Haggadah tells us about 5 great sages who were having a seder together in Bnei Brak - R' Eliezer, R' Yehoshua, R' Elazar ben Azaria, R' Akiva, and R' Tarfon. They spent so much time telling over *Yetzias Mitzrayim* that their students had to come and remind them that it was almost time to say the morning Shema. The point is not to amass knowledge but to drive home awareness of Hashem's control over the world and our individual lives.

DAILY YETZIAS MITZRAYIM REMINDERS

The mitzvah to remember *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is not reserved for seder night. Every day, we mention it during Shema, morning and night, symbolizing that Hashem runs the world at all times. When putting on tefillin, which contain mentions of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, we remember that Hashem is all-powerful. This encourages us to dedicate our minds and hearts to serving Him, which is why tefillin are placed on our head and on our arm, opposite our heart.⁶⁹ Shabbos itself is called a *zecher* (remembrance of) *l'Yetzias Mitzrayim*. While Shabbos reminds us Hashem created the world, *Yetzias Mitzrayim* proves He continues running it, and you can't have one without the other. Even our calendar is designed around remembering *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. We count Nissan - the month of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* - as our first month, even though the world was created in Tishrei, to constantly remind us that Hashem controls everything.⁷⁰ All these reminders of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* keep our *emunah* strong!

THE EXPERIENTIAL SEDER

Besides vividly telling over the story, we make *Yetzias Mitzrayim* come alive at the seder by doing specific physical actions. Over the course of the seder, we drink 4 cups of wine, each one corresponding to a different stage of the *geulah* (redemption): *v'hotzaisi, v'hitzalti, v'ga'alti, v'lakachti*- and I will take you out, and I will save you, and I will redeem you, and I will take you to Me. We eat matzah to remind us how our ancestors left Egypt in such a hurry that their dough didn't have time to rise. The matzah also reminds us of the food we ate as slaves - matzah is cheap to make and takes a long time to digest. We eat maror - bitter herbs at the seder to remind us of the bitter tears we shed when we were enslaved in Egypt. During *Maggid*, we take 10 droplets of wine out of our cup, symbolizing the 10 *makkos*. The purpose of each one is to relive, not just retell, *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*.





Ask The Rabbi

with Rabbi Chaim Mintz
(Ask The Rabbi Book 2 pg.264)

THANKING HASHEM FOR TAKING US OUT OF EGYPT

Q Why do we thank Hashem for taking us out of Egypt if He is the One who sent us there? Wouldn't it have been better if we didn't have to go through the whole ordeal in the first place?

A Why indeed did the Jewish people have to suffer so terribly as slaves in Egypt?

Rav Yaakov of Lisa (author of Nesivos Hamishpat), in his commentary on the Haggadah, Ma'aseh Nissim, shares the following perspective. The Talmud (Berachos 5a) tells us that Hashem gave us three special gifts, each of which can be acquired only through suffering: Torah, the land of Israel, and the World to Come. These spiritual gifts help connect us to Hashem, and to receive them one must be pure and holy.

The Torah tells us that the suffering in Egypt refined and purified the Jewish nation. The pain and suffering subdued their physicality and helped make us spiritual people, capable and worthy of being given these gifts. Our suffering in Egypt was part of the process that molded us into becoming the Chosen Nation, and that is why when we thank Hashem for taking us out of Egypt, which includes our appreciation for Him sending us there.

This should be our perspective for every challenge and difficulty we encounter. Our very purpose on this world is to overcome the trials and tribulations Hashem sends our way, and each one is designed by Hashem for our benefit.. By strengthening ourselves and serving Hashem through thick and thin we grow spiritually, and the adversity itself can serve as the catalyst to reach great spiritual heights. This is one reason the Talmud (Berachos 60b) tells us that we must thank Hashem for the bad just as we thank Him for the good, because every "bad" is really good, and every challenge helps us grow.

So whenever you express your gratitude to Hashem for taking us out of Egypt — whether during davening or at the Pesach Seder — don't forget to have in mind to thank Him for sending us there, too! In the same vein, we thank Hashem for all our nation has endured, fortified with the knowledge that any pain and suffering helped us grow to great spiritual heights.

In short: Not only do we thank Hashem for taking us out of Egypt, we are also grateful for His bringing us there. Similarly, we thank Him for all our trials and tribulations, because they help our spiritual growth.



Tefillah Time

In Pesukei D'zimrah, we say *Az Yashir*, which begins: אֲזַ יְשִׁיר מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לְה' - Then Moshe and B'nei Yisrael chose to sing.

The word יְשִׁיר is in future tense. Why not שָׁר in the past tense? יְשִׁיר literally means 'will sing' and the simple meaning is that when they saw the miracle of the sea splitting, they decided that they *would* sing. But the Medrash teaches "מִכָּאן רָמַז לְתַחִית הַמֵּתִים" - מִן הַתּוֹרָה - The reason יְשִׁיר is in future tense is because it is a hint in the Torah to the resurrection of the dead in the times of Mashiach, when we will sing Hashem's praises once again led by Moshe.

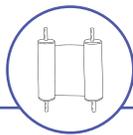


Did You Know?

The Haggadah Shel Pesach (Passover Haggadah) is one of the most popular traditional Jewish texts ever. The National Library of Israel has over 8,500 different ones in their collection! Some people have a custom of buying a new one every year for their Seder.



Zoniac Zone



Yetzias Mitzrayim Recap

Far from just ancient history, *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is the foundation of Jewish faith forever. Hashem revealed Himself openly in the miraculous events of Mitzrayim so every generation would know He controls everything. We're eternally grateful that Hashem freed us from slavery and chose us as His nation. Remembering those big miracles helps us recognize the small,

everyday miracles in our lives, too. That's why we retell the story in such detail at the Seder - asking questions, eating matzah and maror, and drinking four cups of wine. The more we elaborate on the miracles, the more praiseworthy! We mention *Yetzias Mitzrayim* in Shema, in tefillin, and on Shabbos and Yom Tov, keeping our *emunah* strong year-round.



An Unexpected Guest

Seder time was fast approaching and a major challenge was emerging. Rebbetzin Mintz wasn't feeling up to managing the entire two-night marathon event. It was no job for the fainthearted, serving the needs of scores of seder guests until 3 or 4 a.m., and the Rebbetzin was certainly not fainthearted. On this particular occasion, however, she was feeling under the weather and wondering exactly how she'd pull through.

That's when the family decided to hire help. Why not? Hire a non-Jewish waitress, let her serve and clear, and for once, let Mrs. Mintz sit at the table and enjoy the seder like a guest! It was a great idea for which, the family agreed, the time had come.

After making some inquiries, Mrs. Mintz hired Anya, a responsible, middle-aged woman from Poland who spoke English well. She arrived at the Mintz home several hours before candle-lighting on Erev Pesach, as the Rebbetzin had requested, so that she could learn the ins and outs of the job.

"It's going to be quite a while before the meal is served," the Rebbetzin explained to her. "But in the meantime, there are special foods that we'll be needing at the table. That's what's lined up here on the counter."

She showed Anya plates of karpas, maror, extra charoses and matza.

"Oh, I haven't seen this since I was a little girl," Anya said, a note of excitement creeping into her otherwise subdued voice.

"What do you mean?" asked Mrs. Mintz. "Did you go to a seder when you were a child?"

"My family used to make a seder," she recalled. "It was so exciting for us children. I remember it well."

Rabbi Mintz, overhearing the conversation, knew what he had to do. He invited the "waitress" to join the family at the table. After all, she was a Jew and that's where she belonged.

That night and the next, Anya and the dozens of other guests gathered around the Mintz's table enjoyed lively, inspiring sedarim and a delicious Yom Tov Meal. Now that their waitress was a guest, the Mintz children joined her in ferrying the food back and forth from the kitchen. Mrs. Mintz got to play the role of "guest" just as planned, and Anya got a Pesach experience that no one - except Hashem - had planned.

When she finally left after the second seder was over, the table cleared and the kitchen organized, Anya turned to Rabbi and Rebbetzin Mintz with a grateful farewell. "I'm sure this is the first time in my life," she said wryly, "that I've been paid to be served."





ZONIAK DILEMMA

Abi, a 15-year-old Zone member, was determined to make this year's seder unforgettable. He was going to bring the seder alive, get people asking questions, and tell over some super interesting Medrashim about the makkos. He even planned to buy special props to entertain the younger kids, like scary looking toy animals for *makkos arov*.

Seder night arrived and Abi, brimming with excitement and all the knowledge he planned to share, began his 'make seder awesome' campaign right after Kaddeish, asking a question he was sure no one would know how to answer. But just then, his younger brother and sister started arguing over hagaddas and his Dad said, "let's move on for now, Abi".

Abi managed to keep quiet until Maggid, but by then he was bursting to share what he had learned about every *makkah* being measure for measure.

"Does anyone know what the Egyptians did to deserve the *makkah* of blood?" he began. But before anyone could answer, his older brother, Sam, who unfortunately didn't seem much interested in anything besides the approaching *Shulchan Orech* meal, said, "let's just get on with it Abi, I'm starving!"

And so it went. Every time Abi tried to interject an insightful comment into the mumbled reciting of the Haggadah, there was some diversion or it just fell flat. No one seemed interested in going into any details, which was the best way to fulfill the mitzvah of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim!*

His younger siblings enjoyed the toy animals he had brought, but that was about it. The seder ended and Abi was left feeling like his family had lost out on the opportunity to experience the exciting, *emunah* filled like he had dreamed of.

Tomorrow night is Seder number two. Is there anything Abi can do to change things or is he doomed to another let's-just-get-to-the-food style seder?



Zoniac Challenge

Unscramble the following words to find things relating to *Yetzias Mitzrayim*:

- 1 Sethaloni
- 2 Raphaho
- 3 Redes
- 4 Nilltefi
- 5 Tuedaritg
- 6 Tormepedni



Daily Challenge

Recite the last paragraph of Shema today. When you say the words

"אני ה' אלקיכם אשר הוצאתי
אתכם מארץ מצרים להיות לכם
לאלקים אני ה' אלקיכם"

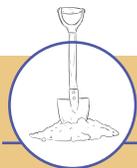
in the last paragraph of Shema, think briefly about the miracles of yetzias Mitzrayim.





Sources

- 1) Sotah 11a, Yalkut Shimoni Shemos #163
- 2) Bereishes 45:16-20, 46:8-27
- 3) Bereishes 45:18 and 47:6 & Rashi there
- 4) Shemos 1:7 and Rashi there
- 5) Kli Yakar 1:7
- 6) Shemos Raba 1:8, Medrash Tanchuma Shemos #6, Seforno, Ohr Hachaim, He'emek Davar on Shemos 1:7
- 7) Shemos 2:23
- 8) Shemos 7:17-25
- 9) Shemos 8:1-11
- 10) Shemos 8:12-15
- 11) Shemos 8:16-28
- 12) Shemos 9:1-7
- 13) Shemos 9:8-12
- 14) Shemos 9:13-35
- 15) Shemos 10:1-20
- 16) Shemos 10:21-29 and Rashi there in 22.
- 17) Shemos 12:29-36
- 18) See Mechiltah Beshalach #1, Tanchuma Shoftim #13, and Shemos Raba 21:5 and meforshim there.
- 19) Targum Yonason ben Uziel Shemos 1:15; Yalkut Shimoni Shemos #164
- 20) Shemos 1:15-16; Sotah 11b
- 21) Shemos 1:22, Rashi, Ohr Hachaim, Ramban
- 22) Shemos 2:3
- 23) Shemos 2:10; Shemos Rabba 1:26
- 24) Shemos 2:11
- 25) Devarim Rabbah 2:29
- 26) Shemos 2:11-22 and Rashi there and Shemos Raba 1:27-28
- 27) Da'as Zekainim, and Ramban on Shemos 2:23
- 28) Kli Yakar 2:23, Divrei David (Taz) 2:23, Malbim 2:23
- 29) See Shemos 2:24-4:17 for the full discussion and Rashi 4:14
- 30) Shemos 3:16- 4:9, Rashi & Rashbam 3:18, Shemos 5:28-31, and Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 48, & Shemos Raba 5:13
- 31) Yalkut Shimoni Shemos #175, #176, #181
- 32) Shemos 7:8-11, Shemos Raba 9:7
- 33) Haggadah Ma'aseh Nissim, Shemos Rabbah 15:9, Gevuras Hashem ch. 61
- 34) Machzor Vitri on Maariv of Shabbos, Sifsei Chaim
- 35) Chinuch Mitzvah #21
- 36) Ohel Yaakov (Dubno Maggid), Oznam LaTorah, Malbim 7:14
- 37) Shemos 10:2
- 38) Chinuch Mitzvah #2, Devarim 4:32-4, Rabbeinu Bechaye Devarim 5:15
- 39) Ramban Shemos 13:16
- 40) See for example Yalkut Shimoni #182, Shemos Raba 15:17, & 18:12, Yerushalmi Pesachim 10:1, and Netzach Yisrael Ch. 53
- 41) Medrash Hagadol 7:21
- 42) Shemos Raba 1:34
- 43) Shemos Raba 9:10-11
- 44) Tanchuma Parshas Va'eira #14, Zohar Shemos 30a
- 45) Shemos Raba 10:3, 10:6
- 46) Oznam L'Torah 1:12
- 47) Ba'al Haturim & Malbim Shemos 8:14
- 48) Shemos 8:14-15, Rashi
- 49) Medrash Sechel Tov 8:11
- 50) Medrash Agadah 9:10
- 51) Nachalas Yaakov Shemos 8:17
- 52) Medrash Hagadol 8:17
- 53) Shemos Raba 11:2-3
- 54) Tanna Dvei Eliyahu Raba Ch. 7
- 55) Me'am Lo'ez Ch. 13 on Shemos 9:6
- 56) Shemos 9:8-12
- 57) Yalkut Shimoni Shemos #184
- 58) Shemos Raba 11:5
- 59) Ibn Ezra 9:18, Medrash Hagadol 9:25
- 60) Yalkut Shimoni Shemos #182
- 61) Medrash Hagadol 10:15, 10:17
- 62) Shemos Raba 13:6
- 63) Shemos Raba 14:3
- 64) Shemos Raba 14:3, Tanna Dvei Eliyahu Rabba Ch. 7
- 65) Shemos 4:21-23, Shemos Raba 15:27
- 66) Lessons for day to day life from Haggadah Shel Pesach Eitz HaChaim by R. Chaim Mintz
- 67) Shemos 13:8
- 68) Pesachim 114b, Rashi and Ran there
- 69) Shemos 13:9, 16; Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 25:5
- 70) Ramban Shemos 12:2



Dig Deeper Resources for Advanced Learning

- 1) Yalkut Shimoni Shemos #182
- 2) Shemos Raba 51:7 and Eitz Yosef there
- 3) Emes L'Yaakov Shemos 8:8

HILCHOS PESACH

SOLD

①

Preparing for
Pesach

②

Bedikas
Chometz/
Biur Chometz

③

Pesach Food
and Minhagim

④

Other Pesach
Halachos

Preparing for Pesach



In a Nutshell

Pesach comes with many important mitzvos and *minhagim* (customs), chief among them being the prohibition against eating chometz (leavened grain) and the positive commandment to eat matzah (unleavened bread).

WHY DO WE CLEAN?

The Torah forbids us to see any chometz that we own. This *issur* (prohibition) is known as “*Ba'al yeroeh u'ba'al yimotzei*” (“not to see or find” [your chometz]). But we are also not allowed to eat even a small amount of chometz on Pesach, even by accident. Because of the serious nature of these prohibitions, the Rabbis gave us a mitzvah of Bedikas Chometz (checking for chometz) on the night before Pesach. In order to prepare for this mitzvah, and avoid the Torah’s prohibitions, we clean our homes and cars well beforehand.

HOW DO WE CLEAN?

To avoid the prohibition of owning chometz, we must find and remove all substantial pieces of chometz (pretzels, cookies, etc.). For this reason, we have to look in any area where chometz may be and clean away any large pieces. To avoid accidentally violating the prohibition of eating chometz, we have to clean away any chometz, including crumbs, that may end up in food. That’s why we clean cabinets and drawers where food was stored, countertops used in food preparation, our knapsacks, and we even shake out pockets where we hid our snacks. Bottom line is that we clean thoroughly anywhere we may have left chometz throughout the year, including where crumbs may find their way into our food.



Spotlight

We are especially careful with the prohibition of chometz on Pesach and perform all the mitzvos of this Yom Tov with love.

WHAT IS CHOMETZ?

Chometz is any food made from five specific grains that have been allowed to rise or ferment. These five grains are:

Wheat, Barley, Spelt, Oats, Rye

When these grains mix with water and sit for more than 18 minutes without being baked, they become chometz. This includes everyday foods like bread, pasta, cereal, cookies, and cake. Matzah is the big exception. It is made from these same grains, but it’s NOT chometz because it’s prepared very carefully and baked quickly before it can rise. However, machine-made Matzah made for year-round use may be chometz, so make sure to check the box carefully for a *hechsher* (symbol of Rabbinic supervision).

Starting from midday on the day before Pesach until after Pesach a Jew may not own, eat, or derive benefit from chometz.

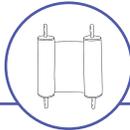
There are certain exceptions to this rule. Medicines are generally permissible to take on Pesach even if they contain chometz derivatives, although chometz-free alternatives are preferred if readily available. Products like toothpaste and makeup (especially lipstick/lip gloss) should be checked with a Rabbi.



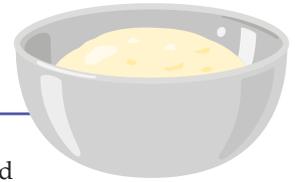
SELLING CHOMETZ TO A NON-JEW

Unlike previous generations, who simply used up their food, today we have so much that it’s usually impractical and wasteful to have to finish or throw away everything. Plus, many foods contain chometz in unexpected ways. For example, flour is a common ingredient in licorice, barley malt may appear in chocolates, wheat is used in soy sauce, and grain-based alcohol can show up in vanilla extract and vinegar, so it’s often hard to know if something might actually be chometz. Since you can’t own chometz during Pesach, the solution is selling them to a non-Jew for the duration of Pesach. Most rabbis handle the sale for their community members and should be asked to sell chometz on one’s behalf at least several days before Pesach.

You can sell chometz through Oorah by going to oorah.org/chometz.



Chometz = Yetzer Hara



The Torah prohibition to eat chometz on Pesach is unique. With every other forbidden mixture, like meat and milk, if less than one-sixtieth of the forbidden food gets mixed into a large pot, we can still eat it. But chometz is different. If even a tiny speck falls into a huge pot of food on Pesach, the entire mixture becomes forbidden.

What is so significant about chometz that Chazal saw fit to prohibit it more strictly than any other forbidden item that gets mixed in?

On a practical level, this may be because we are so used to eating chometz, and it is actually permitted during the rest of the year. Therefore, Chazal went to extra lengths to forbid even a drop of it on Pesach itself, to ensure extra caution on our part.

On a deeper level, one answer may lie in the spiritual significance of chometz. Physically, chometz means leavened grain, but spiritually, chometz represents the *yetzer hara*. When it comes to the *yetzer hara*, we have to be super careful - even with a tiny bit!

WHY is chometz compared to the *yetzer hara*? What exactly is the similarity?

Think about what chometz actually is: dough that has been left to rise. When flour and water sit together for more than eighteen minutes, the mixture begins to ferment and expand. The dough rises higher and higher, becoming something completely different from its original form. This process mirrors exactly what happens when the *yetzer hara* gets the better of us. At first, a desire might seem small and insignificant, but this is just one of the *yetzer hara's* tricks. The *yetzer hara* convinces us 'it's just this once', 'everyone does it', but once he has you hooked, it's a lot harder to get out of his grip. Once we give in once, the *yetzer hara* whispers, "See, that wasn't so bad!" and then he manages to convince us to sin more and more. Just like rising dough, if we let our desires sit and ferment, they grow. That one mean comment becomes a habit of speaking badly

about others. That one skipped assignment becomes a pattern of laziness. Like dough that keeps rising, unchecked desires expand until they become hard to control.

Here's another similarity between chometz and the *yetzer hara*. Look closely at a piece of challah or any leavened bread. What do you see? Air bubbles throughout the dough. The bread is literally puffed up with empty space. This perfectly represents another trick of the *yetzer hara*: it inflates temptations to make them appear much more exciting and appealing than they really are. The *yetzer hara* is a master of advertising. It makes that forbidden thing look incredibly attractive. It creates bubbles of illusion that don't reflect reality. But just like air bubbles in bread that are mostly empty space, the promises of the *yetzer hara* are hollow. It delivers fleeting pleasures at the price of eternity.

Additionally, chometz, with its expansiveness, represents *gaavah* - arrogance. Pride is one of the most dangerous character traits because it's the gateway to so many other sins. When we become puffed up with our own importance, we start thinking we're better than others. We might speak down to people, dismiss their feelings, or treat them with disrespect. We might think that rules don't apply to us because we're so special. An arrogant person also has a hard time submitting his will to the will of Hashem. After all, if they are so important, why should they listen to Hashem and adhere to the Torah?

This is why on Pesach we eat matzah - flat, humble bread that never had the chance to rise. Matzah reminds us to stay humble, to remember that everything we have comes from Hashem, and everyone deserves to be treated with dignity.

Cleaning our homes before Pesach is a big mitzvah, but it's more than just physical cleaning. We're performing a physical act that should inspire a spiritual one. The spiritual goal is removing the chometz from our hearts.

This Pesach, as you help your family search for chometz, think about what you're really searching for. Use this special time to reflect on where the *yetzer hara* has gained a foothold in your life, and commit to sweeping it out just as thoroughly as you sweep out those bread crumbs.

Can you think of more similarities between chometz and the *yetzer hara*?



TORAH CHALLENGE

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת הַמַּצּוֹת -
And you shall guard the matzos.¹

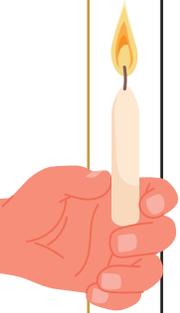
What else besides "matzos" does the word "המצות" remind you of?

Rashi comments here: Don't read it 'matzos', read it 'mitzvos'. How can we guard mitzvos in the same way that we guard matzos?

Bedikas Chometz/Biur Chometz

BEDIKAS CHOMETZ NIGHT

The night before Pesach, we do bedikas chometz, searching for any remaining chometz. Even after thoroughly cleaning your home, we want to make absolutely sure no chometz was overlooked. Using a flashlight (or traditionally a candle), you carefully check all the places where food might have ended up: your kitchen, dining room, car, even coat pockets if you sometimes carry snacks there. You don't need to check places where food could never end, like on a very high shelf or behind heavy furniture. Many families follow the custom of hiding ten small, wrapped pieces of bread around the house so that there will definitely be something to find. (Be careful to keep track of and find all of these!) The one leading the search recites the brachah ending with "al biur chometz."² The search commences, and the found pieces are carefully stored away until the next morning when they'll be burned.³



BIUR CHOMETZ

Biur chometz means destroying chometz, and the custom is to burn it on the morning before Pesach. Many communities organize bonfires where everyone brings their saved pieces from the bedikah to toss into the flames. You only need to burn a small amount, about one or two olive-sized pieces (like those ten pieces from your search). Don't try to burn large amounts, as it might not all burn completely. The rest of your unwanted chometz should go in the garbage beforehand and must be collected before midday. If you can't safely make a fire, you can crumble the chometz and flush it down the toilet (this method is used when erev Pesach falls on Shabbos).⁴ All chometz must be destroyed or sold before midday (chatzos) on Erev Pesach.⁵ After burning your chometz, you recite kol chamira for the second and final time, declaring any remaining chometz ownerless.⁶



KOL CHAMIRA

"Kol chamira" is a special declaration said twice: once after the bedikah and again after burning the chometz. This isn't a prayer; it's actually a legal statement where you declare that any chometz still in your possession that you don't know about becomes ownerless (*hefker*). Why do we need this? The rabbis worried that searching alone might miss some chometz, and you could accidentally violate the prohibition to possess chometz on Pesach. The words must be said in a language you understand because it only works when you understand what you're saying. However, it is traditionally said in Aramaic, as that is the language that was spoken in Babylonia when this wording was established.

GOING AWAY FOR PESACH

What if you're traveling for Pesach and won't be home the night before? You should perform bedikah on the last night you're home, but you don't recite the blessing. In difficult situations where checking your home is too challenging, you might be able to sell your home (or certain rooms) for Pesach to avoid the bedikah requirement, but this requires consulting a rabbi since it must be done correctly.



Corny Corner

Why did the Matzah look nervous?

Because it was under intense pressure not to rise.

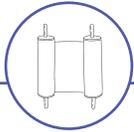


Tefillah Time

In the third paragraph of Shema, we say:

אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵהוֹיֹת לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים - "I am Hashem your G-d, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be a G-d unto you".

The concept of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* (Going out from Egypt) is also mentioned in *Birkas Hamazon*, Kiddush for Shabbos and Yom Tov, and numerous other times in tefillah throughout the year. This is because *Yetzias Mitzrayim* was a pivotal moment. If not for *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, we would have never become a nation and never received the Torah!



When Erev Pesach Falls on Shabbos

Halachic Balancing Act

When Erev Pesach falls on Shabbos, it creates a fascinating halachic challenge. How do you fulfill the mitzvah of eating three Shabbos meals that require bread, while getting your house chometz-free before Pesach, and also keeping all the halachos Shabbos? Let's explore how our sages figured out this complex puzzle.

The problem is actually quite simple to understand, even if the solutions are intricate. On a regular Erev Pesach, you perform bedikas chometz the night before and burn your chometz on the morning of Erev Pesach. You stop eating chometz at a specific time (four halachic hours into the day), and you make sure all chometz is destroyed or sold by midday. But what happens when Erev Pesach is Shabbos?

On Shabbos, we have a requirement to eat three meals with challah for Hamotzi. At the same time, there's a rabbinic prohibition against eating matzah on Erev Pesach because we want to eat the matzah at the seder with excitement and relish, not as something we've already been eating all day. And of course, we can't burn chometz or do extensive cleaning on Shabbos itself because these activities violate Shabbos. So how do we navigate these competing requirements?

The solution begins on Thursday night and Friday. Since you can't do bedikas chometz on Friday night (which would be the night before Erev Pesach) or burn chometz on Shabbos morning, you do both of these a day earlier. You should get rid of all chometz before Shabbos except for what you absolutely need for the three Shabbos meals.

Now comes the careful choreography of the Shabbos meals themselves. The general practice is to make Hamotzi on challah, but with some important precautions. It's recommended that each person have their own small roll or pita rather than cutting pieces from one large challah, since cutting produces more crumbs. Each person eats their challah over a napkin or tissue, then carefully rolls it up and brings it to the bathroom where the crumbs are deposited into the toilet and flushed away. The napkin should be discarded as well.

The rest of the meal is usually made Kosher L'Pesach (Kosher for Passover) because it's

difficult to clean pots and dishes properly without violating Shabbos. People take great care to keep any Pesach food or utensils from coming in contact with any crumbs.

The third meal (Shalosh Seudos) presents the biggest challenge. This meal is usually eaten in the afternoon, after the time when chometz becomes forbidden. But matzah is also not an option because of the prohibition against eating it on Erev Pesach. For those who don't eat *gebrokts* (products containing Kosher L'Pesach matzah meal), even matzah balls or Pesach cakes aren't options!

There are several solutions people use. One approach, preferred by the Gra⁷, is to daven early and eat a quick morning meal, bentch, take a half hour break, then wash again for a third meal. During this meal, people finish eating all their chometz before the deadline. The meal can then continue with Kosher L'Pesach foods for as long as desired.

Those who eat *gebrokts* items, like Pesach cake or matzah balls, should have some of those, but should be careful not to eat these mezonos items during the last three halachic hours of the day (which is about 2.5 hours before sunset, but please consult myzmanim.com for your area for the exact time) so they can arrive at the seder hungry and excited to eat the matzah.⁸ Otherwise, one can simply have meat, fish or fruit for Shalosh Seudos.

Before the deadline for getting rid of chometz, you must say Kol Chamira, relinquishing ownership of all your chometz.⁹

When Erev Pesach falls on Shabbos, it requires extra planning and careful attention to detail, but it beautifully demonstrates how halacha provides solutions even for the most complicated situations.

Can you think of another example of when two halachic components collide and how halacha deals with it?

Hint: Think Motzaei Shabbos Chanukah



Did You Know?

One is supposed to start studying the laws of the upcoming Yom Tov 30 days before. Although some say this applies to all holidays, others suggest that this idea applies specifically to the Yom Tov of Pesach because there are so many laws to learn!¹⁰

Pesach Food and Minhagim

KASHERING THE KITCHEN

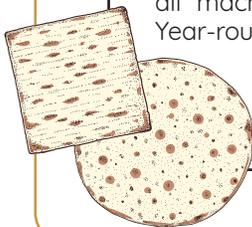
You can't use the same dishes, pots, and oven for Pesach that you used all year round. Some utensils can be "kashered", which means cleaned of chometz and purged of absorbed chometz flavor, either through boiling water or burning it out. Other utensils can't be kashered at all. The laws are complex, so consult a rabbi about what to kasher and how. That's why many families have a separate set of Pesach pots and dishes specifically for Pesach (except for ovens with self-clean settings and other large items that are easier to kasher). We also clean and cover surfaces like counters using corrugated plastic, aluminum foil, or shelf liner.

WATCH THE MATZAH!

Aside from it being forbidden to eat chometz on Pesach, there is a mitzvah to eat matzah. The matzah that we eat on Pesach has some special requirements and comes in various types.

Shemurah Matzah: There's a requirement for a Jew to actively watch matzah preparation to make sure it doesn't become chometz. Some say this supervision must start when the wheat is harvested (*misha'as ketzira*), while others allow it to start when grinding the flour or even when mixing it with water. Technically, only the matzah used at the seder needs this level of supervision, but most people are stringent with all Pesach matzah.¹¹

Hand vs. Machine Matzah: When machine-matzah was first invented, many rabbis had halachic concerns, though over time most issues were addressed through technology and innovation. There are still those who use only hand-made matzah for the whole Pesach for various reasons. Others eat hand-matzah for the seder but machine-matzah the rest of Pesach.¹² Important warning: Not all machine matzah is kosher for Pesach! Year-round machine matzah is often chometz and should be sold with your other chometz. Always check the packages carefully.



MINHAGIM & STRINGENCIES

Since even a drop of chometz is strictly forbidden, many communities adopted extra stringencies.



Kitnios: The Ashkenazic custom (over a thousand years old!) is not to eat grains, legumes, or plants that resemble the five forbidden grains, including beans, corn, soy, and rice. This means that we won't eat beans or peanuts on Pesach. Many Sephardic communities don't have this custom.

Gebrochts: Some communities (generally Chasidic) don't eat matzah or matzah-meal soaked in liquid, due to concern that some flour wasn't mixed properly and might become chometz when wet. Those observing this custom will not eat kneidlach or cakes made from matzah-meal.

Mishing: Many people don't eat at others' homes on Pesach (except immediate relatives) since different families have different customs and standards.

EREV PESACH EATING RULES

The prohibition against eating chometz begins mid-morning Erev Pesach. Check myzmanim.com for the exact time in your area.

It's also forbidden to eat any matzah on Erev Pesach starting in the morning.¹³ Some avoid eating too much matzah on the first day of Pesach (outside Israel), so the second seder will be exciting too. Others don't eat matzah starting from Rosh Chodesh Nissan. (This only applies to regular matzah – not egg-matzah or matzah-meal products.)¹⁴

Little kids who don't yet understand Pesach can eat matzah, but once they understand a bit, they shouldn't eat matzah before Pesach so that they'll ask at the seder what's special about tonight?¹⁵

We should also avoid eating large amounts of any food late on Erev Pesach, as we want to eat the matzah at the seder with a good appetite!¹⁶



Ask The Rabbi

with Rabbi Chaim Mintz
(Ask The Rabbi Book2 pg.106)

WHAT'S THE RUSH?!

Q Me say in the Haggadah that we must proclaim that we eat matzah because our ancestors were rushed out of Egypt with no time to let their dough rise. What is so significant about this rush, and why is this a focal point of the Haggadah?

A This rush was indeed an integral part of the redemption. As long as we were under the jurisdiction of Pharaoh and the influence of the Egyptians, it was not possible to be true servants of Hashem. The moment we left Egypt, we became servants of Hashem and His Chosen Nation — the very purpose of creation. This is why Hashem took us out with great haste. Waiting even just for their dough to rise would have delayed their departure — causing them to become servants of Hashem that much later — a terrible tragedy. Eating matzah thus reminds us of the importance of every moment we have to serve Hashem, the very purpose of the redemption

In fact, the magnitude of a delay of even seconds manifests itself in the very matzah itself. The difference between dough rising and becoming chametz and not rising and remaining matzah is mere seconds. This is an important concept to think about while eating matzah on Pesach: the value of every second and the great importance of using the wonderful opportunity it affords us to serve Hashem. Although a second in this world seems so insignificant, we see the sanctity and power to make a spiritual explosion, which can create a special closeness to Hashem for eternity.

The rush also shows our great sacrifice, being ready to leave without any hesitation. Leaving Egypt and traveling into the desert without provisions was a great sacrifice by the Jewish people, and we continue to reap the benefits

of this great merit throughout the generations. Indeed, the prophet Yirmiyahu shared Hashem's message (Yirmiyah 2:2): "כֹּה אָמַר ה' זְכַרְתִּי לָךְ חֶסֶד לֹא נְעוּרֶיךָ אֲהַבְתָּ כְּלוּלְתֶיךָ לְכַתֵּךְ אַחֲרַי בְּמִדְבָּר בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא זָרוּעָה" — So says Hashem, I remember for you the kindness of your youth, the love of your marriage, your following me in the Wilderness, into a barren land."

Although, in the previous verses, Yirmiyahu had just chastised the Jewish people for their wrongdoings, he was making it clear that as much as they deserved reproof and punishment, Hashem still remembers their devotion and loyalty to Him. Millions of people — young and old alike — followed Hashem blindly into the desert, displaying total trust in Him. We were fully confident that if Hashem told us to go, He was going to take care of us and provide for all our needs. Hashem continues to remember this fondly, and appeals to us to live up to this greatness.

This is another important lesson to internalize on this special holiday: Some people mistakenly think that they must devote all their time and energy to making a living, and they therefore cannot keep Shabbos or devote enough time to pray and study Torah and each day. However, since Hashem is the One Who provides us with our livelihood, we must trust that He can and will take care of us. We must put in the proper effort to make a living, but not at the expense of doing His will. Just as we put our trust in Hashem and He took care of all our needs when we left Egypt, we must continue to trust that He will provide for us in every situation.

IN SHORT: Hashem took us out in a rush because even a delay of seconds in being servants of Hashem would have been tragic. Leaving without provisions was also a source of great, lasting merit for the Jewish people, and reminds us to trust that Hashem will take care of us in every situation.

Other Pesach Halachos

THE SEDER

On the first night of Pesach (and outside Eretz Yisrael, on the second night too,) Jewish families around the world conduct a seder. Seder literally means 'order' because the seder is split into 14 steps, beginning with making Kiddush. We drink four cups of wine at different stages of the seder, each representing a different stage of redemption. We eat matzah and maror (bitter herbs to remind us of the bitter slavery), have a full Yom Tov meal, and sing songs of praise to Hashem. The fifth step of the seder is Maggid, when we tell over the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim, enumerating all the miracles Hashem did for us. This is an explicit mitzvah from the Torah¹⁷, and the more detail we go into, the better we fulfill this mitzvah. The seder is experiential by design to help us connect to the miracles of Yetzias Mitzrayim and feel Hashem's love for us.

SEFIRAS HAOMER

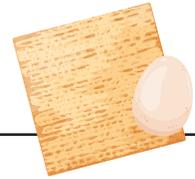
On the second night of Pesach, we begin counting towards the Yom Tov of Shavuot, which celebrates Hashem giving us the Torah. The counting is called "Sefiras Haomer" because on the second day of Pesach, a barley offering called an Omer was brought in the Beis Hamikdash. After the Omer was brought, we could begin eating grain that took root before the 16th of Nissan. One should count while standing, to show respect for the mitzvah.¹⁸ First, we say the brachah:

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצוותיו וצונו על ספירת העומר

Then we say the number of the day. From day seven onward, we also include how many full weeks and how many extra days of the Omer have passed. We count the Omer at night. If you forget, count during the day without a brachah. If you miss an entire day, you continue counting the rest, but without a brachah.¹⁹



EIRUV TAVSHILIN



On Yom Tov, we may only cook for the requirements of Yom Tov. So, how do we cook for a Shabbos that immediately follows Yom Tov? We make an *eiruv tavshilin*, which means taking 1 cooked and 1 baked food item, typically a hard-boiled egg, and a piece of matzah, make the brachah on *eiruv tavshilin* (see a siddur for precise instructions), and set it aside for Shabbos. This enables you to cook on Yom Tov for Shabbos.²⁰

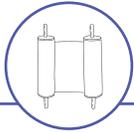
CHOMETZ SHE'OVAR ALAV HAPESACH

What if a Jew accidentally, or G-d forbid, purposely, owned chometz on Pesach? The Rabbis enacted a halacha to discourage this mistake, called "*chometz she'ovar alav hapesach*" - chometz that was owned by a Jew (and not sold) over Pesach. This chometz cannot be eaten or benefited from even after Pesach. Due to this halacha, many are careful not to buy chometz from Jewish-owned stores after Pesach that do not legitimately sell their chometz before Pesach until the old inventory has likely been replaced with newly purchased products. If it is hard to find out a store's ownership or if their chometz was sold properly, one is not obligated to take a long time to make this determination.²¹ If it is known that the store is definitely owned by non-Jews, this problem does not apply.



Sefira Reminders

WhatsApp "Subscribe"
to 732.348.3474 to get daily
Sefiras Ha'omer reminders
from Oorah!



The Pesach & Shavuos Connection

Picture this: The Jewish people have just escaped slavery in Mitzrayim. After centuries of backbreaking labor, they are finally free! They can do whatever they want. Right? Not exactly. The story of Pesach doesn't end with freedom from Pharaoh. In fact, leaving Mitzrayim was just the beginning of something far greater.

When Hashem appeared to Moshe at the burning bush when the Jewish people were still deeply entrenched in slavery, He said to him *“בְּהוֹצִיאֲךָ אֶת־הָעָם מִמִּצְרַיִם תַּעֲבֹדוּן אֹתִי”* - *“הָאֱלֹהִים עַל הַהַר הַזֶּה”* - And when you have freed the people from Egypt, you shall worship G-d on this mountain.²² As the Chinuch explains, this teaches us that Yetzias Mitzrayim, as incredible as it was, was really just the pathway to something even more important. The Torah is the *ikkar*, the essential thing, for the Jewish nation. The spiritual freedom and greatness that Torah gives us far outweighs even the physical freedom of leaving Egypt.

This brings us to a powerful question: What does it really mean to be free? Our Sages teach us *“Al tickrei churus elah cheirus,”* don't read “engraving” but “freedom.”²³ They are referring to the engraving on the *luchos*, the tablets of the Ten Commandments. True freedom isn't about being able to do as you please. It's about having a higher purpose engraved into your very being – and being in control of your life, consciously choosing to do what is right (what Hashem said, instead of being enslaved by your natural desires and surroundings). Another teaching tells us *“Ein lecho ben chorin eloh mi sheosek baTorah,”* there is no truly free person except one who engages in Torah. We weren't truly free just because we were no longer under Pharaoh's rule. Only those who keep the Torah are genuinely free.

Why is this? Think about it: If we had left Mitzrayim just to hang out and do whatever we pleased, would that really be freedom? Or would we just become slaves to our own desires and impulses? Hashem didn't redeem us so we could indulge in physical pleasures and go about our lives aimlessly. He chose us as His *“am hanivchar”*, His chosen nation, to accept the Torah and become a “Light unto

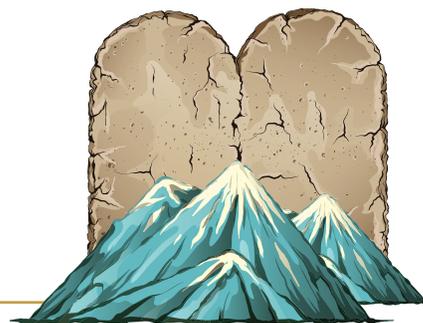
the Nations.” We have a mission, a purpose that gives our freedom meaning.

This critically important lesson of Pesach truly comes into focus through the mitzvah of *Sefiras HaOmer*, when we connect the dots from Pesach to Shavuos. The very next day after the first day of Pesach, when we celebrate leaving Mitzrayim, we begin counting toward receiving the Torah. The Chinuch²⁴ explains that this shows us that *Kaballas HaTorah* (Receiving the Torah) is even more important than the physical freedom of Yetzias Mitzrayim. By counting each day, we demonstrate how much we yearn for the Torah and appreciate this incredible gift.

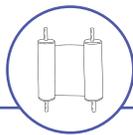
There is a beautiful Medrash that takes us back to that historic moment.²⁵ When Moshe told the Jewish people they would soon be freed from Mitzrayim, he also shared amazing news: fifty days later, they would receive the Torah and gain the special role of serving Hashem. The Jews were so excited that they could hardly wait! They eagerly counted the days in anticipation. That's why we count too. We want to show that we share that same excitement about the Torah.

But counting does something else as well. Just as our ancestors had to prepare themselves for fifty days to be worthy of receiving the Torah, we too must prepare ourselves before Shavuos and make ourselves worthy of continuing the incredible chain that began at Har Sinai.²⁶

So as we celebrate Pesach and begin counting towards Shavuos, remember: We're not just commemorating an escape from slavery. We're celebrating the beginning of a journey toward our true purpose. Physical freedom was the first step, but spiritual freedom through Torah is the destination. Each day we count brings us closer to understanding what it really means to be free.



Zoniac Zone



To Sum It All Up...

Pesach requires us to remove all chometz from our homes and our possessions, which is why we clean carefully, sell leftover chometz, and check for it on the night of bedikas chometz. The next morning, we perform biur chometz, burning a small amount and declaring any unknown chometz ownerless through the formula of *kol chamira*. Throughout Pesach, we

may not own, eat, or benefit from chometz, and many families follow additional minhagim such as avoiding *kitnios* or *gebrochts*. Our kitchens must also be kashered or outfitted with special Pesach utensils to ensure that no absorbed chometz mixes with our food. These halachos ensure our homes are fully prepared for Pesach.



Seder Far From Home

David parked on a quiet Brooklyn street, careful to choose a spot that wasn't too close to Rabbi Chaim Mintz's home. He wanted to attend the family seder, but he also wanted to be able to drive home afterward, something his observant hosts wouldn't approve of on the holiday.

As David stepped out of his car, tucking his keys into his pocket, a young Jewish man approached from the stream of people walking home from synagogue.

"Are you by any chance Jewish?" the man asked warmly.

"Yes, I am," David replied.

"Great. Would you like to join my family for our seder?"

"That's so nice of you, but I already have an invitation tonight," David explained.

"Oh, good. Where are you going?"

"To Rabbi Mintz."

The young man grinned. "Well, enjoy. Good Yom Tov."

Later, when David entered the

bustling Mintz home, the same young man greeted him again. David laughed. "I could've accepted your invitation and ended up in the same place!"

The seder was transformative. Jews from all backgrounds gathered around the table, engaging in lively discussions and spirited singing. This was before the organization Oorah existed, but the Mintz family's passionate approach to outreach was already in full bloom.

At 3:30 AM, as guests prepared to leave, David mentioned he lived in Bensonhurst. Rabbi Mintz immediately insisted that his sons escort David on the 45-minute walk home.

David panicked. His car was just blocks away. "I absolutely won't hear of it!" he protested. "It would take your sons twice that time to get back and forth!"

Despite David's protests, Rabbi Mintz put on his coat, and several sons followed suit. The entire group headed out

into the night. David continued objecting as they walked closer to where his car was parked.

The younger Mintz whispered to his father, "David's car is parked a block from here. If we walk him home, he'll have to walk all the way back."

David began protesting again, saying he wanted to walk alone to reflect on the evening's lessons.

"David, you win," Rabbi Mintz conceded. "Have a safe walk home."

David walked away until the family was out of sight, then turned back to his car and drove home.

David didn't learn enough that night to keep his hand off the ignition. But he did learn something profound: *V'ohavta l'reiecha k'mocha*—love your neighbor as yourself—is more than words. It's five men willing to walk to Bensonhurst and back in the early morning hours to ensure a fellow Jew doesn't walk alone.



We are the Chosen

We've been around since creation of man.
Others came after, but with me it began.
They tried to persuade us, but I know the truth.
And you'll always find rain bright on my face,
cause I am a Jew.

And we are the chosen, my friends.
We are the chosen by Hashem.
The Torah's inside us.
The mitzvahs unite us.
Each to his precious, cause we are the chosen
of the world.

No matter where, from all walks of life,
We're all part of this nation and so proud to be.
And we hold on tight,
when faced with a challenge, our nation fights
through.
With hearts so, so proud, we said loud to the
crowd, I am a Jew.

We are the chosen, my friends.
We are the chosen by Hashem.
The Torah's inside us.
The mitzvahs unite us.
Each to his precious, cause we are the chosen.

We are the chosen, my friends.
We are the chosen by Hashem.
The Torah's inside us.
The mitzvahs unite us.
Each to his precious, cause we
are the champions.



Zoniac Challenge

Capture the Chometz!

Circle every item in the list below that is or may contain chometz.

- | | |
|------------------|-------------|
| 1 Scrambled Eggs | 7 Coffee |
| 2 Oatmeal | 8 Honey |
| 3 Chips | 9 Licorice |
| 4 Chocolate | 10 Rye Pita |
| 5 Cheerios | 11 Pasta |
| 6 Whiskey | 12 Nuts |



ZONIAK DILEMMA

One More Bite?

Dalia stared at the half-eaten granola bar on her little brother's desk. It was 10 AM on Erev Pesach, just a short while before when one had to stop eating chometz.

"Jayden, you need to throw that out right now," Dalia said urgently.

Her six-year-old brother looked up from his video game. "But I'm not done with it yet. I'm still hungry."

"It's almost 10:20 AM. We can't eat any chometz after that time."

"Mom said I could finish my snack!" Jayden protested, taking another bite.

Dalia's family had started becoming more observant this year, and her mom was trying hard but still learning. When Dalia had explained that you couldn't eat chometz after a certain time in the morning and couldn't even own chometz after chatzos (near midday) on Erev Pesach, her mom had nodded but didn't seem to realize how seriously she needed to take it. This morning, she'd told Jayden he could have one last snack before Pesach started "tonight."

But Pesach restrictions didn't start tonight; they started much earlier. Dalia learned this clearly in school.

What should she do? Grab the granola bar from Jayden and throw it out? He'd definitely cry and tell Mom, who would be upset that Dalia was "being too strict" and "ruining Jayden's day." Her mom was already stressed and exhausted from all the preparations she had done.

But if she let Jayden keep eating after the last time to eat chometz, or if they didn't get rid of all their chometz before chatzos, their family would be violating some real halachos, not just stringencies or customs. And Dalia would have to sit through the seder knowing they'd broken some of Pesach's main laws.

She could try explaining to her mom again, but there was barely any time, and previous attempts had only made her mom defensive.

What should Dalia do?



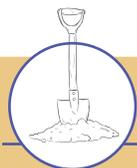
Daily Challenge

Take a minute to think about how your life might be different if Hashem had not taken us out of Egypt.



Sources

- 1) Shemos 12:17
- 2) Shulchan Aruch 432:1
- 3) Shulchan Aruch 434:1
- 4) Shulchan Aruch 445
- 5) Shulchan Aruch 443
- 6) Shulchan Aruch 434:2-3
- 7) Mishnah Berurah 444:8
- 8) Shulchan Aruch 471 and Mishna Berurah 444:8
- 9) Shulchan Aruch 444:6 and Mishnah Berurah there
- 10) Shulchan Aruch 429 and Mishna Berura there
- 11) Kaf Hachaim 453:60, Mishnah Berurah 453:25
- 12) Shulchan Aruch 453:4, Mishnah Berurah there
- 13) Shulchan Aruch 471
- 14) Shulchan Aruch 471, Mishnah Berurah there
- 15) Mishnah Berurah 471:13
- 16) Shulchan Aruch 471:1
- 17) Shemos 13:8
- 18) Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 489:1
- 19) Shulchan Aruch and Mishnah Berurah 489
- 20) Shulchan Aruch and Mishna Berurah 527
- 21) Rabbi Chaim Mintz, as quoted in Sefer Zikeinecha Yomru
- 22) Shemos 3:12
- 23) Eruvin 54a
- 24) Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah #306
- 25) The Shibbolei Haleket #236
- 26) Maharal in Tiferes Yisroel Chapter 25



Dig Deeper *Resources for Advanced Learning*

- 1) Pharmaceutical Products on Pesach:
star-k.org/articles/articles/seasonal/4614/pesach-cosmetics-and-personal-care/
- 2) To explore chometz/non-chometz food items in greater depth: oukosher.org/passover/food-items/
- 3) In-depth discussion on machine versus hand-made matzos:
ou.org/news/the_great_matzah_controversy_should_matzah_be_made_by_hand_or_machine/

PESACH SEDER

❶

What is
a Pesach
Seder?

❷

Why is the Seder
so important?

❸

How do we
do the Seder?



What is a Pesach Seder?



In a Nutshell

The Pesach Seder is a special mitzvah-filled meal held on the first two nights of Pesach (and in Israel, just the first night) where Jewish families around the world retell and relive our Exodus from Mitzrayim (Egypt) through symbols, foods, questions and hands on experiences.

A NIGHT OF SYMBOLISM

Seder night is like no other night on the Jewish calendar. It's rich and beautiful - but to the untrained eye, it seems a little strange. We dip vegetables into salt water, lean to the left while drinking wine, hold up broken matzah and eat bitter herbs. Every unusual action is there for the purpose of helping us relive the slavery and exodus, as Chazal teach us we are obligated to feel as if we personally were redeemed from Mitzrayim. We taste the tears of hardship with the salt water, feel the bitterness of slavery with the maror. We dress regally and recline on pillows at a richly set table. Many reenact the scene of leaving Mitzrayim by carrying the matzah over their shoulder (there are a few variations to this custom). Through tasting, acting, and storytelling, we take our place in the line of Jews who came out of Egypt and we walk with them toward freedom.

A NIGHT OF ORDER

The word "seder" means "order," and the night follows a fixed structure of fourteen steps. These steps, called *simanim*, guide us through the seder, making the flow of the night easy to follow. Many families sing their names at the start of the Seder (you'll notice they even rhyme!) This order isn't random; it's designed so that each part builds on the one before it, slowly leading us from remembering slavery to experiencing freedom and deep gratitude to Hashem.



Spotlight

The Pesach Seder is how we transmit our history and our emunah to our children.²

A NIGHT OF CONTRAST

A major theme of the Seder, as highlighted by the questions of the Mah Nishtana³, is contrasting slavery and freedom. Throughout the night, we are reminded of both - often at the same time. Before we begin telling the story, we break the middle matzah and hold up the broken piece, declaring "*ha lachma anya*, this is the bread of affliction." The stark contrast between the beautifully set table, ready for celebration, and the reminder of poverty in our hands is intentional.

The more clearly we remember the pain, the more deeply we can appreciate the redemption.⁴ Matzah itself is both the "poor man's bread" we ate as slaves and the symbol of our freedom that happened so quickly our dough didn't have time to rise. The same idea appears when we dip vegetables into salt water. Dipping was once something only wealthy people did, but salt water reminds us of tears. In one bite, we experience both suffering and freedom. Thus, the Seder helps us feel real gratitude for what Hashem did for us.



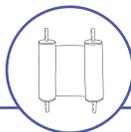
A NIGHT OF PROTECTION

Seder night is called Leil Shimurim, a night of special Divine safekeeping. We experienced this protection on the very first seder night in Mitzrayim, when Hashem protected the Jews both from the Egyptians who saw the Jews slaughtering their sheep gods, and from the plague of the firstborn and the angels of death and destruction that were rampant. This same protection showed itself many times throughout Jewish history on this date, such as when Daniel was saved in the lion's den and when Haman was hanged. Because of this, many have the custom to say only the first paragraph of Shema before going to bed, without the usual additional prayers for protection.⁶



TORAH CHALLENGE

We call the vegetable we dip in saltwater at the beginning of the Seder *karpas* (כרפס) not a commonly used Hebrew word. Splitting the word into two parts, can you rearrange the first three letters and use the gematria of the last letter to draw a connection to the story we tell in the Haggadah?⁵



Mitzvos of the Night

In the times of the Bais Hamikdash (the Holy Temple in Jerusalem), the Pesach seder revolved around the bringing and eating of the korban Pesach (the special Passover sacrifice). Today, in exile, the seder we conduct is like a simulation of the real thing. Without the Bais Hamikdash, some of the mitzvos of the night can only be done in a limited way. Some of the practices we have are *zecher l'mikdash*, remembrances of the original Pesach seder conducted in its full glory.

SIPPUR YETZIAS MITZRAYIM: TELLING THE STORY

The primary mitzvah of the Seder is telling the story of how Hashem took us out of Egypt, an event so foundational to our identity as a nation we have a mitzvah to remember it every day. Seder night, the anniversary of our redemption, is set aside for telling the story at length; as the Haggadah teaches, the more we speak about it, the more praiseworthy it is.

We tell the story specifically in a question-and-answer format, because we learn best when we ask questions. In fact, the Seder's rituals are designed specifically in a way that encourages the children to wonder what's going on and ask questions. One of the night's highlights is when the participants, starting from the youngest, ask the Mah Nishtana, the four questions about the idiosyncrasies of the night.

We tell over the story in a way that speaks to all types of Jews, regardless of their background or learning style, as represented by the four sons referenced in the Haggadah: the wise, the wicked, the simple and the one who does not know to ask. Each is taught the story of Pesach in a way that's tailor made for him.

WHERE'S THE LAMB?

The Torah says we must have the korban Pesach, matzah and maror before us to properly fulfill the mitzvah of *sippur yetzias Mitzrayim*. Today, it is forbidden to eat the korban Pesach because we don't have the Bais Hamikdash. Instead, we remember it by talking about it, by having a *zeroa* (a bit of roasted meat or bone) on the *kearah* (Seder plate) and by eating the afikomen.

MATZAH

We eat flat, crispy poor man's bread to remember how the Jews left Egypt in a rush, before their dough had time

to rise. It also reminds us that we were once slaves in Egypt and ate matzah to survive.⁷

We stack three matzos on top of each other referencing the three groups of Jews: Kohen, Levi, Yisroel.

MAROR

We eat bitter herbs (most commonly horseradish or romaine lettuce) to remind us of the hard work and suffering we experienced in Egypt.⁸ The Torah mitzvah to eat maror is to eat it with the korban Pesach. Today, in the absence of the korban Pesach, eating maror is a Rabbinic mitzvah. Though not the most bitter, romaine lettuce is considered the best reminder of Mitzrayim; like lettuce that starts out sweet but becomes bitter if left in the ground too long, our exile and slavery in Mitzrayim started out okay but became increasingly torturous as it continued.⁹

FOUR CUPS OF WINE

Each person drinks four cups of wine or grape juice throughout the night. This reminds us of the *arba lashonos shel geulah* – four languages of redemption¹⁰. **וְהוֹצֵאתִי וְהַצֵּלְתִּי וְגַאֲלֵתִי וְלִקְחָתִי.** There is a specific time to drink each one as indicated in the Haggadah.¹¹

DIPPING AND LEANING

Twice during the Seder, we dip our food: once a vegetable into salt water, and once maror into charoses (a thick mixture of nuts, apples, wine and spices). We lean on our left side when we eat and drink to show that we are like royalty tonight.¹²

HALLEL

We sing special songs thanking and praising Hashem for taking us out of Mitzrayim and for choosing us to be His special nation. We thank Him for giving us the Torah and mitzvos, our lifesaving guide in life.¹³

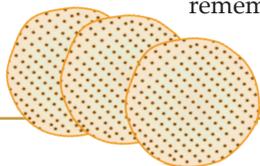


Would the Seder have the same impact if we only told the story, without the foods and actions?



Did You Know?

Many families take time at the Seder to share and reflect on their personal family history of oppression and survival, whether under Soviet Communism, Nazi Europe or other anti-Semitic regimes.



Why is the Seder so important?

OUR ORIGIN

Yetzias Mitzrayim is the moment Hashem chose us, for Him. It's when we stopped being slaves to Pharaoh and became servants of Hashem with the Torah given to us as a gift and life-map. The exodus is when we became a people with a purpose and a destiny. The Seder gives every Jew a chance to reconnect to that clarity.

HASHEM IS HERE

Through the plagues He brought on the Egyptians and the miracles He performed when He took the Jewish nation out of Mitzrayim, Hashem showed us with stunning clarity His power to control the world, His attention to every detail of every action we do, His perfect justice and – because everything transpired exactly as Moshe said it would – the truth of prophecy. Remembering these wondrous events is so central to our mitzvah observance because it's the basis of our beliefs. What's more, the Ramban famously teaches, these major outright miracles make us realize the Divine Hand orchestrating all our lives, even the seemingly natural.¹⁴ The Seder reminds us that Hashem is as involved now as He was then. If He could make the ten plagues happen – punishing the Egyptians fairly and precisely, perfectly suited to their crimes; if He could split the sea, bending the forces of nature to His will to protect our nation from annihilation – surely He directs our lives down to the last detail, with perfect knowledge and understanding of what we do and what we need, with nothing out of His reach.



Freed Forever

There was once a simple pauper who lived hand to mouth, with no skills or education to secure him a gainful means of employment. One day, through an unexpected turn of events, he came into a great fortune. With his new wealth, he didn't just live comfortably – he got himself a good education. Every year on the anniversary of his windfall, he would throw a large party, telling and retelling the story of how his life changed to his children and many guests. Eventually, the wheel of fortune turned and he lost all his money. Now a pauper once again, he would still celebrate every year, albeit more modestly, on the anniversary of his coming into wealth. When people asked why he was celebrating if he was poor again, he answered, "Before, I was uneducated and ignorant. Even if I am poor now, I'll never go back to being the same person I once was. What I gained with my riches can never be taken away."

The Seder teaches us the same idea. Why celebrate our Exodus from Egypt when we are back in exile again? Because we are not the same as before the Egypt experience: we received the Torah, the ultimate purpose of leaving Mitzrayim. Even without freedom in its fullest form, we remain a transformed nation, shaped forever by that redemption.



Tefillah Time

וְהִיא שְׁעֵמֶדָה לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וְלָנוּ.
שְׁלֹא אֶחָד בְּלֶבֶד עָמַד עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ,
אֶלָּא שְׁבָכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר עוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ,
וְהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְצִילֵנוּ מֵיָדָם.

After we recount the promise Hashem made to our forefather Avraham, that his descendants would be redeemed from slavery in a foreign land, we raise our cup of wine and recite *Vehi She'amda*. With this powerful and moving affirmation, we express our belief in the miracle of Jewish survival against all odds. Regardless of how intensely our enemies hate us and how far they'll go to take us down, Hashem's promise comes through for us time and time again.

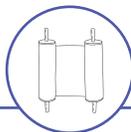


Corny Corner

Why do we have a Haggadah at Passover?

So we can Seder right words.





The Heart of Pesach

The primary function of the Seder is to develop our *emunah* and transmit our traditions to our children. At the time of Yetzias Mitzrayim, the Jewish people witnessed firsthand Hashem's complete mastery over nature and history. Seeing the miracles of the Ten Plagues and the splitting of the sea with our own eyes, our belief in Hashem and in His servant Moshe reached new heights.¹⁵

Today, we don't live in a world of open miracles; it's easy to slip into the pretense of the world running on its own. By recalling Yetzias Mitzrayim every day, and discussing it at length on Seder night, we remind ourselves that Hashem is still guiding and protecting us even when His presence is hidden in the guise of nature. The mitzvah of *sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* trains us to recognize Hashem's ongoing *hashgacha pratis* (detailed involvement) in our lives.¹⁶

This *emunah* is meant to be transmitted. The Torah says, "And you shall tell your child on that day..."¹⁷ placing the Seder at the heart of *mesorah*, the passing of faith from one generation to the next. The Rambam writes that the main mitzvah of the Seder is to explain the story to the children. The Haggadah given us by Chazal provides the structure, flow, and guidance on how to tell the story properly.

It's a springboard for us to deepen our own *emunah* and to pass it on to our children.

Maggid opens by recalling our nation's humble and even embarrassing beginnings, when our ancestors were idol worshippers. Starting this way helps us understand who we would be without Hashem's intervention. It sharpens our appreciation for what we received: not only freedom from slavery, but a new identity and purpose.

Were it not for the Exodus, we might still be slaves, our lives controlled – if not by a human slave master, then by our impulses and desires. True freedom comes with inner direction, guided by higher wisdom and ideals.¹⁸ After Yetzias Mitzrayim, Torah values became part of who we are as Jews. Even in the darkest circumstances, a Jew connected to Torah remains free.

At the end of the night, after the story has been told and the miracles revisited, we sing Hallel. Song follows naturally, gratitude for the redemption we spoke about overtaking us. We raise our cups and our voices, thanking Hashem for our past, recognizing His presence in our present, and davening for the future redemption. That is the heart of the Pesach Seder—strengthening our *emunah* that Hashem runs the world and ensuring that this belief lives on in our children.¹⁹

What does freedom look like in your own life right now?



Ask The Rabbi

with Rabbi Chaim Mintz

(Excerpted from Ask The Rabbi Book 2 pg.260)

Q On each of the holidays, we recite in the prayers and kiddush that the holiday is "zeicher li'yetzias Mitzrayim" - a memorial of the Exodus. In what way are the holidays other than Pesach a memorial for leaving Egypt?

A Our redemption from Egypt is the root of Judaism, and even receiving the Torah was an outcome of the Exodus. The very first words Hashem uttered on Har Sinai were, "I am Hashem Who took you out of Egypt." When Hashem redeemed us from bondage to Pharaoh, it was to become His servants, obligated to serve Him.

The Exodus from Egypt refers to more than the physical freedom from our bondage in the land of Egypt. Mitzrayim is also an expression of "meitzar, boundaries." The Jews in Egypt

were also slaves to the Egyptian culture, having been overcome by the impure ideals of the country that hosted them for more than two centuries. Even after they physically left Egypt, their souls were still tainted by Egypt's depravity and impurity. They had to spend the next forty-nine days removing "Mitzrayim" from their psyche, step by step, growing spiritually until they were ready to accept Hashem's holy Torah.

In this context, Yetzias Mitzrayim is in fact the focal point of all the festivals, since it refers to the entire process of leaving the impurities of Egypt to become Hashem's holy nation. This culminated with Hashem giving us His Torah (Shavuot), and His taking care of us in the desert (Sukkot), making all the holidays "zeicher li'yetzias Mitzrayim" - a memorial of the exodus from the impurities of Egypt and becoming Hashem's holy nation.

How do we do the Seder?

THE KEARAH (SEDER PLATE)

We place six foods in a circle form on our table at the start of the seder.

- 1 **Zeroah:** A roasted piece of meat or bone represents the Pascal lamb we would eat during the seder in the times of the Bais Hamikdash. Since we cannot bring the korban Pesach today, we don't actually eat this at the seder. We look forward to bringing the korban Pesach once again with the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash.
- 2 **Beitzah:** A roasted egg symbolizes the Chagiga offering brought on Pesach in the times of the Bais Hamikdash; an egg is a sign of mourning.
- 3 **Maror:** Maror and chazeres are both bitter herbs, which are typically either romaine lettuce or

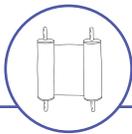


horseradish. Maror is what we call the one eaten alone by the step "Maror."

- 4 **Charoses:** A thick mix of apples or dates, nuts, and wine that resembles the cement we used for our slave labor. Sticks of cinnamon or ginger are added to resemble the straw we had to gather to produce bricks. (Exact recipes vary.)
- 5 **Karpas:** A vegetable, often celery or potato.
- 6 **Chazeres:** Also a bitter herb, typically either romaine lettuce or horseradish. Chazeres is the one we eat with matzah during the step "Korech."

A bowl of saltwater is placed on the table near the kearah, though some place it on the kearah.²⁷

Those who follow the Arizal (as shown) put the three matzahs underneath the kearah.



The 14 Steps of the Seder



Kadesh – Kiddush (Blessing Over Wine)

We start the seder by filling a cup of wine or grape juice. Everyone recites Kiddush and drinks the first of four cups.²⁰ The men and some women lean to the left (similar to the way that royalty used to dine) because on the night of the seder, we celebrate becoming G-d's chosen people! Ideally, one should drink the full cup of wine. If this is not possible, then at least most of the cup. (One should drink at least 3.3 fluid ounces for each cup, and 4.42 fluid ounces for the first cup if the Seder falls out on a Friday night.)

Urchatz – Wash Hands (No Blessing)

We wash our hands, pouring water on each hand twice just like we do before bread, but don't say a blessing. This procedure follows the tradition observed when eating wet fruits and vegetables while the Temple still stood in the Holy Land.²¹ Another reason could be to arouse the children's curiosity which encourages them to ask questions.²²

Karpas – Vegetable Dipped in Salt Water

We dip a small piece of vegetable into salt water, make a blessing "borei pri ha'adamah" and eat it. We have in mind the maror that we will eat later on. The salt water is like the tears we shed in Egypt. It's a combination of dipping - royalty, and saltwater - slavery.

Yachatz – Break the Middle Matzah

We break the middle of the three matzos in two, return the smaller piece to the Seder plate and hide the larger half for the Afikoman 'dessert'. The matzah is "bread of poverty," the food the Jews hurriedly ate when working in Egypt. Unsure when their next meal would come, they would eat some and put away the rest.

Maggid – Telling the Story

Maggid is the heart of the Seder, the time to tell the Pesach story at length. This is a tale passed down for generations, to old and young alike, reminding everyone of G-d's miracles. We begin by remembering how the Jews became

slaves in Egypt. We then recount the ten plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, and the Egyptians' ultimate defeat. The Haggadah teaches that in every generation, a person must see themselves as if they personally left Egypt. The second cup of wine is filled after the recitation of the opening paragraph of Maggid, Ha Lachma Anya. Later on, a bit of wine is poured out of the cup when we speak about each of the ten plagues, and the cups should be refilled to the top. At the end of the entire retelling, we raise and drink this second cup in gratitude for our everlasting redemption.



Rachtzah – Wash Hands With a Blessing

We wash our hands again, this time for eating matzah, and we make a blessing 'al netilas yadayim' like we usually do before eating matzah or bread.

Motzi Matzah – Blessing and Eating Matzah

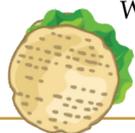
The person leading the Seder says two blessings now, first the bracha of Hamotzi for the matzah and one on the mitzvah of eating the matzah, and everyone eats a piece while leaning on the left side. This is one of the big mitzvos of the night! Eating matzah reminds us of our freedom and escape from Egypt. One should ideally eat a quarter of the top matzah and a quarter of the middle matzah, equaling half a matzah. (amounts given are based on round shemurah matzah) If this is not possible, one can eat a piece of the top and a piece of the bottom, equaling only a quarter of a matzah. If eating with a family and dividing the matzah amongst many, give a small piece of both the top and middle matzah to everyone and then supplement the rest with the other matzah, either a half or a quarter per person. The matzah should be eaten fairly quickly, ideally in 2 minutes. If this is not possible, it can be eaten in 4 minutes, or up to 9 minutes. Men eat while leaning on the left side.

Maror – Bitter Herbs

We make a bracha of "Al achilas maror" and eat a kezayis of maror which is approximately 1 large romaine lettuce leaf. Some add grounded up, bitter horseradish onto the leaves to remind us of the torturous slavery we endured in Egypt. We dip the herbs into the charoses which represent the cement the Jews used to build their bricks. The maror should ideally be eaten in 2 minutes. If this is not possible, it can be eaten in 4 minutes or up to 9 minutes. We do not lean while eating the maror since it is a symbol of slavery, not freedom.²³

Korech – The Hillel Sandwich

We make a small 'sandwich' by combining matzah and maror and eating them together to remember the way the great sage Hillel said



it should be done based on the pasuk על מצות ומרורים יאכלוהו. Take a half of the bottom matzah (or a quarter if that's too much), and a big leaf of lettuce, or some horseradish. Ideally, this should be eaten quickly, as mentioned before. This is eaten while leaning on the left side.²⁴

Shulchan Orech – The Festive Meal

We now enjoy a festive meal to celebrate our salvation and being part of the Jewish nation! During the meal, some serve a hard-boiled egg. This is a zecher, a remembrance, for the Korban Chagiga which was also brought on Pesach during the times of the Beis Hamikdash. The egg is a sign of mourning because we are sad we don't have the Beis Hamikdash around now. The egg serves as a reminder for us to daven for the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash. It's no coincidence that the night of the seder is always the same day of the week as Tisha Be'av.²⁵

Tzafun – Eating the Afikoman

The piece of matzah that was hidden by Yachatz is found (usually by the children, who may hold it for ransom!) and the same amount as by Motzi Matzah is eaten, reclining to the left. The afikoman is a remembrance of the korban Pesach. No more food can be eaten after the afikoman, which should ideally be eaten before chatzos (midnight).



Barech – Grace After Meals

We pour the third cup of wine and then recite the Blessings After Meals to thank the One Above. Afterward, we drink the third cup of wine. We fill our fourth cup, pouring an additional cup in the center of the table, the Cup of Elijah or *kos shel Eliyahu*. It's said that Eliyahu Hanavi visits our homes at this point. As the one who will announce Mashiach's imminent arrival, the cup we pour for him represents the final redemption, for which we pray fervently.

Hallel – Songs of Praise

We raise our voices in song, thanking and praising Hashem for giving us our freedom and so much blessing in our lives. Then we drink the fourth and last cup of wine. Be sure to drink at least 3.3 ounces for one of the last two cups so that you can make the *bracha acharona*.²⁶

Nirtzah – Looking Forward

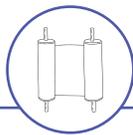
We end the seder by singing traditional songs and expressing our hope to celebrate next year in Jerusalem with the ultimate redemption.

לשנה הבאה בירושלים!!

May we rejoice next year in Yerushalayim!

How does the structure of the Seder turn a story from the past into something personal?

Zoniac Zone



Pesach Seder on a Silver Platter

The Pesach Seder is a mitzvah-filled night dedicated to reliving the story of how Hashem took the Jewish people out of slavery in Egypt and made us a free nation. Guided by the Haggadah, we follow a structured order of actions, foods, questions, and stories that engage our minds and senses.

We remember pain and celebrate freedom, thank Hashem for His miracles, and pass our story from one generation to the next. More than a retelling of history, the Seder invites every person at the table to experience the Exodus personally and to recognize how it shapes who we are as Jews.



A Seat at the Seder Table

It had been a long, long time since Debbie attended a real seder. As a girl and a teenager, she would attend her grandparents' seder, and for that one night a year, she mingled with the religious side of her family. It was like a little vacation for her, a brief stop in a spiritual place that was wonderful to visit but impossible to live in.

She knew she could never be like her older cousins, juggling their babies and children and jobs, making Shabbos every week and dressing in skirts and wigs. And yet, the appeal of their lifestyle undeniably tugged at her heart.

It all ended when her mother remarried a non-Jewish man. The pain to her grandparents was too great. The family split like an iceberg breaking off a glacier, and Debbie was left standing on the break-away piece, floating ever farther away from home-base. As the years went by, Debbie's memories of her grandparents' seder and her clan of cousins receded into the distant recesses of her mind.

Until now.

It was the first day of Pesach, and Debbie stood in TheZone's massive, airy shul among hundreds of other Jews at the conclusion of davening. Some were like her – strangers in a strange land. Others were clearly natives: men whose hats and yarmulkas sat comfortably on their heads, women with babies perched expertly on their hips, teenagers chatting

amiably with their friends and little kids running among the adults with a happy, carefree sense of belonging.

On the previous night, she sat at the first real seder she had attended since the old days. In between the years, there had been semblances of a seder here and there. Some years, she had joined with friends to drink four glasses of wine – or two, or five – eat matzah-ball soup and brisket and enjoy each other's company.

But last night, that connection to her Jewish roots came suddenly alive. This was a seder that in some ways surpassed those of her childhood, because here, it was more than a mood, an atmosphere and a tradition. The words of the Exodus became vivid and relevant. People spoke about their own personal stories of redemption. Hashem's involvement in every twist and turn of life seemed suddenly so obvious, as if everyone there could just open their eyes and see for themselves the plain truth of millions of miracles surrounding them. Six hundred people had spent the night together, bearing witness to what Debbie now understood to be the birth of her people.

For Debbie, it was as if a circuit were closed after dangling in abeyance for so many years; finally, at the ripe old age of 34, her spiritual electricity was able to flow. Her heart felt something. Her soul felt something. She couldn't even believe she was thinking of that word – soul.



Ten Makos

The water is blood, all did shout
Frogs were jumping in and out
Bugs were crawling everywhere
Rrr, wild animals were a scare

Then came Dever by
and by All the farm animals died
Sh'chin, boils and pimples too
On the Egyptians, not the Jews

Chorus:

Ten Makos, Makos ten The Egyptians
were punished Again and again

Borod was fire and hail
In Egypt a loud wail
Grasshoppers flying quick
Then the darkness very thick

Makas B'choros was the last
Paroh ran to Moshe fast
He was afraid to die, so...
He said, "Let those Jews all go!"

Chorus



Zoniac Challenge

Do You Know One?

Complete numbering this list from 2 - 13 to match the song at the end of the Haggadah: Who Knows One?

Use each number only once. We've already done 1 for you.

	Imahos (Matriarchs)
	Days Until a Bris
	Middos (Attributes) of G-d
	Commandments
1	is Hashem
	Stars in Yosef's Dream ★★
	Books of the Torah
	Luchos
	Days of the Week
	Months of Pregnancy
	Avos (Patriarchs)
	Shevatim (Tribes)
	Orders of Mishnah



ZONIAc DILEMMA

Levi was excited for the Seder this year. He recently learned so much about the Haggadah and the whole story of Yetziyas Mitzrayim (going out of Egypt). He was looking forward to sharing some of what he knew.

The Seder started in the familiar, warm way. When they came to the Mah Nishtana, his little brother sang it with his goofy smile and everyone laughed.

Then, so quickly, they were zipping through Maggid. Levi noticed they were skipping paragraphs, not out of disrespect – the family joke was that the holiday was called Passover because you pass over the boring parts. When the leader reached the part about the Rabbis staying up til morning, Levi leaned forward, ready to tell his family what he learned in yeshiva. But no one paused. They were already getting out the frogs they used as props for the Ten Plagues.



You know this matters, Levi thought. You know why that paragraph is there. Say something, your parents will be so proud! But I don't want to be "that guy" making things intense.

What should Levi do?



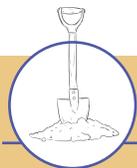
Daily Challenge

Taking inspiration from the open miracles of Yetziyas Mitzrayim, notice one 'miracle' Hashem is doing for you right now, today.



Sources

- 1) Otzer Hatefilos
- 2) Minchas Chinuch Mitzvah #21 and HaSeder Ha'Aruch ch. 58
- 3) Yalkut Meam Loez
- 4) Haggadas Oros Peleh (from the author of Peleh Yoetz); Ritva on the Haggadah, Ha Lachma Anya
- 5) Rashi on the Pesachim 114a
- 6) Remah 481:2
- 7) Rambam Hilchos CHametz Umatzah 7:5 and Meiri Pesachim 116a
- 8) Pesachim 116b
- 9) Pesachim 39a and Rashi and Meiri there
- 10) Shemos 6:6-7
- 11) Shulchan 473:7, Mishnah Berurah 473:69
- 12) Shulchan Aruch 472:2
- 13) Chinuch Mitzvah #21
- 14) Ramban, Bo 13:16
- 15) Shemos 14:31
- 16) Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 21
- 17) Shemos 13:8
- 18) Avos 6:2
- 19) Sefer Hachinuch Mitzvah 21
- 20) Shulchan Aruch 473:2
- 21) Shulchan Aruch 473:6
- 22) Taz 473:7
- 23) Shulchan Aruch 475:1
- 24) Ibid
- 25) Mishnah Berurah 473:22
- 26) Shulchan Aruch 474:1
- 27) Remah, Shulchan Aruch 473:4



Dig Deeper *Resources for Advanced Learning*

- 1) Haggadah Shel Pesach Mesivta
- 2) Me'am Lo'ez Parshas Bo and Seder Haggadah there