



## Pesach Seder 2020

### “Empower Your Seder”

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה

Today, my objective is not going to be just to give you a breakdown of the Pesach Seder. My objective today is to enable you to empower your Pesach Seder this year. With the fulfillment of this objective using the proper tools, Bezrat Hashem, we will be able to appreciate this Seder more than any other year.

We start off in the Haggadah by saying: **“חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים” one must see himself as if he left Egypt.**

Usually, we have many people over for Seder, and this year unfortunately it looks like every household will have their own individual Pesach Seder alone. However, although we may feel like being alone is unfortunate, this particular year, while being quarantined in our homes for Pesach, we can fulfill this objective even further. This year, with the quarantine in place, perhaps we could slightly feel a little more that we are “leaving” Mitzrayim. Perhaps being locked at home while anticipating the day of freedom, the day when this quarantine will be over, we can slightly, but not so much entirely, compare our times to the bondage of Egypt with our Exodus from bondage to follow. This year, we have a chance to genuinely fulfill this obligation of seeing ourselves as “leaving” Egypt.

One major component of seeing oneself as leaving Egypt is properly doing the Pesach Seder and to experience the right amount of enjoyment from it. If this year we fulfill every Seder obligation, say and feel every word of the Haggadah, then we might actually experience this Exodus and feeling of emancipation like we never did previously. Our goal is to make this year’s Seder exciting and exhilarating for our families.

It is fascinating that this year since every household will have their own individual Seder, there will be more Afikomans in the history of Pesach Seders. There will be no sharing of the Afikoman with relatives because we are not congregating this year and the Afikomans will be numerous. Nevertheless, since we are required to eat it every year, we ask what exactly does the Afikoman represent? The Afikoman represents **“צפוף”**, the days of Mashiach and the coming of the end of time.

Rav Chaim Brisk asks a question, why is this night (Leil Ha’Seder) different from every other night (the Rav asks his own version of the **“Ma Nishtana”** question)? Further the Rav asks, we essentially mention and fulfill the obligation of remembering Yetziat Mitzrayim every time we say Shemah, both in the morning and in the evening, why is it necessary to come together on this Pesach night, if we are fulfilling the obligation of remembering Mitzrayim every other day/night? What makes this Pesach night better? We start off the Haggadah with **קדש** and in our Pesach Kiddush we discuss and mention Yetziat Mitzrayim, it says **“Zecher Leyitziat Mitzrayim,”** so why go any further and toil with the rest of the Haggadah? Why can’t we stop there, didn’t we fulfill the mitzvah at this point?!

Additionally, what is required of the obligation of **“והגדת לבנך”**, the obligation to relay the miracle of the Exodus of Egypt to our children on this particular night?

Rav Chaim Brisk answers using three necessary points that translate into obligations we must partake in order to make this year’s Seder powerful by fulfilling these obligations the right way.

1. Rabban Gamliel used to say anyone who does not have Pesach, Matzah and Marror in front of them when they are speaking about Yetziat Mitzrayim will not fulfill those particular mitzvot. If someone doesn’t have these three food items in their presence, or if someone doesn’t eat/drink enough (appropriate amounts of Matzah; drinking the right amounts of wine for the four cups) there is no way that person properly fulfilled these particular mitzvot.
2. Men and Women have to discuss, read and understand the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. As the Ramban says **“לספר נסים ונפלאות”** **speaking of hashem**

**wonders**” – you have to say it aloud. The Gemarah says that the obligation of “והגדת לבנך” is to educate and inform one’s children about what happened in Mitzrayim. The Gemarah asks what if this person does not have any children? Then, the man is required to educate and inform his wife about the story. The Gemarah asks further what if the man does not have a wife? The Gemarah answers that the man has to go to lengths and say the story to himself! The man needs to educate himself about the great miracle and experience. Why? To remember what G-d did for us in Egypt. This is important because it enables the Jewish nation to build and never fall in despair or quit. Remembering what Hashem did for us in Egypt enables a Jew to believe and properly understand that G-d is capable of doing anything and everything. This is essentially what the obligation of Pesach is all about! The story is not about “זכר ליציאת מצרים,” mentioning, verbalizing or reading the Haggadah. The essential obligation this year is having you, your wife, and your children speak out their own Seder and version of the Haggadah. The uniqueness of this year’s Pesach and the ability to experience such a tangible holiday is what makes it the most powerful and the most impressionable Pesach. Today, with our current crisis, we, as a Jewish nation both collectively and individually, are living out our own Haggadah. Our own historical version of Yetziat Mitzrayim is in the making.

3. “מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח”: The Jewish people are not afraid of their unrighteous history and don’t look for ways to hide their history. We, as a Jewish nation, have been downtrodden before and we have sometimes not been loyal to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. The Jews are not scared to reveal their unpleasant and unfortunate history. Even in the Haggadah we start off first by saying, when we start talking about the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, “מתחילה עובדי עבודה זרה היו אבותינו.” We are not scared, to mention front and center, that our forefathers, from the beginning of time, were idol worshippers. We don’t hide it in a footnote in the Haggadah. We start the beginning of our story with our poor qualities and actions, and always end with our praiseworthy actions and righteousness. Because the story is so much greater when you are willing to say it all. That is our job. Don’t fool yourself and your children. If you don’t tell them all the details of our story, when your children hear about crisis and moments of distress like we are in today, they will not understand. Your children will ask themselves when did this ever happen? This is all so new to me? By hiding the unpleasant parts of our Jewish history, you are fooling your children to think that their father was always rich, G-d always split the sea for the Jews and gave them clouds of glory “ענני הכבוד,” and that Jews were always on top of the world. This would be a misrepresentation of how we started and how we grew so much from where we first began. Moreover, your child will not know how to deal with an obstacle, a brick that has been thrown in his/her direction, and your child might look at it and say that G-d gave up on the Jews. But if you relay the full story to your children, your children will remember that this brick (obstacle) is not a wall, it is just an obstacle we need to overcome together and use it as another opportunity to learn and grow from it like the Jews had done in the past.

Going further, it says in the Haggadah: “**Lefichach Chayaveem** [we are obligated] **Lehodot, Lehallel, Leshavech, Lefaer**”

When we take the Kiddush cup and we say aloud, “והיא שעמדה **Vehi Sheamda**” – “**this that stood with us.**” What is “this” or “Vehi” referring to? The numerical value (Gematriya) of “Vehi” is 22 which corresponds to the 22 letters of the Alef Beit. It is the Torah that keeps us standing tall (“**Sheamda**”)! It is the symbolism of the wine when we say in kiddush, “כוס ישועות **אשא**,” which translates into “**If I lift up my wine and call out to G-d,**” the quintessential experience we relive and feel every year.

The Chinuch writes based on Halacha, that one is not allowed to break a bone of the **Korban Pesach**. The “Chacham,” the pious person mentioned in the Haggadah, asks a question. What is the reason we have to go through all these actions, like leaning, eating, and preventing any broken bones on the Korban Pesach? I understand that we have to tell over the story of Egypt, but why do we have to be physically active? Why can’t we just visualize the matzah instead of eating it?

The Chacham further asks: What are all these “**חוקים ומשפטים**”? What are all these “**Laws and Testimonies**”? I understand that we have to mention Yetziat Mitzrayim on Pesach, but why are we also required to remember all year round, like when we say Kiddush and put on Tefillin? Are we mentally incapable of remember one event that occurred?

The Chinuch answers citing a very powerful reason: Everything you do, to ensure a lasting impression on you and your family, you must act it out. The Chinuch responds to the “**Chacham**”, “**Veata Beni**,” – “**and you my son,**” that your laziness has prompted you to question concepts and ideals that require your physical action. This person is called a “**Chacham**” and not a “**Tzadik**” because this person is not righteous and is too pious for his own good. A “**Tzadik**” would not ask, the Tzadik just listens and does what is required of him.

“**אין מפטירין אחר הפסח**”: It says by the Afikoman one must make sure to eat enough so that after you are done eating the Afikoman, you have nothing left to eat. The “**Chacham**” is puzzled by saying that “I asked you about the reason for all our actions like sitting at the Seder table, and your response is to give me more rules?”

What is our answer to the “**Chacham**”? “**Da Ki Hadam Nifal Kefi PAolatav**” which translates into “**You are what your actions are.**” Going on further: “ולבו כל מחשבותיו תמיד אחר מעשיו זה הוא עושה” which translates into “**Our actions define our thoughts.**”

Some may think that their thoughts are responsible for causing their actions. In reality, it is the opposite; your actions define and identify your thoughts. When one puts on Tefillin or gives Tzedakah, those actions define the person and make the person who they really are. **“You are what your actions are.”** We tell the **“Chacham”** that is the reason we promote these physical actions and motivate the Jewish nation to continuously do and be enlightened by these physical actions.

We tell the Chacham further, by doing these physical actions we are guaranteeing a lasting impression on the person taking that action and we need to realize that this impression needs to be eternal. You need to make sure to eat the Afikomen and nothing else thereafter, because we want you to continue to have that lasting impression the Afikoman had on you and to preserve its spiritual effects. **“You are what you eat.”** This experience will be long lasting and eternal if you do every physical action as required. Every motion is done correctly. Every person leans correctly. Every person eats the correct and sufficient amounts of Matzah and Marror. By doing them perfectly and internalizing them during this year’s Seder, you can ensure that these actions will be long lasting and have a lasting impression on you and your family.

Lastly, the Zohar writes, Hashem brings all His angels down to Earth on Pesach night, more than any other time, even more than during the Neilah prayer on Yom Kippur. The Zohar says that G-d himself comes down, as it says, **“Bichvodo BeAtzmoh”**– we start off by saying this in Aramaic in the Haggadah. Hashem wants to come down to everyone’s home, not just to your parents’ and grandparents’ homes. Hakadosh Baruch Hu comes down himself. This is why this year after this Pesach, with Hashem’s Divine Presence, we are going to see great things unravel.

In conclusion, one must remember our **“Ma Nishtana”** question and our journey through **“מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח”** and use our current stumbling block as an opportunity to experience elevation in our lives. Let us leave this lasting impression on all our lives and our children’s lives this year through the proper telling of the Story of Yetziat Mitzrayim.

Thank you. Hag Sameach

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