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VAYIKRA: WHAT DOES HASHEM DESIRE FROM US?

TZAV: ARE YOU PROUD TO BE A YID?



FROM THE SHIURIM OF

HARAV YISROEL BROG שליט"א

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Yamim tovim are tremendous opportunities for us. There's an *inyan* to be *meichen* (prepare) for *Yom Tov* before it comes. To give a *marshal*, let's say a person lives in Yehupitsville. We had a *talmid* whose parents decided they didn't want to live among people. So they drove into the desert. They drove for a couple of hours. Then the wife said stop, and she said to her husband, "Here is where we shall live." And they started to build. They first lived in tents. They had twins, twin boys. They became what you call homesteaders, pioneers. They built everything from scratch. They dug wells. They lived out there. The husband was a real city boy from Brooklyn. His wife was more from the other side of the country. They lived out in the Boondocks. Of course, they were hoping that eventually droves of people would follow them out there and they'd make a community of Jewish nomads who live in nomads' land. They were trying to talk it up about how there's so much interest and people are emailing them and texting them. They want people to come for Shabbos. Now it's a few years they're there, maybe four years, and they're still living out in the boonies by themselves.

I asked the husband, "Where do you get stuff from? Do you make everything from the land? If you have to wait for an apple, it will take you fifty years. If you see an apple, what do you do?" He said, "Once in a blue moon, we travel a couple of hundred miles into a town, and we stock up." I said to the guy, "I hope you have a very organized list before you go into that town because if you forget one thing, you can't go back." The *hachanah* they have to make for that trip, to prepare for things they have to buy, is unbelievable. It's *mamash* their lifeline.

GETTING BOGGED DOWN IN THE MINUTIA

You should know that's how it is for *yamim tovim*. If you don't prepare, you know what happens? It's like when you walk down the aisles in a store, some things grab you, but you know how it is. You go into the store and forget everything you need. You don't have the list. A person has to prepare himself to know what he is "shopping" for with each *Yom Tov*. What am I trying to take out from the *Yom Tov*?

One of the big difficulties with enabling us to properly prepare for Pesach, is that there are so many important details to arrange for *Yom Tov*, like cleaning your house, turning your house over from *chametz* to a Pesach house, getting matzos, buying food, *basar vedagim vechol matamim*. So the *metzius* is that your focus becomes the minutia, the little things. Then, the whole purpose of the shopping trip gets lost and forgotten on the way. It's like *lehavdil* the guy is so busy figuring out how much gas he needs for the trip and preparing everything else he's going to need, that he forgets why he's going there in the first place. A person has to prepare beforehand: What do I want to get out of the *Yom Tov*?

Another thing. You're sitting by the *seder* and you want to know what you should be involved in. Where should your mind be? Most people's minds are in

the empty wasteland of their brain. That means they're maybe thinking about their kids. "Can my daughter say the *mah nishtanah* in Russian or in Polish? Or could she say it in Hebrew? Could she say it in Yiddish? Will the kids spill wine on their clothes, or not spill anything on their clothes? Will there be decorum? Will they fall asleep at the *sefer*? Will they not fall asleep at the *sefer*? Will they say, 'Excuse me, Ta, I have to go to the washroom,' and disappear for a couple of hours." People get tired at the *sefer*. And before they know it, the *sefer* is over, and they missed it. So how do you prepare?

Then you get a father who likes to be on top of the *matzav*. What does he do? He gets his *haggadah*. Nowadays, they have new *haggados* every year. Competition between *Megillas Esther* and *Haggadah shel Pesach* is fierce. Every year you could think those are the most authored and written about *sefarim* in the world. The fact is he starts looking in the *sefer*: Do I get this? Do I say this? Then his kid comes to the *sefer*, and his kid has a fat book with pictures. My *haggadah*. Yossi's *haggadah* or Chanale's *haggadah*, and he wants his own *divrei Torah*. He doesn't want to hear your *divrei Torah*. It's very unpleasant to try to get a word in. His wife says, "Shhh! Let Yossi talk. Yossi, what do you have to say about this?" The father says that today he has the obligation of a father to be *mechanech* the kids. We all have seen this and experienced this.

Some people prepare games, nuts, candies, and other things but, *nebach*, they miss the boat! If you miss the boat, there's no second boat. People get disappointed. Even if you look at a *sefer* or a *haggadah* for *divrei Torah*, you might find a lot of interesting *divrei Torah*, but many of them have absolutely no *shaychus*. They are cute *divrei Torah*. Don't get me wrong. Why do you make *kiddush* before *karpas*? It's a good question. Why is *karpas* called *karpas*? Oh, that is a great *she'elah*. Or why are matzos round? Or כל דכפין ייתי ויכיל, you've got a great *chassidische vort* with a great *mashal* on that. It has nothing to do with Pesach, and you missed the boat, my friend.

It's so important to prepare and to focus and not be dependent on anybody else. If you're able to share with others, fine. But a lot of times, you're a son-in-law or a son, and your father has a program that he's presenting to the *olam* and he doesn't want to hear what you have to say. You're not leading the *sefer*. You can't have two cooks spoil the broth. What do you do then? How do you accept it? What do you work on? If your father has a *mehalech*, then it's a little easier. If he doesn't have a *mehalech*, and he's just scatterbrained and shooting buckshots all over the table of random *vorts*, he might wonder why he gets the question: "Ta, when are we eating?" Or "Ma, I'm getting hungry."

EMUNAH AND HODA'AH

The way to do it is to come prepared, to understand what you're trying to get from Pesach.

The first thing you have to know is that Pesach is a fundamental Yom Tov. What makes it so fundamental? Why is Pesach more fundamental than any other Yom Tov?

In addition to the fact that Pesach is the birth of Klal Yisrael, the answer to this question is - because the foundation of all of our existence in the world is our relationship to Hashem and our belief in Hashem. To the degree that I believe in Hashem, to that degree I have a *shaychus* to *emunah*. Knowing about

emunah but not feeling any *emunah* is like getting a hard drive from somebody. Somebody gave me a gift of a little machine with hundreds of *shuirim* from Rav Shimshon Pincus. I remember holding this little thing in my hand and thinking, "Wow. There are hundreds and hundreds of hours of *shuirim* on this thing. It's amazing." I started to listen, but you have to have time to listen. You figure, okay, I've got it on the machine at least.

That's how most people have *emunah*. They've got it in the *sefer*. They know about *emunah*. They know what the subject is. It lists all the subject headings of each *shmooze*, but that doesn't mean you have *emunah*. Even hearing a *shmooze* doesn't mean you have it. Sometimes people say to me, "Why do you always talk about *emunah* and *bitachon*?" I tell them, "You know why? I'm going to stop the day you get some. As soon as you get some *emunah*, I'm going to stop." They say, "So why do you speak about it?" I say, "Because I'm working on it." Usually, when you get some you want more. You see what it is and you want as much as you can get. מי שיש לו מנה רוצה מאתים.

So the first thing you have to figure out is, how does Pesach fit into the *emunah* picture? That's the first thing about Pesach.

The second foundation of Pesach is *hoda'ah* to Hashem.

Do you remember the famous Ramban (Shemos 13:16), probably the most famous Ramban in the whole *chumash*?¹ You probably heard it from me many times. What is the foremost desire, the *chefetz*, of Hashem *batachtonim*, from people? The reason why I'm asking you this question in front of thousands of people is because the *gemara* says you're only *omed* on *divrei Torah* by first stumbling in them. If you first stumble in it, then you remember it (Gittin 43a).² For things that I was asked a question, I remember them until today. Those questions that my *rebbe* (Rav Meir HaLevi Soloveichik, zt"l) asked me that I had no idea what to answer, I never forgot those answers ever again. For all the other things that he didn't ask me a question, do you know what happened? Some I remember, and some I don't.

Listen to this one-line sentence. When you go back home, you ask this to your mother and then try it on your father for size. Try it on your brothers for size. Try it on some of your friends. The Ramban (*ibid*) says: אין לעיין בתחונים חפץ. What is Hashem's desire *betachtonim*? What is the single most desire that Hashem wants from people down below? If you're *yeshivish*, you might say to learn Torah. If you're *chassidish*, you might say to do *avodas Hashem behislahavus*. If you're a porcupine, you might say something else.

Let me tell you what the Ramban says and don't ever forget this: כי אם, the only thing, שנאמין בו. The first thing is נאמין בו, we should believe in Him. That's the first thing. Hashem's only desire from you is for you to believe in Him. That's number one. The second thing Hashem wants from you is שבראנו, that we should be *modeh*, we should offer up *hoda'ah* to Hashem, to acknowledge, that He created us. So step one, is we should have *emunah* in Hashem. Learning Torah

¹ ולפיכך אמרו (אבות פ"ב מ"א) הוי זהיר במצוה קלה כבחמורה שכלן חמורות ונחביבות מאד, שבכל שעה אדם מודה בהן לאלהיו, וכונת כל המצוות שנאמין באלהיהם ונודה אליו שהוא בראנו, והיא כונת היצירה, שאין לנו טעם אחר ביצירה הראשונה, ואין אל עליון חפץ בתחונים מלבד שידע האדם ויודה לאלהיו שבראו, וכונת רוממות הקול בתפלות וכונת בתי הפנסיות וזכות תפלת הרבים, זהו שיהיה לבני אדם מקום יתקבצו ויודו לאל שבראם והמציאם ויפרסמו זה ויאמרו לפניו ברוותיק אנטוני, וזו כונתם במה שאמרו ז"ל (ירושלמי תענית פ"ב ה"א) "ויקראו אל אלהים בתזקה" (יונה ג ח), מכאן אתה למד שתפלה צריכה קול, חציפה נצח לבישא (עי' ערוך ערך חצף).

² הדר אוקים רבה בר רב הונא אמורא עליה, ודרש: "והמקשלה הזאת תחת ידך" – אין אדם עומד על דברי תורה, אלא אם כן נקשל בהן.

is a way to get *emunah*. That's why תלמוד תורה כנגד כולם *Avodas Hashem* is a way to connect to Hashem. Step two is *hoda'ah*. *Emunah* and *hoda'ah*. Don't forget it.

The first thing you have to know is Pesach is the lesson of *emunah*. Now, what is the point of *emunah*? If somebody asks you what *emunah* is, you have to know that *emunah* is the belief in what Hashem represents in the world, what Hashem's capabilities are. All the *osos* and all the *mofsim* that Hashem brought in Mitzrayim were in order to publicize to the world that Hashem is the sole *shalit*, ruler. It says it in the *passuk*.

Now, if somebody asks you if there is anything unique about the ten *makkos*, most of you will think that the ten *makkos* don't really connect the dots. You know what they are? A hodgepodge of things that only Hashem could think of. If I would think of punishing somebody, I don't think I would decide to turn his water into blood. Maybe wild animals. But Hashem came up with ideas here. What's this all about?

PROVING HASHEM'S ABSOLUTE CONTROL

So listen to what the Steipler in his *sefer Chayei Olam* (פרק טו) says.³ The ten *makkos* was actually a demonstration that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the absolute ruler and controller of every single aspect of the world. He asks what is *dam* a proof for? In *dam*, the world saw that Hashem is the absolute controller and ruler over *mayim*. And so too by *krias Yam Suf*. The water stood like walls. Hashem showed that He is the absolute. The next *makkah* was *tzefardeiyya*. You know what *tzefardeiyya* was for? Hashem showed he was the controller of the life that's found in the *mayim*. Then you have *makkas arov*. You know what *arov* was for? That Hashem is the ruler over the animals of the world. That's what Hashem showed. We're going in this order because I'm trying to show you the order so your mind could digest this. *Mayim*, animals in the *mayim*, animals on the *aretz* and then in *makkas arbeh* we saw that Hakadosh Baruch Hu was the controller of the flying *minim*. He was able to produce so many locusts that they destroyed Mitzrayim, and not one of them came into Goshen. They also saw in *makkas arbeh* that Hashem was the *shalit* on the *brios* that were flying, and that Hashem is a *shalit* on the *ruach*, on the winds because it says that the locusts came with a strong easterly wind. When Hashem finally got rid of them from Mitzrayim, He also did it with a strong wind. Then you have *makkas dever*, Hashem is the absolute ruler over the life of *ba'alei chaim*, and Hashem decides which animals should live and which animals should die. In *makkos bechoros* they saw that Hashem was the *shalit* over the lives of people. In the *makkah* of *kinin*, lice, Hashem showed that the only reason why land was land was because Hashem chose it to be land and when Hashem decided that it should turn into lice, the land became lice for a couple of *tefachim*. He is

³ מכת דם ראו שהשם יתברך שליט על המים. וכן בקריעת ים סוף שמימי הים נצבו כמו נד, והמים להם חומה מימינם ומשמאלם (שמות י"ד כ"ב). במכות צפרדעים ראו שהשם יתברך שליט על בריות שבמים (דכתיב (שמות ז' כ"ח) ושרץ היאור צפרדעים). במכת ערוב ראו שהשם יתברך שליט על חיות הארץ. במכת ארבה ראו שהשם יתברך שליט על בריות המעופפים, שכולם עושים רצונו יתברך שמו וגזירתו, נגזר שיבאו בהמוניהם להשחית במצרים, באו, ולגושן מקום מושב בני ישראל, לא העיז אף אחד לבוא, את הגבול שמרו כולם, כי כן פקד בורא עולם יתברך שמו. במכת ארבה מלבד שראו שהקדוש ברוך הוא שליט על הבריות המעופפות, ראו גם כן שהשם יתברך שליט על הרוח, כי הארבה בא ברוח קדים עזה (שמות י' ג'), וכשהעיתר משה רבינו להסיר, נעתק והלך על ידי רוח ים חזק מאוד, נמבוא בפרשה (שמות י' ט'). במכת דבר ראו שהשם יתברך שליט על חי הבעלי חיים, נגזר על מקנה מצרים שימותו, מתו, וממקנה בני ישראל לא מת אחד (שמות ט"ז). במכת בכורות ראו שהשם יתברך שליט על חיי האדם, בכורות מצרים מתו כולם בשעה אחת כמו שהתרה משה רבינו עליו השלום בשם ה', ובכורי ישראל חיו. במכת כנים ראו שהשם יתברך שליט על האדמה והבריות המתהווים ממנה, כי עפר הארץ נהפך והיה לכנים, ופגעו רק במצרים ולא בישראל (שמות ח' י"ב). במכת שחין ראו שבריאות האדם ותחלואותיו הכל ביד השם יתברך, נגזר שילקו בשחין מצרים ולקו, ולבני ישראל לא פגע השחין, כי הכל בגזרתו יתברך שמו. במכות חושן ראו שהבורא יתברך הוא המאיר לארץ, בגזרתו יתברך שמו המאוות מאירי, ובגזרתו יתברך שמו לא יאירו, וימש חשך (שמות י' כ"א). במכת ברד שהיו שלש דברים, מטר, ברד, ואש מתלקחת, ותהליך אש ארצה (שמות י"ג). ראו שהשם יתברך הוא השולח עננים להמטיר על הארץ, ובגזרתו נהפכים לברד, וראו שהאש והמים עשו שלום לקיים גזירתו יתברך כדפירוש רש"י ז"ל (שמות כ"ד).

a *shalit* over the *adamah*. In the *makkah* of *shechin* Hashem demonstrated that He is in control of the health of man and his *machalos*. The *Mitzri'im* got boils all over themselves. In *makkas choshech* Hashem demonstrated that He is the one who brings light upon the world. It comes from Hashem and when Hashem decides not to bring it, then it's going to be dark. In *makkas barad* there are three things there. There is rain, there is hail and there is fire. All those things joined together and became *barad*: smart bombs. And then Hashem arranged that all the *Mitzri'im* decided to lend the Yidden all their *klei kesef* and all their *klei zahav*, all their clothing, *rechush gadol*, unbelievable stuff. After they got tremendous *makkos*, they saw that Hashem controls whether someone likes you or not. If you go into a *shul* and you decide someone doesn't like you, the first thing I tell you is to stop imagining things. They do like you. But if somebody *taka* doesn't like you it's because Hashem puts that in his mind. When somebody likes you, it's not because you're funny or you're cute. It's because Hashem makes people like you. Hashem has control over the emotions. *Mamash a pelah*. Hashem then showed how He controlled wheels on carriages. All their carriages fell apart. At *krias Yam Suf* Hashem showed more miracles. *Middah keneged middah*. There's no end.

Now in order to be prepared for this you need to think about this. You need to contemplate this, so that when you'll stay focused you say at the *seder*, "*Kinderlach*, there's a *makkah* of *dam*..." It doesn't sound like a *seder*. It sounds very not *mesudar* - you get into your world and think: Hakadosh Baruch Hu, from the *makkah* of *dam* and from all the *makkos* and everything that happened to the *Mitzri'im*, You demonstrated Your control over everything beyond the shadow of a doubt." But you have to prepare this beforehand, and on Yom Tov you're *mesbonen* in it and hopefully you'll believe it.

You have people who can talk about how Hashem controls the entire world, and a half a second later, somebody says something not nice to them, and they lose their equilibrium. What happened to believing that Hashem controls everything? You could have a person who swears that Reuven can't hurt Shimon unless it's decreed 100% by Hashem, and a second later, Reuven comes to Shimon and Shimon blows a gasket. You've got no *emunah*, my friend.

Now if you look in the *Sefer Hachinuch* in *mitzvah chaf alef*, when he talks about the *mitzvah* of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*, he says as follows: Tonight, everybody, in his understanding, in his language, must speak about this because it's a *yesod gadol*, a very big principle and *amud chazakah*, a very strong pillar, *beToraseinu uve'emunaseinu*, because it's a sign for us, אות ומופת גמור בחידוש העולם, that there's a Hashem who came before anything, Who does whatever He wants and He's able to do anything. He's *poel* all things in the world, all *shinui hateva* - and this silences every *kofer* (*denier*) in *chiddush haolam*.⁴

Now you have to think about that. Just saying it doesn't make you a *ma'amin*. If you're not going to delve into this *sugya* of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*, you're not going to come to any awareness of this! The *osos* and the *mofsim* have to bring out

⁴ מצות ספור יציאת מצרים – לספר בענין יציאת מצרים בליל ט"ו בניסן, כל אחד כפי צחות לשונו, ולהלל ולהשבח לשם יתברך על כל הנסים שעשה לנו שם. שנאמר (שמות יג ח) והגדת לבנך. וכבר פרשו חכמים, (מכילתא בא שם) דמצות הגדה זו הוא בליל ט"ו בניסן בשעת אכילת מצה. ומה שאמר הכתוב לבנך, לאו דזקא בנו, (פסחים קטז, א) אלא אפילו עם כל בריה. וענין המצוה, שיתברך הנסים והענינים שארעו לאבותינו ביציאת מצרים, ואיך לקח האל יתברך נקמתנו מהם, ואפילו בינו לבין עצמו, אם אין שם אחרים, חייב להוציא הדברים מפיו, כדי שיתעורר לבו בדבר, כי בדבור יתעורר הלב (עי' סהמ"צ להרמב"ם מ"ע קנא). משרשי מצוה זו, מה שכתוב בקרבן הפסח. ואין מן התמה אם באו לנו מצות רבות על זה, מצות עשה ומצות לא תעשה, כי הוא יסוד גדול ועמוד חזק בתורתנו ובאמונתנו. ועל כן אנו אומרים לעולם בברכותינו ובתפלותינו זכר ליציאת מצרים, לפי שהוא לנו אות ומופת גמור בחידוש העולם, וכי יש אלה קדמון חפץ ויכול, פועל כל הנמצאות הוא ובידו לשנותם, כפי שיחפץ בכל זמן מן הזמנים, כמו שעשה במצרים, ששנה טבעי העולם בשבילנו, ועשה לנו אותות ומופתיים גדולים ועצומים, הלא זה משתק כל כופר בחידוש העולם ומקים האמונה בידיעת השם יתברך, וכי השגחתו ויקלתו ובפרטים כלם, וכו'.

in you and bring home to you the *emunah* that Hashem is the absolute creator of the world, and to silence every *kofer*. It doesn't make a difference what anybody else thinks.

I'll never forget I was once giving a *shiur*, and there was a father who was more of a modern fellow, an Israeli guy. I was talking about this *sugya*, how there's nothing that happens in the world that's not from Hashem. He stood up in the back of the room and said, "You mean Arafat is from Hashem?" I said, "No, he's from Mohammad. But who is he from? Who creates everybody? The same One who created you, created Arafat." He said, "Are you crazy! You think Hashem created Arafat?" I said, "Who then created him?" The fellow wasn't letting up, "And what about Hitler?" I said, "Hashem made him too." The guy went completely nuts. He went off the rails. He got so angry he charged out of here. He was so worked up. Such an *eino ma'amin!* But the guy wore a yarmulke. He put on *tefillin* every day. He kept Shabbos. But he never kept a Pesach, you see? He never celebrated a real Pesach. He may have gone through it but he never got anything from it! He doesn't believe that Pharaoh is from Hashem. He just believes that Pharaoh is a bad guy. He just tortured Yidden terribly. No, he's also from Hashem.

EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IS HASHGACHAH

You have to know that everything that happens is the *hashgachah* of Hashem. *Middah keneged middah is hashgachah*. The *Mitzri'im* got punished *middah keneged middah*. You have to say to yourself, "Hashem, I want to acknowledge and I want to know it and I want to recognize everything that happens to me that is *middah keneged middah*. Open my eyes to see it, Hashem!" With every little thing that happened to my *rebbe*, whatever it was, he always looked at what the *middah keneged middah* was.

I once told you a story. My *rebbe* had a memory that was a בור סיד שאינו מאבד טיפה, he remembered the language of *rishonim* that he saw seventy years before! He couldn't understand what people were talking about when they said, "I forgot." How is it *shayach*? He remembered stories exactly. If it was one thing off, it was a *sheker*. I once said something over to him, repeating to him something he had said. He asked me, "Where did you hear that?" I said, "I heard it from my *rebbe*, he should be *gezunt*." He said, "You didn't hear it from me." I said, "Rebbi, I've got it in my notebook. I only write in my notebook things that I hear from you." He told me, "*Dos is nisht emes. Ich hob nisht gezugt*." I went out and met another guy, another *talmid*. I said to the guy, "Do you remember this *vort* we heard from the *rebbe*?" He said, "Sure." I said, "Take a look at it. You see this *vort*?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Do you know what the *rebbe* told me? That it's not from him." "What do you mean it's not from him? Of course it's from him." This guy was a little older than me. He said, "You have to know Briskers are *daykanim*. If you changed one word from what he said, then it's not what he said."

I went back to my *rebbe*. I said, "Rebbi, did you ever speak about this subject?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Did I make a mistake in a word?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Don't you think that's a little, maybe, exaggerated? A little *guzma* to hold me down to one word?" He said, "It's a *sheker*." I said, "Don't you think that's a little extreme?"

He said, "Let me tell you the *chinuch* that I got from my father. A Yid came to my father, the Brisker Rav, and he told him that he met Rav Chaim Soloveitchik back in the day. Rav Chaim was talking about the Yidden in Yerushalayim and Rav Chaim said a description. He described it. He said they're this, they're that. Rav

Chaim used three or four different adjectives to describe them. My father listened to him *klor*, and *chazered* it over. Ten years later, the same Yid came back to my father. He forgot he told the Brisker Rav this story. "I'll tell you a story. I'll tell you what I heard from your father." The Brisker Rav said, "It's *nisht emes*." He said, "I heard it from him." "*Nisht emes*." It's not *emes*. He said, "What do you mean? I'm telling you what I heard." He said, "Ten years ago you told me the story. You changed it now. Description number two, you said as three. Now you said description three as number two. It's *nisht emes*. Which one is not *emes*?"

My *rebbe* said, "You understand how it's not *emes*?" I said, "Rebbi, it's too much for me. Forget about it." This is way above and beyond my paygrade. To even see and be exposed to such a thing was mind-blowing to me!

LOOK FOR THE MIDDAH K'NEGED MIDDAH

In *emunah*, it has to be perfect. In *middah keneged middah* it has to be perfect. My *rebbe* didn't forget anything. Now, one time he said a *vort* and his father liked it. When he said a *vort* and his father liked it and praised it, that meant it was gold. But then he forgot it. He remembered the Rashi that he based it on, but he couldn't remember what the question and the answer were. It bothered him to no end. The only ones who knew it were his father and a famous Yid in Yerushalayim, Rav Matisyahu Davis. Rav Mattisyahy knew it because one day, Rav Matisyahu asked him to say a *vort*, and he said, "I'll tell you a *vort*, a *frisher vort*." That was when he told him. But both his father and Rav Matisyahu were *niftar*. Rav Meir said, "I can't tell you how much time I spent trying to resurrect the *vort*. But he thought, "Why did Hashem make me forget it? What's the *sibah*? Other things I don't forget. How come I forgot this?"

We would say, "Listen, you're allowed to forget something. It's pretty normal. Forgetting things is the ABC of humankind. I always forget things." But with my *rebbe*, there was no such thing. He forgot? "There's a *middah keneged middah* here. There's a reason why Hashem took it away from me."

So, he thought about it and replayed in his mind the whole story of how the *vort* came about. He said, "I was serving my father as was my *minhag*. I was being *meshamesh* him, bringing him food. My father said to me, '*Meir ich hob a kasha*,' so he tells me a *kasha*."

My *rebbe* said, "My father asked me a *kasha*. I thought about it for a second and then I shot out the answer. My father was very impressed by the answer. He liked it a lot. I thought afterwards, 'What right did I have to open my mouth? My father wanted to say something. Let me hear what he had to say.' Because I didn't listen to hear what my father had to say, I spoke out my *vort* first, so it must be that Hashem is now taking away my *vort*." That's how he understood *middah keneged middah*. There wasn't a *zach* that wasn't *middah keneged middah* by him.

PESACH STRENGTHENS EMUNAH

That's what a person has to realize. If you go through a Pesach and your *emunah* is not uplifted, you missed the boat. If all you have is indigestion from too much matzah or wine in your system, you got headaches from the wine or the sugar in the grape juice, or you're tired from the cleaning - then that Pesach went over your head and you missed it. You have to prepare yourself. Prepare yourself to get some level of *emunah* this Pesach. Every year Hashem gives me a chance to get more *emunah*, to get more and more *emunah*. Hopefully, in your lifetime of Pesachs you'll

be *zocheh* to maybe get a little bit of *emunah*.

Now, the reason why the lesson of Mitzrayim is obvious is because of the *shpitz kofer* in the story. Who was the *shpitz kofer*? Pharaoh, of course. Pharaoh was the *shpitz* guy who thought that he's in charge. Every month has a *mazal*. What's the *mazal* of Chodesh Nissan? *Taleh*. What's *taleh*? A sheep. Sheep is what the Egyptians worshiped. It's a very interesting thing. When the *makkos* were coming, at one point, Pharaoh became broken. You know when? After *barad*. He said *ה' הצדיק ואני ועמי רשעים*. And then afterwards came *makkas arbeh*. You know what he did by *arbeh*? He drove Moshe and Aharon out (Shemos 10:11). Get away from me! And then during the *makkas choshech* he opened his big mouth and he was *meschatzef* to Moshe Rabbeinu. You know what he told Moshe Rabbeinu? *אֵל תִּפְךָ רְאוֹת פָּנַי*, "I don't want to see your face again" (Shemos 10:28).

Now, where did he get his newfound manliness? Where did he get this *koach atzum*? Didn't he say *וְאָנִי וְעַמִּי הִרְשָׁעִים* following the *makkah of barad*?! (Shemos 9:28) Where did he get this *chizuk*? You know why? Because he knew Chodesh Nissan was coming and Nissan's *mazal* was *telah*. He said if I can get into that month of *telah* I've got it made. My astrologers told me you've got to connect with the sheep. If you connect with the sheep, you're going to be in good shape.

Haman also made a similar mistake and thought Purim was the month for him. So Pharaoh figured, if he could just hold on a little bit more, the scales would tilt to his favor. That's why he told Moshe, "Get out of here! I don't want to see you. Don't come back to me! I don't want to see you! Come back in Nissan. In Nissan, we'll talk." That's what Pharaoh's whole trick was.

What happens is that Pharaoh gets duped. Hashem shows him all his *mazalos*, you joker, you comedian, you fool what you are! With all your astrologers, all your *chachamim*, all the degrees that they have - don't you know who the real Boss is?! *עוד ראשון הוא לכם לחדשי השנה* And that's why *אין עוד מלבדו בשמים ממעל ובארץ מתחת אין עוד*.

You should sit and think this over, and think how Hashem took care of you all your life, and how Hashem controls you and how Hashem guides you, and then you walk out of Pesach with step one that the Ramban told us about, *שנאמין בו*.

Now you have to understand the following. Hashem wants me to believe in Him. You know what that means to say? If I believe in Him, that's my insurance program. That's my life insurance. If all Hashem wants from you is that you should believe in Hashem and talk about *emunah* in Hashem, if that's all He wants from you, then doing that will of His is what's going to give you life insurance. Forget about car insurance. You need life insurance.

ARE YOU PROUD TO BE A YID? (PART 2)

PESACH REPRESENTS EMUNAH AND HODA'AH

In part one of this shiur, we spoke of what the Yom Tov of Pesach is supposed to give us. We learned the Ramban (ibid), who says that Hashem's only desire from the *tachtonim* is *emunah* and *hoda'ah*. We spoke about how both of those factors, *emunah* and *hoda'ah*, are represented by the Yom Tov of Pesach. Pesach was the *leidah*, birth, of Klal Yisrael, when Hashem chose Klal Yisrael and expressed His *cheifetz*, His desire, for us. The Ramban tells us that all Hashem chose us for and

SHOW GRATITUDE FOR ALL HASHEM'S *TOVOS*

And the Maharal answers the question. I remember my father *alav hashalom* always used to say over this Maharal. The Maharal explains that when you want to come and relate the praises of Hashem, then we say 'מי ימלל גבורות ה'. But what we are mainly obligated to do on the night of *yetzias Mitzrayim* is not to offer up the praises of Hashem, but rather express that we're not *kefuyei tovah*, that we appreciate all the greatness that Hakadosh Baruch Hu did for us and that we're *modeh* to Him for it. So if we have to express our *hoda'ah* to Hashem, are we not *mechuyav* then to speak about those *tovos* He did with us?! Even if I am not able to be *mesaper* all of the *shevach* of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, so because of that I shouldn't even express my thanks to Hashem in a minimalistic way, so that I'm not a *kofoy tovah*?!

I once had a person who came to me and said, "You should know, the reason why I didn't tell you thank you is not because I don't have gratitude. It's because I don't know how to express gratitude to somebody who gave me life. I am *makir* that I was a *meis* and you turned me into a *chai*." I told him, "That's very nice and I appreciate what you say, but you have to know that one of the *yesodos* of Klal Yisrael is to express thanks. You have to do it. You have to say I'm not a *kafoy tov*. Even if you can't do it properly, it does not exempt you from expressing yourself." That is the *mitzvah* of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*. When you're sitting there talking about Avraham Avinu, you have to be thinking to yourself, "Hashem, I'm being *modeh* to You for the *yetziah*, for taking out my grandfather, taking out all my grandfathers. I am thankful to You for taking me out of Mitzrayim." A person has to understand that this is a very important *avodah*.

The Rambam in *Sefer Hamitzvos* (מצוה קנז) says regarding the *mitzvah l'saper b'yetzias Mitzrayim* וכל מי שיוסיף במאמר ויאריך הדברים בהגדלת מה שעשה לנו ה' ומה שעשו לנו המצרים מעול וחמס ואיך לקח ה' נקמתנו מהם ולהודות לו יתעלה על כל הטוב שגמלנו יהיה יותר טוב, whoever is *mesaper* more about the great *nissim* that Hashem did for us, about the how the *Mitzrim* afflicted us, and how Hashem took revenge for us, and expresses *hoda'ah* to Hashem for all the good that he bestowed upon us - is much better, as it says כל המרבה לספר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משובח. Do you hear that? What we are doing is offering our *hoda'ah* to Hashem Yisbarach שגמלנו משה שעשה לנו ה' ומה שעשו לנו המצרים לספר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משובח. Like it says כל המרבה לספר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משובח. The *Sefer Hachinuch* (מצוה כא) says everybody has to be מהלל למהלל על כל הנסים שנתעשה לנו ומשבח ה' יתברך על כל הנסים שנתעשה לנו. It says it in the *gemara*, and in the *Rishonim* so you have to understand this a very big *yesod*. This is a whole new aspect. After the *seder* or when Pesach comes, do people feel any more gratitude to Hashem? And the answer for many people, is "no." They either feel tired or they feel indigestion or that it was boring or not boring. People have all kinds of feelings that they feel. You have to feel *hoda'ah* to Hashem. When Hakadosh Baruch Hu tells us to be *doresh* the *parshah* of *mikra bikurim*, He is demanding that we work on our *hoda'ah* to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

GRATITUDE FOR BEING CHOSEN TO BE A YID

Now it is a tall order to actually feel gratitude to Hashem. When Hashem says, "I have no desire from man other than that he should be *ma'amin bi* and be *modeh leShmi*," He doesn't mean for us to offer lip service. He doesn't mean בפיו ובשפתיו "he honored Me with its lips, but has kept its heart far from Me" (*Yeshaya* 29:13). That's not what Hashem means. What He means is: do you understand and appreciate the fact that Hakadosh Baruch Hu chose you to be a Jew.

Now, I believe that many people have difficulty with this. I remember when I was a young boy, I felt very unhappy about the fact that I didn't appreciate the *tefillah* of *Aleinu L'shabeiach*. A very great *tefillah* by very great authors. A person should feel the *shevach*, the thanks to Hashem that He didn't make him a *goy*. Everybody knows that a *goy* is *chafshi* from the mitzvos. He has no *shibudim*, obligations. I remember going to my Zeida and telling him, "You know, I'm embarrassed. I hope you're not angry at me. I want you to understand that *l'ma'aseh* I'm not happy to be a Jew. To me it seems that a *goy* is having much more fun." A *goy* is *chafshi* from the mitzvos. Rav Yerucham mentions in the *parshah* of *bikurim* that a *goy* is *chafshi min hamitzvos*. He sees a *goy* take a big sandwich and the guy walks in the street, a *fresser*. He doesn't have to worry about *netilas yadayaim*. He doesn't have to worry about *tolaim*. He doesn't have to worry about a *brachah achronah*, a *makom keviyus*. He doesn't have to worry about anything. Nothing! *Kevias makom* is a big problem. A fellow came to my *rebbe* once. He was eating something. My *rebbe* asked him, "Where did you make that *brachah*? So you know what he said? "I made it in my house." He said, "So how can you still eat it? *Shinui makom*." The fellow said, "But it's a candy." My *rebbe* said, "So what? That *brachah* doesn't work for here." So if a *goy* eats a sandwich, there is no difference for him. But for a Yid it says, האוכל בשוק דומה לכלב (Kiddushin 40b). If a *goy* is *ochel bashuk* he's a cool guy.

You know how hard it is to feel gratitude? When Hashem says, "I want you to be *modeh* to Me," it means "I want you to have *hoda'ah* and be thankful that I chose you to be a Yid." You know what kind of *hachanah* you have to make for that? You think anybody could just come and say to Hashem on Pesach night, "I'm happy to be a Jew?" You have to work on that for months before Pesach. And the first year you'll get to a little bit of *hoda'ah*. The main thing is that a person has to reach a *madreiga* where he's *modeh* to Hashem. He appreciates being a Jew.

Now the *hoda'ah* to Hashem on the *leil haseder* is not simply *hoda'ah* to Hashem לך נשמותינו הפקודות ועל חיינו המסורים בידך ועל נשמותינו הפקודות, that we're alive, that's not the *hoda'ah* we're talking about here. The *hoda'ah* we're talking about on *leil seder* is, like the *gemara* (*Pesachim* 116a) says אמר ליה רב נחמן לדרו עבדיה עבדא דמפיק ליה מריה לחירות ויהיב ליה כספא ודהבא מאי בעי למימר ליה אמר ליה בעי לאודוי ולשובחי, a slave whose master set him free and gave him silver and gold, what does he need to say to his master? He needs to thank him and praise him. You hear what it says over here? The *yesod* is to be *modeh* to Hakadosh Baruch Hu that He took us out of Mitzrayim and that He took care of our enemies. That's a very tall order and a difficult *avodah*. But if your *libo* is *rachok mimenu* and you don't have any *hoda'ah* to Hashem, Hashem says, "I have no *chafetz* in you, no desire for you." Can you imagine a *melech basar ve'dam* who wants to be *mekarev* somebody to himself, and he goes to that person and says, "I'm going to shower you with *kol tov*. I'm going to make you a prince. But I'm making you a prince for one reason, because I want you to have a bond with me. I want you to be *kashur* with me." The person says, "I'm happy to take everything from you, but I'm not sure if I'm ready to have a *keshet* with you. I appreciate everything you do for me. I'll say 'thank you.' But I have a life. I'm not looking to commit my life to you." Do you know how many Yidden there are who are not ready to commit their lives to Hashem? They have their families. They have their businesses. They have their houses. They have their cars. They have their jobs. They have their real estate. They have their vacations. They have everything. But they're not ready to commit to Hashem. Hashem took us out from Mitzrayim for a reason. Everybody thinks this is a massive *chiddush* from the Ramban. We say it every morning in davening. Where do we say this? In *Ahavah Rabah* we speak about the *groise ahavah*. We say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu: וקרבתנו לשמך הגדול, You took us out and brought us near to You,

בהבחה לך וליחדך באהבה. *L'hodos lecha* means to offer *hoda'ah* to You, and *l'yachedcha* is to be *m'yached* You and to single You out, to acknowledge there is nothing else but You, *be'ahavah*, with love, not *bal korchacha*, without being forced to do so.

THIS GIVES US ZECHUS KIYUM

If a person does this, he's fulfilling the *ratzon* of Hashem, and that gives him a *kiyum*. What gives you a *zechus kiyum*? If ever your situation, your *kiyum*, seems to be in question, what you should do is be *modeh* to Hashem and be *meyached* Hashem. That's the whole purpose. If you look in the *gemara* (Sotah 40a) you'll see that the main *nusach* of the *Modim* that we say during *chazaras hashatz* is מודים לך על שאנו מודים לך. *ikar girsa* in the *gemara*! We're *modeh* to Hashem לך על שאנו מודים לך. You know what that means? Have you ever heard of such a thing?! We're saying a whole *tefillah* to thank Hashem that we can thank Him. We have a *mitzvah* to thank You. We want to thank You. I thank Hashem for giving me the ability to thank Him. You know why? Because that's my ticket to live. Hashem says if you are going to thank Me, if you are going to offer Me a *hoda'ah*, then that's going to be a *zechus hakiyum*. *Noradik!* That's what a person has to understand.

Now the *hoda'ah* that Hashem is *chafetz banu* includes all kinds of *hoda'os*. The *leil sipur yetzias Mitzrayim hoda'ah* is not only for the fact that He took us out. We're thanking Hashem for making us become Klal Yisrael. *Rabbosai*, this is something that needs training. You have to train yourself to *be'emes* come to appreciate what it means to be a Yisrael, and what it means to be part of Am Yisrael.

YIDDEN HAVE GREATER RESPONSIBILITY

Now, there are people who think that the main difference between Am Yisrael and the *umos haolam* is in the future worlds. That in *olam haba*, we have a *chelek* in *olam haba*. That's a very major *chiluk*. We are definitely *nitzchi*. But the *chiluk* has to be *nikar* in this *velt*, too! You have to look at a *goy* and you have to say to yourself, "I was created with a much greater *tafkid*, a much greater purpose. I have a tremendous responsibility and that responsibility defines my greatness."

A *goy* once asked me this question, "Do you think you're better than me?" I said, "I'm *greater* than you." That's what I said. He said, "What does that mean?" I said, "Let me explain it to you. My job is not to walk around and put you down. We're not looking to destroy anybody. What I mean is that my responsibilities are greater than yours." The Germans *yemach shemam vezichram* professed that they were the Aryan Nation. The reason why they hated the Jews was because when they looked at all the other *goyim* in the world and told the other *goyim* that they were better than them, the *goyim* agreed. The Germans were tall. They were blonde, with blue eyes, cultured, and educated, but when they looked at the Jew, the Jew always reminded them that this bent-over Jew with the twinkle in his eyes without his university was smarter, more educated, and more cultured than this cursed German nation was. They were the lowest of the low. Hashem demonstrated through them that you could have a *shpitz* cultured nation that is so *shafel*, so lowly, so lacking basic humanity, human decency. Animals are better than them. They're worse than animals, worse than snakes.

So a Yid has to feel that he has a greater responsibility than the nicest, most important *goy*. I have *mitzvos*. I have a culture. My actions have tremendous meanings. I'm connected to all the *olamos*. Every one of my actions has an effect and *hashpa'ah*. And the actions of the *umos haolam*? No. Does that mean I want

to get rid of them? No. I want them to stay around forever. Who's going to drive my buses? I don't need people from Skver driving my buses. They should sit in the *beis medrash* and say *Tehillim* and do *avodas Hashem*. Let the *umos haolam* drive buses. Who is going to make my clothes? I don't need *chassidim* from Williamsburg importing clothes from China. I'm happy to have the O'Malleys and O'Connors and all the people in the world do it. The same thing for all my needs. I'm very happy to have the whole world provide them. And we're thankful. I'm being *makir tov* for that. The fact that I'm greater than him makes me more responsible and holds me to a higher standard. To get that appreciation is a lifetime of *avodah*, rabbosai. If a person is not happy to be here, it's like Hashem chose the *am hanivchar* and He did it *b'ahavah*, the greatest act of love and what does the Yid say? "No, thank you!"

SIPUR YETZIAS MITZRAYIM INCLUDES HODA'AH

Many years ago, we answered a famous question with this *yesod*. Rav Chaim Halevi Soloveitchik explained the Rambam that *b'zman* Moshiach, the mitzvah of *zechiras yetzias Mitzrayim* that we do all year long is going to be nullified, null and void. According to Ben Zoma, the mitzvah of *zechiras yetzias Mitzrayim* is only *noheg* in this world until *yemos haMoshiach*. That's why the Rambam does not write down the mitzvah of *zechiras yetzias Mitzrayim* as one of the 613 mitzvos. The Rambam says: I only put down mitzvos that are going to be *noheg l'asid lavo*. But if you look at the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*, the Rambam does write it down! Why does he include it? If *zechiras yetzias Mitzrayim* is not going to be *noheg beyemos haMoshiach*, why is *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* going to be different? And the answer is because the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* has an addition. The addition is the *hoda'ah* aspect. The mitzvah of *zechiras yetzias Mitzrayim* daily is not for *hoda'ah*. It's only for *emunah*. It's only for the conclusion of the *Shema Yisrael*, where we're *mekabel* upon ourselves the *ol malchus Shamayim* and we acknowledge Hashem is *echad*, we say that it began when Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim, להיות לכם לאלקים. However, the mitzvah of *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* has an aspect of *hoda'ah*. It says that when Moshiach will come, there's going to be miracles even greater than those of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. So if we need to have a *ra'ayah* of *emunah* in Hashem, you're not going to have to come to *yetzias Mitzrayim*. You're going to have greater miracles when Hashem brings the Moshiach. If you have a bigger *ra'ayah*, you don't bring the smaller *ra'ayah*. But what happens if a person does *tovos* for you, small *tovos* and big *tovos*, do we say because he does big *tovos* that you don't have to be grateful for the smaller things?! Of course you have to be grateful for those as well. So *le'asid lavo* you're going to be grateful to Hashem for this. That's what a person has to know.

IT'S GREAT TO BE A YID

I'll give a suggestion for you this Erev Pesach: before Pesach, in addition to being *mechazek* yourself in the *emunah* of Hashem and in matters of *emunah*, try to think about reasons that you can convince yourself or explain to yourself why you're lucky to be a Yid. I once heard of a good *ma'areh makom* in English, from a very *chashuve yungerman*, way back in the day, a Brisker who came from a very *yeshivishe* home and *yeshivah*. He asked me, "Did you ever read your Zeida's *sefarim*?" I said, "Yeah, a little bit. I looked at them." He said, "You got anything out of it?" I said, "They're pretty boring." He said, "Let me suggest that you look at them again." I said, "Why?" He said, "I want to tell you something. I think I'm starting to realize how lucky I am to serve Hashem, to be an *oved Hashem*." I said, "How is that?" He said, "I read your Zeida's *sefer*." I said, "How did you come to it?" This person was a serious *ben Torah*. He said, "I'll tell you the truth. My wife was sick. She was having

a baby. She was laid up. I had to buy her stuff to read. So I went out and I bought a whole bunch of things to be *mechazek* her. One of the things I bought her is this *sefer*. She opened it up and told me it's boring. So I decided I would read it. And I read it." He said, "I became so full of *simchah* of being a Yid." I said, "Are you sure?" The guy said, "You have to read the whole thing." The first part talks about evolution, about *narishkeit*, how *narish* the *goyishe shitos* are. I never got to the end. I wasn't mature when I read it. I was very young. So I decided I would read it again and I sat down and I read that *sefer* and I *pashut* felt אשירנו מה טוב חלקנו ומה נעים גורלנו. My Zeida doesn't mention anything about the next world. My Zeida was very practical. He lived in this world. But he was so ecstatic that Hashem chose him to be a Yid. When he made that *brachah* גוי עשני שלא אלקיני מלך העולם, he told me he used to think in his mind of the most important *goyim* around. And then think, "I'm happy You didn't make me one of them." There are many tidbits, insights, and food for thought in that book to help a person realize how fortunate we are to have been created as Yidden.

HOW WONDERFUL IT IS TO BE A TORAH YID

Now there are a lot of things you have to get out of our system just because we're lazy. A lot of times, if something is hard for me and I have to push myself, I automatically think that it's not fun. But that's *shтус*. For all the good things in life, you have to push yourself. You have to overcome some difficulties, and then you get a sense of accomplishment for having done them. For things that are easy, there's no sense of accomplishment. There's no joy in them. Joy is when a person develops himself and breaks himself, and then he realizes the *gadlus* of Hashem and how puny he is, and he realizes that Hakadosh Baruch Hu chose him to perform His will. He chose me out of all the nations in the world. *Ruba deruba* of the world are not Klal Yisrael. And then you appreciate it even amongst Klal Yisrael. Most people in *Klal Yisrael* are not following the *derech* of Hashem. You could offer up lip service to this, and not feel it. A lot of people are walking around and inside they're thinking, "I'm not so sure what is so great, what this Yiddishkeit thing is all chugged up about." Of course, you get exciting things. You get run-a-thons. You run for Judaism. You get bike-a-thons. That's exciting. You get yourself in the paper. You get exercise. I just read about a guy who was riding through Lakewood and he drove up to the mountains. It's a lot of fun, biking or driving for Yiddishkeit. But I'm talking about just appreciating what a mitzvah is, what you create with a mitzvah, what you accomplish with a mitzvah.

I told you this many times: People don't begin to think about what they're accomplishing when they do a mitzvah. It's not just like taking a drink of water. It's not just like filling up a glass of water. It's not like just scratching your head because you got an itch. Doing a mitzvah is such an accomplishment. You're creating *malachim*. You're changing worlds. You're being *meitiv* with others through simple mitzvah. You're giving Hashem *nachas*. And on top of all these benefits, Hashem wants you to do the mitzvahs. Then you get a feeling: I'm thankful Hashem, very thankful for one more Pesach. Hashem, thank You for granting me so many chances. Like the famous *kasha* everybody asks, the *narishkeit* they ask. It says אפילו כולנו התורה, what for? The guy knows all the Torah from last year. He knows all the stories from last year. All the *medrashim* from the last fifty years. What does he need it for? Do you know what the answer is? This is the answer: To feel *hoda'ah*, to feel *hoda'ah b'ahavah*, to grow in your love for Hashem and your appreciation for Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

I don't care how big you are. A lot of big people have expressed, "*Oy is shver tzu zein a Yid, oy* being a Jew, nothing comes easy." They don't appreciate it. It shows a lack of appreciation. This is where it comes from. We must be *mechazek* ourselves, and be *meichin* ourselves.

When people sit by the seder, they start thinking to themselves how they can buy themselves a simple box of matzahs. I say 'simple' because there's nothing in the matzah. No salt, no sugar, no taste, just flour and water. You could pay \$37, \$47 for a pound of matzah. A guy told me last year: \$70 a box of matzah. I was thinking to myself, "\$70 a box of matzah? \$50 a box of matzah? \$35 a box of matzah? What is this, gold?" It's just simple matzah. A minute after Pesach it's worth very little. On Pesach do you know what it is? A mitzvah. Another guy said to me, "I'll take the Manischewitz stuff. It's only \$3.50 and you have this soft egg matzah," and some kind of nonsense over there. That's how people are. *Amaratzim*. Pesach has no value to them. If you don't appreciate Pesach, it has zero value. It means you're not even sitting by a seder. You're being *mevazeh* yourself and *mevazeh* Hashem and *mevazeh* everything.

EXPLAINING THE BEAUTY OF YIDDISHKEIT

I remember the first time that I had to convince somebody as to the beauty of Yiddishkeit. I remember being petrified with a pit in my stomach. I remember the guy getting ready, trying to figure out all the questions he was going to ask me. I'll never forget that. He gave me a very hard time and I told him, "Don't you understand that the only purpose you came to this world is to get close to Hashem?" I'll never forget. He got all upset. He said, "No, absolutely not! What about family? What about raising kids? What about having a good marriage? What about friends?" I said, "Uuhhh, good point." Then I told him, "There's only one *tovah*," I told him. "*Kirvas Elokim*." He started laughing at me in his unusual laughter that he has. He said, "Come on! You're not going to sell me that." I remember sweating and I went home and I called my grandfather. It's a good thing to have a grandfather to call.

I remember the first guy asked me, "Explain to me, what exactly is beautiful about Judaism? The white shirts? What exactly is the attraction here? The fact that you could study all day long? Is that the attraction? Where's the attraction here?" But you're not sure what to tell a person. There are plenty of Yidden that walk around, who have no idea why they're Jewish. They have no idea what beauty is. They were in the world their entire lifetime and they never once showed gratitude to Hashem. A lot of them have this approach: "Well, I'm Jewish, but I didn't choose it. I'm stuck with it. Okay, you want me to do a good job? Okay." You know you have kids that they put in school. I remember I disliked school. My mother said, "You have no choice. You go to school. You've got to follow the rules." I said, "You follow the rules if you want to be in the school. If I don't want to be in school, why should I follow the rules?" That's how it's done. I understand people don't want to do that. But this is appreciating. Do you appreciate it? How do you tell somebody how to appreciate the value in education?

BUILD YOUR PRIDE IN WHO YOU ARE

A person must be *mechazek* himself in this area. This is incumbent upon every single individual. Go out and get a book, go out and look at *sefarim*. You've got to find some kind of *sefer* that's going to explain to you what is great about being Jewish, to understand in your own terms, in your layman *pashute* terms when you're surrounded with all kind of nonsense who are *ba'alei olam hazeh* to the max

and they're doing what they want, how they want, where they want and when they want. You're going to view them that they're *gornisht*.

My Zeida once told me. "Don't ever be *mekarev nebachs*. You want to *mekarev* Jews? Go to the most successful people." I remember asking my Zeida, "What am I going to sell them?" He said, "They have no Yiddishkeit." I said, "Yeah, but they have everything else in the world that their hearts desire." A guy who doesn't have a job, a guy who doesn't have a wife, a guy that doesn't have *hatzlachah*, he's easier to get. "That's דבר התלויה באהבה," he told me. "That's not real Yiddishkeit. Sell Yiddishkeit to the guy who thinks he's got everything." And I remember when I got to the point where I felt I understood it and could give it over. It was amazing! At that point, I remember a wealthy and very high, very famous and powerful guy, who came to me and said, "Now what in the world do you think you have to offer me?" I said, "I'm going to let you in on a little secret. You've got zero. That's what you have. I know everything that you have and you don't begin to dream an iota about or understand what I have. You can't say about what I have that it's nothing. I can say that about what you have. I know what a nice car is. I know what a nice house is. I know what trips are. I know what hotels are. What don't I know? So you eat in every restaurant in the world? But what do you have?" The guy was shocked. He said, "You really believe you have something that I don't have?" I said, "You have nothing. I'm going to give you an example. Can you imagine going to the jungle. We go to the jungle and we see a guy with a loin cloth. He's got a piece of cloth in the front and a piece of cloth in the back. And you turn around to me and you say, 'Look at this guy. Who is this guy?' I say, 'This guy is the head of the tribe. He's got paint across his cheeks on this side. He's got a really funny haircut.' And you say, 'The guy looks like he's a jungle man. The guy looks like he's a barbarian. He probably eats people, human beings, for breakfast.' I say, 'Probably.' Do you want to know something? That's what I think of you. That's exactly what I think of you. You are to me a jungle person, uneducated, unknowledgeable, clueless to what your existence is. You're exactly like the guy who has a head on his shoulder and he goes and asks somebody, 'Do you have any idea why G-d made this pimple on my shoulders?' At that point you know, without a shadow of a doubt, that the guy is retarded. You say, 'Do you think it's a pimple appendage on your shoulders?'" *Koach hare'iyah, koach hashmiyah, koach ha'achilah, koach hareiach, koach haseichel*. What is he *hocking a tshaynik? A meshugene*. That's how you are," I told him. "You have no idea what *seichel* is."

I used to say like this: "Tell me, do you know how to tie your shoes?" They would say, "What?" They thought it was the craziest question. I would repeat my question, "Do you know how to tie your shoes? Which shoe do you put on first?" "What difference does it make?" Oh, that's like the guy in the Congo. What difference does it make if I have pants or underpants? Who cares? You understand? You understand there's a difference. You're sitting on dirt. You're going to get sick. It's not exactly a healthy situation. I used to make jokes with them, make *leitzanus*. I used to say to them, "Okay, do you know how to put on your pants? I said, "Does somebody put on your pants for you?" I used to say this every time. "No." I said, "Tell me, how do you put your pants on? Which leg do you put in first?" "What difference does it make?" "Oooh, that's too hard. That's too difficult for you. Shirts. How about shirts?" "What shirt?" I said, "You take a shower. What do you wash first?" They didn't know. I didn't say, "Do you know the Torah tells me all of this? Do you know when you're supposed to wash your face and when it's a mitzvah? Do you understand what a Jew's knowledge is? Do you understand that when a Jew walks down the street, you think you're seeing somebody, a mirror image of you. You're not. That's what an animal thinks. An animal thinks here goes a two-legged animal. But we understand

that's a human being and this is an animal. You have to feel that. You have to get that into you. As my Zeida used to say דע מה שתשיב. You have to know what to answer yourself. Your own questions. You have to feel something special about it. And if you feel something special then you'll have *hoda'ah* to Hashem. Otherwise, you'll never have *hoda'ah*.

Everybody is thankful. Every guy gets up by a *simchah* and says, "I want to thank my wife for all the effort she put in and made the bar mitzvah happen and made the wedding happen. It wouldn't have happened without her." *Baruch Hashem shehechianu*. You mean *baruch Hashem* my foot. You don't do anything for Hashem. You don't feel anything for Hashem. You don't feel more gratitude to Hashem. You don't feel any obligation to Hashem. You don't feel any closeness to Hashem.

GRATITUDE BRINGS CLOSENESS

That's what *hoda'ah* does, my friend. I feel close to people who I'm grateful to. We're going to get to that, too. It's a very big *avodah*. You know how embarrassing it was in the beginning when I started getting into the program of thanking Hashem. I *mamash* felt funny. I felt weird. I thought it was corny. And I can't tell how many *yungerleit* told me that their wives told them, "Could you stop with all this thanking to Hashem business? It sounds corny." I said, "I know exactly what she means." I can't blame her. She's being honest. She doesn't have an appreciation for it. And you don't either. It's like the guy who comes home, he just became *frum* and when he sits down by his meal of *treife* food, he puts his hand in his pocket and he pulls out one of those plastic yarmulkes and he pulls it over his ears and he tries to place it so it won't fall off. His wife says, "You look silly. What are you doing that for?" He says, "Oh, it's a rule. You've got to put this beanie on." She says, "I understand if you want to put on a bib so you don't get stains on your shirt. But why are you putting something on your head? Are you starting to eat with your head? You're rolling your head in the food? What do you need that thing on your head for?" The guy has no idea, and it feels corny. It does feel corny if you can't answer this question with a real conviction and passion. It looks weird. But if you stop doing it, then you remain a *goy*. And if you push yourself and get awareness and you start to appreciate what you're doing, you appreciate that you're really living, you appreciate everything, do you know what you feel like? Like a million dollars. You can make *leitzanusa deavodah zarah*. You look at somebody who is *frei* and you don't think, "I'm jealous of him." Instead, you think, "What a *nebach!* What a *nebach!*"

Hakadosh Baruch Hu should help us have a wonderful Yom Tov. A Yom Tov of *aliyah*, a Yom Tov in which we *taka* fulfill the mitzvos of Hashem *k'retzon Hashem*, and *mechazek* ourselves in our *emunah* and in our *hoda'ah* to Hashem.

This is going to be the last *shiur* for this *zman*. I'm sorry to say the *zman* is over now. The last afternoon. We hope to meet you on the other side of the Pesach bridge. We hope to see you on the other side a little stronger, a little more grateful, a little closer to Hashem, a little prouder to be a Yid and a little stronger in your commitment to mitzvos. *Chag kasher vesameach*.

IN SUMMARY

Yamim Tovim need *hachanah*, preparation, so that we use the opportunity properly and take out of the Yom Tov the most important elements that relate to that *chag*. We must ask ourselves, "What do I want to take with me from Yom Tov?" Pesach is a foundational Yom Tov that celebrates the birth of *Klal Yisrael* and our belief in Hashem. Therefore, our goals for Pesach are that we should grow in *emunah*, and that we should thank Hashem that He created us. With the *makkos*, Hashem was showing that He controls all different elements of the world. Now, we are *ma'amin* that everything that happens is under the direct *hashgachah* of Hashem and is *middah knegged middah*. Each year, through Pesach, our *emunah* can be uplifted; we should grab onto that opportunity. We should come out of Pesach with one thing - *shena'amin bo* - that we have *emunah* in Hashem. This week (*bli neder*), I will prepare for the Yom Tov of Pesach by thinking about Hashem's control over everything in my life. During Yom Tov, I will be *misbonen* about Hashem demonstrating His control over the world through the *makkos* and throughout the episode of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and I will aim to believe in *hashgachas Hashem* more.

One of the great *yesodos* of Seder night is to recognize it is an opportunity and an obligation to thank Hashem for taking us out of Mitzrayim. While we aren't really capable of adequately expressing our gratitude to Hashem for *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, we are not released from offering our thanks in some way. Therefore we have a *mitzvah* to thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu for taking us out of Mitzrayim and for punishing our enemies. It is a big *avodah*, so Hashem wants us to work on and improve in expressing our *hoda'ah* to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Attached to this *mitzvah* is the concept of being grateful we have been chosen to be Jews. We should work on feeling lucky to be a Yid for months before Pesach in order to say on Pesach night, "I'm happy to be a Jew," and really mean it. This week, I will (*bli neder*) offer Hashem *hoda'ah* as practice for *leil Haseder* and also as a *zechus kiyum*, and I will focus on appreciating how lucky I am that I have *mitzvos* and that my actions have meaning in this world and all the worlds.

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