

An illustration on a blue background showing four hands in various shades of blue holding a globe. The globe is filled with a pattern of small, dark Hebrew characters. The text "This is the Bread of Affliction" is written in white, serif font, arching over the top of the globe. Hebrew text "היא לחמא עניא" is written in black, serif font, curving along the right side of the globe.

This is the Bread of Affliction

היא לחמא עניא

food & justice

haggadah supplement

An **Uri L'Tzedek** project featuring essays, insights, and action to unite Torah, Jewish practice, food, and justice.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction from Uri L'Tzedek		
2-3	Contributors		
4	Editor's Preface		
5	Erev Pesach	ערב פסח	DR. AARON KOLLER
6	Kadesh	קדש	RACHEL BERGER
6	Urchatz	ורחץ	RABBI JOSH FEIGELSON
7-8	Karpas	כרפס	RABBI AVI KATZ ORLOW SHLOMIT COHEN
9	Yachatz	יחץ	SARA WOLKENFELD
10-19	Maggid	מגיד	RABBI YITZ GREENBERG RABBI DAVID WOLKENFELD RABBI DR. DON SEEMAN MERLE FELD RABBI SAMUEL FEINSMITH ROSH KEHILAH DINA NAJMAN ARI HART AARON POTEK
20	Rachtzah	רחצה	RABBI ARI WEISS
21-22	Motzi Matzah	מוציא מצה	RABBI CHAIM SEIDLER-FELLER SHIRA HECHT-KOLLER
23	Maror	מרור	RABBI DAVID JAFFE
24	Korech	כורך	RORI PICKER NEISS
25-27	Shulchan Orech	שלחן עורך	RABBI SHMULY YANKLOWITZ NIGEL SAVAGE
28	Tzafun	צפון	GILAH KLETENIK
29	Barech	ברך	RABBI ARI WEISS
30-32	Hallel	הלל	RABBI NATHAN LOPES CARDOZO ARI L. GOLDMAN RUSSEL M. NEISS
33-35	Nirtzah	נרצה	RABBI ARI WEISS ALIZA DONATH

Introduction from Uri L'Tzedek

The seder is the quintessential Jewish meal. Its food recreates the tastes of slavery and freedom: *matzah*, the bread of affliction; the *maror* of embittered lives and hard work; *charoset*, thick as mortar; the four cups of triumphant redemption; and the savory Pesach sacrifice, a celebration of being passed-over and chosen for a life of service. Food at the seder goes beyond just simple nourishment; it is symbolic and performative.

The seder incorporates these tastes and smells of freedom to tell a story about the Jewish people, specifically, a story of the liberation from slavery and their realization as a people. The Haggadah provides the general narrative of this story but its telling remains incomplete. "In every generation, one must regard themselves as though they had gone out from Egypt" and in every generation we must continue the work of the Exodus and continue to create freedom and fairness in the world. **In this generation, Uri L'Tzedek has chosen to add an ambitious chapter to the seder's never-ending story of oppression and freedom: food and justice.**

Uri L'Tzedek is an Orthodox social justice organization guided by Torah values and dedicated to combating suffering and oppression. Through community-based education, leadership development, and action, Uri L'Tzedek creates discourse, inspires leaders, and empowers the Jewish community towards creating a more just world. In the last three years, Uri L'Tzedek has directly reached over 15,000 individuals in the 175 programs that it has sponsored or co-sponsored nationwide. This number includes programming at over thirty universities, impacting an estimated third of all American Orthodox university students. Through their association with Uri L'Tzedek, participants have studied what Maimonides thought of microfinance, lent tens of thousands of dollars in micro-loans, advocated for the Tav HaYosher, and lobbied for progressive legislation. We have invested significant resources in over one hundred emerging leaders who serve as Uri L'Tzedek fellows, interns, committee heads, and Tav HaYosher compliance officers. The passion and grassroots activism of our community has successfully created social change across North America.

Since Uri L'Tzedek's launch in 2007, a particular focus of our work has been on food justice. The abuse and exploitation of workers in fields, kitchens, and slaughterhouses across North America where kosher food is prepared alarmed us. These injustices needed to be addressed by the Jewish community as consumers of kosher food. Thus, in May 2009, we launched the Tav HaYosher, an ethical seal for kosher restaurants that ensures workers' rights. As of March 2011, over seventy-five kosher eating establishments throughout North America have been awarded the Tav HaYosher, securing the rights of close to a thousand workers. Because of our commitment to food justice, the Uri L'Tzedek leadership team decided to create a *Food and Justice Haggadah Supplement*, highlighting themes related to food, social justice, and ethical consumption found in the Haggadah.

The Bronfman Youth Fellowship in Israel Alumni Venture Fund generously provided a seed grant for this project. We would like to thank their board and Rebecca Voorwinde, the Bronfman Youth Fellowship in Israel's Director of Strategy and Community Engagement, for all of her help. Additional funding for this project was provided by Hazon. We would like to thank Nigel Savage, their Executive Director, for hours of exciting conversation around food and Judaism and for convening the Jewish food movement at the Hazon Food Conference, where we each had the opportunity to explore the various intersections between food, ethics, and Judaism. For almost three years, Uri L'Tzedek has found a home in Bikkurim: An Incubator for New Jewish Ideas. We would like to thank their staff, board, and funders for all their care in supporting Uri L'Tzedek and for their financial support of this project. We recently joined the Joshua Venture Group community and would like to thank them for their financial and organizational support, as well.

This project would not have been possible but for the hard work and dedication of a core group of people. Adina Gerver meticulously edited the *Food and Justice Haggadah Supplement*, enduring countless e-mails and conference calls as the project evolved. Aliza Weiss created the amazing design and aesthetic tone for this Haggadah. Hillary Levison, Uri L'Tzedek's extremely capable Associate Director of Operations, coordinated the supplement's printing and made sure that all aspects of its production flowed seamlessly. We would also like to thank the Uri L'Tzedek Board of Directors. As we continue to grow, they have been a deep reservoir of guidance and advice.

A very big thank you to all of the Haggadah's contributors who volunteered their time, passion, and moral imagination to this project. If you would like to further explore a thought or an idea in this Haggadah or if you would like to join Uri L'Tzedek in its important work, please contact us! You can find us on the web at www.utzedek.org or email us at info@utzedek.org.

Finally, we would like to wish you all a meaningful Pesach. May next year find us in "Yerushalayim, city of righteousness, the Faithful city" [Yeshayahu 1:26].

Ari Hart
Co-Founder, Uri L'Tzedek

Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz
Founder and President, Uri L'Tzedek

Rabbi Ari Weiss
Director, Uri L'Tzedek

Contributors

RACHEL BERGER is the Director of Grantmaking at Jewish Funds for Justice. In the past she has enjoyed working with seniors and the disabled community. Rachel has an MSW from Columbia University. She is married to Josh Frankel.

RABBI DR. NATHAN LOPES CARDOZO is the Founder and Dean of the David Cardozo Academy, Beth Midrash of Abraham Avinu, Jerusalem, and the author of many books and essays on Judaism. Visit www.cardozoschool.org for more information.

SHLOMIT COHEN is studying at the Graduate Program in Advanced Talmudic Studies at Yeshiva University. She graduated from Stern College with a BA in Jewish Studies and a minor in Political Science. Shlomit serves as the volunteer coordinator for Uri L'Tzedek's Tav HaYosher. Shlomit has spent time on Capitol Hill, and with the American Jewish World Service, the Equal Housing Opportunity Council, and Community Voices Heard.

ALIZA DONATH is a freelance writer and artist living in New York City. She has been an avid lover of art, Torah, and food for her whole life, and currently attempts to balance writing for the Jewish humor/lifestyle blog, *Arbitrize*, and food ethics blog, *The Jew and The Carrot*.

RABBI JOSH FEIGELSON is the Campus Rabbi at Northwestern University Hillel. His areas of activism and concern have included human trafficking in Israel, worker justice in the *kashrut* industry, and the living wage campaign at Northwestern. Josh blogs at www.rabbijosh.com

RABBI SAMUEL FEINSMITH is a *musmach* of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah. He served as a Judaic Studies teacher at the Abraham Joshua Heschel School in Manhattan from 2005 to 2010. As an American Jewish World Service (AJWS) *Kol Tzedek* Fellow in 2010, he lectured and taught in numerous synagogues and communities about the intersection of Torah and social justice. This past January, Rabbi Feinsmith completed a three-month stint as a member of the AJWS Volunteer Corps, working at a youth organization in Cambodia. He is currently traveling in some of the poorest countries in Asia on a year-long honeymoon with his wife, Sarah-Bess Dworin.

MERLE FELD's writing includes *Finding Words* (URJ Press, 2011), *A Spiritual Life: Exploring the Heart and Jewish Tradition* (SUNY Press, 2007), and contributions to *Mahzor Lev Shalem* and *The Torah: A Woman's Commentary* and the plays *The Gates are Closing* and *Across the Jordan*. She has facilitated Israeli-Palestinian dialogue in the West Bank and at Seeds of Peace, and worked with Jewish women activists in the Former Soviet Union.

ARI L. GOLDMAN, a former reporter for *The New York Times*, is a professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. He grew up in Hartford, Connecticut and studied at Yeshiva University, Columbia, and Harvard. He is the author of three books, including the best-selling *The Search for God at Harvard*. He lives in Manhattan with his wife and three children and is active in Congregation Ramath Orah.

RABBI YITZ GREENBERG has served in the Rabbinate, academia, Jewish education (adult leadership learning and rabbinic pluralism training), and Jewish philanthropy (education and outreach). His primary teaching is that the Torah is built on the principle of *tzelem elokim*, that every human being is an image of God. This endows them with the dignities of infinite value, equality, and uniqueness. To uphold these dignities, we are commanded to fight poverty, hunger, and oppression and offer justice and caring love to all.

ARI HART is the co-founder of Uri L'Tzedek. As a leader in the Tav HaYosher, Flaums Appetizing, and Agriprocessor campaigns, and as a contributor to the *Huffington Post* blog, *Jerusalem Post*, and *Haaretz* magazine, Ari is working to put food justice on the American Jewish community's agenda.

SHIRA HECHT-KOLLER is the Director of Interdisciplinary Programs and Instructor of Talmud at the North Shore Hebrew Academy High School in Great Neck, NY where she has been involved in designing and implementing school-wide interdisciplinary social justice programs. She received her BA and JD from Yeshiva University, is a graduate of the Bruria Scholars Program at Midreshet Lindenbaum, and has studied at the Bernard Revel Graduate School.

RABBI DAVID JAFFE is the Mashgiach Ruchani of Gann Academy in Waltham, MA and the founder and dean of The Kirva Institute, an organization dedicated to integrating the inner-life and efforts for social change. Before receiving *smichah* from Yeshivat Bat Ayin in Gush Etzion, he was the Director of Social Justice programs at the Boston Jewish Community Relations Council, where he engaged the Boston Jewish community in community organizing and low-income community development.

GILAH KLETENIK is the Congregational Intern at Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun. She engages Jewish texts to inform and inspire social activism, through publishing articles and teaching on the subject. Gilah has worked to combat sex slavery and human trafficking, and has volunteered with AJWS and Uri L'Tzedek.

DR. AARON KOLLER is assistant professor of Jewish Studies and Semitics at Yeshiva University. He also teaches courses on aspects of the Bible and Jewish thought at the Drisha Institute.

ROSH KEHILAH DINA NAJMAN has been the *Marta d'Atra* of Kehilat Orach Eliezer in Manhattan since 2006. She has extensive experience teaching and speaking in the Jewish community on topics ranging from bioethics to environmental law. She is on the Executive Board of the Halakhic Organ Donor Society (HODS) and is Education Committee chair for the Agunah Task Force.

RORI PICKER NEISS is a student at Yeshivat Maharat, having previously worked with Religions for Peace, JOFA, and the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations. Rori is a member of Religions for Peace's Global Youth Network, a CLAL Rabbis Without Borders student fellow, and co-editor of *InterActive Faith: The Essential Interreligious Community-Building Handbook*.

RUSSEL M. NEISS is the Academic Director of Technology and Media Services at the Rodeph Sholom Day School in New York City, where he helps teachers integrate technology in a pedagogically sound manner and helps students actualize their Jewish learning to become *rodpei sholom*.

RABBI AVI ORLOW works at the Foundation for Jewish Camp. Before that, Avi was the Rabbi at the St. Louis Hillel at Washington University where he was involved in many social justice causes. He was ordained in the inaugural class at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah. Avi lives in White Plains, NY with his wife, Cantor Adina Frydman, and their three children Yadid, Yishama, and Emunah.

AARON POTEK is a first-year rabbinical student at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah and the founder of MOOSHY (Meat On Only Shabbat, Happy occasions and Yomtov), an organization that advocates for reducing meat consumption and elevating the meat that we do eat.

NIGEL SAVAGE is the founder and director of Hazon. For more on Hazon's Community-Supported Agriculture programs, Food Conferences, Israel Food Tour, and other food programs, please see www.hazon.org.

RABBI DR. DON SEEMAN is Associate Professor of Religion and Jewish Studies at Emory University. He publishes and lectures broadly on Jewish thought and ethics and the anthropology of religion. His book, *One People, One Blood: Ethiopian-Israelis and the Return to Judaism*, inaugurated the Jewish Cultures of the World series at Rutgers University Press in 2009.

RABBI CHAIM SEIDLER-FELLER is in his 34th year as UCLA Hillel director. He was ordained in 1971 at Yeshiva University, where he also earned an MA in Rabbinic Literature. He has taught Kabbalah and Talmud at the University of Judaism, is a Fellow of the Shalom Hartman Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, and is a member of the Academic Advisory Board of the Wilstein Institute for Social Policy.

RABBI ARI WEISS is the Director of Uri L'Tzedek. As a co-creator of the Tav HaYosher, he aspires to live Rabbi Yisrael Salanter's maxim: "The material needs of my neighbor are my spiritual needs."

RABBI DAVID WOLKENFELD is co-director of the Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus at Princeton University. His specific Torah interests include the interaction of *halachah* and social thought, philosophy of *halachah*, and Jewish political thought. David has partnered with Uri L'Tzedek on several programs at Princeton and has encouraged Princeton students to become involved in Jewish social justice through Uri L'Tzedek.

SARA WOLKENFELD is co-director of the Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus at Princeton University, where she serves as the Jewish Life Coordinator at the Center for Jewish Life. She is a regular member of the summer faculty at the Drisha Institute, where she has taught in both the high school and adult education programs.

RABBI SHMULY YANKLOWITZ is the Founder and President of Uri L'Tzedek, the Senior Jewish Educator at the UCLA Hillel, and a fifth year PhD candidate in Moral Psychology & Epistemology at Columbia University. You can follow Shmuly's writings in his bi-weekly column in *The Jewish Week* called *Street Torah*.

Editor's Preface

I am pleased to present the *Food and Justice Haggadah Supplement*, the result of collaboration between twenty-six contributors, the leadership team of Uri L'Tzedek, and myself, as editor. The Pesach seder, when broad themes of God's justice and mercy traditionally overlap with copious amounts of eating, is the perfect setting for discussing food and justice.

The seder starts, of course, with the rumblings of one's stomach. Dr. Aaron Koller ("Hunger and Liberation on Erev Pesach: Leveling the Playing Field") explains why all, not only first-borns, must fast for the last few hours before Pesach begins and liberation from hunger and fear are celebrated. Shlomit Cohen (*Karpas*), also writing about hunger, reminds us that Judaism is not only a religion of religious worship, but also one that cares about the physical hunger of Pesach celebrants. Sara Wolkenfeld (*Yachatz*) uses the splitting of the *matzah* into two to remind us to consider two kinds of eating: for pleasure and for sustenance. While many of us are lucky enough to engage in both, many are not. Later in the supplement, Russel M. Neiss (*Hallel*) movingly questions how we can thank God with full stomachs while so many remain hungry.

Moving beyond the physical experience of hunger, Rachel Berger (*Kadesh*) tackles the contradiction between the celebratory wine of redemption and those who labor for low wages under difficult conditions to produce that wine. In a discourse on dipping, Rabbi Avi Katz Orlow (*Karpas*) tells us the story of Rav Huna's education about fair wages for workers and urges us to educate ourselves about the same, as well as to consider our treatment of everyone, not only those who suffer in direst poverty. Rosh Kehilah Dina Najman (*Maggid*) reminds us to consider not only our own labor exploitation not only in Egypt, but the way those we label as "other" are exploited in our own times.

In the first of three pieces on *Ha Lachma Anya*, Rabbi Yitz Greenberg reminds us not to overlook what God intended to be our sacred mission in this world, when he redeemed us from Egypt, and not to become too complacent in our current celebratory well-being to forget the stranger, the poor, and the orphan. Rabbi David Wolkenfeld centers his excursions on social solidarity and communal responsibility, and their connections to the *matzah* referred to in *Ha Lachma Anya*. Finally, Rabbi Dr. Don Seeman reflects on the importance of hospitality and what it means today, and how it is connected to revelation.

In "Reflections on *Urchatz*," Rabbi Josh Feigelson urges us to move beyond the ritual aspects of *kashrut* to consider all aspects of ethical food consumption. Merle Feld (*Maggid*) artfully picks up the same theme of different approaches to ethical consumption in her re-reading of the "Four Sons at the Seder Table." Rabbi Samuel FeinSmith ("Four Faces of Social Justice") expands upon Ms. Feld's reading of four sons concerned (or unconcerned) about food justice to provide four ways to educate our communities about broader social justice issues.

Ari Hart reminds us that *Dayenu* did not end with having the *Beit Hamikdash* built for us; it applies, too, today, as we consider our own relative food security and how we consume food. In his piece on the *korban Pesach*, Aaron Potek (*Maggid*) encourages us to consider how and when we consume meat, in particular.

Shira Hecht-Koller uses *matzah* to remind us that in addition to positive, active commandments, we also have commandments to prevent certain things from happening. One of those things is genocide, which Rabbi Ari Weiss uses the story of the *eglah arufah* to connect to *Rachtzah*. Others are highlighted by Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller, in his exhortation to regard *matzah* as the bread of sufficiency, and by Rabbi David Jaffe, who teaches us that *maror*, too, is a reminder not to overlook, not to let suffering by others go unnoticed. Rori Picker Neiss shares a similar message against blindness to injustice, through the connection between *Korech* and *Pesach sheni*.

Finally, we get to the eating part of the meal! Nigel Savage explains that the seder *seudah* serves as the quintessential example of any *seudah*—the halakhically-mandated meal—and all that that entails in terms of consciousness, restraint, and sharing with others. Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz, too, takes the opportunity to remind us that *Shulchan Orech* is more than simply a meal to satiate our physical hunger. Rabbi Ari Weiss (*Barech*) reveals the process of stylizations that frames our eating; he claims that in a Jewish meal the desire to have and taste food must be accompanied by an ethics of eating, including giving thanks to God.

Moving us towards the redemptive end of the Pesach story, Gilah Kletenik ("Hidden Hope") elucidates the connections between hiddenness, exile, and true redemption. Rabbi Dr. Nathan Lopes Cardozo explores some of the pain that the Jewish people has experienced on our way to redemption, and hopes for a time when hatred will be eradicated. Ari L. Goldman reminds us that although we wait for Elijah to come usher in the Final Redemption, we must act together to hasten the coming of Elijah. We must not be complacent. Rabbi Ari Weiss (*Nirtzah*) offers a moral future based on justice as love, which combats the deep pessimism displayed in *Chad Gadya*. Finally, in her paper cuts, artist Aliza Donath reminds us that nothing is simple; everything in life is a process of many steps. Some of those important steps are suggested in the ACT items in this supplement. Take them!

Chag kasher v'sameyach!

Adina Gerver

Editor-in-Chief, *Food and Justice Haggadah Supplement*

Erev Pesach ערב פסח

Hunger and Liberation on Erev Pesach: Leveling the Playing Field DR. AARON KOLLER

עֶרֶב פֶּסַח הַיּוֹם סְמוּךְ לַמְנַחָה, לֹא יֵאָכֵל אֶדָם עַד שֶׁתְּחַשְׁדָּה. אֶפִּילוּ עֲנִי שְׁבִיטָא לֹא יֵאָכֵל
עַד שְׁיִסֵּב. לֹא יִפְתּוּ לוֹ מֵאַרְבָּעָה כּוֹסוֹת שְׁלִיין, אֶפִּילוּ מִן הַתְּמָחוּי. [משנה פסחים י:א]

On the eve of Passover, close to *minchah* time, a person should not eat until it gets dark. Even a poor Jew may not eat until he reclines. They should not provide him with fewer than four cups of wine, even if it comes from the soup kitchen. [Mishnah Pesachim 10:1]

What an odd juxtaposition of laws this *mishnah* presents! The first two clauses mandate hunger practices: no one, not even the poor, may eat from a certain time in the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan until dark. Meanwhile, the last clause obligates the unnamed authorities to make sure that even the most destitute have four cups of wine for the seder, even if it all needs to come from the soup kitchen.

Let us look at these rules more carefully. The first was that no one may eat from “close to *minchah* time,” until darkness falls. According to the Talmud, this mini-fast begins a quarter of the day prior to sunset, so on a typical spring day in Israel, this means refraining from food from about four o’clock in the afternoon until at least about eight o’clock.

The second rule in the *mishnah* is that even poor people are not allowed to eat during this time. The implication is that despite probably not having eaten much all day, they, too, are prohibited from eating in the hours leading up to the seder.

All of this is designed to ensure that the seder begins with hunger. Why is this so important? It may be to increase one’s appetite for *matzah*. But the *mishnah* seems to imply something different: “even a poor Jew may not eat until he reclines.” The fasting, the hunger, can only be broken by an act of celebration and of independence. When does one first recline during the seder? This depends on the various views regarding reclining for wine. According to the Talmud Bavli [Pesachim 108a], some held that only the first two cups of wine required reclining, because one drank them while reliving the Exodus, and others held that only the last two cups of wine required reclining, because only they were drunk after freedom was actually achieved. (Our practice, dictated by the *gemara* there, is to recline for all four cups.)

One gets the impression, therefore, that the goal of the fasting is to create the actual experience of hunger leading up to the encounter with liberation. It would be artificial if we sat down at the seder, contented with full stomachs, and claimed to be reliving the experience of the deliverance from bondage. At least a token effort is necessary: after all, “an individual is obligated to see him or herself as

if one just left Egypt” (although this line is absent in all reliable manuscripts of the *Mishnah*).

For the poor person, too, this experiential component to reliving the redemption is mandatory. Therefore he, too, must not eat for the last quarter of the day, no matter how little he has eaten prior to that time. But our *mishnah* then points out that there are two necessary components to this experiential reenactment, not just one. It is easy for “us” to legislate that the poor must fast like their wealthier co-religionists, but this alone does not guarantee them the same experience that the others have. After all, will they have the means for the second component, for the liberation? Will they be able to feel as if they have been redeemed? Or will they say in exasperation, to paraphrase Rava from a different context [Arachin 10b], “But we are still slaves to poverty!”

Therefore, the *mishnah* rules that the authorities must make sure that the poor, too, have four cups of wine with which to celebrate and reenact the redemption during the seder. Even if it comes from the food pantry, each individual must have four cups of wine this night.

The *mishnah* is thus prescribing a community-wide, shared experience. For the last quarter of the day, everyone, rich or poor, must feel the hunger of bondage, must thirst for freedom. Then at the same time, everyone, in manors and hovels, must recline and drink the first glass of wine.

To create this communal experience of liberation, however, we have to level the playing field. The rich have to refrain from consumption: in other words, they have to act like the poor. The poor, meanwhile, have to be given the means to consume: in other words, they have to act like the rich. This, after all, was the experience of the Exodus. The nation, as one, without class distinctions, underwent the process of liberation. Once a year, we try to recapture that in each of our homes. ■

Kadesh קדש

RACHEL BERGER

At *Kadesh*, we set our intentions for our seder through a cup of wine. Wine, which is at the center of many of our holiest moments, is the vehicle for *kiddush*. Wine is the catalyst for our most sacred intentions: the love and commitment of a wedding ceremony is formalized with *brachot* recited over wine. Perhaps because of its very power of seduction, wine is also susceptible to ruin us through our baser instincts and through our actions: *yayin nesach*, wine used for idolatry, is forbidden to us. Jews are therefore careful about who touches their wine. Wine seems to absorb all that we intend for it, whether good or bad.

While we raise our glasses of wine during *kiddush* and sanctify the holy day of Pesach, *z'man cheiruteinu*, the time of our emancipation, we must be mindful about those who labor for our food, and especially for our wine. While workers across the United States benefit from laws that guarantee "freedom of association and liberty of contract,"¹ farm workers, the lowest paid workers in our county, do not. Those who pick our vegetables, as well as our grapes and other fruit, are denied the working conditions and wages for a good life. They are not liberated from poverty nor are they free from heat exhaustion, pesticides, and other dangers in their work.

It is fitting to recall on Pesach that the origins of the fight for farm workers' rights are tied to wine. Forty-five years ago, César Chávez of the National Farm Workers Association (today the United Farm Workers) launched a national boycott of grapes to bring attention to the plight of farm workers. This boycott eventually led to higher wages and other rights for farm workers in California. But we must recall that farm workers today are still migrant and vulnerable, working more² and earning less than other workers,³ and subject to abuse and indignity.

When we recite the *kiddush* on Passover, we describe our *simchah* and *sasson*, our happiness and rejoicing. This holiday is *zecher liyiztiyat mitzrayim*, a time to recall the Exodus from Egypt. *Kadesh* evokes these sacred collective memories, yet it also alludes to another side of our relationship with our Maker. We say *vikidshanu bimitzvotav*, "God sanctified us through commandments," and we move beneath exalted emotions to unearth the essence of our obligations. During this seder, when we relive and retell the experience of our own liberation so many years ago, we must obligate ourselves to all those who are denied liberation today. When we raise our wine to recite *Kadesh/kiddush*, let our intentions be to invite *everyone* to drink deeply from the full cup of justice. ■

Urchatz ורחץ

RABBI JOSH FEIGELSON Reflections on Urchatz

We have long since forgotten the significance of ritual washing for vegetables, a practice of the ancient *kohanim*. Today, *Urchatz* mainly inspires the question, "Why do we wash and not say a *brachah*?" As though we should only wash if it has ritual significance! The simplest answer to this question is *peshat*: We wash in order to have clean hands when we eat.

Urchatz reminds us that many things don't need to be ritualized to nonetheless be right. While the *halakhot* of *kashrut* may only focus on particular ritual aspects of the slaughter of animals, *ein tzarich lomar*, it is so obvious that it need not be said, that

the ethics of what we eat and how it comes to our table matter in their own right. On this seder night, as on every night, our hands should be clean—not because we need to conform to a ritual requirement, but because it is basic human decency. On this seder night, we remind ourselves of Moses' invocation at the completion of the *mishkan*: "*uma'aseh yadeinu koneneihu*," "and the work of our hands, establish it" [Tehillim 90:17].

On this seder night, as we wash for *Urchatz*, we pray that the actions of our hands will fulfill the aspirations of our minds and hearts. ■

¹ 1935 National Labor Relations Act.

² According to the US Dept. of Labor, the average farm worker works 200 days of the year. The average citizen reports working 175 days a year. <http://www.doleta.gov/agworker/report9/chapter4.cfm#workdays>

³ In California, farm workers earn on average \$19,230 a year. This is some of the lowest paid work in the state, second only to manicurists and shampooers. http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_ca.htm#00-0000

We have finished the first of our four glasses of wine. We have just sat down after the first of the two hand washings. Now, we partake of a vegetable dipped in salt water or vinegar. With the blessing of *borei pri ha'adamah* on our lips and the first sign of spring in our hands, we eat our first food of the evening. However, our excitement of this rite of spring is overshadowed by the salty taste reminding us of the sweaty, backbreaking labor of slavery.

But what of those who dip in vinegar? How are they to connect the vinegar to a deeper message about the day or the ritual of dipping? There is a story from the Talmud that seems pertinent to us in this moment. We learn:

Once, four hundred jars of wine belonging to Rav Huna turned sour. Rav Yehudah, the brother of Rav Sala the Pious, and the other scholars—some say: Rav Adda ben Ahava and the other scholars—went in to visit him [Rav Huna] and said to him: The master ought to examine his actions.

He [Rav Huna] said to them: Am I suspect in your eyes? They replied: Is the Holy One, blessed be God, suspect of punishing without justice?

He [Rav Huna] said to them: If somebody has heard of anything against me, let him speak out.

They replied: We have heard that the master does not give his tenant his [lawful share in the] vine twigs [i.e., fair wages for his work]. He replied: Does he leave me any? He [the tenant farmer] steals them all! They said to him: That is exactly what people say: If you steal from a thief you also have a taste of it! He said to them: I pledge myself to give it to him [in the future]. Some report that thereupon the vinegar became wine again; others that the vinegar went up so high [in value] that it was sold for the same price as wine. [Berachot 5b]

רב הונא תקיפו ליה ארבע מאה דני דחמרא, על לגביה רב יהודה אחוה דרב סלא חסידא ורבנן, ואמרי לה: רב אדא בר אהבה ורבנן, ואמרו ליה: לעיין מר במיליה. אמר להו: ומי חשידנא בעיניכו? אמרו ליה: מי חשיד קודשא בריך הוא דעביד דינא בלא דינא? אמר להו: אי איכא מאן דשמיע עלי מלתא - לימא. אמרו ליה: הכי שמיע לן דלא יהיב מר שבישא לאריסיה. אמר להו: מי קא שביק לי מידי מיניה? הא קא גניב ליה כוליה! אמרו ליה: היינו דאמרי אינשי: בתר גבא גנוב, וטעמא טעים. אמר להו: קבילנא עלי דיהיבנא ליה. איכא דאמרי: הדר חלא והוה חמרא; ואיכא דאמרי: אייקר חלא ואיזדבן בדמי דחמרא. [ברכות ה:]

Rav Huna, a 3rd century CE *amora*, was unwilling to see his misfortune as mere happenstance. As the head of the Academy in Sura, it is clear that Rav Huna wanted to improve himself. After some coaxing, his peers informed him that he was not providing the tenants of his vineyard what was perceived as a fair wage. So, instead of punishing the tenants for stealing from him, Rav Huna paid them a fair wage. The taste of the vinegar was a reminder to Rav Huna to be meticulous in his business dealings, and the ensuing miracle speaks to the significance of his redemptive act.

While there are profound demands on us to see to an end to dire poverty, the very same Rav Huna challenges us to say that this is not enough. We learn:

When he [Rav Huna] had a meal he would open the door wide and declare, “Whosoever is in need let him come and eat. [Ta’anit 20b]

כי הוה כרך ריפתא הוה פתח לבביה ואמר: כל מאן דצריך - ליתי וליכול. [תענית כ:]

It was not just on Passover that Rav Huna opened up his home to the needy. Rav Huna also teaches us that we need to be punctilious in business dealings and not just focus on the most needy or impoverished. Every working person needs to be paid a fair wage, especially those responsible for bringing food to our tables. Rav Huna further teaches us to open our homes and our hearts not only to those who are starving, but to anyone in need. Passover is an occasion for us to reflect on our behavior throughout the whole year. If we allow ourselves to taste the vinegar of the *karpas*, we will come to taste freedom all year. ■

Karpas כרפס

SHLOMIT COHEN

“Rather than claim that poverty or injustice are the means to reach greater spiritual heights, Judaism constantly and consistently emphasizes our imperative to ameliorate suffering, whether our own or that of our fellow human beings.”

The commentators offer various reasons for the *mitzvah* of *karpas*. The Tur, following Rashbam [Pesachim 114a s.v. *ad shemagiah*], famously explains that the *karpas* is meant to elicit questions from the children, as it was unusual to dip anything prior to the actual meal [Tur, O.C. 473]. The Bach, however, offers a different approach towards *karpas*. He suggests that perhaps the custom of *karpas* is to give us the opportunity to eat something, since the meal is still far off, and we should not have to go through the entire *Maggid* narrative without consuming any food [Bach, O.C. 473 s.v. *lokeiach yerakot*].

At first glance, the Bach's approach seems so prosaically pragmatic that the ritual seems in danger of losing its religious significance. However, his suggestion is actually quite profound, in that it highlights Judaism's sensitivity to the needs of human beings even in a context, such as the seder night, in which we might expect to ignore our physical needs in favor of fulfilling the key religious duty of recalling our national redemption. However, rather than deny the necessity of food or the impact of hunger on our physical and emotional psyche, the Bach posits

that the physical reality of human hunger was in fact the primary impetus for the Rabbis to institute the custom of *karpas*.

This has implications for Judaism at large. Judaism does not view human suffering and the inability to access necessary material needs as an expression of religious worship; Judaism is a religion that responds and affirms our humanity. This is highlighted in the way that our own religious rituals, such as *karpas*, reflect these basic needs. Rather than claim that poverty or injustice are the means to reach greater spiritual heights, Judaism constantly and consistently emphasizes our imperative to ameliorate suffering, whether our own or that of our fellow human beings.

We are given the ritual of *Karpas* lest we suffer for a few hours until it is time to eat our celebratory meal. How do we respond to the 925 million people worldwide who do not know where their next meal will come from?¹ ■

ACT Millions of Americans need help putting food on their tables, but can't get fresh produce from the local food pantry.

Millions of American homeowners grow more food in their backyard gardens than they can possibly use.

Ample Harvest <<http://www.ampleharvest.org>> is a nationwide effort to diminish hunger in America by making it easy for millions of backyard gardeners across the country to quickly find local food pantries eager to receive freshly-picked crops for their clients. If you grow food or know others who do, reach out to Ample Harvest and become a part of the solution. _____

¹ See World Food Program Hunger Stats <http://www.fao.org/docrep/012/al390e/al390e00.pdf>

In his commentary on the Haggadah, Rav Avraham Yitchak HaKohen Kook identifies two types of eating that are part of the human experience [*Haggadah Shel Pesach with Olat Ra'ayah*, Mossad Rav Kook, 1947, pp. 23-24]. The first is “*achilah l'teyavon*,” eating for the sake of sustenance. Rav Kook defines this as “the act of eating for the sake of necessity.” People eat when they are hungry; it is necessary for survival. The second type of eating is “*achilah al sovah*,” eating to really feel satisfied. This, Rav Kook says, is eating that brings about joy, consumption that allows us to celebrate our lives and the freedom that we have to relax and enjoy our meals.

When we reach *Yachatz*, we are compelled to take a moment to recognize both of these modes of eating. By breaking the *matzah* in two, we recognize that the way in which we eat can be divided into these two different experiences. All of us, suggests Rav Kook, have engaged in both modes. At times, we eat simply because we are hungry, without giving any thought to the possibility of an elevated, sanctified experience. Other occasions allow us to pause and consider how blessed we are to have the opportunity to engage in a meal that promises true satisfaction for the stomach as well as the soul. However, *Yachatz* is also an opportunity to think beyond our own experiences. Rav Kook emphasizes that even if we ourselves are used to the latter form of eating, the soul-enriching meal during which we give no thought to mundane questions of sustenance, *Yachatz* reminds us that there are people in the world for

whom even that first level of eating is not a given, people who struggle just to put food on the table. In 2009, the USDA reported that 50.2 million people in America were living in food-insecure households (<http://frac.org/reports-and-resources/hunger-data/>).

Yachatz is a moment when we celebrate and elevate the act of eating. The *matzah* is in front of us, and we are so confident in our abundance that we do not need to eat it now. We set it aside; some will be part of our meal, and some will be saved for “dessert” (*afikoman*). Yet by breaking our *matzah* into two, we symbolize this split that exists in our food culture, both in our own lives and in the world around us. In the moment when we see the two pieces of *matzah* in front of us, Rav Kook suggests, we remember that both elements of consumption have the potential to be present in every act of eating. We are mindful of those who encounter food as an urgent necessity, but we are also aware that every act of eating has the potential to be a holy and uplifting moment. ■

“The *matzah* is in front of us, and we are so confident in our abundance that we do not need to eat it now.”

ACT

One way to work in solidarity with the 50.2 million people that live in food-insecure homes is to support changes to the Farm Bill.

The Farm Bill, which comes up for renewal in Congress every 5-7 years, funds much of the production of food in America. Contact your local member of Congress with these asks for the Bill's next iteration:

1. Increase hunger relief programs.
2. Support new programs like Access to Local Foods and school garden programs that encourage public institutions to purchase local produce.
3. Expand innovative pilot programs like the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program and the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program that support healthy eating for low-income citizens.

The *Maggid*—the story of the liberation of the Israelites—begins here. But the arc of telling should have started with the actual narrative: beginning in slavery and total oppression, rising through the ten blows (or plagues) that broke the taskmasters' arrogance and on to the exultation of the *Dayenu* (where we share that our blessings overflow beyond our expectations) and the climax of *Hallel* (songs of praise). Alternatively, for educational purposes, the *Maggid* should have started by engaging the children through the Four Questions.

“[One] danger in the seder experience is that we are so well fed that we feel too accepted and accepting of the status quo, leading us to tune out the deepest purpose of the reenactment *mitzvah*...”

Instead, the Rabbis have us hold up the *matzah* long before we get to it in the telling. Then, they have us insert an invitation to the hungry and the needy to come join the seder and get their share. Thus, the Haggadah first reminds us that the *matzah* we are about to eat and celebrate as the bread of freedom, which our ancestors ate in the desert in order to get out of slavery faster [Shemot 12:39] was before that, first and foremost, the bread of oppression and poverty [Devarim 15:3]. Before entering into the reenactment, the text reminds the seder participants: Before you is the hard bread, the plain flour and water—with all the ingredients of enrichment and pleasure excluded—which was fed to the Hebrew slaves all the years of bondage.

Why start this way? What is the point?

The Rabbis are dealing with two great dangers that arise when we sit down to a celebration of a great victory and immerse ourselves in a beautiful ritual. The first risk is that we feel so good about serving God and obeying the commandment that we overlook that “what does God ask of you...but...to walk in all of God's ways” [Devarim 10:12]. That means, above all, that *Hashem* wants us to imitate God's behaviors. God is “the One who does justice for the exploited, who gives food to the hungry, who sets the captives free” [Tehillim 146:7]. God is the One who calls on us to “do justice to the poor and the one without a parent, to rescue the needy and the destitute” [Tehillim 82:3]. That's what God did in taking us out of Egypt. That should be the outcome of this meal.

The second danger in the seder experience is that we are so well fed

that we feel too accepted and accepting of the status quo, leading us to tune out the deepest purpose of the reenactment *mitzvah*: that “you know the soul of the *ger*/outsider, because you were *gerim*/outsiders in the land of Egypt” [Shemot 23:9]. The Torah wants us to know the soul of the exploited in the Biblical sense—in our bones. In our gut we should feel that we were the (undocumented) immigrants in Egypt who had to take on the dirty work that the Egyptians would not perform. The Torah wants us to taste what it is like to be treated like an alien or an

unskilled worker. The Torah wants us to feel that we were the ones whose wages were not paid on time (a violation of Devarim 24:14-15), who did not get paid for overtime, who had to accept lack of safety on the job, to being exposed to toxic chemicals, to overbearing supervisors—because the alternative was to starve. When our soul is seared by this memory, we can no longer be bystanders. When we swallow the bitter *maror* and it tears up our *kishkes*, only then we will rise up and reject our own status quo, our own playing it safe, our being at ease while the others are tormented.

The Rabbis ask that in response to encountering the bread of poverty, we invite the needy into our homes. In the Rabbis' vision, we commit to sharing our well-being and to engaging with the poor. Then we pledge that “*Ha-Shata Avday; L'Shanah Ha'Baah B'nei Chorin*” – “this year we [have tolerated being] slaves, next year [we will be/we will help others become] free people.” ■



Rabbi Greenberg writes that we commit to engaging with the poor and sharing our well-being with them.

One effective way of accomplishing this dual goal is by joining the Uri L'Tzedek lending group on Kiva (http://www.kiva.org/team/uri_ltzedek). Kiva is “a non-profit organization with a mission to connect people through lending to alleviate poverty. Leveraging the internet and a worldwide network of microfinance institutions, Kiva lets individuals lend as little as \$25 to help create opportunity around the world.” In the last two years, members of the Kiva Uri L'Tzedek group have made loans of over \$10,000, financing over 350 projects throughout the developing world.

“[W]ithout manifesting and demonstrating the sense of solidarity, responsibility, unity, and readiness to share and participate, the whole seder becomes meaningless.”

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik writes that the apparent redundancy in the declaration of *Ha Lachma Anya*—the invitation to “those who are hungry” and to “those who are in need”—is, in fact, not redundant:

Whoever is in need of bread, *dichfin*, is hungry. *Kol ditzrich* refers to one who is alone, who has a lot of *matzah* and wine but no home or family. There are indeed many ways to be included among the *kol ditzrich*. The invitation to “all who are in need” is not *yeitei ve-yeichol*, to eat with us; but rather, it is to spend the Pesach with us, *yeitei ve-yifsach*, to celebrate with us. It is an invitation addressed to unfortunate and lonely people. They might be millionaires; it is completely irrelevant. Whoever is in need should come and celebrate. *Ha Lachma Anya* is the renewal of a pledge of solidarity among the Jewish people... It is a proclamation that we are one people and we are ready to help each other. [*The Seder Night: An Exalted Evening*. New Jersey: Ktav, 2009, p. 27]

When understood in this way, *Ha Lachma Anya* transforms the seder into a ritual of social solidarity. Of course praise, gratitude, and the reenactment of freedom are predominant themes of the seder, but the fostering of solidarity is an important undercurrent. In Rav Soloveitchik’s words, “without manifesting and demonstrating the sense of solidarity, responsibility, unity, and readiness to share and participate, the whole seder becomes meaningless” (*ibid.* p. 28).

Another term for the “readiness to share and participate” is social capital. In his groundbreaking book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), Harvard professor Robert Putnam presented a bleak picture of contemporary American life. The title comes from Putnam’s observation that, although bowling remains a popular past time, fewer Americans now bowl on teams. Instead of bowling with friends, as was once common, Americans now go “bowling alone.” Over the past 25 years, there has been a 35% decline in “having friends over,” a 58% drop in “attending club meetings,” and a 43% drop in family dinners (<http://bowlingalone.com>). Putnam argues that aside from any direct negative implications of those statistics, they mark a decline

in social capital, “the very fabric of our connections with each other.”

Pesach is a time particularly appropriate for fostering these ties of social solidarity because there is a connection between *matzah* itself and social solidarity. This connection is explained by in the Vilna Gaon as emerging from the passive voice adopted by the Torah to describe the *mitzvah* to eat *matzah* (“*matzot* shall be eaten for seven days”). In the words of Rabbi Yonason Sacks [*Hagaddah Chazon L’Yomim*, Feldheim, 2009, p. 107], “by formulating the imperative in the passive voice, the Torah implies that the obligation of *matzah* is not simply to eat *matzah*, but rather to ensure that *matzah* is eaten by everyone.” Thus, when reciting *Ha Lachma Anya*, we are making a declaration of social solidarity centered upon a substance, *matzah*, whose very consumption mandates social consciousness. ■

“[R]ight now, at the beginning of the seder, gathered with our families and secure in our deep enmeshment in the spiritual project of the night, right now above all, we need to be reminded: Hospitality precedes revelation...”

Ha *Lachma Anya* is by all accounts a relatively late addition to the Haggadah. The fact that it is written in Aramaic and the fact that it calls all who are hungry to come and eat without having had them in mind when the *korban Pesach* was slaughtered, means that it probably was added long after the destruction. Nevertheless, Rav Matityahu Gaon (ninth century) testifies that already in his day, it was considered “an ancient custom of our ancestors” to open the door at the beginning of the seder to invite guests. What is the logic behind this custom? Coming after *kiddush* and before the beginning of *Maggid* (at least according to the dominant Ashkenazi practice), it seems like an interruption or at least a non-sequitur in the liturgy of the evening. But this very fact may teach us a very important lesson about the relationship between ethics and divine revelation in Jewish life.

Let us consider two very different approaches to the relationship between Torah and hospitality in Jewish life. In Chapter 18 of Genesis, an elderly Abraham sits at the entrance to his tent recovering from the ordeal of circumcision that has just been imposed upon him and his household by this God for whom he has already sacrificed everything—or almost everything—a man can be asked to sacrifice. Suddenly, shimmering in the heat upon the empty horizon, he spies what look like three Bedouin travelers on some unknown errand, and rather than watching them or girding his family’s defenses, Abraham’s first response is to rush to greet them and to offer them his hospitality. He slaughters a calf and his wife bakes cakes which the midrash tells us should be thought of as *matzah*—it was Passover, says the midrash, after all. There is however, an obvious problem in the story as the Torah tells it: “And God appeared to Abraham as he sat among the groves of Mamre in the hot part of the day. And he lifted up his eyes and looked and saw, behold, three men coming towards him, so he ran to greet them...” We are told that God appeared to Abraham, but then hear no more about this as the text immediately begins to tell us about the visit of the three travelers who turn out to be angels.

All the major commentators understand this story as telling us something about the importance of hospitality to the stranger and the righteousness of Abraham. But beyond that, different readings abound. For the Baal Shem Tov, founder of Hasidism in eighteenth-century Eastern Europe, there is no contradiction here at all. When the text tells us that God appeared to Abraham, that is just an introduction. What it means is that Abraham saw three potential guests and rushed to greet them. “The guest who comes,” teaches the Baal Shem Tov, “brings Torah to the master of the house,” and the Torah that is revealed between them could not have been revealed except for that encounter. For the Baal Shem Tov, caring for guests in the desert is *itself an act of divine encounter and revelation*. There is something appealing about this approach, which sees the face of God in the face of the other. But what becomes of all the norms of religious life in this approach?

Another reading comes to us by way of the great Lithuanian scholar and teacher, R. Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, the Netziv. According to the Netziv, “and God appeared to Abraham” means that Abraham was engaged at that time in spiritual pursuits. He was davening, he was communing with God, maybe he was even contemplating the depths of Torah. But then three wanderers appeared, and in the shadow of the opportunity to perform a *mitzvah* like *hachnasat orchim*, Abraham knew that he had to put his communion with God aside, as it were, in order to fulfill the halakha: “The reception of guests is greater than the reception of the *Shechinah*.” One should not miss the anti-Hasidic polemic implied by the Netziv’s approach, but neither should one reduce his teaching to a narrow polemical context. On the contrary, his point is that for Jews like Abraham who are committed to the divine word, for Jews like these in particular, the chance to do a *mitzvah* for another person must sometimes paradoxically take precedence over any “religious experience,” even the most profound and authentic. It is one level to see God in the face of the other, and another level entirely to understand that one must sometimes

take leave of God in order to the care for the other.

So we begin the seder on Passover by calling out, “Let all who are hungry come and eat!” It may only be a metaphor nowadays. Already in the ninth century, Rav Matityahu Gaon commented that today, when we are dispersed among the nations, we prefer to distribute charity before the holiday rather than waiting to extend invitations to all of our neighbors at the last minute. Yet still, we hold onto the custom of calling out at the beginning of the seder as Abraham did, perhaps because we need more than ever the *liturgical interruption* that this custom engenders. This is true, even though we may have already provided for the poor—how the Chafetz Chayyim rails against any Jewish community that did not provide at least wine and *matzah* to those in need!—and even though we may already have extended our invitations to the lonely and desolate. Indeed, the Baalei Ha-Tosafot worry that if we really opened our doors literally at this moment, our homes might be truly overrun by those who could not or did not provide for themselves, and that this would be bad for the guests as well as the householders. Nothing in Jewish tradition is completely straightforward, after all, and pious proclamations do not free us of the responsibility to care also for our own.

But right now, at the beginning of the seder, gathered with our families and secure in our deep enmeshment in the spiritual project of the night, right now above all, we need to be reminded: Hospitality precedes revelation. “Greater is the welcoming of guests than the welcoming of the *Shechinah*” [Shabbat 127a]. Great is the power of ritual to remind us of these truths. Moreover, the end is contained in the beginning, our final redemption contained within our memory of our father Abraham. In the merit of “let all who are hungry come and eat,” teaches Rav Kook, may we merit speedily to complete the verse: “Let all who are needy come and celebrate the Passover with us,” in Jerusalem rebuilt and Israel redeemed. ■



Over the remainder of this Passover, actively seek out individuals who would appreciate hospitality. If your shul doesn't have a hospitality committee, start one.

Maggid מגיד

MERLE FELD Four Sons At The Seder Table

The Wise One: I want to know where this *matzah*, this brisket, this chocolate cake came from? Is the food at this feast truly sanctified? Has the meat that is giving me pleasure been processed by someone who is too young to be working? By someone who is paid the wages of a slave? With what research tools and by what methods may I identify food which is in every way kosher?

The Wicked One: How is it my problem if the animal whose flesh I enjoy tonight suffered as it lived and died? Why should I be concerned if the woman my parents have hired to serve and clean up our large gathering cannot go home until after the buses have stopped running?

The Simple One: Who harvested all the produce at our seder table and how are their lives blessed or plagued? What dishes can we make from fruits and vegetables grown near our home or frozen in season and stored for tonight? What is a carbon footprint?

The One Who Does Not Know How To Ask A Question: I just want to celebrate this happy holiday and not disturb myself with large issues I cannot possibly understand or problems that are too vast to be solved. ■



ACT Next time you purchase food, make sure you ask the right questions! Fair trade helps you do just that.

Fair trade uses a market-based approach to support food producers around the world from exploitation and abuse. Fair trade is a trading partnership based on dialogue, transparency, and respect that seeks greater equity in international trade. You can take action by buying coffee, chocolate, sugar, tea, bananas, honey, fruit, and more that is certified as fair trade. Look for special seals on many of your favorite products and ask your local grocer to carry fair trade items. _____

“[T]he Haggadah outlines four fundamental approaches to educating our community about the Divine call to social justice.”

Nechama Leibowitz believed that God orchestrated our servitude in Egypt in order to sensitize the Jewish people to human suffering. Redemption laid the “religious duty...to redeem [our] fellow-being from the slavery he had been reduced to for lack of means” [Nechama Leibowitz, Introduction to *New Studies in Shemot*]. By ritually reliving the story of bondage and liberation each year, we reaffirm the responsibility to sensitize our community to injustice so that we can renew our devotion to ending it. This lens provides us with the possibility of a figurative reading of the *Arba'ah Banim* that sees each child as representing a different orientation to the Passover story, and by extension to human suffering and the pursuit of justice.

The *Chacham* is the individual who already accepts the Divine directive to pursue justice but seeks deeper direction about how to proceed. The suggested response, “After the Passover Sacrifice we do not follow up with *afikomen*,” is instructive. The *afikomen* has been identified by scholars as the *epikomion* of the Greek Symposium—licentious post-dining revelry [Baruch M. Bokser, *The Origins of the Seder*]. With this etymology in mind, perhaps the response to the committed individual can be rendered as, “You’ve already made the Passover sacrifice of responding to human suffering. Now don’t allow yourself to become distracted by frivolous pursuits. Stay focused! The correct path will reveal itself through your ongoing commitment.”

The *Rasha* is the individual who is unwilling to assume the responsibility of responding to human suffering. As Rabbi A.J. Heschel was known to say, “The opposite of good is not evil, it is indifference.” It is the disposition of indifference in the face of human suffering that makes the *Rasha* an agent for the triumph of evil. The recommended response strikes us as violent and jarring, as does the affirmation that this individual would not have been redeemed from slavery. Yet someone who takes a stance of indifference *must* be shocked out of complacency (albeit by means less violent than those described in the Haggadah), perhaps by illustrating to them that their attitude is in reality self-defeating: “If everyone adopts your current mind-frame, there will be no one left to redeem you from your own suffering!”

The *Tam* asks “What is this?” This child is the individual who does not even know what social

justice work is. The suggested response, “The Lord delivered us from Egypt, from the house of bondage, with an outstretched Arm,” provides a foundational narrative framework for educating this individual about the human condition and the nature of Jewish responsibility: “We were slaves in Egypt, and we were redeemed by the Almighty. Millions of people are slaves today, and as Jews we have a responsibility to redeem them. That’s the nature of our work.”

The *She'eino Yodeiah Lish'ol* is the individual who is so overwhelmed by human suffering that he or she cannot even articulate a question. Here the suggested response to the would-be guide is “You provide an opening!” Those who are driven to silence by the enormity of the task must be taken by the hand and provided with concrete guidelines about where to begin and how to proceed: “Yes, the task is overwhelming, but there are some concrete attainable benchmarks that can be achieved, and countless people who will benefit. Come, let me show you the way...”

Seen in this light, the Haggadah thus outlines four fundamental approaches to educating our community about the Divine call to social justice. We must encourage focus and continued commitment for those who are already involved, shock the indifferent out of complacency, clarify the nature and urgency of our work for the uninitiated, and provide clear guidance and support to those who feel overwhelmed by the task. ■

Maggid מגיד

ROSH KEHILAH DINA NAJMAN וירעו אתנו המצרים

In the *Maggid* section of the Haggadah, we are presented with the *midrashic* interpretation of the *vidui ma'aser*, the declaration made by the farmer when bringing the first fruits to the *Beit Hamikdash*. This declaration begins with a short history of the Jewish people. Concerning our time in Egypt, the verse says (and the farmer is directed to declare):

וַיַּרְעוּ אֶתְנוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ, וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבֹדָה
קָשָׁה. [דברים כו:ו]

The Egyptians dealt harshly with us, and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labor upon us.
[Devarim 26:6]

The Haggadah parses each phrase of this verse to elaborate and expound on our oppression at the hands of the Egyptians. To understand the beginning of the verse *וַיַּרְעוּ אֶתְנוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם*, generally translated as “The Egyptians dealt harshly with us,” *Chazal* quote the following verse from *Shemot* 1:10:

הֲבֵיאָה גַּתְחֻמָּה לּוֹ פֶּן יִרְבֶּה, וְהִיָּה כִי תִקְרָאנָה
מִלְחָמָה וְנוֹסֵף גַּם הוּא עַל שְׂנְאֵינוּ וְנִלְחַם בָּנוּ, וְעָלָה
מִן הָאָרֶץ

Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase; otherwise, in the event of war they may join our enemies in fighting against us and get them up out of the land.

As terrible as the consequences of this statement were, how does this particular verse explain how the Egyptians were evil to us? It seems that it would have been more fitting for *Chazal* to cite the verses that follow Pharaoh's declaration and that outline the oppressive and degrading treatment, including:

אִם-בֶּן-בֵּן הוּא וְהַמֶּתֶן אֹתוֹ, וְאִם-בֵּת הוּא וְחִיתָ.
[שמות א:טו]

If it is a boy kill him, if it is a girl, let her live. [Shemot 1:16]

The *Netziv*, Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, in his commentary on the Torah, explains that *וַיַּרְעוּ אֶתְנוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם* does not mean that the Egyptians were evil to us. For the verse to mean “they were evil to us,” the Torah would have used the phrase *וַיַּרְעוּ לָנוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם*. The Torah is telling us that the Egyptians made us bad: *וַיַּרְעוּ אֶתְנוּ*.

According to the *Netziv*, the Egyptians ascribed to us evil intentions, which never even arose in our minds. They caused us to be seen negatively in the eyes of other Egyptians.

Many often think of Pharaoh's statement, “Let us deal wisely with them” as merely an expression of his own paranoia, albeit with horrific consequences. According to *Chazal's* understanding of this verse, Pharaoh made us evil in the eyes of the Egyptian people. By describing the Jewish people negatively and with threatening intentions, it was much easier for the Egyptians to enslave us and treat us as less than human. *Chazal* understood the power of propaganda to make mistreatment of a people easier. This understanding of *וַיַּרְעוּ אֶתְנוּ* to influence how one population treats another has persisted from Egypt to modern times in the racist stereotyping of African Americans, of Jews in Nazi Germany, and of Latinos and foreign workers. The myth of being overtaken by the other in our midst continues to be used as a means of labor exploitation.

On *leil seder*, we retell but we also learn from our history. We recall how, as a people, we were subject to profound misrepresentation and suffered gross mistreatment through severe physical and psychological abuse at the hands of the Egyptians.

Just a short time after the Exodus, we are commanded by God not to oppress the foreigner based on our own experience in Egypt:

וְגַר, לֹא תִלְחָד; וְאִתָּם, יִדְעִתֶם אֶת-נֶפֶשׁ הַגֵּר--כִּי
גֵרִים הֵייתֶם, בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם. [שמות כג:ט]

You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt. [Shemot 23:9]

This idea is reiterated throughout the Torah with reference to the national memory of our oppression in Egypt. Whatever the specific meaning of the word *ger* is in this context, the simple meaning of the text must be that as a people with a national history and memory of exploitation and degradation, we cannot permit similar mistreatment of others. This approach is expressed in the well-known statement of Hillel the Elder: “מה ששנוי עליך אל תעשה לחברך” “That which is abhorrent to you, do not do to others.”

The concern for the just treatment of foreign workers has institutional implications. The Torah commands us in *Vayikra* (19:32-33):

מִפְּנֵי שִׁיבָה תִּקְוִים, וְהוֹדַרְתָּ פָּנֶיךָ; וְיָרָאתָ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ,
אֲנִי יְקֹנֶךָ. וְכִי-יָגוּר אִתְּךָ גֵר, בְּאַרְצְכֶם--לֹא תוֹנוּ,
אֹתוֹ.

You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord. When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him.

Ibn Ezra explains, “The Torah mentioned it [the *ger*] after the elder. The reason is that just as I warned you to give honor to the Jewish elder because he does not have strength, in that way, I warned you about the *ger* because your strength is greater than his; or because he does not have strength because he is in your land and your domain.”

Ibn Ezra emphasizes that just as one must be reminded to treat an elder with heightened respect, so too, one needs to be cognizant of the fact that there is an imbalance of power relative to the *ger*. We must have a finely-tuned sensitivity to that power in order to not abuse it.

The Torah commands us to draw on our own experience not only in our personal and business relationships with those who are “foreign” or “other.” We must also implement this sensitivity throughout our communal institutions and legislation. Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch comments on the verse from Shemot (22:20)

וְגֵר לֹא-תוֹנוּהוּ, וְלֹא תִלְחָצְנוּ: כִּי-גֵרִים הֵייתֶם, בְּאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם.

Here it says simply and absolutely כִּי- גֵרִים *ACT*, your whole misfortune in Egypt was that you were גֵרִים ‘foreigners,’ ‘aliens,’ there, as such, according to the views of other nations, you had no right to be there, has no claim to rights of settlement, home, or property. Accordingly, you had no rights in appeal against unfair or unjust treatment. As aliens you were without any rights in Egypt, out of that grew all of your עֲבֹדוֹת (bondage) and עֲוִי (oppression) your slavery and wretchedness. Therefore beware, so runs the warning, from making rights in your own State conditional on anything other than on that simple humanity which every human being as such bears within him. With any limitation in these human rights the gate is opened to the whole horror of Egyptian mishandling of human beings.

We have the opportunity to use the seder night to carry forward the strength and understanding gained by seeing ourselves as having personally left Egypt. The Torah obligates us to use our experience as a means of teaching ourselves to treat people fairly and humanely and to ensure that the society that we create is as far from the oppression and abuse of Egypt as possible. On *leil haseder*, we can enhance the educational and transformative nature of the meal by considering those who might be considered “other” and have labored in one of the many points from the farm or factory to the bounty that we enjoy at our table. We must never be influenced by the false and pejorative descriptions of other human beings to in any way deprive them of just treatment. Inherent in our national identity are our concern for the dignity and just treatment of all human beings and our advocacy for those who do not have the power or voice to claim their rights. ■

“Chazal understood the power of propaganda to make mistreatment of a people easier.”

ACT “The Egyptians dealt harshly with us, and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labor upon us.” [Devarim 26:6]

Launched by Uri L’Tzedek, the Tav HaYosher is a local, grassroots initiative to bring workers, restaurant owners, and community members together to create just workplaces in kosher restaurants. Join us to ensure that the society that we create is as far from the oppression and abuse of Egypt as possible by doing these three things:

1. Asking your local food establishments to join the Tav. It’s free and easy to join.
2. Volunteer as a compliance officer or partnership builder.
3. Generate consumer support for the Tav through educational events and community outreach.

Maggid מגיד

ARI HART *Dayenu!*

“The manna was a food miracle from God: sustaining, nutritious, plentiful, consistent, and free. Yet *B’nei Yisrael* couldn’t appreciate it.”

If he had provided for our needs in the wilderness for 40 years—*dayenu!*

If he had fed us manna—*dayenu!*

When reciting these verses, some Sephardic Jews have a fascinating *minhag*. They take long-stemmed green onions or leeks and use them to playfully whip each other on the head!

Some attribute the source of this *minhag* to the following verse, in which the Jewish people are grumbling in the desert: “We remember the fish that we used to eat in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. Now our gullets are shriveled. There is nothing at all. Nothing but this manna to look at!” [Bamidbar 11:5-6]

What’s the connection? The manna was a food miracle from God: sustaining, nutritious, plentiful, consistent, and free. Yet *B’nei Yisrael* couldn’t appreciate it. The *minhag* to whip each other with green onions and leeks is a physical reminder of our mistake in the desert: not appreciating the food miracles we had.

For some Americans, myself included, the modern food system is also nothing short of miraculous: sustaining, nutritious, plentiful, consistent, and

affordable. Almost any fruit, from anywhere in the world, in any season, can be found fresh in a local supermarket. Going to bed hungry is unthinkable. *Dayenu, dayenu, dayenu!* But we forget, we grumble. “Now our gullets are shriveled. There is nothing at all!”

How many of us have looked inside a full refrigerator or a stuffed pantry and thought, “There’s nothing to eat!” How many of us have complained about food that was healthy, sustaining, and plentiful, but that didn’t meet our sensual desires? How many of us have exclaimed “I’m starving!” after eating a meal just a few hours ago? How many of us feel that not eating *chametz* for a week is a real hardship, without ever going close to hungry? I know that I have.

On a holiday when many of us eat exorbitant amounts of food, we are called to maintain that *dayenu* mentality. This year, may the recitation of *dayenu* help us do just that, through its lyrics, melody, and for some, the end of a playful whip!

Dayenu! ■

ACT

It’s enough! In the last twenty years, many non-government organizations have organized around the Jubilee Debt Campaign to reduce the hundred

of billions of dollars of debt that developing countries have accrued. Servicing this debt costs billions, money that can be better allocated social service and the creation of a civil society. This campaign has had some great successes: to date the International Monetary Fund and World Bank have provided over \$72 billion in debt relief for 36 countries. These institutions need to do more! Contact your local Senator or member of Congress and request complete debt relief for developing counties. _____

The *korban Pesach* was the centerpiece of our first seder before leaving Egypt. When the *Beit Hamikdash* was still standing, anyone who did not participate in the *korban Pesach* was cut off from the Jewish people. Even after the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash*, it has remained a critical part of the seder. Leading up to the seder, the Vilna Gaon would recite all the *psukim* from *Tanach* that relate to the *korban Pesach*. Each year, at the seder, we read Ramban Gamliel's statement that one who does not mention the *korban Pesach* the night of the seder does not fulfill the obligation to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt [Mishnah Pesachim 10:5].

Many reasons can be given for the importance of this commandment. It is the first detailed *mitzvah* we received as a nation [Shemot 12:3-13], it symbolizes a blatant rejection of Egyptian theology, and it recalls G-d's passing over and protection of *B'nei Yisrael* the night He struck the Egyptian firstborns. However, about all of these reasons we can ask: Now that the *Beit Hamikdash* is destroyed and we cannot bring the sacrifice, why should it still hold the same importance in our modern-day *sedarim*?

Though we can no longer offer the *korban Pesach*, I believe this *mitzvah* conveys values that are still relevant today. The *mitzvah* to sanctify time through counting the months immediately precedes the detailed instructions for *korban Pesach* [Shemot 12:1-2]. Jewish holidays may be celebrated cyclically, but it is during this moment that G-d reveals linear time. This is a radical concept for an about-to-be-liberated people who had previously known each day to be much like the previous one. In our new lives as a freed people, the calendar symbolizes our constant progress. With the Exodus from Egypt, we began our calendar and thus our belief in a future that we can shape.

Passover is a celebration of the day the Jewish nation entered world history. To appreciate our growth, we must acknowledge significant moments in our lives and in our nation's history. But simply celebrating this intellectually, in our minds, is not enough. It is no coincidence, then, that the Torah transitions from the commandment about counting months to the commandment about offering the *korban Pesach*. The *korban Pesach* is G-d's way of allowing us to celebrate through action. It is the same reason we were commanded to offer the first fruits at the *Beit Hamikdash* or to say *kiddush* on Shabbat—to sanctify moments through action.

Just as there are significant moments in our lives that require special awareness, there are also significant acts, such as the eating of meat, about which the Torah also demands a special awareness.

Rav Kook writes "The regulations of slaughter, in special prescriptions, to reduce the pain of the animal registers a reminder that we are not dealing with things outside the law, that they are not automatons, devoid of life, but with living things" [Ben Zion Bokser, *Abraham Isaac Kook: The Lights of Penitence, The Moral Principles, Lights of Holiness, Essays, Letters, and Poems*, Paulist Press, 1978, p. 319].

The *korban Pesach*, the only commandment in the Torah to specifically require everyone to eat meat, shows that we can heighten our consciousness of spiritually significant moments through holy deeds. And this consciousness in turn can give significance to the physical act. Today, we don't offer the *korban Pesach*, but we can regain the spiritual practice of eating meat by limiting it to these special moments. In doing so, we will internalize the broader message of *pesach*—that active celebration of our past should lay the groundwork for building a better future. ■

“Passover is a celebration of the day the Jewish nation entered world history. To appreciate our growth, we must acknowledge significant moments in our lives and in our nation's history. But simply celebrating this intellectually, in our minds, is not enough.”

Rachtzah רחצה

RABBI ARI WEISS

When the seder meal was originally ordered in late Antiquity, we washed our hands at *rachtzah* to purify them, so that the *matzah* bread would not become ritually impure. Although these purity laws are no longer current, the deep symbolic force of the purifying power of water still resonates within Jewish life. One example is the phrase “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities,” which we recite during the *yamim noraim* [Yechezkel 36:25].

In the case of the *eglah arufah*, water not only purifies but absolves. To recall: A murdered corpse is found in the field, and the murderer is unknown. The elders of the nearest town are identified, a cow is brought, and its neck is broken. The elders wash *their hands* over the broken animal and declare, “Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it” [Devarim 21:1-9].

The *mishnah* [Sotah 9:6] that comments on this passage is incredulous: “Could it be that the elders of a Court were shedders of blood?” Rather, the *mishnah* (as cited in the Talmud Bavli [Sotah 46b-47a]), interprets the elders as saying, “He came into our hands that we should have dismissed him without sustenance, and we did not see him and leave him without an escort.” The *mishnah*, then,

according to the Bavli’s reading, obligates the elders, i.e., those with the capacity to act, with a set of specific and concrete responsibilities. They must feed and protect people who pass through their town. If they fail this test, they are morally responsible; if they constantly meet this obligation, then the elders can literally wash their hands of culpability in a specific case that escapes their notice.

If, as Thomas Friedman famously announced, the world is flat in a globalized and interconnected age, can we legitimately continue to proclaim our innocence and wash our hands of all responsibility when we constantly encounter victims of injustice? I believe that just as the elders of the town must invest in the protection of life of everyone they encounter by sustaining and escorting visitors, we must do the same even if they are only encountered virtually. We can no longer say, “Never again,” only to see and read about victims of genocide again (in Cambodia) and again (in Rwanda) and again (in the former Republics of Yugoslavia) and again (in Darfur) and again (in Democratic Republic of Congo).

Only after we have acted to the limits of our capacity to fight against the loss of life, can we, like the elders of the town, wash our hands in good conscience and enjoy the upcoming meal. ■

“If, as Thomas Friedman famously announced, the world is flat in a globalized and interconnected age, can we legitimately continue to proclaim our innocence and wash our hands of all responsibility when we constantly encounter victims of injustice?”

Motzi Matzah מוציא מצה

Matzah, the Bread of Sufficiency RABBI CHAIM SEIDLER-FELLER

“Can we attempt to change our habits and values and affirm the goal of being ‘satisfied with our portion?’”

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, my revered teacher, suggests in his Haggadah commentary that we view the Passover *matzah* as a type of manna, the simple desert food eaten by the freed slaves during their forty years of wandering. Living on manna required discipline—the discipline of not gathering too much, the discipline of sharing limited resources, the discipline of restraint—for if you took too much, it rotted. One learned to gather each morning only that which was necessary for survival.

What a wonderful and poignant message for our world at this time of economic crisis as we endeavor to curb our obsessive drive to acquire and accumulate more! Perhaps we will learn to conceive of the *matzah* not merely as the bread of affliction (*lechem oni*) but also as the *bread of sufficiency*. Thus, we will transform the *matzah* that symbolizes oppression into the *matzah* that symbolizes the ultimate freedom from subjugation to desire.

Can we strive together to embrace a standard of sufficiency that will reduce competition, jealousy, enmity, and violence? Can we attempt to change our habits and values and affirm the goal of being “satisfied with our portion”? If so, Elijah beckons, challenging us to cross the threshold into the world blessed by enough: *dayenu!* ■

» *For more about being satisfied with one’s portion, see Pirkei Avot 4:1.*

ACT

Over the next seven days of Pesach, identify the non-essential, *chametzdik* food products that you are not consuming because it is Pesach: pastries, crackers, etc. Donate the money you would normally spend on those products to a local food pantry. After Pesach, choose one of those items to eliminate from your diet for the rest of the year. Donate the money you save to fighting hunger. One place to start is at your local food rescue organization, which helps reduce food waste while feeding the hungry. _____

Motzi Matzah מוציא מצה

SHIRA HECHT-KOLLER Matzah: Omissions and Commissions

“When thinking about both our observance of laws, and our actions as human beings, we tend to think in concrete, neat distinctions: are we actually doing something wrong, or merely allowing a wrong to occur?”

The Biblical presentation of the laws of *matzah* leaves the reader with the lines blurred between active and passive obligations and between positive and negative commandments, and with a distinct sense that the text is imparting a message far beyond the technical requirements of the law.

Of course, the whole obligation to eat *matzah* is actually to eat something that is not *chametz*. However, conceptually, it goes beyond this. Although the Torah says “*shivat yamim matzot tocheilu*” [Shemot 12:15], halakhically, the *mitzvah* to eat *matzah* is only applicable on the first day of *Pesach* [Rambam, Hilchot Chametz U-Matzah 6:1]. What is true is that there is a prohibition against eating *chametz* for seven days. The Torah, therefore, appears to be formulating a negative commandment—don’t eat *chametz*—as a positive one—eat *matzah*. The Torah’s presentation of the law inextricably weaves the negative, passive commandment with a positive, active one.

The same technique of interweaving positive and negative commandments is at play in the presentation of the law of *tashbitu*, the positive commandment to remove all *chametz* from one’s property [“*ach bayom harishon tashbitu se’or mibateichem*,” Shemot 12:15]. Again, although the Torah commands *tashbitu* as a positive action, the positive obligation is actually to not have *chametz*. Consequently, there is no requirement to go and acquire *chametz* in order to get rid of it; the prohibition is against *having chametz*. Once again, the Torah formulates a negative commandment—don’t have *chametz*—as a positive one—*tashbitu*, remove *chametz*.

Finally, the Torah commands “*ushmartem et ha-matzot*” [Shemot 12:17] to “guard the *matzot*,” which demands that we supervise the *matzah*-making process to ensure that no fermentation occurs. Here, the Torah’s command transcends the requirement to not eat *chametz*, and, again, blurs the lines between the positive and negative, the active and passive. We have, as a result, a positive *mitzvah* to prevent something from occurring.

It is clear from these examples that though we are inclined to do so, it is not always appropriate to group laws into neat categories of active vs. passive or positive vs. negative. When thinking about both our observance of laws, and our actions as human beings, we tend to think in concrete, neat distinctions: are we actually doing something wrong, or merely allowing a wrong to occur? Are we culpable, or did we just not prevent someone else from being culpable? The *mitzvah* of *matzah* demonstrates, however, that we cannot always make such neat distinctions. At times, we need to be *active* to ensure that something does *not* simply “occur.” The whole *mitzvah* of *matzah* erases these convenient distinctions by formulating prohibitions as commandments, negatives as positives, and passivity as activity. The obligation of *ushmartem et ha-matzot* instructs us to live our lives positively by guarding against the *matzah* turning into *chametz*, thus actively ensuring that wrongs are not allowed to occur. We should use this as a conceptual model not only for *matzah*, which many of us observe scrupulously, but also for other areas of our lives in which we should be as careful as we are with *chametz* to observe God’s will actively, not only passively. It is not enough to not commit wrongs; we must also take active steps to prevent wrongs from being committed. In this way, we can hope to bring wholeness to a broken world. ■

STORY

Legend has it that Rav Yisrael Salanter, the founder of the Mussar movement, was asked to certify the *kasbrut* of a certain *matzah* factory.

The owner had recently opened the factory and proudly led Rav Salanter through his factory, showing off his highly efficient, scrupulously regulated *matzah*-baking operation.

At the end of the tour, the owner asked Rav Salanter, “So? Will you give us your *hasbgachah*?”

Rav Salanter said quietly, but firmly, “No.”

“No!?” the owner asked. “But everything here is so clean, so efficient, *mehadrin min hamehadrin!* What’s the problem?”

Rav Salanter replied, “You have created a very efficient plant, but the women producing the *matzot* are strained beyond their limits under the burden you have placed on them. Your workers are suffering. We have been accused of using the blood of Christian children in our *matzah*. While this is clearly untrue, in this case the blood of your workers is in these *matzot*. I cannot, therefore, give my *hasbgachah*.”

In Talmud Bavli Pesachim 115b, Rava teaches, “[One who] swallows the *matzah* [without chewing] has fulfilled the obligation [of eating *matzah*]. [However, one who] swallows the *maror* [without chewing] does not fulfill the obligation [of eating *maror*].” Rashbam explains that even though ideally one should taste the *matzah*, after the fact, even swallowing without tasting is a form of eating and thus one has fulfilled the *mitzvah*. *Maror* is different. Actually tasting the *maror*, and not just eating it, is the essence of the *mitzvah* because the *maror* should remind us of how our lives were embittered by the oppression of the *mitzrim*. (See also Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayyim 475:3; Mishnah Berurah 475: 29, 30.) We need to slowly chew our horseradish or romaine lettuce, letting the burning juices sink into our tongues and open our sinuses!

We live in a fast food culture. Except on Shabbat, our meals are often rushed; an efficient meal is something we can finish in under five minutes or eat while doing something else. The *ba’alei mussar* teach that the *yetzer harah’s* main strategy is to keep

us busy, moving so fast that we absorb neither our own reality nor the reality of the world around us. There is so much suffering in the world, both our own and others’, such as the migrant workers who harvest our food, exposing themselves to dangerous pesticides while being paid less than a living wage. They contract illnesses and do not have the health insurance needed to heal. Subsistence farmers in Central and South America are forced by economic need to produce only one type of crop and no longer have the ability to feed their own families. Or, closer to home, a relative may be silently suffering health problems, family strife, or economic vulnerability. This *halachah* is teaching us that suffering is something to be absorbed and felt if it is to have a cathartic and motivating impact. Our business urges us not to look, not to dwell, not to really feel. However, it is that bitter taste of suffering that makes it impossible for us to accept things the way they are. We must act, we must reach out, we must make change! ■

“The *ba’alei mussar* teach that the *yetzer harah’s* main strategy is to keep us busy, moving so fast that we absorb neither our own reality nor the reality of the world around us.”

ACT 8-Step *Maror* Meditation

1. Sit comfortably in your chair.
2. Place the *maror* in your hand. While feeling the *maror*, reflect on the comfort level you are currently experiencing.
3. Raise the *maror* to your mouth. Note that you are about to subject yourself to discomfort, in the midst of a festival of freedom and joy. What are you feeling as you are about to taste the bitterness?
4. Put the *maror* into your mouth. Chew three times and then stop.
5. Pause and note what the bitterness feels like. Think about a source of bitterness in the world today. Close your eyes and picture it. Open your eyes.
6. Swallow the *maror*.
7. Make a realistic, tangible commitment to addressing the source of bitterness that you pictured in the world.
8. Share your commitment with the person next to you. —

Korech כורֵךְ

RORI PICKER NEISS

As we lift up the *matzah* and *maror* together, we say:

זָכַר לְמִקְדָּשׁ כְּהִלֵּל. כֵּן עָשָׂה הַלֵּל בְּזִמְנוֹ שְׂפִיט הַמִּקְדָּשׁ הָיָה קָיָם: הָיָה כּוֹרֵךְ מִצָּה וּמָרוֹר
וְאוֹכֵל בְּיַחַד, לְקַיֵּם מֵה שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר: עַל מִצּוֹת וּמִרְרִים יֵאָכְלָהּ.

In remembrance of the *Mikdash*, like Hillel. Thus Hillel did when the *Beit Hamikdash* was standing. He would sandwich the *korban Pesach*, *matzah*, and *maror* and eat them together, in order to fulfill what is written in the *pasuk*: “With *matzah* and *maror* they shall eat it.” [Bamidbar 9:11]

Interestingly, the *pasuk* that is quoted at the seder is not in reference to the *korban Pesach*, but to *Pesach Sheni*. The Torah relates that when God commanded Moshe regarding the *korban Pesach*, some men from the community implored Moshe to ask God what they might do because they would not be able to participate in the standard Passover offering due to ritual impurity. God responded that they could bring a replacement Passover offering on the fourteenth of Iyar, adding “with *matzah* and *maror* they shall eat it” [Bamidbar 9:11]. The fourteenth of Iyar is referred to as *Pesach Sheni*, or “second Pesach,” because it is a second chance to bring the *korban Pesach*.

Thus, *Pesach Sheni* is the ultimate example of a second chance. It is, in its essence, *teshuvah*. Our sages teach that one has only achieved complete *teshuvah* when one is placed in the same situation that caused sin once, and chooses to act differently the second time. In this case, the Israelite who was ritually impure on the first Pesach repents and is ritually pure on the second Pesach.

But does one need to be a sinner in order to recognize that a situation requires a different response than one had the first time? As we hold the *matzah* and *maror* sandwich in our hands, we have already completed the recounting of *yetziyat mitzrayim*, the Exodus from Egypt. We have remembered the pain and atrocities that our forefathers faced; we have tasted the tears of bitterness; and we have relived the victory of freedom. In that story that we tell on Pesach, we were the victims. And yet, if we sit at the Passover seder, holding in our hands this symbol of a second chance, and we choose to remain oblivious to the people in our world who are enslaved, who are deprived of basic resources such as food and potable water, who are forced to endure merciless working conditions for minimal pay, have we not failed in our *teshuvah*?

During Passover, we are commanded to remove all *chametz* from our premises. Commentators teach that *chametz* is symbolic of sin. Today, most of us do not actually remove all *chametz* from our households, but rather, we remove it from our sight and sell it. We make ourselves blind to it. So,

too, many of us recount the Pesach story remaining blind to the distress of those around us. But *Pesach Sheni* comes with no such commandment to remove *chametz* from our premises. Thus, as we eat the *korech* sandwich, symbolic of *Pesach Sheni*, the ultimate chance for *teshuvah*, we cannot ignore the sin, corruption, suffering, and pain that surrounds us. The only questions that remains are: How do we choose to respond? Do we respond as our Egyptian oppressors did, choosing to be consciously or unconsciously complicit? Or do we choose to act, and, in doing so, achieve the ultimate *teshuvah*? ■

“*Pesach Sheni* is the ultimate example of a second chance. It is, in its essence, *teshuvah*.”

Shulchan Orech שלחן עורך

RABBI SHMULY YANKLOWITZ

“Eating is made holy when it raises our consciousness toward the other, be that G-d, guest, laborer, the hungry, animals, or the future generations affected by our impact on the environment.”

The *Shulchan Orech*, “the set table,” is similar to the *Shulchan Aruch*, the premier code of Jewish law, in that it reminds us that proper Jewish eating has the power to sanctify an order in our lives that is guided by ethical and spiritual principles. There is a very unique traditional order to this meal that, like all festival meals, is to be infused with *simchat yom tov*, the joy of the holiday, not to be confused with *simchat kereiso*, the joy of the stomach, a joy that the Rambam explains neglects the poor [*Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Yom Tov* 6:18]. When one is fulfilled merely by

their own food consumption, there is no room for the other. But at this meal, we are to be sure to include the hungry at our table and in our celebration. Eating is made holy and truly uplifting when it raises our consciousness toward the other in need. Tonight’s meal is a cheerful food meditation and is an attempt to joyously “set the table” for a year of enacting justice through our food consumption choices. ■

ACT

Are there workers helping you celebrate the Pesach seder tonight? If so, find a meaningful way to include them in tonight’s celebration of freedom.

You might invite them to come join you and eat at the table, offer them a personal thank you, or, as a group, publicly acknowledge their labor that made this sacred celebration possible.

Shulchan Orech שלחן עורך

NIGEL SAVAGE The Seder as The Essence of Seudah:
What The Seder Night Teaches Us About Eating The Rest of The Year

“[T]he seder—this organized meal—should reflect the questions that we struggle with, and it should point us to living more healthily and sustainably throughout the year.”

We begin with a Jewish world record. More Jewish people gather to eat together, with friends and family, on the seder night, than on any other night of the year.

The late Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveichik, *z”l*, argues that the Pesach seder is the quintessential *seudah* —“all the elements which make the Seder an exalted experience are already present in the halakic definition of the everyday *seudah*.” If that is so, it’s legitimate for us to frame this from the opposite perspective: what does the seder come to teach us that we should think about in our *seudot*—our sacred and celebratory meals—throughout the year?

Lord Sacks, the English Orthodox Chief Rabbi, has argued persuasively that the seder is fundamental to Jewish pedagogy: that the *mah nishtanah*, and the child-focused and question-focused rhythm of the seder, combined with its central motifs—the Exodus from Egypt; the centrality of freedom itself in Jewish tradition—together have influenced Jewish life significantly the other 364 days of the year. We have steadily stood up for freedom throughout history at least partly because the seder so powerfully imprints its centrality on Jewish children and Jewish families.

But Lord Sacks is addressing the intellectual content of the seder, but not the meal or the food itself. Yet we are a generation striving to find meaning and wisdom in ancient tradition, and not merely in the abstract, but in relation to a wide range of complex and troubling contemporary issues. The late Reb Shlomo Carlebach, *z”l*, summed this up when he said, “The Torah is a commentary on the world, and the world is a commentary on the Torah.” It is from this place that many aspects of the seder as a shared *meal*—as opposed to simply a familial Jewish celebration or service, absent food—speak now to us in new ways. Here are a series of quotes from an essay on the seder by Rav Soloveitchik, published from a series of manuscripts and tapes that were edited after his death [*Festival of Freedom: Essays on Pesah and the Haggadah*, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, ed. Joel B. Wolowelsky and Reuven Ziegler, Toras HoRav Foundation, 2006]:

[Man’s] lust for riches expresses the absence of confidence in himself and in God. He wants to

entrench himself in this world, to ensure himself against any risk and evil in nature. Not being able to find this sense of security in the worldly goods he accumulates, he tries to expand his holdings. Finite man wants infinite security, and this craze leads to predaciousness....Man need not respond to hunger in the same manner as the beast or the brute of the field. Judaism has never forbidden man to quest for security... However, there is a distinction between a normal security quest and security madness.

Economic over-extension is a sin and leads to the infringement of the rights of the other self.

Economic justice and equity are a precondition of physiological cleanliness. Only the bread won through toil and hard work that justly belongs to a person may be offered to God... Many scholars have expressed the opinion that one who eats stolen food must not recite the blessings prior to and following the meal.

Eating becomes a worthwhile undertaking, replete in spiritual meaningfulness and symbolic, if man begins to realize the mystery of organic life, its sustenance through the act of feeding—if he becomes aware of the enigma of the human body, of life in general. Ignorant man is not amazed by anything; nature is a self-explanatory, dynamic system to him, and he does not suspect that the obvious, natural, daily routine constitutes the greatest miracle, defying human imagination and intellectual genius.

Judaism says that man must eat, not alone, but within the community.... The meal is basically a rendezvous with *hesed*—or with God Himself, who is *naf besed*, abounding in *hesed*.

The slave suddenly realizes that the little he has saved up for himself, a single lamb, is too much for him... he knocks on the door of his neighbor, whom he had never noticed, inviting him to share the lamb with him and to eat together. No wonder our Seder commences with the declaration, “*Ha lahma anya*, This is the bread of poverty... let all who are hungry come and eat.”

What the Rav is arguing here goes to the heart of a series of contemporary issues. Part of what he writes sounds like a contemporary secular left-winger, arguing that we are over-consuming the world. Part of this sounds like Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, talking about radical amazement. Both perspectives are rooted deeply in the tradition, and connected to each other. The Rav's argument is:

- To be human is to have both desire and insecurity, and each leads us to want too much;
- The nature of *halachah* and of Jewish life is to challenge this; the very essence of *ol malchut shamayim* is to restrain oneself;
- The quintessential place both of restraining ourselves and of thinking about the needs of others, is the *seudah*—a meal, we might say, of consciousness;
- The quintessential *seudah* is the seder.

And if we extend this outwards, once more, it leads to questions that are well worthy of our seder tables—and the rest of the year:

- What is the nature of self-control in my life? If I give up *chametz* throughout Pesach, what does that come to teach me that I choose to remember in the rest of the year? What would it mean to give up plastic bottles that litter our oceans for millennia? On this night of freedom, can the hard-

boiled egg that I dip to recall slavery come from a chicken kept in a factory-farmed coop—and what would it mean to choose only free-range eggs throughout the year? More generally, where are the places that I fail to restrain myself, and should learn to do so?

- How do I share my meals, and with whom? Do we eat as a family or not—and how might we change that? Do I open my Shabbat table more widely? Does my community reach out to those in need? Does our leftover food go to those who are hungry?

I do not mean to reduce the Rav's essay to oversimplistic tropes. Seder night is about much more than whether we do or don't drink Coke, and three thousand years of Jewish tradition should not be compressed into a trite list of do's and don'ts. But the seder—this organized *meal*—should reflect the questions that we struggle with, and it should point us to living more healthily and sustainably throughout the year. Amidst the stories of the Haggadah, the praises of *Hallel* and the familial songs that close the evening, *we eat a meal together*. Its central message is that the freedoms we celebrate confer responsibility; that freedom from want implies also freedom to choose; and that the meals we eat with others are the locus of who we are in the world and what we stand for. *Chag sameyach* and have a great seder! ■

Tzafun צפון

GILAH KLETENIK Hidden Hope

Hiddenness and hope come together as we bring the *afikomen* to the table. This hidden half of the broken *matzah*, stolen away by the children, is retrieved ceremoniously and eaten, our “just dessert.” Its taste will be our final taste of food for the evening. The hope is that it will linger long into the night.

“Our redemption can only be a concrete hope when we are moved to draw it forth from its hiddenness.”

Tradition teaches that this half of the *matzah* represents the redemption hidden away for the Israelite people. While the first half of the *matzah* symbolizes our past, the slavery and the redemption from Egyptian bondage, this second half is the future—as if handed to us by our children, our most potent of hopes.

It is with the very similar secretive hiding of a child that our story commences, we are told that Yocheved “*lo yachlah le-hatzpeno*” [Shemot 2:3], could no longer hide Moshe, who is, of course, our hidden hero of the Haggadah. His frightened mother places him in a tar-coated basket into the Nile, concealing him yet further. Her hope hinges on his hiddenness.

Moshe’s beginning, as a child hidden away, foreshadows that which will come. He is raised in the Egyptian palace with a hidden Jewish identity and is later forced to escape into further hiding. Moshe, our champion of social justice, later returns to his people to be the harbinger of hope. However, to do so, he must first emerge from his own hiddenness.

Karl Marx critiqued religion by arguing that it is passive by perpetuating the status quo. Our *Tanach*, concerning social change, sees matters differently. The retrieval of our own redemption, the realization of the prophetic promise of a time when the oppressed will be free, the downtrodden uplifted, and the persecuted dignified, may be hidden away,

but it is neither in heaven nor beyond the sea. Rather, it is very near, in our hands. Indeed, as Rabbi Akivah famously responds to Tornus Rufus’ challenge about the Lord’s ostensible indifference to human suffering, it is our responsibility, not God’s [Talmud Bavli, Masechet Bava Batra 10a].

That *Tzafun*, “hidden,” shares the letters and sounds of *le-tzapot*, or to anticipate, as in *tzipiah le-geulah*, or hope for redemption, is no accident. Our redemption can only be a concrete hope when we are moved to draw it forth from its hiddenness. *Halachah* requires that the *afikomen* emerge from its hiding place as *chatzot*, midnight, is upon us. The message is clear: Only through concrete action to rectify the injustices surrounding us might we actually move ourselves from the thick darkness of exile into the light of redemption. ■

“[W]orkers never lose their freedom because of their insufficient documentation; that they are always afforded basic dignities up to the point of being offered dessert. In this spirit Levinas writes, Judaism is ‘sublime materialism concerned with dessert.’”

As we approach *Berach* and reflect and give thanks to God for the meal we recently consumed, let us pause for a moment and reflect on what a Jewish meal is. Having a meal according to the Jewish tradition is much richer and more complex than just consuming food.

As William H. Gass¹ has noted, as animals we desire only nourishment. However, in the process of eating, other things happen. The desire to *have* food is replaced by the desire to *taste* food. To have a meal is to civilize our desire for food; meals are a marker for our humanity. This process, which Gass calls “stylization,” is also the process of culture. Culture, though, is ethically neutral. Part of having a Jewish meal is to eat according to the Jewish tradition. Jewish teachings about having a meal locate eating within an ethical register. How so? By forcing us to consider the *kashrut* of a food object, *halachah* stylizes our desire by telling us that we cannot eat everything that we want. The ethics of *halachah* announces itself in limiting my desire, my self-interest, my want of certain foods. It is a specific kind of training, of virtue, that ultimately translates into realizing the needs of another, of the Other. In keeping kosher, I make the stylization of eating into something normative.

Eating, though, involves more than just consumption: eating is having a meal. The Jewish tradition not only stylizes what I eat but also the nature of my meal. It not only tells me what food I can eat but what I have to do before I eat, what type of blessings I have to make, and the requirements of those blessings. It informs me that I need to give thanks after the meal: to *berach*, or bless, God for the food that God has graciously provided us. It also stylizes *how* I eat, that I cannot eat like an animal. It goes so far as to tell me, to stylize, the topic of conversation at my meal. The *Mishnah* [Avot 3:3] relates that if three people have a meal without words of Torah it is as if they are feasting on the sacrifices of the dead, but if they say words of Torah then it is as if they eat at God’s very table.

Perhaps, most importantly, *halachah* stylizes, or frames, the relationship between what I consume and those who produce what I consume, those who directly or indirectly work for me, those who serve me.

One brief example: A *mishnah* in Bava Metzia [7:1] states that “when one hires workers where the custom is that they be fed, he is obligated to feed them; where it is that they be served dessert, he must serve them dessert.”

Emmanuel Levinas writes, in his commentary on this *mishnah*, that it “affirms the rights of the other person, the worker who finds himself in the inferior position. This position is dangerous to his freedom because he runs the risk of losing his freedom without undergoing any violence...This *Mishna* says that nothing can be bought and not everything can be sold; there are limits imposed on freedom in the greater glory of freedom and those limits concerned the material conditions of life, sleep and food.”² According to Levinas, this *mishnah* teaches us then that it is our responsibility as a community to make sure that those who serve us are not deprived of the basic conditions of life; or a recent application would claim that workers never lose their freedom because of their insufficient documentation; that they are always afforded basic dignities up to the point of being offered dessert. In this spirit Levinas writes, Judaism is “sublime materialism concerned with dessert.”

As we approach *Barech*, take a moment to think about the meal that you just consumed—the food you eat, how Jewish tradition stylized it, and the people who produced it—before giving thanks to God. ■

¹ William H. Gass, “The Stylization of Desire,” *The New York Review of Books*, February 25, 1971.

² Emmanuel Levinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, trans. Annette Aronowicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 97.

Judaism lives in constant tension. Between reality and dream. Hope and disappointment. It longs for the day when the wolf will live with the lamb and the messianic era will finally be ushered in. But it knows that day has not yet come. There is still an enormous gap between what *is* and what *ought to be*. Judaism is the art of the possible. Of the doable. The road is long and the bumps are many, but the dream is alive and well. Until one has arrived, there is a heavy price to pay. Still, one must not give up and should even enjoy the ride. At least make a sincere attempt.

What does one do when his arch enemies are drowned in the Reed Sea? Should he dance on the rooftops when he sees the enemy crushed, or should he thank God for the victory but go home with a heavy heart, shedding a sincere tear for human life that was lost? Even if it is the life of his arch enemy?

Judaism chooses the latter. It has no option but to be sad even in times of joy. And its sadness is so great that it spills over. Despite the enemy's cruelty, the Jew takes his cup of wine on the day of his liberation and spills a bit to demonstrate sorrow for his enemy's loss of life. He does so in spite of the prohibition against wasting even a drop. His sadness is so intense that he cannot hold back from transgressing the law for the sake of allowing his emotions to have their way. He diminishes his *simchah* by removing a tiny bit from the cup of his glorious victory. The dip of a finger. Nothing more. It takes only a second, but the act is of infinite value. Compassion for those who fell so low that they turned into Jew haters and lost all dignity. How distressing that human beings are able to compromise themselves to that extent. How is it possible not to mourn? Ten mini dips for ten plagues that befell the Egyptians. The totality of the Jewish *neshamah* is reflected in this tiny gesture. Tiny, but of enormous moral strength.

But *can* a man really live with ten mournful dips in the face of an arch enemy's cruelty? Is it possible for the Jew to simply dip and forget about the pain inflicted by the enemy for thousands of years? Where will this pain go? Does one just swallow it? Forget what happened? Or shall the Jew, after all, call for revenge, take the law in his own hands and initiate a *jihad* (holy war)? And if so, how then will he live with the drops of wine he just wasted? The Jew is caught between a sorrowful dip and an inner need for revenge. He is tossed from left to right and back again. And he ultimately decides for the dip. No revenge, no *jihad*.

“Far from what one may think, *shefoch chamatcha* is not a prayer of incitement. It is a prayer born out of pain, in which we ask God to redeem us from all the hate which we Jews have experienced over thousands of years.”

But what about the pain? How can one vent his frustrations, fed by thousands of years of cruel anti-Semitism? Is violence not often the result of such frustrations that were denied an outlet? What does one do when the drop of wine stands in the way and does not allow his vexation and pain any escape? At whose feet can one throw his resentment and be assured that it will be handled with the greatest sensitivity but simultaneously not lead to more trouble?

Only in the privacy of one's home, where one knows he can call for revenge and be confident that he will be taken seriously but not so seriously that it will be turned into reality. Where one can say what he means, let off steam, get it out of his system and be sure that in spite of it all, he would not hurt a fly.

Only with God, the ultimate home, can we unburden our feelings. Only He knows how to deal with human frustrations, and not get carried away. He will know what we really have in mind and whether or not to take action.

Far from what one may think, *shefoch chamatcha* is not a prayer of incitement. It is a prayer born out of pain, in which we ask God to redeem us from all the hate which we Jews have experienced over thousands of years. To this very day. We just have to let off steam. It is up to Him to decide how to respond. It is not our business to assist Him in this. In fact, it is forbidden to be of any support.

Judaism does not allow any waste. Only in a few instances is one allowed to spill. And just a tiny bit. To teach a fundamental lesson on how to approach life. To learn not to waste our souls or risk our stake in God. Why, after all, is it forbidden to waste? So that we may recognize the overflow of the beauty of life.

Shefoch chamatcha is a prayer spoken at the moment of great intimacy between God and us. A prayer in which we try to master what is inferior in us and grow beyond its words.

May this prayer soon disappear from the Haggadah. When hate will cease to exist and there will no longer be need of an outlet for our frustrations. When we will be able to live and let live in pure love. When we will dwell on a word in our prayers and transform it into the realization of our ultimate dream—from feelings of frustration into emotions of love. ■

We are in the warm cocoon of our seder with friends and family—drinking wine, eating good food, discussing the Exodus—until it comes time for Elijah. We open the door and, like a gust of cold air, in spills the outside world with all its problems and challenges. Elijah reminds us that while we may be well fed, others are hungry. While we may be with our loved ones, others are bereft of those dear to them. While we may be free, others are enslaved.

“Everyone has something to contribute, a reminder that the work of human redemption is a collective effort.”

Elijah comes to remind us of all this—and of our obligation to fix the world. There is a beautiful Hasidic custom that encourages everyone gathered around the seder table to add some wine to Elijah’s cup. Everyone has something to contribute, a reminder that the work of human redemption is a collective effort. We cannot wait for miracles or supernatural forces but have to take the first steps ourselves. Drop by drop, we fill the cup of redemption.

Elijah is no stranger in Jewish homes. Whether we see him or not, we make room for him at every *bris* ceremony; we even prepare a special chair for Elijah. We also invoke Elijah at the *havdalah* ceremony at the end of every Shabbat. “Elijah, the Prophet,” we sing. “May he come soon to us in our day.” Elijah is not the redeemer. He is our partner in raising our children and in transforming the world.

Our tradition is filled with Elijah stories. My favorite comes from Rabbi Yonah Blum, the Chabad rabbi at Columbia University, where I teach. The story goes like this:

A wealthy man comes to the Baal Shem Tov (Besh”t) with a complaint: “Every year at the seder, I open the door for Elijah but he never comes. I do everything right! We read the Haggadah! We have a beautiful meal! Year after year I set out my best cup for Elijah but he does not come.”

The Besh”t tells the man that he knows for a fact that Elijah comes to a certain cottage on the outskirts of town. “Next year, go there for the seder.”

The man waits a year with great anticipation and visits the Besh”t before his departure. “Remember, you are coming as a guest,” the Besh”t tells him, “so be sure to bring wine and food and gifts for the children.” The man complies and loads up his wagon with everything a family could want for the holiday.

He arrives at the cottage and finds within a poor family that welcomes him with great warmth. He

joins them for the seder and it comes time to open the door for Elijah. Alas, Elijah is not there.

After the holiday, the man returns to the Besh”t angry and disappointed. “Oh,” the rabbi tells him. “Elijah must have been delayed. He will come for the last day of the holiday. Go back again. And don’t forget to fill up your wagon this time. But, do me a favor, before you knock on the door when you return, listen for the sounds within.”

The man is skeptical, but he obeys the great rabbi. He drives his wagon, laden with goods, back to the cottage. He is about to knock but then he remembers the instruction to stop and listen. From inside, he hears the woman of family say to her husband: “We have no food for the holiday. Our cupboards are bare. We have so many mouths to feed. What will we do?”

The man tells his wife. “Not to worry. Last week God sent Elijah. I know he will send him again.”

The moral of the story, Rabbi Blum said, is simple: We are Elijah’s partners. And sometimes, we are Elijah himself. It is up to us to take the first steps to fix the world. ■

Hallel הלל

RUSSEL M. NEISS

“While we may be physically sated having just completed a lavish meal, more than one billion people suffer from chronic hunger.”

The *gemara* in Masechet Ta’anit [25b-26a] mentions that the recitation of Hallel requires two things: one, literally translated as “a full stomach,” and the other, a bit more loosely translated as “a satisfied spirit”:

אין אומרים הלל אלא על נפש שבעה
וכרס מלאה

We do not recite Hallel except with a satisfied spirit and a full stomach.

While we may be physically sated having just completed a lavish meal, more than one billion people suffer from chronic hunger.¹ That’s nearly one-sixth of the world’s population, or more than three times the population of the United States.

How can we sit with our stomachs full asking *Hashem* to give us “more”--

יְסֹף יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם; עֲלֵיכֶם, וְעַל בְּנֵיכֶם

May the Lord increase you upon yourselves, upon you and your children. [Tehillim 115:14]

while knowing that there are so many with so much less than we have? Can we really say, facing such realities, that we are saying *Hallel* “with a satisfied spirit”? ■

ACT

Starting this Pesach, you can make an impact on world hunger through Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger. Founded on the heels of the Ethiopian famine of 1985, Mazon was conceived as a bridge between the abundance in the Jewish community and the desperate hunger felt by millions of people around the world. Through their advocacy efforts, volunteer projects, and financial campaigns, you can play a key part in the Jewish campaign to end hunger. See <http://mazon.org/> for more information.

¹ United States Government. “Fact Sheet - Global Hunger and Food Security.” Feed The Future. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Dec. 2010. <http://www.feedthefuture.gov/gh_factsheet.html>.

At the close of the Haggadah, after moving from past humiliations to future hopes, a surprise! A *piyut*, or liturgical poem, first quoted in *Sefer Rokeach* (1160-1238), that returns to the Haggadic theme of retribution but on a deeper, more fundamental register. Nature is a “war of all against all.”¹ The cat that attacks is attacked just as the Egyptians who oppressed are oppressed. “Nature red in tooth and claw.”² And so it goes. Violence always escalating, always returning. The possibility for change is abandoned. The only escape from the cycle of violence is an end to the natural order: “and death shall be no more; death shall die.”³

Perhaps there is another option. Instead of locating redemption only in eschatological times and abandoning this world to violence, we can find *geulah* by transforming our essential natures through self-improvement and concerted action. We can move from violence to love. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s writing on this topic is instructive. He writes:

The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate. So it goes. Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.⁴

Justice perceived as retribution can only go so far. In order to create a flourishing society, we must change our vision from pessimism to hope by moving beyond justice conceived only as “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.”⁵ We must create a justice based on love. The great Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas describes love as “the proximity of the other—where the other remains other. I think that when the other is ‘always other’ there is the essence of love...Love is an excellence, that is to say, the good itself.”⁶ Taking this definition of love as a starting point, a justice based on love takes as a start that all humans are created “in the image of God” and therefore have infinite worth, are plural, and are unique. It embraces the command to “love the stranger,” which is mentioned in the Torah thirty-six times.

The commentary found in this *Food and Justice Haggadah Supplement* is only a beginning of this greater project of loving the stranger by focusing on food security, a basic freedom necessary for human beings to flourish on this earth. We ask that you join with us in creating our next steps on this journey through engaging in the action points recommended in this supplement and by contacting us to get involved. ■

“Justice perceived as retribution can only go so far. In order to create a flourishing society, we must change our vision from pessimism to hope by moving beyond justice conceived only as ‘an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.’”

¹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 16.

² Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Memoriam A.H.H.*, Canto 56.

³ John Donne, *Holy Sonnet X*.

⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength To Love*. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 1983).

⁵ Shemot 21:24.

⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Is It Righteous to Be: Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*, (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2001), 58.



Cocoa Beans, papercut by Aliza Donath



LAUNCHED BY URI L'TZEDOK, THE TAV HAYOSHER IS A LOCAL, GRASSROOTS INITIATIVE TO BRING WORKERS, RESTAURANT OWNERS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS TOGETHER TO CREATE JUST WORKPLACES IN KOSHER RESTAURANTS.

There are three criteria that a restaurant must provide its workers in order to qualify for the Tav HaYosher. All criteria are derived strictly from US, state, and local law.

1. The right to fair pay.
2. The right to fair time.
3. The right to a safe work environment.

NATIONWIDE, **OVER 75 RESTAURANTS** HAVE BEEN AWARDED THE TAV HAYOSHER!

THERE ARE MANY WAYS YOU CAN GET INVOLVED WITH TAV HAYOSHER!

- **Become a Compliance Officer:** The Tav HaYosher depends on trained volunteers who conduct regular compliance visits with all Tav HaYosher-certified restaurants.
- **Advocate:** Pick up the phone and call your local kosher restaurant. Ask for the owner or manager, and in a supportive, encouraging way, let them know you would like them to carry the Tav. This method of consumer activism has been very effective.
- **Educate:** Tell your shul, school, friends, relatives, whomever about the Tav! Give a drasha, write a blog post, send an email, help us get the message out!
- **Donate:** We do not charge restaurants for the Tav. That means we rely on donors like you to keep this work sustainable. Whether it's \$10 or \$10,000, every gift is crucial.

For more information, please send an e-mail to: tav@utzedek.org



Uri L'Tzedek's University Fellowship Program

Do you want to create social change?
Searching for the tools to become a social justice leader on your campus?
Committed to Orthodoxy and social justice?

Learn more about Uri L'Tzedek's Fellowship Programs

Fall & Spring Semester Fellowships

- Semester-long fellowship for university students across the country
- Work on campus to create change
- Bring social justice to the forefront of your community's consciousness
- Conversations and workshops about social entrepreneurship

Summer Fellowship

- Meet college students in LA or NY
- Learn from activists, Rabbis, and social entrepreneurs
- Focus on the Tav HaYosher campaign

Find out more at www.utzedek.org



JEWISH INSPIRATION. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES.

HAZON WORKS TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES IN THE JEWISH WORLD AND BEYOND. WE ARE PROUD TO BE SPONSORING THIS PESACH SUPPLEMENT, AS CHAMETZ IS JUST THE TIP OF THE CONVERSATION ON FOOD, ETHICS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE.

Hazon's New York Ride is held over 4 days during Labor Day weekend in the New York area, drawing over 300 participants from across the country. Rider fundraising supports the work Hazon and its major partners. A series of smaller grants are allocated to individual projects in the Jewish community. The next New York Ride is September 2-5.

Hazon's California Ride is held in the spring. The inaugural Ride was in 2010 with 120 participants. The Ride features Hazon programming at the Shabbat retreat, followed by a beautiful ride in Sonoma and Marin Counties, and ending in San Francisco. The next California Ride is May 6-9.

The Arava Institute Hazon Israel Ride: Cycling for Peace, Partnership & Environmental Protection is held annually over 7 days in the Fall. The Israel Ride is a 200–300 mile journey that provides participants the opportunity to experience the beauty and challenges of the Israeli landscape in a whole new way. The next Israel Ride is November 8-15.

The Hazon Food Conference brings together foodies, educators, rabbis, farmers, nutritionists, chefs, food writers and families who share a passion for learning about and celebrating food. The next food conference is August 18-21 in California.

Hazon CSA is the first Jewish Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) program in North America and is currently the largest faith-based CSA program in the country. In 2010, over 40 Hazon CSAs put over \$1 million in Jewish family purchasing power behind local, sustainable farms. Hazon CSA sites include JCCs, synagogues, Jewish day schools and Hillels – and we'd love to add your community to the list. Contact csa@hazon.org to apply.

Find out more at www.hazon.org



Editor-in-Chief Adina Gerver
Managing Editor Ari Hart
Contributing Editor Rabbi Ari Weiss
Design and Layout Aliza Weiss
Project Coordinator Hillary Levison
Creative Consultant Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz



URI L'TZEDEK

ORTHODOX SOCIAL JUSTICE

25 Broadway, 17th Floor, New York, NY 10004

Telephone (212) 284-6540 Website www.utzedek.org Email info@utzedek.org