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SHABBOS HAGODOL DROSHA 1981

The comparison between the recital when you brought Bi Kureem and the Haggadah. If you did not bring Bi Kureem you could still eat your crop but you would miss something. If a Jew does not celebrate Pesach he can still exist as a human being but he will miss something. Why don't we say a Brocha before we say the Haggadah? The two obligations a Jew has to the community and to personal Mitzvahs. The structure of the Haggadah. Zos Chukas HaPesach and Zos Chukas HaTorah. We are not sure he will stay a Jew until he makes a commitment.

SHABBOS HAGODOL 1983
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

Pesach is a holiday which teaches us how to save the Jewish people from death. We do not say a brocha when we begin the Hagaddah because we are not sure that we will be able to secure the future of the Jewish people, but we do say it after we complete the reading before dinner. The central reading of the Hagaddah is the prayer for first fruits which is found in Deuteronomy. It speaks about how an Aramian tried to wipe out our father. This was more through assimilation than physical death. We Jews must be willing to have a sign outside our doors, to be willing to stand up as Jews, not to feel inferior. We read the Zos Chucasa Torah. We also read the Zos Chucasa Pesach. The Chok of the Torah allows us to overcome the depression, etc. of death, and Zos Chucasa Pesach allows us to overcome the death of the Jewish people. A Chok is something which is immutable. You must just get in harmony with it. The Hagaddah teaches us how the Jewish people shall remain eternal.

SSA
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Pesach and Yomeem Naroem have a big hold on Jewish people. Yomeem Naroem concerned with individual. Zos Chukas Hatorah. An individual in order to overcome death needs others. That's why we gather together in big multitudes on Yomeem Naroem. Pesach concerned with our commitment to make sure that Israel doesn't die. We're not grouped together in large groups but as family. Every family has the obligation to make sure Jewish people lives. We can't put it on anyone else. The telling of the Hagadol based on Arami Oveed with the bikireen. Why? Because the peril of slavery even from a labor from assimilation. We must have hagoles Keikin before Pesach. Each of us must assume commitment to Mitzvas Zos Chakeen HaTorah and to Jewish people - Zos Chukas HaPesach. We also concerned about Eretz Israel. Argument about five cups. Didn't have fifth cup because we still don't have Israel. Hagaddah begins now here, next year is Israel. Why do we say Hallel on Pesach night? Because we're elevated. We've committed ourselves to Torah, to the Jewish people, and to the land of Israel.

SSA.
SHABBOS HAGGADOL 1984
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In the Torah we have written out the commandment for saying the Haggadah. We learn it says "and you should tell your son on that day saying." This teaches us that we are to recite the Haggadah on Pesach. There is another sentence which says, "Remember this day that you went out from Egypt." Maimonides says that we need both these sentences to teach us the commandment of reciting the Haggadah. The sentence "and you should tell your son" you might think only applied if you have children. What happens if you have no children? What happens if you are alone? The other sentence tells us that even if we are alone you have to remember the Exodus from Egypt. In fact, the question can be asked, what is so special about remembering the Exodus from Egypt on the first night of Passover? We do it all the time. We do it in the Shma, when we put on Tephillin, in the Kiddush, etc. The Minchas Achinuk says that the difference is that on Pesach we have to do it in dialogue fashion. We have to ask questions. We have to delve deeply into it and even if there is nobody at the Seder you have to ask yourself the questions. The Rambam says that the word "Zochor" which is used for "remember this day" is the same word used for remembering the Sabbath. The Sabbath is different than the holidays because we have the authority to set the holidays. We can play with the calendar so that Yom Kippur never comes out on a Friday or a Sunday. Sometimes the new moon will actually be on a Sunday and we will not declare the new moon to be until Tuesday. The Torah gives us this right. However, Shabbos is different. Shabbos always has to come on the 7th day. Shabbos is an immutable law. Shabbos is a Chuk. Even if the United Nations would declare that two days of the year have no weekday so that Sunday will always come on the first and Saturday on the 7th, we could not accept it. Pesach, too, has some of the element of Chuk. That's why the Torah refers to Pesach as Zos Chukas HaPesach. This is the Chuk of the Pesach. We also learn the same expression, Zos Chukas HaTorah, with the red heifer. In Judaism death is the highest form of ritual defilement. Ritual purity has nothing to do with moral culpability, with doing wrong. Ritual impurity is really a psychological state. When a person feels helpless, that he cannot act

in the world, when he feels depressed, when he feels nothing is worth the effort, then he becomes ritually impure. This is what happens when you touch a dead body. It is a very great Mitzvah to touch a dead body, but it cannot help but leave you depressed. Our job in this world is to act, to be G-d's partner in creation. That's why we wake up after we sleep we have to wash our hands, not just for cleanliness, but because we become in a certain sense impure. We are passive. We cannot act. We are supposed to continue to act. The Chukas of the Torah allows us to act. They allow us to feel that we can accomplish things. This, too, is the meaning of the Korban Pesach. It tells us we are not slaves to some malevolent forces. Aries does not control us. The lamb does not control us. We can act. We can accomplish things. The Haggadah starts with Genus and ends with Sheva. The question is asked, why don't we say a Brocha before we begin the Haggadah? After all, we just cannot say that it is just because we are saying words. A lot of time when we say words we say a Brocha, like when we read the Megillah. We do not make a Brocha before the reading of the Haggadah because we are in a state of degradation and slavery, and we cannot be a part of G-d in creation. You have to first be filled with hope. We first must feel that we can accomplish things. When we make a blessing and we say, "Blessed are You, G-d, Who has redeemed us and our souls." Pesach talks not only about a physical redemption, but also about a redemption of our souls. Jews now believe that they can make a difference. They can act. Even in Auschwitz they had a Seder. Why should they have had a Seder in Auschwitz? They were not free until 1946, yet they continued to make a Seder because we are free inside. Since the time of the first Pesach we have known that we have been free inside. We can make a difference. The question is also asked, why don't we make a Brocha over Halel? We split Halel in half. The first part we say before the meal. This part deals with slavery, with Egypt. We cannot say a blessing because psychologically we are still slaves. The second part of the Haggadah deals with redemption, with making us know and feel that we do make a difference. We can act. We can be G-d's partner in creation. That's

why Pesach is known as Leil Shimureem, the night of watching. On this night we are not afraid. We do not even say the special prayers of the Shma when we go to bed because we know we have the capacity to act. We know that Judaism's message will eventually get through to the whole world. We know we will finally be a great redemption. That's, too, why we have to Hagoles Hekeleem, we have to clean all our vessels symbolic of cleaning ourselves from depression and passivity and feeling that we are useless and hopeless. That's the chometz we have to clean out of our system so that we can truly work with G-d to bring the great redemption, a day which we speak about in the second part of the Haggadah, a day in which even death will be overcome, when happiness and joy and naches will reign supreme. May this day soon come. Amen.

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This year the first day of Pesach comes out on a Shabbos. The question can be asked, why do we still eat matzah on Pesach since it comes out on Shabbos? After all, when the first day of Rosh Hashonna comes out on Shabbos we do not blow the shofar. When the first day of Succos comes out on Shabbos we do not take the lulav. Why should we eat matzah on the first day of Pesach since that is the main commandment of the day, as is blowing the shofar for Rosh Hashonna and taking the lulav on Succos? The Torah commands us to blow the shofar on Rosh Hashonna and to take the lulav on the first day of Succos just as it commands us to eat matzah. The rabbis have the power to negate a positive commandment if they think it will lead to violations. The rabbis cannot negate a commandment which has both a positive and a negative side, but they can a positive commandment. The rabbis tell us that we do not blow the shofar when it comes on Shabbos because a person will take the shofar to an expert to learn how to blow. The same applies to a lulav. Why shouldn't the same apply to matzah? There are special brochas to learn, etc. Why shouldn't we say a person cannot eat matzah on the first day because he will take it outside the prescribed limits because he will take it to an expert to learn how to say it properly? There is a difference between Rosh Hashonna, Succos, and Pesach because on Pesach we make the seder at night. On Rosh Hashonna we blow the shofar during the day, and on Succos we take the lulav during the day. This means that there would be no opportunity to violate Yontif by taking the matzah elsewhere since the very beginning of the holiday we eat the matzah. However, the question still is, is there, though, a deeper reason why we eat the matzah on Shabbos? Shabbos is different than the other holidays because Shabbos was set by G-d. We can never change it. There was a proposal years ago to make a uniform calendar, where the first day of the year would always be a Sunday and January 7th would always be a Saturday. This means there would always be two days a year that would not be counted and would always be holidays. This proposal was anathema to us because the 7th day would appear at different times in different years, sometimes Wednesdays and sometimes Thursdays. It would cause businesses to have a rough time and would be impossible for school, etc. The holidays are different. We declare the holidays. The rabbis have been given the authority to

declare the holidays. We can manipulate with the months' start so that Yom Kippur never comes on a Friday or Sunday. Sometimes the Molad will be declared on Tuesday and Rosh Chodesh will not come until Thursday. The holidays were given to teach us specific messages: Rosh Hashonna to improve ourselves, Succos to always feel joy in life, Shavuot the importance of the Torah. Pesach was given to teach us that we must be G-d's partner in perfecting this world. In fact, that is the message of Shabbos, too. We say we are given Shabbos for two reasons: to remember the creation of the world, and also to remember the Exodus from Egypt. Shabbos, the rabbis say, is a foretaste of the world to come. Shabbos not only commemorates G-d's creation, but the way the world can be if we will but do our job. This is the message of Pesach, too, to take the world from darkness to light. That's why the seder is held at night. The matzah is the symbol of our desire to go from darkness to light. We eat the matzah on Shabbos because Shabbos is also to remember the Exodus from Egypt. On Pesach on the night of the seder we again experience the symbolic slavery and its evils and reaffirm our desire to make this a better world. That's why, too, Pesach is different from Rosh Hashonna and Yom Kippur. On Yom Kippur we invite all sinners to come and daven with us, even apostates, those who have given up the Jewish religion, but on Pesach we will not allow an apostate or an uncircumcized Jew to eat of the Korban Pesach, to participate fully in the seder. Rosh Hashonna and Yom Kippur talk about a people changing, improving, making themselves ready to serve G-d's purposes. We encourage everyone to come. Perhaps it will awaken in them the desire to change, to be more what G-d wants them to be. The message of Pesach, though, is different. On Pesach we actually commit ourselves as a people to help G-d bring about the redemption of the world. This requires commitment. We are committed to help G-d bring light to the night. Pesach is a symbol that G-d will never forsake us, and that if we do our share as a people we will eventually bring the time when everyday will be like a Shabbos. Therefore, we eat matzah on Shabbos because that is also part of the message of Shabbos. We commit ourselves to help G-d bring light to the night.

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In the Mishnah in Pesachim we learn that we are not supposed to eat matzah on erev Pesach, on the day before Pesach. We all know that from approximately 3:30 p.m. on on all holidays and the Sabbath we do not eat a meal so that our Sabbath and holiday meal will be eaten with good appetite. We know that for Pesach the rabbis add approximately another half hour, to 3:00 p.m., in which they say that you should not eat a meal after that time so that you can eat the Pesach seder with an appetite. However, there is a special law on erev Pesach which says that you should not eat matzah erev Pesach. The Rambam says that anybody who violates this law should receive stripes. If you normally eat before a holiday or Shabbos after 3:30 p.m. it is not considered nice, but there is no punishment. The Rambam, though, gives this very severe punishment to one who eats matzah the whole day before Pesach. Why should this be so? What's more, we learn in the Talmud Yerushalmi and in the Tosvos to the Talmud Bavli that one who eats matzah on erev Pesach is like one who had intercourse with his fiance while she still was in her father's house. Why do they use this strong expression and this type of imagery to describe one who eats matzah on erev Pesach?

In ancient days the Jewish wedding ceremony was split in two. An engaged person in ancient times is not like an engaged person today. Today we combine both parts of the wedding ceremony; that's why we have two cups of wine at our wedding ceremony. The first part of the wedding ceremony is called Arusin or Kedushim. During this first part of the wedding ceremony the groom gives a ring to the bride and says, "Behold, you are sanctified to me with this ring according to the law of Moses and Israel." At this point the groom becomes

an Arus, and the bride becomes an Arusa.

In Talmudic times approximately a year separated the first part of the wedding ceremony, called Arusim, from the last part of the wedding ceremony, which was called Nissium. During this time the engaged girl lived at home and the groom spent the year gathering money and obtaining position so he could adequately provide for the bride. At the end of this time at the Nissium, the Sheva Brochas were said and the bride then moved into her husband's home. During the period of Arusim the groom did not have intercourse with the bride and he also did not have to support her. She was banned, however, from any other man. If she would have intercourse with any other man, it would be considered adultery. If, for any reason, they broke up during this time they would need a Jewish divorce, a get. Arusim then prohibits and separates; Nissium permits and joins the husband and the wife.

Erev Pesach, the eve before Pesach, is really a holiday, part of Pesach. The Korban Pesach, or paschal sacrifice, was brought from 12:00 noon on until nightfall. During this time no chometz was allowed. That's why we are not allowed to eat chometz from 12:00 noon. Actually the holiday of Pesach began then. The rabbis have added another two hours to make sure we do not violate the prohibition of eating chometz.

What does the bringing of the Korban Pesach mean? It meant that we were rejecting all forms of idolatry. We know at this time of year the Constellation Aries holds sway. The Egyptian people believed that the spirit of Aries would become incarnate in the lamb at this particular time of year. They, therefore, believed that anybody

who would touch a lamb, the potential dwelling place of the spirit, was endangering the very existence of Egypt and should be dealt with harshly, even killed. We rejected all these type of ideas. We said that only G-d was worthy of worship, not these spirits and superstitions. In effect, we became an Arusa to G-d at this particular time. Most sacrifices, after you brought them, you would eat them immediately, but the Korban Pesach you could not eat until nightfall. Only at the seder do we have the Nissium, do the Jewish people assume the positive uniting aspects of them with G-d. During erev Pesach we still are stressing the negative aspects. We are showing that we reject all others, but we have not formed a positive relationship with G-d yet.

The matzah we eat on Pesach has a double meaning. It means the "bread of affliction". It was the main diet of the slave. They did not have the time, energy, or wherewithal to make real bread. It was the symbol of degradation. Matzah was also the symbol of freedom, of the Jewish people's willingness to leave Egypt quickly even without bread and to trust G-d and follow Him into the wilderness with very little provisions. It was also a symbol of faith and confidence. Two weeks before the Jewish people were to leave Egypt they were commanded about the seder. We learn also that Moshe told them to leave the cities so they should not be polluted with the idol worship of the Egyptian people when they make the seder, and they should eat the Korban Pesach with matzah. Certainly they would have had enough time to have made the matzah before the seder and even bread.

Why then weren't they prepared? The answer is, to my mind, that they did not realize that G-d would take them out so quickly. They

did not realize they would leave in the middle of the night, that the Egyptians would chase them out. They thought the Egyptians would wait a little bit. They would discuss and parlay like they did before, but the very night the Angel of Death passed over they expelled them. Why, though, can't we eat matzah the day before Pesach? It is true that some authorities say that we can eat matzah up until noon when we could bring the Korban Pesach. The HaMaor says this. Maimonides and almost all other authorities say we cannot eat it all day, the reason for it being that the night before we were commanded to destroy all chometz. Since we are now under obligation to destroy all chometz we are now prohibited to eat matzah before the seder, the reason being that matzah and chometz are intimately related.

The definition of matzah is dependent on what is chometz. During the rest of the year there is no such thing as matzah or chometz. Matzah is just a form of bread or chometz. It is only when we define something as chometz and prohibit it that the category of matzah comes into play. Chometz is any of the five species of flour which have touched water for more than 18 minutes. It is for this reason, too, that women are obligated to eat matzah on the seder night. You could claim since this is a time-bound position commandment to eat matzah that women should be free from it, but since they are included in the negative commandment not to eat chometz, they are then obligated to eat matzah at the seder because matzah and chometz are intimately related. Some people do not eat matzah from the beginning of Nisan and some even from Purim. This, of course, is only a custom and not a law. They do this because this is when they become concerned about the whole concept of chometz and matzah. The concept, though, does not come into being until erev Pesach. It is only then that

we are forbidden by law not to eat matzah.

The Zohar says that the matzah is "Nachal Mehem Nuso" which means "the faithful bread". It is the bread which proclaims the Jewish people's faithfulness to G-d and G-d's love of the Jewish people. Why can't we eat matzah erev Pesach? Because on erev Pesach the matzah is still a negative concept. The matzah stands for affliction, for slavery. On erev Pesach we Jewish people are an Arusa. We are prohibited to all other gods. We negate all other people's religious and culture values which are based on violence and cruelty. However, we are still not a Nissua. We still do not have the positive relationship with our lover, so to speak, with G-d. It is only at the night of the seder that we have this relationship. That's why the custom in many communities to sing Shir Hashir, the Song of Songs, which speaks of G-d's love for Israel and Israel's love for G-d on the night of the seder. It is only on the night of the seder that the matzah becomes a positive symbol.

One of the major lessons of the seder is to teach the Jewish people that they were not to just change places with the Egyptians. Usually what happens in successful revolutions is that the oppressors and the oppressed change places. Many times a people concentrate so much on the negative aspects of their suffering that they fail to take advantage of the positive effects of freedom. They no longer believe in freedom. They just believe in revenge. This G-d did not want to happen to the Jewish people. That's why we do not begin the Haggadah with a brocha because we do not want to dwell on the slavery. We want to emphasize our deliverance. It is only before we eat that we say a brocha in the Haggadah, and we thank G-d for

redeeming us and redeeming our souls.

This is true even in the way we describe the symbols. When we describe the Korban Pesach at the seder we discuss its positive aspects, not that it was the symbol of rejection of idolatry, but that because we put its blood on our door G-d saved us. The matzah, too, we stress that it was a bread of affliction when we speak about the bread of faithfulness, that we were willing to go out into the desert with only unleavened bread. Even the bitter herbs we do not stress just the negative. We dip the bitter herbs in Harosis, which is sweet. Slavery was terrible but work, itself, was good. The Jewish people still took pride in their work. Work is good. It is only when you do it as a slave that it is bad.

On erev Pesach we could not eat the matzah or the Korban Pesach because we were only an Arusa. We were only in a negative relationship with G-d. We proclaim by our sacrificing the lamb that we reject all other gods. At the seder, though, we, in effect, became married to G-d or, as the rabbis say, there was "Gelus Schintel". That's why the seder is at home. It is the Nissiu ceremony. We use the chupa as a symbol of the bride coming into the groom's home. There are also seven blessings before we eat the matzah, which remind us of the seven marriage blessing. The matzah is also covered, like the bride is veiled. Until the night of Pesach the Jewish people did not know whether G-d could provide for them, like the Arusa does not know whether her Arus can support her. G-d, though, by taking us out of Egypt, proved He can take care of the Jewish people. He proved that He can always help us. We now are no longer Arusim; we are a Nossua.

The importance of pesach is the positive elements, the positive relationship we now have with G-d, not the negative things. Now we can understand why the Rambam says a person who eats matzah erev Pesach deserves stripes, because he is a person who is not a positive Jew but a negative Jew. He is a person who knows that he has suffered and wants to get revenge, but he does not stand for anything positive. He does not want to break the cycle of oppressor and oppressed and usher in a new era.

We also understand why the Jerusalem Talmud says that anyone who eats matzah on Pesach is like a person who has intercourse with his fiance while she is still in her father's house. Again, we are speaking about somebody who has not taken upon himself the responsibilities of preserving Judaism. He only wants the benefits without the responsibilities. The Jewish people were only an Arusa on erev Pesach. They did not become a Nissua until the seder. The way we Jews have always dealt with evil is to concentrate on doing good. Matzah also means mitzvahs. We Jews established our relationship with G-d by concentrating on doing deeds of kindness, not only looking back and hating our enemies. What we are supposed to be is positive Jews, not people who are separate and prohibited but people who know that G-d loves us and cares for us and Who wants us to help Him make this a better world.

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On Shabbos Hagodol we do nothing special in shul except reading a special Haphtorah. We do not take out two Torahs; there is no ringing decisions about the importance of freedom; there are no special foods, no special kiddush. All we do is read a special Haphtorah about a time in Jewish history shortly after the Jewish people returned to Israel from Babylonia. It also does not seem to have anything to do with Pesach. Why should we read this Haphtorah? What's more, in the Haphtorah we have slanderous statements being made against G-d. "It is vain to serve G-d, and what profit is it that we have kept His charge? Now we call the proud happy."

This seems a very strange Haphtorah to read on the only Shabbos of the year which is called Shabbos Hagodol. Perhaps we can understand why we read this Torah portion if we read the next sentence. "Then they that fear the Lord spoke with one another, and the Lord harkened and heard and a book of remembrance was written before Him." The people learned how to talk with one another and then they were able to solve their problems. Reconciliation is the theme of this Torah portion. That's why at the end of this Haphtorah we say that "Elijah will return the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers". When people are not talking to each other, are not dealing with each other then things are difficult, but if generation talk with each other, if even people who have been insulted by one another can talk, then reconciliation can happen and great things can occur.

That's the theme, also, of our Torah portion Metzora, the reconciliation of the leper to the community. The leper we see is one who has slandered others; therefore, he was afflicted. When his affliction is over, a Kohen is told to visit him and to determine whether his leprosy

has been cured. If it has been cured, the Kohen, or priest, then has him undergo a special ceremony. He is to take two birds. He is to slaughter one bird into a clay pot over running water. He is to dip the other bird in the blood of the first bird and let it go free. This is to teach us that although slander is like killing a person and it muddies up the living waters of trust, yet if a person no longer slanders the water will soon be clean again, and the bird, who is dipped in the blood, after a short time will, too, be clean. If the slanderer will stop slandering and participate in society as a normal human being, the damage can be erased. People can be reconciled.

That's, too, why the leper after this ceremony stays one more week out of the camp, and then he offers a sacrifice in the Temple. If he stops slandering everything can be brought back to normal. We can all be reconciled. That, too, is the theme of Shabbos Hagodol. The Jews, by taking the lamb that they were going to slaughter, showed that they were reconciling themselves to G-d, that they no longer believed in the idolatry that the lamb represented. The rabbis tell us that they were commanded to do three things before the Exodus: to take and slaughter the lamb; to circumcise themselves; and to let their own slaves go free. Before they were worthy of the Exodus they had to be reconciled to G-d, to the Jewish people (that's what circumcision represents), and to each other. They had to free their own slaves.

That's, too, why they had to have a seder on the night they were redeemed. They had to prove they could live in harmony with each other, especially their family and close friends. Reconciliation is the pre-condition for redemption. That's why there is no pomp

and ceremony or special foods connected with Shabbos Hagodol. Shabbos Hagodol is concerned with the heart, with the ability of people to reconcile themselves to each other, even to people who have acted badly toward you.

The rabbis ask the question, why was it that Aaron or a descendant of Aaron, the priests, were selected to examine the leper and tell whether or not he now was clean. Why wasn't Moshe given this task or the rabbis? The answer is because Aaron was a person who made mistakes. He was the person who helped the people fashion the golden calf. The people could relate to Aaron. He was a man who made mistakes but who did not give up but kept trying. They found it hard to relate to Moshe because Moshe seemed to be a man who never made mistakes. The slanderer and others who have done wrong must feel that they can change and that they can be reconciled to their friends and family.

Shabbos Hagodol tells us that this reconciliation is possible. Even those who have been hurt can be reconciled to those who have harmed them. They just have to talk to each other. They have to talk to each other. They have to talk to each other in a straightforward manner without guile or trickery. If they can do this, then they can be reconciled. Our talk should not be a cover for sending the wrong message, for giving people the wrong number. Our talk should be straight so that we can be reconciled. If we can be reconciled one to another we can all be fitting partners with G-d in creation and bring the ultimate day of redemption closer.

I am reminded of the story they tell about a woman who calls up on the phone and said, "How are thing going?" The other woman said, "Mom, the kids are wild, the house is a mess, and I have six guests

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coming for dinner." The woman replied, "Don't worry. I'll come over, straighten the house, cook the dinner, and calm down the kids. By the way, how is your brother?" The woman said, "My brother?! He died three years ago." The woman said, "I'm sorry. I guess I have the wrong number." The young woman replied, "Does this mean you aren't coming over?" Reconciliation can be achieved if each of us talks straight and does not send each other wrong numbers.

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There are three main symbols of Pesach. Rabbi Gamliel tells us that we are obligated to mention them at the Pesach seder. They are the Korban Pesach, the Matzah, and Moror (bitter herbs). In the ancient days we could not invite anybody off the street into a seder. You had to be invited, ~~had to be counted before.~~ ~~You could not just come to a seder.~~ You had to be counted as a member of a group before the Korban Pesach was offered. After the Korban Pesach was offered, then you could not join the group. The people who offered the Korban Pesach had to have you in mind when they offered the Korban Pesach. Also, a person could not participate in a seder if that person was an apostate Jew, or if that Jew was an uncircumcised Jew. Pesach was entirely different than Yom Kippur. On Yom Kippur we invite everyone in to daven with us. We would encourage them to come in. We ~~would~~ ask the ~~miradas in the older days,~~ ^{even} those who had publicly found themselves another religion, to participate in Yom Kippur services, but when it came to Pesach, they were not permitted to be at the seder. Apostate Jews, Jews who were not circumcised were not included in the Pesach seder. Why should this be so?

We know that the rabbis have a disagreement as to when Pesach actually begins. Is Pesach on the 13th of Nisan, the day we call Erev Nisan today, or is it the 15th of Nisan? In other words, was Pesach the day they sacrificed the paschal lamb, or was Pesach the 15th, the night they ate the paschal lamb? Some rabbis, based on a ~~sentence~~ ^{verse} in the Book of Bamidbar, say that Pesach is the 14th because it says on the morrow of the Pesach we left Egypt. We know we left Egypt on the 15th. Other rabbis say

that Pesach is really the 15th, because it says in the book of Joshua that ~~we~~ could eat the Chadash on the morrow of Pesach, and we know we do not eat the Chadash, new grain, until the 16th so, therefore, Pesach would be the 15th. The other days of Pesach the rabbis call Chag HaMatzo, or the Holiday of Matzah. ~~The reason for this disagreement as to what day is Pesach is to be considered the day upon which we brought the Korban Pesach, which is the 14th, or the day upon which we ate the Korban Pesach, which is the 15th?~~ ^{It} The Korban Pesach was different from all the other sacrifices. All the other sacrifices, immediately after you brought them, could be eaten, especially the peace offering. According to the Torah, though, the Korban Pesach was different because the Korban Pesach you slaughtered on the 14th, and then you could not eat it until the 15th. ~~According to most rabbis, you couldn't eat it until midnight.~~ We see the rabbis were not sure whether Pesach was the 14th or 15th. Actually, Erev Pesach is a holiday, too, because that was the day on which we brought the Korban Pesach. It does not have the work restrictions of Pesach, but it, too, was a holiday. Many people make the mistake of thinking that since all Jewish holidays start at night, therefore Pesach really does not start until night time, and, therefore, it is all right to eat chometz until night time. ^{They claim that} ~~Maybe~~ the rabbis made a fence around the law and said you should not eat it ~~until~~ ^{at the} 12:00, but actually you can eat it ~~any~~ ^{noon.} ~~Till evening~~ ^{time you want.} This is completely ~~false.~~ ^{could bring} ~~is.~~ The holiday of Pesach really begins at 12:00 when you ~~brought~~ ^{could bring} the Korban Pesach. From the time you ~~brought~~ ^{could bring} the Korban Pesach you could not eat any chometz. It is true the rabbis extended ~~it~~ ^{the prohibition} for two more hours and said you could not eat any chometz from 10:00 on. The ^{of not} ~~prohibition from the Torah about~~ eating chometz begins at 12:00 ^{noon} ~~EREV~~ ^{EREV} Pesach

noon Erev Pesach.

There is also something interesting, too, ^{on} about Erev Pesach, ~~too~~
about the 14th, and that is that ^{we} you are not allowed to eat any
matzah ~~on this day~~. In the last chapter of the Gemorah Pesochim,
we learn that we are not supposed to eat any matzah, ~~and then~~ ^{so that}
give the reason for it that ^{we} you should have a good appetite ~~when~~ ^{at}
~~you eat your meal~~. However, the Rambam, based upon Yerushalmi,
^{the sedek} says that it is a very serious offense to eat matzah Erev Pesach.
He says it is ^{as serious an offense as a person having} ~~similar to anyone who has~~ intercourse with his
fiance ~~while~~ she is still in her father's house. ^{The Talmud} In the old days
there were two marriage ceremonies a person went through. One
was called Erusin, which meant engagement, and one was called
Nesumi, which meant ^t marriage. When a man and women went through
the Erusin ceremony in which certain blessings were said, the
first cup of wine was used and the words "Hareat L'Kedeshes Lee
Ketabat Zu Ketabat Moshe Yisroel - Behold you are sanctified to
me with this drink on Moses" was said. For all practical
purposes they were married. If they broke the relationship there
had to be a "Get - Jewish divorce". However, the man did not
have to support her. She still stayed in her father's house, and
there was no sexual intercourse. There was no relationship of
that nature. In the old days a man was supposed to hustle and
get enough money to support his new wife, and at the end of a few
months, or even a year, he would then bring her into his own
house and there would be a second cup of wine and the Sheva
Brochas would be said. Today we combine both these ceremonies
because in the Middle Ages, especially, it could happen that a
woman would be engaged to a man and if he disappeared then she
would never be able to get married. The rabbis then decided we
would combine these two ceremonies, and that is what we do. That
is why we have two cups of wine at the modern ceremony. The

first cup of wine is for the Erusin and the second cup of wine is for the Nesumi. The only thing that separates them is the reading of the ketubah. The Rambam says eating matzah Erev Pesach is just as great an offense as a man who has intercourse with his fiance in her father's house. It even describes Lashes for such an offense. Why should this be so?

If we look in the Hagaddah we will find that Rebbe Gamliel gives reasons for the different symbols we have on Pesach. He tells us why we have the Korban Pesach and the Matzah and Moror. In fact, he says anybody who does not give these reasons has not fulfilled his obligations. It is interesting to note that each of these symbols have a positive and negative reason. Here Rabbi Gamliel only uses the positive reasons. We know why the Jewish people sacrificed the lamb. They did it to show they were rejecting idolatry. This showed they no longer believed in the Egyptian superstition that spirits inhabit idols, things that human beings made, or animals at certain times of year and we could manipulate these spirits if we knew how to make the right vessels for them to inhabit. We totally rejected this whole idea of spirit worship. Since the Jewish people had sunk to such a low level before the Exodus, they had to do some dramatic act to show they rejected these ideas which were even beginning to hold sway among them. When Rabbi Gamliel mentions the reasons in the Hagaddah, he doesn't mention that reason. He mentions that it is because the Holy One, Blessed be He, skipped over the houses of the Jewish people and spared our firstborn. The people bowed and worshipped. He does not mention anything about the negative reason at all.

The same is true of the matzah. The matzah stands for the bread of freedom, but it also stands for the bread of affliction. This is "Alecha Money - the bread of affliction" which the Jewish people ate in Egypt. They did not have time as slaves to make elaborate meals. They did not have the money to eat good food. They ate this bread of affliction, this broken bread, this bread of poverty. Rabbi Gamliel only mentions the Jewish people did not have time for their dough to rise, that they were in such a hurry for freedom that they went with almost no provisions, just a little matzah, into the desert. He uses the positive reason.

This is also true with the Moror. We learn about the bitter times the Jewish people had in Egypt. We do not learn how the Egyptians killed us and walled up our children in the pyramids and how they threw the boys in the Nile and about the bloodshed. All we learn about is that they made us work against our will harshly, rigorously. We all know that work, itself, is not bad. Work can be good, and, in fact, is even encouraged in our tradition. Again, Rabbi Gamliel uses the positive reason and not a negative reason.

If we look at the difference between an engagement and a marriage perhaps we will understand what is happening here. When a person is engaged it means they are prohibited to everyone. When a woman is engaged it means she is prohibited to go out with any other man. She has to be faithful with this man. However, she cannot join, have intercourse, with this man either until they are married. Engagement prohibit. Marriage, on the other hand, commits. Marriage commits a man and woman to each other. So we see that engagements prohibit and marriage permit. What did the

Jewish people do on the 14th? When they offered the lamb they did an act of negation. They did not positively do an act of affirmation of Judaism and G-d, but they rejected all other faiths. They rejected all other suitors, so to speak. What they did was to say, "I will now reject the spirit worship of the Egyptians." They had not yet, so to speak, consummated their marriage to G-d. They had to become faithful to the G-d of Israel. That is why they could not eat the matzah until the evening. The Korban Pesach in the evening became a positive symbol. It became a symbol of the Jewish people's dedication to G-d. We know that in the Torah where every time the Jewish people refer to this holiday, we refer to it as Pesach, and every time G-d refers to it, He refers to it as Chag HaMatzos, which means the Holiday of Matzah, and Matzah is spelled the same way as Mitzvah, which means the Holiday of Mitzvahs when the Jewish people agreed to do Mitzvahs. What is it that transformed the 14th, the Holiday of Pesach, into the Holiday of Chag HaMatzos into the holiday of eating the Korban Pesach? What changed the engagement into the marriage? It was the Jewish commitment to mitzvahs, the Jewish commitment to follow G-d no matter where it led.

That is why we cannot eat matzah on Erev Pesach. We cannot eat matzah until we have a commitment, just like an engaged person cannot follow through with a marriage until he is willing to make a total commitment to his beloved. That is why we call this holiday Pesach. Pesach has another meaning in Hebrew. It also means "to be merciful". It also means "to be lame". We believe in the mercy of G-d. We agree that G-d moves the universe even though sometimes He seems lame and sometimes it is hard to see

how right makes might and not might makes right, that we assume the Pesach, that we not only reject all other gods, which the Korban Pesach symbolized, but we also agree with the concept of Pesach. That is why we only eat the Korban Pesach at night, only after the redemption had begun. We sat in our homes and we ate the Korban Pesach as a symbol that we are now going to follow G-d, make this commitment. G-d, on the other hand, refers to this holiday as Chag HaMatzos. He says, "Jewish people, it is not enough to say you have a commitment. You have to follow through on the commitment." The word Matzah in Hebrew has another meaning. It means "to exhaust, to squeeze, to drain". When the Jewish people ate matzah it was because other people drained and exhausted them and exploited them and took everything out of them, but when it came to the Jewish people willingly committing themselves to G-d and to Judaism, we were to exhaust and drain ourselves in His service. That is, of course, why the Jewish people ate matzah when they left Egypt. They were willing to follow G-d into a howling wilderness without adequate provisions. The questions could be asked, why were they going without adequate provisions when Moshe told them two weeks earlier they would be going out of Egypt on the 15th? He told them to take the lamb. He told them all these things and even told them to leave the cities that were filled with idol worship and to make their seders outside so they knew they were going to leave. Why didn't they have bread ready? One answer is that they thought they would be leaving in the day and not at night. Another answer is that they had made a commitment now to go with G-d to the desert and, of course, we all know that in the desert matzah would last longer than bread. Bread would mold faster than matzah. They were thrust out of Egypt and did not have adequate

time. They would never be able to make adequate provisions because they were placing their trust in G-d. They were willing to exhaust themselves, so to speak, in His service. Therefore, before they made this commitment it was prohibited for them to eat matzah because matzah is a symbol of their relationship to G-d, and until they were willing to commit everything to this relationship they could not eat matzah. This is just as a man who, until he is willing to commit himself to support his wife and children, is not allowed to have sexual intercourse with her. Matzah was a symbol of the Jewish people's devotion to G-d and to, so to speak, eat this matzah without the commitment, would be a denial of the covenantal relationship between man and G-d, just like sexual intercourse without a commitment to support the wife and children is also a violation of the covenantal relationship between man and G-d. The relationship between man and G-d is a paradox for the relationship between men and women. Therefore, we see that the seder night was really the marriage of G-d and Israel and the offering the paschal lamb was the symbol of the engagement. Therefore, we sing the Shira, the Song of Songs, to announce this marriage, to rejoice in this marriage. We also, if we read the Hagaddah carefully, do not make any brocha when we begin the Haggadah. Only when we end the first part of the Hagaddah do we make a brocha. The reason is that we were first in slavery and then came to freedom. We do not rejoice in the negative things. It is not enough to be a negative Jew, to stay a Jew because we don't believe in this or that. We must be a Jew because we have a positive relationship with G-d, otherwise it is very difficult to be a Jew. There is a lot of pain being a Jew because you do not have that commitment, that joy which comes from consummating your relationship.

Also, we will notice if we read the Hagaddah carefully that there are 7 blessings similar to the 7 marriage blessings before we eat the matzah. We have the Boray Prehagofin, the Makayeish Yisroel Mahasmaneem, the Shecheonu, the Boray Piray Adono on the green vegetable, the blessing on the Hagaddah, itself, in which we praise G-d for redeeming our souls as well as our bodies - Ga'ah Yisroel - and then we have the blessing Biray Preagovin - the blessing on washing the hands - and then we make the blessing on eating the matzah, the first of the marriage blessings. Matzah then is a symbol of the relationship between G-d and man, and this relationship cannot be complete unless people are willing to make a commitment. This is the reason, too, why we do not eat the paschal lamb. The paschal lamb, too, became a symbol of the Jewish people's commitment to G-d. Therefore, we stress only the positive reason in the seder. We are Jews for positive reasons. We also divide Halel in half. We say half the Halel before the meal and half after the meal. This is one of the few times, too, when we say Halel that we do not make a brocha. Why is that? Because we are not sure we are still going to make this commitment. It is only after we are sure we are going to make the commitment, after we have said the seven blessings and eaten the matzah that we are going to make this commitment. Therefore, we do not say a brocha before Halel because we are not sure we are going to make the complete commitment when we first start Halel.

The end of the seder is filled with happiness, joy, singing, a lot of beautiful prayers, because we are celebrating the relationship between G-d and Israel, the marriage between G-d and Israel. Unfortunately, in our day, too, there are a lot of Jews

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who are negative Jews. They are Jews because they do not believe in this and that, but they do not have any positive in their relationship. Judaism does not fill them with joy and happiness because they do not make a positive commitment to it. It is true that many times Jews thought they could not be observing Jews because Judaism was opposed to Jewish security, as those early pioneers who went to Israel at the turn of the century. The rabbinic leadership did not realize the Holocaust was coming. Everybody could see it, but they put their heads in the sand because they did not want to see it. They had a wonderful religious society there. They said if the shtetel had been around for 1000 years, it would be around for another 1000 years. The youngsters defied them and went to Israel against all odds to build a new society. Of course, we now see that their own children and their grandchildren, unless they have a positive attitude to Judaism, want to leave all Jewish identity. They took a survey in Israel and found that 37% of the secular Jews would rather leave Israel. A similar survey of religious Jews showed that only 1% wanted to leave Israel. Of course, we shouldn't be smug and complacent because here, too, in the United States we have a similar situation. There is a spiritual holocaust going on. We are losing so many Jews to intermarriage and assimilation that within a very short time there probably will be no Jews in America, but nobody does anything about it because the secular leadership, which controls the communities, is afraid if we do anything about it, if we support Jewish education on a very high level, if we would insist that certain Jewish practices be observed, that we would, in effect, blot ourselves out and prevent ourselves from rising to high economic status in America, would lose our swimming pools, cars, etc.

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They do not want to take a chance. Therefore, they make one study after another. Therefore, the only Aliyah to Israel is religious people. We can see the handwriting on the wall. It is those Jews who try to eat matzah without commitment that are performing a grave offense because they are leading Judaism nowhere and Jewish survival will never be assured. We can only eat matzah if we are willing to make a commitment. That's why Rabbi Gamliel said that it is an obligation not to just do the mitzah of eating matzah and moror and pesach, but we have to give the right reason for it. Pesach and matzah and moror talk about a willingness to assume obligations, a willingness to exhaust ourselves in our commitment to Judaism and Jewish practices. Unless we are willing to make these commitments, a commitment he speaks about when he quotes the positive reasons and not the negative reasons, then we will have trouble remaining Jews, but if we adopt the positive reasons, if we are happy knowing we have this special relationship with G-d, a relationship for the benefit of all mankind which will bring redemption to the whole world, then we will have difficulty being Jews.

