

Points to Ponder
Haggadah 5777

STORY from Rav Dovid Lau– Rav Yisrael Meir Lau once led a seder for families who had lost a loved one in the Independence War and also who had lost someone in Yom Kippur War. The seder was very difficult, many tears and crying, very few participated. Finally Rav Yisrael Meir Lau got up and said we say **השתא הכא לשנה הבאה בארעא דישראל**. There are some who want to be here but can't, like those trapped in the Soviet Union. Then, there are those who are here, in Israel, but don't want to come to the Seder. Today, I feel there are those we have to think that we want to come to the Seder but are no longer here with us, able to come. If we don't join together for a Seder, we won't have anything to invite these loved ones to.

At that time, ten year old **(Rav) Dovid Lau Shlita** suggested to his father that they start singing Israeli folk songs to get everyone to start singing together – **מה טוב ומה נאים שבת אחים גם יחד**, and slowly the assembled all started to sing -- with sorrow yes, but everyone was finally together. The song finished and an older couple got up and said, from the time we lost our son in the '48 war of independence we did not join a Seder...until tonight we decided to come, Thank You!

Now, whenever Rav Dovid Lau is about to begin a seder, he looks around and always remembers that seder, saying to himself how thankful we have to be with what and who we have and that we are able to sit here together. To say thank you for what we have.

A Pre-Seder thought – My friend and colleague, **Rav Avrohom Herman Shlita** noted the comment of the author of the Sefer HaChinuch on the Possuk **כי כל שאור וכל דבש לא תקטירו** where the author explains that he does not know the exact reason for the mitzvah but offered a conjecture in order to stimulate his son's (for whom he was writing the Sefer) mind and wanted him to be able to ask any question and find answers. Rav Herman added that this should be our goal on Seder night as well – to encourage all questions and try to find the answers.

4 cups – The Yirushalmi and the Midrash parallel the cups to the 4 languages of Geulah. What is so significant about the words of redemption that it led to the establishment of the 4 cups? Also, why do we pour a fifth cup but disregard its drinking? **Rav Aharon Yeshaya Shapiro ztl (father in law of my great Rebbe Shlita and namesake of my friend Rav Shay Schachter Shlita)** suggested that the idea of Geulah is expressed in a Midrash about the words upon the Luchos – **אל תיקרי חרות אלא חירות**. From the time that they received the Torah, Bnei Yisrael were free from domination and torment. Yet, we see that this is not always the case. If so, where is the **חירות**? Rather, Rav Shapiro suggests, the goal of Pharaoh was two-fold. He sought to destroy the spirit of the Jew and to crush them physically. This is why Hashem promised **והוצאתי** for the salvation of the spirit and **והצלתני** from the physical labor. **וגאלתי** referred to the suspension of the rules of nature that took place in the **יצאת מצרים** process. **ולקחתי** refers to how we are not to be enslaved to any nation, culture or opinion. We emerge from every situation intact and with an unshakable faith. **והבאתי** refers to a time when the nations of the world turn to us and ask us to teach them how to serve Hashem. We still await that opportunity. Maran HaRav Schachter Shlita explained that each of the 4 cups is a toast to Hashem. We can only toast to that which we experienced. Until the final Geulah is achieved, we will recognize 4 and not 5 cups.

Karpas – When the children ask why we eat Karpas, what should we answer them? **Rav Moshe Wolfson Shlita** answers that we are NOT to answer them. He explained that sometimes, the Emunah is

strengthened when in a moment we do not get an answer but let it unfold (compare to our Derasha for Parshas Ki Sisa 5777 (כי בושש משה לרדת)

Karpas – Many have the custom of using a potato for Karpas. The **Yismach Yisrael** suggested that there is a deeper meaning contained therein. All year long the Karpas remains under ground. Only on the Seder night do we raise it up through the process of Kaddeish U'Rechatz. We too, raise ourselves on the Seder night (from our lowly and often dormant spiritual state) through the Seder and the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim. **The Beis Yisrael of Ger** would specifically use a radish noting that all year long it is a Retach and tonight it is a Mitzvah.

Whoever needs shall come in and eat – **Rav Bernard Weinberger Shlita (Shemen Hatov)** noted that in regard to מעות חיטין the Rema holds that there is a minhag to give wheat to everyone. We do not find this concept by other Mitzvos. Why? From this line in the Haggada it sounds as if we are being shown that on Seder Night we are all equal.. – we all eat לחם עוני and we give permission to one another to offer praise to Hashem. Therefore we give each other the ability to do so through the giving of Matza and entering together into the meals of Pesach.

Maggid – **Rav Schachter Shlita** reminded us regularly that part of the Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim experience was a lesson in Emunah. So much so, that he noted that one needed to mention the עיקרי אמונה in the process of telling the story to his children and to show how those ideas were brought out in the Sippur. **Rav Moshe Shapiro ztl.** found the source for this idea in the concept of אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים in the Mitzva of Emunah¹. The first elements of Emunah are identified in the words of Ramban at the end of Bo that through the miracles of Mitzrayim it became apparent that Hashem was the undivided and unique supreme God through the miracles (Ikkarim 1-5) Through the punishments, it was obvious for us that Hashem knows all and rewards and punishes accordingly (Ikkarim 10 & 11) By sending Moshe, it was obvious that there was a concept of Nevuah and that Moshe was the supreme Novi (Ikkarim 6 & 7). The ideals of Torah Min HaShomayim and that Torah does not change come from Hashem's promise of הזהר את האלקים על ההר הזה (Ikkarim 8& 9) Moshiach is seen in the promise of אשר אהיה אשר אהיה which came with an association that I will be with the Jews in this Galus and in the subsequent ones and redeem them from those too (Ikkar 12) Techiyas HaMeisim is apparent in Shiras HaYam – שר לא נאמר אלא ישיר משה ובני" (Ikkar 13).

The 4 questions – **Professor Elie Wiesel** once noted that Pesach used to be most special to him because it was the opportunity for him to escape time. For the seder process is a period of skipping around from Avraham, Lavan and Yaakov to Yosef to the slavery and the redemption and then to the Beis HaMikdash with Hillel & Rabban Gamliel and later to Bnei Brak and back. We do it all in one night. However after the Holocaust, Wiesel learned that time is inescapable and joy to him was short-lived. He then found a different meaning in Pesach and the seder in particular because it called on the person to ask questions. He noted that the idea of asking questions was a chance to arouse our curiosity by opening the doors to memory. He noted that by allowing all questions from all levels of understanding, we collectively live in biblical times. We too, live not only in the paroxysm of evil but also the realization of a promise, not only the kingdom of night but also the rebirth of a dream, not only the horrors of Nazism but also the end of the nightmare. Wiesel would often focus on the fact that history moves at a dizzying pace. While man can conquer so much, it is Pesach and the Seder that reminds us to raise a cry against indifference and a cry of compassion.

¹ Paranthetically, Rav Tzaddok HaKohein of Lublin uses the same Mitzva to teach us that one needs to have אמונה עצמית – for if Hashem believed in us to take us out of Mitzrayim then we must believe in ourselves too.

On this night we are all reclining – Why do we recline? Simply put, it is a sign of חירות. However, the Midrash (Shemos Rabba 20:18) compares it to the roundabout way that Hashem took the Jews out from Mitzrayim (ויסב אלקים את העם). What is the connection between the trip and reclining? **Rav Mattisyahu Solomon Shlita** explains that the Midrash Tanchuma (Bamidbar 1) notes that the Midbar is both a place of danger but can also be a place of tranquility depending on how prepared you are to deal with it. When the Jews left, Hashem took them like the princes who proceed through the desert with a sense of tranquility. We highlight this idea in the concept of reclining – for even the poor must recline.

Even if we were all Chachamim, Nevonim etc – **Rav Zevulun Charlop Shlita** once noted that our world is filled with what he called “many Jewish doughnuts” – people who are wise and filled in many areas of worldly knowledge but when it comes to their own religion, they know almost nothing. The antidote to this situation is knowledge. However, without inspiration, the thirst to seek Torah knowledge is non-existent. Thus, even if we are wise and discerning we need to tell the stories of Pesach in order to inspire that thirst – so that people learn to seek that which they do not know.

Baruch HaMakom – Why do we use the term HaMakom here to describe Hashem? **Rav Shimon Schwab ztl.** explains that whenever we find the word HaMakom as an attribute of Hashem, we are also identifying a situation of Tzidduk HaDin. But how is that relevant here at all? What Tzidduk HaDin applies to this situation? **Rav Yisrael Reisman Shlita** explains that sometimes we want those sitting at the Seder to be the ideal, perfect seder with the ideal and perfect life, wife (or husband), family and kids. Then reality kicks in and we see that things are not always the idealized version that we expected them to be. To that we recite (ברוך המקום, ברוך הוא). Hashem is Makom, is at every Seder table no matter if there are disappointments, if there is excitement, if there are things which you rather be different. Whatever your table is like, make it a tool in serving Ribbono Shel Olam.

If he would have been there he would not have been redeemed – **Rav Shear Yashuv Cohen ztl.** once distinguished between the Rasha of the Seder and the wayward of today. He noted that the Rasha of the seder was פורש מן הצבור – through his actions he demonstrated that he wanted to separate from the community and did not share in their sorrow. If anything the wayward of today share in the sorrow of the community and see leaving it as a great shame. We cannot give up on them.

Tomorrow when your son asks “What is this?” You should tell him that it was with the strength of the Hand that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim (13:14) – **Rav Ovadiah Yosef ztl** asks why we answer the Tam with this particular answer. He answers that different children need different connections to our heritage. Some children need to connect to the supernatural miracles in order to be drawn to Emunah and active Mitzva observance. This is likely the case with the Tam. Still, he adds, לא המדרש העיקר אלא, – it is the Yad – the doing -- that got us out of Mitzrayim not the stories.

Yachol M’Rosh Chodesh – Why is this connected to Yetzias Mitzayim? Why is it even in the Haggada? **Rav Moshe Shapiro ztl.** explained that time and Yetzias Mitzayim are concepts that are quite linked. For in general, we tend to be enslaved to time and expect nature to be dictated by it. But nothing could be further from the facts. Time in Hebrew comes from the word Zman which comes from the word prepared. Kiddush HaChodesh sets the Moadim which means they establish our opportunities to meet with Hashem (Moed comes from יעוד). Normally one thinks that he is bound to time as a slave or a prisoner is bound. However, the first part of the Geulah process is when we understand that we are bound to a different process. We attach ourselves to Hashem and seek to meet with Him regularly. That

began with the command of Rosh Chodesh. When this outlook changed it was the beginning of the Yetzias Mitzrayim. Hence the thought Yachol M'Rosh Chodesh.

Talmud Lomar BaYom HaHu- R. Dovid Lichtenstein recently noted that General Lee explained how he lost during the Civil War despite being a superior tactical general. Lee noted that it had to do with being outclassed militarily due to technological advancements that the Union Army had in being able to handle long range weaponry. In essence, Lee lost the war because he was not up to date. This is the secret to life and specifically the idea of HaChodesh Hazeh Lachem. It is the opportunity for spiritual renewal in the most up to date, real time response. This is perhaps, the understanding we put in to our lives – מעשה בראשית – המחדש בטובו בכל יום תמיד מעשה בראשית. Today's renewal is not based on yesterday's. Ironoically, we learn that from Rosh Chodesh but the Seder's inspiration must be BaYom HaHu.

Baruch Shomer HavTachaso - Why would I say "Baruch Hamakom... Baruch Hashomer Havtachaso" in Haggadah – would I even think Hashem wouldn't fulfill his promise like some politician?

Also how can I say He fulfilled the promise when He didn't actually fulfill it! He promised we would be slaves for 400 years but b'koshi we were slaves for 210, possibly in actual servitude even less.

Finally, we say in Haggdah, if Hashem hadn't taken us out we would still be slaves in Mitzrayim. Even if He hadn't taken us out, by now we would have been freed anyway. So why are we thanking Hashem?

Rav Chaim Volohzin says based on the Gr"a, that in every nevuah it's possible it can happen one way or another but it depends on the person how it will come about – "Hashem tzilcha al yad yiminecha" – just like tzeil (same shoresh as tzilcha), shade, mirrors a person's actions, so too, what Hashem makes happen to a person mirrors their actions. And gives example of Sodom vs Ninveh, both wicked cities, but Ninveh who does teshuva is not destroyed unlike Sodom.

Rav Lau suggests the same is true with the promise of 400 years of avdus – it all depended on how Bnei Yisrael acted in Mitzrayim, and when He heard their cries, He started the 400 years count much earlier from birth of Yitzchak. The promise happened, but how the promise manifested itself was dependent on us.

We must thank Hashem for considering the slavery from earlier while still keeping His promise to Avraham.

והקב"ה מצילנו מידם – Seems a little surprising to assume. After all, with all of the Korbanos in every generation do we really think it is ok that "alls well that ends well"? **Rav Yechiel Yitzchak Perr Shlita** explained that the intent here is similar to that which existed when Yaakov placed Rachel and Yosef last when preparing to go see Eisav. Yaakov knew that the continuity of the Jewish people would be perpetuated with Yosef alive. It does not excuse the Korbanos but it DOES serve as a Michayeiv on the survivors.

כל הבן הילוד - This decree came about because of the prophesy of the astrologers of Pharaoh. **The Steipler ztl.** notes the irony of the events. Not only was Moshe not drowned in the river, it was Pharaoh's own daughter who saved him. Based on this, the Steipler comments that no human plan has the ability to deter the heavenly decrees. The implications are enormous – רבות מחשבות בלב איש ועצת ה' היא תקום

Behold the hand of Hashem will attack your cattle in the field – **Rav Dovid Soloveitchik Shlita** asks how we use this as a proof to the Yad Hachazaka of the Seder. After all, the Makka of Dever was only at the halfway point to Geulah? Why was Dever singled out with the phrase Yad HaChazaka? **Rav Dovid Cohen Shlita, Chevron Rosh HaYeshiva,** explains that the first 5 makkos broke the spirit of Pharaoh and

he would have let the Jews go. Thereafter Hashem hardened his heart in order to punish him. This is why it is referred to as “Yad HaChazaka” it is a five fingered punishment that destroyed the economy.

באותות זה המטה – **Rav Meir Shapiro ztl.** notes that the Moteh – passed down from generation to generation of leaders from Adam to Moshe was transformed immediately. The Lubliner Rav noted that even the holiest of objects is affected by its surroundings. In Egypt, even the Moteh turns into a snake!

The Maakos – The Mishna in Avos (5:4) notes that there were 10 miracles that were done for our forefathers in Mitzrayim. **Rav Yisroel Meir Lau Shlita** notes that this seems somewhat odd – the miracles were done to the Mitzrim – not our forefathers. And why bother to call them miracles anyway? Rav Lau explains that miracles are things that bring one to a better awareness of Hashem’s presence in the world. Although the miracle happened to the Mitzrim, the ones who seemed to get the message were the Jewish people.

The Makkos – The Ran (Derashos 6) notes that when Hashem promises that he shall not put any of the punishments of Egypt on Bnei Yisrael, what kind of promise is it, not to punish an Oved Hashem simply by keeping from the punishments of sinners? Ran explains that the promise was not limited to the maakos but rather that the Egyptians got EVERY Machala in Mitzrayim. **Rav Mattisyahu Salomon Shlita** explains how each Makkah was actually representative of multiple makkos – Dam caused a cessation of fluid in the land and consequently in the people – it affected the kidney and urinary tracts. Those who drank the blood suffered gastro-intestinally, the smells caused fainting or asthma. Tzfardeia caused ulcers and complex gastro difficulties, the noises causing hearing difficulties and loss of sleep and madness. Kinim caused fatigue. Arov brought about anxiety and traumatic stress not to mention resulting toxins from poison and potential sclerosis if bitten. Shechin brought forth all the dermatological illnesses and the psychological complexes that came with it. Barad destroyed the roof over the head of the Egyptian and exposed him to the respiratory illnesses of collapsed buildings...the list is endless.

How many Maalos Tovos – The Malbim explains that after we finish the prose of the Yetzias Mitzrayim story, we must begin to recite the Hallel. In order to inspire that Hallel, we note every aspect for which we owe him thanks. This is one long continuation until the end of Maggid.

Dayeinu - What is the meaning of Dayenu? Why does it play such a central role in our Pesach Seder? **Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis A”H** explained that the word “dayenu” means “sufficient” – if G-d would have only done this or that for us it would have been sufficient for us to say “thank you” and remain eternally indebted. So rather than declaring a general expression of gratitude, we enumerate every act of kindness in all its fine details – thank you, Hashem; thank You, Hashem; thank you, Hashem! And we focus on the many kindnesses our Heavenly Father has extended to us and continues to extend every day of our lives. Despite the fact that in life we generally prefer that which is “kurez un sharf” – “brief and to the point” when it comes to expressing thanks, the more expressive that you are, the more meaningful the thanksgiving. She compared the issue to the Bar/Bat mitzvah speech

The answer is simple. Think of a bar mitzvah boy addressing the guests at his celebration and thanking all the people who are important in his life. His comments usually go something like this: “I wish to thank my parents for everything they have done for me.” What does that really mean? Does that touch anyone’s heart? More important, does that touch the bar mitzvah boy himself? Does that very general “thank you” inspire him to appreciate the love and sacrifice his parents have made and continue to make on his behalf?

Would it not be so much more meaningful were the young man to say the following?

“I wish to thank my mother for always being there for me, for giving me comfort and courage when I felt down and was upset. Thank you, Mom, for helping me with my homework. Thank you for your patience when I asked you a thousand and one questions. Thank you for allowing me to invite my friends over and making them feel so special. Thank you for never leaving my bedside whenever I was ill.”

And what about the father?

“Thank you, Dad, for being such a great father and a great friend. Thank you for taking me on special father-and-son trips. Thank you for coming home from the office to say the Shema with me every night. Thank you for telling me bedtime stories. Thank you for teaching me how to ride my bike. Thank you for teaching me how to play ball. Thank you for taking me to buy my tefillin and for showing me how to put them on. Thank you for always finding time for me, even on your busiest days.”

Wouldn't such a detailed expression of gratitude be more powerful and meaningful and inspiring to that young bar mitzvah boy and his listeners then just a general “thank you”?

Had he brought us to Har Sinai and not given us the Torah it would have been enough – Why would that have been worth it? Who goes to the park and watches without playing and being happy with the experience? **Rav Dovid Kav Shlita** explained that even if we had not received the Torah we would have been obligated in the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach – 9at least like the nations of the world). By coming to Har Sinai, those Seven Mitzvos would not merely have been an obligation of civics – they would have reflected the unique relationship we have with Hashem – as it was there that we were told **והייתם לי סגולה מכל העמים**. For that alone, Dayenu would suffice.

Marror – **Rav Schachter Shlita** would remind us yearly that the purpose of Charoses was either as a medicinal agent for the Marror or a reminder of the mortar in Mitzrayim. That being the case, we do not have a Beracha with it for as he would quote from Rav Soloveitchik ztl., Charoses lacks a Maaseh HaMitzvah – it does not have a specific Mitzva action associated with it. It merely needs to “be there”. Accordingly, the Beracha cannot and does not exist.

Shulchan Orech – People have a minhag to eat an egg at the start of Shulchan Orech to remember the Beis HaMikdash. Why do we use an egg? **The Imrei Emes** quotes that in Halacha it is known that an egg that is born today was completed yesterday. The same can be said both for preparing for the Seder and for the Geulah. One who prepares gains. This is likely the intention of the Possuk **הזורעים בדמעה ברנה יקצרו**.

לא לנו – Why do we say this section if we are breaking up the Hallel anyway? **Rav Yisrael Meir Heiman ztl.** noted that without this, there is no Hallel at all. For one who depends on Avodah Zara fails while he who believes in Hashem never falters. **Rav Yechiel Yitzchak Perr Shlita** added that this is why we say Einayim Lahem v'Lo Yirau even though it is not true – the Avodah Zara lacks real eyes. Rather, at the end we say **יהיו עושיהם כמוהם** and those who make an Avoda Zara are indeed walking blindly even if they have eyes.

Additional Thoughts on the Makkos

Pharaoh's heart is too hard (7:14) – What Was Pharaoh thinking when he wouldn't listen to the obvious messages to be found in the Makkos or even in the words of his advisors? What was HIS logical flow? The author of the **Teshuvah MeiAhava** explains that although Pharaoh had heard the rumors that Hashem promised Avraham that his children would be enslaved and then released with great reward, he lived with the premise of the rumors of the Leitzanei HaDor that Yitzchak was sired by Avimelech. Therefore Bnei Yisrael could not have been the nation Hashem prophesized about. He adds that this is the idea in the Haggada that B'Tzeis Yisrael ..Me'Am Loeiz – from a nation that offered and spouted rumors that we were not legitimate Bnei Avraham.

Tzfardeiya

And in your ovens (7:29) – The Talmud (Pesachim) learns from here that the frogs even went into the hot ovens despite their danger. In fact, the gemara notes that Chaniah Mishael and Azaria made a Kal VaChomer to determine that they too, must go into the oven at the time that they were tested. **Tosafos** asks why we needed a Kal VaChomer for this if it is a clear Halacha? **Rav Schachter Shlita** cited Rabbeinu Tam who noted that perhaps the Avodah Zara that they were supposed to bow to was not a real Avoda Zara and in the face of torture, they could have been lenient. Therefore they used a Kal VaChomer. Rav Schachter added that many of the other Rishonim were not happy with this explanation but it demonstrates the lesson that one can learn issues of sacrifice for Kiddush Hashem from animals too.

And Aharon raised his hand over the waters of Mitzrayim and the frog infestation arose and covered the land of Egypt (8:2) – Rashi notes that the plague began with a single frog. The Mitzrim hit it until swarms sprung forth and covered the land. In 1986, **Rav Pam ztl** recognized that the splintered groups of terrorists from the PLO would grow in number with the retaliatory attacks to them. He added that Terrorism seemed to grow with every military response to it. Rav Pam noted that despite the need to combat terror, the best way to end it is to do what Moshe and Aharon did in order to end the terror epidemic – Tefillah.

And he said “tomorrow” (8:6) – Why would Pharaoh ask to remove the frogs tomorrow instead of immediately? Or HaChaim offers a perspective but **Rav Simcha Zissel Broide ztl.** suggested that based on **Rashi's** comment that Moshe davened immediately for an event to happen later, we learn that the magicians only had the power of immediacy. By requesting the change to “tomorrow” Pharaoh hoped to catch Moshe in an old sorcerers trick. Alas he was not to be fooled. (Parenthetically, we see the lesson of immediacy as an Egyptian trait as opposed to patience which is a Jewish virtue)

And Moshe cried out to Hashem on the matter of the frogs (8:8) – On the matter of Moshe's **Rabbi Akiva Sofer ztl.** impassioned Tefillah noted here as Tzaaka one becomes aware of Moshe's roused compassion for the Egyptians. Why? Was he so aggrieved about their plight? explained that Moshe was concerned lest the full Kiddush Hashem due to be achieved through the 10 Makkos not be achieved if Pharaoh listened to the messages of the frogs. Thus he cried out Al Divar – on the words of the frogs – lest he hear and the Kiddush Hashem not be actualized.

Kinim

And the Kinim were found in man and animal (8:13) – The **Rambam** (in his Pirush to Avos) notes that unlike all the other Makkos which seem to differentiate between the Maaka's effect on the Egyptian and its lack of effect on the Jew, in regard to Kinim no such reference is present. Rambam explains that in fact, Kinim were found within the camp of both Jew and non-Jew but it only affected the Egyptian. **Rav Sorotzkin ztl.** finds proof from the fact that Yaakov asked not to be buried in Egypt. Rashi explains that he was worried that his body would be affected by the Makkah of kinim. If Kinim were not to be found in Goshen, why would he simply request to be buried there – unless Kinim were to be found there as well. But why would Hashem have this makka there? Rav Sorotzkin adds that this was necessary because it was the last Makka of brick requirement. Had kinim not been in the Jewish camp the Egyptians might have moved the brick operation to Goshen and the Jews would have had to continue working.

It is the finger of Hashem (8:15) – The **Vilna Gaon** points out that the difference between the finger and the hand (which was seen at the shores of Yam suf) is that a finger warns and the hand strikes. **Rav Yaakov Galinsky ztl.** adds that if the 10 makkos were merely a warning – we need to accept the warnings of OUR lives and engage in Teshuvah for OUR misdeeds.

We shall travel 3 days into the desert and bring a sacrifice to Hashem (8:23) – At the beginning of the Parsha Moshe was told that this was to be emancipation and suddenly he is turning it into some kind of Shabbaton? **Rav Belsky Shlita** suggested that perhaps the Bnei Yisrael were incapable of comprehending the idea of full emancipation and thus Moshe spoke of a 3 day “break” to warn them to the idea of freedom, to warn them to the idea of freedom. At the same time, the idea of a 3 day excursion allows one to contemplate kedusha independent of secular responsibilities. It affects the preparations for the moment and the relations from the time spent and how it is taken into the rest of the year. This too, was part of Moshe's desire for the people.

Dever

Behold the hand of Hashem will attack your cattle in the field (9:3) – Rav Dovid Soloveitchik Shlita asks how we use this as a proof to the Yad Hachazaka of the Seder. After all, the Makka of Dever was only at the halfway point to Geulah? Why was Dever singled out with the phrase Yad HaChazaka? **Rav Dovid Cohen Shlita**, Chevron Rosh HaYeshiva, explains that the first 5 makkos broke the spirit of Pharaoh and he would have let the Jews go. Thereafter Hashem hardened his heart in order to punish him. This is why I is referred to as “Yad HaChazaka” it is a five fingered punishment that destroyed the economy.

Barad

He who feared the word of Hashem from the servants of Pharaoh (9:20) – How could the concept of “Fearing Hashem” enter the discussion when we are speaking about the Egyptians? The fearing of Hashem should have made them change their minds which is something that would not happen for another 3 Maakos? **The Steipler ztl.** explains that Yiras Shomayim is not an intellectual concept. One can see proof that there is Hashem and come up with all sorts of alternative explanations for the proof. True Yiras Shomayim is a desire to see the obvious. **Rav Dovid Povarsky ztl.** adds that this is why the Jewish survival in the Galus, a concept that clearly proves Ki Lo Yitosh Hashem Amo is not widely seen by humanity as a proof to Hashem and a calling to be close to him.

The wheat and the spelt were not destroyed since they are late in sprouting (9:32) – **Rashi** cites the Tanchuma which explains that it was a miracle (Pele) that these types were not destroyed. Why were the Wheat and spelt deserving of a miracle? **Rav Bauch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** explains that there was a lesson here to Pharaoh – to be flexible instead of brazen – like the wheat and spelt whose flexibility kept them alive. The Pele is a reference to the fact that the miracle was performed for Pharaoh and he STILL didn’t want to learn it.

Arbeh

And he chased them from in front of Pharaoh (10:11) – after all of the Makkos and the semi-mutiny, how could he flippantly chase Moshe and Aharon away? **Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl.** explains that when he saw the Mazal of Raah suggesting embarrassment for the Jews in the future, he thought that the Jews too were going to get it in the end. The idea that they would be embarrassed too, was enough for Pharaoh to be brzen enough to throw Moshe & Aharon out knowing that they too would experience the shame.

And Hashem sent a strong western wind which lifted the Arbeh (10:9) – Why did Hashem need a strong east wind to carry the Arbeh away if he didn’t need it to bring them? The **Ohel Yitzchak** explains that the Arbeh enjoyed the opportunity to take Hashem’s vengeance to those who deserved it and so didn’t need such strong prompting. However, once the Makkah was done, their removal required more effort as the motivation was no longer there. **The Otzros HaTorah** explains that we can learn how excited we should be when coming to Shul or the Beis Hamedrash and how longingly we must feel when being forced to leave it.

Chosheich

A heavy darkness (10:21) – **Rashi** notes that this Makka affected the Jewish population as well. For during this time 4/5 of the population died—those who didn’t want to leave. **Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky ztl.** estimates the loss of life at above 2 million. This certainly must have impacted the Jews as well. Still, while we become troubled by Hashem’s challenges in the dark times, they can be a clear indication that we are quickly coming close to Geulah. The same can hopefully be said today...

But to the Jews there was light in their abodes (10:23) – **Rav Wolbe ztl.** explains that we learn a valuable lesson from this experience – that two people can be in the same place and experience the experience through each of their unique world views. He calls this part of man’s obligation to state B’Shvili Nivra HaOlam. He questions how this was possible to have one person experience darkness and the other one next to him be a beacon of light – unless one only sees darkness while the other allows himself to BE a beacon of light.