

after *barchu*, a second too late? *Zerizus* is the awareness that every moment matters, and that second of delay could spell doom for your spiritual aspirations. And here's the kicker -

יונתי בחגי הסלע בסתר המדרגה הראיני את מראדך השמיעני את קולך כי קולך ערב (שה"ש ב-ד)

Chazal tell us, "קשים מאונתמי של אדם כקריעתו" and "קושין לחוגן," Arranging *shidduchim* and providing a person's *parnassa* are described as being difficult like *Krias Yam Suf* was. What is the simple understanding of this statement? Can anything be called "difficult" for *Hashem*? And why are these specifically compared to the splitting of the sea?

There is another instance of something described as "difficult" for *Hashem*. After *Klal Yisroel* spends seven special days in the shade of the *Sukka*, the Almighty declares "קשה עלי פרידתכם", it is difficult for Me to to separate from My children. And so we are given the *Yom Tov* of *Shemini Atzeres*. Just as it is hard for a parent to be apart from beloved children, it is difficult for *Hashem* to be distant from His own. Explains the **Sefas Emes**, when one prays for salvation from a struggle, a lack of livelihood or spouse, or any other difficulty, the prayer emanates an entirely different level. The person, with strong *emuna* turns only to *Hashem*, fully aware that only He can deliver. But once the *Yeshua*

שבועת ימים מצות האכלו ... (שמות יב-טו) שבועת ימים תאכל מצת ... (שמות יג-ו)

In studying these two *posukim*, we notice two obvious differences. 1. The word "מצות" is written once מלא and once חסר. 2. The word "תאכלו" translates as "should be eaten" - while "תאכל", as "you should consume." The **Vilna Gaon z"l** says that this is a *remez* to the custom of מעות חיטים providing for needy people. Thus, when it says תאכלו, referring to others, it says מלא מצות, implying that you should give them with a מלא - a lot. When it comes to scrimp; for yourself, you are allowed to scrimp; hence מצת without a *yav*.

"וא לחמנו את ה' סדרה" we begin with *Seder*? עניא, inviting the poor. Why is this the opening to our *Seder*?

The **Chasam Sofer z"l** explains that one may wonder: "It's very nice that we left *Mitzrayim*, but look where we are now! We, once again, are suffering through *golus*." To that we say that we possess the ability to alter our destiny through צדקה. As the *posuk* says "וציון במשפט ... ועימה בצדקה". And what better way than to invite our poor brethren by saying ... לכל דכפי ...

My grandfather **Reb Uri Weiderman**, whose *yahrtzeit* is on *Pesach*, would always say the following thought: Why do we eat *karpas* on פסח? In פרשת וישב on the words "כתונת פסים", **Rashi** explains that this was a woolen garment, as it says מגילת אסתר in "כרפס ונכלת" because of מכירת יוסף and we commemorate that incident. And perhaps we wish to rectify that by inviting guests, and showing our eternal love for our brothers and sisters.

The **Tur** says that the שלש רגלים correspond to the *Avos*. *Pesach*, is *kneged Avraham Avinu*, the paradigm *baal chesed*.

Mesilas Yesharim continues that one who is not a *zariz*, it is not unclear if he will succeed, it is not doubtful. It is CERTAIN! ודאי הוא שלא יצליח *Chag kosher vesameach!*

הנחמדים מהב

comes, is the *tefillah* the same? There's a familiar joke of a person circling a full parking lot desperate for a spot. He lifts his eyes heavenward and begs for a space. Just then, a perfect spot opens. The man says, "Forget it, G-d, I got one."

Klal Yisroel at the *Yam Suf* were "יונתי בחגי הסלע". With no choice and in tremendous danger, they could only *daven*. While *Hashem* wanted to bring the *Yeshua*, He knew that once the danger passed, the intensity and closeness of the prayers would diminish, and like the end of the *Yom Tov* of *Sukkos*, the downgraded relationship is "difficult" for *Hashem*. And so it is true with each individual. *Hashem* desires the closeness, and by removing the stress, there is concern that the *Tefillos* will not be the same.

Rashi (*Sotah 40a*) translates "על שאנו מודים לך" as "ובוקים" "בך, we truly connect to *Hashem* when we are not in a difficult situation but when we are thanking Him. May we be *zoche* to see *yeshuos* and thank *Hashem* with a *Korban Todah* in the soon to be rebuilt *Bais HaMikdash!*

מחשבת הלב

Hence, at the very outset of *Yom Tov*, we too wish to excel in this *middah* by inviting and providing for those who need it. Through this we hope to tap in to the *zechus avos* and cause the *geulah* to commence, בב"ב.

בצאת ישראל ממצרים בית יעקב מעם לעז ... (הגש"פ)

Throughout *Yom Tov*, and even at the *sedorim*, *Hallel* is recited. The **Rambam** in *Sefer Hamitzvos* (קנ"ז), when speaking about the *mitzvah* of יצאת מצרים, adds that the more we praise and thank *Hashem* for what He did for us, the better it is; as it says "כל המרבה לספר הרי זה משובה". Clearly, *Hallel* occupies a prominent place and plays a pivotal role in general, but more so and specifically on *Pesach*.

There's a *posuk* with a **Rashi** in *Navi Shoftim*, highlighted by **R' Mattisyahu Salomon z"l**, that provides us with a profound and timeless insight. The *Yidden* were under duress from the nation *Midyan*. A *malach* appears to Gideon and says *Hashem* is with you. Gideon says, "Really? So where are all those fabulous miracles my father told me that *Hashem* performed for *Klal Yisroel* so many years ago?" (*Shoftim 6, 13*) Rashi says that it was *Pesach*, and Gideon said, "Last night my father recited *Hallel*, I heard him proclaim יצאת מצרים 'ישראל ממצרים'. So now too whether we're deserving or not, *Hashem* should redeem us."

Asks **R' Mattisyahu**, if it was *Pesach*, it's fair to assume that Gideon's father recounted the story of the *Avos*, and all that it entailed. So why did he choose *Hallel*? He answers

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ZT"l

devotion, his unwavering commitment to truth and *Torah*, will not go unrewarded. You will merit a child whose light will illuminate the world." That very year, the couple welcomed a son, a child who would grow to become the great Chassidic master, **R' Avraham of Czechanow z"l**, the **Beis Avraham**, whose teachings would inspire generations.

דודי לי ואני לו הרעה בשושנים. עד שיפוח היום ונסו הצללים ... (שיר השירים ב-מז"ו)

During his long imprisonment in the Soviet Gulag, **Reb Mendel Futerfas z"l**, a legendary *Chabad* figure known for his unwavering faith and resilience, was occasionally allowed to receive packages from his family and friends in London. These parcels were lifelines, containing basic necessities, clothing, and non-perishable food. However, his family had to be extremely cautious. They could not include any religious objects, like a *tallis* or *tefillin*, because doing so would not only result in immediate confiscation but would also compromise *Reb Mendel's* safety by marking him as a religious subversive.

As the *Yom Tov* of *Pesach* arrived one year, *Reb Mendel* hoped dearly that a package might arrive containing some *matza* with which to sustain him over the eight-day period. Since *matza* is technically a food item, he prayed his jailers would view it as mere crackers and allow it through, enabling him to fulfill one of the most important *mitzvos* of the year.

Unfortunately, sundown of the first night of *Pesach* arrived - but no package arrived. It was a crushing blow for *Reb Mendel*. Bread was his staple food, and *chametz* - leavened bread, is strictly forbidden on *Pesach*. Therefore, *Reb Mendel* was left with almost nothing to eat for the duration of the holiday. He spent the eight days of the festival surviving on nothing but water and small cubes of sugar, hovering on the verge of starvation and collapse.

The day after *Pesach* ended, *Reb Mendel* was suddenly called to the warden's office. There, the guards handed him a package. When he opened it, he found exactly what he had prayed for: it was *matza*. He saw the guards laughing at him and the warden beamed with a self-satisfied smile - and he knew right away. It became immediately clear that the prison authorities had received the package well before the holiday began but had deliberately withheld it, specifically to deny him the spiritual and physical sustenance of the Jewish commandments he held so dear.

Driven by intense hunger after over a week of fasting, *Reb Mendel* tore into the package and began to devour the *matza*. This caused the guards to double down with glee as crumbs stuck in his beard and on his clothes like wood shavings on a newly trimmed piece of furniture.

But almost as soon as he started, *Reb Mendel* stopped himself. With incredible self-discipline, he took the remaining pieces, wrapped them carefully in paper, and tucked them into his pocket. Looking at the surprised guards who had stopped laughing at this point, he spoke softly, mostly to himself: "I can use this next year on the first day of *Pesach*."

Even in the depths of the Gulag, having just been tortured by hunger and psychological cruelty, his first thought was not for his current comfort, but for the assurance that he would be serve *Hashem* properly when the holiday returned a year later.

משל למה הדבר דומה

ויוצאנו ה' ממצרים לא על ידי מלאך ולא על ידי שרף ולא על ידי שליח אלא הקדוש ברוך הוא כבודו ובעצמו ... (הגדה של פסח)

משל: Walking past a mental asylum in Bialystok one day, the great **Maggid, R' Yankel Galinsky z"l**, heard two men calling out to him from behind the gates. They were weeping bitterly, begging him to come closer and listen to their plight.

"We don't belong here!" they cried. "Everything they said about us is completely false. We are sane. Please, you are a prominent Rabbi, do whatever you can to get us out of here before we lose our minds and our lives in this dire situation!"

Listening to their articulate and desperate pleas, *R' Yankel* was deeply moved. He offered them *chizuk*, and promised to look into their case to do what he could to secure their release.

As he turned to leave, one of the men rushed forward, grabbing the bars. "Please, Rabbi, speed up our discharge! It is a matter of *pikuach nefesh* (saving a life)! You see, I am *Mashiach*, and I must redeem the *Yidden* already!"

Hearing this, his companion quickly grabbed his arm and shushed him. "What are you saying? It's not time for *Mashiach* to redeem the *Yidden* yet! Why are you speaking like this? *Mashiach* will come when *Hashem* says so, and I haven't said so yet! So don't tell everyone that *Mashiach* has come!"

In a flash, *R' Yankel* realized exactly why these men were locked away. Their lucid, normal appearance had completely covered over the profound delusion inside of them. They had sounded perfectly rational, but underneath it all, they were suffering from the ultimate madness: they thought they deities who were were running the world.

משל: During the *Seder*, we say: "I will pass through the land of Egypt ... I and not an angel, I and not a seraph, I and not a messenger." Why is the *Haggadah* so specific about excluding everyone else? Because human beings are easily fooled by the "normal appearance" of the world. We look at the world and are often misled into thinking that human beings; politicians, big bosses, or even great prophets, are the ones running the show. This is the very essence of spiritual madness. Pharaoh suffered from this delusion, believing he was a god and *Yetzias Mitzrayim* came to shatter that illusion. By stating: "I, and not an angel," *Hashem* reminds us that we must not fall for the facade of human power. Just as it was in *Mitzrayim*, there are no intermediaries truly calling the shots. *Hashem* alone is the Director of history, and *Hashem* alone is the Redeemer.

body during these special days of *Yom Tov*?" She was torn between the demands of her health and the purity she associated with *Pesach*, and the tension left her paralyzed.

R' Shimshon came to visit her at home and he approached the situation gently, with the kind of sensitivity that comes only from someone who truly sees the person standing before him. He listened to her fears, her hesitation, her trembling sense of responsibility. And then, with a calm voice and a reassuring smile, he said something that startled her.

"You are absolutely right. *Chametz* on *Pesach* is forbidden. These pills, as they are, should not be taken."

She looked at him in surprise. No one had validated her feelings until now. They had tried to push past them.

The *Rav* continued. "Still," he said, "the *Poskim* teach us that if you place the pill between two pieces of *matza*, the *chametz* becomes nullified to the *matza*. Thus, what you are ingesting is not *chametz* at all - it is *matza*."

Her face softened. The tension in her shoulders eased. Suddenly, the impossible became possible. She wasn't swallowing *chametz*; she was swallowing *matza*. She wasn't violating *Pesach*; she was honoring it. R' Shimshon had not changed the *halacha*. He had changed her perspective of it. He had taken her fear and transformed it into peace. He restored her dignity, her peace of mind, and her connection to *Hashem*. He took her *chametz* and made it *matza*.

R' Shimshon had a gift for taking the "*chametz*" of everyday existence, the mundane, the messy, the ordinary, and elevating it. He taught people that holiness is not found only in the *beis midrash* or in lofty spiritual moments but in the way one eats, sleeps, speaks, and interacts with others. He showed people how to infuse lives with meaning and he didn't demand that people leap to spiritual heights. He simply helped them take what they already had and raise it a little higher.

אלא שבבל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לבלותנו והקדוש ברוך הוא מצילנו מידם ... (הגדה של פסח)

Raphael Dubzinsky was a gentle Jew who lived in a small Polish village, one of countless Jews who were barred from the larger cities and from most respectable trades. Like many of his brethren, he made his living by operating a modest inn, which he rented from the local *poritz*, the landowner. Raphael's reputation was impeccable. His honesty was legendary, and his kindness was felt by all who crossed his threshold. Jews respected him, Gentiles trusted him, and even those who barely knew him sensed the quiet nobility that shaped his every action. He and his wife lived simply and contentedly, though their hearts carried one deep sorrow: they had no children.

Their peaceful life changed when a new priest arrived in the village. This priest was a bitter, virulent anti-Semite, and nothing angered him more than the affection his parishioners showed toward Raphael. He issued an edict forbidding Christians from entering the Jewish inn, but the villagers ignored him; the inn had long been a place of warmth and camaraderie, and Raphael's good name outweighed the priest's threats. The priest then pressured the *poritz* to revoke Raphael's lease, but the landowner refused, unwilling to dismiss a tenant so honest and reliable.

Frustrated, the priest devised a more destructive plan. Every year before *Pesach*, Raphael sold his stock of beer and spirits to a non-Jew, as Jewish law requires. The priest announced that anyone who dared purchase the Jew's *chametz* would face excommunication and eternal damnation. The threat was so severe that when *Pesach* approached, not a single villager was willing to buy Raphael's stock. Overnight, Raphael faced the prospect of losing everything. Yet he did not despair. Instead, he made a public declaration, renouncing ownership of all his beer and spirits. He left the doors of his inn wide open.

"Whoever wishes," he announced, "may come and take whatever he likes." With that, he and his wife left to spend the festival with relatives. He celebrated *Pesach* with genuine joy, trusting that he had done what was right.

When the holiday ended and Raphael returned home, he asked the townspeople he met whether they had enjoyed the free drinks. They looked at him in confusion. "What free drinks?" they said. "We couldn't even get near your inn. Those vicious dogs you had guarding the place nearly tore us apart."

Raphael was stunned: he owned no dogs. But when he reached the inn, he saw two fierce-looking animals pacing near the entrance. As he approached, the dogs softened, sniffed him gently, and then trotted off into the distance. In that moment, Raphael understood: Heaven had intervened to protect his property.

But the miracle created a troubling *halachic* question. If the *chametz* had been guarded, had it remained in his possession throughout *Pesach*? If so, *halacha* forbade him from deriving any benefit from it. Without hesitation, Raphael began opening the spouts of the barrels, letting the beer and spirits spill away. His wife cried out in anguish. "What are you doing? You renounced ownership! You did everything *halacha* requires. Ask the rabbi before you destroy what little we have left."

Raphael consulted the rabbi, who ruled that his wife was correct. By publicly abandoning the *chametz* and leaving the inn open to all, Raphael had indeed relinquished ownership. The miraculous protection did not undo his act. He was fully permitted to reclaim and use the goods. But Raphael's conscience would not allow it. "The *chametz* was in my inn," he said quietly. "If the law permits it because of a technicality, that may be so. But in my heart, I cannot benefit from it."

And with that, he poured out every last drop. His wife, heartbroken, went to the rabbi in tears. "Now we are childless and penniless," she wept. The rabbi listened with compassion and then said gently, "Do not fear. The purity of your husband's

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b'shem R' Shaul Kohen zt"l with the following lesson. True, Gideon's father told him about the *nissim* and spoke about *emunah*. But that was not enough. Gideon saw the passion and emotion exhibited during the *Hallel* recitation, and it left an indelible, and lasting impression on him.

This is a lesson in *chinuch* in general. It's not enough to just preach. We have to live it and demonstrate for real what it means to be a *yid*. I heard a *psbat* once on the *posuk* in *Yisro*, "וכל העם רואים את הקולות". They saw the *dibros*. Meaning,

hearing the *mussar* talks and parenting is one thing. But when they saw, practiced in real life, those very same talks, that impression was a lasting one. Is it a wonder that this lesson from *Sefer Shoftim* is *perek 6, posuk ג'* = 613?! Because this lesson applies to ALL 613 *mitzvos*. It's all about the enthusiasm we demonstrate.

Let's try our best on this beautiful and special *Yom Tov* to make our actions speak louder than our words and may we all have *nachas* and see *yeshuos* for all of *Klal Yisroel*.

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

שאר לא ימצא בבתיהם כי כל אכל מהמצת ונכרתה הנפש ההוא מקדת ישראל ... (שמות יב-יז)

An unusual situation was once presented in the *Beis Din* of R' Yaakov Reischer zt"l, the "Shvus Yaakov." A Jewish man married a non-Jewish woman, ר"ל. As if this wasn't bad enough, he came to the rabbi a few days before *Pesach* with an important *halachic* query. He explained that although his wife is a non-Jew, he himself is a practicing, religious Jew, and aside from the fact that he is married to a gentile, he is careful to keep the *Torah* and *mitzvos* in every other way.

The *dayanim* looked at him with shock and unmitigated surprise but the man was undeterred. He turned to the sitting judges and presented his case to the esteemed rabbinat: are the *chametz* products that his gentile wife purchased over *Pesach* permitted to him immediately after the holiday as they belonged to a non-Jew during *Pesach*; or perhaps they are forbidden to him because the *Talmud* states that whatever belongs to a wife belongs to her husband, and therefore, her *chametz* falls under the category of "חמץ שעבר עליו את הפסח" - forbidden *chametz* that was in the possession of a Jew during *Yom Tov*?

The words dropped like stones. One *dayan's* face drained of color. Another shifted uncomfortably. A third stared at the table, stunned. It was not merely a *halachic* problem - it was a spiritual tragedy. But R' Yaakov maintained his composure. He conferred with his colleagues for a few minutes. Then he called an attendant and asked for a *sefer*. He opened the *sefer* entitled, "Shvus Yaakov" and turned a few pages. He read through a number of paragraphs and then he looked up satisfied.

Turning to the questioner, he spoke with measured clarity. "In *halacha*," he said, "the rule that a husband acquires what his wife acquires applies only within a Jewish marriage." He then quoted the principle exactly as he wrote it in his *teshuvah*: "דין זה" "This rule, that whatever a woman acquires her husband acquires, applies only to a Jewish woman." He explained that the *halachic* mechanism of a husband's rights over his wife's property exists only when the marriage itself is *halachically* recognized. A gentile woman, however, is not considered a wife in Jewish law. Thus, he continued, again using the language preserved in his written ruling: "But regarding a gentile woman - the husband has no rights whatsoever in her acquisitions." The man listened intently, absorbing every word.

R' Yaakov concluded reading with the words: "וממילא חמץ שלה כחמץ של נכרי דמי" - "Therefore, her *chametz* is like the *chametz* of any gentile." The ruling was complete. The *chametz* was permitted to him after *Pesach*!

The man thanked the *Rav* with relief and left the *Beis Din*. Only after the door closed did the tension in the room break.

One of the *dayanim* turned to R' Yaakov, his voice trembling. "Rebbe, please teach us. How could you answer him so calmly? A Jew married to a non-Jew - and he asks about *chametz*?"

R' Yaakov closed the *sefer* gently. Looking around at the quizzical looks on every face in the room, he declared in a soft tone, "If this man still cares enough to ask a *sh'eilah* about *chametz*," he said with conviction, "then a spark of *Yiddishkeit* still burns within him. If we push him away now, we may extinguish it forever." The *dayanim* fell silent.

This story was retold in later generations and according to one accepted version, that spark did not go out. The man eventually returned - not with another *halachic* question, but with a heart seeking *teshuvah* and repentance. The *Rav's* calmness, his refusal to shame him, had opened a door. In time, he separated from the gentile woman and returned to *Torah*.

שבבל הלילות אנו אוכלין חמץ ומצה הלילה הזה בלו מצה ... (הגדה של פסח)

In the quiet town of *Ofakim*, a woman lay struggling with a life-threatening illness. Her doctors had prescribed medication that she needed to take daily, pills that were not optional, not negotiable, and not something she could afford to skip even once. Yet as *Pesach* approached, she discovered that the pills contained traces of *chametz*. For her, this was not a minor detail. This was a huge problem, affecting her very existence. No matter how many times she was told that *pikuach nefesh* overrides every prohibition in the *Torah*, no matter how many *halachic* authorities assured her she was obligated to take the medication, she simply could not bring herself to swallow *chametz* on *Pesach*. Her body needed the pills, but her heart refused them.

The *Rav* of *Ofakim*, R' Shimshon Pinkus zt"l was called and brought up-to-date on her condition. Immediately, though, he understood that this was not a *halachic* debate. It was a human one. The woman was not challenging the rulings of the *Poskim*; she was wrestling with her own soul. Her question was not "Is it allowed?" but "How can I put *chametz* into my