

INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

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This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Tzipora bas Tzvi.
"May her Neshama have an Aliya!"

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Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PESACH EDITION

Theme of Pesach

Every year, as we gather with our family and loved ones to participate in the Seder, we seek ways to make the Seder meaningful and relevant. Some families buy new Haggadahs each year; some incorporate show-and-tell themes for the children; others painstakingly listen to every Dvar Torah that the children bring home in the Haggadahs they prepared in school (and for some unknown reason their teachers thought the Dvar Torah to be both meaningful and relevant).

The Seder is, or should be, a deeply meaningful experience; in fact, the Seder is the most widely observed ritual by Jews of all levels of observance. So what is the message that we should take away from this experience? Clearly, we shouldn't make the most memorable part of the Seder the fact that the *Ma Nishtana* was repeated in eleven different languages.

A good place to start is by examining the *mitzvos* of the evening. Upon taking a closer look, it should become obvious that the messages of the evening are rather contradictory: The four cups of wine, representing the four types of redemption, are drunk in a manner befitting kings. Pesach is called *Zman Cheiruseinu* – the time of our freedom. Yet the *mitzvah* of matzah – *Lechem Oni* – represents our being slaves and impoverished. The Torah refers to Pesach as "*Chag Hamatzohs*" – meaning that an overriding theme of the holiday is the servitude.

It isn't even as if we are transitioning from being slaves to being redeemed; the *mitzvos* are interspersed throughout the

Seder – and the last thing we eat is the Afikomen, which is the taste we are supposed to retain. How do we reconcile this inherent contradiction?

There is a fascinating Rashi on the verse, "*And remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and that Hashem your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and with a stretched out arm...*" (*Dvarim* 5:15). Rashi explains that the reason we must remember that we were slaves in Egypt is to understand that this is the very reason Hashem took us out of Egypt: "Hashem redeemed you in order for you to be his servant and fulfill his Torah and *mitzvos*." In other words, being slaves in Egypt both educated and prepared us to be proper servants to Hashem.

While the obvious difference between being servants to Pharaoh and being servants to Hashem is that Hashem has only our interest at heart, in truth, the difference is much, much deeper. Hashem created the world with a mission to be fulfilled. This mission, in essence, is for mankind to perfect itself and seek a relationship with Him. It is only through this relationship that we achieve eternity and an everlasting existence.

Klal Yisroel are therefore Hashem's ambassadors to the world. This is a very lofty position. We are part of Hashem's "management team" to see that His will for us and the world is fulfilled. The Torah is Hashem's manual for the world and the path to its perfection. This is why Hashem, upon our leaving Egypt, marched us straight to Mount Sinai to accept the Torah.



This leads us to a VERY important point, and likely the most significant difference between being servants to Pharaoh and servants of Hashem: At Mount Sinai we were ASKED to accept the Torah and the inherent responsibilities that come along with that commitment. The entire episode is referred to as *Kabolas HaTorah*. In other words, "our acceptance" is a critical component of this servitude. We are freely choosing this responsibility and that is what gives us a world standing. We represent Hashem and therefore have an elevated status. This is why a tiny country, buried in the Middle East, is a focus of such devotion and enmity. The entire world, at least subconsciously, recognizes the position that the Jewish people hold within the world.

This position is what gives us an elevated status; we are truly part of Hashem's kingdom. Thus, we have to live up to what it means to be both sons of the King and His ambassadors to the world. Therefore, on Pesach, while we celebrate our leaving Egypt, we also reaffirm our servitude to Hashem. This is represented by the matzah. The wine represents the role we have chosen for ourselves as Hashem's ambassadors to the world, which will lead to the ultimate redemption and the entire world's recognition of Hashem's unity and that we are all one.

