



# Light Lines

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## Light Insight

### *Hidden Persuasion*

*"In every generation, a person is obligated to see himself as if he were leaving Egypt..."*

• PESACH HAGGADAH

#### *Pharaoh's Revenge...*

**Y**ou may not have realized it, but the Seder, over three thousand years old, is a virtual reality experience. The *matzah* reminds us of the bread that had no time to rise as our forefathers grabbed their belongings on their night-flight from Egypt. The bitter herbs remind us of the bitterness of the 210 years of slavery. The *charoses* dip resembles the mortar that was used to build the treasure cities of Pison and Ramses. You may not have realized it, because when the Seder is over and we rise from the table, we don't generally feel like we have actually left Egypt. More likely is the feeling of our stomachs turning over from what might be called 'Pharaoh's revenge' — four large glasses of wine and copious amounts of *matzah*, not to mention boiled egg with salt water followed by the main course of the Passover meal!

#### *Ready When You Are Mr. De Mille!*

**T**he Torah wants us to actually experience coming out of Egypt. So why don't we do

something far more dramatic at the Seder? For example: Half the guests at the Seder could dress as Jewish slaves and start the evening by building a large wall with bricks and mortar. Periodically, the other half of the guests, dressed as Egyptian taskmasters, could come along and treat them to the joys of slavery. Of course, to make everything fair, halfway through the evening the roles would be reversed. Then, just before midnight, everyone would sit down together (on cushions!) and have a nice Passover meal. I'm sure that everyone would certainly feel that they had 'left Egypt' after that! At the very least, couldn't we run a computer game called something like Virtual Egypt? The most sophisticated 3-D graphics would then transport us back to the Exodus.

Yet, the Torah, the blueprint of the Creator of the human psyche itself, instead mandates very subtle observances to create the virtual reality of coming out of Egypt.

#### *The Hidden Persuaders*

**I**n the 1960s a new form of advertising was discovered and almost immediately made illegal. Madison Avenue advertising firms discovered that an image of their product on a single frame in a movie playing at 24 frames per second left a 'subliminal' message imprinted in the mind of the viewer. A message of which he was totally unaware.

Because of its extreme subtlety, the message managed to sneak under the defenses of the consumer and plant itself into his subconscious. And without knowing it, the next time he was shopping, for some unknown reason, he had this overpowering attraction to "FidoFeed" over his usual brand of dog food.

Subtlety can be a far more powerful hidden persuader than the overkill of knock-you-over-the-head pyrotechnics. By means of the seemingly subtle experiences of the Seder, the subliminal spiritual message sneaks under the defenses of the coarser aspects of the physical makeup and lodges itself in the depths of our souls.

#### *Ready, Set...*

**Y**ou often hear people complaining at the Seder: "You mean we have to eat more *matzah*?!" "If I have another glass of wine, I'm going to fall into the *charoses*!" "When do we eat already?!" Why are we so particular to fulfill the practical details of the Seder to the letter? Would it really make so much difference if we had one less cup of wine or if we ate the meal before the bitter herbs? After all, we're still commemorating the Exodus, aren't we?

#### *Machine Code For The Soul*

**T**he answer is that the Passover night experience is a Seder. *Seder* literally means order. A precise sequence of events. It's

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like programming code for a computer. The order of the code has to be precise to effect the subliminal spiritual experience of coming out of Egypt. Just as in computer programming where one zero too many or too few will make all the difference between the program running or crashing, so too the Seder operates within precise parameters. It's a Seder. It has to be in this order. With a zero here. With a one here.

So when you are singing "Chad Gadya" at the end of your Seder, and all you feel is that you would like a

large glass of Alka-Seltzer, remember that whether you sense it or not, the Seder has put into your soul a spiritual program which will run every time you say in the Shema: "I am G-d, your G-d Who took you out of the land of Egypt to be your G-d."

The Torah penetrates to the very depths of the human psyche. It wants us to experience the Exodus as a spiritual rite of passage on the deepest level. The soul experiences reality on a very fine and non-material plane. Things that impress and affect the body are rejected by the soul as indigestible. Keeping to the very precise formulation of the Seder allows its subtle experiences to reach beyond the coarseness of the physical — to elevate and enlighten the soul.

### Metzora

#### *Sticks and Stones*

*"And he shall be brought to the kohen (priest)." (Leviticus 14:3)*

When a person speaks *lashon hara* - slanderous speech or gossip, it indicates that he has no concept of the power of speech. It shows that he considers words to be insignificant in comparison to actions: As the nursery rhyme says, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me." Nothing could be further from the truth. When a person speaks evil he awakes a prosecutor in Heaven not only against the target of his *lashon hara*, but also against himself. An angel with a "tape-recorder" stands by the side of each one of us recording our every word.

In order to teach those who speak *lashon hara* the power of just one word, the Torah instructs that the offender be brought to the *kohen*. Afflicted with *tzara'at*, a visible skin blemish that is the Torah's punishment for slanderous speech, he is commanded to go and be seen by the priest. Even as he is on his way to the *kohen*, his body covered with *tzara'at* for all to see, he is still considered spiritually pure — until the *kohen* pronounces the word "Impure", and he is no longer spiritually pure. Similarly, he cannot regain his former purity, even though his disease has healed completely, until the *kohen* pronounces him to be spiritually pure. From this the speaker of *lashon hara* is taught to reflect on the power of each and every word. For with one word, he can be made an outcast, and with one word he can be redeemed.

### Acharei Mot

#### *Rain On My Parade*

*"You shall not take revenge and you shall not bear a grudge..."  
(Leviticus 19:18)*

You wake up with a smile on your face. It's good to be alive. Another day. Another gift. As you leave your house, you bump into your neighbor. "Good morning, Fred!" you beam. "What's good about it?" comes the dour reply. He gets into his car and drives off. You try out your smile again, but you find that there's a little dent in it that wasn't there before.

The Torah prohibits a person from taking revenge: You ask your neighbor to lend you his lawn mower and he refuses. The next week he asks to borrow your drill. You're not allowed to refuse him because he refused you. That's called taking revenge. You're not even allowed to say "Of course, you can borrow my drill — I'm not like you; I lend my things." The Torah categorically calls this

bearing a grudge.

The question arises however: If I'm not allowed to take revenge by refusing to lend my drill, shouldn't the Torah also prohibit my "friend" from refusing to lend me his lawn mower? After all, it was he who started things. If it hadn't been for him not lending me his lawn mower, none of this would have happened in the first place.

Someone who refuses to lend his possessions may not be the greatest guy on the block, but the Torah doesn't make it an offense to be stingy. What the Torah is concerned about is that his stinginess will generate hatred, that his bad character will sour that of his neighbor and turn his natural generosity into hatred. That cannot be allowed to happen. And so the Torah tells us to overcome the knee-jerk reaction and let our natural love of our fellow come through.

When your neighbor returns your friendly greeting with a look that could freeze a fire, don't let him control your life. Go on and smile. Don't let other people's behavior dictate who you are.

## INSIGHTS into the HAGGADAH

*The essential goal of the Passover Seder is to communicate the story of the going out of Egypt. The following is a compilation of insights on the Haggadah. We hope they will enrich your Seder.*

### *The Festive Meal*

One of the unique aspects of the Seder is that we interrupt the saying of the Hallel with a meal. Why is that? Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Berlin explains as follows: The purpose of going out of Egypt was to receive the Torah. With the Torah we gain the ability to serve G-d not only through “spiritual” means, such as Torah study and prayer, but through “physical” *mitzvos* as well, such as marriage, enjoying Shabbat, eating the *matzah*, maror vegetable, and the Passover offering. We eat in the middle of the Hallel prayer in order to praise G-d for sanctifying and elevating our physical existence. Even “mundane” things like eating are elevated when we do them in the service of G-d.

## Response Line

### Sea-ing Red

*Stephen Tenzer wrote:*

*I recently read a book which claimed that the Jewish People did not cross the Red Sea, as is commonly believed, but rather crossed the Sea of Reeds. “Red Sea,” according to the author, is a mistranslation. This was news to me. My English translation of the Bible refers to the Red Sea, while the Hebrew refers to “yam suf.” I remember from Hebrew School that “yam” means “sea.” What does “suf” mean? Did the Jewish People cross the Red Sea, the Sea of Reeds, or some other sea?*

Dear Stephen,

“Suf” means “reeds.” The Jews crossed the “Yam Suf” which means the “Sea of Reeds.”

There are several views in our commentaries as to what the Yam Suf is. It may have been the Gulf of Suez, which branches up from what is today called the Red Sea. Others identify it with the large delta at the mouth of the Nile in the North of Egypt; interestingly, in ancient Egyptian, the swampy Delta districts were called “sufi.”

## LOVE of the LAND

*Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel*

### *Enough To Be Thankful For*

“Dayenu!” This is the title of the most popular song of the Passover Seder in which we enumerate the historical kindness bestowed on our people by our Creator. After mentioning each kindness, from the Exodus from Egypt to the building of the Holy Temple, we declare in melodic fashion that any one of them would have been enough for us (*Dayenu*) to be thankful for.

The final pair of this long list is arranged in a pattern which teaches an important lesson in our scale of values: “Had He given us the Torah and not brought us into the Land of Israel — it would have been enough.”

Torah without the Land of Israel is a viable formula for the fulfillment of our identity as a chosen people. For thousands of years Jews have preserved their identity in lands not their own. The Land of Israel without Torah, on the other hand, can degenerate into the empty nationalism of other peoples.

Once we have the Torah, however, the Land of Israel becomes the ideal setting for the development of our spiritual potential, and the Temple — the house in Jerusalem chosen by G-d as the dwelling place for His presence — the sacred shrine for facilitating total development of our human potential to connect with our Creator.

Today, when all Jews have the Torah and the opportunity to come to the Land of Israel — even if we have not yet merited having the Holy Temple our midst — we can joyously sing: *Dayenu!*

## TO OUR READERS

Ohr Somayach wishes you and your family a healthy, joyous and meaningful Passover.

This special edition is for the weeks of April 15th through the 29th. We will resume publication for the week of May 6th.

Chag Somayach