



# Pesach – A Jew's Pride and Joy

With the Yom Tov of Pesach arriving this is the time to give over to our children an understanding of the unparalleled good fortune of the Jew in having such a unique holiday.

And unique it is indeed: Consider the classic image of a mother – with, hopefully, other family members pitching in, too - scrubbing an obscure corner of the house in order to ensure that every last nook and cranny is Pesach'dik. The meticulous and unyielding exactness with which the Jewish people have observed Pesach is something that has been marveled at throughout the ages. What motivates the Jewish father and mother to expend their last ounce of energy preparing for this Yom Tov?

Pesach has had a unique effect not only on the observant Jew, but even those who are tragically distant from Torah. Even among Jews whose observance of Shabbos and Kashrus are obsolete, the traditions of the Passover Seder, have been kept alive and repeated each year. What is it about Pesach that touches the heart of even the most seemingly apathetic Jew and moves him to recite the glorious national story that begins with the words, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt"?

We can decipher these enigmas by understanding the ultimate meaning and message of Pesach. The Ramban writes that until the Jews witnessed the miracles of Yetzias Mitzrayim, the human race had never directly seen Hashem's all-encompassing creative powers. Many people had used their intellect to recognize Hashem and His involvement in the affairs of mankind, but never was the reality of Hashem's total mastery of all so clear and palpable, and on such a large scale.

But, as human experience bears out, faith in Hashem is not acquired once and forever; instead, it requires ongoing reinforcement. This, the Ralbag explains, is why the Jewish people sang the Shira after the splitting of the sea. Even after seeing miracles of such magnitude, their faith needed the strengthening that only the spiritually uplifting experience of the Shira could provide.

And so, too, does Pesach serve for us as a present day song of praise to reaffirm what we know to be true about Hashem's mastery of the world. By recalling the redemption in all its splendor, from the power that was displayed during Makkas Bechoros to the love that was expressed through the Ananei Hakavod in the desert, the Jewish people reawaken and rejuvenate their faith and trust in Hashem.

When we relate to our children the intricate details of the Ten Plagues and the amazing precision with which they were meted out -- a glass of blood in the hands of an Egyptian becoming water when touched by a Jew, or Jews walking about in sunlight at the very moment a thick darkness paralyzed their Egyptian neighbors -- these events clearly illustrate Hashem's constant control over nature. They drive home that every occurrence is a direct result of Hashem's will; and when we need help, there is but one direction to turn.

But the Torah, in its infinite wisdom, teaches that simple remembrance is not enough. For the message of Hashem's omnipotence to truly penetrate, it must be expressed through actions, specifically during a Chag, a festival, when we refrain from work and other mundane matters, so we focus on absorbing the Divine message conveyed by the many different Mitzvos of Pesach.

First there comes the cleaning the house of all Chometz, followed by the various Mitzvos of the Seder, primary among them the eating of the Matzah, all of which help us to actually relive our history. By eating the same Matzah they ate and being deprived of Chometz just as they were, we are reminded of the speed with which the redemption came. Although 210 years of slavery had already elapsed, we were rushed out of Mitzrayim without even enough time to bake a loaf of bread.

This is a palpable, powerful demonstration of Hashem's love for His people. And so it is with every aspect of the Seder night, all of which place us back in time to Mitzrayim and make us realize that we, too, were redeemed along with the rest of our nation.

But perhaps the most powerful Mitzvah of all is the one in which the Torah commands us, "And you should tell your child on that day..." When a man relates the Pesach story to his child, he becomes linked to a heritage that goes straight back to that glorious day, over 3330 years ago.

This is the very same story his father told him, which he heard from his father, and upward through the ages, and that's enough to fill him with an overwhelming sense of pride in being Jewish. It's staggering to consider that from America to Ethiopia, from Russia to Australia, millions of Jews from all walks of life gather in their homes on this one special night to tell a story they have heard so many times before, just as it was told by the original generation of millions of eye-witnesses.

Is there another people on earth that can claim such continuous transmission of their national story and such tenacious devotion to an ideal? There is none.

This alone is an unparalleled source of pride in our Judaism. It is enough to make us and our children ecstatic over our amazing good fortune in simply being Jews, members of a nation unique within mankind.