



PESACH

from the Lev
of **Yerushalayim**



Divrei Torah & chizuk
from the Lev Aharon family

The TRUE REDEMPTION

Rabbi Laniado



To my dear students, friends and community,

As much as all of the Rabbis of Lev Aharon wanted to be in New York, to celebrate together our 15th year anniversary, Hakaosh Baruch felt that it would be better for us to be your messengers straight from Yerushalayim in order to pray for you and all of Am Yisrael. Even if we are not together physically, we are one in spirit. There is no way that I can express in words how much I miss all of you and am thinking about your wellbeing. And if these are human feelings then you can be sure that everything that is going on in the world is from the deepest love of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And if we are able to understand that, we will all be dancing at home with the greatest happiness.

The Mishnah in Masechet Pesachim daf זב: tells us that even the poor man must not eat on the seder night, unless he leans over, symboliz-

As Jews, we always know that in any situation, we are the chosen nation and the sons of G-d

ing freedom. The Tosafot is bothered by this statement: Why would the halacha be different for a poor person? We never find any halachic differentiations based on financial status. He answers that since the poor man does not even have that which to lean on, we would think that for him, leaning over is not considered showing a sign of freedom. Therefore, the mishnah has to specify that even the poor man must lean and it is considered a sign of freedom for him as well. If we focus on Tosofot's answer, it explains the writing of the mishna, but he does not clarify the concept of how the poor man leaning over is

considered a symbol of freedom. If this man is so poor and does not even have a cushion to lean on, in essence he cannot feel the sensation of true freedom and is merely going through the motions without any meaning. This question intensifies when we hear stories about great people in the Holocaust who saved up some meager grains of flour for months in life-threatening situations in order to bake a small piece of matza and celebrate the holiday of Pesach. How can someone commemorate freedom in such a dire situation, even more so when he is in a position of such intense suffering and doubt of what his future holds?

This paradox defines the greatness of the Jew. As Jews, we always know that in any situation, we are the chosen nation and the sons of G-d. As it says: the son of a king is a king, no matter where we are. We have dignity that cannot be uprooted, as much as peo-

ple may try to lower us and demoralize us. A Jew is about his inner world and his intimate relationship with G-d. When he appreciates this relationship, he will have a tremendous feeling of happiness and will never feel that he is alone or missing anything in his life.

The world today works in the extreme opposite way. Our inner world has almost disappeared completely. It's all about what people are going to say and how we are going to be looked upon. People are willing to post the craziest or most degrading things on social media just to attract some attention. The most sacred things are now news for the public. People spend millions of dollars on meaningless parties, just in order to be a sensation for a few days. These are all signs of inner emptiness and not living a real life. We, of course, cannot understand why G-d is putting us in the situation that we are in now and it is incumbent upon each and every person to do his own personal soul-searching. However, what is clear is that G-d is putting us in a position where we must focus on our inner world. At this time we cannot indulge in extravagant weddings and have the participation of the entire community,

yet the chatan and kallah need to be able to rejoice simply because they found each other and are celebrating this sacred relationship. We are bound to our homes, alone with our families and we must utilize this time to work on finding greatness in our families and ourselves. We have a golden opportunity now, to build our relationship with our Creator without any distractions and just relish the fact that He is with us. In these times, there is no difference between rich and poor, famous and obscure. Everyone is equal. Our value lies not in what we own or how much we have anymore, but in who we are as a person. We are being forced to live a much simpler life like our ancestors, but at the same time, it is a life of satisfaction and fulfillment.

Interestingly enough, the Rambam in Hilchos Pesach perek zayin halacha gimel is posek that a son should ask his father the questions of Pesach, and if not his wife, and if he is by himself he must ask the questions to himself. It can be that the explanation for that is that a person is really living in two worlds and he must take his understanding from the outside world and internalize it in order to gain a renewed meaning of what Yet-

ziat Mitzrayim means to him. And when a person internalizes that he can get to the true answer which is gratitude and praise to Hakadosh Baruch Hu for all the miracles that he has done for us. Even when he is by himself, he knows that G-d is right there listening to him. The translation of quarantine in Hebrew is 'bidud' which numerically comes out to 26 which is the numerical value of י-ה-ו-ה (the name of Hashem) as well. This suggests that being alone is the highest level of being with G-d, which brings out in the person the greatest level of happiness. With this analogy in mind, we will be sitting like kings on the seder night, whether or not we will have with whom to celebrate. This is the explanation as to why the leaning of the poor person is considered an act of freedom. He does not need a physical cushion because he has the best cushion possible to lean on which is Hakadosh Baruch Hu, as the words of the famous song go "ואין לנו על מי להישען אלא על אבינו" Wishing you all a Hag Kasher V'Sameach!

**תזכו לשנים רבות
נעימות וטובות!**

With much admiration,
Rabbi David Laniado

HIDING the *Afikoman*

Chacham Baruch Ben Chaim ztz"l



It is customary in some communities to hide the afikoman under a pillow. A novel explanation to this practice is found in the book, *ויאסף דוד*, who explains this with a parable.

There was once a prince who went out to search for a suitable girl to marry. After a long search he finally met a girl from a destitute family who won his heart. Despite the fact that she was dressed in tatters, the prince was attracted to her and spoke to her heart to persuade her to return with him to the palace and marry him.

The prince realized that although she was an attractive girl, she would not be accepted by the royal family if she showed up wearing shredded clothing, and so he ordered a few expensive outfits, dressed her royally and brought her to the palace with much ado. Upon seeing her exquisite attire, everyone in the king's palace assumed that she was from a wealthy and respected family and she was accepted with open arms.

...he will pull out these clothes to remind her where she came from and what he had done for her...

After the welcoming affair, the prince asked his servant to hide her old clothes. He reasoned that if there should ever be a time when his wife will try to dominate him, he will pull out these clothes to remind her where she came from and what he had done for her. The young maiden took note of his actions; understanding what his intentions were, yet she stood by quietly and did not give any indication of being bothered by it.

When their wedding day arrived, the prince hurried his servants to make all the necessary preparations. His love for his bride was so profound that he could not wait to marry her.

Due to the rushed process, the bread did not have time to rise and remained unleavened. As they sat down at the festivities the bride conspicuously took a piece of the bread and peculiarly hid it under her pillow. The prince watched her interesting behavior and asked her what she was doing. She responded that she did this out of habit from the time she was poor and she had no real reason to do this.

Sometime later, a quarrel broke out between the prince and the new princess. After yelling at her in anger, the prince asked his servants to bring her clothing that he hid away in order to remind her where she came from. As soon as he said that, the princess pulled out the piece of unleavened bread from under her pillow and said "yes, it's true that I come from an unflattering background, however because of your dear love for me, you were so eager to marry me that you did not even give time for this bread to rise." The prince

realized his foolishness and shamefully apologized for his outburst.

Similarly, when we were redeemed from Egypt, we were spiritually poor. The angels were complaining that there was no difference between the Jews and the Egyptians as they both served avodah zarah. The only merit we had were the mitzvot of korban Pesach and milah. In order to remind us of this, Hashem commanded us to bring a korban Pesach throughout the generations

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so that we should remember where we came from. However, on the other hand, due to Hashem's deep love for the Jewish nation He rushed us out of Egypt and our bread did not have time to rise. Therefore when we say פסח שהיו אובלים... which reminds us of our sole merit of redemption, we hide the unleavened bread in order to remind Hashem of His love for us so that He should have mercy upon us.

*Thanks to Rabbi Eliezer Abensour for providing these divrei Torah.



CORONAVIRUS

ולא יהיה בהם נגף בפקוד אותם (Shemot 30, 12)

There will be no plague among them when they are counted

Notes from the Rishon LeTzion,

Harav Yitzhak Yosef's Motzei Shabbat Shiur

Translated by Rabbi Potash Shlit"א



- Increase in Tefilah to prevent the awful virus.
- The obligation to follow the medical regulations.
- Cautiousness of endangering others
- Rules of those who are in quarantine including praying with a minyan and answering “*devarim shebeKedusha*”

Increase in Tefilah

Unfortunately, the Coronavirus is spreading, and with many grievances, has arrived to Eretz Yisrael. Although very few have been infected there are several hundred thousand people in quarantine in efforts to halt the spreading of the virus. First and foremost, is to increase in tefillot and beseech Hashem to arise from his chair of Judgment and sit in his chair of Mercy. Pleas for the healing of the sick must be made, as well as requests to stop the virus. Upon opening the ark, it is beneficial to recite the traditional prayers as well as a Perek of Tehillim.

Torah of Life

It is imperative to stress the importance to abide by the requests of the Department of Health. All those who have been instructed to self-quarantine “*בדד ישב*” *he shall dwell isolated*, “*אבל לא חוץ למחנה*” but *not outside the camp*, rather one can stay in his home within the camp. One may not leave his home even to perform a mitzvah. According to halacha, those in quarantine must listen to the instructions of the doctors which are being proposed in effort to prevent the virus from spreading. Our Torah is a Torah of life, commanding us “*ונשמרתם מאוד לנפשותיכם*” *You shall greatly safeguard your souls*” it also states “*חוקותי ואת משפטי אשר יעשה האדם*” “*You shall observe My decrees and My laws which man shall carry out and by which he shall live.*” Chazal explain in Masechet Yoma (פ"ה): “You shall live by”, and not “You shall die by” and it’s well-known that *pikuach nefesh*, life danger overrides the entire Torah. One

who is ill to a degree of possible danger, need not fast on Yom Kippur and even the Sabbath may be desecrated for him; as the Rambam states that it is forbidden to hesitate before transgressing the Sabbath on behalf of a person who is dangerously ill. A person shall perform [mitzvot] to live by them, and not to die by them. This implies that the laws of the Torah do not bring vengeance to the world, but rather mercy, kindness, and peace.

To Listen To the Words of Chachamim

Once, the Gaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt"l* heard of an elderly talmid chacham who was admitted to the hospital. The medical staff instructed him not to fast on Yom Kippur, yet he insisted on fasting. He claimed that for 80 years he fasted and now he must eat!?! As soon as Rav Auerbach heard of the matter he made a great effort to visit him. He discussed various matters with him, and within the conversation mentioned that he

must abide by the doctors' requests. The talmid chacham argued that the staff is not religious. Rav Auerbach replied that there are many doctors here, who based on your condition, are all instructing you to eat. It's obvious that this is a matter of life and death. The ill man, insistent in his ways, claimed he was well aware of his strengths, and he is well and able to fast. When the Rav realized that his stubbornness was getting the best of him he mentioned that that there was a scent of "*epikorsut*" in the air, because the Gemara in Sanhedrin states that Rav Yosef says: *Epikorsut* is referring to one who conducts himself like those who say: In what manner have the sages benefited us with all their Torah study? They read for their own benefit and they study for their own benefit. That is to say, one who questions what the need is for all the yeshiva students, for avrechim and talmidei chachamim, and questions what we gain from them, is considered an "*apikoros*". An "*apikoros*" judges worldly matters and nature according to what his mind understands and does not subject his intelligence and thoughts to what the chachamim have to say. So too, here, when the halacha instructs that it is forbidden to fast, one may not reassess the situation at all, rather he must

fulfill the words of Hashem which is the halacha to abide by the doctors' request.

The Ways of Maran Zt"l

Maran zt"l, during his position as Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv and then Chief Rabbi of Israel, would pay visits to hospitals. He would request from the management to refer him to all the patients in danger of fasting. He would approach them and tell them that he commands them to eat. Upon seeing the honorable Chief Rabbi himself making this request everyone conceded. In the later years of Maran zt"l's father's life, Rabbi Yaakov Ovadia, *alav hashalom*, the doctor ordered that he must eat on Yom Kippur. Yet, he did not want to obey. Upon receiving the news, Maran zt"l traveled to Katamon and began an earnest discussion with him to persuade him to eat on Yom Kippur. And so he did. Although a son must listen to his father, when the son is the Gadol Hador the father must also listen to his son.

Davening In a Minyan

One who is instructed to self-quarantine, must do so for a time frame of two weeks, to be clear of any sickness. One should not leave, even in order to pray with a minyan, "*אונס רחמנא פטריה*" Hashem exempts one who is under du-

ress. One should pray alone, even though he is sacrificing hearing the reading of the Sefer Torah. The obligation of reading the Sefer Torah is contingent on having a minyan and "*אונס רחמנא פטריה*". If one hears Kadish or Kedusha from the neighboring shuls, he should answer "amen". So too, by telephone. Nevertheless, he is not counted as part of the minyan, due to his lack of physical presence.

The One Who Harms

Tosafot wrote (ב"ק כג. ד"ה וליחייב) One should be more careful with himself not to harm, than to be harmed. For it's written in the Torah (ויקרא כד, כא) ומכה (בהמה ישלמנה ומכה אדם יומת) And one who injures an animal shall pay for it and one who strikes a person shall be put to death. Chazal explain (ב"ק כג:) "One who strikes a person," and the verse also states: "And one who strikes an animal," to teach that just as one who strikes an animal is liable to pay monetary compensation, so too, one who strikes a person is liable to pay monetary compensation. The result is one who strikes a person himself or causes monetary damages, is liable to pay. The Tur Paskens (ח"מ סי' שעה) One who causes monetary damages, is liable to pay. So too, one is liable if he causes damages by spreading the virus to others,

G-d Forbid. During the Cholera epidemic in Europe, the Gaon Rabbi Akiva Eger wrote in a letter that he has warned several times, warning after warning that eating conducts should be according to what the doctors have determined and prescribed, and not to veer from their words even a hair's breadth. And someone who does not follow their instructions is a grave sinner against Hashem. Greater is the uncertain than the certain, especially when the danger involved includes oneself as well as others. Therefore it's an obligation for each and every person to maintain personal hygiene and the shuls should be instructed to open the windows for fresh clean air.

Chizuk in Lashon Hara & Other Inyanim

Each and every person must do his utmost to prevent the spread of this epidemic. A few issues that need to be strengthened is steering away from machloket as well as lashon hara. It is written in *Chovot Halevavot*, (שער הכניעה פרק ז) that all the merits accumulated by one who speaks lashon hara are transferred to the one who he has spoken about and all the sins of the one who was spoken about will be transferred over to the one who spoke. So too, the Angel Ham-

agid, who was created from the Torah of Maran HaBet Yosef said, that after 120 years, when one arrives above and they say to him, "You transgressed on this and that sin", and he will stand perplexed "Where are all my mitzvot? I shook the lulav; I went to the Kotel!" These mitzvot are written by someone else, why? Because you spoke lashon hara about him, therefore all your mitzvot have been transferred to him and all of his sins have been transferred to you. And if everyone strengthens these inyanim, it will stop the epidemic. I am concluding with a prayer to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* to send a *refuah sheleima* to all the sick and may *Hashem* end this epidemic from me and all of Klal Yisrael! Amen v'amen.

Due to the difficult situation in recent times and the various illnesses, no one knows what's next to come. Chazal say that one should always precede prayer to troubles. It's brought down by Ari Hakadosh in Shaar Hakavanot that one should recite "*Petum Haketoret*" after chatzot layla approximately 1:04 am (Brooklyn, New York) which has a major influence above, especially when recited with the masses. It has the power to revoke decrees. Below is a prayer written by Maran HaR-

ishon Letzion Harav Yitzhak Yosef Shlita to end the Corona Epidemic which should be said during the opening of the ark on Shabbat, Mondays and Thursdays.

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו, שתתמלא ברחמים על כל יושבי תבל, ועל יושבי הארץ זו, והגן עליהם מכל גזירות קשות ורעות המתרגשות ובאות לעולם, ותצילנו מכל נגע מגפה חולי ומחלה. וכל החולים שנדבקו במחלה תרפאם רפואה שלימה

"לך ה' הגדולה והגבורה והתפארת והנצח וההוד, כי כל בשמים ובארץ לך ה' הממלכה והמתנשא לכל לראש, ואתה בידך נפש כל חי ורוח כל בשר איש, ובידך כח וגבורה לגדל ולחזק ולרפא אנוש עד דכה, עד דכדוכה של נפש, ולא יפלא ממך כל דבר

"לכן, יהי רצון מלפניך הא-ל הנאמן אב הרחמים, הרופא לכל תחלואי עמו ישראל, אתה רופא נאמן, תשלח מרפא וארוכה ותעלה ברוב חסד וחנינה וחמלה לכל החולים שנדבקו במחלה הזאת, אנא ה' יהמו נא רחמך על כל יושבי תבל, ועל כל עמך ישראל, עמוד נא מכסא הדין ושב על כסא הרחמים, ותכנס לפנינו משורת הדין, ותבטל מעלינו כל גזרות קשות ורעות, ויעמד פְּנֵהְס ויפִלֵל ויתעַצֵר המַגֵּפָה, וגזור עלינו גזירות טובות ישועות ונחמות למען רחמך, ותקרע רוע גזר דיננו, וייקראו לפניך זכיותינו, קומה עזרתה לנו ופדינו למען חסדיך

"שמע נא לקול תחינתנו, כי אתה שומע תפלת כל פה, ברוך שומע תפלה. יהיו לרצון אמרי פי והגיון לבי לפניך ה' צורי וגואלי, ויתקיים בנו מקרא שכתוב "כָּל הַמַּחֲלָה אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַתִּי בַּמִּצְרַיִם לֹא אֲשִׁים עֲלֶיךָ כִּי אֲנִי ה' רִפְאֶךָ", אמן

Bitul Hametz & TESHUVA

Rabbi Eliezer Abensour



One of the halachot we practice each year is bitul hametz. We recite the text of “Kol chamira”, following both bedikat and biur hametz before Pesach. I would like to spend a few moments trying to clarify how this works and to bring out an important lesson.

The basic idea is that we are declaring all our hametz to be like the dust of the earth, thus avoiding the prohibition of owning hametz on Pesach. (See your local orthodox Rabbi for actual halachic implications.) Sounds simple enough. In fact, according to many halachic opinions it does not even require verbal expression, rather it can simply be done in the mind. Now let us rethink this. Suppose I have a house full of hametz. I may have thousands of dollars’ worth of food. I may have expensive bottles of scotch or whiskey. How can I simply close my eyes and think “all this is just dust”? How does this work? Is it a magic trick?

Does my hametz actually turn into dust?

How does this work? Is it a magic trick?

Does my hametz actually turn into dust?

There is another question which may seem completely unrelated, but we will soon see that it is actually very closely connected. There is a Gemara in Masechet Kiddushin :מט. A Rasha approaches a girl and presents her a ring with the following preposition: “Behold you are married to me on condition that I am a total tzadik”. The gemara rules that this kiddushin is valid (on safek) because perhaps he had a thought of teshuva in his heart. Now, here is my question. Suppose he actually did have a thought of teshuva, can

he actually erase years of sin simply with a thought? Can this thought instantly transform him from rasha to total tzadik? Shouldn’t this require a whole process?

Let us go back to bitul hametz and put the kiddushin case on hold for a moment. The gemara says that there are two things that are not actually in a person’s possession, but the Torah makes them as if they are. One of them is hametz on Pesach. This means as follows. Hametz on Pesach is “assur beHana’a”. This means halachically that one may not derive any benefit from hametz, which includes even feeding to an animal or selling to a non-Jew. It thereby has no monetary value and according to Torah law is technically ownerless. It cannot be owned by definition. Despite this, the Torah creates a simulated reality making it as if it is yours thus resulting in the transgression of the Torah’s prohibition to own hametz

on Pesach. Now the Ra"N explains, this is how bitul works. When does the Torah create this simulated reality? When the owner chooses to attribute significance to his hametz. The moment, however that he declares it to be dust, the problem of owning hametz never begins. It remains ownerless as it was all along in reality. So Bitul hametz is not magically changing reality, rather it is simply revealing what the true reality was.

Now let us return to our friend from Masechet Kiddushin. Here is a fellow who has been involved in terrible sins all his life. Seemingly he is a terrible person. "Seemingly" was the key word in that sentence. The seforim all equate the Yetzer Hara to hametz. Here lies the answer. Every Jew is intrinsically good. He possesses a holy neshama who's innermost desire is only to do good and connect to Hashem. All the evil we see in this Jew is simply an illusion. Of course he is held accountable for his actions, but like hametz this is all a simulated reality caused by his own choice! The evil

never actually penetrated his true essence. Therefore, no process is actually required

When Pesach comes and we rid ourselves of our physical hametz, we must remind ourselves, to get rid of our "spiritual hametz"

to make him into a tzadik, because he is not coming to create a new reality rather to reveal the true reality as it was all along. Just as the imaginary ownership of hametz is removed with a simple thought, so is this Jew able to become a total tzadik through a simple thought. This, explains R' Tzadok HaCohen MiLublin is the meaning of the passuk (Yirmiyahu 50:20) "And on that day [of the coming of Mashiach] Hashem will search out the

sins of Yehuda and they will not exist". Because once we return to Hashem we will discover that we in essence were pure all along. It was our Yetzer HaRa who led us to believe otherwise.

Throughout the year we may unfortunately get involved in numerous bad habits or ways of conduct. We then convince ourselves falsely to believe that this is who we are. We may even believe that we cannot change. When Pesach comes and we rid ourselves of our physical hametz, we must remind ourselves, to get rid of our "spiritual hametz" i.e. our Yetzer HaRa, as well. We must remind ourselves that this is just a façade, an illusion. This is not really who we are. In our true essence we all want and **can** serve Hashem with all our hearts.

May Hashem grant us the strength and clarity to reveal our true good, and may we be zoche soon to see the coming of the final geula when the entire world will recognize that Hashem is One and only His will is reality. Amen.

5 Tips how to HOLD ON & CLIMB

Rabbi Eliyahu Franco



Hey boys!

I miss you all! Each one of you has grown dramatically this year in Torah and Yirat Shamayim and you all mean so much to me. I'm sure, being the great boys that you are, that all of you are interested in maintaining and even building on the achievements that you accomplished this year through great effort. So here are a few tips that have been tried and proven to work in the past by boys who have been at this critical juncture you are now facing.

1. First & foremost—**TORAH**. You all have learned this year and know very well that Torah is the center-pillar of our religion and our lives. **Without being grounded in Torah at least ONE HOUR each and every day, it is ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE to maintain the valuable and extremely fragile high levels that you have reached, which are so coveted by many.** Too many times we have seen boys who grew very much in Lev, but so sadly lose **everything** in a matter of two weeks or less, only because they were disconnected from Torah, which caused them to unfortunately regress. Therefore, read this carefully.

This one-hour-a-day **MUST**

be a **text-based** hour. I am not talking about listening to a nice class on-line for an hour – which is fantastic if done in addition. I'm talking about an hour of focused Gemara learning or Mishnah, Halacha, Humash-Rashi, but most important, **INSIDE A SEFER**. This is preferably done with a habruta or with a Rebbe in a small spacious group (if acceptable based on the times) and with a pencil/pen in hand for note-taking and translation. If you do this, you will feel great about yourself because you know you accomplished and you feel it! If everything you achieved this year in Lev is valuable to you to hold on to, then know very well and understand that *this* is the

only way to maintain everything you got here for now and your future. **YOU CAN DO THIS!**

2. **TEFILAH:** You all know that praying three times a day with a minyan (if allowed) is the most basic religious thing you can do. Very many people in our community who don't learn are at least praying three times a day. You, who have tasted and experienced ideal Torah values should not accept for yourself to be any less. Praying must be a top priority no matter how busy or tired you are. If you see yourself being married with children and never missing a minyan, which I know is a goal by all of you, then it must be an absolute routine for you already now.

3. KIBBUD AV VAEM: This is no joke. It comes from the Ten Commandments and has a segula for long life if done properly. Your parents sacrificed a year being without their beloved son in hope that he will come back improved with midot tovot. Show them that you did! Your parents derive tremendous nahat when they see that you are motivated independently in doing good deeds. Give them that nahat by waking up in the **morning** to pray and learn. Clean up after yourself. Put your plate in the sink, clothes in the hamper, make your bed and offer a hand with Pesach chores. When you speak to your parents, **speak with great patience and never raise your voice.** Offer to make their plate and pour them a drink at the Shabbat table and help clear when the meal is over. Open the door of the house and the car for them. All of this is straightforward Gemara Kiddushin and Shulhan Aruch. This is halacha, not suggestions. But most importantly when performing kibbud av vaem, understand that it is a zechut of immense value to be able to do this and that Hashem has bestowed tremendous mercy and kindness upon you by giving you the opportunity to do this great mitzvah.

4. INTERNET: As we mentioned above in Torah, that it is impossible to maintain the level you reached without an hour a day of focused learning, the same is true with internet usage. It is **ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE** to maintain your level of growth without filtered internet and without putting a time-limit on it's usage. Understand that this is a matter which is more basic and crucial than even Torah and tefilah. **If you limit the usage, you remain focused. If you have a filter, you remain Jewish. It is that simple!** In Lev, the Rebbes were always around to give you hizuk when you fell and helped you to get back on your feet. **Now, you are on your own.** Your kedusha level is very dear to you. Hold on to it! Show yourself that you are above all that filth and pray very hard to be saved. Keep strong and be in touch with the Rabbis.

5. FRIENDS: A growing environment around you will promote you to want to grow. Stay around good friends **only.** Specifically, friends who grew with you in Lev and those of other Yeshivas. In this matter, it is always important to look up and not look down. Look up to friends who grew more than you and hang out with

them so that you can grow even higher. If you treasure your growth, you must avoid friends who will bring you down at all costs. If you are strong, they will stop calling. If you tell them I'm too busy because I'm on my way to learn or to pray or I will be in an hour, negative friends are allergic to that and they will stop calling. If they say, "What happened to you?" Be **proud** and say with excitement, **"THE BEST THING HAPPENED TO ME – I WENT TO LEV! I wish you would've come."** Raise your flag high and have no fear! Know clearly that you are on the right path and you worked very hard for it. Know clearly that you have a very bright and happy future ahead of you and never allow anyone to strip that away from you, whatever the price. The rare values and priorities you worked so hard to attain are way too valuable to lose!

So boys! Be smart, be assertive and confident when dealing with others and when dealing with your own issues. Know well that you have and know the truth of this world and never ignore it for a minute. May Hashem bless you all with good health and with great strength and will-power to be able to hold on and keep climbing!

Getting Rid of the Shmutz (garbage) INSIDE & OUT...

Rabbi Landsman



Shalom Aleichem Boys! We miss you and are thinking about you always! If you ever need to speak to someone or just want someone to listen to you or advise, we're always here for you!

During times like this, it's always good to get some Chizuk. Never forget that Hashem loves you! The good is great and the bad is good. Everything Hashem does is for the best.

Everybody is busy worrying about the Coronavirus; we Jews just need to have bitachon and trust Hashem that everything is going to be okay. While the whole world is worrying, we Jews are busy cleaning for Pesach; freedom. May we feel true freedom this year BE"H!

I present you with two questions:

1. Why is Pesach so stringent; you have to get rid of all the chametz... you can't see it, have it or own it

2. What's the difference between matza and bread?

We have a special mitzvah for Pesach; you can't see, have or own chametz. There is no other halacha like this. For example, I can own a pig but I can't eat it. I can see a treif burger, I just can't eat it. I can have non-kosher meat in the freezer, but I can't have chametz during Pesach? Why? Why is Pesach so stringent? People go crazy cleaning, which is a mitzvah, but not when you go too overboard. The ikar is to get rid of the Chametz which equals the Yetzer Hara! The tafkid of the Yetzer Hara is to puff everything up, make things look bigger and better than they really are. There is a lot of counterfeit happiness and fun which leaves us feeling more empty, after the fact. The only real happiness and joy is Torah! Everyone knows what they have to work on. Part of cleaning for Pesach, besides the chametz on the floor, is the chametz inside us.

It's not a coincidence that Pesach night is called Seder. All of us need seder, the order in our lives. At least once a year Hashem gives us an opportunity to have that seder. Our job is to take that and apply it throughout the year. We start the Seder singing Kaddesh, Orchatz.... even if we don't have children we still start singing

As soon as we left Mitzrayim, we were free to serve Hashem.

through the order. This teaches us an unbelievable insight. Everything in life has a proper schedule. One of the most fundamental things in our life is to make a time and place for everything. Applying this concept will help make our lives more productive, with better marriages, jobs etc...

In Mitzrayim, we were slaves to Pharaoh; we were not free.

As soon as we left Mitzrayim, we were free to serve Hashem. We left under one ruler and we came out to another. So where is the freedom? A person thinks that when he can do as he desires, he's free, but in reality, he is not, because he's being controlled by his desires (Yetzer Hara). Someone who is ruled by Hashem, the eternal ruler, Whose rules are to help us grow is truly free. When we follow the rules, we are being guided on how to live an awesome life.

Where did we become Bnei Yisroel? After we left Mitzrayim, we were newborn, Hashem's bachor. If you ever see a first-time mother take care

**...during Pesach,
Hashem had
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germs away.**

of her child, you see how she watches him, washes away all the germs... Soon, as her child grows up, she calms down and eases off. So too when Bnei Yisroel was becoming Bnei Yisroel, during Pesach, Hashem had to make sure to keep all the germs away. The germs are the Yetzer Hara, the fluff, which I hope all you boys realize by now is counterfeit. That's why Pesach is

so stringent. We have to be so stringent because we are like newborns, and therefore we can't see the germs or have the germs or even own the germs! That little chametz, yeast that rises, is the Yetzer Hara. When we rationalize the Yetzer Hara, that is when we fall. We say "what's so bad about...."; that's when we fall. We have to say no! It's all about being fully clean of both the physical chametz on the floor and the chametz inside us. Let's make this year a real seder, not just Pesach night, but all year! Keep the Yetzer Hara out! Good Luck boys!

All my love
Rabbi Landsman



Finding ourselves on PESACH

Rabbi Avraham Malka



Time, for the Jews, has a greatly different connotation than the rest of the world. While the common perception is that we remain constant and time passes through us, the Torah perspective is that time remains constant and we are passing through it. We see this idea expressed in regard to mazalot.

A mazal is a particular constellation that provides a specific segula for that time period. Since every mazal recircles every twelve months, that segula associated with that mazal resurfaces every twelve months as well. Tishrei is always a month that is mesugal for closeness to Hashem. Adar is always a month that is mesugal for simcha and success for Bnei Yisrael. These segulot occur in Shamayim, a totally spiritual world, in a spiritual way, but there is also a parallel manifestation happening in our world, which is mostly physical, in a physical way.

The Yom Tov of Pesach is one such example. The defining miracle of Pesach is our redemption from Mitzrayim. However, a more precise ex-

planation is not just that we left Mitzrayim, but that it was when Bnei Yisrael was born. Asher bachar banu mikol ha'amim - Hashem chose us, and in essence created us, by Yetziat Mitzrayim.

We also see this clearly through our physical environment. **שבעת ימים תאכל מצות אשר צויתך למועד חודש האביב כי בחודש האביב יצאת ממצרים.** The Torah refers to Pesach as the Yom Tov which falls out during the Spring, the season of rebirth. Spring is the season when animals come out of hibernation, vegetation begins to sprout, and the warmth of the sun returns to welcome us to be productive. The physical rebirth is only a siman of the spiritual rebirth that is taking place all around us.

Every year, we remind ourselves that Pesach is not only a commemoration of a miracle that happened thousands of years ago, but it is something that we relive each year. **בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים**, every generation has to understand that we are experiencing the same Yetziat Mitzrayim. We may not be

physically leaving Mitzrayim, but we have the opportunity and segula to experience that same freedom and rebirth.

Throughout the year we get caught up in so many different challenges, both physically and spiritually. We become so absorbed in our daily, weekly and monthly routines that we rarely take time to pause and reassess what our basic needs and priorities are. Pesach is that time to refresh, a time to get back to the basics. We must appreciate what it means to be privileged, to be chosen each year by Hashem to be His nation.

We are blessed with families and are commanded **להגדת לבנך**, to raise our families properly and show them the bracha that there is in serving Hashem. B'ezrat Hashem we should take advantage of the segula of the month of Nissan and Pesach, and use the special help from Shamayim to realize who we really are and all the gifts that Hashem blessed our lives with, and use our newfound sense of self, to achieve the greatness Hashem intends for us.

PREPARING *for* PESACH during this pandemic



Rabbi Yishai Rabi

There is no way for us humans to understand the depths of G-d's ways. We are therefore not meant to know the hidden reasons behind why He chose to bring this virus and turn over the world. However, our Rabbis have taught that when there is a tzara – Hashem is sending us clear messages and these messages must define the direction that we need to go in response to the difficulties we find ourselves in.

We are living in a time of technological advances. We believe in the power of science and expert doctors etc, and now out of nowhere we have no clue what we're dealing with. A tiny microorganism that is not visible to the eye, and yet the coronavirus is bringing the world to its knees. This is a very humbling effect, but it brings out so many positive ideas.

First thing to do is not to panic by any means. Just like the Mishnah in Pesachim teach-

es us to check each room to make sure there isn't any chametz around (even a sliver or a trace) still the Mishna concludes that there's no suspicion that a cat or mouse entered the room with chametz after we've already checked,

**“Wash
your hands
frequently,
but always
remember
who's hands
you're in”**

because all the Torah requires us to do is check to the best of our abilities and trust in Hashem that our homes are chametz-free. So too, during this time we should take meaningful steps to mitigate and minimize this pandemic, but never to the point of paranoia and lack of emunah. Like the quote that I recently saw “Wash your

hands frequently, but always remember who's hands you're in”.

We know without a doubt that nothing in this world happens without Hashem's intervention. As the Ba'al Shem Tov taught his students that even a small leaf that fell from a tree and was blown by the wind to the other side of the road was determined by the creator of the universe. Everything that we're going to experience is going to be divinely orchestrated for our benefit. This is the comforting thought that has helped us outlive every nation throughout history, and has allowed us to always be productive.

The message:

The world is shutting down all its practices. Schools, bars, restaurants and theaters are all closing. Our daily schedule is all of a sudden diverted, and most of our habits have now been canceled. We have now been liberated from our

“Mitzrayim”. We got so used to thinking about what life is all about, but now we finally have the opportunity to re-discover life. We can begin to think clearly about what life is **really** about and choose to start changing bad habits. Every generation has to get out of its Mitzrayim (bondage), and now it's being done for us naturally. So we must take advantage of this time by realizing that all assumptions, habits and fears can now be dismissed. Everything is changing, but it's changing for the better. As soon as this thing will pass, the world is going to be a much better place.

Intimacy:

We've gotten so used to the idea that affection and closeness is purely physical. It's so untrue. Love and affection is not subjected to physical activities. Now that we're in forced isolation, we have to find oth-

Now that we're in forced isolation, we have to find other ways to become close and show affection

er ways to become close and show affection. Showing love without touching is a tremendous opportunity (just as in a marriage, there are times that the couple is forced to develop their emotional relationship with kindness and sensitivity to one another without the physical aspect). This reality will bring out the goodness in us. All the pettiness is becoming too embarrassing, and we are maturing and sobering up in so many ways. Now is the time to think not about ourselves, but of others. Not about

our physical health, but of our moral health. We will fight illness with more life, goodness and kindness. We have to become more enthusiastic about becoming better people. So let's not allow this incredible opportunity to pass us by. Just like Mordechai told Esther that there's nothing to worry about because the Jews are going to be around forever, but don't miss out on your contribution to your personal mission in life.

Now before the coming of Mashiah we all have to fulfill our missions, so let us all seize the moment by bringing the finishing touches to our ultimate redemption. If we all produce a little G-dliness, the whole world will become G-dly. Happy Passover and looking forward to seeing you all back in a fully rebuilt Jerusalem very very soon.

Much love.

Yishai Rabi



PESACH & the power of speech

Rabbi Uri Sondhelm



There is uniqueness to the mitzvah of sippur yetziat Mitzrayim. There is no other mitzvah where the Torah commands us to tell over the history of a Yom Tov other than on Pesach. Additionally, there is no other mitzvah where the Rabbis tell us that kol hamarbeh harei zeh meshubach!

The reason for this is found in the holy seforim which declare that in Mitzrayim “dibbur begaluta”, the power of speech was in galut. The power of speech was taken away from the Jewish people. This is questionable, because we find many Jews who did speak in Mitzrayim such as Moshe, Aharon and even Dattan and Aviram!

We must redefine the dibbur we are referring to as the unique and ultimate dibbur, the ruach memallela given to us to speak to Hashem, which was denied to Am Yisrael in

Mitzrayim. We find that even when Bnei Yisrael prayed to Hashem for help, they were unable to speak, their prayers were without words. Vayeanchu, they groaned, vayizaaku, they cried out.

We find that even when Bnei Yisrael prayed to Hashem for help, they were unable to speak, their prayers were without words

When Am Yisroel was released from galut their power of speech was also set free. The city formerly known as Pitom, sealed mouth, became known as Pi HaHerut, freed mouth.

This is alluded to in Tehillim, where the pasuk states, Anochi Hashem Elokecha hamaalcha m'Eretz Mitzrayim - followed by Harchev picha veamaalehu.

The importance of the freeing of our speech is hinted to in the name Pesach meaning “pe sach”, a mouth that is now able to converse with G-d. To appreciate this gift, we are commanded lesapper, to tell over the events, and to be marbeh lesapper, to use our newfound power of speech to the nth degree.

This also explains the law in the Mishna of Masechet Pesachim: If a person is having a seder by himself he is still required to ask questions and to answer them to himself. This at first seems strange! The reason is now obvious; this Jew must also celebrate Pesach by acknowledging his newly found freedom of speech.

The Corona message *in the* HAGGADAH

Rabbi Lowenstien



As the corona pandemic sweeps across the world, all of mankind searches for its meaningful message.

On seder night we read the Haggadah “and the Lord took us out of Egypt with a mighty hand”. “With a mighty”- this refers to the plague of the pestilence. Now, there were many plagues in Egypt, in what way did the pestilence show Hashem’s mighty hand more than other plagues?

The answer can be found at the end of the book of Shmuel. David Hamelech is told by the profit Gad that he must choose one of three punishments for Am Yisrael: famine, war or pestilence. David chose the pestilence, saying “Let us fall into the hand of Hashem, and

not fall to the hand of man”. When war breaks out, one may put his trust in the strength of his army. In face of famine, one

**“the mighty
hand of
Hashem” is
recognized
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pestilence.**

may rely on his wealth. There is no one, however, to rely on when facing pestilence – other than Hashem himself.

At this time, it is simple for us to understand that “the mighty hand of Hashem” is recognized most at a time of pestilence.

As we watch the world around us feebly grappling with a pandemic – we are called upon to internalize this message. Your strength will not protect you, neither will your money! Only Avinu ShebaShamayim!

The Mishna at the end of Sotah tells us that before Mashiach comes we will see clearly that Ein lanu al mi lehishaen ela al Avinu ShebaShamayim – We have **no one** to rely on other than our Father in heaven!

This is one of the messages that Hashem is sending us with the Coronavirus, and this is also a central message of the seder night. With this message we will Beezras Hashem greet Mashiach.

KEEPING the PEACE

Rabbi Akiva Becker



We are living in challenging times. Having a challenge is not something new to any of us. Every person has been through something, and every person is capable of achieving success. It is incumbent upon every one of us with all the uncertainty surrounding us, to look within to find the inner strength that will give us the ability to continue. The Gemara in Brachot says that Hashem never puts a sickness into the world, without first putting the cure.

We read in the Parsha only a few weeks ago, how the oil used in the Mishkan was crushed into its purest state in order to be used as an elevated eternal light. Every one of us can be compared to this oil. The difficulties and the challenges we face are only sent by Hashem in order to bring out the most essential aspects of our being; our ability to be a constant elevated flame.

Many of us are back from Yeshiva for the first time in close

to half a year. The time was spent absorbing the Torah and working on our Middot. Our growth has been phenomenal. But now we are faced with

Our true tests in life are in our daily affairs and interactions with people

the practical application of everything we have learned. Our true tests in life are in our daily affairs and interactions with people, whether family and friends, chavrutas or business acquaintances. How man treats his fellow man has been a recurring concept in our religion since the destruction of the second Beit Hamikdash.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avot says that the students of Aharon Hakohen were lovers of peace, seekers of peace and lovers of all [of Hashem's] creations.

We can derive from here many lessons on how vital it is to be peaceful and loving towards our fellow man/family member or friend. ***But one lesson we can take out from here is that the students saw everyone not just as people with actions and reactions, but as creations of Hashem. Being Hashem's creation means having challenges and struggles of their own.*** This gave Aharon Hakohen's students the ability to be able to seek peace and love people, even when it may have been hard to. At the end of the day we are all creations of Hashem equally worthy of his love.

There is a wonderful story of Rav Chaim of Volozhin zt"l (author of the Nefesh Hachaim) who was on his way to do the mitzvah of pidyon shvuyim (redeeming captives). While going through a dangerous forest, he was captured by bandits. Before killing him they allowed him to make a final request. R' Chaim

When we start to see everything and everyone as Hashem sees it, with love and compassion, the world will start to reflect back on us in a more positive light.

asked for five minutes to think. He put his hands on his eyes to concentrate and after five minutes he was immediately released. The talmidim asked him what he had contemplated, which caused his survival. He said that since he wished to leave this world with no anger towards others, he built up a strong feeling of love towards the leader of the bandits and tried to judge him favorably. *In this way he aroused the man to love him in return.*

More often than not we allow

our surroundings to affect our emotional state, when in reality our true emotional state is not dependent upon what occurs outside of us, only within. When we start to see everything and everyone as Hashem sees it, with love and compassion, the world will start to reflect back on us in a more positive light and will bring us closer to Moshiach Tzidkeinu bimheira biyameinu!

Hoping to see everyone back very soon in good health!

-Akiva Becker



PINCHAS' EXAMPLE

Rabbi Zechariah Javaheri



In the parshah of Pinchas, Pinchas is rewarded the eternal and coveted brachah of shalom for bravely standing up for what is right in the face of incredible odds. Let's examine together what went on here: Here is a 13 year old boy (that's how old he was at the time according to Chazal) who separated himself from doing what seemed to the 24,000 people around him to be the right thing to do: to become hefker! There was a lot of peer pressure; it all seemed right. Everyone was into the fray. To do anything otherwise would be abnormal, looked down upon and not legit! Yet he didn't succumb to the peer pressure nor did he give in to temptation. Instead he did the unthinkable. He picked up the spear and finished off the cause of the temptation and the fire died down. In one moment, in the heat of making the right decision and against all odds he turned himself from just another boy to a man! Because of his heroics, he turned back

**He was
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Hashem's anger at Am Israel. He was the hero, he stood up for what he believed in and Hashem assisted him through twelve miracles.

But it wasn't over. Everyone was talking about him, mumbling about his past and where he came from. **Who does he think he is to do such an outrageous thing like this? What gave him the right to go against popular public opinion?** Many rose up against him to harm him, to ruin his good name, to attack what he stood for. But it was

all for naught! In the end his decision to do what's right overcame all odds and Hashem gave him the covenant of peace and the right to be a kohen forever. And little by little the mumblings stopped, the threats disappeared, and everyone came to respect him for what he stood for: a man who honored Hashem's name. His antagonists made peace with him and aspired to be like him.

What does this have to do with us and all Lev alumni?

We just finished an incredible year at the prestigious Lev Aharon Yeshiva. All the bachurim that came in as boys left as men. Everyone transformed himself through hard work and sacrifice into becoming someone they never thought they can be. Potentials that the boys didn't think they had were tapped into, realized, and set into motion. You broke records in coming to tefilah, changed the manner you speak and learned how

to guard your tongue. You showed consistent improvement in learning and changed your world view from the sheker of tempting popular public opinion to one that's guided by the truth of Torah and emunat chachamim.

But now you head back into a world where you left as boys and touchdown home as men carrying with you the spear of Torah and the honorable badge of Lev Aharon. You will be faced with challenges; that's a fact of life. The Yetzer Hara will be awaiting you as soon as you get on the plane, to take away your spear of Torah. He'll tell you to leave your spear behind and let your guard down. He'll melt your heart with convincing arguments that all your accomplishments won't stand a chance outside of Lev, especially in the heat of the summer where temptations are at a climax! He'll paint a picture in your mind that your friends and relatives won't accept the man you've become. He'll scream into your ears that you can't win. But as we saw in the case of Pinchas, all these arguments are false because you have already won! You have left your boy behind and you are going back as ev-

eryone's hero even if it won't feel that way in the beginning.

Like we said, people still talked about Pinchas after he

**“ ..if you fall
just get right
back up.**

**Don't let the
yetzer hara
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that you are a
failure”**

waved the spear of Torah values in his hand. They taunted him for what he stood for because he had **become a man and they had remained boys**. The same is true with every single one of you. Don't let down your guard. Be proud of what you have become with respect, sincerity and integrity. It might take some time for everyone to come to terms with the fact that you've graduated to the next stage of your life, the stage of young manhood, but be consistent and patient. And most important

of all, if you fall just get right back up. Don't let the yetzer hara make you feel that you are a failure. That's his most forceful tactic, to make one dwell on his past or present mistakes and to convince one to throw in the towel. Don't listen to him. Focus on how far you've come and build on that. **What matters most is not whether you fall (as humans we all do sometimes) only whether you get back up.** And with this kind of attitude, you'll be looked up upon. Other boys will strive to learn from your example. You'll be the talk of the town. All the yetzer hara's arguments will disappear. Your parents and relatives will be proud of your accomplishments and they will take joy in the walking Kidush Hashem that you have become. And like Pinchas you'll also be granted the eternal covenant of peace in body and soul. And with constant growth, you'll be the poster child for the pasuk: mamlechet kohanim vegoy kadosh (a **kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation**), Amen.

With all the blessings of the Torah and yours truly

Zechariah

Exodus from Egypt & COVID-19

Rabbi Eli Shoub



Imagine a baby being born with the brain and intellectual faculties of an adult. How would he experience birth? What would he think is going on? He suddenly enters the world and hears his mother screaming in agony while his father sheds tears of joy (and is freaking out). He then sees the doctor reach for a pair of scissors and cut the umbilical cord, his only source of sustenance for the last nine months. As if that was not enough, the doctor picks him up stark naked and shows him off to all present. Next they plop him down on a hard surface and start to rub and probe his body, weigh him and attach an uncomfortable band to his wrist... Finally they restrain him and wrap him up tightly in a blanket. The infant thinks to himself “What type of crazy place have I entered?” In many ways we are like this infant; we have no idea why things happen or how things are done in this world. We are baffled, confused and

**“There’s
Someone bigger
and greater
than all of us.**

**With the tiniest
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humanity”**

sometimes even angered about why things are happening. We are being reminded that although the Almighty has given us so much wisdom and understanding, with all of that, there is so much we don’t know and there is so much that is beyond our control. Ultimately we need to recognize that He loves us and we count on Him and trust in Him. Everything he does is the best for us even though we don’t understand it. There’s Someone bigger and greater than all of us. With the tiniest thing, He

can just change the face of all of humanity.

Egypt

During the ten plagues that Hashem brought upon the Egyptians, He began with the Nile River. The Egyptians used to worship forces of nature and especially the Nile, which was the source of sustenance, life and food for the entire Egypt. This turned their world upside down. Hashem shattered everything they believed in and showed them Who runs the world.

This Virus

In this new pandemic it is very clear that Hashem has done the same thing. He has taken away all that people rely on, enjoy and believe in. The wealthy people are the idols of our community. People rely on their capabilities, powers and success, and learn from them to live lives of enjoyment and pleasure. All of a sudden, overnight, there is no business, no travelling the world,

no vacations, no sports and no parties. The world of pleasure and enjoyment has crumbled. Many people are worried about their investments. We had one parent forbid his son from going to his best friend's wedding. No money in the world can prevent being affected by this virus. I offered an amazing deal to a well-off client of mine who owns many properties in Israel. The shekel fell so low, that which translates into a 10% discount on the original price. I explained to him that this is a great time to invest in the property. The response I received was: "how can you offer me real estate in Israel when I'm afraid to leave my own bedroom." No matter how much money people have, they are scared out of their wits since they are just as susceptible to this pandemic as everyone else.

Torah

There is one area Hashem has not touched. This is the ability to learn Torah, to do mitzvot and chessed. The Torah is intact; no one can stop us from learning, doing chessed, praying, educating others in Torah or working on changing our 'habits' and character traits. Hashem is teaching us what really counts.

Especially during this time,

coming home after being away for so long, Hashem is giving us a golden opportunity to make up for all the lost time of Kibbud Av Va'Em and building our family relationships. We can learn with our fathers and share with our family all that we have learned. We need to use this challenge as a springboard for growth. The Zohar teaches us that the Jewish people, the Torah and Hashem are all one. What this means is that through our studying, we connect to the Torah and become one with the Torah. Since the Torah is Hashem's Divine will and He and His will are One, we, through our learning are one with Hashem.

Keeping the guidelines = chessed

All of the measures being taken are not for our own selfish sake, but for the sake of others. The idea is that we don't get others in a position where their lives are in danger. Those that think money is everything are very scared. Keep in mind that all the precautions we are taking are not because we're scared, but rather because we have a sense of responsibility and because we care about the rest of humanity. We care about everybody else.

Tefillah

People are looking all around

for the magic potion; what can I do or say that will save me? Which Tehillim? There are a lot of things out there. We're not into the magic. We're not neviim, we're not prophets. I get so many idiotic messages of why this came upon us and how many others I must forward their message to. My student Aryeh Vilinsky said so nicely "Our mission is to see how we can strengthen ourselves. We can ask WHAT is Hashem doing, but not to give reasons WHY."

There is a Torah commandment of prayer in time of trouble and time of need. There's a Torah commandment to speak to your Creator; He is the address. We can let Him know that we care about humanity, that it pains us when His people suffer. We can beg Him to put the pieces back together again. A prayer could be in your own words. In fact, it may be more effective when you say what you mean and mean what you say.

May the One Above hear all of our prayers and may this come to an end with a happy ending. May we one day find out that it was actually for our benefit and how Hashem loves us.

May you all be very healthy.

Love you all and wish I could be there with you.

HAGGADAH HIGHLIGHTS

From the lev alumni

הא לחמא עניא

This is the Bread of Affliction

Chaim Zada- Lev alumnus

Why does the *Haggadah* begin in Aramaic instead of *Lashon Hakodesh*? The *Gemara* says that when *Rebbi Elazar* would visit a sick person, he would pray for him in Aramaic. The *Gemara* asks, why? After all, *Rabbi Yehudah* stated that prayers should never be in Aramaic, since the angels do not know Aramaic and are thus unable to assist the *Tefillah*.

The *Gemara* answers that there is *Pasuk* in *Tehillim*

that says “ה' יסעדנו על ערש דווי” which means *Hashem* provides support by the bed of the sick. The *Gemara* understands that *Hashem* provides support directly. Since *Hashem* is there by a sick person, we can therefore pray in Aramaic because we are talking directly to *Hashem* and don't need the support of the angels. The *Zohar Hakodosh* says that on the night of the *Seder*, *Hashem* himself comes down to every *Seder* to hear how his children praise the story of יציאת מצרים.

The *Ba'al Haggadah* begins the *Haggadah* in Aramaic to show that we are directly interacting with *Hashem*.

This message is especially important by the night of the *Seder*. The *mitzvah* of the night of the *Seder* is the *mitzvah* of telling the story over to our children. There is no greater way to begin by being מוהנר our children and to teach them the concept of *emunah* in *Hashem* and the providence that *Hashem* has over the Jewish people.

ארבע כוסות The four cups

Tomer Sagy – Lev alumnus

Where is the earliest hint to the mitzvah of the four cups in the Chumash? In *Parshat Vayera*, after the destruction of *Sedom*, Lot and his two daughters fled to a cave. Thinking that the whole world has been destroyed, the daughters decided to intoxicate their father and repopulate the world through him. As a result, they each had a son. One was named *Moav*, from whom came *Rut* the great grandmother of *David Hamel-ech* and the other was named *Amon*, from whom came *Na'ama*, who married *Rechavam* the son of *Shlomo*. Only through these two women, *Rut* and *Na'ama*, could *Mashiach* come into the world. We see from here that even from the

lowest act, the redemption can sprout forth.

If we read the *pesukim* of this episode carefully, the word יין, wine, appears **four** times. It would seem that in these four mentions of wine, the *Torah* is hinting to the four cups of wine. See *Rashi pasuk* that this episode happened during *pesach*.

So when we raise our cups tonight four times, not only are we drinking *l'chaim* to celebrate the redemption from Egypt, we are also celebrating our *emunah* in the future redemption with the coming of *Mashiach* - who was born as a result of the wine.

With this, we now understand

the opening of the Haggadah “Now we are still slaves but next year will be free men in Israel” - in the time of *Mashiach*.

The first redemption the Jewish nation had, from Egypt, was the root for all future redemptions. The *Navi* says about the final redemption “כימי צאתך מארץ מצרים אראנו” “נפלאות” which means that the future redemption will be miraculous like the redemption from Egypt. The roots of the future redemption are in the redemption of Egypt. And so, we conclude the *Seder* with the heartfelt prayer of “לשנה הבאה בירושלים” Next year - in Jerusalem, requesting the final redemption.

Leaning while drinking the 4 cups

Yitzchak Wahba – Lev Alumnus

Men are required to lean while drinking all four cups of wine. When we look at the source of this halacha in the Gemara *Pesachim*, there

is a *machloket* if one must lean on the first two cups or last two cups. The *gemara* concludes that since we don't know which opinion to follow,

one should fulfill both opinions and lean on all four cups.

Now if we consider that the mitzvah of the four cups is

Rabbinic (and not a Torah commandment), it would seem that when in doubt we should be lenient. Therefore, when it comes to the first two cups we should conclude that since it's unclear if leaning is required, it should not be necessary to lean. The same can be said about the last two

cups. If so, the question is, why does the Gemara say that one should lean by all four cups, if it's a safek?

The Ran answers that not leaning by any of the four cups, would uproot the entire mitzvah, and therefore we lean by all four. It means to say that

you have to lean on all four cups because if we will be lenient, how can we choose to be lenient on the first two cups over the last two cups? By doing that, you are uprooting both - what makes us choose the last two over the first two? Therefore we lean by all of the four cups!

Why do we dip and eat Karpas?

Ronen Moshe Sion, Lev Alumnus

There are many reasons behind why we eat the Karpas – thereby obligating us to wash. Aside from the Gemara's explanation - to arouse the curiosity of the children, some Rishonim such as Rabbenu Manoach (end of Rambam's Hilchot Chametz U'Matzah) explain that Karpas symbolizes freedom and victory. He also explains that Karpas reminds us of the elegant coat Yaakov gave to Yosef - 'Ketonet Passim'. Indeed, the Megilat Esther uses the word karpas to describe the hangings of fine linen in the palace of Achashverosh. Thus, by starting the meal with Karpas, we can remember how the slavery started; the Jewish people

coming to Mitzrayim because of Sinat Chinam. [See also Rashi, Bereishit 37:3]. Other Rishonim suggest that we are imitating a practice by the upper class who start their meal with a vegetable (also a medicinal benefit) – demonstrating our freedom from Egypt. An opposite reminder is also brought down – that Karpas reminds us of our hardship and slave labor; Karpas backwards is "sixty perach" – the six hundred thousand Jews who toiled in Egypt.

There are also many reasons why we dip. The salt-water, vinegar or lemon juice may remind us of the tears and bitterness of our slavery. Sim-

ilarly, it could remind us of Yosef's coat being dipped into the blood (also one of the 7 liquids). This can even explain why the Rambam says that one should dip it into charoset. According to the Talmud Yerushalmi, charoset reminds us of blood.

Should we lean when eating Karpas?

Because of these mixed messages, it is brought down by many halachic authorities that there is no obligation to lean while eating the Karpas, even **לכתחילה**, but neither is it problematic to do so. One may also eat the Karpas in both positions to satisfy both opinions, as brought down by Rav

Chayim Palagi. These views are shared by the Ben Ish Hai, Chazon Ovadia (prefers not to recline) and the Or Lezion (prefers the synthesis of Rav Chayim Palagi).

The best way to fulfill your obligation

It is preferable that the person leading the Seder should make the beracha and have in mind to fulfil everyone's obligation. Our chachamim explain this to be because the halachic principle 'ברוב עם הדרת מלך' applies here; "in multitudes there is glorification of the king" – Mishlei 14:28. It is a recommendation that berachot (and in general, mitzvot/ma'asim tovim) should

be performed in a large gathering of people – i.e. one person should recite a bracha on behalf of everyone. This provides greater honor to Hashem. If the person leading the Seder either doesn't know the halachot, won't have the kavana or can't pronounce the words correctly, one should preferably make his own beracha.

According to Kabbalah, a small amount of Karpas should be left over as the idea is to leave the Seder plate complete throughout the entire night of the Seder.

The importance of being makpid

Rabbi Kalmanowitz of Yeshi-

vat Lev Aharon adds that Reb Chaim Abulafia (in the end of his Sefer 'Ashdot Hapisga') wrote that we should check for bugs in the Karpas even though throughout the year we don't usually check for them in these vegetables. This is because the mekubalim write that on Pesach, all issurim are more chamur than the rest of the year. On Pesach, the idea is to get rid of all the Yetzer Hara and 'kochot hatuma' and so we should take extra precaution not to sin, even unintentionally, during all the days of Pesach. In parallel to this, we should also be makpid in the halachot of Urchatz/Karpas and the other parts of the Seder. See Peleh Yoetz: Pesach.

מה נשתנה

The four questions

Mosie Cabasso – Lev alumnus

Halaila hazeh kulo matza - this night we only eat matza.

Tosafot in *Masechet Pesachim* 99b learns from the words "halailah hazeh" (in a *pasuk* about eating the *korban Pesach*), that eating *matzah* must be only at night - after dark.

Therefore, *Pesach* night is different than all other *Shabbatot* and *Yamim Tovim*, where one may accept *Shabbat* early and make *kiddush* even before dark, see *Berachot* 27b.

This *halacha* is brought in *Shulchan Aruch hilchot Pesach siman* 472,1 "One may not say

kiddush on the night of the *Seder* until dark".

How does the *Shulchan Aruch* know that even the *kiddush* may only be done after dark? From the *pasuk* "halaila hazeh" we only know that the *matza* has to be eaten after dark, but why does the *kiddush* and ev-

everything that comes before the *matza* need to be after dark?

The *Beit Yosef* quotes the *Terumat Hadeshen* (volume 1 *siman* 137), who explains that the four cups of wine, the *Kar-*

pas, all the special changes we make at *Seder* night so that the children will ask and certainly the *haggadah* itself can only be done at the time that one may eat *matzah* and *maror*.

Therefore, since the *kiddush* on *Seder* night is not only *kiddush* like every other one, but it is also one of the four cups, it can only be made at a time that one may eat *matza*.

ארבע בנים The four sons

Haim Mosseri – Lev alumnus

The *Haggadah* lists four sons: the wise son, the wicked son, the simple son and the son who is unable to ask a question. When a father comes to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *vehigadeta lebincha*, telling over the story of the redemption from Egypt to his sons, he must be aware of who his sons are - so that he will speak the language of his child. There is a *chidush* in the presentation to each type of son.

The wise son needs to hear an advanced explanation. If it's too simple, he will get bored.

The wicked son couldn't care less and is only interested in moving on to the meal. The fa-

ther has to speak to the wicked son in a way that will engage him by connecting to him on his wavelength.

The simple son only sees the basic storyline. He doesn't feel a need for any details of the story. Even so, the father must interest him in additional details of the story.

As for the son who is unable to ask questions, it is the father's job to bring him to ask questions, because the *mitzvah* of this night is to answer your sons' questions.

This is a big job for every father and requires a good amount of thought, even before the *Seder* begins, to plan how to pres-

ent the story to each one of his children.

The choice is ours

Another thought on the four sons: Every year on the *Seder* night we have the chance to choose who we want to be for this year: the wise son, the wicked son, the simple son or the son who is unable to ask a question.

It doesn't matter who we were up till now. Just as the Jewish people on this night made a tremendous change from being slaves to Egypt to becoming free men who serve Hashem; so too, every Jew can become a new man on this night.

לפיכך אנחנו חייבים להודות להלל לשבח

Therefore we are required to thank & praise

(Elazar Shochet – Lev alumnus)

There are four basic differences between the Hallel at Leil HaSeder and the Hallel said in the rest of the year. 1- It is split into two parts - one after Magid and the other after Bircat Hamazon, while the rest of the year it is said all at once. 2 - It is said while seated, whereas the other times it is said standing. 3 - It is said over a cup of wine, while the rest of the year it isn't. 4 - This Hallel is said at night, as opposed to the rest of the year when it is said during the day. The Chatam Sofer (Orach Chaim Siman 51) asks why we say it while sitting when the halacha is that mitzvot should be done while standing? Additionally, how come the Hallel on Seder night is said at night and during the rest of the year it is said during the day?

The answer is that there are two types of Hallel. The Hallel we are familiar with all year long is the Hallel which is said as part of the prayer service. We learn that this Hallel may only be said during daytime, standing, without an interruption and without wine. The Hallel at Leil HaSeder is an entirely different type of Hallel. It is a song of praise to Hashem that is said as a spontaneous reaction to one who is personally experiencing a miracle, which needs to be said at the time it happens, whether day or night. It may be said while seated, with wine and broken into parts.

A miracle is really happening for us at Leil HaSeder. We say this statement right before starting the first half of Hal-

lel: "In every generation it is man's duty to regard himself as though he personally has come out of Egypt; as it says 'You shall tell your son on that day: this is on account of what Hashem did for *me* when I came out of Egypt.' It was not only our fathers whom the Holy One, Blessed is He, redeemed from slavery; we, too, were redeemed with them, as it says: "He took us out from there so that He might take us and give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers." Only after internalizing this statement that we just came out of Egypt - out of slavery - can we now say Hallel for the miracle that Hashem did for us, as every year Hashem takes us out of our spiritual enslavement, anew.

Students in the spotlight

Insights in the Haggadah from our talmidim

אלו עשר מכות שהביא הקב"ה על המצרים במצרים

These are the ten plagues that Hashem brought upon the Egyptians in Egypt

Yonatan Tornheim

Why did Hashem send ten plagues? Why not just one big plague?

The simple answer is that the ten plagues were not just to punish the Egyptians, but also to show Bnei Yisrael the power and greatness of Hashem. There were lessons shown in each plague to teach Bnei Yisrael about Hashem and His power. The miracle of the plagues wasn't only that it punished the Egyptians, but it was a miracle in and of itself that the Jews weren't affected by them (Ramban). Over the course of the ten plagues the Jews saw both the power and might of Hashem through the punishment of the plagues, and also His mercy and love for Bnei Yisrael through the protection they received by

being immune to the plagues. Bnei Yisrael got to see Hashem's greatness ten times, each time greater than the last. It also showed them that Hashem is with them at all times.

This still leaves a question of why specifically ten? The מהר"ל מפראג says that the ten plagues are paralleled to the ten statements Hashem used to create the world.

Now that we know that the plagues parallel the ten statements that Hashem created the world with, let us consider the question of the Mishnah in Masechet Avot. In the fifth perek, the Mishnah asks "Why did Hashem create the world in ten statements if he was able to do it in one?"

The Mishnah answers "He

created it in ten statements to increase the reward for the tzadikim and increase the punishment for the wicked"

The Bartenara explains that it's much more severe to destroy something created in ten steps than something created in one step. It's incomparable. So if the wicked destroy this world they will be severely punished, since it took ten statements to create this world.

The reason Hashem took his time to create the world was to show us how valuable this world is to Him and how much we should take care of it. Something created in ten steps shows effort and that specific detail was put into the construction of it, compared

to something only created in one step. A person who puts effort, and works years to build his house will value and appreciate it much more than a person who was given a house already built. The person who built his own house would make sure not to disgrace it or destroy it, even a bit. This world was created for us, and we have to understand that Hashem took his time and put effort to show he cares about this world. If we understand that, we wouldn't disgrace it or destroy it so easily; as it's brought in Mesilat Yesharim in the name of the Midrash "At the time that Hashem cre-

ated Adam he showed him all the trees in Gan Eden and He said to him "Look at my creations they are so pleasant and praiseworthy and all I created was created for you. Focus your intentions so you should not damage and destroy my world!"

Comparing this to *יציאת מצרים*, we find that when the pasuk describes the ten plagues in Mitzrayim it says *לקחת לו גוי מקרב* Hashem took [the Jewish] nation from inside a nation". The Midrash (*מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל*) explains that Hashem took Bnei Yisrael out of Mitzrayim "like a per-

son who pulls out the fetus from the stomach of a cow". We learn from this Midrash that the process of the ten plagues was the process of the birth of Bnei Yisrael. Just like the world was born through ten statements, so too, Bnei Yisrael was born as a nation through the ten plagues. Even though Hashem could've had Bnei Yisrael born through one plague, He showed us that we are precious and valuable to him and to show that anybody who upholds Bnei Yisrael will be rewarded greatly and anyone who disgraces it will be punished greatly, just like the world.

***'Uvmorah Gadol'* With Great Fear**

Zevi Levy

R' Shlomo Kluger asks a question: The pasuk says 'with great fear' when discussing Hashem taking the Jews out of Egypt, Who was the recipient of this fear?

Egyptians: Fear is merely an anticipation of pain and suffering, the Egyptians were already past this point of fear, as they had already experienced the plagues and the wrath of

God.

Jews: What were they afraid of? They knew that the plagues were for the Egyptians, and should therefore be nothing but happy and confident.

A1) R' Kluger, through the Haggadah, answers this question saying that the term 'great fear' refers to the revelation of the Shechina and the fear it instilled in Am Yisrael. He fur-

ther says that this wasn't fear of punishment nor pending doom, rather it was fear out of awe and astonishment. The Haggadah brings a proof for this from the pasuk which says 'fear of all that God did to you in Egypt in front of your eyes'.

A2) Rav Meshulem Yissachar HaLevi Horowitz, the Stanislav Rebbi provides an alternative answer.

He explains that the destructive forces, such as demons and angels of destruction, had an underlying fear of the power of the Shechina. And this fear of the Shechina is what deterred these forces from harming the Jewish people during the makkot.

A3) Rav Moshe Sternbuch uses a story brought down by the Baal Shemtov to give a final answer.

There was once a king who while on an adventure in the wilderness got lost. After hours of venturing he eventually came across a small village. Upon arrival he attempted to convince the locals of his kingship, only to be met with jokes and mockery

of such claims. Soon after, the villagers began to beat and rob him and expel him from the village. After eventually finding his way back to his palace he consulted his advisors on what to do about these villagers who had shown him such disrespect. The first advisor immediately insisted that he should kill or give serious punishments to these villagers, because regardless of their oblivion of his kingship, they still showed him major disrespect. The second advisor defended the villagers and pushed the king to spare the villagers of any consequences for their actions. However, the king was most impressed by the third advisor who recommended that he return to

this village dressed in his royal garments and accompanied by the royal guard. When the villagers will see the king as he truthfully claimed, the feeling of embarrassment and fear they experience will be even worse than killing them. The king took this advice and indeed the villagers reacted and felt as they had anticipated.

In Egypt Hashem was with the Jewish people the entire time. However, they didn't fully recognize and appreciate His presence. This feeling of embarrassment and fear felt by the villagers in the story provides a perfect comparison to the fear felt by Am Yisrael when Hashem brought them out of Egypt and revealed his presence.

Dayenu

David Tawil

It says in the Haggadah, “If you would have brought us to Har Sinai and not have given us the Torah it would have been enough...”. What does that mean - what would have been the point of that?

We can learn from the word NATAN Lanu et haTorah, that of course we would have received the Torah, however

there are a number of different ways to acquire the Torah, and here we are thanking Hashem for choosing to give us the Torah as a gift.

The Beit HaLevei explains that there are three ways of acquiring the Torah. All three are referred to in a Pasuk in Tehilim, perek 68 pasuk 19 - “Alita lamarom, shavita shevi, lak-

achta matanot ...” The pasuk refers to Moshe Rabeinu going up to heaven to get the Torah- “Alita lamarom”. “Shavita shevi” - means he took it captive. What does it mean to take the Torah as a captive? The Gemara in Megillah, Daf vav talks about understanding the Torah. It says “Don't believe a person who says I worked hard

to understand the Torah and I didn't understand it" because there is a guarantee that no matter who you are or why you are learning, if you are Jewish and you work at it - you will get it! He can take it captive even without fear of G-d or being a shomer mitzvot, but he will get it in the end.

A much higher level of learning Torah is what the pasuk calls "lakachtah" - which means "you acquired it". Acquiring means that there is a buyer and a seller - the buyer has to do something to pay, in order to get the item.

The same Gemarah in Megillah says that beyond understanding, there is applying the Torah learning to real life situations - remembering the Torah and applying it. For that, the Gemarah says, you need Hashem's help.

The Beit Halevi says that to reach that level, you need mitzvot, fear of Hashem and learning with the right intentions. From this we now understand "lakachta"; we come with our merit and he gives it to us.

The highest level, however, is "matanot". The pasuk then says matanon - He gave to us the Torah as a gift. This refers to a person who worked hard and worked on himself so that now he's at the level of matanot "gifts"; he will now learn and Hashem will give him the secrets of the Torah as a gift, since he is the person who Hashem chooses to give the gift to.

To summarize there are three levels. The lowest level is everything coming from the taker, meaning the person who works hard and he gets it even without good spiritual merits. He understands the content of the Torah, but he is not connected to Hashem. He takes Hashem's Torah as a captive.

The second level is where because of his good spiritual merits he acquires the Torah. Hashem will sell him the Torah, but only corresponding to his merits.

The third and best level is where Hashem is giving him a gift - so here the sky's the limit of what he can obtain from the Torah!

So when we say the dayanu - Ilu keravano lifnei Har Sinai velo NATAN lanu et ha-Torah, we don't mean that we wouldn't have received the Torah, but rather we mean that if we didn't get it as a gift, but rather in a different way, on a lower level, it still would have been enough for us to thank Hashem.

With this we can understand the three steps of Birchot Ha-Torah.... The first bracha is asher kidshanu... la'asok b'divrei Torah - which is going on all people - whether you are doing Hashem's will or not, you are commanded to learn Torah, and if you are "osek" - toil in Torah, you will understand it.

The second part of the bracha is "vhaarev na..." which ends with "hamelamed Torah" so this is talking about the second level where the person did good deeds and now Hashem will teach Torah to him.

The third part is the bracha of "asher bachar banu... v'natan lanu et Torato" - Hashem chose us and gave us the Torah as a gift - this is the top level where we get the Torah as a gift and the sky's the limit!

רבן גמליאל היה אומר כל שלא אמר שלשה דברים אלו בפסח לא יצא ידי חובתו

Eli Chahino

Are women חייב to tell the story of מציאת מצרים?

The Mishna Berura brings from חיי אדם that if you have a Jewish maid, you have to call her in to hear the paragraph of רבן גמליאל, because without it you are not יוצא חיוב to do the מצוה of the הגדה. This implies that women are included in the obligation. This is difficult, because of the Gemara in מסכת מנחת חינוך that states that women are פטור from time-bound positive מצוות.

Sefer החינוך in mitzvah 21 says that women are included in

the mitzvah. The מנחת חינוך asks this question and leaves it unresolved, however he suggests that there is a Rabbinical requirement in order to fulfill the mitzvah of four cups. This may explain why you have to call in the maid - so that she can be able to fulfill the מצוה of four cups.

Perhaps one could suggest that the Sefer Hachinuch learns that when Raban Gamliel said that if one does not mention the explanation of the three mitzvot – Pesach, matzah and maror, he has not fulfilled his

obligation, meaning that he has not fulfilled his obligation of Pesach, matzah and maror. If so, we could explain that since women are included in the Torah obligation of Pesach, matzah and maror, therefore they must also explain these mitzvot – and the explanation itself is the fulfillment of sipur yetziat Mitzrayim. If so, the mitzvot of Pesach, matzah and maror are actually contingent on the mitzvah of sipur yetziat Mitzrayim, and we would understand why women are included in this Torah commandment.

‘Maror’ – what about horseradish?

Eliya Aroosi

Which part of the vegetable can you use for the mitzvah of Maror? In the Gemara in Pesachim pg. 39, the Mishna mentions five types of maror and says that not only can one do the mitzvah by eating the leaf, but even the stem.

The Rambam brings down this halacha (seventh perek of hilchot chametz umatzah, halacha 13).

Hagot Maimoni on the Rambam brings down Rabeinu Tam saying that since only the leaves and the stem

were mentioned, obviously the root isn't allowed. The Emek Beracha brings a proof to this from the Mishnayot in Masechet Uktzin that says that the root of the lettuce is a shomer of the lettuce itself, but not considered a food

product; it just keeps the lettuce fresh when still attached. That explains why we can't eat the root, because you are supposed to eat a food and the root isn't a food. Many communities do have the custom to eat horseradish roots. How is that allowed? We just mentioned that the root isn't a food for the mitzvah of Maror, and may not be used.

One can say that there are two types of roots. One only serves the leaves as a shomer to keep it fresh, but in and of itself is not a food product, like the lettuce root. The other type of root is edible and it not only keeps its leaves fresh, it also is the main part of the vegetable. An example would be a potato, carrot or beet. So it would seem that the horseradish root is much different than the

lettuce root and similar to the beet. So when the Rambam talks about the five types of maror, he comes to tell us the common denominator of all of them. He says that we can use the leaves and the stems for all of them, but one can definitely single out and say that by some of them the roots are also edible, and can therefore be used like the horseradish.

