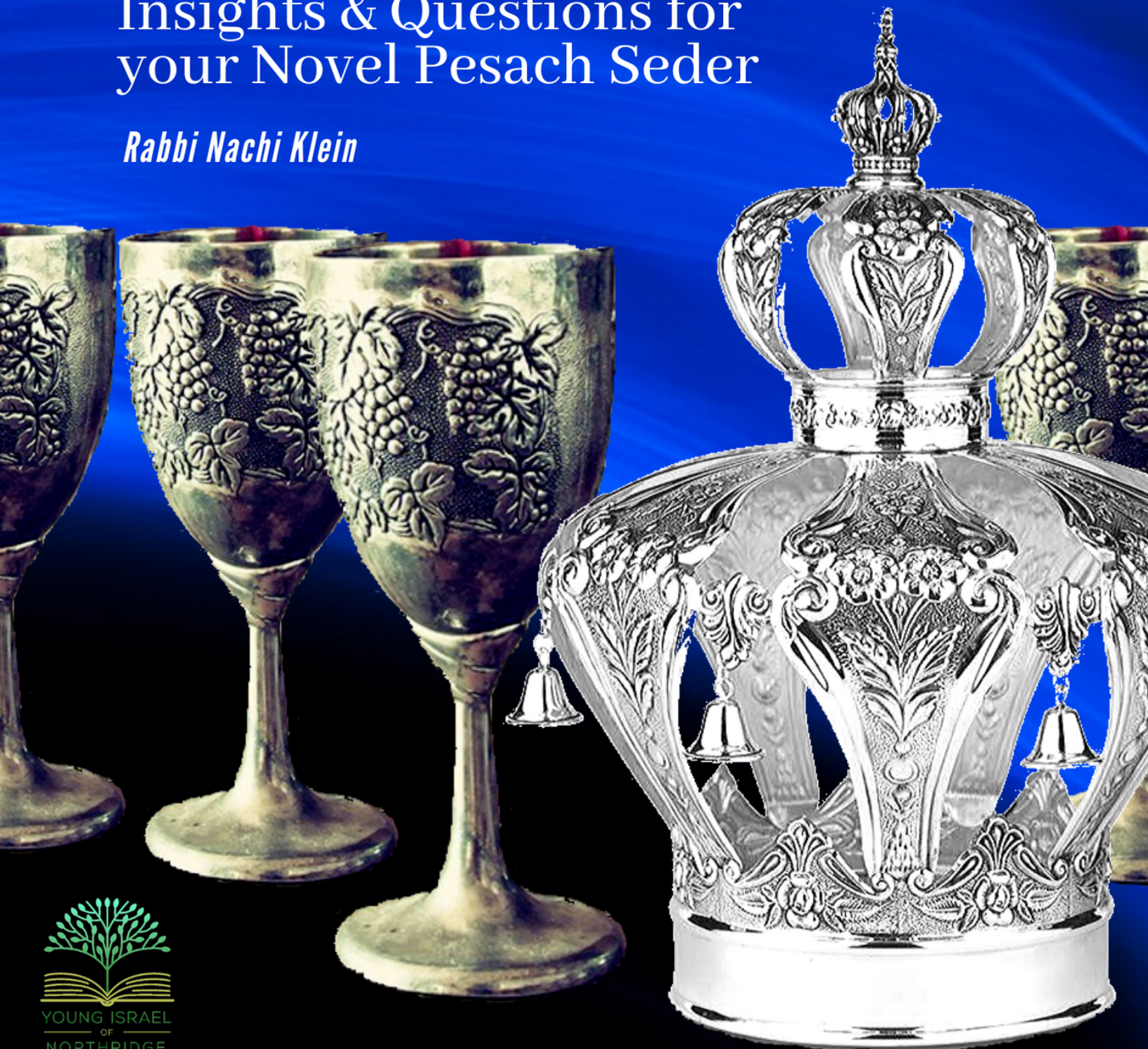


# THE CORONA HAGGADAH SUPPLEMENT

Insights & Questions for  
your Novel Pesach Seder

*Rabbi Nachi Klein*



# INTRODUCTION

Pesach and the Seder are hallmarks of Jewish tradition. It is a holiday that almost all denominations of Jews celebrate. Rich with traditional foods, actions and experiences, the holiday that transformed us from connected individuals into a connected nation. That connectedness has brought so many people to enjoy the seder nights together with friends and family. But this year, our seders will be similar to the first seder night, where each person closed their doors, and with their faith in G-D, Hashem, went through their seder alone.

One of the running themes we have through the traditions of the seder, is the development of actions so that the children will ask. We hear it over and over, so the children will ask, so the children will ask... Of course they're asking, they've been home for 4 weeks! They don't stop asking, and they don't give parents any breaks. Isn't it time for the parents to ask?

In most homes this year, the parents and adults will be doing the asking. There may not be any children at the table, and there may not be anyone else either. This night will likely be different than all other nights they've ever had before, including all previous seder nights.

This haggadah supplement is intended to give each of us more insights into this year's unique Pesach experience. Each step or stage of the seder has its own deep messages, aside from the overarching theme of slavery to redemption that we are to experience when telling over our thousand year story.

Aside from the meanings of each stage, this supplement has added thoughts regarding our experiences during the coronavirus pandemic, COVID-19. Thought provoking and action based questions will come at the end of each stage, enabling us to ponder and hopefully put into action, changes in our lives that will make us better people following these events.

With blessings of healing, health, safety and Geulah,

Rabbi Nachi Klein  
Young Israel of Northridge  
17511 Devonshire St.  
Northridge, CA 91325  
501c3: 95-3880217

For questions and positive feedback, please feel free to email or call.  
rabbiklein@yion.org  
323-206-2207





# KADESH קִדְּשׁ

## KADESH

The Haggadah begins with Kadesh, sanctification. The ability to sanctify, to make kiddush, has been imbued within Jews from time immemorial. Kadesh is the perspective we take prior to any act or event. It is the ability for us to take the mundane, the simple and to make it holy. Drinking a cup of wine is a basic act, an act that can lead to drunkenness, but we understand that if you are mekadesh, if you take the act and sanctify it, it can elevate your experience and your existence to a different level. We are no longer dealing with a simple meal with drinks, we are now becoming holier individuals who will be embarking on a spiritual journey, connecting ourselves to G-D and everything in the spiritual universe.

We are also connecting ourselves to generations past and we are creating the link to the generations in the future. We may look back at previous sedarim (seders) as a nice memory, but in fact, each seder that we live through is a seder that strengthens the bond between our souls and the souls that are no longer here. And it opens the next link to the chain of the generations that are soon to come.

Kadesh is about sanctifying time as well as an event. It's sensing the inherent spirituality in time. Time for us, is not a simple linear line of past, present and future, we see it as a guide or boundary to experiences in life. Like time, Life can flow through us without finding a purpose, or it can be sanctified with focus on how we spend our time, and how we plan our daily life.



## CORONA INSIGHTS

As the Virus quickly put cities and countries into lockdown, people have found themselves stuck in their homes for an unknown extended period of time. Jews have been struggling in different ways with the lockdowns, let alone those that caught the the virus, and sadly, those that succumbed to it. Children have been going stir-crazy sitting at home all day, sitting on their computers or phones for classes. Parents of young children have been babysitting, teaching, reprimanding, all while trying to keep to a work schedule of some sort. These parents will likely be grateful in the future to pay tuition and have their kids go to school. Those that have been out of work, can't find any work, because only a few businesses are hiring. Single adults are often stuck at home with no place to go. And older adults are experiencing empty nest syndrome when it is the most difficult, during Yom Tov holiday season.

It is worth the moment of Kadesh, to pause. To recognize the opportunity we have to sanctify ourselves at any given moment in time. To take any event, whether easy or hard, and to elevate it to a spiritual activity. There may be a lot to be stressed or worried about, but if we would think about what is working in our lives, we can be grateful and thankful for all of these experiences.

One point of recognition during this time is how we plan our days. For those that had a daily life outside of the home, it has been a challenge to restructure our days and create a game plan throughout our day. Coming up with a (temporary, new) daily schedule will give more meaning and purpose to each and every day.

### QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. What struggles do you see yourself going through right now?
2. What positive things can you see yourself going through right now?
3. Whatever you are going through, aside from making kiddush, what's one way you can sanctify the moment you are in?





# URCHATZ וְרַחֵץ

## URCHATZ

Washing prior to a meal signifies our preparation of purity. Whereas Kadesh, represents holiness, Urchatz represents the ability to purify ourselves. Kedusha (Kadesh) means to elevate, to separate, and to be lofty. Taharah (the results of Urchatz washing) means to take the physical steps to remove impurity from ourselves.

In the Torah, many items or experiences are deemed pure (certain kosher animals, utensils immersed in a mikvah) and those that are deemed impure (non-kosher animals, deceased people). Those that are impure have a spiritual deficiency based on their current makeup. Some things can become pure, such as a person who purifies themselves, while other things cannot change their state (non-kosher animals, a deceased person).

The recognition that each of us has the opportunity to become pure through our actions, brings us to a place of strength.



## CORONA INSIGHTS

The corona experience has given us an eerie reminder of Biblical laws of Tzaraas (lit: Leprosy). The one who received this divine punishment would find blemishes on their skin or other parts of their body. Prior to being declared tamei, impure, by the Kohen, they are sent into quarantine. Following the week of quarantine, the blemish is re-evaluated. If the blemish had spread, the individual is declared tamei, and is then sent out of the camp to be placed in total isolation, alone from interaction with anyone and everyone.

During that time of excommunication, the individual must face a new reality. The reality of being alone with themselves, and alone with the all-knowing G-D. For many during this time, they are experiencing this sudden silence of being alone, without family, without friends. At the time when Jews spend the most time together, reliving an experience, and following a tradition that they have done for generations - suddenly alone, with nobody to share it with. The experiential night of the seder, where we share songs, Torah, foods and freedom, is now spent in solitude, as if we are each considered tamei, impure.

It is therefore imperative that we accept this message, and live through this experience as if our solitude was commanded directly from the mouth of the Kohen, as the messenger of G-D. G-D has spoken and wants us to think about our relationships with ourselves, not with others. Our reality of who we are, and how we can see ourselves improve. What we can work on, and how we can appreciate our purpose in the world.

### QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. What can I do to purify myself, to immerse in a 'spiritual mikvah,' shed away impurity from my life and become a pure person? Being alone has a purpose.
2. How can my sense of being alone be looked at from a positive light
3. What positive things can you see yourself going through right now?





# KARPAS כַּרְפָּס

## KARPAS

Our first morsel of food has arrived. We've gone through our first process of purification with Urchatz. In Urchatz, no blessing was recited, as we are at the initial stages of purity. Now we recite the first blessing on food. The blessing we recite on the small potato/parsley/radish will also cover the Marror that we'll be eating later on during the seder.

The blessing on the food that we're yearning for (because we haven't eaten in a while), will also cover the food that represents bitterness. We have the ability to make a blessing on the good, as well as the bad. At this point, we are looking forward to the good (potato) yet we have in mind for the bitter that will come. It's our ability to bless good and bad that makes us realize that everything has meaning and it is all from G-D.



## CORONA INSIGHTS

Rav Nachman of Breslov explains the following: We wash our hands expecting to have a lavish meal, we wait, and then instead of food, we bring out a miniscule potato. Washing represents our preparation for something that will occur. Then there are times when our expectations aren't fulfilled, and we enter into a state of despair. We have expectations of our kids, our spouses, our homes, community, our friends, and then ourselves. When it doesn't match up, we get saddened, depressed.

So Rav Nachman says, take a piece of potato, parsley, radish. Something simple and appreciate that simplicity. Be thankful for that little thing that you have. We are all having 'different seders' than what we are used to, or what we expect. There are many things we wish would be different now. But there are also many little potatoes, moments of simplicity that we can appreciate and be thankful for.

### QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Think back two months ago. What was your seder 'supposed to be like' and what is it like now?
2. Given the changes, can you find five aspects of simplicity that you can be thankful for?
3. Can you find something negative that you can also imagine praising or thanking G-D for?







# YACHATZ יָחַץ!

## YACHATZ

At this point we are introducing the matzah to our seder, The middle matzah is picked up and broken in two. The smaller part of it will be used for Hamotzi. The larger part will be hidden/stolen as the afikomen. Matzah which represents the duality of the seder, the experiences of slavery and affliction (lechem oni, poor man's bread) and the experiences of freedom (Onenim alav devarim Harbeh, bread on which we speak in freedom about our many experiences). Yet the part of true freedom, will only be eaten at the end. For now, it is hidden or stolen. Either we hide it and deprive it from others, or others steal it and deprive it from us.

There is a strong message at this point of the seder. That which is truly good for you, you may have to wait for. The ultimate goodness will be there, it will come. We must always have the yearning for good things, even if we can't attain them at this point in our lives. It is the knowledge that G-D wants us to experience the ultimate goodness, Olam Haba, the world to come, it is hidden from us now, but we will get it in the future.



## CORONA INSIGHTS

During the pandemic, we might resonate with the sense of brokenness. Broken dreams, broken plans, broken souls. Whether it's shorter term, such as broken Pesach plans, or longer term, such as their financial future, people are feeling broken and shattered. We might be looking at the smaller broken piece of our lives right now, without any ability to see a future of the 'larger hidden piece'. It is at this time that we develop resilience for ourselves to recognize that though we are currently broken, we will rejoin with our bigger half to become whole again.

### QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. What plans did you have that have suddenly come to a halt, and have you been able to accept the current circumstances?
2. Can you take a moment to see how others' have had different dreams or plans that have been broken, and feel their pain?
3. What can you envision your 'Hidden Bigger Piece' to look like now that it has been taken away and hidden from you?



# MAGGID מגיד



## MAGGID

Maggid is the primary purpose of the seder. The seder consists of many rituals and traditions, most of which deal with food. Once we reach Maggid, we now deal primarily with speech as we tell over the story of our becoming a nation. A nation built on Godly ideals, a nation created to bring purpose to all of creation. Our speech creates, as the Hebrew root for 'thing' or 'item' is *davar* דָּבָר, and the Hebrew root for speech is דָּבַר. That which we say brings something into fruition.

As we retell the story of our slavery-freedom experience, the more we develop, the more we become enriched as individuals and as a people. As Jews we don't relive history, we are history. Everything that we do makes an impact on the world, in every moment in time. The seder that we sit through is not something that will be put in a history book somewhere, it will be re-experienced for generations. With effort of spiritual adjustments, one can connect to hundreds, if not thousands of seders past, and relive them tonight.

Before you delve into the richness of Maggid, it would help to realize that we are all in need of a salvation of some sort. As we recall what our forefathers went through and the struggles they experienced, we should also realize that they cried out to Hashem (VaNitzak el Hashem Elokei...). When we get to that point of the hagaddah, we should feel our personal pain, and call out to Hashem with fervor.



## CORONA INSIGHTS

How many children ask why we do things at the seder? They are taught the seder in school. They don't ask anymore. There are so many questions to be asked about the way we live our lives, our purpose, meaning, connection, etc... but the children aren't asking.

The Rambam, pulling from the Talmud, teaches [Hil. Chametz 7:3] that a person must "tell over to their child of the exodus experience, and if he has no children, he should tell it to his wife, and if he has no wife, and he sits alone, he should ask himself, 'why is this night different'". Most people wait for seder night to bring families and friends together, but on this night, many will be fulfilling the Rambam's direct command to 'ask yourself the Mah Nishtanah'.

An interesting requirement is presented, if a person has nobody to share it with, they must ask themselves the questions, presumably the questions that they themselves know the answer to. Therefore we may contemplate the fact that although we think we have the answers to the questions that have been asked many times in our lives, when we present the questions to ourselves, we may in fact not have the same answers. We are required to delve deeper into the many questions of our lives and our experiences, our connections and our purposes. We may ask why this night is different, and we may not even understand the depth of our own questions.

### QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- 1.If you were to create your own Mah Nishtanah during the experience you are currently going through, what would your four questions be?
- 2.What one answer could you give to answer those four questions?
- 3.With the power of speech and dialogue, what conversation can you have with Hashem right now?





## RACHTZAH

The law of washing our hands before bread has its roots based on the vision of a better future. During Temple times, a portion of our food (challah) is separated and set aside to be given over to a Kohen. The kohen must remain in a state of spiritual purity in order to consume that food. As a preparation for the future times when the third Temple will be built, King Solomon established the law to wash our hands prior to eating bread, to ensure that we will all be accustomed to the laws of purity when that moment arrives. To have a mitzvah that was instituted thousands of years ago (according to most interpretations) for something that will only happen millenia later, is what reminds us constantly to be forward thinking and envisioning ourselves as part of a greater future, one that we can't fully fathom at any given present time.

After the washing, we remain silent, until the hamotzie blessing is recited and a portion of the food is swallowed. In that moment of silence, we recognize that the act of eating that we are about to commence is not simply something done to fulfill our desires; the moment of silence distinguishes us from mere animals who eat for sustenance and pleasure. We view it as a physical act with spiritual associations, elevating our meal as if we are dining with Hashem at our table.

It is interesting to note, that the moments of deep conversation, and verbal discussions of our plight and deliverance are immediately followed by a sudden silence, a silence that enables us to process all of that which was spoken.



## CORONA INSIGHTS

Wash your hands, purell your hands, lysol your hands. We have been doing many hand washings these past few weeks. It's almost like the Kohen Gadol washing on Yom Kippur. With all of the washings, it makes us evaluate the necessity of each of the expeditions we are about to take when we venture outside. It certainly allows us to be more deliberate in deciding what we're shopping for, and how much we really need those items.

Once we wash, the moment of silence that we have prior to Hamotzie, might have us pause to think of those that are sick and are in need of great healing and salvation. Almost as if we are dedicating our meal to their healing. This meal will be full of unique once-a-year mitzvos and while performing them, having in mind those who are sick in hospitals or at home and cannot fulfill these wonderful commandments.

### QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Imagine what your life will be like after these events will be over. What new personal changes can you see yourself making due to the sudden change in your life circumstances?
2. Can you look around and survey the items that you own that are really unnecessary in your life?
3. What blessing or words of solace can you give to someone who is sick in a hospital right now?



# MOTZIE MATZAH

## מוציא מצה



## MOTZIE MATZAH

The food is finally arriving, which is great, because we want to be yearning for matzah at this point. There are two mitzvos associated at this stage, the mitzvah of the reciting of Hamotize on bread (מוציא) and the unique mitzvah of Matzah specific to seder night.

Yet there is another meaning to the title, that motize matzah is to 'bring out the matzah', not simply to eat the matzah, rather to bring out the raw essence of who we are. Matzah is the basis, the foundation of simplicity, with nothing added, and no process of waiting that could cause it to rise. It represents seizing the moment without wasting precious minutes of time.

When the Jews finally were ready to go free, they were taught that true freedom isn't simply about having free time, it is about mastering your free time. It is about being present in every moment that we experience in our life. One can be present while eating, speaking or even reading a book, yet it requires focus and understanding one's underlying purpose in the action they are taking. Ultimately it is for the focus of Godliness in our life as well as to be able to live a life filled with care and determination to find and fulfill our purpose.



## CORONA INSIGHTS

There may be bread on the shelves now, but there sure aren't any paper products, such as toilet paper. Some people are afraid, and some people are just planning on going camping in their homes for a long period of time. Thankfully, we have matzah, a staple that lasts for a long period of time, way longer than bread. For many people, our current event has caused them to become selfish, worrying about themselves, the next meal and the toilet paper they are going to need for the next day.

After Noach and the flood, In the post-diluvian world, man was able to work together but for the wrong purpose, to foolishly attempt to attack Hashem and remove Godliness from the world. That led to the tower of dispersion, separating people and isolating them from one another. In our days, we find ourselves thrown into solitude, away from the interconnectedness that we had before and took for granted. Maybe we can evaluate our meetings, events, and get-togethers that we have with one another and see if perhaps our 'towers' need more refinement and a greater Godly purpose.

### QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. If I had control of all the time and resources at my disposal, what spiritual focus would I add to my life?
2. What lessons can I learn from the forced solitude and separation that so many must experience during this time?
3. Are there scenarios or incidents in my life where I used societal connectedness for improper purposes?





# MAROR מרור



## MAROR

Unlike matzah, the requirement to eat maror has taste as a necessity. If a person can't taste matzah, they can still fulfill their obligation, not so with maror. Maror requires us to taste some element of bitterness, in order to connect to the bitterness of our ancestors' plight. Much of the seder is an experiential event, and the experiences create impressions in our minds that last and help reinforce the messages that we bring forth. Messages of faith during difficult times, that the hardships in life are the iron crucible which transform us into people of resilience and commitment.

Maror is not eaten while leaning, because there is no freedom in maror. The freedom will be experienced when we eat it in the korech wrap/sandwich. Only when we eat the maror with the matzah (and korban Pesach) together, do we appreciate the hardships that we went through. Maror alone is just bitter. It can only be uplifted through faith.



## CORONA INSIGHTS

There is much bitterness to experience during this seder, and for many, they are living with their own maror. For those living in a ground zero location, whether past or present ground zero, they may be sitting at home with the angel of death walking openly in the streets. Day after day, tens and hundreds of people are dying, multiples from the same shul or same community. When will it end, when will the curve flatten, we don't know, we only hope.

For people much further away, unless they know someone who has been deeply affected, it's much harder to feel the pain that ground-zero Jews are going through. When we can't feel that pain, we unfortunately feel that it's not part of our life or our life experience, it's just a scare. For those people, bitterness will be experienced through discomfort, financial hardships and loneliness.

The maror is indeed bitter this year, the horseradish is much sharper than in previous years, and its potency is clearly lasting a lot longer than the past. We are able to connect to our ancestors' pains and their struggles as a people.

### QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Think about the bitterness that past generations went through, and the bitterness you are going through right now. What of your experiences can you compare to theirs?
2. How can you tap into your deeply rooted faith at these times?
3. Plan your speech for a future generation. How would you describe to them the difficulties you went through AND the resilience that you showed during that time?



# KORECH כּוֹרֵךְ



## KORECH

The word Korech means to wrap, to encircle. The sandwich term was given when we couldn't figure out how to wrap the hard flatbread matzah. Soft matzah that is found in many Sefardic communities surely makes the korech word much more applicable.

Korech is the combination of matzah and maror, and when the Beis Hamikdash will be rebuilt, the paschal offering as well, in fulfillment of the verse **עַל מַצּוֹת וּמְרוֹרִים יֹאכְלוּהוּ**, "you shall it eat (the sacrifice) with the matzah and maror together". When we combine all of life's experiences together, the hardships and salvations, we are able to create a different, more valued meaning for our lives. Every wrap or sandwich combines tastes from different items with different flavors to create a new taste creation. If there's too much of one item, it may dominate and overpower the flavors of the other foods. The life sandwich is the same. If focus is put on one type of experience, it will overpower all the others. We need to decide what type of experiences we want to focus on in order to taste that flavor regularly.

When we eat our Korech wrap we mention the zecher L'Mikdash K'Hillel - the way Hillel ate it, commemorating the way it was eaten during Temple times. It would be helpful to imagine, and even close our eyes, while we are leaning and chewing, that we are sitting near the Beis Hamikdash eating our meal exactly the way it was prescribed to us, with a smile on our faces.



## CORONA INSIGHTS

We can only imagine what we will be like at the end of this pandemic experience. There will be some things that we'll need to re-learn, and many things that we should re-learn. Getting through this experience will mean becoming a better person than before we began. Our relationships with our family, now in close quarters, should be enhanced, with purposeful attempts to spend more time together. Being sandwiched-in against our will will hopefully get us to want to be together more, willingly. Children intermingling with others will be greatly appreciated, both for parents and for children.

Perhaps we will be able to give each other more space and recognize each other's personal space. And that will lead us into transforming our personal spaces into private sacred places. Our homes need to regain their personal status, leaving our business and external issues away. The home needs to become a safe haven for our emotional and spiritual needs.

### QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. What reasonable change can I make for myself to create a greater sanctity and privacy of my personal space and home?
2. Are there areas in life that are too overbearing or burdening that may be preventing me from tasting the sweetness of the positive things in my life?



# SHULCHAN ORECH

# שלחן עורך



## SHULCHAN ORECH

Though we might have expected the meal to be an accompaniment to the rest of the seder, it is actually one of the stages itself. It is at this point when we can truly display our freedom, because the word חירות, the word that we loosely translate into freedom, is actually described as royalty. The finest foods, with the finest dining ware, displaying our royal status as lofty individuals, no matter how society may define us the rest of the year. The meal must solidify the actions of our previous nine stages, and develop a fullness of gratitude that will carry us through the next four stages of our royal experience.

Our tables are considered a mizbeiach, an alter, because of the poor that we invite over to our homes. Having opportunities to invite the less fortunate to our meals surely enhances our overall purpose and spiritual bank accounts. Having the people we don't know well, even if they're fortunate, promotes good will and meaningful connections.



## CORONA INSIGHTS

We have become separated from friends and family during this time. People have been deathly ill and many have passed on. We need to come from the ashes and celebrate again, with one another. Our meals must become sanctified, eating for a purpose and with purpose. Unfortunately, prior to these events, our meals and our celebrations, have reached the level of King status, bringing in foods from exotic lands, utilizing exotic chefs, etc... all in the name of holiness. But it is holiness in name and not in spirituality. an easy test to determine if our excess is for spiritual purposes, is to ask ourselves after a massive kiddush followed by a massive lunch, "Do I feel more spiritually elevated, or more physically inflated?"

Let us celebrate our Shabbosim and Yomim Tovim with grandeur and splendor, but we can surely do it, by limiting our weekday intake and elevating our holy days incrementally. Must our weekday be celebrated as if it's Shabbos? שבת מה תהא עליה, what will be of our Shabbos? Our zemiros speak of fattened fowl and lavish Shabbos food, items that weren't eaten at all during the week. Many of our lavish meals have become a routine standard without the special feel of Shabbos Holiness; Our meals need to become special because of Shabbos Kodesh and our unique relationship with Hashem, not our relationship with food.

### QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Our tables must become a mizbeiach, alter, once again. When I come out of this experience, who is it that is needy of means or spirit, that I can I invite to my table?
2. Who are the families or acquaintances that I can invite over (when we are finally able), even if I have nothing to do with them?
3. Is there a part of my meals of celebration (eg. bris milah, bar mitzvah, wedding, etc..) that I can do without, for the sake of creating limits and adding more holiness to our spiritual experiences?





## TZAFUN

The eating of the afikoman, which like the korban Pesach, is to be eaten at satiety (נאכל על השובע) , saving this food for last. Our Afkioman tastes the same as our matzah, because we don't have a korban Pesach. Eating it, requires a hopeful sentiment and a mind with a good imagination. After eating so much matzah, we have a lavish meal and then again, we are brought more matzah. This matzah, though it has a familiar taste, is symbolically different. It is now eaten to keep the flavor of matzah on our taste buds, associating a physical experience with an emotional event.

According to those commentaries that this matzah represents the missing korban Pesach (others say its the fulfillment of matzah), we may wonder why use matzah to fulfill this requirement, when matzah already has a place at the seder. One answer given is that our tzafun is still somewhat hidden. We are still in exile, and our freedom as a holy nation with our mission fulfilled, is not fully actualized. Therefore the matzah, as a sign of freedom is still reminiscent as a sign of slavery.

The hidden matzah has now been revealed, as if to tell us that we have been granted a right to look beyond our present and look with visionary eyes towards a better future. A future of greater clarity of Hashem, and greater commitment to our faith.



## CORONA INSIGHTS

We have all been spending a lot of time at home. When people get bored, they resort to different vices to take the edge off their boredom. For many people that vice is eating. From one pantry to a cabinet, to the refrigerator and then another pantry. We're eating, but there is no end in sight. We are looking for that hidden treat that will take us out of that boredom and will make us feel accomplished and appreciated. We are waiting to find out when it will end and when can we find what to do and feel more accomplished.

There is much hidden from our future right now and we wonder if or when things will get back to normal. It is clear that all of our lives have been changed, and we want to make sure that we change ourselves internally to be able to appreciate the future that awaits.

### QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. What are some of the newly developed unknowns in my life that I have now begun to think about?
2. What future lifestyle changes can I imagine myself realistically taking on within the next year?
3. What personal exile am I going through that I would like to be revealed from its hiddenness and brought to redemption?







## BARECH

There are two components to the stage of Barech. The first is bentching (birkat hamazon) and the second is the כוס של אליהו, cup of Elijah, including the paragraph of Shefoch Chamascha, may Hashem take his wrath out on our enemies.

Bentching is a wonderful catchall for thanks. We start by thanking Hashem for the food that we have eaten, then we are thankful for the land of Israel, followed by Yerushalayim and finally we thank Hashem for the hidden daily miracles, which are included in the blessing of HaTov V'HaMeitiv. Bentching is unfortunately looked at as a burden for many, because the natural tendency is to move on to other things once eating has finished. It is at the conclusion of a meal where pausing to be thankful for all of the gifts in life is apropos. When we're full and our needs are met, we must take stock of the kindness and goodness that Hashem has given us.

From this multifaceted gratitude, we develop a deep bond to the Almighty. That bond leads us to request our salvation from all of the enemies who try to destroy us, and in essence, try to destroy Hashem. It is an empowering moment, to know that we are the warriors for Hashem's great name in this world and we live with Hashem on our lips.



## CORONA INSIGHTS

There are many things to be grateful for during these times. With all of the bad surrounding us, we must focus on the good that we have. For starters we must be grateful that we can daven. Hashem is telling us, I'll take your prayers now, not in a minyan, but I'll take them individually. We also have wonderful opportunities to learn Torah, even online or over the phone. Appreciate those experiences and build on them.

During the pandemic outbreak, many people have already begun their antisemitic rants about the Jews creating the virus. It has been said that after every pandemic over the last number of centuries, there was an explosion of antisemitism. Two versions of antisemitism have already erupted in the first few weeks. The old narrative of the 'Jews created the plague and spread it everywhere', and now the new one is that the 'religious Jews are careless, and they are spreading it everywhere'. Both are filled with antisemitism, but the second is filled with anti-religious bias from the Jews as well.

To the antisemitic non-Jews we can focus our prayers of "carry out your wrath", but for the Jews filling the world with anti-religious bias, we must stem the tide with our actions. We may be upset at those communities who did not heed the call for distancing early on, but we certainly don't need to fan the flames of hatred at them now, as they suffer deeply with the disease. May Hashem save us all, and may we be worthy to be the kiddush Hashem that shines His light onto the world.

### QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Can you put together a list of ten things outside of the seder that you can be thankful to Hashem for right now?
2. Knowing that shuls are closed, what part of your personal prayers have you found yourself connecting to more?
3. What type of prayer can I pray to help those that have unfortunately been stricken with the virus?



# HALLEL הלל



## HALLEL

The prayer of Hallel was specifically split into two parts in the haggadah. The first part, describing our salvation from Egypt (which is why it is called Hallel HaMitzri), is said before our meal. The second half, full of general praise, is recited after our meal. Some suggest that it is done this way in order to have the hallel recited over the Pesach offering (before and after eating it).

Over each of these stages of the seder we have built a reliance on Hashem and a recognition that He is in charge of every aspect of our lives. The praises we recite are there for us to increase the value of Hashem in our eyes, and to imbue within ourselves the ultimate devotion we need to have for Him. In the Hallel we mention that all the good we have comes from Hashem, and that we are still a broken people who can only survive on Hashem's word (אנא ה' הושיעה בנא).

We are taught that Hallel is a unique in that is unlike any other Hallel recited throughout the year. The recital of this night's Hallel is part of a Shira Chadasha, a *new song* that we sing to Hashem. This unique song is a song of present salvation, not merely a commemoration of a previous redemption. We are to feel as if we are being saved right now!



## CORONA INSIGHTS

Haven't we been thankful enough for all the good that we've come to recognize during this time? We've spent a long time with our nuclear families. We've prayed together, eaten together, played together, in short, we've been together for a while. We also appreciate our shuls more and the friendships we've developed. And how about those that have had to stay alone for all of these weeks, with no ability to leave their homes. Surely they appreciate the opportunities to connect to others more than ever. Haven't we reached our goal already?

Clearly it hasn't been enough, and Hashem has other plans than the ones we are defining for Him. Praising Hashem means not only to praise Him for the good things that we have, but also to praise Hashem for the difficulties and the bad that we experience. Deep down we know that it is all for the good, we just don't feel it in this world. Baruch Dayan HaEmes rings loudly in our ears, whether it is for someone who passed away, or for the hardships that we are experiencing.

It's important for us to know that we don't know. We don't understand, and we may not ever understand why this was brought upon us and the world. But we must find it within ourselves to declare Hashem as Master of the universe.

### QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Imagine a song or poem you can compose for five generations from now. How would you declare the praises of Hashem for your experiences during this difficult time?
2. If someone were to laud you with praise, what types of praise would you want them to say about you?
3. Think about a setback you've had in the past, one with no positive resolution that you have sensed. Can you say Thank you Hashem for this difficulty?



# NIRTZAH נִרְצָה



## NIRTZAH

Everything has been completed, We've gone through all the stages of the seder, followed the rituals and expanded on our slavery and salvation. We've eaten, we've created the memory to last, and we've praised Hashem and recognized that He's in charge of it all. What more is needed?

Nirtzah is the culmination, it's when everyone else has left the party, and we stay just a little bit longer to show our love. Now is when we feel a true bond with Hashem, not out of obligation, but the desire to stay in His presence a little bit longer. Nirtzah is the afikoman of praise. The eating of the Afikoman keeps the flavor of matzah in our mouths, and the singing of the songs at Nirtzah, keeps the 'flavor' of our relationship with Hashem on our minds and in our hearts.

Nirtzah comes from the word נִרְצָה, to be desirous of us. It is not only our will that we get close to Hashem, it is His will to be close to us during this time. A relationship is built when both parties feel the connection to one another. It is a time when we take this opportunity to feel Hashem's true love for His people.



## CORONA INSIGHTS

We have been through a lot these last few weeks, we want answers, and we don't have them. So let us envision that we are staying close to Hashem in this time of great need. Perhaps with our commitment and showing of love, He will share with us the innermost secrets of our world and purpose. We can work on our sense of pride to be a Jew and feel special to be in Hashem's inner circle.

We pray that the end of the virus will be a great salvation for the Jewish people and the redemption with Mashiach. Sitting at our unique seder meals, ideal for almost no one, we pray that this connection we have with Hashem will open up the Heavenly gates and bring our ultimate redemption.

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- 1.If I look at my religious observances and actions, what part of my spiritual life can be enhanced if I choose to just stay a little bit longer?
- 2.If Mashiach were to come tomorrow, what would be the first thing I would do to celebrate?
- 3.Do you feel like you are ready to be greeted by Mashiach? What forms of Teshuvah would you want to commit to in order to make yourself worthy of Mashiach's arrival?

