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WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? Questions to think about before Pesach

By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

“Why is this night different from all other nights?”

This is the classical introduction to the “four questions” which children traditionally ask their fathers at the Pesach Seder.

These questions focus on the differences in the menu and the manner of consumption. Their purpose is to invite a response about the significance of the Exodus, which is in a sense being relived by every Jew through the recital of the Haggadah.

In anticipation of this experience we might gain an important perspective by asking ourselves another question:

“What difference does it make that there was an Exodus and how it took place?”

The answer to this question is given at the very beginning of the Haggadah’s introductory response to the aforementioned “Four Questions”:

“Had the Holy One, Blessed be He, not taken our ancestors out of Egypt, then we and our children and grandchildren would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.”

Here, even before we begin to actually tell the story of our miraculous liberation from bondage, we must ask some questions which this introduction inspires:

“Is it possible that one nation could be enslaved to

another for thousands of years? Would we not have eventually achieved freedom like all other people in history?”

The answer to these questions lies in a deeper understanding of what “enslavement to Pharaoh” means. Egyptian bondage was much more than forced, backbreaking labor. It was exposure to the most corrupt culture in human history. Pharaohs may come and go, but the spiritual corruption they represent emerges in every generation to enslave the souls of their subjects.

Had the liberation of our ancestors occurred through political or military means, as has been the case in all of history’s freedom movements, we might have thrown off our shackles but remained spiritual slaves to the Egyptian values to which we had become so accustomed. Only by witnessing the ten plagues, which punished the Egyptians measure-for-measure, did we learn the full meaning of the corruption of that culture and thus gain true freedom from the “Egyptianism” which has contaminated mankind throughout history.

This is what the Haggadah and the Pesach Seder are all about – taking the Jews out of Egypt and taking Egypt out of the Jews.

EDITOR’S NOTE

The Pesach Handbook, a special 20-page booklet with articles, features and information to help make your Pesach an even more unforgettable experience, is available free at <http://ohr.edu/pesachbook/>

The Constant Fire

“A constant fire shall burn upon the altar; it shall never go out.” (6:6)
Throughout their journeys in the wilderness the Jewish People carried with them the Mishkan. The word Mishkan comes from the word in Hebrew which means “to dwell.” Through the Mishkan, G-d caused the Divine Presence, the *Shechina*, to dwell amongst the Jewish People.

There was an altar in the courtyard of the Mishkan. On it burned three different fires. On the eastern side of the altar was the *ma'aracha gadola*, the “large arrangement”. On this largest fire, the *korbanot* sacrifices were offered. On the south-western corner there was another fire that was used solely to ignite the pyre of the golden altar inside the Mishkan on which the incense was burned.

And there was a third fire which had no fixed place but could be made anywhere on the outside altar. This fire had one purpose and one purpose only — to fulfill the words of the Torah in this week’s portion: “A constant fire shall burn upon the altar; it shall never go out.” Come rain or shine, weekdays and Shabbat, this fire never went out. It burned all the forty years that the Jewish People were traveling in the desert. In fact, it burned without interruption for a total of over one hundred years: forty years in the desert, fourteen years in the Mishkan at *Gilgal*, and fifty-seven years in the Mishkan at *Nov* and at *Givon*. Two pieces of wood had to be added to the fire twice a day. One in the morning at the time of the morning offering, and one in the afternoon at the time of the afternoon offering.

One might ask, why were three fires necessary? Wouldn't

one have sufficed?

These three fires can be understood as three aspects of our relationship with G-d:

The large fire represents our external service; the performance of the *mitzvot*, the obligations of prayer at its fixed times throughout the day and throughout the year. Because it was the largest fire, it was the most visible, just as our external duties as Jews are the most visible, be they the giving of charity or the care of the orphan and the widow. These are things that are as visible as a large fire.

However there was another fire whose function outside was for no other purpose than to kindle an internal fire. That fire teaches us that we must take our exterior service and use it to kindle the interior fire. That internal fire represents the duties of the heart: our belief and trust in G-d and our constant striving to be better people. That's something you can't see from the outside, but like the incense that is burned on the golden altar, it emerges from within a person with a scent that is unmistakable.

The third fire can be moved anywhere, but it must never go out. This represents the undying fidelity of the Jewish People to G-d throughout our long and difficult Diaspora. Even though we have had to move from one corner of the world to another, our devotion to G-d has never been extinguished by an unkind world. Whether in the light of morning, or the impending darkness of approaching night, throughout our long history, the Jewish People have always placed the kindling on the altar of our devotion to G-d.

Chant Of Love

“Aharon raised his hands toward the people and blessed them.” (9:22)
One of the most awe-inspiring experiences is the *Birkat HaKohanim*, when a thousand-or-so *kohanim* bless the many thousands at the Western Wall in Jerusalem on the second day of *Chol HaMo'ed Pesach* and *Succot*.

Most of the time, prayer at the Wall is a segmented affair. This group starts as this one finishes, while yet another group is somewhere in the middle.

Apart from the daily moments of silence at the dawn's break when everyone begins together the Silent Prayer of Eighteen Blessings, I can think of no other time when the whole of the Kotel is as unified as it is by *Birkat HaKohanim*.

The haunting chant of the Kohanic blessing evokes deep and powerful feelings in the heart of every Jew however religious he may be. It is a chant that echoes down the years. It is a living witness to the unbroken chain of Jewish tradition that links us to Sinai.

The first appearance of that chant is in this week's Torah portion. Aharon completed his first day of service in the Sanctuary and he then blessed the people with great joy. Such was his desire to bless the people that G-d rewarded him and his descendents that they should bless the Jewish People thus

throughout the generations.

The word for blessing in Hebrew, *beracha*, is connected to *bericha*, which means a “pool.” Blessing is an overflowing pool that enriches and fills our lives.

In the time of the Holy Temple, when the *kohanim* would bless the people, they would raise their hands over their heads and make a space between the third and fourth fingers of hands. When they recited the blessing using the ineffable Name of G-d, the *Shechina*, the Divine Presence, would rest on their hands.

The *kohanim* to this day still cover their heads and hands with their prayer shawls when they recite the blessing.

But maybe we could also understand a different symbolism behind the covering of the hands of the *kohen*.

Our Sages teach us that blessing only descends on things that are hidden from the eye, that which the eye doesn't see. For example, a farmer who starts to weigh his grain may pray that his crop will be large, but if he has already weighed it, he may no longer make such a request, for the size of the crop is already revealed to the eye. When the *kohanim* cover their hands they symbolize this idea that blessing descends only on that which is hidden from the eye.

Mind you, I wouldn't recommend that because of this you give up checking your bank balance once in a while!

• Sources: *Talmud Bavli Bava Metzia 42a, Mishna Berura, 128:98*

TAZRIA

So Far Away

“The kohen shall look, and behold! The affliction has covered his entire flesh, then he will declare the affliction to be pure.” (13:13)

T*zara’at*, frequently mistranslated as leprosy, was a disease caused by spiritual defects, such as speaking *lashon hara* (slander). (Nowadays we are on such a low level spiritually that our bodies do not reflect the state of our spiritual health in this way.)

The verse here is puzzling for if “the affliction has covered the entire flesh” of the person that must mean that he is far

from pure, and yet the Torah tells us that the *kohen* shall “declare the affliction pure”. How can he be pure if the affliction covers his whole body?

The answer is that he is so far from being cured, having ignored all the warnings to do *teshuva* (repent), that the disease ceases to perform any further purpose. Thus the Torah specifically says not that the *kohen* shall declare him pure; rather that “the affliction is pure”. He, on the other hand, is as far from purity as is possible.

• Based on the *Ha’emek Davar* and Rabbi S. R. Hirsch

METZORA

Boomerang

“...and he shall be brought to the kohen.” (14:3)

When a person speaks *lashon hara* it indicates that he has no concept of the power of speech; that he considers words to be insignificant in comparison to actions. As the nursery rhyme says, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me.”

Nothing could be further from the truth. When a person speaks evil, he awakes a prosecutor in Heaven, not only against the target of his speech, but also against himself. An angel stands by the side of each of us recording our every

word. In order to teach those who speak slander the power of just one word, the Torah instructs that the offender be brought to the *kohen*. But, even as he is on his way to the *kohen*, his body covered with *tzara’at* for all to see, and until the *kohen* actually pronounces the word “Impure!” he is still considered totally pure. Similarly, he cannot regain his former status, although his disease has healed completely, until the *kohen* again pronounces him to be spiritually pure.

From this, the speaker of *lashon hara* is taught to reflect on the power of each and every word. For with one word he can be made an outcast, and with one word he can be redeemed.

• Based on *Ohel Yaakov*

ACHAREI MOT – KEDOSHIM

G-d’s Waiting Room

“When you shall come to the Land and you shall plant any food tree, you shall treat its fruit as forbidden; for three years it will be forbidden to you.” (19:23)

With macabre humor, Miami Beach is called “G-d’s waiting room” because it abounds with retirement homes and hotels for the elderly.

Retirement is a western concept, and one that has come under criticism from doctors in recent years. Studies have found that people who don’t retire but stay involved in their work (albeit at a level that befits their age) have longer life expectancies than those who retire and relax into their “gold-years”.

My father, *alav hashalom*, who passed from this world a few years ago well into his ninety-third year, was a person who worked hard throughout his life and never retired. Every morning he would still go into the office and do his work. He went in later and came back earlier, but he still kept his life’s routine.

Our Sages teach that G-d conceals our time of death from us so that we should remain active to the last.

The Roman Emperor Hadrian was once passing through the city of Tiberias in Eretz Yisrael. He noticed an elderly man exerting himself, tilling the soil around his fig trees.

“Saba! (Grandfather) Saba!” called out Hadrian, “Why are you working so hard? When you were young you had to toil to make a living, but now it’s time to relax. Anyway, you will never live to enjoy the fruits of your labors.”

The old man replied, “My task is to try and accomplish

whatever my age allows. The Almighty will do as He sees fit.”

“Tell me, please, Saba, how old are you?”

“I am a hundred years old.”

“A hundred years old! And you actually expect to reap what you sow?”

“If I merit to eat the fruit of my labors, well and good; and if not, my efforts will benefit my children just as I have benefited from the toil of my forebears.”

Said Hadrian, “Hear me, Saba! If you ever eat these figs that you are planting you must surely come and let me know.”

In due course, the figs ripened and abounded with fruits. The old man thought to himself, “I must go and tell the emperor.”

He filled a basket with figs and traveled to the palace.

“The Emperor wishes to see me,” he announced to the guards and they led him before Hadrian’s throne.

“Who are you?” asked Hadrian.

“Does the emperor remember years ago in Tiberias passing by an old man tending his figs? G-d has granted me to eat of those figs that I planted. I have brought the emperor a basketful as a gift.”

Hadrian turned to his servants. “Take the figs from this elderly man and refill his basket with gold coins.”

His courtiers questioned the emperor’s generosity, “Why such an lavish gift for an old Jew?” Hadrian replied to them, “His Creator honored him with longevity; is it not proper that I too should accord him honor?”

The Creator does not want us to sit and read the newspapers in G-d’s waiting room.

• Source: *Vayikra Rabba* 25:5

TALMUDigest

Keritot 9-15

- When atonement sacrifices are required even for willful violations
- The sacrifices of a woman after childbirth
- The “sliding scale” of certain atonement sacrifices
- When a man and woman have different atonements for the same sin
- Witnesses and defendant denial in regard to sin of eating forbidden food
- How one act of eating can result in multiple sins
- Time span for combining two acts of eating
- Intoxication’s effect on sacrificial service and halachic rulings
- Multiple sins in one act of sexual relations

No Escape

May one teach Talmud while intoxicated? The answer to this question depends on how we understand the Torah’s command to Aharon and

his sons to refrain from drinking intoxicating wine “in order to distinguish between the sacred and the profane... and to teach the Children of Israel all the decrees that G-d had spoken to them through Moshe” (*Vayikra* 9-11).

Our Sages saw this as extending to Torah scholars refraining from teaching Torah while intoxicated. One view is that it is not only forbidden to offer halachic rulings in such a state, but to even teach Talmud. Rabbi Yosse ben Rabbi Yehuda, however, contends that Talmud can be taught since it is not direct rendering of halachic judgment.

The Sage Rav accepted the latter position. He nevertheless refrained from giving a public Torah lecture on Midrash the day after a Festival because of the drinking he had indulged in on the holy day. The *gemara*’s explanation is that wherever a Sage like Rav was present he would inevitably be asked by people attending his lecture questions in halacha which he would not be permitted to answer.

• Keritot 13b

What the SAGES Say

“How do we know that we accept a convert even when there is no possibility for him to bring a sacrifice? Because the Torah states (*Bamidbar* 15:14) ‘When a proselyte sojourns with you or one who is among you throughout your generation...’”

• Rabbi Acha bar Yaakov - Keritot 9a

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לע"נ

מרת פייגה בת ר' דוד ע"ה

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

TALMUDigest

Keritot 16-22

- Multiple Shabbat violations of similar nature on a number of *Shabbatot*
- When there is doubt whether one involuntarily sinned
- When are separate atonement sacrifices required for repetitive sinning
- When there is doubt as to which of two involuntary sins was committed
- The concept of *mitaseik* – committing a sin while intending to do something else
- Which bloods are forbidden by Torah or Rabbinical law
- When blood of fish or humans may or may not be consumed
- Atonement sacrifice for doubtful involuntary misuse of sacred property

A Tale of Two Sacrifices

Just as there is a sacrifice of *korban chatat* to serve as an atonement for involuntary transgression of a sin whose punishment for intentional transgression is *karet* (premature death), there is a sacrifice of *korban asham taluy* to protect one who is not certain that he has even committed such as sin.

If someone ate *chelev* (forbidden animal fat) which he mistakenly assumed was *shuman* (permissible fat), he is considered a *shogeg* (involuntary sinner) and must offer a *chatat* (sin offering) as atonement.

But a different scenario introduces a different sort of sacrifice. There were two pieces of fat before him, one *chelev* and one *shuman*, and he mistakenly assumed that both were *shuman* and ate one of them. After both pieces were gone he was informed that one of them had been *chelev*, but he is not certain as to which piece he ate. Since there is a doubt as to whether he actually ate the forbidden piece and incurred an obligation to offer a *chatat*, he is required to offer an *asham taluy* (a doubtful guilt offering). His purpose is to protect himself from Heavenly punish-

ment, and if he eventually clarifies that he did indeed eat the forbidden piece he must offer a *chatat*.

It is interesting to note that the ram which must be used for the *asham taluy* must have a minimal value of two *shekalim*, while the lamb or goat used for the *chatat* need not be more valuable than a *danka*, which is one forty-eighth of two *shekalim*.

Why must so much more be spent on atonement for a doubtful sin than for one which was certainly committed?

Rabbeinu Yonah of Gironde, one of the classical Talmudic commentaries, offers a fascinating explanation in his commentary on *Mesechta Berachot* (1b). When one is certain that he committed a sin by being careless and involuntarily eating forbidden fat or violating Shabbat, he takes the matter to heart, regrets his behavior and repents wholeheartedly. But when he is not certain that he actually committed a sin, he tends to rationalize that the piece he ate was not the forbidden one and therefore does not set his mind to repenting. The Torah therefore required him to spend much more money on the animal for this sacrifice so that he will realize the gravity of his action and properly repent.

• Keritot 18a

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TALMUDigest

Keritot 23-28

- Can two people be responsible for bringing an atonement sacrifice for eating from the same pair of foods
- When one who has brought a sacrifice to atone for a doubtful violation discovers he had not sinned
- Situations in which one relinquishes ownership of property because he mistakenly assumed it was condemned
- Can one voluntarily offer an *asham taluy* sacrifice which is for doubtful sinning
- When Yom Kippur comes before an *ashem taluy* is brought
- When money given for purchase of an animal for an *asham* sacrifice is sufficient for purchase of two
- A *chatat* atonement sacrifice purchased for one sin cannot be useful for another sin
- The bitter fate of the *kohen gadol* who showed disrespect for the sacrificial service

Sins Known Only to G-d

If a Jew had an obligation to offer a *korban chatat* (sin offering) or a *korban asham* (guilt offering) for a sin which he definitely committed, he must make that offering even if Yom Kippur intervened between the time of the sin and the sacrifice. But if there was a doubt as to whether the sin was committed and there is an obligation to offer an *asham taluy*, we consider that sin atoned for by the passing of Yom Kippur and there is no longer any need to offer that sacrifice.

The source for this distinction is the Torah passage (*Vayikra* 16:30) declaring that Yom Kippur provides purification “from all your sins before G-d.” A sin that is known only to G-d is atoned for, but one that is known to the sinner as well requires the atonement of sacrifice even after Yom Kippur.

A challenge to this interpretation is posed by the Gemara from the following case. A woman gives birth to something of which there is a doubt as to whether it obligates her to offer the sacrifice required of every mother after

a normal birth. She is required to offer a sacrifice because of the possibility that the birth obligated her, and must do so even if Yom Kippur passed in the meantime. Since her obligation too is something “known only to G-d” why does she not gain exemption from it with Yom Kippur?

The Gemara’s response is that the sacrifice following birth is for the purpose of elevating the mother from her state of ritual impurity rather than atoning for sin, and is therefore not affected by the atonement of Yom Kippur. This explanation, however, does not seem to fit in with the position of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai who stated that every woman is guilty of some sin in childbirth because when she experiences the pangs of labor she vows never to have relations again with her husband. The resolution of this problem is that whatever sin she may be guilty of for such a rash vow is atoned for by the pain suffered in the actual birth, and the purpose of the sacrifice is to purify her and make her eligible to eat sacred sacrificial meat. The atonement of Yom Kippur therefore does not affect this sacrifice even according to Rabbi Shimon.

•Keritot 26a

LOVE_{OF THE} LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

Land of the Perfect Match

The Midrash thus extols the perfect match between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel.

“Sometimes there is a man who has a pleasant appearance but his garments are repulsive. Sometimes there are pleasant garments on a repulsive person. The People of Israel and the Land of



Israel, however, form a perfect match for both are so pleasant.”

The People of Israel were given *mitzvot* by G-d, and the Land of Israel is a place to which G-d gives special attention and in which more *mitzvot* can be performed than anywhere else: a perfect match!

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TALMUDigest

Me'ilah 2 - 8

- The ban on *me'ilah* misuse of sacred property applies to sacrifices slaughtered in wrong place
- *Me'ilah* in regard to the flesh of a sacrificial animal which died
- Rabbi Yehoshua's basic principle for when *me'ilah* applies
- Does *me'ilah* apply to sacrificial flesh which had a lapse in its *kashrut* before the blood was placed on the altar
- The differences between the different kinds of sacrifices regarding *me'ilah*
- *Me'ilah* in regard to the bird offered as a *chatat* sacrifice

Respect for What We Don't Understand

M*e'ilah* - the name of the *Mesechta* we begin this week - means transgressing by using for private purposes an animal, funds or any other property which has been consecrated for the use of the *Beit Hamikdash*.

One who transgresses by thus misappropriating even the value of a *prutah* must atone for his sin in the following way:

If he was aware that the property was sacred and intentionally misappropriated it, he is punished with flogging and he must repay the amount he took. If he was unaware that this was sacred property and mistakenly thought he

was using his own, then he achieves atonement by repaying the amount taken and adding a *chomesh* (literally a fifth but since this means a fifth of the amount taken with the fifth added on, we would refer to it in our language as a fourth) and offering a ram as a *korban asham me'ilah* sacrifice.

Rambam, at the conclusion of his codification of the laws pertaining to this subject, draws this powerful lesson for us in how to relate to Torah statutes that defy our comprehension:

"It is proper for a person to ponder the laws of the Torah in order to comprehend them as much as he can. But he should not view disrespectfully those laws whose reasons he fails to grasp. His thoughts about them must not be like the thoughts one has of secular matters. Let us take a look at how severely the Torah deals with the transgressor of *me'ilah*. If sticks and stones, dust and ashes become sacred simply because the Name of G-d has been declared upon them, and anyone who utilizes them for a secular purpose has transgressed and requires atonement even if he did so involuntarily; how much more so is this true in regard to the commands which G-d legislated that one should not disrespectfully reject them just because he fails to understand the reason for them."

• *Me'ilah* 2

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TALMUDigest

Me'ilah 9 - 13

- Me'ilah in regard to the bird offered as an *olah* sacrifice
- When does *me'ilah* apply to the cow and goat sacrifices for particular sins
- Me'ilah in regard to the ashes piled on the altar
- When *me'ilah* applies to the non-animal materials used in the sacred service
- The five categories of *chatat* sacrifice to which *me'ilah* does not apply
- Funds designated for purchase of animals to serve as sacrifices of a *nazir*
- Me'ilah in regard to blood, libation wine, menorah ashes, animal milk and bird eggs

From the Birds?

An idol is forbidden for any use by a Jew unless the heathen has renounced his intention of further worshipping it. The clearest demonstration of such renunciation is an action on his part to smash that idol or any part of it.

What is the rule if the idol fell and was thus smashed, not through the action of the idol worshipper?

There is a difference of opinion on this point between the sages Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish. The first is of the opinion that the remains of this idol are still forbidden because there was no visible renunciation of

its worship by the heathen. The opposing view is that these remains are now permitted for use because we may assume that the worshipper has renounced any intention of continued worship. "If the idol was not capable of saving itself," says the heathen in his heart, "how will it be capable of saving me!"

Their differing opinions lead them to differing interpretations of the rule stated in the Mishnah that if there is a bird's nest atop an *ashera* tree worshipped as an idol a Jew may remove it from the tree with the end of a pole. Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish understood this to mean that the nest had been formed from branches the bird had broken off that tree. This is therefore an idol that was smashed, albeit not by the idol worshipper, and permitted for use by the Jew who may now appropriate the nest.

Rabbi Yochanan, however, reads the Mishnah otherwise. The branches used for building the nest have been brought from another, non-idolatrous tree and the issue is not whether the nest may be used or not. What is of concern are the fledgling birds in the nest. The Mishnah informs us that since these birds are already capable of flying wherever they wish, they are not considered to be a part of the forbidden idol tree and may be removed with a pole from its top, for permissible use.

• Me'ilah 14a



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Search by Candlelight

From: Marcell

*Dear Rabbi,
Must the search for chametz before Pesach be done only with a candle? If so, why? If not, what else can be used? Thanks.*

Dear Marcell,

The search for chametz is performed by the light of a single candle. A torch which has many wicks, or a large flame, may not be used because a person may not search properly out of fear that fire may spread. Also, the large flame prevents one from looking into small corners or crevices.

Similarly, candles made of fats, oil or non-kosher materials may not be used since one will be distracted from the search by the fear that the fat or the oil will drip and stain the house and his other belongings, and that the forbidden materials will drip into foods and render them unkosher.

Rather one should use a candle made of wax, since it gives a bright light, and if it drips, it won't cause damage or render food unfit. Customarily, thinner candles are preferred since they drip less. Also, such candles are easier to maneuver into small, tight places. That being said, even though such candles are preferred, where flame or dripping wax could cause fire or damage, a flashlight may be used.

The search for chametz in our homes and among our belongings parallels what should be a search into our selves and the inner recesses of our beliefs and modes of behavior. Just as we remove leavened material from our possession, so we are to remove improper beliefs and practices from ourselves.

Perhaps this relates to the types of candles that should or shouldn't be used for the search. A multiple-wicked candle or large torch may represent an overzealous search which may burn a person or, alternatively, prevent a person from reaching into and cleaning the subtle crevices needed for change. Candles made of messy materials represent a disorganized and haphazard search, which certainly isn't conducive to real improvement. Spiritual searching through unkosher means renders one entirely unfit.

A single flame, from a thin, kosher candle represents using the light of Torah to concertedly and strategically search the deep and dark recesses of ourselves, to illuminate and rectify our wrongs in order to prepare for, and catalyze, Redemption.

Sources:

- *The Book of Our Heritage, Nissan ch.3, p. 519*

Red Wine

From: Rachel

*Dear Rabbi,
Wine is used throughout the Jewish year for different occasions and for different purposes. It's my understanding that any type and color of wine can be used for these different occasions. Is this so regarding the four cups at the Seder, or must they be red?*

Dear Rachel,

The mitzvah of the four cups of wine at the Passover Seder may be fulfilled with any type or color of wine, and even with

grape juice for those who find it very difficult to drink wine.

However, the ideal way to fulfill the mitzvah is with red wine. There are several reasons for this, which recall different aspects of the Egyptian exile and exodus.

Red wine serves as a reminder of the blood of the Jewish children whom Pharaoh slaughtered so as to bathe in their blood, which he did, thinking it would cure his skin condition. This blood shall never be silenced and even after thousands of years after this tragedy it will not be forgotten nor forgiven.

Red wine also serves as a reminder of the blood that was smeared on the doorposts as a sign when G-d passed over the homes of Israel, preventing the destruction from striking them. By using red wine we express our prayer that G-d continue to protect us and deliver us from all our enemies.

Red wine also recalls two great *mitzvot* performed by the Jewish people on the eve of the Exodus for which they gained merit to be redeemed: circumcision and the Passover sacrifice. G-d conveyed to Israel that they must circumcise themselves and then to bring the Passover sacrifice, which the entire nation did. This merit is recalled in the elevated cup.

Finally, red wine symbolizes Divine Judgment that will be brought against all the past and present persecutors of the Jewish People. G-d will pour His cup of wrath upon these evil-doers, then fill the cup of Redemption in the hand of Israel.

Sources:

- *The Book of Our Heritage, Nissan ch.5, p. 598*

Song of Songs

From: Jason

*Dear Rabbi,
What is the reason for reciting Song of Songs on Pesach.
What's the connection?*

Dear Jason,

It is customary to read Song of Songs on the first night of Pesach at the end of the Seder. In the Diaspora where the Seder is repeated on the second night, the reading of this book is sometimes spread over the two nights, but it is more common for the whole book to be read on the first night.

In Ashkenazi communities, Song of Songs is read publicly in the synagogue on the Shabbat of Chol HaMo'ed before the Torah reading. In some communities, it is actually read from a scroll, hand-written on parchment.

One reason for this is that Pharaoh is explicitly mentioned in this book, and in addition, Jewish sources relate the content of the book to the four different exiles and Israel's redemption from each.

The Zohar states that Song of Songs embodies the entire Torah, the story of the exile in Egypt and the redemption of Israel from there, as well as from other oppressors, so that by reading it we are enhancing the mitzvah of recounting the story of the Exodus.

Another reason for reading Song of Songs is that Pesach is a special time of love between G-d and Israel, who entered into a covenant and became betrothed to Him through the Exodus from Egypt. It is appropriate at this time that we recall presence of that love at all times.

Sources:

- *The Book of Our Heritage, Nissan ch.6, p. 629*

PARSHA Q&A

TZAV

1. What separated the *kohen's* skin from the priestly garments?
2. How often were the ashes removed from upon the *mizbe'ach*? How often were they completely removed from the *mizbe'ach*?
3. If someone extinguishes the fire on the *mizbe'ach*, how many Torah violations has he transgressed?
4. The portion of a flour-offering offered on the *mizbe'ach* may not be *chametz*. But is the *kohen's* portion allowed to be *chametz*?
5. When a *kohen* is inaugurated, what offering must he bring?
6. What three baking processes were used to prepare the *korban* of Aharon and his sons?
7. What is the difference between a *minchat kohen* and a *minchat Yisrael*?
8. When is a *kohen* disqualified from eating from a *chatat*?
9. What is the difference between a copper and earthenware vessel regarding removing absorbed tastes?
10. Can an animal dedicated as an *asham* be replaced with another animal?
11. How does an *asham* differ from all other *korbanot*?
12. Unlike all other *korbanot*, what part of the ram or sheep may be placed on the *mizbe'ach*?
13. What three types of *kohanim* may not eat from the *asham*?
14. In which four instances is a *korban todah* brought?
15. Until when may a *todah* be eaten according to the Torah? Until when according to Rabbinic decree?
16. How does a *korban* become *pigul*?
17. Who may eat from a *shelamim*?
18. What miracle happened at the entrance of the *Ohel Moed*?
19. Other than *Yom Kippur*, what other service requires that the *kohen* separate from his family?
20. What are the 5 categories of *korbanot* listed in this *Parsha*?

Answers to Tzav's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 6:3 - Nothing.
2. 6:4 -A) Every day. B) Whenever there was a lot.
3. 6:6 - Two.
4. 6:10 - No.
5. 6:13 - A *korban mincha* — A tenth part of an *ephah* of flour.
6. 6:14 - Boiling, baking in an oven and frying in a pan.
7. 6:15 - The *minchat kohen* is burnt completely. Only a handful of the *minchat Yisrael* is burnt, and the remainder is eaten by the *kohanim*.
8. 6:19 - If he is *tamei* (spiritually impure) at the time of the sprinkling of the blood.
9. 6:21 - One can remove an absorbed taste from a copper vessel by scouring and rinsing, whereas such a taste can never be removed from an earthenware vessel.
10. 7:1 - No.
11. 7:3 - It can only be brought from a ram or sheep.
12. 7:3 - The tail.
13. 7:7 - A *t'vul yom* (a *tamei kohen* who immersed in a *mikveh* yet awaits sunset to become *tahor*); a *mechusar kipurim* (a *tamei* person who has gone to the *mikveh* but has yet to bring his required offering); an *onan* (a mourner on the day of death of a close relative).
14. 7:12 - Upon safe arrival from an ocean voyage; upon safe arrival from a desert journey; upon being freed from prison; upon recovering from illness.
15. 7:15 - a) Until the morning. b) Until midnight.
16. 7:18 - The person slaughters the animal with the intention that it be eaten after the prescribed time.
17. 7:19 - Any uncontaminated person (not only the owner).
18. 8:3 - The entire nation was able to fit in this very small area.
19. 8:34 - The burning of the *parah adumah* (red heifer).
20. *Olah* (6:2); *mincha* (6:7); *chatat* (6:18); *asham* (7:1); *shelamim* (7:11).

PARSHA Q&A

SHEMINI

1. What date was “*yom hashemini*”?
2. Which of Aharon’s *korbanot* atoned for the Golden Calf?
3. What *korbanot* did Aharon offer for the Jewish People?
4. What was unique about the *chatat* offered during the induction of the *Mishkan*?
5. When did Aharon bless the people with the *birkat kohanim*?
6. Why did Moshe go into the *Ohel Mo’ed* with Aharon?
7. Why did Nadav and Avihu die?
8. Aharon quietly accepted his sons’ death. What reward did he receive for this?
9. What prohibitions apply to a person who is intoxicated?
10. Name the three *chatat* goat offerings that were sacrificed on the day of the inauguration of the *Mishkan*.
11. Which he-goat *chatat* did Aharon burn completely and why?
12. Why did Moshe direct his harsh words at Aharon’s sons?
13. Moshe was upset that Aharon and his sons did not eat the *chatat*. Why?
14. Why did G-d choose Moshe, Aharon, Elazar and Itamar as His messengers to tell the Jewish People the laws of *kashrut*?
15. What are the signs of a kosher land animal?
16. How many non-kosher animals display only *one* sign of *kashrut*? What are they?
17. If a fish sheds its fins and scales when out of the water, is it kosher?
18. Why is a stork called *chasida* in Hebrew?
19. The *chagav* is a kosher insect. Why don’t we eat it?
20. What requirements must be met in order for water to maintain its status of purity?

Answers to Shemini’s Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 9:1 - First of *Nissan*.
2. 9:2 - The calf offered as a *korban chatat*.
3. 9:3,4 - A he-goat as a *chatat*, a calf and a lamb for an *olah*, an ox and a ram for *shelamim*, and a *mincha*.
4. 9:11 - It’s the only example of a *chatat* offered on the courtyard *mizbe’ach* that was burned.
5. 9:22 - When he finished offering the *korbanot*, before descending from the *mizbe’ach*.
6. 9:23 - For one of two reasons: Either to teach Aharon about the service of the incense, or to pray for the *Shechina* to dwell with Israel.
7. 10:2 - Rashi offers two reasons: Either because they gave a halachic ruling in Moshe’s presence, or because they entered the *Mishkan* after drinking intoxicating wine.
8. 10:3 - A portion of the Torah was given solely through Aharon.
9. 10:9-11 - He may not give a *halachic* ruling. Also, a *kohen* is forbidden to enter the *Ohel Mo’ed*, approach the *mizbe’ach*, or perform the *avoda*.
10. 10:16 - The goat offerings of the inauguration ceremony, of *Rosh Chodesh*, and of Nachshon ben Aminadav.
11. 10:16 - The *Rosh Chodesh chatat*: Either because it became *tamei*, or because the *kohanim* were forbidden to eat from it while in the state of *aninut* (mourning).
12. 10:16 - Out of respect for Aharon, Moshe directed his anger at his sons and not directly at Aharon.
13. 10:17 - Because only when the *kohanim* eat the *chatat* are the sins of the owners atoned.
14. 11:2 - Because they accepted the deaths of Nadav and Avihu in silence.
15. 11:3 - An animal whose hooves are completely split and who chews its cud.
16. 11:4,5,6,7 - Four: Camel, *shafan*, hare and pig.
17. 11:12 - Yes.
18. 11:19 - Because it acts with *chesed* (kindness) toward other storks.
19. 11:21 - We have lost the tradition and are not able to identify the kosher *chagav*.
20. 11:36 - It must be connected to the ground (i.e., a spring or a cistern).

TAZRIA

1. When does a woman who has given birth to a son go to the *mikveh*?
2. After a woman gives birth, she is required to offer two types of offerings. Which are they?
3. What animal does the woman offer as a *chatat*?
4. Which of these offerings makes her *tahor* (ritual purity)?
5. Which of the sacrifices does the woman offer first, the *olah* or the *chatat*?
6. Who determines whether a person is a *metzora tamei* (person with ritually impure *tzara'at*) or is *tahor*?
7. If the *kohen* sees that the *tzara'at* has spread after one week, how does he rule?
8. What disqualifies a *kohen* from being able to give a ruling in a case of *tzara'at*?
9. Why is the appearance of *tzara'at* on the tip of one of the 24 "limbs" that project from the body usually unable to be examined?
10. On which days is a *kohen* not permitted to give a ruling on *tzara'at*?
11. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow (e.g., the head or beard), what color hair is indicative of ritual impurity?
12. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow, what color hair is indicative of purity?
13. If the *kohen* intentionally or unintentionally pronounces a *tamei* person "*tahor*," what is that person's status?
14. What signs of mourning must a *metzora* display?
15. Why must a *metzora* call out, "*Tamei! Tamei!*"?
16. Where must a *metzora* dwell?
17. Why is a *metzora* commanded to dwell in isolation?
18. What sign denotes *tzara'at* in a garment?
19. What must be done to a garment that has *tzara'at*?
20. If after washing a garment the signs of *tzara'at* disappear entirely, how is the garment purified?

Answers to Tazria's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 12:2 - At the end of seven days.
 2. 12:6 - An *olah* and a *chatat*.
 3. 12:6 - A *tor* (turtle dove) or a *ben yona* (young pigeon).
 4. 12:7 - The *chatat*.
 5. 12:8 - The *chatat*.
 6. 13:2 - A *kohen*.
 7. 13:5 - The person is *tamei*.
 8. 13:12 - Poor vision.
 9. 13:14 - The *tzara'at* as a whole must be seen at one time. Since these parts are angular, they cannot be seen at one time.
 10. 13:14 - During the festivals; and ruling on a groom during the seven days of feasting after the marriage.
 11. 13:29 - Golden.
 12. 13:37 - Any color other than golden.
 13. 13:37 - He remains *tamei*.
 14. 13:45 - He must tear his garments, let his hair grow wild, and cover his lips with his garment.
 15. 13:45 - So people will know to keep away from him.
 16. 13:46 - Outside the camp in isolation.
 17. 13:46 - Since *tzara'at* is a punishment for *lashon hara* (evil speech), which creates a rift between people, the Torah punishes measure for measure by placing a division between him and others.
 18. 13:49 - A dark green or dark red discoloration.
 19. 13:52 - It must be burned
 20. 13:58 - Through immersion in a *mikveh*.
-

PARSHA Q&A

METZORA

1. When may a *metzora* not be pronounced *tahor*?
2. In the *midbar*, where did a *metzora* dwell while he was *tamei*?
3. Why does the *metzora* require birds in the purification process?
4. In the purification process of a *metzora*, what does the cedar wood symbolize?
5. During the purification process, the *metzora* is required to shave his hair. Which hair must he shave?
6. What is unique about the *chatat* and the *asham* offered by the *metzora*?
7. In the *Beit Hamikdash*, when the *metzora* was presented “before G-d” (14:11), where did he stand?
8. Where was the *asham* of the *metzora* slaughtered?
9. How was having *tzara’at* in one’s house sometimes advantageous?
10. When a house is suspected as having *tzara’at*, what is its status prior to the inspection by a *kohen*?
11. What happens to the vessels that are in a house found to have *tzara’at*?
12. Which type of vessels cannot be made *tahor* after they become *tamei*?
13. Where were stones afflicted with *tzara’at* discarded?
14. When a house is suspected of having *tzara’at*, a *kohen* commands that the affected stones be replaced and the house plastered. What is the law if the *tzara’at*: a) returns and spreads; b) does not return; c) returns, but does not spread?
15. When a person enters a house that has *tzara’at*, when do his clothes become *tamei*?
16. What is the status of a man who is *zav* (sees a flow): a) two times or two consecutive days; b) three times or three consecutive days?
17. A *zav* sat or slept on the following: a) a bed; b) a plank; c) a chair; d) a rock. If a *tahor* person touches these things what is his status?
18. What does the Torah mean when it refers to a *zav* who “has not washed his hands”?
19. When may a *zav* immerse in a *mikveh* to purify himself?
20. What is the status of someone who experiences a one-time flow?

Answers to Metzora’s Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 14:2 - At night.
 2. 14:3 - Outside the three camps.
 3. 14:4 - *Tzara’at* comes as a punishment for *lashon hara*. Therefore, the Torah requires the *metzora* to offer birds, who chatter constantly, to atone for his sin of chattering.
 4. 14:4 - The cedar is a lofty tree. It alludes to the fact that *tzara’at* comes as a punishment for haughtiness.
 5. 14:9 - Any visible collection of hair on the body.
 6. 14:10 - They require *n’sachim* (drink offerings).
 7. 14:11 - At the gate of Nikanor.
 8. 14:13 - On the northern side of the *mizbe’ach*.
 9. 14:34 - The Amorites concealed treasures in the walls of their houses. After the conquest of the Land, *tzara’at* would afflict these houses. The Jewish owner would tear down the house and find the treasures.
 10. 14:36 - It is *tahor*.
 11. 14:36 - They become *tamei*.
 12. 14:36 - Earthenware vessels.
 13. 14:40 - In places where *tahor* objects were not handled.
 14. a) 14:44-45 - It is called “*tzara’at mam’eret*,” and the house must be demolished; b) 14:48 - the house is pronounced *tahor*; c) 14:44 - The house must be demolished.
 15. 14:46 - When he remains in the house long enough to eat a small meal.
 16. 15:2 - a) He is *tamei*; b) he is *tamei* and is also required to bring a *korban*.
 17. 15:4-5 - Only a type of object that one usually lies or sits upon becomes a transmitter of *tumah* when a *zav* sits or lies on it. A *tahor* person who subsequently touches the object becomes *tamei* and the clothes he is wearing are also *tamei*. Therefore: a) *tamei*; b) *tahor*; c) *tamei*; d) *tahor*.
 18. 15:11 - One who has not immersed in a *mikveh*.
 19. 15:13 - After seven consecutive days without a flow.
 20. 15:32 - He is *tamei* until evening.
-

PARSHA Q&A

ACHREI

1. Why does the Torah emphasize that *Parshat Acharei Mot* was taught after the death of Aharon's sons?
2. What is the punishment for a *kohen gadol* who inappropriately enters the *kodesh kodashim*?
3. How long did the first *Beit Hamikdash* stand?
4. What did the *kohen gadol* wear when he entered the *kodesh kodashim*?
5. How many times did the *kohen gadol* change his clothing and immerse in the *mikveh* on Yom Kippur?
6. How many times did he wash his hands and feet from the *kiyor* (copper laver)?
7. The *kohen gadol* offered a bull *chatat* to atone for himself and his household. Who paid for it?
8. One of the goats that was chosen by lot went to *azazel*. What is *azazel*?
9. Who is included in the "household" of the *kohen gadol*?
10. For what sin does the goat *chatat* atone?
11. After the Yom Kippur service, what is done with the four linen garments worn by the *kohen gadol*?
12. Where were the fats of the *chatat* burned?
13. Who is solely responsible for attaining atonement for the Jewish People on Yom Kippur?
14. From one point in history, installation of the *kohen gadol* through anointing was no longer used but was conducted by donning the special garments of that office. From when and why?
15. What is the penalty of *karet*?
16. Which categories of animals must have their blood covered when they are slaughtered?
17. When a person eats a kosher bird that was improperly slaughtered (a *neveilah*), at what point does he contract *tumah*?
18. The Torah commands the Jewish People not to follow the *chukim* of the Canaanites. What are the forbidden "*chukim*"?
19. What is the difference between a *mishpat* and a *chok*?
20. May a man marry his wife's sister?

Answers to Achrei's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 16:1 - To strengthen the warning not to enter the *kodesh kodashim* except on Yom Kippur.
2. 16:2 - Death.
3. 16:3 - 410 years.
4. 16:4 - Only the four linen garments worn by an ordinary *kohen*.
5. 16:4 - Five times.
6. 16:4 - Ten times.
7. 16:6 - The *kohen gadol*.
8. 16:8 - A jagged cliff.
9. 16:11 - All the *kohanim*.
10. 16:16 - For unknowingly entering the *Beit Hamikdash* in the state of *tumah*.
11. 16:23 - They must be put into *geniza* and not be used again.
12. 16:25 - On the outer *mizbe'ach*.
13. 16:32 - The *kohen gadol*.
14. 16:32 - Anointing ceased during the kingship of YOSHIAHU. At that time, the oil of anointing was hidden away.
15. 17:9 - One's offspring die and one's own life is shortened.
16. 17:13 - Non-domesticated kosher animals and all species of kosher birds.
17. 17:15 - When the food enters the esophagus.
18. 18:3 - Their social customs.
19. 18:4 - A *mishpat* conforms to the human sense of justice. A *chok* is a law whose reason is not given to us and can only be understood as a decree from Hashem.
20. 18:18 - Yes, but not during the lifetime of his wife.

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PARSHA Q&A

KEDOSHIM

1. Why was *Parshat Kedoshim* said in front of all the Jewish People?
2. Why does the Torah mention the duty to honor one's father before it mentions the duty to honor one's mother?
3. Why is the command to fear one's parents followed by the command to keep Shabbat?
4. Why does Shabbat observance supersede honoring parents?
5. What is "*leket*?"
6. In *Shemot* 20:13, the Torah commands "Do not steal." What does the Torah add when it commands in *Vayikra* 19:11 "Do not steal?"
7. "Do not do wrong to your neighbor" (19:13). To what 'wrong' is the Torah referring?
8. By when must you pay someone who worked for you during the day?
9. How does Rashi explain the prohibition "Don't put a stumbling block before a sightless person?"
10. In a monetary case involving a poor person and a rich person, a judge is likely to wrongly favor the poor person. What rationale does Rashi give for this?
11. When rebuking someone, what sin must one be careful to avoid?
12. It's forbidden to bear a grudge. What example does Rashi give of this?
13. The Torah forbids tattooing. How is a tattoo made?
14. How does one fulfill the mitzvah of "*hadarta p'nei zaken*?"
15. What punishment will never come to the entire Jewish People?
16. What penalty does the Torah state for cursing one's parents?
17. When the Torah states a death penalty but doesn't define it precisely, to which penalty is it referring?
18. What will result if the Jewish People ignore the laws of forbidden relationships?
19. Which of the forbidden relationships listed in this week's *Parsha* were practiced by the Canaanites?
20. Is it proper for a Jew to say "I would enjoy eating ham?"

Answers to Kedoshim's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 19:2 - Because the fundamental teachings of the Torah are contained in this Parsha.
2. 19:3 - Since it is more natural to honor one's mother, the Torah stresses the obligation to honor one's father.
3. 19:3 - To teach that one must not violate Torah law even at the command of one's parents.
4. 19:3 - Because the parents are also commanded by G-d to observe Shabbat. Parents deserve great honor, but not at the 'expense' of G-d's honor.
5. 19:9 - "*Leket*" is one or two stalks of grain that are accidentally dropped while harvesting. They must be left for the poor.
6. 19:11 - The Torah in *Vayikra* prohibits monetary theft. In *Shemot* it prohibits kidnapping.
7. 19:13 - Withholding wages from a worker.
8. 19:13 - Before the following dawn.
9. 19:13 - Don't give improper advice to a person who is unaware in a matter. For example, don't advise someone to sell his field, when in reality you yourself wish to buy it and the sale is not beneficial to him.
10. 19:15 - The judge might think: "This rich person is obligated to give charity to this poor person regardless of the outcome of this court case. Therefore, I'll rule in favor of the poor person. That way, he'll receive the financial support he needs without feeling bad about taking charity."
11. 19:17 - Causing public embarrassment.
12. 19:18 - Person A asks person B: "Can I borrow your shovel?" Person B says: "No." The next day, B says to A: "Can I borrow your scythe?" A replies: "Sure, I'm not stingy like you are."
13. 19:28 - Ink is injected into the skin with a needle.
14. 19:32 - By not sitting in the designated seat of an elderly person, and by not contradicting his statement.
15. 20:3 - "*Karet*" — the entire Jewish People will never be "cut off."
16. 20:9 - Death by stoning.
17. 20:10 - *Chenek* (strangulation).
18. 20:22 - The Land of Israel will 'spit them out.'
19. 20:23 - All of them.
20. 20:26 - Yes.

PARSHA Overview

TZAV

The Torah addresses Aharon and his sons to teach them additional laws relating to their service. The ashes of the *korban olah* — the offering burnt on the altar throughout the night — are to be removed from the area by the *kohen* after he changes his special linen clothing. The *olah* is brought by someone who forgot to perform a positive commandment of the Torah. The *kohen* retains the skin. The fire on the altar must be kept constantly ablaze. The *korban mincha* is a meal offering of flour, oil and spices. A handful is burned on the altar and a *kohen* eats the remainder before it becomes leaven. The Parsha describes the special *korbanot* to be offered by the *Kohen Gadol* each day, and by Aharon's sons and future descendants on the day of their inauguration. The *chatat*, the *korban* brought after an accidental transgression, is described, as are the laws of slaughtering and sprinkling the blood of the *asham* guilt-*korban*. The details of *shelamim*, various peace *korbanot*, are described, including the prohibition against leaving uneaten until morning the remains of the *todah*, the thanks-*korban*. All sacrifices must be burned after they may no longer be eaten. No sacrifice may be eaten if it was slaughtered with the intention of eating it too late. Once they have become ritually impure, *korbanot* may not be eaten and should be burned. One may not eat a *korban* when he is ritually impure. Blood and *chelev*, forbidden animal fats, are prohibited to be eaten. Aharon and his sons are granted the breast and shank of every *korban shelamim*. The inauguration ceremony for Aharon, his sons, the Mishkan and all of its vessels is detailed.

SHEMINI

On the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan, Aharon, his sons, and the entire nation bring various *korbanot* (offerings) as commanded by Moshe. Aharon and Moshe bless the nation. G-d allows the Jewish People to sense His Presence after they complete the Mishkan. Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, innovate an offering not commanded by G-d. A fire comes from before G-d and consumes them, stressing the need to perform the commandments only as Moshe directs. Moshe consoles Aharon, who grieves in silence. Moshe directs the *kohanim* as to their behavior during the mourning period, and warns them that they must not drink intoxicating beverages before serving in the Mishkan. The Torah lists the two characteristics of a kosher animal: It has split hooves, and it chews, regurgitates, and re-chews its food. The Torah specifies by name those non-kosher animals which have only one of these two signs. A kosher fish has fins and easily removable scales. All birds not included in the list of forbidden families are permitted. The Torah forbids all types of insects except for four species of locusts. Details are given of the purification process after coming in contact with ritually-impure species. *Bnei Yisrael* are commanded to be separate and holy — like G-d.

TAZRIA

The Torah commands a woman to bring a *korban* after the birth of a child. A son is to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life. The Torah introduces the phenomenon of *tzara'at* (often mistranslated as leprosy) — a miraculous affliction that attacks people, clothing and buildings to awaken a person to spiritual failures. A *kohen* must be consulted to determine whether a particular mark is *tzara'at* or not. The *kohen* isolates the sufferer for a week. If the malady remains unchanged, confinement continues for a second week, after which the *kohen* decides the per-

son's status. The Torah describes the different forms of *tzara'at*. One whose *tzara'at* is confirmed wears torn clothing, does not cut his hair, and must alert others that he is ritually impure. He may not have normal contact with people. The phenomenon of *tzara'at* on clothing is described in detail.

METZORA

The Torah describes the procedure for a *metzora* (a person afflicted with *tzara'at*) upon conclusion of his isolation. This process extends for a week and involves *korbanot* and immersions in the *mikveh*. Then, a *kohen* must pronounce the *metzora* pure. A *metzora* of limited financial means may substitute lesser offerings for the more expensive animals. Before a *kohen* diagnoses that a house has *tzara'at*, household possessions are removed to prevent them from also being declared ritually impure. The *tzara'at* is removed by smashing and rebuilding that section of the house. If it reappears, the entire building must be razed. The Torah details those bodily secretions that render a person spiritually impure, thereby preventing his contact with holy items, and the Torah defines how one regains a state of ritual purity.

ACHREI

G-d instructs the *kohanim* to exercise extreme care when they enter the *Mishkan*. On Yom Kippur, the *kohen gadol* is to approach the holiest part of the *Mishkan* after special preparations and wearing special clothing. He brings offerings unique to Yom Kippur, including two identical goats that are designated by lottery. One is "for G-d" and is offered in the Temple, while the other is "for Azazel" in the desert. The Torah states the individual's obligations on Yom Kippur: On the 10th day of the seventh month, one must afflict oneself. We abstain from eating and drinking, anointing, wearing leather footwear, washing, and marital relations. Consumption of blood is prohibited. The blood of slaughtered birds and undomesticated beasts must be covered. The people are warned against engaging in the wicked practices that were common in Egypt. Incest is defined and prohibited. Marital relations are forbidden during a woman's monthly cycle. Homosexuality, bestiality and child sacrifice are prohibited.

KEDOSHIM

The nation is enjoined to be holy. Many prohibitions and positive commandments are taught. *Prohibitions*: Idolatry; eating offerings after their time-limit; theft and robbery; denial of theft; false oaths; retention of someone's property; delaying payment to an employee; hating or cursing a fellow Jew (especially one's parents); gossip; placing physical and spiritual stumbling blocks; perversion of justice; inaction when others are in danger; embarrassing others; taking revenge; bearing a grudge; cross-breeding; wearing a garment of wool and linen; harvesting a tree during its first three years; gluttony and intoxication; witchcraft; shaving the beard and sideburns; tattooing. *Positive*: Awe for parents and respect for the elderly; leaving part of the harvest for the poor; loving others (especially a convert); eating in Jerusalem the fruits from a tree's fourth year; awe for the Temple; respect for Torah scholars, the blind and the deaf. Family life must be holy. We are warned again not to imitate gentile behavior, lest we lose the Land of Israel. We must observe *kashrut*, thus maintaining our unique and separate status.

THE Coca-Cola Kashrut Controversy

BY RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

Ah! The cool refreshing taste of the “Real Thing”! Is there anything (besides maybe baseball and apple pie) that is considered more American? Everyone also knows that around the world there is almost nothing more kosher than good, old-fashioned Coke. Why, you can even ask Grandma, that back in the day (before mp3s, microwaves and dishwashers), it was “Always Coca-Cola”, as it was THE drink of choice for all, even the strict kosher consumer.

However, it wasn't always that way. We all have a certain person to thank for that, Rabbi Tuvia (Tobias) Geffen, Chief Rabbi of Atlanta, Georgia for many decades. He was one of the select few who actually knew the closely guarded secret ingredient in Coke. Back in the 1930's, Coke was looking to expand their market share, when it came to their attention that if they received a *hashgacha* (kosher certification), then many more Jews (and others who look specifically for kosher products) would drink freely of the “pause that refreshes”.

So the directors approached the most-likely candidate to grant Rabbinic supervision, Rabbi Geffen. Coke was, after all, invented and headquartered in Atlanta. He was more than willing to check it out, as many of his congregants were asking him about the kosher status of Coke.

His findings were mixed, for although technically the drink was kosher and was permitted to be drunk, it was questionable if he was allowed to give it his seal of approval to allow observant Jews to purchase it. The reasons were that it turned out that there was a non-kosher ingredient in the makeup of Coke, but it was only present in minute quantities. Therefore, it would be permitted to drink, for the non-kosher ingredient was *battel b'shishim* (meaning *there was present at least 60 times the amount of kosher against the non-kosher*¹), and was, for all intents and purpose, considered nullified according to Jewish Law.

However, for him to grant Coke *hashgacha*, posed a different problem in a different category, that of “*Ain Mevatelin Issur Lchatchila*, or that one may not purposefully nullify a non-kosher ingredient”.² This means that if the non-kosher substance would accidentally fall into kosher food (as long as there was the prerequisite sixty times the amount of non-kosher that fell in) it would be permitted to drink. Nonetheless, if one would add it on purpose with the express intention of nullifying it, the *halacha* is that the entire mixture becomes forbidden for the person who transgressed and for whomever he intended to benefit.

The issue at stake here was that the Coca-Cola Company was obviously putting this non-kosher ingredient in the batch purposefully, as it was part and parcel of the Coke everyone knew and loved.

On the other hand, it was not just a simple open and shut question, for the Coca-Cola Company was not owned or run

by Jews, and quite obviously was not marketing Coke exclusively for Jews.

Therefore, Rabbi Geffen was in a bit of a dilemma: did this situation fall under the category of “*Ain Mevatelin Issur Lchatchila*” and therefore be unacceptable for purchase by the kosher consumer? And, even if it did not, and was permissible for purchase, was he allowed to give his *hashgacha*, or Rabbinic approval, on a product that contained a non-kosher ingredient?

Before we get to the punch line, let us explore the Halachic issues involved.

There are various schools of thought among the Halachic authorities as per the status of a non-Jew's nullification.

Some Halachic authorities make a distinction between a scenario where a non-Jew nullifies non-kosher, where a Jew is allowed to eat of the mixture; as opposed to where a non-Jew is *selling* non-kosher, where they maintain that it is forbidden for a Jew to purchase. They reason that when a Jew is purchasing the item from the non-Jew, it is as if *he himself* nullified it, and therefore it becomes forbidden for him to eat.

Many authorities, however, disagree with this reasoning and conclude that it is improbable to make such a distinction. They maintain that it is acceptable to procure items that contain nullified non-kosher ingredients in its makeup, providing that the nullification itself was done by a non-Jew. The reason for this is that for a non-Jew, it was never forbidden to actively nullify it. As such, the item is not restricted by or beholden to the laws of “*Ain Mevatelin Issur*” and therefore is suitable for purchase.

However, this matter is even more complicated, for yet other authorities further qualify this permissible ruling. They maintain that although one may rely upon a non-Jew's occasional nullification for purchase, conversely, if the non-Jew is doing it for his job, or on a frequent basis, then certainly it is considered as if the Jew himself nullified it. Following this ruling would seem to imply that Coke would have to be prohibited to the kosher consumer, as it is definitely mass-produced.

So, now with us being the wiser, having a rudimentary understanding of the issues involved, what did Rabbi Geffen decide to do? Feeling uncomfortable by having to make such a decision, where *Gedolim* through the ages have taken stands on both sides of the matter, he did the only thing he felt he could do – he went to Coca-Cola and *asked them to change their formula!* Surprisingly, out of respect to him, the executives listened and the company removed the problematic ingredients from the formula, and substituted them with kosher alternatives, thus making the soft drink kosher for everyone, proving that “things”, especially *kashrut*, “go better with Coca-Cola”.

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What's the Right Thing to Do?

Bilingual Seder

Question: I am expecting guests for my Pesach Seder whose knowledge of Hebrew is practically non-existent. Conducting it entirely in English will be unfair to my Hebrew-speaking children. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The need to translate the Haggadah into another language is already mentioned in our halachic sources. (See *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 473:6 where Rema mentions that one of the early commentaries, Rabbi Yitzchak of London, translated the entire Haggadah for his wife and children.)

Many families in Israel share your problem because their children understand only Hebrew while their guests understand only English.

The right thing to do is to say the Haggadah in its original Hebrew and supply your guests with an English translation to read while you are doing so. You can cite any additional commentaries, rotating between Hebrew and English so that everyone feels they are taking part.

It might also be a good idea to supply your guests with a transliterated version of popular songs like *Dayeinu* so that they can sing together with everyone else in the same language.

The HUMAN SIDE of the Story

The Missing Pesach Silver

In the little Lithuanian town of Vabolinikas there lived a saintly woman by the name of Batsheva Shach. Her charitable deeds were legendary. Despite her own limited means she would deliver baskets of food at the doors of poor families in town and quickly depart before anyone became aware of her good deed.

Her charitable activities reached their peak when the need arose to provide funds for the wedding of an orphaned girl. As she racked her brain for some way to help the poor *kallah*, her eyes fell upon the closed cabinet containing silver vessels that her husband had given her as an outright gift. These were pre-

cious vessels that were used only on Pesach and she was sentimentally attached to them. Without even informing her husband she opened the cabinet and delivered the vessels into the hands of the trustees collecting for the wedding.

When Pesach came and her husband opened the cabinet in order to decorate the Seder table, he asked his wife where the vessels were. Her reply was that those vessels helped establish a Jewish home.

This was the woman whose son, Rabbi Eliezer Shach, was destined to become a leader of world Jewry.

The Coca Cola Kashrut Controversy *continued from page fifteen*

Rabbi Geffen later published the whole account, as well as the *Halachic* reasoning behind his actions, in his responsa.³ Later *Halachic* authorities as well, ruled similarly to Rabbi Geffen's sound logic and reasoning, and rule that although there is what to rely upon when it comes to buying, nevertheless, when it comes to granting *hashgacha*, a Rabbinic authority should not give a seal of approval to an item that has nullified non-kosher ingredients inside.

So the next time you partake in a nice, cool, refreshing glass of Coke, you should think of Rabbi Geffen, as well as all the "behind the scenes *kashrut* issues" that went into making sure that "Coke is it", even for the kosher consumer.

Postscript: There is actually more to the story. Another ingredient inside the Coke was *chametz*, and the laws of nullification do not apply to *chametz* on *Pesach*, and therefore

the Coke was not kosher for Passover. At Rabbi Geffen's behest, this ingredient was also substituted for a kosher for Passover alternative. In fact, Coca-Cola was considered kosher for Pesach until the "New Coke" debacle in the 1980's. When the company reinstated the "Original Coca-Cola Classic", there was one minor change in the formula. Cane sugar was replaced with a cheaper alternative: high-fructose corn syrup. The one *kashrut* concern with this is that it is *kitnyot*, which Ashkenazim do not consume on Pesach. That is why Coca-Cola and other soft drinks require specific Passover supervision. There are numerous die-hard Original Coke aficionados who drive many miles during the Passover shopping season to major metropolitan areas with a large Jewish concentration, just to purchase "the Coke with the yellow bottle cap". For these fans, if it's not the Passover Coke, it's just not the "Real Thing".

1. This is the standard rule of nullification in *halacha*, that if there is present (in the kosher ingredients) 60 times the amount of non-kosher, then the non-kosher ingredients are considered nullified. See *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah* 98.

2. See *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah* 99, 5.

3. *Shu"t* Karnei Hahod (vol. 2, last chapter in the *sefer* - B'davar Hamashkeh HaCoca-Cola). This *teshuva* has also been translated to English and can be found on the Hebrew Books website – <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/2227>.

4. This article was written in honor of my brother-in-law, Ezra Carter, who, as a native Atlantan, was the impetus for my interest and research on this topic.