

OHR NET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

Four More QUESTIONS

Rabbi Nota Schiller

For significant numbers of non-traditional Jews, the Pesach Seder is their last connection to ritual. Jews who build no succah, who don't know when Shavuot is, faithfully assemble year after year to eat matzah and tell about the going out of Egypt.

Mrs. S., an eighty-year-old woman from Ann Arbor, Michigan told me that one year at her Pesach Seder she had forgotten the "shank bone" that traditionally goes on the symbolic Seder Plate, and her grandson went over to her refrigerator, took out a pork chop, and placed it on the Seder Plate.

Even at this home, however contradictory, some confused semblance of Pesach ritual stubbornly persists more. More than with other traditions, some mysterious spiritual energy emanating from Pesach cuts deeper and longer into the collective Jewish conscience. Why?

Another question: The dominant recurring number in the Haggadah is four: We drink four cups of wine, we ask the "Four Questions," we tell of the "Four Sons." What is the connection between Pesach and the number four?

King Solomon says in Proverbs "Listen, my son, to

your father's ethic, and do not abandon the law of your mother." Without an investment of focused effort one does not acquire the ethic of one's father. Hence the phrasing, "Listen to the ethic of your father." The "father's ethic" is encountered externally, like a voice. It must be engaged, admitted, and assimilated. Only then to be internalized.

"The law of your mother," on the other hand, is axiomatic. Innate, coming with the territory of being born Jewish, it functions intuitively. Hence the negative phrasing, "Don't *abandon* the law of your mother." Every Jew is imbued with this given intuition; to abandon it requires an active rejection. When passive, it lingers at least subliminally.

This "law of your mother" can be described as minimal Jewishness. The Hebrew word "Uma" — nation — is from the same root as "Ima" — mother. Jewishness (apart from conversion) is established by having a Jewish mother, the *given* of one's being.

Whereas "listening to the ethic of one's father" is presented to us as choice, with accountability; an act of freewill, at times realized and at times not.

Under the yoke of Egyptian slavery, only an elite core of Jews exercised this option, listening to "the ethic of your father." For the rank and file, the vast number of Jews, there remained only some vestiges of Jewish identity. Minimal Jewishness, the "law of one's mother," the matriarchal mode.

Yet, this very "minimal Jewishness" was the pivot upon which the salvation would swing. That residual lingering consciousness sufficed to connect to the heritage and redemption. Without this minimum Jewishness, the floodgates of total assimilation would have burst open.

Providential guidance determined that history take another course. In Egypt, minimal Jewish identity



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Stealing *for the Next Generation*

Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky

There is a beautiful custom that takes place every Passover at the Seder. After *kiddush*, the father breaks the middle matzah of the three matzahs placed before him and hides it away till the end of the Seder. It is the *afikomen*, the final food eaten at the Seder. *Afikomen* is apparently related to the Greek word for "dessert," and it's a real pleasure to watch the happy contented faces of the Seder participants munching away at still another piece of matzah. Some people observe it's even tastier this year than usual. They are eating the cardboard box.

But as all the youngsters know, before you can reach that exciting conclusion to the Seder, you first have to *get* the *afikomen*. The children, as you know, are encouraged

to steal the *afikomen* and hold it hostage, refusing to return it until you promise to buy them the gift of their dreams.

Now, far be it from me to be the grinch that stole Passover, but does it make sense to encourage our children to steal, blackmail and extort money from us? Granted, once they get married they'll be

doing it on a regular basis, but do we need to instill it in them as a value at a religious ceremony?

There are those who suggest it's just a harmless game designed to maintain the children's interest in the Seder so they don't drift off. In that case, there should be something there for the average adult as well. But as far as the children are concerned, why not do

what we always do? Tell them if they sit quietly they'll get a prize. Offer them a chance to answer questions about what we read.

But thievery and extortion? Isn't that taking educational aids a little too far? Although perhaps seeing what's going on in the American school system, this might be a good way to prepare them. But I digress.

The truth is, I think there's a tremendous lesson to learn from the custom of stealing the *afikomen*. Let's take a quick look at the Seder. The *kiddush* is followed by a series of unusual activities. We dip a vegetable in salt water, we uncover the *matzos*, we re-cover the *matzos*, we remove the Seder plate, we refill the wine cups. Busy as beavers, we are. Finally we get down to business and one of the children recites "*Ma Nishtana* — the Four Questions." When the child finishes, he is returned to his seat at the table where, between plotting his *afikomen* caper, he throws things at his brother and annoys his sister.

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The printed version of OHRNET has been serving you for close to four years. Each week 4,000 copies are printed and distributed to communities throughout Israel. Unfortunately, due to budgetary pressures we cannot continue to print OHRNET.

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Interlaced

“And raise up the ash...” (6:3)

At first sight, some things in Judaism look pretty weird. I remember someone who wasn't religious discovering the *halacha* that you have to tie your left shoe before your right. He said to me “I really can't believe that G-d cares which shoe I tie first.”

I could have explained to him that we tie the left shoelace first as a gesture of respect to the leather strap of the *tefillin* which is worn on the left arm. However, I realized that what was bothering him was something more fundamental.

Those of us born in the West grew up in a world where religion is a weekend activity. The main role of the clergy is, at best, to “hatch, match, and dispatch.” Religion is compartmentalized, and so is G-d. To the Western mind, if there be a G-d, He is limited to guest appearances on weekends. Any further intrusion into our lives is considered extremely irksome.

In 1898, Lord Melbourne remarked on hearing an evangelical sermon: “*Things have come to a pretty pass when religion is allowed to invade the sphere of private life.*”

To the Jew, however, Judaism is not a leisure activity. It is not an aspect of life. It is life.

The Jew sees every activity as an opportunity to come closer to G-d.

What we eat. What we think. What we say. What we do. What we don't do. Nothing in this world is devoid of the potential for spirituality. Nothing is neutral.

If the purpose of creation is for us to recognize G-d, then everything must have been created to that end. The alternative would be that there are vast areas of this world which have no part in G-d's purpose, and that would be accusing the Master of the world of extreme sloppiness.

In the above verse, the Hebrew word for ash is *deshen*. *Deshen* can be read as an acronym for *davar shelo nechshav* — “something without importance.” When the Torah says, “and raise up the ash,” it is telling us to take everything, even those things that seem to us like ash, insignificant and valueless, and place them next to the altar. To raise up the little thought of parts of our lives and to use them to serve G-d. For there is nothing in this world which cannot be used to serve Him. Even the humblest shoelace.

Scaling Peaks

“He shall separate the ash of what the fire consumed...and place it next to the altar” (6:3)

If you'd spent many years learning to play the piano, you'd be pretty disappointed if you woke up one morning and found it a struggle to play *Chopsticks*. If you'd made a million dollars and put it in the bank,

you'd be pretty upset if the next day it had vanished into thin air.

Physical achievements tend not to vanish overnight. However, when it comes to our spiritual achievements, every day we start from scratch. We can't assume that yesterday's spiritual triumphs will protect us from today's challenges. Every day there is another spiritual Everest to climb.

Sounds like hard work, doesn't it? It is.

But there is one consolation. Even though we face anew our spiritual challenges every day, we are not the same person we were yesterday. Through rising to yesterday's spiritual challenges, we have become a different being. And we go out to scale those spiritual peaks, not as who we were yesterday morning, but as a new person.

We can see this idea in the beginning of this week's Parsha: Every day the *kohen* would remove the ash of the daily offering and place it at the base of the altar. Miraculously, the ash would be swallowed by the ground around the base of the altar. Thus, the daily offering was a different offering every day, but its ashes, the evidence of yesterday's service, became part and parcel of the altar on which that service was performed.

Sources:

Interlaced - Admor Rabbi Tzvi HaKohen MiRimanov in *Iturei Torah*

Scaling Peaks - Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch, Rabbi Mordechai Perlmán

PARSHA Overview

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 takes off 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 *korbanos* offered by the *kohen gadol* each day, and by Aharon's sons and future descendants on the day of their inauguration. The *chatas*, 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 *korbanos*, 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, *korbanos* 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.

WEEKLY Daf

Yoma 79 - 85

A Different Choice

To save a life, we must violate Shabbos or any of the Torah's *mitzvos*, except for the three sins of idol worship, sexual immorality and murder. This rule is stated in this week's *gemara* section.

If a life-threatening illness requires a person to eat, he is fed even on Yom Kippur; if no kosher food is available, he is fed non-kosher food. If different categories of forbidden food are available, we must choose that category which has the least severe degree of prohibition. Where there is the meat of a *neveilah* (a kosher species which died without proper *shechita*), it should be offered rather than untithed produce. This is because the punishment for eating *neveilah* is only lashes, while eating untithed produce carries the punishment of premature death.

The *gemara* continues with other such examples, explaining how to decide, on the basis of lesser gravity, which of two categories of forbidden food should be given to save a life.

An interesting problem arises based on a *gemara* on the flip side of this page. The *gemara* declares that the failure of a Jew to wash his hands before eating bread led to his eating swine meat. Rashi (*Mesechta Chullin 106a*) explains this: There was once a Jewish restaurant owner who used to serve kosher meat to his Jewish customers and non-kosher meat to his non-Jewish ones. A client whom he did not know entered his restaurant and did not wash his hands before eating bread. Thus, the owner assumed he was not Jewish and served him non-kosher meat.

What kind of non-kosher meat did he serve him? Our *gemara* mentions swine meat, but in *Mesechta Chullin* there is a difference of opinion. Rabbi Dimi says it was swine meat; the Sage Ravin states that it was *neveilah*.

What difference does it make whether he ate swine or *neveilah*, since both are forbidden? Rashi there points out that eating swine meat is a more serious sin than eating *neveilah*, because he not only violates a negative command but transgresses a positive command as well. That is, he violates the prohibition against eating swine, plus he transgresses the positive command to eat only animals which have split hooves and chew their cud.

It should therefore follow that if, in a life-threatening situation, there be a choice between *neveilah* and swine, *neveilah* is preferred. This example is, however, not mentioned either in the *gemara* or in *Shulchan Aruch*. (Comments are invited.)

• Yoma 83a/b

Soul Food

Included in the cases of life-saving taking precedence over the laws of Yom Kippur is that of an expectant mother whose unborn child smells food. If the resulting desire to taste that food is not satisfied, the lives of both mother and child are in danger. The *mishna* therefore tells us that she must be given to eat from that food until she recovers.

The Sages nevertheless attempted to satisfy the hunger of such a woman without violating the ban of eating on Yom Kippur. Two incidents are recounted by the *gemara*.

When such a case came before Rebbi (Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi) he instructed his disciples to whisper to the expectant mother that "Today is Yom Kippur." This was done and the unborn child's hunger ceased. Rebbi then quoted this passage regarding that child: "Before I formed you in the belly, I knew you, and before you went forth from the womb I sanctified you." (*Yirmiyahu 1:5*) That child grew up to be the great sage Rabbi Yochanan.

A similar incident with a different result involved Rabbi Chanina. He gave the same instructions as did Rebbi but the unborn child did not respond until his mother was actually fed. Rabbi Chanina quoted the words of King David in regard to this child: "The wicked are estranged (from Hashem) in the belly." (*Tehillim 58:4*) The child turned out to be a notorious grain hoarder by the name of Shabtai.

The sense of smell, explains Maharsha, is a spiritual one, as the *gemara* says (*Berachos 43b*): "What is it that the soul derives pleasure from but not the body? Fragrance!" The sense of taste, on the contrary, is a physical one. This is why smelling fragrances is permitted on Yom Kippur while tasting food is forbidden. For Yom Kippur is a microcosm of the World to Come in which there is no eating or drinking.

This unborn child whose hunger was satisfied by the soulful experience of merely smelling food, a pleasure permitted on Yom Kippur, turned out to be the great man of soul, Rabbi Yochanan. The other child whose hunger could not be satisfied with smell alone, but rather required the physical experience of eating which is forbidden on Yom Kippur, was destined to be a coarse individual with a material appetite for monetary gain at the expense of others.

• Yoma 82b

The Ohr Somayach family wishes you a Chag Kasher v'Somayach.

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חג כשר ושמח

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 removed from next to 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 *minchas kohen* and a *minchas Yisrael*?
8. When is a *kohen* disqualified from eating from a *chatas*?
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 *korbanos*?
12. Unlike all other *korbanos*, 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 *korbanos* listed in this *Parsha*?

Answers to this Week'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 minchah* – 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 *minchas kohen* is burnt completely. Only a handful of the *minchas 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 sacrifice); An *onan* (a mourner prior to the burial of the deceased).
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 (and 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); *minchah* (6:7); *chatas* (6:18); *asham* (7:1); *shelamim* (7:11).

I Didn't Know That

“Their portion shall not be baked as chametz...” (6:10)

By eating the flour offering, the *kohen* brings atonement to the owner of the offering. Therefore, the *kohen's* portion requires the same restrictions as the portion brought upon the altar itself; i.e., it may not be *chametz*.

• Abarbanel

Recommended Reading List

| RAMBAN | | | | SEFER HACHINUCH | |
|--------|----------------------------------|------|--|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 6:7 | <i>Minchah</i> Laws | 8:1 | Chronology of <i>Mishkan</i> Chapters | 132 | Hiding the Miracle |
| 6:18 | <i>Korbanos</i> | 8:7 | Garments of the <i>Kohanim</i> | 136 | The <i>Kohen Gadol's</i> Offering |
| 7:8 | Hides of <i>Korbanos</i> | 8:11 | Solution to Rashi's Source | 143 | Dignity and Trust |
| 7:14 | Leavening in <i>Korban Todah</i> | 8:22 | Role of Different <i>Korbanos</i> in <i>Miluim</i> | 144 | The Benefits of <i>Kashrus</i> |

ASK the RABBI

Kosher for Passover Roommate

Zippy Abramson from Nashville, TN <untitledpr@hotmail.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
My city has a small Jewish population, which means it's highly unlikely I'll find a Jewish roommate who also keeps kosher. I think I've figured out how to make the kosher kitchen work (though I'm always open to suggestions from people who have been in my place before), but what do I do about Passover? Is it enough to ask one's roommate to keep her chametz on her side of the kitchen, contained in a receptacle?

Dear Zippy Abramson,

If you must room with a non-observant roommate, the ideal would be to talk to her about the possibility of keeping kosher while in the apartment. You'd be surprised to find how many Jews are actually willing to keep kosher if merely presented with the idea. At the very least the apartment should be kept kosher for the eight days of Passover. It shouldn't be too hard to find a Jewish roommate willing to make this compromise; because most Jews anyway observe Passover in some form or another. (And besides, I wonder: Would you want to room with someone not willing to compromise for one week?)

However, Jewish law does not recommend sharing a kosher kitchen with someone who does not keep kosher. For one, there's the question of the person's knowledge of the kashrut laws. Second, when push comes to shove, how reliable can we assume a person to be if they themselves don't fully subscribe to the idea of keeping kosher? If she's cooked all day for the dinner-party you two are planning for a bunch of friends, and 10 minutes before the guests arrive, she realizes she's cooked all the meat in dairy pans, will she tell you? Or will she think, "Is it really such a big deal if just this once the meat was cooked in dairy pans? I mean, the pans were totally clean, and

what Zippy doesn't know won't hurt her."

Such kashrut mistakes are quite common, so you need a kitchen partner whom you know you can rely on 100 per cent of the time to inform you if something's gone wrong.

For further reading, see the book "After the Return" by Rabbi Mordechai Becher and Rabbi Moshe Newman, Feldheim Publishers.

Seek and Destroy

Yehuda (Joel P.) Wiesen, Ph.D. from Newton, MA <Wiesen@personnelselection.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I have a quiz for you: What mitzvah do you do just once a year but do not say shehechianu? Well, one answer is destroying our chametz (leavened food) the day before Pesach. My question is: Why don't we say shehechianu on the mitzvah of destroying our chametz?

Dear Yehuda,

Good question. *Shehechianu* is the blessing we say upon experiencing the joy of reaching a new season in life. For example, we say *shehechianu* when eating a new fruit, putting on a brand-new suit, and when doing a mitzvah that comes around once a year.

So why don't we say *shehechianu* on the once-a-year mitzvah of destroying our *chametz*? Because, although we feel the joy of performing a mitzvah, we are also aware of the fact that we are engaged in an act of destruction.

Another explanation is simply that there is no need to say *shehechianu* at the time of destroying our *chametz*, because we rely on the *shehechianu* blessing that we say at the Pesach Seder.

Sources:
• *Ta'amei Haminhagim* 487-8

Middle Riddle

Neil Reznik from Valley Forge, PA <nreznik@ccp.cc.pa.us> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Why is the *afikomen* taken from the

middle matzah during the Seder rather than from the top or bottom matzah?

Dear Neil Reznik,

On the first night of Pesach, we say two blessings over the matzahs.

The first blessing, *hamotzi*, is the usual blessing we say when eating bread. Since this blessing is always best to say on a whole "loaf," we therefore put an unbroken matzah on top of the stack.

The second blessing, *asher kideshanu*, is the special blessing we say for the commandment to eat matzah on this night. This blessing applies especially to the broken matzah, because this matzah symbolizes our broken, impoverished state as slaves in Egypt. Since this blessing is second, the broken matzah is second in the stack.

The third matzah is just there to complete the idea of *lechem mishneh*, which means that on Shabbat and festivals we use two whole loaves instead of just one, so it goes on the bottom. According to widespread custom, this bottom matzah is let slip from the hands before the second blessing is said. (According to some, no third matzah is used at all.)

Sources:
• *Mishnah Berurah* 473:57, 475:2

What Four?

Ron Sadoski from Fort Smith, AK <r.sadoski@data-tronics.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Please tell me the meaning of each of the cups that are used during the Seder meal. I know they have a meaning but I cannot find a good answer to satisfy my inquiry.

Dear Ron Sadoski,

The Torah uses four expressions to describe our redemption from Egypt: G-d said to the Jews in Egypt (*Exodus* 6:6-8):

- "I will take you out from under Egypt's burdens — *Vehotzeiti*"
- "And I will save you from their servitude — *Vehitzalti*"

ASK the RABBI

- “And I will redeem you — *Vega’alti*”
- “And I will take you as My nation — *Velakachti*”

We didn’t go from a slave nation to being the Chosen People at Mount Sinai overnight. There were different stages of redemption. The above phrases described these different stages. Each cup of wine represents one of these levels.

There’s actually a fifth expression of redemption, “*Veheveiti*” (and I will bring you into the Land of Israel). This is seen as a reference to the future redemption, to be announced by Elijah the Prophet, when G-d will gather the Jews from the “four corners of the earth” and return them to their Land. This level of redemption is represented by the fifth cup, called “Elijah’s cup,” which we pour but we do not drink.

Mystical Waves

Deb Wiener

<Debisabel@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Hi, Rabbi, and Happy Pesach. I’m aware of a cassette Ohr Somayach offers called “*The Parting of the Waves: Moses and the Red Sea — The mystical meaning of the splitting of the Red Sea,*” by Rabbi Mordechai Becher. I’m fascinated and would like to find out about this. Thanks for any help you can give me.

Dear Deb Wiener,

Here’s a brief idea from the class. The world contains “form” and “mat-

ter.” Matter is pure material that is not formed into a shape and has no purpose as yet. Form is the goal, purpose and shape that is given to matter. Water symbolizes matter, because it has no form and takes on the shape of whatever vessel it’s placed in. On a symbolic, mystical level, by splitting the waters of the Red Sea, Moshe showed that no matter or material force can stand in the way of the Jewish people’s “form” or destiny.

To find out how to order this or other tapes, please check out www.ohr.org.il/tape/tapeidx.htm on the Ohr Somayach Interactive Website.

Brewer’s Yeast

Eliyahu Shiffman

<sarashl@netvision.net.il> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I like to keep my sale of chametz to a non-Jew on Pesach to a minimum, so we’re already timing carefully our purchase of foods that contain chametz that we buy in bulk. My question: We buy dog food in big sacks, and I’ve checked the ingredients for chametz. The only suspect ingredient is “brewer’s yeast.” Since I understand that not only can I not eat chametz, but neither can my dog, can you tell me if brewer’s yeast is chametz?

Dear Eliyahu Shiffman,

A kashrut expert told me that nearly all brewer’s yeast is made from beer production and is *chametz*.

The reason you can’t give your dog

chametz on Pesach is that you are not allowed to own *chametz*, or to derive benefit from it.

Order a Plate

Joshua Tree <Hawkjoe@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Almost every Seder Plate I’ve ever seen arranges the six items in a circle, in a specific order that seems to be nobody’s *minhag* (custom). I’ve asked Rabbis and looked at various Haggadahs and nobody seems to have the *minhag* to arrange them the way all the plates are made, not Sephardim, not Ashkanazim, not Litvaks and not Chassidim. How come?

Dear Joshua Tree,

Funny you should ask. Just the other day I went to a *mikveh* to immerse a new vessel, and I bumped into a friend who was immersing a Seder Plate he had just bought in Jerusalem’s Meah Shearim neighborhood. His Seder Plate was engraved in Hebrew letters with the name of each item and its place on the plate. With a wry grin, my friend showed me the message printed on the back of the box that his Seder Plate came in: “Made in China!”

Anyway, there are three major customs regarding the placement of the items on the Seder Plate. My friend’s Seder Plate correctly followed one of them, the custom of the Arizal.

Perhaps the plates you’ve seen were made by artists with an eye more for aesthetics than tradition.

YIDDLE RIDDLE

I have fulfilled a Rabbinical commandment when I was not yet commanded to fulfill a Torah commandment. Therefore, I can no longer fulfill the Torah commandment when I am commanded to fulfill it. How is this possible?

Answer: A minor who became an adult between Pesach and *Pesach Sheini* (a month later, Iyar 14). In such a case in the time when the Holy Temple stood, he is responsible for eating the *Pesach* offering on *Pesach Sheini*. But if he was included in the *Pesach* offering on Pesach itself (and thus fulfilled eating the *Pesach* offering only on a Rabbinical level), he is exempt from fulfilling it again on *Pesach Sheini* (even though it would now be a Torah commandment since he is an adult).

Source:

- Rambam, *Laws of Korban Pesach* 5:7
- Riddle courtesy of Mordechai Perlman

PARSHAS SHEMINI

The Right Man For The Job

“Moshe said to Aharon, ‘Come near the altar...’” (9:7)

Bungee-jumping, hang-gliding, free-fall parachuting, and riding over Niagara falls in a beer barrel all share one thing. You have to be absolutely *meshuga* to do them.

There’s a big difference between being *fearless* and being *foolhardy*.

However there are times when being afraid is an advantage. The Chafetz Chaim once decided that a particular student should take a vacant post as the Rabbi in a distant community. The student was reluctant to go. He told the Chafetz Chaim he was afraid of the responsibility of being the only halachic authority for a whole community. The Chafetz Chaim replied, “*Should I send someone who’s not afraid?*”

Sometimes being afraid doesn’t disqualify someone from being the right man or woman for the job. Sometimes it’s the essential quality.

Moshe had to tell Aharon, “*Come near the altar.*” Rashi tells us that Aharon was embarrassed and afraid to approach the altar. Moshe told him not to be afraid, for it was precisely Aharon’s quality of bashfulness which qualified him to be the *kohen gadol*.

When we want to draw close to G-d, to serve Him with more conviction

and faithfulness, we might feel embarrassed by our inadequacies, afraid and incapable of such a task. “Who am I to serve G-d?” we might think. It is precisely that quality of self-effacement, of fear, which is the prerequisite for being “the right man for the job.”

Seventh Heaven

“And it was on the eighth day...” (9:1)

When Moshe set up the *Mishkan* Sanctuary, he didn’t set it up just once; he set it up eight times. Every day, for seven days, Moshe set up the *Mishkan* and then took it down again. On the eighth day, he set it up and left it up.

Why was all this necessary?

Let’s answer this question with another one. Why did G-d create the world?

G-d created the world so that the *Shechina* — the Divine Presence — could dwell in it. When G-d first created the world, the Divine Presence rested on the Creation. However, Man, through his destructive spiritual actions, caused the *Shechina* to retreat bit by bit, until it ascended back to the Seventh Heaven. After the world had sunk to this spiritual nadir there came seven spiritual giants in seven generations who managed to bring the Divine Presence down again to this world: Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Levi, Kehas, Amram and Moshe.

With the giving of the Torah at Sinai, G-d finally “descended” once again to this world, as it says “And Hashem *came down* to Mount Sinai.” However, in all too short a time, the *Shechina* retreated back to the Seventh Heaven at the Jewish People’s infidelity regarding the Golden Calf.

The healing process of seven generations of *tzaddikim* and the concomitant return of the *Shechina* to this world was concretized in Moshe’s building the *Mishkan* for seven days. However, even after these seven days, which represented the seven generations, the cure was not total. A golden calf was still possible. It was only on the eighth day, when Moshe set up the *Mishkan* for the eighth time, that the final cure to these spiritual maladies took effect. And thus, the *Mishkan* could remain standing.

This is one of the reasons that the Talmud says, “*On the day the Mishkan was finally set up, Hashem had the same joy as on the day on which the Heavens and the Earth were created.*” For it was on that day that the purpose of this world, G-d’s “dwelling” in this world, was finally achieved.

Sources:

The Right Man For The Job - Degel Machane Ephraim, Rabbi Mordechai Perlman

Seventh Heaven - Chesed L’Avraham in *Turei Torah, Tractate Megilla 10*

PARSHA Overview

On the eighth day of the dedication of the *Mishkan*, Aharon, his sons, and the entire nation bring various *korbanos* (sacrifices) as commanded by Moshe. Aharon and Moshe bless the nation. Hashem allows the Jewish People to sense His Presence after they complete the *Mishkan* and draw closer to Him through their *mitzvos* there. Aharon’s sons, Nadav and Avihu, innovate an original offering that was not commanded by Hashem. A fire comes from before Hashem 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. The Jewish People are commanded to be separate, and holy – like Hashem.

remained; and the precariousness of that identity heightened the urgency for immediate exodus.

Why is the number four a dominant recurring theme in the Haggadah? The number four symbolizes the Matriarchs. Sara, Rivka, Rachel and Leah. This, "the matriarchal four," this "law of our Mothers" is what sustains us in exile.

Egypt would be a paradigm for all future exiles. Having built up sufficient antibodies to resist the malady of Egyptian exile, the Jewish nation could then survive all future exiles. The covenant guaranteeing Jewish continuity was made with the patriarchs. Yet, the *mechanism* by which the pact functions is the matriarchal mode. Wandering through the bleak valleys of disper-

sion, minimal Jewishness would be the bridge connecting to the next peak of mitzvah performance, to the next moment of "listening to the ethic of your Father."

Returning to our original question: Why does Pesach linger so much longer in the collective unconscious of even so-called secular Jews? Just as a given space has its special combination of topography, minerals and climate, so time has its own unique landscape. When the calendar rolls around to that *place* in time called Pesach, the mystical minerals of that spiritual lode can be mined. Returning to the "time-station" called Pesach, G-d reaches out to Israel just as He did that first Pesach. Every Jew feels, senses, a reactualization, a reawakening of the matriarchal root

core, of his personal, and our national, identity.

When describing the father's dialogue with the son "who does not know how to ask a question," the Haggadah directs us: "You begin for him." The word "you" here is written in the feminine "*ahit*." Here too, we see the matriarchal mode as the mechanism for maintaining minimal connection, even for the son who does not know enough to ask. That will bridge to the moment when the father can fulfill the mitzvah of "you shall tell it to your son." Ultimately, there will be that reunion of "listen my son to the ethic of your father, and do not abandon the Torah of your mother." The mitzvah of the Haggadah is just such a moment of reunion.

STEALING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION... continued from page two

Did anyone notice that while we were careful to make sure the child asks the four questions, no one seems to care if he gets any answers?

If you return to the original source of the customs that precede the reading of "*Ma Nishtana*," you find that they all have the same theme: To inspire the children to ask. The child sees the wine cup being refilled, and he thinks: "Hey! We don't make *kiddush* twice!" He sees the Seder plate being removed and thinks: "Is the Seder over already?" This inspires a child's curiosity until he wants to say: "Hey guys, why is this night different from all other nights?"

Unfortunately what happens most of the time is that we cover the matzahs, uncover the matzahs, remove the seder plate, fill the cups, and when the child's curiosity is stimulated he can count on receiving the same answer: "How in the world do I know why we're doing all these things? That's how your grandfather did it!"

A friend of mine once offered a case of beer to whoever gave the best answer to the following question: "Why?" Of course, most peo-

ple gave answers like "because" or "why not?" But the case of beer went to the person with the best answer: "Because that's how they did it in Europe."

It's sad that people can have a Passover Seder every year and never stop to think of all the "whys."

How do we make this night special from all other nights? Parents have a commandment one night a year to tell their children what's really important to them – why we are Jews, the traditions and beliefs of our ancestors, the meaning and miracle of Jewish survival. And the kids have a commandment to listen. Imagine! One night a year the kids have a mitzvah to ask us questions and actually have to listen to our answers. What an opportunity! But do we take advantage of it? Or do we give our children the same tired Seder performance that we did last year?

With all the preparations for Passover, all the cleaning and shopping and cooking — shouldn't we spend some time preparing our Seder? Thinking about what I want to tell my children. Maybe we should buy some of the excellent

classical commentaries on the Haggadah, most of which are now available in English, and study them. See if there is a fresh approach to the Seder that we want to share with our children. Something that will be meaningful and relevant as our children enter the twenty-first century. (Maybe the Y2K Haggadah?)

That, I believe, is the reason for the custom of stealing the *afikomen*. Our children just asked four questions; they deserve answers. Maybe they realize the only way they can get our attention is by stealing it. Maybe the wise men who instituted the custom wanted to remind us that we aren't going to finish the Seder without the children. "Mom, Dad, remember me? I want some answers. And if I have to blackmail you to remember that you have a kid, I'm prepared to do it."

We all struggle to make the Passover Seder meaningful for our guests and for ourselves. But be careful to remember that the next generation is sitting at your Seder table.

Have A Happy and a Kosher Passover.

WEEKLY Daf

Yoma 86 - Succah 12

When Opportunity Knocks

An incident involving the Sage Rav serves as an explanation of a *gemara* elsewhere: Rav had been insulted by a butcher in his community. He waited for the butcher to ask forgiveness on erev Yom Kippur, as is customary among Jews. When this fellow failed to show up, Rav took the initiative of going to his shop, certain that once the butcher saw him he would seize the opportunity to make amends. When Rav entered the shop, the butcher was in the midst of chopping an animal head into pieces. He looked up from his work, noticed Rav and cried out “Are you Abba (Rav’s name)? I want nothing to do with you!”

As he continued chopping, a bone flew off the table, struck him in the throat and killed him. This was Heavenly punishment for showing such disrespect for a great Torah scholar.

The *gemara* (*Rosh Hashana 16b*) tells us that three books are opened on Rosh Hashana. One is the record of the very wicked, another of the very righteous and a third of the in-between. The righteous are immediately inscribed and sealed for life. The very wicked are immediately inscribed and sealed for death. The fate of those in-between is left pending until Yom Kippur. If they merit, they are recorded for life; if not they are recorded for death.

The definition of an “in-between,” says the *gemara* (*Kiddushin 40a*), is one who has as an equal amount of merits for his good deeds as debits for his transgressions. One more mitzvah can tip the scales and win salvation for him, and sometimes for an entire world which is equally balanced. It should follow that one whose record is balanced on Rosh Hashana need only tip the scales on the credit-side before Yom Kippur in order to be consigned to life. Why then does Rambam (*Laws of Teshuva 3:3*) state that only if he does *teshuvah* — repents of his sins — does he gain a favorable verdict?

“Seek Hashem when He can be found,” urges the Prophet Yeshaya, “call Him when He is near.” (*Yeshaya 55*) And when, ask our Sages, is Hashem particularly near to us? “During the ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur,” answers Rabbi Abba ben Avuha. (*Rosh Hashana 18a*) When Hashem makes Himself so available for us to ask forgiveness and mend our ways, our failure to do so is a repetition of the disrespect shown by the butcher to Rav. This is so grave a transgression that a single mitzvah — and perhaps many more — cannot balance the scales of judgment against it. Shunning the opportunity to ask Divine forgiveness can only lead — like in the incident of Rav — to the gravest of consequences.

• Yoma 87a

Upwards and Sideways

A *succah* must have at least three walls. Certain laws were given at Sinai to Moshe, even though they were not recorded in the Torah, which allow us to stretch the definition of a wall. One of these is the concept of “*gud asik*” which enables us to see as reality an imaginary, upward extension of an existing wall.

Two examples of this are mentioned: 1) The *succah* has the required number of walls of the required minimum height. However, they do not reach up to the *schach* (roofing) which

is supported by tall poles. We therefore apply “*gud asik*” and view the walls as extending upward and reaching the *schach*. 2) Four poles are placed on the corners of a roof and upon them the *schach* is placed. There are no visible walls supporting the *schach*, but (according to one opinion) by applying “*gud asik*” we extend the walls of the house upward so that they form the necessary walls.

Both of these cases are cited in *Shulchan Aruch*. Regarding the first case, the halachic authorities point out that “*gud asik*” applies even if there is a sideways gap between the (imaginary) upward extension and the *schach*, provided this gap is less than three *tefachim* (handbreaths). This is made possible by applying another one of those aforementioned oral laws, called “*lavud*,” which allows us to view any gap of less than three *tefachim* as non-existent. (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 630:9*)

Regarding the second case, however, “*gud asik*” applies only if the poles in question are at the very edge of the roof. If they are not at the very edge, even if they are less than three *tefachim* away, we cannot “come to the rescue” with “*lavud*,” and such a *succah* is invalid. (See *Mishna Berura 630:31*)

What is the difference?

Perhaps the answer lies in the dispute between the Sages Abaya and Rava regarding a platform erected in the center of a *succah* whose *schach* is above the maximum height — 20 cubits — for a kosher *succah*. This platform has the length and width dimensions required for a *succah*, and its height from the floor eliminates the problem of the *schach* being too high above it. The only problem is that this platform standing in the middle of the *succah* and removed from the *succah* walls has no walls of its own. Abaya states that we may apply *gud asik* and extend the platform walls upward to form *succah* walls, to which Rava counters that a *succah* must have recognizable walls. His thesis is that only if there are recognizable walls can they be extended, but the sides of a platform which are totally unrecognizable as walls cannot. This principle can help us distinguish between “case one” above in which the walls are recognizable and only need extending, and “case two” in which there is no recognizable relationship between the house walls and the area on the roof even slightly removed from them.

• Succah 4b

The Stolen Succah

The Torah commands us: “You shall make a festival of Succos for yourself.” (*Devarim 16:13*) This phrase lends itself to different interpretations. Beis Shammai sees in it a requirement that in order to be valid, a *succah* must be built specifically for the purpose of fulfilling the mitzvah to dwell in a *succah*. Therefore, Beis Shammai disqualifies a *succah* built more than 30 days before the festival which was not built specifically for the mitzvah. Their interpretation of the passage is based on transposing the words to read “You shall make *succahs* for the (purpose of the) festival.” Also, in the final phrase “for yourself” they see a requirement that the *succah* be made “for fulfillment of your mitzvah.”

Beis Hillel, on the other hand, interprets “for yourself” as “of yourself,” disqualifying a *succah* which is not yours but

continued on page twelve

1. What date was "yom hashmini"?
2. Which of Aharon's *korbanos* atoned for the golden calf?
3. What *korbanos* did Aharon offer for the Jewish People?
4. What was unique about the *chatas* offered during the induction of the *Mishkan*?
5. When did Aharon bless the people with the *birkas 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 *chatas* goat offerings that were sacrificed on the day of the inauguration of the *Mishkan*.
11. Which he-goat *chatas* 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 *chatas*. Why?
14. Why did Hashem choose Moshe, Aharon, Elazar, and Isamar as His messengers to tell the Jewish People the laws of *kashrus*?
15. What are the signs of a kosher land animal?
16. How many non-kosher animals display only *one* sign of *kashrus*? 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 this Week'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 chatas*.
3. 9:3,4 - A he-goat as a *chatas*, a calf and a lamb for an *olah*, an ox and a ram for *shelamim*, and a *minchah*.
4. 9:11 - It's the only example of a *chatas* offered on the courtyard *mizbe'ach* that was burned.
5. 9:22 - When he finished offering the *korbanos*, 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 chatas*: Either because it became *tamei*, or because the *kohanim* were forbidden to eat from it while in the state of *aninus* (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 *chatas* 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 regarding food.
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).

I Didn't Know That

"Moshe asked: 'Why didn't you eat the sin offering?' Aharon answered: 'Were I to have eaten this day's sin offering, would Hashem approve?' Moshe heard and he approved." (10:17-20)

Our Sages explain that the above exchange between Moshe and Aharon was actually a halachic dialogue regarding the question: Was Aharon, while mourning for his yet unburied sons, allowed to eat from the special inaugural offerings?

This is the first place in the Torah text where we find the classic exercise of *Torah Sheba'al Peh*, the Oral Law, in which reasoning is used to ascertain the halacha.

• Rabbi Tzaddok Hakohen

Recommended Reading List

| | RAMBAN | | SEFER HACHINUCH |
|-------|---|-----|--------------------------------|
| 9:17 | Relation of <i>Miluim</i> and <i>Shemini Korbanos</i> to <i>Tamid</i> | 149 | Dignity in the House of Hashem |
| 10:15 | Heaving and Waving | 150 | Respect for the Service |

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

Gilgal - The First Korban Pesach in the Land We Love

Although you will find nothing on the map or in geography books about this place, it was the most important site in the first years of the Nation of Israel in *Eretz Yisrael*. Here is where the Israelites under Yehoshua camped after their miraculous crossing of the Jordan River, and here is where they placed the twelve large stones which they had removed from the river bed to serve as a remembrance for generations of that miracle. (*Yehoshua 4:20-24*)

The name Gilgal comes from the Hebrew word for “removing.” Gilgal became the name for this site because here is where Yehoshua carried out a mass circumcision for all those who had been born during the 40 years in the wilderness, whose climate



made such an operation too dangerous to life. “Today I have removed from you the shame of Egypt,” said Hashem, “and the place shall be called Gilgal.” (*Yehoshua 5:9*)

This removal of the foreskin which distinguished them from their former masters made the entire nation eligible to offer a *korban Pesach*, the first one in forty years.

The *Mishkan* (Sanctuary) which the Israelites had carried with them throughout their wandering in the wilderness stood in Gilgal for 14 years, until the land was conquered and divided amongst the tribes, after which it was transferred to Shiloh.

WEEKLY DAF...continued from page ten

stolen from someone else.

Tosefos here raises an interesting problem. The *gemara* (*Succah 30a*) explains that a stolen *lulav* (one of the four species we are commanded to hold during Succos) is invalid for the fulfillment of the mitzvah. Why? Because, explains the *gemara*, you cannot fulfill a mitzvah through committing a sin. If so, asks Tosefos, why was it necessary for the Torah to use a special phrase to disqualify a stolen succah, when we would have disqualified it in any event, because it came about through a sin?

Tosefos' conclusion is that the disqualification of a mitzvah through sin is only of rabbinic origin, whereas dwelling in a stolen succah is ruled out even by the Torah, based on the phrase “for (of) yourself.”

An alternative approach to Tosefos' challenge is proposed by the nineteenth century author of *Minchas Chinuch* (*mitzvah 325*). Even if the disqualification of a mitzvah through sin is of Torah origin, it means only that the object acquired through transgressing Hashem's will cannot be used to fulfill His will. It does not mean, however, that the succah is not a valid succah.

This distinction is subtle, yet it has the following ramifications: There are two categories of obligation regarding eating in a succah. On the first night (the first two nights outside of *Eretz Yisrael*) there is a positive command to eat a meal in a succah, just as there is a positive command to eat matzah on the first night of Pesach. After that, there is only a requirement that any meals eaten during the festival should not be eaten outside the succah. If the Torah did not write “for (of) yourself” we would only have applied the “mitzvah-through-sin” disqualification to the succah thief's fulfillment of the mitzvah to eat in the succah on the first night. But we would not have disqualified the stolen succah as a succah, and thus we would not consider one's eating his meals there as if he were eating *outside* the succah. But now that the Torah tells us that a stolen succah is not a succah, one who eats in it anytime during Succos is guilty of eating outside the succah.

• Succah 9a

The Succah in the Wilderness

In what kind of succahs did our ancestors dwell in the wilderness? Rabbi Eliezer says they were not man-made succahs, but rather miraculous pillars of cloud — “clouds of glory” — which protected the Children of Israel from the inhospitable desert climate. Rabbi Akiva's view is that they were succahs which the people put up for shade wherever they camped on their way through the wilderness.

Although the consensus of the commentaries is to accept Rabbi Eliezer's view (see *Targum Onkelos* on *Vayikra 23:42*), there is an interesting perspective of how to approach these two differing views.

There is a fascinating relationship of mutual love between Hashem and His chosen people. In the manner of such relationships, each party seeks to compliment and praise the other. We refer to the festival celebrating our exodus from Egypt by the name “Pesach,” which recalls that Hashem did “Pass-over” the Jewish homes when He slaughtered the Egyptian firstborn. But Hashem, in His Torah, calls it the “Festival of Matzos,” to pay tribute to the faith of our ancestors in departing from Egypt for the wilderness at His command, with no more provisions than some *matzos*.

Rabbi Akiva understands the phrase “In order that your generations shall know that I caused you to dwell in succahs when I took you out of Egypt” (*ibid.*) as the Torah's reminder not only of Hashem's kindness in liberating us, but also of our ancestors' faith in following Hashem into an inhospitable desert, where they had to struggle to build shelters against the elements. Rabbi Eliezer, however, sees the succah as the premier expression of our appreciation of all Hashem's many kindnesses shown to us in protecting us, providing us manna from heaven, water from a miraculous spring, and all our needs throughout our sojourn in the wilderness.

• Succah 11b