**S.A.L.T. –PESACH 5776**

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This shiur is dedicated to the refua sheleima of our alumnus

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Motzaei Shabbat

The *Shulchan Arukh* (O.C. 451:26) codifies the view taken by many *Rishonim* that glassware that had been used for *chametz* – even if it had been used for long-term storage of *chametz* – may be used on Pesach without *kashering*. According to this view, glass, unlike other materials, is incapable of absorbing food or liquid. As such, a glass utensil that had been used with *chametz* needs to be thoroughly cleaned to ensure the removal of actual *chametz*, but no *kashering* is required to extract absorbed *chametz* from its walls. The Rama, however, notes that Ashkenazic custom follows the stringent view, which maintains that to the contrary, glass utensils that had been used with *chametz* cannot be used on Pesach, and cannot even be *kashered*. The *Mishna Berura* explains that according to this view, *Halakha* treats glassware like earthenware, since glass is made from sand, which resembles earth. Hence, just as earthenware is assumed to absorb the food it contains, and this absorbed matter is then incapable of being completely expunged from the utensil’s walls, glassware likewise cannot be kashered.

As mentioned, Ashkenazic communities follow the stringent opinion and do not use on Pesach glassware that had been used with *chametz*. And, despite the *Shulchan Arukh*’s lenient ruling, some Sepharadim nevertheless adopted the Rama’s position as a measure of stringency, as noted by the *Sedei Chemed* (*Ma’arekhet* *Hei*, 29).

In between these two extremes, the *Ben Ish Chai* writes in one of his published responsa ([*Rav Pe’alim* vol. 3, O.C. 29](http://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=1402&pgnum=38)) that the custom in Baghdad was to *kasher* glassware for Pesach by filling the utensils with water, leaving the water there for a day and then pouring the water out, a process which they perform once a day for three days. This practice is based on the *Shulchan Arukh*’s ruling earlier (451:21) that earthenware containers that had been used with beer may be *kashered* in this fashion. The *Mishna Berura* (451:17) explains that it is only when an earthenware utensil absorbed food or liquid through heat that the absorbed food or liquid is assumed incapable of being fully expunged from its walls. If the utensil was used only with cold food or liquid, then although it absorbs, the absorbed matter is capable of being expunged through the process of *milui ve-irui* – filling then utensil with water, emptying it after a day, and then repeating the process two more times. Accordingly, it became customary among some communities to accept the premise of the stringent view, that glassware is treated halakhically as earthenware, but to permit *kashering* the way earthenware can be kashered after having been used with cold *chametz*. Since it can generally be assumed that glassware is not used with very hot food or liquid, it can – according to this custom – be *kashered* through the process of *milui ve-irui*. (The status of pyrex and other types of glass capable of withstanding heat may be different in this regard; we speak here only of ordinary glass.)

The *Mishna Berura* (451:156) cites the *Chayei Adam* as ruling that even according to the Ashkenazic custom, not to allow *kashering* of glassware, one may *kasher* glassware through the process of *milui ve-irui* if no other options are available. Since it can be assumed that the glassware had not been used with hot food or water, it may, under extenuating circumstances, be *kashered* in this fashion.

Nowadays, of course, the widespread custom among Ashkenazim is to buy a separate set of glassware for Pesach and not to rely on the *Shulchan Arukh*’s ruling or even on the method of *milui ve-irui*.

Sunday

Two different reasons have been given for the custom noted by the Rama (O.C. 451:26), and observed throughout Ashkenazic (and some Sephardic) communities, to forbid on Pesach the use of glassware that had been used with *chametz*. Whereas the *Shulchan Arukh* ruled that such glassware may be used on Pesach, and it does not even require any process of kashering, the Rama maintained that they may not be used and kashering is not even an option. This was the position of Rabbenu Yechiel of Paris, cited by the *Hagahot Maimoniyot* (Hilkhot Chametz U-matza 5:25) and the Mordechai (Pesachim, chapter 2). He reasoned that since glass is made from sand, which resembles earth, glassware has the same halakhic status as earthenware, which cannot be kashered. The *Chafetz Chayim*, however, in *Sha’ar Ha-tziyun* (451:196), notes that the Ritva (end of Masekhet Avoda Zara) cites the Ra’a as maintaining this position for an entirely different reason, namely, the concern that one may not *kasher* the utensil properly. Given that glass cannot generally withstand intense heat, it is likely that a person will not completely immerse the utensil in boiling water as the process of kashering requires, and so glassware should not be kashered.

The Ra’a’s view differs from the position of Rabbenu Yechiel, in that it acknowledges the theoretical possibility of kashering glassware. Whereas Rabbenu Yechiel compared glassware to earthenware utensils, which are assumed to absorb the food or beverage they contain, but are then unable to completely expunge the absorbed matter through kashering, the Ra’a maintained that glassware is capable of expunging absorbed matter. Practically speaking, however, people would be reluctant to subject glass utensils to the level of heat necessary to expunge the absorbed matter, and for this reason, they cannot be kashered for Pesach.

The *Chafetz Chayim* speculates that other *poskim* did not accept this line of reasoning because, quite simply, kashering glassware would not require exposing the utensil to intense heat. The principle of “*ke-bol’o kakh polto*” establishes that food or liquid absorbed in the wall of a utensil is expunged through exposure to the same level of heat at which it was absorbed. As such, in order to expunge absorbed *chametz* from the walls of a glass utensil, it would suffice to expose the utensil to the level of heat with which it is normally used. Quite obviously, if a person normally uses his glassware at a certain level of heat, he would not hesitate to expose it to that same level for the purpose of *kashering*. Therefore, other *poskim* did not accept the Ra’a’s argument.

This discussion may assume practical importance with regard to the possibility of kashering Pyrex utensils, which are capable of withstanding heat. It stands to reason that the Ra’a, who did not allow kashering glassware only because of the practical concern involved, would permit kashering Pyrex, which can withstand intense heat and can thus be kashered without any hesitation or fear. Rabbenu Yechiel, however, would not allow kashering any glass utensil, even if it can withstand intense heat, since glass is halakhically equivalent to earthenware, which is incapable of being kashered.

Several recent *poskim*, including Rav Eliezer Waldenberg and Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (cited in *Piskei Teshuvot*, 451, note 289), ruled that Pyrex utensils may, indeed, be kashered for Pesach, even according to Ashkenazic practice. They note that the majority of *Rishonim* permitted using on Pesach glassware that had been used with *chametz*, even without kashering. And although Ashkenazim follow the minority, stringent position, nevertheless, the Ra’a, as noted, ruled stringently only because of the fear that the kashering will not be done properly – a concern which does not arise when dealing with Pyrex. Therefore, in consideration of the majority view among the *Rishonim* and the fact that even within the minority view there are those who would permit kashering Pyrex, these *poskim* felt that one may kasher such utensils.

Others, however, rule stringently in this regard. Rav Gedalya Felder, in [*Yesodei Yeshurun* (vol. 6, p. 170)](http://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=4175&st=&pgnum=170&hilite=), cites authorities who claim that once Ashkenazic communities have accepted the custom to disallow the use of glass utensils that had been used with *chametz*, even after kashering, this custom should be followed without any distinctions drawn. Even where the initial reason for the practice does not apply – such as in the case of Pyrex – the custom must still be observed, and thus even Pyrex utensils should not, according to Ashekanzic custom, be kashered for Pesach. Rav Felder adds, however, that they may be kashered and used on Pesach under extenuating circumstances (“*bi-she’at ha-dechak*”), when no other options are available.

Monday

After completing his instructions to *Benei Yisrael* in preparation for the night of the Exodus, Moshe conveyed God’s command to observe the *korban pesach* each year to commemorate the Exodus. He then anticipated the time when children will ask their parents for the meaning of this ritual – “*Ma ha-avoda ha-zot lakhem*” (“What is the purpose of this service for you?” – Shemot 12:26). In response, Moshe instructs, parents are to explain the story of the plague of the firstborn, when God spared *Benei Yisrael* from the plague that struck the Egyptians, a miracle commemorated by the paschal offering.

This question – “*Ma ha-avoda ha-zot lakhem*” – is explained in the *Haggadah* as the question posed by the “wicked” son, who indicates through his wording (“for you”) that he wants no part of this religious service. However, the *Midrash Sekhel Tov* (cited by *Torah Sheleima*, note 471) and Chizkuni explained this question differently. According to these commentaries, the son in this verse cannot readily discern the purpose of the *korban pesach* – as opposed to the other festival sacrifices, the purpose of which he can easily understand. The *korban ha-omer*, offered on the second day of Pesach, celebrates the beginning of the barley harvest. The *korban shetei ha-lechem* on Shavuot marks the onset of the wheat harvest; and the sacrifices of Sukkot celebrate the culmination of the harvest season. Offering sacrifices to celebrate these occasions makes sense to the child, but the *korban pesach* does not. He therefore asks his parents why they bring this unusual sacrifice.

According to this reading, the son understands the need to appreciate and express gratitude for present-day blessings, for the goodness God bestows upon us. What is more difficult for him to comprehend is the need to commemorate an event of ancient history. He sees the crops produced by his family’s farm or being sold in the market; he readily acknowledges the importance of thanking God for the food on his family’s table. But the *korban pesach* celebrates a distant historical event, the relevance of which is not immediately obvious to the child.

Indeed, one of the prominent themes of Pesach – and the night of the *seder*, in particular – is connecting to our past. We fulfill the *mitzva* of *sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim* (telling the story of the Exodus) by expounding on the text of *mikra bikkurim* – the proclamation made by farmers when bringing their *bikkurim*, or first fruits, as a gift to the *Beit Ha-mikdash* (Devarim 26:5-10). In this proclamation, the farmer, living many centuries after the Exodus, recalls how the Egyptians treated “us” cruelly, that “we” cried out to God, who then heard “our” cries and brought “us” to the Land of Israel. It has been suggested that this text is used at the *seder* specifically because the farmer speaks of the events of the Exodus as though he experienced them firsthand. This is the great challenge, and obligation, of Pesach: “In each and every generation, a person must see himself as though he left Egypt.”

The *seder* experience is meant to take us back in time, to remind us of our origins and reinforce our sense of connection to our history and to the generations that came before us. It is about transcending time and recognizing that we are part of a great historical process that is not bound to any particular age or era. It teaches us of the need to be mindful of, and grateful for, not only the blessings of the present, but also the blessings of the distant past, recognizing that the entity of *Kenesset Yisrael* extends beyond the confines of time and place, and the miracles that occurred in one generation must therefore be celebrated by all others.

Tuesday

In his prophecy to Pharaoh warning him of the impending plague of the firstborn, Moshe predicts that in contrast to the deafening shrieks of horror that would be heard throughout Egypt on the night of the plague, *Benei Yisrael* will enjoy calm and serenity. He proclaims that even the dogs will refrain from barking and remain quiet that night – “*lo yecheratz kelev leshono*” – in order to underscore the contrast between the horror befalling the Egyptians and God’s special protection of His people (Shemot 11:7).

The Gemara in Masekhet Berakhot (56b) comments that if a person dreams about a dog, upon awakening he should immediately recite this verse from Sefer Shemot that speaks of the dogs’ silence on the night of *Yetzi’at Mitzrayim*. This should be done quickly, the Gemara urges, as otherwise a different verse about dogs may come to mind first, namely, Yeshayahu’s description of dogs as “*azei nefesh*” (“brazen” – Yeshayahu 56:11).

The verse in Yeshayahu describes dogs’ natural, ingrained quality – to brazenly bark at people and other creatures without respect or inhibition. The verse in Shemot speaks of how on one night in history, this natural tendency was overcome, and the dogs spent a night in decorous silence.

The Gemara is perhaps instructing that when we contemplate and think about our negative tendencies, we should focus our attention not on the fact that these are natural, ingrained qualities, but rather on our ability to overcome them. When we think of “dogs,” of our unseemly characteristics, we must remind ourselves of the model of the dogs in Egypt. We are not slaves of our characters; to the contrary, they are subject to our free will. Our attitude should not be one of “*ve-ha’kelavim azei nefesh*,” that we are helplessly controlled by our natural, ingrained weaknesses, but rather one of “*lo yecheratz kelev leshono*,” that we are empowered by our Creator to overcome and restrain our natural impulses, and to conduct ourselves as dignified, refined servants of the Almighty.

Wednesday

The Gemara comments in Masekhet Pesachim (109a), “*Chotefin matzot be-leilei pesachim bi-shvil ha-tinokot she-lo yiyshnu*.” Literally, this means, “One grabs *matzot* on the nights of Pesach so that the children will not sleep.” The Rashbam brings several different interpretations of this difficult passage. One possibility, he writes, is that this refers to lifting the plate of *matza* in the air in order to arouse the children’s curiosity at the *seder*. Secondly, he writes, this perhaps means that we should eat *matza* quickly in order not to unnecessarily prolong the *seder* and thereby lose the children’s interest. Thirdly, the Rashbam writes, this might mean that we “grab” the *matza* from the children’s hands in the sense that we do not allow them to eat too much, as excessive eating may bring on fatigue and cause them to fall asleep.

The *Shulchan Arukh* (O.C. 472:1) appears to follow a variation of the second interpretation, as he writes: “*Mitzva le-maher le-ekhol bi-shvil ha-tinokot she-lo yiyshnu*” – “It is a *mitzva* to eat quickly so that the children will not sleep.” This *halakha* is presented in the context of the *Shulchan Arukh*’s ruling that the *seder* table should be set before the onset of Pesach so that the meal can begin as soon as possible. According to the *Shulchan Arukh*, then, this passage instructs that we should “grab” the *matza* in the sense of beginning the *seder* promptly so that the children will be able to remain awake.

Rabbenu Yosef Tuv Elem, in one of his hymns recited by some communities on Shabbat Ha-gadol (“*Elokei Ha-ruchot Le-khol Basar*”), expresses this *halakha* in poetic form: “*Ta’anu la-chatof matza be-leilei pesachim kedei she-lo yiyshnu ha-perachim*” – “They established that we grab the *matza* on the nights of Pesachim so that the ‘flowers’ will not sleep.” In formulating the *halakha*, Rabbenu Yosef Tuv Elem refers to children as “*perachim*” – “flowers.” The Tolna Rebbe suggested that this reference perhaps sheds light on the requirement of “*choftin matzot*” to keep the children’s interest at the *seder*. Especially at the *seder*, we are to look at the children as “*perachim*,” as beautiful “flowers.” We are to overlook whatever challenges and disciplinary issues we face while raising them, and focus entirely on their quality of “*perachim*” – their “beauty,” how they enhance and enrich our lives. As they are to be the focal point of the *seder*, we need to look upon them with special love and affection. This concept underlies the requirement of “*chotfin matzot*,” the need to tailor the *seder* to suit the children and undertake measures to keep their interest and attention. The children – always, but especially at the *seder* – are the “*perachim*,” the magnificent “flowers” that adorn our home, and so the *seder* must revolve around them and be orchestrated in a manner that caters to their needs.

Thursday

The Gemara in Masekhet Pesachim (9a) cites the well-known debate between Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya regarding the time-frame for eating the *korban pesach*. Rabbi Akiva maintained that the meat of the sacrifice may be eaten throughout the night until the morning, whereas Rabbi Elazar argued that it may not be eaten past *chatzot* (midnight as defined by *Halakha*).

The Gemara explains that the debate revolves around God’s command to *Benei Yisrael* that on the night of the Exodus they must eat the sacrifice “*be-chipazon*” (“hastily” – Shemot 12:11). Rabbi Akiva interpreted this to mean that *Benei Yisrael* were to partake of the sacrifice up until the time of “*chipazon de-Yisrael*” – the timewhen they were rushed out of Egypt – meaning, in the morning. Rabbi Elazar, by contrast, understood this command to mean that they were to eat the *korban pesach* until the time of “*chipazon de-Mitzrayim*” – when the Egyptians fell into a frenzy following the plague of the firstborn. Thus, the sacrifice may be eaten only until *chatzot*, the time when the plague struck.

It seems, at first glance, that both readings work off the assumption that “*be-chipazon*” refers not to the manner of eating, but rather to the time-frame, and the prefix “*be-*” should be understood to mean “until.” Rabbi Akiva understood that the sacrifice was eaten until *Benei Yisrael*’s frantic departure in the morning, and Rabbi Elazar explained that it was eaten until the Egyptians were thrown into a frenzy at midnight.

We may, however, suggest an explanation of this debate that accounts for the simple meaning of the verse, according to which “*chipazon*” describes the condition in which the sacrifice was to be eaten. The word “*chipazon*,” while commonly translated as “haste,” may also be understood to denote pressure or tension. *Benei Yisrael* were to eat not in a calm, relaxed fashion, but rather with a degree of pressure, and the *Tanna’im* argue in identifying the precise nature of this pressure. According to Rabbi Akiva, this was the pressure of the Exodus, of knowing that they would be leaving the country with all their belongings and beginning an entirely new chapter in their lives and in their people’s history. In Rabbi Akiva’s view, “*chipazon*” may even be interpreted as “excitement.” *Benei Yisrael* ate the sacrifice with eager anticipation, knowing that this would be their last meal in Egypt and they would soon be embarking on a transformative journey. Hence, Rabbi Akiva maintained that the *korban pesach* may be eaten until morning, as “*be-chipazon*” refers to the anticipation of the departure – “*chipazon de-Yisrael*.”

Rabbi Elazar, however, seems to have maintained that the “pressure” mentioned here refers to the pressure of *makat bekhorot* (the plague of the firstborn). The entire paschal ritual was predicated on the notion that in principle, *Benei Yisrael* would be at risk as the plague descended upon Egypt. The sacrifice was necessary to protect them from the plague, as the blood stood guard, so-to-speak, at their front doors while they remained inside. The command of “*chipazon*,” according to Rabbi Elazar, speaks not of the tension of the people’s anticipated departure, but rather of the fear of the plague. They were not to feel too confident or at ease; they were to experience fear and anxiety, knowing that a devastating plague would soon befall their country. This “*chipazon*” lasted only until *chatzot*, when the plague arrived and *Benei Yisrael* were spared. As such, Rabbi Elazar held that the *korban pesach* may be eaten until *chatzot*, the time when the experience of “*chipazon*” – as Rabbi Elazar defined it – passed.

Friday

In the *maggid* section of the *Haggadah* we discuss the verse in Sefer Devarim (26:7) which tells that God heard *Benei Yisrael*’s cries in Egypt, and took note of “our oppression, our harsh labor and our distress.” The *Haggadah* explains the word “*lachatzeinu*” (“our distress”) means “*ha-dechak*” – pressure and stress.

The simplest explanation of the *Haggadah*’s comment, it would seem, which is indeed offered by several commentators (including the *Avudraham* and *Shibolei Ha-leket*), is that this refers to the strict quotas imposed by the Egyptian taskmasters. As we know from Sefer Shemot (5:8), the Israelite slaves were expected to produce a certain number of bricks each day, a requirement which created a great deal of stress and anxiety. It is to this aspect of the bondage experience, it appears, that the *Haggadah* refers when noting the “*dachak*” which *Benei Yisrael* suffered.

The Ritva, however, explains this passage differently, claiming that it refers to religious persecution. After failing to curb *Benei Yisrael*’s population growth, the Ritva writes, the Egyptians resorted to efforts to pressure them to adopt Egyptian religious mores and practices, and this is the meaning of “*dachak*” – the overwhelming pressure *Benei Yisrael* faced to renounce their faith and embrace the Egyptians’ religious beliefs. (It has been suggested that for this reason, the phrase “*ve-et lachatzeinu*” is immediately followed by, “*Va-yotzi’einu Hashem mi-Mitzrayim*” – “The Lord took us out from Egypt.” Once the Egyptians began pressuring *Benei Yisrael* to abandon their faith, God had no choice, so-to-speak, but to rescue them so they would not completely assimilate into Egyptian culture.)

In truth, these two interpretations may not be so different from one another. “*Dachak*” – the constant, overwhelming pressure to complete tasks by certain times, can cause a person to lose sight of loftier ideals and the higher goals to which he should be aspiring. Indeed, the *Shela* is cited as explaining the *Haggadah*’s reference to “*dachak*” as the Egyptians’ attempt to draw *Benei Yisrael* away from their faith through the pressure of an overbearing workload. Maintaining our religious devotion requires, at very least, allocating time for study, prayer, thought and contemplation. The “*dachak*” of the Egyptian bondage did not allow *Benei Yisrael* the time to reflect on spiritual matters, and according to the *Shela*, this was precisely the Egyptians’ intent, as part of their effort to force *Benei Yisrael* away from their faith.

As we reflect upon the story of the Egyptian bondage and the Exodus, we should perhaps consider whether we, too, are subject to “*dachak*,” to self-imposed pressure and stress that denies us the opportunity to grow spiritually and deepen our connection to the Almighty. The *Haggadah* makes it clear that the severity of the Egyptian bondage lay not only in the physical torment, but also in the spiritual dangers that it presented – dangers which exist even when we are not subject to persecution, and which we must ensure to avoid even when we are otherwise free.

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