

SECOND DAY PASSOVER 1996

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

We all know that last night at the seder the four questions were chanted by our children. It is interesting to note that in the Mishnah the four questions are different than the four questions that we have today. Three of them are the same, but the fourth one is different. What is the fourth one that we have today? On all other nights we eat either sitting upright or leaning. This time we eat only in a leaning position. In the Mishnah version we have a different one and that is all other nights we eat either cooked or barbecued, but today we eat only meat barbecued. We understand that this referred to the Korban Pesach. That's why we do not say it today. In fact, today you are not even allowed to eat barbecued meat. If you have a Zeroah, a shankbone, on your plate on the night of the seder you are not allowed to eat it. You can eat it the next day but you cannot eat it at the seder because the rabbis did not want to have even a smidgeon of thought that this represented the Korban Pesach. We do not have a temple now so, therefore, we do not have the Korban Pesach and, therefore, we should not eat anything which even resembles the food of the Korban Pesach, which even looks like the Korban Pesach. Therefore, we do not eat any barbecued foods at all on the first two nights of the seder.

The question can be asked, why is it that the rabbis substituted this particular question for the fourth question, that on all other nights we eat either sitting or reclining but on this night we eat reclining. After all, there are many things else at the Pesach seder that we do not even talk about, we do not even renumerate. On other nights we drink maybe one cup of wine but on this night we drink four cups of wine. We do not mention that at all. There are many other things that we could mention about the seder. For example, on all other times we say

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the Hallel continuously with the brocha first, but on this night we break the Hallel in two and do not say a brocha at the beginning. We do not ask that question either. The question we ask is, on all other night we eat either sitting or leaning and on this night we eat only leaning. Why should this be? After all, leaning is a sign of freedom, and the truth of the matter is that when this fourth question was instituted the Jews no longer had freedom, at least external freedom. We know the reason we took out the question about the barbecue meat is because we do not have the Korban Pesach anymore, but of all questions why did the rabbis choose this particular question?

What's more, we have all been taught that Moshe Rabbeinu's name is not mentioned in the Haggadah but that it not really true. It is mentioned once when Rabbi Yosi Yehudi says when talking about the plagues, that if in Egypt there was a finger of G-d and on the Red Sea there was a hand of G-d, how many plagues were there on the Red Sea? We all answer fifty because we have five fingers. Of course, the reason it is in the Haggadah where it is in order to wake the children up and also because the rabbis say that all those plagues that occurred in Egypt will not happen to us if we observe the laws of the Torah so the more plagues we can find in Egypt the less things will ever happen to us. But here Rabbi Yosi Yehudi says that when the people saw the great hand which G-d did against the Egyptians at the Red Sea the people feared G-d and they believed in G-d and in Moshe, His servant. So we mention Moshe's name here. Why is it that we mention Moshe's name here? And why did Rabbi Yosi Yehudi have to bring in the whole story of the Red Sea here at this particular

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time when this is something that happened actually after the Exodus?

Finally, we have a question which was asked by my granddaughter, Penina, who said that actually if we look at the third question of the four questions, we will see that this question is not really true. What does this question say? This question says that on all other nights we do not dip even once but on this night we dip twice. We all know that on Rosh Hashonna we dip. We dip the apples in the honey. How is it possible for us to say that on all other nights we don't dip even once when we know that on Rosh Hashonna we dip? We dip the apples in the honey. If it would have said on all other nights we do not dip very much it would be a good question but since it says we do not dip even once it seems to fly in the face of the fact that we do all dip apples in honey on the eve of Rosh Hashonna, so how can we say that on all other nights we do not dip even once?

It seems to me that what the rabbis are teaching us here is something very important and that is that no matter what the Jew can never give up hope, that one of the worst things that a Jew can ever do is to give up hope and that is what the seder is teaching us here. The reason why the rabbi teach us that we have instituted here the question that on all other nights we can eat either sitting or reclining but on this night we can only recline is because this is truly a mark of freedom. Even in the time of our persecution we have to remember that we are going to be free. As long as we, as I talked about yesterday, are free inside then we do not have to worry about the oppression around us. Eventually we are going to be free, but we

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have to believe that even in the darkest times G-d is going to come to our aid, that we should never give up, that the worst crime of all is to say that there is no hope; there is always hope. We know that there is hope in a theological way and a national way and a personal way. In fact, that is why we have the seder plate. The seder plate is really two triangles that are one on top of the other, or you have two triangles that meet in the center. It depends on how you arrange the seder plate, but you always have the shankbone and then the egg and in the middle you have the bitter herbs, and these stand for the three things that are being redeemed. The shankbone stands for the redemption of G-d's name. We all know that in the Torah when the Jewish people refer to the holiday of Pesach they refer to it as Pesach, but G-d refers to it as a holiday of matzos. G-d's name has to be redeemed in the world. When we refer the holiday as Pesach another word for the meaning Pesach is to limp. When we look at the world we see G-d is limping. G-d's name has to be redeemed. How can we say that there is justice in the world? How can we say that G-d rules the world with kindness and mercy when we see so many atrocities being carried out? Then, of course, we have the egg. The egg is a symbol of the national redemption of the Jewish people, of its rebirth. We all know that on the same night as the first night of Pesach is when Tisha B'Av comes. The egg also stands for destruction. The Jewish people, when they were in slavery, had the potential for greatness but they were being hounded and persecuted and pushed down. We also know that the middle of this triangle stands for the bitter herbs, stands for the personal problems that we all have. We know that we are all going to go through life as a child. We have the problems of adjusting to our parents and school. As a teenager our passions outrun

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out maturity. When we are young adults we have the problem of supporting our family. When we are old we have the problem of sickness and death. There are always going to be problems in life. Life is going to be bitter, but Maror also means mister. It means a person who has dignity. It means we can face our problems with dignity. In the second triangle we have the Charosis and the Charosis stands for the way we redeem G-d's name in the world. As G-d refers to this holiday as mitzvahs, Charosis is apples and nuts and wine and we redeem G-d's name in the world by remaining optimistic. That's why when the apple stands for the fact that the Jewish people never gave up, especially the women. The men had given up but the women did not give up. The men said, "Why should we have children? We should give up. We are never going to make it out of here." The women took the men under the apple tree, which is a symbol in Jewish life of procreation, and they said, "No, we are not going to give up. We are going to create more Jews. We will eventually overcome this terrible time." The nuts are special because a nut tree will only grow if its roots are covered, which means that we have to be attached to Hashem Mishporah and if we are attached and do the mitzvahs then we can redeem G-d's name. Of course, the wine stands for joy, for making things holy, for making kiddush. That is how we redeem G-d's name, by doing mitzvahs, by being optimistic. That is, of course, why when it says on Rosh Hashonna that we dip the apple the reason why we say today that that does not count is because we dip it not only during the night but also during the day, because we dip the apples in the good times and in the bad times, while on Pesach we are talking about the bad times. We are talking about not giving up hope when things are really bad. Of course, the

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we take the parsley and dip it into salt water. This stands for the tears for the destruction of our people, but there is still always a little twig left and we dip it into the past but we build a future. We build our Holocaust museums but that is not enough. We remember the past but we also strengthen Jewish education. We take our twig and push it in the past but we also nurture and make sure our twigs grow up into mighty cedars so that Judaism can survive. We also have the bitter herbs and the bitter herbs were also referred to in the Temple as Hazeret because they refer to the community's returning and returning. How do we overcome the bitterness of our own problems? By raising children who will continue so that even if we are gone our message will continue. So the seder plate, itself, teaches what has to be redeemed. We have to redeem G-d's name. We have to redeem our theology. We have to redeem our people and we have to redeem ourselves. We do that by doing mitzvahs, by making sure that we nurture education, by making sure that we form close families. That is how we overcome. That is how we never give up hope so persecution can never destroy us.

This is what Rabbi Yosi Yehudi is telling us. He is telling us that at the Red Sea it all looked hopeless. The Jewish people could not continue anymore, but then when everything looked hopeless G-d appeared and split the Red Sea. Then they believed in G-d and in Moshe, His servant. The important thing here was that they believed because they, themselves, were redeemed, but the Rambam says that is not the reason why we believe today. We believe today because Moshe received the Torah on Mount Sinai. If miracles happen to you you will believe but it is hard to transmit them to your children. We are only

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able to transmit them to our children because of the Torah which G-d gave to Moshe, and that is why Moshe's name is mentioned here. When we study Torah then we see that there is hope and we see that we are going to be able to continue. Therefore, the message of Pesach is hope. The rabbis chose after the destruction of the Temple not to tell us about the four cups but to tell us about hope. We recline because we know that there is going to be freedom. The rabbis tell us that on this holiday we dip twice and on other times we do not dip even once because on this time we dip when it is really only bad, when it seems hopeless. On Rosh Hashonna we dip when it is also filled with hope, but we here dip when it is hopeless to remind us that there is hope. Pesach tells us there is always hope. If things seem bad, if things seem bad to the Jewish people in this country or in Israel or anyplace else we should never give up hope. We should always believe and because we believe we should always act to make sure that G-d's name is redeemed, that the Jewish people are redeemed, and that we, ourselves, personally are redeemed from all our Tzores by educating our children.

I am reminded of the story they tell about a man who went with a group fishing in the Gulf of Mexico where their ship was overturned and they were all thrown in the Gulf. They were all wearing T-shirts. One person's T-shirt said "There is no hope". Of all the people only he was saved. When he was taken ashore they asked him, "How come you were saved?" He answered, "I don't know but all I can tell you is that when one shark came near me he turned to another shark and said, 'Even I can't swallow this'." We have to remember there

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is always hope. If we will never give up hope and will always act accordingly then we can rest assured that G-d will help us so the Mashiach will come quickly in our day. Amen.