

## SECOND DAY PESACH 1999

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

Today we are reading a portion of the Torah from the Book of Shmos. We read how it says, "And Moshe called to the elders of Israel and he said to them, 'Draw out and take for you sheep for your families and slaughter them for the Pesach.'" We also learn later on in the same place where it says, "And you shall watch this thing, and it shall be a Chok for you, a law for you and for your children forever." Then we also learn in the few verses beforehand in the beginning of that chapter that G-d first told Moshe something else. He told Moshe, "Speak to all the congregation of Israel saying, 'In the tenth of this month and they shall take for them each man a Seh, a lamb, for the house of his father,'" and then it mentions that, "This thing should be for you as a remembrance, and you should celebrate as a holiday of G-d for your generations as a Chok, as a law forever you shall celebrate." As you notice, G-d said something else to Moshe than Moshe actually did. Of course, it is recorded in the Torah, so it must be that G-d approved of what Moshe did, but G-d said, "Gather together the community of Israel," and G-d said to him that they should take a lamb for the house of their fathers. Moshe instead called the elders of Israel and said, "Take for you from the sheep," not a lamb, a sheep and he said, "to their families." G-d said, "It should be a Hazikaron and a Chok for you." Moshe said it should only be a Chok for you. How come

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Moshe changed what G-d told him to do? Besides that, there is another question that we have, and that is, why is it that we break the middle matzah and hide the afikomen? We can understand why you have to break a matzah because it is lechem oni, and you have to have a broken piece of matzah because it stands for slavery, so some rabbis say you have one and a half pieces and some say you have to have two and a half pieces because you have to have two challahs every holiday, so you have two and then another additional broken piece. Some rabbis say no, you only need one and a half because this is the holiday of the broken matzah. The question, though, remains, why do we have to hide the half of the other matzah? We can just discard it, or just start with a broken matzah.

I think if we look carefully at the answer to our first question, perhaps we can understand about the afikomen also. When G-d spoke to Moshe He said, "Speak to the congregation of Israel." Moshe said, "Speak to the elders of Israel." Everything requires leadership. Why is the purpose of the seder? The purpose of the seder is to teach us how we Jews can survive. That is why it is called the Chok of Pesach, Zos Chukas HaPesach, this is the law of the Pesach.

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If the Jewish people observed the Pesach correctly, then the Jewish people will survive forever. That is, of course, why Moshe talked to all the elders of Israel because you need leadership. Things do not happen just by themselves.

Without leadership, nothing happens in the Jewish community. That's why G-d said, "Speak to the congregation of Israel." And how do you move the congregation? By good leadership. You do not move the leadership just by taking a survey, or even giving the people what they supposedly want. I remember in 1946 how my grandfather, Abe Silver, and Rabbi Walgalanter and Moshe Genauer started a day school in Seattle. Most of the people did not want a day school in Seattle. They thought it was un-American, but it turned out that the day school was the saving of Judaism in America. Without day schools, it is almost impossible to give your child a sufficient Jewish education. Now the people at that time were not convinced that day schools were the most important thing, or that they should even be supported, but it took leadership, just like in our congregation, too, it takes leadership to get certain things done, for the new building to be done, for new classes and new adult education to take place. It just does not happen if everybody is in control, nobody is in control.

Therefore, people have to sense what is the problem of its generation, and to

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move forward, and to offer the leadership necessary, so Moshe said, "Call all the elders of Israel." Then G-d said to take a lamb. Moshe says, "Draw it out for you from the sheep," which means that for the Jewish people to survive, people have to be willing to take from their assets, not just from their income. They have to sacrifice for the future. If they are not willing to sacrifice for the future, nothing is going to happen. G-d said, "Take it to the house of your fathers for the extended families." Moshe said, "Do it for your family." I remember so many people come and tell me, "Oh, yes, my grandfather had wonderful seders, but after he died none of us really had the knowledge to do it, so we just really don't do it anymore, or we do it in such an abridged form that all it is is the chicken soup." That is not what is going to cause Judaism to survive. Yes, it is better if you have an extended family, but if you do not have an extended family, then do it yourself. That's why the rabbis say, if you don't have children, let your wife ask Manishtanah. If you don't have a wife, you ask the Manishtanah. The important thing is that the seder continues, that the root of Judaism is always in the home. You cannot say, "Well, when I have a family I will keep kosher and I will keep Shabbos." The truth of the matter is, the longer people are single in the United States and they come from observant

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homes, the less likely it is that they will be observant, because they say they will wait for their family, but the truth of the matter is, you have to do it for your own family. Even if you leave your city and your extended family, you still have to do it yourself, and you have to have the willingness to do it yourself, so Moshe knew that for the Jewish people to survive, they needed to have leadership, and they had to be willing to take from their capital, to sacrifice for it. I remember when I was in college I had almost no money, and there was a friend of mine who I used to give food and different things because he claimed he was so poor. After a while I asked why he was so poor. He said, "Well, you see, I am investing in this insurance policy and buying this property and in this stock program." You have to sacrifice for your future even from your assets, from your capital. You have to realize that you are responsible as an individual family group to continue on in Judaism.

That is, too, why Moshe Rabbeinu here tells about the Chok. G-d said it was a Hazikaron. Moshe was saying to them that this is a Chok, this is the future of Judaism. G-d was saying this was a remembrance of the past, and it is also a Chok, but we have to stress it is for the future, not just for the past. That's

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why, of course, we say that G-d passed over the houses of Israel, He, Himself, because G-d is eternal, and when G-d tells us about the importance of freedom, that it is an eternal thing, that we have to continue to watch for. G-d sometimes uses an angel because an angel is a temporary phenomenon, but when G-d is involved in it, it is a permanent phenomenon. This is a Chok for Israel. Israel can survive. We can overcome all difficulties, and we will be an eternal people, just as G-d has made this an eternal process, if we realize that we have to offer leadership, and we have to offer from our resources, and we have to be responsible as an individual family unit to preserve Judaism.

That, of course, is why we hide the afikomen because it not really clear in the world that things are going to come out all right. After all, we call this holiday Pesach, because the world means limping. We look at the world and see that G-d is limping. Is it always true that the righteous are at ease and that evil people are being punished? That is not the way it always is. Sometimes it is the exact opposite, so how can we see that G-d is there to help us? And, of course, the night of Pesach everybody saw it. That which is hidden, the brokenness of the world which is hidden is revealed. We look at the afikomen

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at the end. G-d came by Himself and saved the Jewish people. In fact, it says He did not give a Mashgees to destroy you, to come to your houses, which means that even those people who should have died on this night from diseases or old age did not die. This was a sign to the Jewish people that G-d is there to help us. G-d has assured us He will always help us, but we have to do certain things to make sure G-d will help us. We have to provide leadership. We have to give from our assets. We have to have strong family units. If we have these things, then G-d has assured us that we will be an eternal people.

I am reminded of the story they tell about a man who was arrested in Worcestershire, Massachusetts last year for selling eternal youth pills. Sure enough, the man had a criminal record. He was arrested in 1640 and 1732 and 1806. We are an eternal people, but we will only be an eternal people if we provide the correct leadership, if we are willing to sacrifice and willing to have excellent families. Let us all hope that we will do so so the Mashiach will come quickly in our day. Amen.