

## SECOND DAY PESACH 2000

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

Last night, we concluded the seders for this year. We all know that at the seder a very important part is the Afikomen. We break the middle matzah and take half of it and hide it away. The last thing we eat is the Afikomen. The taste of the Afikomen is supposed to be in our mouths. The word, Afikomen, itself, is a strange word. Some people say it comes from the Greek, which means dessert. Others say that it has to do with teaching us that we cannot go from one place to another. After we had eaten the Korban Pesach during the time of the Temple, it was forbidden to go to eat the paschal sacrifice at another seder. We cannot flit from one seder to another. This has great symbolic meaning. We should not run from house to house being so busy that we do not have enough time for our family. The same, of course, applies on a national level. So many Jews are involved in helping other cultures that they forget about their own culture.

The rabbis argue as to what is more important: the first matzah that we eat at the seder; or the Afikomen. The Tosfos and the Rosh are of the opinion that the matzah that we eat at the beginning of the meal is more important because since we make a blessing on it, we, therefore, are fulfilling the primary mitzvah. The Rambam and the Rif are of the opinion that the Afikomen is the

## SECOND DAY PESACH 2000

Rabbi Joseph Radin

more important of the two, and they say that it is inappropriate to make a blessing on the matzah now after you have already consumed matzah. The practical difference between them is what happens if you only have enough matzah for the beginning of the meal or for the Afikomen at the end of the meal. What should you do? These rabbis are really arguing over a deep philosophical point, and that is, what is the greater problem that a person can encounter? The Tosfos and the Rosh are of the opinion that poverty is the worst problem. It breaks people and can cause them to act immorally, and, therefore, the matzah that we eat in the beginning of the meal on an empty stomach, which signifies the matzah of affliction, is the more important. The Rambam and the Rif, on the other hand, claim that the Afikomen that we eat at the end of the meal is the greater problem because when people many times are rich, they forget all about G-d and morality and feel that they made it all on their own, that they do not need anybody or anything. In fact, the Book of Proverbs talks about two tests: the test of poverty; and the test of riches. The Jews in America would seem to want at all costs to be given the test of riches. Eben Ezra comments that when the Jews wandered in the desert, the manna was a test of faith because since it could not be stored, the Jews never knew whether

## SECOND DAY PESACH 2000

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

they were going to have manna the next day. The Orchut Chayim says the opposite. He says they knew they were going to get manna the next day, and, therefore, did not have to worry about anything economically, and that was a great test.

We know, though, that life is filled with difficult problems. That's why we break the matzah, and a broken matzah symbolizes the many problems we have in life, and we hide them. Therefore, in the order of the seder, we go from Shulchan Orech to Safun. The Afikomen is called Safun. Why should it be called Safun, or hidden? The answer is because it takes hidden qualities to overcome our problems. It takes hope. It is not enough just to follow the Shulchan Orech, which means not only the set table physically but also the Code of Jewish Law. We have to have the inner strength to overcome, and this inner strength comes from the belief in Hashem and in Judaism.

That's why we read Shir HaShirim, a love story, on Pesach because it reminds us that it was only because of the love of Hashem that the Jewish people were willing to go out into the desert with only matzah. Matzah was a bread of faith

## SECOND DAY PESACH 2000

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

as well as a sign of problems. We hide the matzah to tell us that it is with this faith that we can overcome the problems. In the Shir HaShirim, the Song of Songs, a young girl, a keeper of the vines, is able to maintain her love for her shepherd boy, even though King Solomon tries to entice her with all the blandishments at his disposal. We know in Egypt that it was because of the faith of the women that the Jewish people were saved. It was a woman who understood that we are never to give up hope. Women understand the hidden things better than men. After all, they carry a baby for nine months, and know the potentiality that is there. They understand that great travail, especially the travail of childbirth, comes before the birth of a child and of hope and of joy. In fact, hidden throughout the Haggadah is a reference to the great role that women play on Pesach. After all, Pesach, itself, is a women's holiday. They bear the full brunt of making sure the house is ready, the special foods are cooked. Pesach revolves around the home and the women, and although it is very hard on many women, many women consider it their favorite holiday, although not all women.

In the Haggadah, the number four predominates. The rabbis say the four stands

## SECOND DAY PESACH 2000

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

for the four mothers: Sarah; Rifka; Rochel; Leah. There are four questions, four cups of wine, four sons. Four also stands for family: a father and mother, son and daughter. In the song where we say, "And she stood for our forefathers and for us," it does not explain what the "she" is. Some say it is G-d's promise. Some say it is G-d, Himself, because G-d can be referred to as feminine. Some say it is an anachronism, which stands for Mishna Torah, the Ten Commandments, and G-d, but others say it stands for women, for the women of Egypt and the women throughout all the generations who stood steadfast in the belief of Judaism, and the truth of the matter is, if women do not want Judaism, it will never be kept, but if women want Judaism, no matter what the men do, it will be kept.

Later on in the Haggadah, we learn about, "And G-d saw our affliction," and that the Haggadah says means the enforced separation of husband and wife, and "our burden" means the drowning of the male children. Throughout the Haggadah, there are hints of the role women play. They understood and understand the importance of Sofun, of the hidden things. It is not just the Shulchan Orech which is important but it is also the hope, the faith that is

## SECOND DAY PESACH 2000

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

hidden, the matzah of faithfulness. I believe that there is another reason we call the Afikomen the Afikomen, and that is found in the song we sing right before the benching where we say, "Return our returnees, O G-d, as the dry stream will flow again in the Negev." The word is Afikeem, that that which looks like it is dried up actually has hidden potential, and with a little water, everything turns green. The dry river beds come get up again. The Afikomen teaches us that there is hope, and that things can and will get better.

I am reminded of the story of a young man who proposed to a 20 year old girl. She asked him how much money he had. He said he had \$500. She said, "I can't marry anyone unless they have \$500,000." The young man left and went to the big city. He came back five years later and again proposed to the girl. She asked him how much money he had. He said, "I have \$1,000." She said, "That's close enough." We all must go through life with courage and hope. That we can do if we combine the Shulchan Orech with Sofun, with the hidden things of faith. May we all do so so the Mashiach will come quickly in our day. Amen.