

## SEVENTH DAY PESACH 1999

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

Today is the day when the Egyptian army was destroyed, and we truly got our freedom. The walls of the Red Sea came cascading down upon them after the Jewish people reached the other side safely. It is interesting to note that we do not say Shecheyanu on this day. Why shouldn't we say Shecheyanu on this day? After all, this was the day we got our freedom. The Tur in the Shulchan Orech gives two reasons for it. One, that the angels in heaven started to sing Hallel, but G-d stopped them and said, "How can you sing this joyous song when My creatures are drowning?" This is also the same reason given why we take a drop of wine out of our wine cup when we recite the plagues, because how can our cup of joy be full when many Egyptians were killed?

The Tur also gives a second reason, saying that the seventh day of Pesach is not really an independent holiday. It is tied to the first holiday of Pesach, which makes it different than Shmini Atzeres, which is really a separate holiday from Succot. Secondly, we know that there is an argument between Rashi, Tosvos, Rosh, and the Shulchan Orech who say that we must have two and a half matzahs at our seder, while the Rambam and the Vilner Gaon say that we need only one and a half matzahs. These rabbis also have a separate argument, and that is what quantity of matzah must you eat to fulfill the mitzvah of eating

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matzah? The Rashi, Tosvos, Rosh, and the Shulchan Orech say that you have to have two kaziyes' worth, while the Rambam and the Vilner Gaon say you only need one. The first group of rabbis say the reason you need two and a half matzahs is because you need two matzahs because every Shabbat and holiday you need a double portion, and on Pesach you also need a broken matzah to symbolize slavery. Therefore, you need two and a half matzahs. The Rambam and the Groah say one and a half are enough. Pesach is a special holiday, and we remember the slavery of Egypt so on this day you do not need a full double portion. That's also why they say you only need to eat one kaziyes because we do not have to fulfill the mitzvah of a seudah, a festive meal on this day. Rashi, Tosvos, Rosh, and the Shulchan Orech say, no, you also have to fulfill the mitzvah of a festive meal on this day. What is the underlying philosophical argument here?

Both groups of rabbis agree that there is something broken in the human psyche. That's why we have a broken matzah. This brokenness in the human psyche causes a lot of suffering and anguish for no reason. There are many people who say give everyone prosperity and there will be no more wars or

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dissension. In fact, that's what Shimon Peres said about the Arab-Israeli situation. Make the Arabs prosperous and there will be no desire for war. We see this is not true. Look at Yugoslavia today. They are a relatively prosperous country, not at the level of the United States but still prosperous, and they want to war over Kosovo, over nationalistic, mystical, intangible things. Human beings get their dander up when they feel their integrity and pride has been injured. I am reminded of the story that one of the economic professors at Purdue used to tell. He, too, subscribed to an economic interpretation of individual's actions, but this story belies that belief. He was only about 5'6", and he told that in World War II he had an anti-Semitic sergeant who was 6'6" and taunted him and called him names. He could not take it anymore and attacked him. Of course, he was court martialed, put in the stockade, and lost rank, but he always said it was worth it. He could have been badly hurt. People act from many different motives. How many divorces have occurred for no reason, just for foolish, prideful incidents, and I know from being involved how a very successful business just exploded because the two partners got into a petty argument. They both lost everything they had, and they jeopardized their marriages. There is a certain brokenness in human

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beings which causes them to act against their best interests many times that we have to watch out for. Prosperity may help alleviate it, but it certainly will not end it. Sometimes it even accentuates foolish, stupid steps. After all, it was Joseph who brought prosperity to Egypt, but that did not stop the Egyptians from enslaving the Jews.

Rashi, Tosvos, the Rosh, and the Shulchan Orech are telling us, be careful.

You may be prosperous, but slavery could happen to you, too, almost overnight. Look at what happened to the people of Kosovo. They were forced out of their homes in hours, and to tell the truth, if Israel ever lets down her guard, the same thing would happen in Israel, but we would have no place to run, just to the sea. People fight for pride and history and all sorts of reasons even when they are prosperous. The Rambam and the Groah are telling us it is not important to stress the lessons of prosperity. The thing we want to stress today is the slavery. They, too, see it could happen at any moment, but they do not want to mention our present condition. They say it is not enough that we have to eat the afikomen on a full stomach. Rashi and his group tell us, enjoy your prosperity but be on guard. Do not take anything for granted. Make sure

that the blind spot of human nature is carefully monitored. Brokenness can even happen when you are prosperous.

Why don't we say Shecheyanu on this day? How can we say Shecheyanu when Pharaoh showed such obtuseness? He had just suffered the plagues and thrust the Jewish people out. Why would he chase them, and why would he lose all sense of proportion and take chariots down into a muddy seabed? His blindness and brokenness caused them. We all must watch out for our brokenness, for our blind spot.

I am reminded of the story they tell about a man sitting in the park eating matzah. All of a sudden the blind man came up and sat next to him. The blind man heard crackling. He asked, "What are you doing?" The man said, "I have matzah here." The blind man asked, "What's that?" The man replied, "Here, I'll give you a piece." The blind man took the matzah and moved his hand over it, then turned to the fellow and said, "Who wrote this drivel?" The blind man had an excuse. At least he was blind, but we have no excuse. Let's all hope that we will keep our brokenness and blind spot in check so we will know only

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**good things in the future so the Mashiach will come quickly in our day. Amen.**