

KOL TODA



Gateways to Gratitude: Giving Thanks to Hashem

MARROR: GRATITUDE FOR BITTERNESS

In a few short weeks we will be celebrating the birth of our nation, the Holiday of Redemption – Pesach. We will sit at the Seder table and retell the story of our nation's bitter slavery in Egypt, and The Almighty's miraculous redemption. The word "Seder" denotes that everything we do during the course of the evening is according to a very specific order. Yet there is something we do that appears to be not quite in the correct order. In accordance with the order brought in the *passuk* (Bamidbar 9) "It shall be eaten with matzah and marror," we eat first the matzah that symbolizes the salvation, and then the marror, the bitter herbs that remind us of the bitterness and pain of slavery. This requires explanation; surely, chronologically the order should be reversed?

The Sefas Emes (Pesach, 5632) writes that the purpose of eating the bitter herbs is not just to recall the bitterness of slavery, but to include even the bitterness of the servitude in the gratitude we feel and express during the Seder. He writes: "The reason for eating marror is to show that we appreciate now and believe that even the pain and slavery were for our good and praise Hashem even for them. Through those tribulations we entered the covenant with G-d. It was not by chance that our nation was in Egypt, it was a preparation for our achieving perfection (a prerequisite for receiving the Torah and becoming a holy nation), just like silver is placed in the fire in order to be purified."

Maharil Tzintz, in his notations on the Haggada, comments that Klall Yisrael

only arrived at this elevated perception after the redemption. After the final objective was achieved, they appreciated retroactively that even the difficult steps that led to this goal were totally for their good. Hence we eat the marror after the matzah; after reliving the redemption we

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appreciate the good – and goodness of Hashem – even within the servitude.

We are told that in the future, we will be able to proclaim the blessing *Hatov veHameitiv* – Who is Good and Does Good – for everything that happened to us in this world, even for occurrences that appeared at the time to be very negative. But now, before we see the final objective, it is inappropriate and even forbidden to express this *berachah*. Nevertheless, here

in this world it is still possible to thank G-d for our difficulties.

A blessing – *berachah* – is a higher level of expression than gratitude, as is evident from the verse, "All Your works will thank You, Hashem, and Your pious ones will bless You" (Tehilim 145:10). Blessing is the level of piety in which the person is so filled with gratitude that he feels the desire to give something in return for what he received. Achieving such a level of wholehearted appreciation even for pain and difficulties, is beyond our capability in this world. Therefore, one does not proclaim the blessing *Hatov VeHamietiv* in this world for (seemingly) bad things. But, we are directed to appreciate that there is good even in the difficult things. The Gemara (Berachos 60) states that after the death of someone close, G-d forbid, we are instructed to recite the blessing of *Dayan Haemes* – The True Judge. The Gemara continues, "A person should accustom himself to say always 'Everything Hashem does is for the best!'" This is brought also in Shulchan Aruch (Or Hachaim 230). The *berachah Hatov VeHamietiv* is inappropriate, but appreciation and even gratitude are most praiseworthy.

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May we always thank Hashem for the good within every aspect of our life – without exception. In this merit He will surely reveal to us very soon the wonderful final objective of the entire magnificent plan of Creation.

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TZADDIKIM THANK HASHEM

Reb Zalman Brizel - Appreciating Broken Matzos

Reb Zalman Brizel, one of the esteemed figures in Jerusalem of old, was known for his extreme meticulousness in his mitzvah observance. When the holiday of Pesach came he was even more careful than usual. He gave special attention to the mitzvah of baking matzah – he would travel out to the fields long before Pesach to insure that the wheat was completely dry and kosher for the Pesach matzos. Then, after the wheat was finally ground and packed, he would carefully take out the flour on the day of Erev Pesach to bake the special matzos that would be used at the Seder – matzos referred to as "matzos mitzva" – those very special matzos that would be used for the mitzvah of eating matzah at the Seder table.

Erev Pesach afternoon one year, after he returned from the exertion of baking the matzos mitzva, Reb Zalman placed the precious basket of matzos in a secluded corner in the room, a particularly clean and closed area. Before nightfall, the family members began gathering to set up the Seder table at their grandfather's house. A few

exuberant grandchildren started a lively game of tag and ran around the house, accidentally knocking over the precious basket of matzos.

When they heard the crack and crumble of the matzos, everyone came running, and stood frozen in their tracks when they realized what had happened – the precious flour ... the elevated atmosphere of the baking ... the special *chumros*, extra care ... were all now of no avail. No one will eat matzos from the floor on Pesach.

Everyone was afraid; what would grandfather say when he saw what happened?

Reb Zalman came home and saw the matzos. He raised his hands to the heavens and said:

"Master of the world! How can I thank You enough for the grandchildren that You gave me! How many people don't have children? How many don't merit that their children marry? Of those who do marry off their children, so many don't have grandchildren ... and if the matzos fell because of these precious children, can one complain?!"



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A Word of Gratitude

“The objective of Yetzias Mitzrayim is our gratitude. This gratitude should inspire and motivate us to keep the whole of the Torah”

Sifsei Chaim by Rabbi Chaim Friedlander zt"l

Thank G-d for the Cleaning - A Point to Ponder

A young boy approached Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and asked him for an explanation: "The Mishna tells us that Hashem wanted to increase the merit of Yisrael, He therefore gave them many mitzvos." If Hashem loves us, why does He give us many mitzvos, He should give us less, to make life easier for us, not more difficult!"

The rav answered with a question: "Are you able to put two shoes on at once? Of course not. One must put on one shoe and then the other. Hashem wanted to reward us for something we do anyway – Hashem told us to put on the right shoe before the left one. Now, if you do this because Hashem told you to do so – you will have earned reward!"

"This is the meaning of the Mishna: Hashem gave us many mitzvot, things that we would do anyway. How

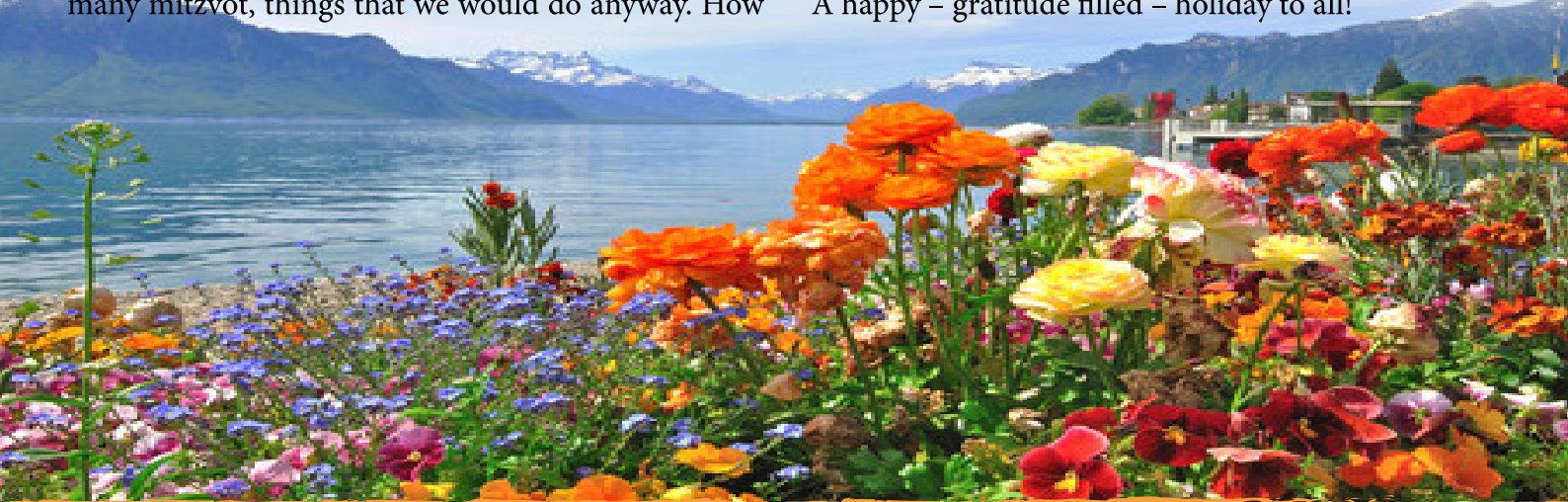
good Hashem is to us: everyone in the world puts on shoes, but we put on shoes and are rewarded for it."

In this vein we may add with regard to Pesach cleaning: Everyone knows a house needs to be cleaned and tidied at least once a year: borrowed items must be returned to their owners, all the things that went missing over the year need to be found and the dust and cobwebs need to be removed. Hashem loves us so much and says to us, "You would clean your homes in any case. Come, clean it for a mitzvah. Clean your homes to get rid of the chametz in honor of Pesach."

So clean and scrub away, and give thank to Hashem, our Loving

Father, Who gave us this wonderful mitzvah...!
A happy – gratitude filled – holiday to all!

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The staff of "Kol Toda" wishes our readers, phone line listeners and all of Am Yisroel a happy kosher Passover!

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L'Olam Odehka
"Forever will I thank You"



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