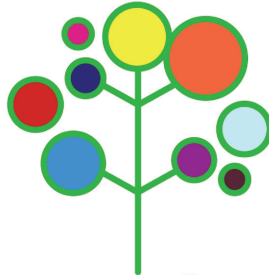


BS"D



חב"ד חינוך
CHABAD CHINUCH

AFIKOMEN & MOSHIACH

*Compiled by
Rabbi Mordechai Z. Hecht*



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We clean for Pesach. We make all the arrangements. We set the Seder table. Step #1 We make kiddush. Step #2 We wash our hands. Step #3 We eat some vegetable (onion ,potato, celery etc.) in salt water. Step #4 We remove the middle Matzah and we break it in half and put the larger half away in a special afikomen bag to be eaten later for the **Afikomen**. (Some are careful there should be a Kizayis, some also break it into 5 parts)

What is this all about?

Open up to the Code of Jewish Law, Laws of Pesach Section 477: We find the following:

“At the end of the entire meal we eat from the matzah that we placed in the afikomen bag and we eat a Kizayis of Matzah. (a measure formally described as the size of one olive and traditionally determined as one ounce, 27 grams) This matzah is a symbolic memory of the Passover offering once brought in Temple times which was eaten after the Passover meal. One should lean when eating it. No need to wash our hands again for bread and no additional blessing on Matzah is recited.”

This is just one of many laws associated with this ancient practice but is sufficient to show us what we do practically.

The Question that remains is, what is this all about?

Some interesting ideas that I came across this year are shared here. These thoughts all reflect one central theme and this is that the Afikomen is all about Moshiach and the long awaited dream and the fulfillment of so many prophecies of our Holy Torah that will complete the redemption of Egypt in a most wholesome way.

Each paragraph is titled by the sage who said it, all in the spirit of the Haggadah itself which quotes the love and passion of the sages who stayed up all night retelling the story. So too sages throughout the ages have elaborated and enlightened us with their insights into the Haggadah, as I too fulfill my duty in this spirit and share them with you here.

∞ Rabbi Eliezer Nachman Puah

Rabbi Eliezer Nachman Puah [died 1659], a prized disciple of the great Ramo of Fano – Rabbi Menachem Azaria of Fano [died 1625] one of the leading Kabbalists in Italy explains: “We begin the seder with one thought in mind: As G-d has once redeemed us from Egypt, so too G-d will redeem us from this present Exile”. The seder is not only about retelling the story of our past but very much about our present lives and our future as a people.

He further expounds: “This is the whole purpose of the Haggadah, to retell all the stories of the Journeys of our people and the miracles that G-d has performed for us time and again, so that we reflect on them and show G-d our *Hakarat Hatov* – appreciation for all the goodness and kindness. In doing so G-d in turn is inspired and motivated to do more goodness and kindness and ultimately to bring us our most desired internal will”, our ultimate dessert of all desserts, the final course of the great meal of life, “the coming of our exodus from this present exile.”

This in turn explains why we hide the *Afikomen* – matzah bag for later. This matzah reminds us of the Temple which will be rebuilt, “later”. From the onset of the Seder table we are setting a trajectory and goal which is our prayer to G-d that we want Moshiach now, the return of the Temple in Jerusalem and G-d’s revelation as in days of old.

(*Medrash B’Chidush p.32,33*)

∞ The Rebbes of Belz

The Great Rebbes of Belz [1800’s] expound on a similar note. “that when we begin retelling the story of the Exodus we begin at this stage with the story of the Poor man’s bread as we invite the poor people, and we recognize that just as G-d redeemed the Jewish people from Egypt at such a low for our people, at the brink of total despair practically physically and spiritually so too G-d should and could redeem us equally so,

with little expectations from his children, but rather by the mercy and love of G-d towards us." By hiding this afikomen it is resembling our hidden goodness and as we hope and pray for our redemption as a people, we show G-d we have our trajectory set, but ultimately G-d needs to make it happen. *(Imrei Kodesh p. 32,33) [G-d is the one who gives, G-d is the one who takes, let him bring it all back, with Moshiach now.]*

∞ The Sefas Emes

The Sefas Emes, one of the great Chassidic Masters explains that, "The miracle of the exodus of Egypt was the preparation for all the redemptions of our people. It is for this reason that we don't say the whole Hallel on Passover because the ultimate redemption is still not here and therefore the redemption from Egypt isn't even complete. Rather, in every generation we are one step farther out of Egypt and one step closer to the Ultimate and complete redemption, until the grand finale. Therefore, we hide some matzah for the end". As a symbol that it isn't over yet, we are still waiting for the end, as always, for the end of all ends.

(Haggadah, Sfas Emes)

∞ The Kaliver Rebbe

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Taub, the great and saintly Kaliver Rebbe expounds, "that the reason why we eat a vegetable dipped in salt water but we don't make an after blessing is because in this bitter exile, we get a lot of bitter experiences with no end. *After Blessings* by their innate nature - close things out; but not here and now." *(Kol Menachem Al Hatorah p.99)*

This thought can easily lend itself to what we've been saying all along from the onset of the Seder. We don't take our eye off the ball - the matzah, the wish and waiting of our people to end the bitter exile as we know it. We continue to hope and pray that the end all and be all in fact be here and now. Afikomen! Let us end this exile already. Bring on the

dessert of all deserts G-d and let us say the grand Grace after meals and conclude this exile now, by putting a true end to all suffering, tears and sorrow and not leaving it open ended any longer.

∞ **Reb Yehonason Eibzchuts**

Reb Yehonason Eibzchuts, [passed away 1764] one of this great master's ideas lends itself to the Practice of *Karpas* and why it comes before *Yachatz* and the Afikomen practice:

“Vegetables grow by the light and powers of the sun and the moon. What do the vegetables have to do to get that blessing of existence and life? Nothing. By the share order of existence vegetables have been growing for millennia easily totaling in size much greater than the moon and sun itself. When the Jews left Egypt, they left by night to show the Egyptians we are not afraid, even in the darkness of night we can leave. Not the physical darkness of night but even standing by the powers of the Moon, served as idolatry by the Egyptians. Even their *G-d of the moon* could not stop our people from the redemption. In fact, when do we eat the Passover offering, particularly and only: “all night until morning.”

(*Ahavas Yehonason Pesach 1, p94*)

The Jewish people also have a sun and a moon spiritually, a bright side and a dark side. After all, said and done, even their dark side didn't halt the redemption of the Jews in Egypt. [Even whilst some of the plantation in Egypt was destroyed in the plagues] We, like vegetables, may live by the powers of the sun and sometimes by the darkness and dimmed lightness and powers of the moon - a reference of a lower level of G-d divine powers and energy, yet that does not eradicate us, past or present tense, nor should it stop our ultimate growth, and upcoming redemption for our people.

Immediately before the *Yachatz* - setting aside the Afikomen Matzah - we take out a vegetable and eat it. Precisely stressing this idea, dear G-d we want our redemption

now and a need to our pain and suffering in exile. Please G-d don't allow any darkness halt us any longer as you didn't allow it to halt us in Egypt itself. Only then, immediately, go and break the middle matzah with absolute faith that there will be a "later" – a redemption – a dessert of all desserts for us – later. Amen. (*See also Peshet Davar 293, MaaSeh Hashem*)

∞ HaRav Shlomah Zalman Hecht ZT"L

Reb Shlomah Zalman Hecht, Chief Chabad Ambassador, Chicago [passed away 1979].

"If you ever paid attention to a burning log, at first you see a raging fire and the bark gets peeled away with all the snap crackles and pops of the fire. Then, the fire calms down almost to a subtle silence, and it is at that moment when the heat of the flame is actually the hottest and most effective. The Jews have had millennia to make noise, and then there are times when we seem to be quiet, yet in those moments of silence we are and can in fact be most effective. We don't always know what to say or even how to say to it – but we know it and we feel it. And the silence itself is a form of an offering and powerful presence. Like a warm hand shake, or a gracious smile. Priceless!" ... (*Unpublished Talk 1970s*) or not even a whole Matzah, hidden silently in a bag waiting and waiting for us to come and take it back out and use it for a Mitzvah. Like we say on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur there's the loud voice and then there is the *Kol Demmamah Dakah* – the low silent voice – the internal and eternal yearning of every Jew for what we really know is best for us, only silently wishing and hoping for its face to show speedily in our times. Amen. This is the Afikomen. This is what the Afikomen means to me – and to our people.

∞ Eating out on Pesach

The Maharitz Chiyus on the Gemora Sanhedrin 32b raises a quandary. How was it that Rabbi Eliezer in the Haggadah was in Bnei Berak for Pesach, his hometown was Lod, Israel. Rabbi

Eliezer himself said: Sukkah 27b: “Praised worthy are the Atzlonim – lit, lazy ones who don’t go out of their house on the Holidays”. If that is the case how was it that he himself was in Bnei Berak for Pesach?

“Open up the Haggadah of Reb Reuven Margolios ZT”L as he answers this question as follows:

We find numerous times that Rabban Gamliel and his colleagues, the elders of the generation would travel overseas for the needs of our people...it’s possible that on the eve of that particular Holiday he had returned to dry land late and ended up in Bnei Berak, which was near Yafo, close to the home of these other sages. Surely, for the needs of our people, Rabbi Eleazar himself would allow going away for Pesach. In his particular situation that year, he attempted to travel home back to Lod but couldn’t make it in time for Pesach so he stayed by his friend’s house in Bnei Berak.”

(Haggadah Yayin Lavan)

However, it does not end there because everything in the Haggadah has depth and profound meaning for us and this story may have happened once, but its lesson must leave an indelible mark for us and some ideas to consider may include:

1) We are commanded to always love and be concerned for our people and Pesach is an awesome time to emphasize this.

2) Pesach should be spent with family and friends; some would even argue *must* be spent in this way. Look at the Haggadah, who will ask the 4 questions. Who will play out the 4 sons. Ultimately the Haggadah itself says *VChol Hamarbeh Lisaper...* “those who increase in telling of the stories of our ancestors will be praised”. The term used is a plural one. Rebbe Elazar ended up in Bnei Berak and spent the holiday with friends and more friends equal more storytelling and greater conversation. *This is the spirit of Pesach.*

In fact, even if everyone at the table tells over the exact story it is considered a mitzvah for all present. There is never

too much showing-appreciation to G-d and his influence in the world.

(see *Avudraham on the Haggadah*.
See *Abarbanel. Peshar Davar p.35*)

∞ **Avnei Nezer- The Rebbe Sochatchov** **(Rabbi Borenstein ZT"l)**

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 477:1) rules that one should be careful to eat the Afikomen before chatzot - midnight. The Mishnah Berurah explains that this is because it commemorates the korban Pesach, which was consumed before chatzot (*Zevachim 5:8*). One should ensure that at least the first kezayit of matzah, which we make a bracha on, should be eaten by chatzot. The reasoning behind this is clear. In order to feel the imminence of the geulah, as if it were taking place here and now, one must perform the mitzvah at the same time that our ancestors did it in Egypt, as they were rushing to leave. This will help him feel as though he himself is going out of Egypt. (*Sources mentioned above*)

“As there is a great discussion as when exactly the Afikomen needs to be eaten. “In *Avnei Nezer* (381) I found a remarkable plan, based on the premise that, according to the view that the *Korban Pesach* – Passover offering may be eaten only until midnight, and, likewise, matzah must be eaten before midnight, a leniency results, viz. that after midnight one may eat to his heart’s content, and the prohibition of eating after the Afikomen does not apply, since the obligation that one must have the taste of Pesach and matzah remaining in his mouth, applies only to the time when there is a mitzvah to eat the *Korban Pesach* and matzah. After midnight, however, when the time of the mitzvah has passed, there is no such rule.

Accordingly, if, at the beginning or the middle of the meal, one sees that midnight is approaching, he should eat a *kezayis* of matzah with a condition, that if the halacha is in accordance with R’ Eleazar ben Azariah, who rules that the *Korban Pesach*

may be eaten only until midnight, this should be his Afikomen. If the halacha is in accordance with R' Akiva, who rules that the Pesach may be eaten throughout the night, this should not be his Afikomen, but ordinary matzah. He should wait until after midnight and complete his meal and then eat a second Afikomen. Thereby, he fulfills his obligation in any case. If the Halacha is in accordance with R' Eleazar ben Azariah, the first one is counted as Afikomen, and after midnight, he was permitted to eat further. If the halacha is in accordance with R' Akiva, the second one was his Afikomen."

(Encyclopedia of Mitzvos 2, Sholom Gross)

∞ Dzikover Rebbe

"Incidentally, I saw in *Taam Hamelech* (p. 231, appendix, note 35), quoting *Sefer Imrei Noam* from the Dzhikover Rebbe o.b.m. that tzaddikim say that Afikomen is an assurance for having children. This is alluded to be the Midrash that states that Pharaoh said, "פן ירבה", Lest they multiply, and the Holy Spirit replies, "כן ירבה", So shall they multiply. The words, Ken yirbeh, equal numerically, the word, Afikomen - 287."

(Encyclopedia of Mitzvos 2, Sholom Gross)

If I may humbly add, 287 is the numerical amount of the Hebrew word פור - which means to open up - generously. It's this holy spirit mentioned above that we wish and pray for each and every day for G-d to open up and reveal himself entirely - that which will be revealed when Moshiach comes. The Afikomen is all about G-d opening up and revealing his true self for all eternity - *generously*.

Furthermore, perhaps Humorously, we can consider that if Moshiach comes before Midnight and we still didn't eat the Afikomen we may need to still bring the *Korban Pesach* this night, however if he comes after midnight and we didn't eat the Afikomen, according to the opinion that it must be done before midnight, it's too late and we'll have to wait till next year for a *Korban Pesach* offering. So for those ardent believers

that wait until midnight to eat the Afikomen have now more than enough for what to rely on.

∞ The Maharal of Prague

“The commentaries on the Haggadah made *Halel* – step 14 and *Nirtzah* Step 15, two separated steps in the Haggadah. *Halel* is the part where we say the collective prayer of *Halel* – praises to Hashem and *Nirtzah* is our way of saying: G-d please answer our prayers - and one who has reached this (step# 15) point surely his prayers will be – *Nirtzah* – accepted.

However, the Maharal says: “this does not seem so to me”. “Why would the sages OBM not do this with all other mitzvos as well. Have a stage where we conclude with G-d’s acceptance of sorts. Why here of all places in the Torah’s 613 mitzvos? Rather, *Halel* and *Nirtzah* represent 1 step leaving us with only 14. *Halel* – *Nirtzah* being 1 idea and 14 is in fact the correct number of steps of the Seder corresponding to ט” numerically 14, but in translation it means ‘hand’, a reference to G-d’s “outstretched arm”, G-d’s great hand that has performed in Egypt - that took us out of Egypt. And *Halel* – *Nirtzah* is a request, one united idea, a prayer, that G-d should perform wonders and miracles for us today as well - and take us out of our Egypt, here and now.”

(Divrei Neggidim, Hagadah Tiferes Maharal)

The Maharal does not stop there, he sheds light and *opens the door* to a profound misconception.

“There is a minhag- custom to open the door of ones dwelling at this stage in the Haggadah and we recite an eerie prayer about punishing G-d’s enemies. By opening the door so gallantly we are making a point that tonight is *Leil Shimuirm* – a guarded night by G-d Himself and that we are not afraid of the gentiles etc. However, says the Maharal, once again, this does not seem so to me. Why now of all times to ask G-d to punish the nations that deserted G-d and monotheism, we can do it any and every other day? Rather, we open the door for one

reason since, as already mentioned earlier, *Halel – Nirtzah* is all about asking G-d to shower us with his mercy and bless us with Moshiach now, miracles and wonders, and redeem us now from exile, therefore it is our obligation, and a truthful fundamental idea part of the idea of our faith in Moshiach, to make known to our families and children, the next generation, as we are taught by our sages throughout history that which the prophets have taught us: that before Moshiach comes *Eliyahu Hanavi* – Elijah the prophet will appear, a pre cursor to the coming of Moshiach. It is for him that we open the door!

Now, at this point, once we are already opening the door for Elijah – as we pray for the coming of Moshiach (*Halel – Nirtsah*), we also make note of the reality that the Torah teaches us that before Moshiach comes there will be a war Gog U'Magog – a battle of sorts amongst the nations – and following this the redemption will arrive -we are in turn asking Hashem; *Shefoch Chamoscha* – please G-d – You, rid the world of all those things that are deterrents to the ultimate redemption including *Goyim* -idolatrous nations or nations who wish to harm us spiritually and physically.” Now you have the proper and correct meaning and reason that is sweet like honey for opening the door.”

(Divrei Neggidim, Haggadah Tiferes Maharal)

∞ Chafetz Chaim

“It was customary by the Chafetz Chaim that the children were *Chotfin* – would grab the Afikomen. It was the custom of Reb Mendel Zt'l, Rosh Yeshivah Chofetz Chaim Radin, as was customary amongst our people that the children would make a deal to receive a gift after they return the Afikomen. ([Probably this was the custom by the Chafets Chaim as well]).”

(Mibeis Chofets Chaim, Haggadas Hagershuni p.58.)

This above-mentioned thought lends itself to all of the above mentioned earlier here in this collection of thoughts, the idea that perhaps when training our children all about the

seder and the Afikomen we educate them and explain to them that a prize is given because Moshiach is like a prize and comes to those who wait, but also to those who search and want it and ask for it really bad. Perhaps then we too can turn around to Hashem and say: if not for us alone perhaps in the merit of the *Kinderlach* who show their commitment to the mitzvos of Pesach and graciously wait and want it really bad, Moshiach should come now. Amen.

“Three days before Pesach, on the porch of his home, the Gri”z zt”l would make a calculation if Moshiach would come if it would still be possible to bring a Korban Pesach – a Passover offering, and would make note of all the things one could do to fulfill this mitzvah in full detail. One point, the fact that the animals need to be held in advance for four days to assure that it has no blemish, was his only question that he couldn’t answer as it was now already three days before Pesach, aside from this he had it all worked out.

(MiBeis Chofetz Chaim, Haggadas Hagershuni, p. 63)

We too should be thinking and perhaps planning what if Moshiach comes, how will we be performing the Afikomen in such an instance.

The word “tzafonah” צפנה is not only the northward direction, but can also mean “hidden.” On the night of Pesach, for instance, the afikomen we eat at the end of the meal is called “tzafun” צפון, because it is hidden throughout the entire seder. Hashem told Moshe to tell the Children of Israel, “Since you are coming into the boundary of the land of Eisav, it is important to remember that ‘*penu lachem tzafonah*’ – go in the direction of ‘tzafun’ – hiding – i.e. keep your wealth and success concealed. Do not arouse their animosity, and jealousy.

(Kli Yakar)

Now, in exile our blessings and richness have to be hidden but when Moshiach comes this will no longer be an issue as we will easily and happily be able to practice our Judaism easily and without any concerns for others who wish to harm us.

∞ The Lubavitcher Rebbe

Let us understand the reason for performing mitzvos in a physical manner, and specifically the significance of not eating anything [on the night of the Passover seder] after the Afikomen or “dessert” has been eaten – except the wine symbolizing the coming Redemption. Nowadays, during exile, the matzah we eat for the Afikomen serves as a reminder of the Paschal offering. Nothing is eaten after the Afikomen so that its taste may linger. The intent of the Paschal offering is to teach us to believe in Providence. Even when subjected to great danger, we should have full confidence in G-d. For G-d is the Guardian of Israel, as it is written: ‘The Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.’

(See: Shulchan Aruch Admur HaZakein, Hilchos Pesach 477:3. / Yerushalmi, Pesachim ch. 10/ Haggadah For Pesach, p. 43. 19/ Shulchan Aruch, ibid.; Haggadah For Pesach, p. 37. 20. Shulchan Aruch 478:1. 21. Tehillim 121:4)

G-d’s conduct with the Jewish people transcends the bounds of nature. When a Jew submits all his natural matters to G-d’s service, the Almighty then helps him in a supernatural manner. This is what is meant by the statement that the taste of the Paschal offering should linger in one’s mouth, [remembering] that “G-d saved our houses” [by protecting the Jews in a supernatural manner].

This is also the general idea of the exodus from Egypt, [at which time] G-d acted in a manner that transcended nature. The matter will be better understood by examining this concept [of transcending nature] as it applies to man’s spiritual service. Here too, the whole purpose of nature is to serve as a vehicle for that which transcends nature. The verse states: “G-d placed the world too within their hearts.” This means to say that the world’s spiritual purification is wholly dependent on man’s spiritual refinement. Man achieves this refinement through spiritual service and physically performing mitzvos.

It is written: "You shall love the Lord your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul...." Our sages comment: "With all your heart' means with both inclinations, the yetzer tov and the yetzer hora. 'With all your soul' means one must love G-d even if He should take one's soul." To love G-d "with all one's heart" means that even the yetzer hora should come to love G-d, while to love G-d with all one's soul means that one should wrest away from the animal soul its love of physical pleasures. Both these loves are achieved only by waging war [against the animal soul], as we find written: "When you go out to do battle against your enemy," the evil inclination being man's enemy [in as much as it seeks to spiritually destroy a person].

(Shemos 12:27, 23. 3:11. 24/ Devarim 6:5. 25/ Berachos 54a; Rashi, Devarim 6:5. 26/ Devarim 21:10; Likkutei Torah, Devarim, p. 34c.)

The Zohar states: "The time of prayer is the time of battle," between the G-dly and animal souls. Both souls possess intellect and emotions. The intellect of the divine soul comprehends only that G-dliness is good, while the intellect of the animal soul comprehends only the goodness of material matters. That the intellect of the animal soul is devoted only to worldly pleasures is to be gleaned from the verse: "...that the tree was good to eat and pleasurable to the eyes." The divine soul's intellect explains to the intellect of the animal soul the goodness that is inherent in G-dliness. Because the animal soul possesses intellect, it is capable of comprehending that G-dliness is indeed good. For though the animal soul is immersed in physical pleasures, the very fact that it possesses intellect [enables it to comprehend G-dliness. Herein lies the difference between the animal soul and the yetzer hora. The yetzer hora is only emotive, while the animal soul possesses intellect as well.

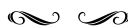
Although its intellect is bound up with physical matters, it can be made to comprehend that G-dliness is better. There are a number of proofs which help the animal soul comprehend the matter. The animal soul is aware that there are various

levels of goodness and pleasure. Food is pleasurable, but music is more pleasurable. The pleasure [received through the exercise] of a good emotional attribute [such as an act of kindness] exceeds even the pleasure of music. And the goodness of intellect surpasses even that of emotion; since intellect is more refined than emotion, it follows that the pleasure derived from it is also superior. That intellect is superior to emotion can be perceived from the fact that emotion is much more tangible [or coarser] than intellect; intellect is drawn to understand that which is above it, while emotions are drawn to that which is below them.

Through these various explanations the intellect of the animal soul concludes that spiritual goodness is superior to physical goodness. When the G-dly soul gives the animal soul to understand various G-dly concepts by using explanations and illustrations which are readily comprehensible, [the animal soul undergoes a marked change]. Little by little, the intellect of the animal soul comes closer to comprehending matters of G-dly intellect. Ultimately it will come to realize that only G-dly goodness is truly good, and that it is this goodness which a person should desire. This then is the meaning of: "You shall love the Lord your G-d with all your heart..." that the animal soul too should attain a love of Godliness.

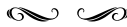
In summary: The Afikomen serves as a remembrance of the Pascal offering. It helps us remember Providence, and that G-d's conduct with Jews is supernatural. The purpose of mitzvos performed physically is to refine the world's physicality, this being dependent on each person's prior refinement of self the person achieves self-refinement by teaching the animal soul the goodness of G-dliness, and thus endowing it with a love of G-d. This [love of G-d by the animal soul as well as the G-dly soul] is love "with all your heart."

(Chassidic Discourses 1, p.201)



In conclusion: reflecting on all the words of the greatest sages quoted in this compilation is one thing and this is: The Afikomen resembles that which is hidden, and like Moshiach which is hidden will one day be revealed. Something we wish for and pray for always.

May this year be our final year of waiting and may we see the revelation of the coming of Moshiach speedily in our time. Amen.



לזכות
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