

# Pulse OF Emunah

ANI  
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life

LESSONS

## GOOD NEIGHBORS II

The community of Outremont, Montreal, is a model of positive relations between a group of frum Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors. Over the years, the neighborhood was the scene of conflict after conflict, whether it was a shul expansion, the construction of an eiruv, public transportation, or anything else.

A group of *chassidim* felt it was time their neighbors heard their side of the story. They opened a blog and began printing flyers for their neighbors explaining each Jewish holiday in advance. They held open meetings to respectfully discuss issues such as the garbage generated by frum families or standards for yard maintenance. And they urged their own community to be more sensitive to their neighbors.

Another group, Friends of Hutchison Street, was established by a non-Jewish Canadian woman of Palestinian. The two groups now work hand in hand to promote peace and mutual understanding in the neighborhood. A non-Jewish neighborhood resident wrote to Friends of Hutchison that his car had been damaged in its parking spot. He was surprised to find a note from the *chassidish* driver, taking full responsibility and providing his phone number to pay for repairs. The owner of the car was impressed. He had not expected anyone to come forward.

“If we all thought and acted as he did, we would live in the most beautiful area of the world! One year after moving here, I feel more and more in harmony with my Hasidic neighbors.”

As our communities expand, we must be sensitive to the way our actions are viewed by others. Whether we are leaders or ordinary people, we must make kiddush Hashem among our top priorities.



gem

OF THE WEEK

## CHAMETZ: WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

Throughout the years in Mitzrayim, Bnei Yisrael never had time to let their dough rise. Driven by the whip, they could only bake bread in haste. Thus, matzah is the bread of slavery “that our forefathers ate in Egypt.” Matzah symbolizes *avdus*, lack of social independence. Its opposite is *chametz*.

Pesach serves as a *zikaron*, reminding us each year how we attained independence. The day of our freedom features its removal. For seven days we refrain from nourishing ourselves with the bread of independence. Moreover, on the anniversary of attaining independent personalities and homes of our own—*seh l'bayis*—we clear out from our homes the symbol of social independence. In this way we remind ourselves that, at the time we rose to freedom, our personalities and our possessions bore not the slightest trace of independence, or even the ability to achieve it. We were sunk in servitude, and it was only the omnipotence of G-d that brought us out.

Therefore, if anyone, during the seven days of Pesach, eats bread, he denies the divine origin of our freedom and declares it a human achievement; he

*continued on reverse side*

powerful  
PRAYER

GA'AL YISRAEL:  
SERVING HASHEM



Why do we deserve such great reward of being assured a place in Olam Habah merely for saying Geulah right before Shemone Esrei? Rabbeinu Yonah explains that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim in order to be His servants. *Tefillah* is considered our *avodah*.

When we remember Yetzias Mitzrayim, our gratitude, and our obligations to Hashem, and then perform His service by humbling ourselves in *tefillah*, we are indeed deserving of Olam Habah.

*Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom*

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## ETERNAL LESSONS

*By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation*

This year's Pesach Seder will be number 3,339 since the first one so many years ago. Throughout our long history, Jews have always made a Seder, year in and year out, no matter what circumstances we found ourselves in, no matter where on the globe we were living. Whether the many *kehillos* across Eastern and Western Europe, the communities of North Africa, the Middle East, or Yemen—everyone kept the Seder. Despite all we have endured throughout our *galus*, we keep on going. We are linked back to the very first Seder that was observed in Jewish homes in Egypt the night before leaving Mitzrayim.

The Ramban observes that there are many mitzvos dedicated *zecher l'yetzias Mitzrayim*. He explains that Yetzias Mitzrayim was a one-time-only training course for us to learn about Hashem as Creator and controller of the entire universe, and these lessons will not be repeated for a latecoming scoffer who demands of Hashem, "If you're up there, prove it to me." That is why it is so important for us to keep remembering the lessons of *emunah* taught when we witnessed the miracles of that time.

In the last twenty years of his life, Rav Yisrael Salanter traveled through France and Germany in an effort to influence Jews who had been affected by the Haskalah and Reform movements. In each town, he would find one reliable home to stay in. One time, he observed that the host himself seemed to have slacked in his observance. When Rav Yisrael inquired as to why, the man told him that a Reform thinker had eaten a ham sandwich in front of him to prove that G-d does not punish those who sin. Since that "demonstration," his faith had weakened.

Rav Yisrael did not respond. However, that same day, his host's daughter came home from music school, proudly bearing a certificate of excellence in piano.

"I don't believe that you can really play," Rav Yisrael said. "Can you show me?"

"No," said the girl, offended. "I have a certificate—I don't need to prove it to everyone who asks!"

"You are right," Rav Yisrael said. He turned to her father, the *ba'al habayis*.

"The Torah is our certificate. Hashem does not need to provide a new demonstration for every individual who doubts or denies it."

The proof has already been there in our history, since the time of our salvation from Mitzrayim over three thousand years ago.

abandons the basis of our past and cuts himself off from our future.

The *issur* of bread during Pesach means there was no independent human contribution to our freedom. Eating matzah combines the idea of freedom with the idea of subordination to Hashem, through which we became free. The emancipated Jewish people must always stand before God with matzah in their hands. We moved from serving man to serving God.

When freedom came, the Jewish people were driven out so hurriedly that they could not even prepare bread. Their departure under pressure defines *yetzias Mitzrayim* as an act of G-d, and transforms the prohibition of *chametz* and the mitzvah of matzah into significant symbols.

Were it not for these *mitzvos*, we would have eventually come to regard *yetzias Mitzrayim* as just a successful uprising by our ancestors, like so many others in world history. After all, the nation included 600,000 able-bodied men—their liberation should not have been a miracle; on the contrary, we would wonder why they tolerated oppression for so long.

The matzah, however tells us that our forefathers were driven out of Egypt in such haste that they had no time to even bake bread. They would have liked to wait for their dough to rise, but even this they could not do. Even at the very moment they went free, they were still in the power of their Egyptian oppressors.

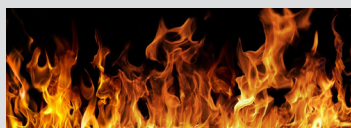
Klal Yisrael's original bread was matzah. Left to their own devices, we would still be eating the "bread of servitude." Each year when we celebrate the Yom Tov commemorating our freedom, the matzah reminds us that we obtained freedom and independence not by our own hands, but through Hashem's *chesed*.

*Based on the commentary of Rav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.*



## wonder WORLD

### ETERNAL FLAME



*How does fire keep burning?*

In Parshas Tzav, the Torah commands that the fire on the *mizbei'ach* must be kept burning constantly. What allows a fire to keep going?

Fire needs three things to continue burning: fuel, heat, and oxygen. If one of these is missing, the fire goes out. The fuel could be wood, oil, or any material that burns. Heat starts the process and keeps it going. Oxygen from the air feeds the reaction. As long as all three are present, the fire can continue. A fire must be maintained, with fuel added regularly so it does not go out. Fire reminds us that constant energy and attention are needed to keep something going strong.

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