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# GROWTH

## At The

# YOM TOV TABLE

*Special Holiday Double-Sided Edition!*

BS"D  
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5784

# PESACH

The Last Days

## The Filthy Peasant

R' Zecharia Wallerstein, zt"l, shared something remarkable.

*There was once a single, young king, who was advised by his ministers to marry the princess of a neighboring country, to unite the two regions. He heard of a beautiful princess of a bordering country, and got dressed and all ready to embark on the long journey to meet her. He traveled in his royal chariot, together with his soldiers and advisors, making their way to potentially find a queen. They eventually reached a fork in the road, causing them a momentary delay as they waited for traffic to pass. Suddenly, the king heard something out the window. He peeked out, and saw a hand reaching out of the muddy floor. "Please, I'm starving," cried the voice of a poor peasant, begging for some charity. She caught the attention of the king's guards, who explained to him that this was a pauper lying in the mud. "Pick her up, I want to see her," the king requested. They raised her up, only to suffer the terrible stench. She was covered in filth, from head to toe. "Why are you in the mud?" the king asked her. "My parents died," she explained. "I have nothing to eat; I don't even have a hut to roof over my head. I stay on the road to collect pennies so I can get something to eat..." The king was astonished. "Wow, in my kingdom?" he thought to himself. "I didn't know there was such a person in my kingdom," the king told her. "Come into my carriage; I want to talk to you." The guards suddenly piped up, "Your majesty, she will soil your carriage. Let us handle her. This is beneath you." "No," the king replied sternly. "I want to talk to her myself, and see what's going on." And so, he brought her into the chariot. She couldn't even look at him in his royalty, in her filth and shame. The king told his coachman, "Turn around; we're going back to the palace." The advisor couldn't believe what he was seeing. "Sire, we'll take care of her. We'll have her washed, fed, and give her a place to stay. You're the king! You have to marry a princess! You shouldn't even be talking to her..." "The king was adamant, "We're going back to the castle; we'll discuss meeting the princess a different time." The carriage traveled back to the capital, and the townspeople noticed a dirty peasant girl sitting inside, next to the king! Rumors spread like wildfire; people were talking and analyzing the king's "crazy move," demeaning the king for his choice of a queen. They got to the palace, where the king ordered for the servants to take care of the girl, making sure she was showered, dressed in royal clothing befitting a queen, and adorned with jewelry and cosmetics. "By 8:00, I want her in the dining room," the king commanded. "Make sure you get her ready." His ministers advised against what the king was doing: "What you're doing is very kind... of course you should help the poor... but don't bring them into your house!" The king was stubborn; this was what he wanted. Finally, at 8:00, the king was seated at one end of the long dining table, advisors seated at both sides, and in walked the young lady. The advisors were blown away. She was magnificent. Dressed in her gown, she looked like royalty. They couldn't believe it; there was no way that this was the same girl, covered in mud, in the carriage! The king stood up and pulled out her chair, welcoming her to sit and join them. Just as the ministers were praising the king on his wisdom and great ability to see beauty where no one else could, the waiters brought the food, and she quickly grabbed whatever she could with her hands, and started drinking straight out of the bottle, thus ruining her gown and getting stains all over herself. She had never seen a fork or knife. The advisors looked at the king, disparagingly. "You may be able to remove the dirt from a peasant, but you can't take the peasant out of a peasant... She's not for you, Your Majesty..." The king patiently responded, "The beauty is there, and I can't change that. But manners, I can teach her. If you give me the right amount of time, I can teach her how to be the woman of the kingdom." And so it was. It took him a few months, and with the best teachers, she was fit to be the queen. A year after he picked her up from the mud, he married her, and the entire kingdom was in awe that he was able to see her beauty through all that filth.*

R' Shimshon Pincus explained that this story is almost identical to what happened when Hashem took us out of Egypt. We were like that peasant girl – lying in filth and mud, having reached the 49<sup>th</sup> level of impurity, as Chazal describe. There were many other nations to choose from – nations that enjoyed wealth and boasted of their superiority. There was no reason for Hashem to choose us... yet He saw through all the *tum'ah* and challenges of our nation an inner beauty that the angels couldn't see. The Midrash describes that when G-d told the angels that He's going to take *Am Yisrael* out of Egypt, they responded: "Absolutely not. They serve idols just as the Egyptians do! Why would you choose the slaves over the masters?" Hashem responded that the Egyptian nation was ugly, while Klal Yisrael was beautiful. "You can't take this filthy, peasant nation of lowly slaves as a wife!" the angels countered. "If you want to take them out, we'll do it for you. It's beneath you!" Hashem responded, as we say in the Haggadah: "I will do it! I, and not an angel. I, and not a *saraph*. I, and not a messenger. I'm taking her to the castle Myself." And so, Hashem took us out, and exposed our inner glory for the whole world to see. But then, *Am Yisrael*, in all our beauty and splendor, brought out our inner peasant. "We want food! We want meat! We want water! We're making a golden calf! We want fish! We want to go back to Egypt!"

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(Continued from Front Side:) The angels once again retorted, "This is who You pick? This is royalty? They're still peasants at heart!" Whereupon Boreh Olam responded, "Patience... they just need time. I'm not taking them through the shortcut. I have to teach them etiquette. I'm going to give them 613 ways for them to upgrade their manners to the level befitting royalty."

The night of Pesach was the night of our "engagement" between us and our Creator. It was the night where Hashem showed His angels that they were wrong, and while they were arguing against us, HaKadosh Baruch Hu saw right past our filth and baggage and saw the real beauty inside us.

And that is why on Pesach specifically, we have a special mitzvah: לספר בסיפור יציאת מצרים – to discuss the story of the exodus from Egypt. No other holiday has this; there is no specific mitzvah to discuss Matan Torah on Shavuot or the Clouds of Glory on Sukkot. The reason that only Pesach has this unique concept is because, as the Zohar describes, Hashem gathers the angels every year on Pesach: "Come, listen to the beautiful praises the Jews are singing, how they rejoice that I had redeemed them." The angels come and visit each Seder, and all the armies of *malachim* in Heaven are afterwards forced to admit to G-d that He was right – that we are not a dirty, impure people, but rather an awesome nation. The Zohar even comments: "Thus, when Jews praise Hashem over *yetziat Mitzrayim* on Pesach, they give strength to Hashem." How do we "strengthen" Hashem? The answer is that through our praise to G-d over the exodus, we are proving that He was right, and the angels who had badmouthed us were wrong. We are ultimately showing that we're not as lowly as the angels had described us to be, and that gives Boreh Olam the "strength" to continue protecting us...

## What's The Name?

R' Avraham Walkin shared a beautiful thought in the name of the *Kedushat Levi* (of Berditchov). In the Torah, the holiday of Passover is referred to as *chag hamatzot* – the holiday of matzahs.

Firstly, Matzah is known as "poor man's bread," and commemorates our Egyptian enslavement. Why are we naming the holiday of our freedom based on a theme of slavery?

Secondly, we refer to the holiday as *chag hapesach* – the holiday of Pesach (stemming from when G-d passed over the Jewish houses and only killed the Egyptian firstborns). Why are we deviating from the Torah's name for it: *chag hamatzot*!?

The *Kedushat Levi* gives an unbelievable answer. When Hashem took us out of Egypt, we were like a newlywed *chatan* and *kallah*. We were slaves to Pharaoh, and we became free to "marry" HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The moment of the exodus was our engagement, and the wedding was at Har Sinai, when Boreh Olam gave us the Torah as *kiddushin*. Similar to the intense love-phase a *chatan* and *kallah* have at their engagement, where they each solely focus not on their own persona but on bringing out the qualities of one another, we had that between us and Hashem. Just as the *chatan* will say wonderful things about the *kallah*, and the *kallah* will speak highly of the *chatan*, Hashem calls it *chag hamatzot* to "recall" the kindness on our part when we left Egypt in great haste and faith in Him, carrying matzah on our backs, with no other food for the trip, to serve Him. And we refer to it as *chag hapesach*, commemorating G-d's everlasting kindness to us when He skipped over our houses and spared us from the grips of death. We talk about the greatness that Hashem did for us, and Hashem says, "No, I'm going to talk about the greatness of what you did for Me."

This is in line with the Gemara in Berachot, which brings down that Hashem said: "You [*Am Yisrael*] made a unique praise for Me when you said '*Shema Yisrael... Hashem is One.*' Therefore, I will give you a unique praise: '*Mi k'amcha Yisrael* [who is like Your nation, Israel]... the one nation of the world.'" Here, too, we extol Boreh Olam as being "One," and He reciprocates in kind...

**"If you minor in Emuna, you will have major problems. If you major in Emuna, you will have minor problems. Our Sages teach us that faith is a source of all blessings. Wherever you see faith in your life, you receive blessings."** (Gedale Fenster)

## An Opportune Time

On these final days of Pesach, we commemorate one of the greatest open miracles in history: *kri'at Yam Suf*, the splitting of the sea. The *Sefer Me'am Lo'ez* brings down that there were actually 50 different unbelievable miracles that took place for the final showdown at *kri'at Yam Suf*!

One of them – #20 – is that the Egyptians actually followed the Jews into the *Yam Suf*. What were they thinking?? How does it make sense for 900 million men to see a body of water splitting and continue chasing the Jewish People into it? The *Me'am Lo'ez* writes that when you think about, "כי אפילו שוטים שבעולם לא היו עושים כן" – even the most foolish people in the world would never have followed Bnei Yisrael into the water! Out of hundreds of millions of Egyptians, not even one of them had thought to themselves where they're going or what they're doing! This was undoubtedly the doing of the Ribono Shel Olam, Who performed yet another mind-boggling miracle in His enormous love for us...

When the Jews saw the numerous miracles all taking place at once, they had a tremendous boost in their levels of *emuna*. They even had fruits growing out of trees *in the sea* for them to feed their children, and special water to drink! R' Biderman commented that the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Pesach, when this all happened, is an especially opportune time to grow in *emuna*. Just as, on this very day, the Torah testifies, "ויאמינו וברו" – that the Jews strengthened their *emuna* in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant, so is any Jew today able to tap into that energy and fortify his own personal *emuna*. R' Rosenblum adds that the same way Bnei Yisrael was trapped, with an ocean in front of them, the Egyptians behind them, and nowhere to run, and Hashem showed them that a *yehudi* is never stuck – so do we all have to internalize on the anniversary of that fateful day that a Jew is never stuck, and that we can never give up hope, *chas v'shalom*, because Boreh Olam is always there for us.

*Let us come out of this amazing chag with a renewed spirit of hope, having strengthened our faith, trust, love, and relationship with our one and only Father in Heaven.*  
 (R' Yaakov Mizrahi)