

לכבוד ליל הסדר. The גמרא עירובין דף ס"ה ע"א has a very long אגדתא discussing the properties of יין. In that גמרא, it says: אָמַר רַבִּי הֲנִינָא: כָּל הַמִּתְפַּתֵּה בְּיֵינוּ יֵשׁ בּוֹ מִדַּעַת קוֹנּוֹ. An interesting statement, which literally translates: "Whoever can be appeased, or quieted down, through his wine will be able to acquire understanding of Hashem, or some aspect of understanding of Hashem, Who is our קונה." The גמרא continues by quoting a פסוק from נח: וַיֵּרָא ה' אֶת רֵיחַ הַנְּחִיחוֹת וַגּו': פִּרְשַׁת נח came out of the תִּבְקָה, he offered a קרבן, and Hashem accepted that קרבן. רש"י explains on that גמרא: גמרא על דבר - we're able to calm him down, or appease him, in a particular matter; ומתרצה - and he accepts it; כשטוב לבו ביין - when his heart is glad, when his heart is happy, when his heart is good with יין.

I, in a very בעלבתיש way - nothing to do with this דבר תורה - always associate בִּינָן הַמֶּלֶךְ with אַחְשָׁרוֹשׁ, and I think of his drunken orgy where he decided to kill his wife, only to regret it later. That's a very negative approach to the concept of טוב לבו ביין. The גמרא, however, presents a far more important function of יין, which in fact plays a central role in the סדר - the ארבע כוסות. What do the ארבע כוסות signify? There is an entire דרשה on this topic, discussing how vital and impactful the ארבע כוסות are. By studying this, I was able to appreciate much more what the ארבע כוסות mean to us.

At the beginning of פרשת בא, the תורה states: (שמות י"ב:) וַיִּדְעֻם כִּי אֲנִי ה' ... וַיִּדְעֻם כִּי אֲנִי ה' - to attain some level of understanding of Hashem and His relationship with us. To summarize, there are three levels to the סדר:

1. Through the כוסות ד', through the סדר, and through all the meaningful components of the סדר, we recount and relive יציאת מצרים.
2. This is absolutely critical. I don't know if we fully appreciate this, but I certainly did not.
3. What do you do with that דעת? How does it change you? How does it make you a better person?

I hope to discuss these three aspects over the next few minutes.

First, when we were עבדים in מצרים, both our גוף and נשמה were under the יד פרעה. This was a powerful manifestation of the סטרא אחרא, the יצר הרע in control. What was the result? We descended to מ"ט שערי טומאה. But then ה' took us out from that טומאה and brought us to טהרה, enabling us to reach a level of דעת. That was the great accomplishment of יציאת מצרים.

A person can assess himself on the night of the סדר. If he truly engages in יציאת מצרים properly, he will gain an inkling of the דעת of Hashem that is attained through the סדר. How? By recognizing that Hashem is his בורא, his קונה - He acquired us through יציאת מצרים. And what does this great knowledge lead to? It fosters the מידה of הכנעה. One becomes a little more humble, a little more modest, a little more easygoing. And what does that mean? It means he can withstand his יצר הרע, he can live peacefully with others. He can get along with everyone. When he sees that he is capable of being happy no matter who is around him - even people he previously didn't get along with - this brings him to a deeper understanding. That is the highest accomplishment of דעת: to develop a רוח נמוכה, a humble spirit, that enables a person to live harmoniously with others.

There is a תנה דבי אליהו that states that the יוצאי מצרים had one מצוה. Just one. What was that מצוה? To bring joy to Hashem. How did they accomplish that? How did they fulfill this one מצוה that, according to the מדרש, which was worth more than a hundred מצוות? They became a unified entity, a collective unit of ישראל. Just as we say by שבועות אחד: כאיש אחד בלב אחד, we can say the same by פסח. They made a ברית, an agreement. What was that agreement? To do חסד for one another. That is what the תנה דבי אליהו says.

That was the greatest achievement - not just freedom, not simply moving from עבדות to חירות. That is true, but what do you do with that חירות? True חירות means having humility before Hashem, and that humility



propels you to be טובל, to be patient, to live in peace with every other Jew. The result? אחדות in Israel. That was the ultimate accomplishment.

At the beginning of the סדר, we say לחמא עניא, and what do we declare? קל דקפין ייתי ויכל. Many מפרשים ask: The door is closed - who are you inviting to the סדר at this point? Invitations are extended in advance, days or even weeks before. So what does קל דקפין ייתי ויכל mean?

The answer is profound. When a person says this, he is speaking to himself. "I am willing to live with and be at peace with every Jew, with שלום, with happiness, with רעות - no matter who he is, even if I didn't get along with him yesterday. Whoever he is, he can come to my house and eat with me. That is what I am accepting upon myself." That is what קל דקפין ייתי ויכל means. No matter who it is, every single Yid is invited. And once we internalize קל דקפין ייתי ויכל, what do we say next? השתא ה'א, לשנה הבאה בארעא. פסח - We are here now, but next year, we will be in ארץ ישראל. As you know, the first night of פסח corresponds, through א"ת ב"ש, to the first night of תשעה באב. The בית המקדש was נחרב because of שנאת חנם. And what are we doing tonight? Through acquiring דעת ה' and allowing the כוסות ד' to bring out the פנימיות of a Yid - not to get us drunk, but to remove the שנאה that obstructs ישראל - that is what the כוסות ד' accomplish. And then, we will be able to say: Next year בירושלים. Through אהבת חנם, we will have the ארץ to return to ישראל זכות.

I got a ספר about the Berdichever from Ari by his מצוה בר, and the stories that are brought down for פסח are fabulous and fit right in here. It's a little bit long, but I'll try to make it as brief as possible. This is not a שבת הגדול דרשה, but I think it's worthwhile. The story goes as follows:

Two men were shouting at each other in the street. They didn't care who was around them. Someone asked, "What's going on?" They were screaming and hollering. One of the men said, "He owes me a thousand rubles." The other one said, "No, you owe me a thousand rubles." They were really fighting. Finally, an older gentleman suggested, "Let's go to ר' לוי יצחק." They agreed and went to ר' לוי יצחק. He listened to their arguments, thought about their points, and the next day he ruled that the one who claimed he was owed money must pay the other a thousand rubles. The man accepted the פסק and asked for a receipt.

The next day, he came back to ר' לוי יצחק and said, "I couldn't sleep last night, Rebbe. I understand that the Rebbe's ruling is true based on the guidelines of ההלכה, and I accept it. But I also know that I am innocent - I don't owe him a penny. He presented lies as the truth, and it was impossible for me to prove otherwise. I cannot accept in my mind that this was a just ruling." ר' לוי יצחק saw how sincere the man was and suspected he was telling the truth. He said, "You know what, let me think about what you're saying. Come back in three days." For the next three days, ר' לוי יצחק fasted and davened for an answer. The answer came to him in a dream.

When the man returned, ר' לוי יצחק told him, "It was revealed to me in a dream that your grandfather borrowed 1,000 rubles from your friend's great-grandfather and never paid him back. The 1,000 rubles that should have been repaid instead remained in your family and was passed down to you. The בית דין של מעלה decreed that the money should be returned to the original lender. Since he is no longer alive, it should be given to his grandson." The man was amazed. "That's incredible," he said, "but how do you know this is true? It was only a dream." ר' לוי יצחק asked him, "Did you inherit a שולחן ערוך from your grandfather?" "Yes, I did." "Go home and look through the pages. See if you find anything in there."

The man went home and searched through the שולחן ערוך. Suddenly, a document fell out - just as ר' לוי יצחק had predicted. It contained a record of the loan. The man immediately ran back to ר' לוי יצחק and showed him the document.



The next day, ר' לוי יצחק called for a meeting of all the leaders of the congregation. "I would like to offer my resignation." They were flabbergasted. "Why?" He told them the story about the מחלוקת and the dream, and he said, "I want to go to another city. If there's a dispute here, I have to fast for three days before I can give a proper דין. It has never happened to me before. I think it would be better if I find a different place." "Please don't leave so quickly," the townspeople pleaded. "We understand what you're saying. Give us some time. It's פסח now. Let's talk about it after פסח." ר' לוי יצחק agreed, and the city leaders departed.

On night פסח, all the poor and beggars stood in the back of the shul, waiting for someone to invite them to their home, as was the custom every year. One בעל הבית approached a pauper, bedraggled as he was, and said, "Would you like to be my guest for the סדר tonight?" "Yes, I would. Thank you very much." "It's my pleasure and honor," said the בעל הבית. "Would you mind waiting here for a minute or two? I need to have a word with a friend of mine." "Take as much time as you need. I'll be right here."

The בעל הבית went out with his friend and got caught up in a deep conversation. They walked down the street, still talking, and continued all the way to the בעל הבית's home. When they arrived at his door, they wished each other a good יום טוב and parted ways. As the בעל הבית stepped inside, he suddenly froze. "Oy! What happened to my אורח? What happened to my guest?" He ran back to shul. It was empty. The poor man he had invited was gone. Despondent, he walked home. That year, to the dismay of his wife and children, they had no guest at their סדר.

The next day in shul, the בעל הבית spotted his would-be guest. He ran over to him. "My dear friend, I owe you a thousand apologies," he said. "Forgive me. I got caught up in a conversation and forgot about you. It was inexcusable. Please forgive me." The poor man waved it aside. "Think nothing of it," he said. "I admit, I was nervous at first - I couldn't find you." "So why didn't you wait for me? When I came back, you were gone." "Everything was fine. האב נישט קיין מוירא. I did not go hungry last night. That man over there," he said, pointing, "came by and invited me." "I see. Did he ask you if you had been invited?" "He did. I told him you had invited me, but that I didn't see you anywhere, so he took me home with him. The סדר was wonderful. The food was excellent - excellent!"

Angry and upset, the בעל הבית sought out and confronted the man who had taken his guest. "How could you take my אורח?" he demanded. "You knew I had invited him!" "True, but I saw you had abandoned him." "I didn't abandon him! I was speaking to someone! I came back for him, but he wasn't there - because you took him!" They started fighting. They had to be pulled apart before they came to blows. Finally, peace was restored when they both agreed to go to ר' לוי יצחק for a פסק after יום טוב.

ר' לוי יצחק listened carefully to their arguments. Then he turned to the second man and said, "You have to pay the first man a קנס for taking his אורח." After they left, ר' לוי יצחק called another meeting with all the ראשי הקהילה. "I have reconsidered," he announced. "I have decided to remain here as the רב of Berditchev. If the men in this city fight over the privilege of inviting a poor man to their סדר, then this is the kind of city that I want to serve."

That's the message of פסח. The message of פסח is סיפור יציאת מצרים - to understand that Hashem is the boss. We are humble little creatures. Our job is to help each other. If we get that message from פסח, we've done our job.

The ארבע כוסות are good too.

Good יום טוב!

