

The Chasam Sofer's Tremendous Insight: "THEY SPOKE OF YETZIAS MITZRAYIM THAT ENTIRE NIGHT"

To Make Amends for Not Doing So at the Time of Haman's Evil Decree!

• Translation: Dr. Baruch Fox •

The yom tov of Pesach, "zeman cheiraseinu," commemorates our freedom and emancipation from the exile in Mitzrayim. Our holy seforim explain that every Jew, no matter on what spiritual level, is capable of experiencing his own, personal exodus. Everyone has his own, personal Mitzrayim—and he can go from slavery to freedom and from darkness to illumination. This concept is expressed in the Haggadah (Pesochim 116:): "Bechol dor ve'dor chayav adam liros es atzmo ke'ilu hu yatza mi'mitzrayim - in every generation, a Jew must view himself, as if he, personally, had left Mitzrayim." In keeping with the time, it is appropriate to explore various issues pertaining to Pesach.

1) The Mishnah (Pesochim 116a) teaches that the story of yetzias Mitzrayim is to be told in the form of question and answer, the son asking and the father answering. The source for this is found in the pesukim (Shemos 12,26): "And it shall be that when your children say to you: 'What is this service to you? You shall say: It is a Pesach feast offering to Hashem, Who passed over the houses of the Children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, but He saved the households, and the people bowed their heads and prostrated themselves, and (ibid. 13,14) And it shall be when your son will ask you at some future time, 'What is this? you shall say to him, 'With a strong hand Hashem removed us from Egypt, from the house of bondage.

2) It is also worthwhile to probe into the rabbinical institution to drink four cups of wine on the first night of Pesach. The Talmud Yerushalmi (Pesochim 10,1) and the Midrash (B.R. 88:5) explain that the four cups correspond to the four "Leshonos of Geulah—expressions of redemption", in Parshas Vayerah (Shemos 6:6) "Ve'hotzeisi, Ve'lokachti, Ve'goalti, Ve'hitzalti—Therefore say to the Children of Israel: 'I am Hashem, and I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt; I shall rescue you from their service, I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm...I shall bring you to the land. Nevertheless, where do we see more than a single redemption from the exile in Mitzrayim?"

"They Spoke of Yetzias Mitzrayim that Entire Night"

The Haggadah Shel Pesach states: "Ma'aseh b'Rebbi Eliezer— It happened that Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon—were reclining at a seder in Bnei Brak. They were discussing Yetzias Mitzrayim all that night, until their students came and told them: "Masters! It is time for reciting the morning Sh'ma."

We find a phenomenal insight on this story in the "Derashos Chasam Sofer" (part 1, p. 207, column 3), based

on the Gemara (Gittin 57:) "the descendants of Haman taught Torah in Bnei Brak." In the time of Haman, the Jews failed to fulfill the mitzvah of recounting the story of yetzias Mitzrayim. The posuk says (Esther 4,17) "Mordechai then left and did exactly as Esther had commanded him. Rashi comments that Mordechai saw fit to fast on the first night of the yom tov of Pesach."

Not only did they not eat matzohs and marror on the first night of Pesach, but they did not even recount the story of yetzias Mitzrayim either. This can be deduced from the Gemara (Megillah 4a): "One is required to read the Megillah at night and once again during the day." Rashi explains that this is to commemorate the miracle, when they

Amalek and was beyond the possibility of a tikun. They were trying to make amends for the descendants of Haman. The holy seforim explain that all descendants are a part of their ancestors. The descendants of Haman were part of him at the time that he was instrumental in the mitzvah of Pesach not being fulfilled. Consequently, they required tikun.

Yetzias Mitzrayim Was to Purify Yisroel to Receive the Torah

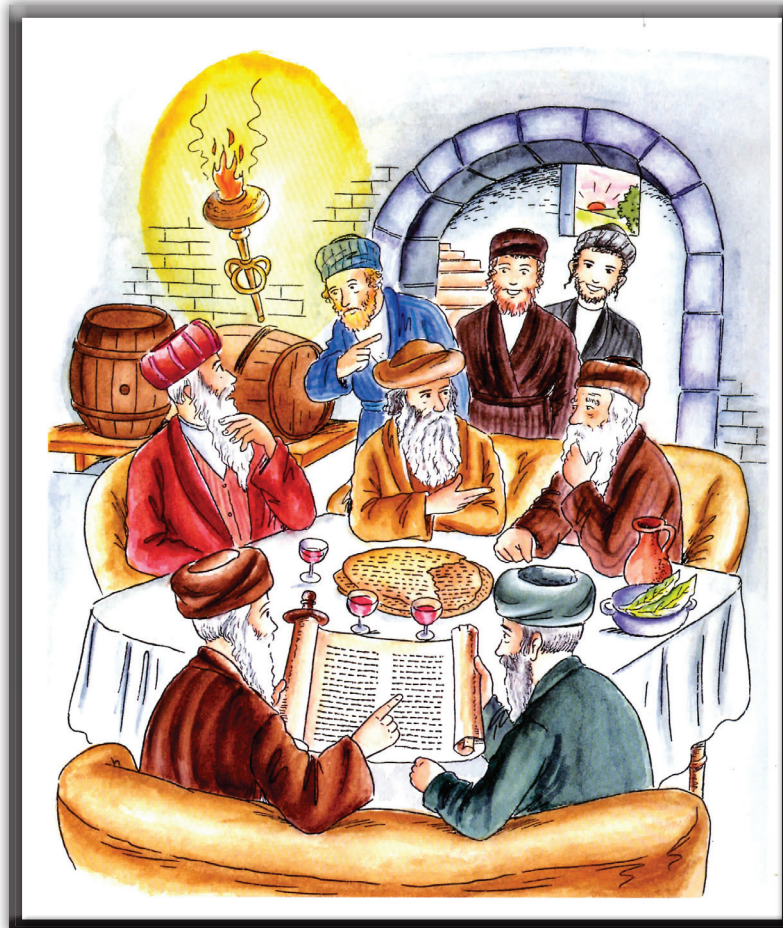
Let us delight in the wonderful words of the Chasam Sofer while delving deeper into this incident in Bnei Brak and the sages' intent to cause a rectification of what transpired in the time of Haman. The Midrash (Esther Rabbusi 8,7) elucidates the posuk (Esther 4,15) "Then Esther said to reply to Mordechai (ib. 15). She said to him: 'Go, assemble all the Jews that are to found in Shushan, and fast for me, do not eat or drink for three days'" (ib, 16): these were the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth of Nissan. He sent back word to her: But these include the first day of Pesach? She replied: 'Elder of Israel, why is there a point of observing Pesach? Mordechai thereupon acceded to her request, as it says, 'Mordechai then left and did exactly as Esther had commanded him.'" (ib. 17). In Babylon they say that this means that he spent the yom tov of Pesach fasting on account of that calamity.

How shall we understand Esther's statement to Mordechai: "Elder of Yisroel, what is the point of observing Pesach?" Clearly, it is prohibited, even in times of trouble, not to perform a mitzvah prescribed by the Torah. The contrary is true; in times of trouble, we must double our efforts to observe the Torah and fulfill the mitzvahs. So, what motivated Esther to suggest this drastic measure, and why did Mordechai agree with her?

We can explain this based on an enigmatic statement in the Zohar hokadosh (Bereishis 27). "They embittered their lives with hard work"—alludes to questions; "with mortar"—alludes to a kal ve'chomer; "and with bricks"—alludes to libun hilchusa; "and with every labor of the field"—alludes to bereisa; "all their labors that they performed with them were with crushing harshness"—alludes to Mishnah.

This Zohar makes an analogy between the various types of backbreaking labor in Mitzrayim to various aspects of study of Torah sh'bal peh. At first glance, it seems difficult to comprehend these parallels.

Let us offer the following explanation. It is known that Yisroel were exiled to Mitzrayim to purify them and prepare them to ultimately receive the Torah. It is written (Devorim



were crying out in prayer day and night. From here we see that all they did was pray.

The Chasam Sofer explains that these sages, were trying to make amends, a tikun, for the descendants of Haman who taught Torah in Bnei Brak. It was their forefather, the wicked Haman, who caused this very mitzvah not to be observed in his time.

It is important to clarify a point about the Chasam Sofer's explanation. The sages were not trying to make amends for the wicked Haman's sin; for, he was a descendant of



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4,20): "Hashem has taken you and removed you from the iron crucible, from Mitzrayim, to be a nation of heritage, as this very day." Rashi comments that an iron crucible is a vessel that is used to refine gold. Rashi (*Shemos* 3,11-12) explains that Bnei Yisroel merited the miraculous exodus from Mitzrayim, because of Hashem's future designs for them—they were destined to receive the Torah three months later on the mountain.

The Purpose of Yetzias Mitzrayim Was to Receive Torah Sh'bal Peh

The Sefas Emes (*Pesach* 5639) teaches us an important principle. There are two components of the Torah, written law and oral law. The purpose of the yetzias Mitzrayim was so that Bnei Yisroel receive the oral law. Therefore, it is a mitzvah to verbally discuss the events of yetzias Mitzrayim as an allusion to Torah *sh'bal peh*. This concept is expressed by the Bnei Yisoschor (*Nissan* 1,5) to explain the words of the Haggadah: "Even if we are all wise, all clever, and all expert in the Torah, we are all obliged to speak of yetzias Mitzrayim. Whoever discusses yetzias Mitzrayim at length is praiseworthy."

This means that even if we were all well versed in the written Torah, Torah *sh'bichsav*, nevertheless, we are still commanded to tell the story of yetzias Mitzrayim, by speech, verbally, and whoever recounts the story at greater length and in greater detail is praiseworthy.

This idea that we are invoking the merit of Torah *sh'bal peh* on the seder night fits in beautifully with the Gemara (*Rosh Hoshanah* 11:): "Rebbi Yehoshua says, in Nissan they were redeemed and in Nissan they are destined to be redeemed again; from where do we know this? The posuk states (regarding the night of yetzias Mitzrayim): It is a 'night of anticipation,' a night that has been anticipated since the six days of creation (as the date of the final redemption)." Additionally, the Midrash says (V.R. 7,3): all of the redemptions, including the future redemption, will be realized in the merit of [Mishnayos] the study of Torah *sh'bal peh*.

We have mentioned on various occasions, in the name of Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, *zt"l*, an allusion in the *posuk* (*Yeshayah* 1,27): "Tzion beMishpat Tipodeh Ve'shovaha b'Tzeddaka—Zion will be redeemed through justice, and those who return to her through righteousness." The essence of Torah *sh'bal peh* is Talmud Bavli and Talmud Yerushalmi. "Tzion beMishpat Tipodeh" has the numerical value of Talmud Yerushalmi, both equal 1076; while, "Ve'shovaha b'Tzeddaka" has the numerical value of Talmud Bavli, both equal 524. The allusion is that just as we were redeemed from Mitzrayim in order to subsequently receive Torah *sh'bal peh*; so, too, we will be redeemed in the future, in the merit of Torah *sh'bal peh*.

We now understand, why the author of the Haggadah inserted verses from the written law, as well as *Mishnayos* and *braisos* from the oral law as part of telling the story of yetzias Mitzrayim. Furthermore, the Haggadah concludes this mitzvah with the blessing: "Blessed are You, Hashem, Who redeemed Yisroel." This is because by telling the story of yetzias Mitzrayim, and fulfilling "pey-soch" (the mouth that speaks), which is a fulfillment of Torah *sh'bal peh*, we

will merit the ultimate redemption, speedily, in our days.

We can now explain the meaning of the Zohar which we cited previously:

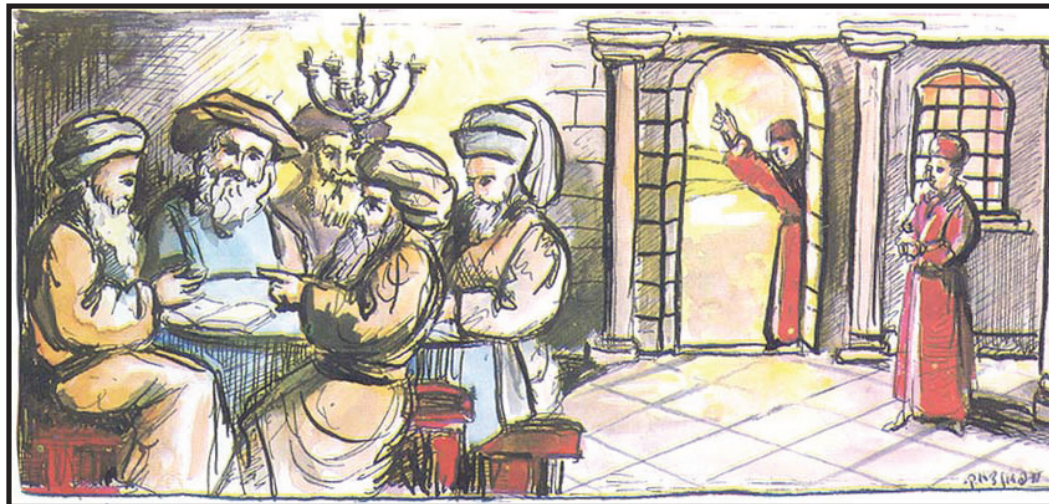
"They embittered their lives with hard work"—alludes to *kushyah*, questions; "with mortar"—alludes to a *kal va'chomer*; "and with bricks"—alludes to *libun hilchasa*; "and with every labor of the field"—alludes to *bereisa*; "all their labors that they performed with them were with crushing harshness"—alludes to Mishnah.

The Zohar is teaching us that the purpose of the difficult labor during the exile in Mitzrayim, was to purify us and prepare us for the labor and toil of Torah *sh'bal peh* which includes *kushyah*, *kal va'chomer*, *Mishnah*, and so forth.

This also explains why the story must be told in a question and answer format, with the son asking and the father answering. The nature of Torah *sh'bal peh* is the transmission of the oral law from generation to generation, father to son and Rebbe to student. Therefore, it is appropriate that the recounting of yetzias Mitzrayim on the night of Pesach, which commemorates the preparation to receive Torah *sh'bal peh* as a result of that exodus, follows this format.

Four Cups of Wine Represent Parde's

Zohar hokadosh states (*Ekev* 271:) on the *posuk* (*Mishlei*



9:5) "Lechu lachmu be'lachmi—Come and partake of my bread," alludes to the written law [Torah *sh'bichsav*]...and drink of the wine that I mixed,—alludes to the oral law [Torah *sh'bal peh*]."

Based on this we can explain the rationale for the Rabbinical institution to drink four cups of wine on the seder night. "Bread" alludes to the written law and "wine" to the oral law. Just as wine is a derivative from the fruit of the vine, so, too, the expositions of Torah *sh'bal peh* are derived from Torah *sh'bichsav*.

In Toras Kohanim (*Vayikra* 1,1), Rabbi Yishmael says: Through thirteen principles is the Torah elucidated—Torah *sh'bichsav* is elucidated in the Torah *sh'bal peh* based on the thirteen hermeneutic principles.

In addition, Torah *sh'bal peh*, which includes all interpretations and commentaries on Torah *sh'bichsav*, is divided into four categories symbolized by the acronym PARDE'S—Pshat, the straightforward, literal interpretation, Remez, interpretations based on allusions, Drush, lengthier expositions, and Sod, mystical interpretations. So, we can suggest that the four cups of wine were instituted to correspond to these four categories of Torah exegesis, which Yisroel merited to receive as a result of their purification process in the iron crucible of

Mitzrayim.

This also explains the deeper meaning of the Midrash and the Yerushalmi which state that the four cups correspond to the four expressions of redemption. In reality, these four expressions of redemption, correspond to the four categories of interpretation in Torah *sh'bal peh* (represented by Pardes—*pshat*, *remez*, *drush*, *sod*) which were redeemed with Yisroel from exile in Mitzrayim. After all, it was in the merit of that redemption that Yisroel received Torah *sh'bal peh* which is comprised of these four categories of interpretation.

Esther Cancelled Pesach in Order to Save Torah Sh'bal Peh

We can use this reasoning to explain why Esther saw fit to cancel the observance of the first day of Pesach, at the time of Haman's evil decree.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 88a) says that on Purim, Yisroel accepted the Torah out of *ahavah*. "And they stood under the mount. Rabbi Avdimi bar Chama bar Chasa said: This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, overturned the mountain upon them like an [inverted] barrel, and said to them, 'If you accept the Torah, 'it is well; if not, shall you be buried there. Rabbi Acha bar Yaakov observed: This furnishes a strong protest against the Torah. (since they were coerced to accept it.) Said Rava, nevertheless, they received again during the times of Achashveirosh, for it is written, [the Jews] confirmed, and took upon them [etc.]: they confirmed what they had accepted long before.

In Pri Tzaddik (*Purim* 2), Rav Tzaddok hokohen of Lublin, *zy"ta*, explains that Yisroel's accepting the Torah on Purim out of *ahavah*, is referring to Torah *sh'bal peh*. That is what they accepted willingly on Purim. Tosefos asks why was it necessary for Hashem to force Yisroel into accepting the Torah, by giving them an ultimatum, had they not already expressed their willingness to receive

the Torah by proclaiming *Naseh v'Nishma*?

Midrash Tanchuma (*Noach* 3) answers that they only accepted Torah *sh'bichsav* willingly at Har Sinai, but Torah *sh'bal peh* was accepted under duress.

Since Torah *sh'bal peh* was originally accepted in a threatening manner, it is understandable why Rava said, "Nevertheless, they received it again during the times of Achashveirosh." This acceptance at the time of the miracle of Purim, was in regards to Torah *sh'bal peh*, which until then had only been accepted under duress, but, in the times of Achashveirosh, was accepted willingly and lovingly. In this manner, Rav Tzaddok explains the Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 96:): "The descendants of Haman taught Torah in Bnei Brak." Since Haman was a catalyst for Yisroel accepting Torah *sh'bal peh*, he must have contained some element of *kedushah* associated with Torah *sh'bal peh*; from that element of *kedusha* within Haman, descended those who taught Torah in Bnei Brak.

This is also the reason for the feast over wine on Purim, as it is written (*Esther* 9,22): "to observe them as days of feasting and gladness." We cited a Zohar hakodosh "and drink of the wine that I mixed," stating that wine is a reference to Torah *sh'bal peh*: Therefore, drinking wine on Purim, alludes to the fact that Yisroel accepted upon

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Seder Night Gems



of infliction) in the matzos.

“This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the Land of Egypt”—this refers to the *lechem oni* that common people taste. Even our ancestors who left Egypt tasted only the taste of matzos despite the fact that Hashem elevated them and redeemed them from Egypt.

“Let anyone who is hungry come and eat”—one who eats matzoh only to quiet his hunger should come and eat. This is also a mitzvah that sanctifies man, but man’s main objective should be: “Let anyone who is in want come and celebrate the Pesach”—a person’s entire craving should be to fulfill the mitzvohs of the Seder night only for the sake of the mitzvah. The madreigah of one who truly has refined his body is in reality “come and celebrate the Pesach”—he should be *po seach* (skip over) from one madreigah to the other, higher and higher, until he attains the most sublime of levels.

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Here the Son Asks

Only the Loving Son Can Ask.

We don’t find anywhere in the whole Torah that we delve deeply into the reason for the mitzvohs in a way of questions and answers except for the mitzvah of relating yetzias Mitzrayim. Why on the Seder night do we ask *mah nishtanah*?

In man’s scale of priorities to improve his *avodah* he must first work on the middah of yirah (fear of Hashem) and then add the middah of ahavah (love of Hashem). Avodah through yirah is similar to slaves serving their master, but avodah through ahavah is similar to how a son serves his father. We are sons to HaKodosh Boruch Hu as is written, “You are children to Hashem, your G-d” (*Devorim* 14:1).

When the avodah is like a slave who serves his master, it is improper before performing mitzvohs to ask about the reason they were given, just as it is improper for a slave to ask his master why he is commanding him to do something.

But when the avodah is that of a loving son, not only is

it possible to ask questions, the father wants his son to ask him why he is commanding him to do such and such. The father is more than happy to answer his son’s questions, as is written, “Hashem said to me, ‘You are My son, I have begotten you this day. Ask of Me and I will make nations your inheritance’” (*Tehillim* 2:7-8).

The correct order in one’s avodas Hashem is to first practice yirah of the Creator and later ahavah. During the whole year it is improper to ask about the reasons for mitzvohs when we perform them since we must perform Hashem’s mitzvohs as a slave serves his master with the middah of yirah and pachad.

On the Seder night, spiritual attainments are awarded



to us in an unnatural way, not gradually, but in a sudden abundance. HaKodosh Boruch Hu lifts up bnei Yisroel to soaring heights, above the madreigah of the malochei hashoreis, and we are then on the level of “You are children to Hashem, your G-d.” We immediately merit the lofty madreigah of love of the Creator, and therefore when we have reached the madreigah of sons it is proper to ask about the reasons for the mitzvohs. “You are My son...ask of Me and I will make nations your inheritance.”

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Relating Our Leaving Mitzrayim

Redemption of the Nefesh

“*Mah nishtanah haleilah hazeh mikol haleilos*” (“Why is this night different from all other nights?”). This question is actually the introduction to the questions that the four sons later ask, “On all other nights...” It is only proper to understand what the author of the Haggadah wants to convey to us through this introduction in the form of a question.

When bnei Yisroel lived in Egypt they were in a bitter golus consisting of two parts: The first was the golus of our body and the second was the golus of our nefesh and daas.

The Torah refers to the golus of our body when it writes, “They embittered their lives with hard work, with mortar and with bricks, and with every labor of the field” (*Shemos* 1:14), and the novi Yechezkel refers to the golus of our nefesh, “But you were naked and bare” (16:7). In Egypt bnei Yisroel were submerged in the forty-nine gates of tumah.

The yetziah and geulah from Egypt was for both the body and nefesh. The geulah of the body was one from subjugation to redemption, from slavery to freedom, while the geulah of the nefesh was HaKodosh Boruch Hu’s radiating to bnei Yisroel from the splendor of His Shechinah and taking them out of the forty-nine gates of tumah and bringing them into the gates of *kedushah*.

The geulah of the nefesh occurred at the night before leaving Egypt when we ate the korban pesach. At that time HaKodosh Boruch Hu sent us intensified *kedushah* that was above our *madreigah*, subdued all opposition to *kedushah*, slew all of the firstborn Egyptians, and bnei Yisroel emerged from the gates of tumah and entered the gates of *kedushah*. The geulah of the body didn’t occur at night; it was bnei Yisroel actually left Egypt during the next morning.

We fulfill the mitzvah of remembering leaving Egypt during the whole year. A difference of opinion exists if we are obligated to mention our leaving Egypt at night or only during the day. This machlokes refers to the whole year, but on the Seder night there is a consensus that it is a mitzvah to



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themselves the oral law on Purim, since it compared to wine. For the very same reason, Esther invited Haman to feast on wine which led to his downfall; because she foresaw that as a result of his downfall, Yisroel would accept the Torah *sh’bal peh*-which is also referred to as wine.

“Elder of Yisroel, Why Celebrate Pesach?”

This explains Esther’s words to Mordechai: “Elder of Yisroel, what is the point of celebrating Pesach?” She realized, through divine inspiration, that as a result of the miracle of Purim, Bnei Yisroel would accept the Torah *sh’bal peh* out of ahavah. She told Mordechai, therefore, to instruct the people to fast three days, on her behalf, including the first day of Pesach. When Mordechai questioned her concerning the cancellation of the mitzvohs of the first night of Pesach, she replied wisely: “Elder of Yisroel, what is the point of observing Pesach?”

In other words, since you are an elder of Yisroel, a scholar

of the oral law, a *zakein*, and the Gemara (*Kiddushin* 32:) teaches us: a *zakein* is one who has acquired *chochmah*, [wisdom], then you should certainly realize that if Bnei Yisroel do not warrant the miracle of Purim, they will not receive Torah *sh’bal peh*. In that case, “what purpose would the holy ceremony of the first night of Pesach serve? After all, the ceremony is to invoke the aspect of “*pey-soch*” [talking much] representing Torah *sh’bal peh*.

For that reason, Mordechai, one of the heads of the Sanhedrin, the great sages of the oral law, agreed to annul the rituals that Pesach night, including the eating of matzah and Marror, the recounting of the story of yetzias Mitzrayim and drinking the four cups of wine.

We relate the exodus to invoke the “*pey-soch*” (a mouth that speaks), we consume four cups of wine corresponding to *Pardes*, the four categories of Torah exegesis.

All of these mitzvohs are to commemorate the exodus, whose purpose was to prepare Bnei Yisroel to receive Torah *sh’bal peh*, they would be meaningless without the miracle of Purim-which facilitated the renewed acceptance

of Torah *sh’bal peh* this time *me’ahava*.

We now gained a better understanding of the Chasam Sofer’s explanation of the incident in Bnei Brak: “It happened that Rebbi Eliezer, Rebbi Yehoshua, Rebbi Elazar ben Azariah, Rebbi Akiva and Rebbi Tarfon—were reclining at a seder in Bnei Brak. They were discussing *Yetzias Mitzrayim* all that night, until their students came and told them: “Masters! It is time for reciting the morning *Sh’ma*.”

These holy Tanaim, the teachers of Torah *sh’bal peh* of the generation, gathered, specifically, in Bnei Brak, to help make amends for the descendants of the wicked Haman, teachers of Torah in Bnei Brak,” and they discussed **yetzias Mitzrayim, throughout the night,** to invoke the *kedushah* of Torah *sh’bal peh*, by fulfilling the aspect of “*pey-soch*” (a mouth that speaks). Their intention was to rectify the shortcoming of Haman’s descendants; they were still a part of Haman, so they slowed in the cancellation of the mitzvah of sipur yetzias Mitzrayim. By so doing, these holy Tanaim wished to arouse in the heavens the miracle of Purim which resulted in Yisroel’s accepting Torah *sh’bal peh* with love.

