

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED FOURTEEN

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

"*Gluzpapier*" now that's a word to conjure with. Let it slide around in your mouth, get it to trickle off your tongue. *Gluzpapier* a word that has its own rasping dignity. What on earth is this *Gluzpapier*? In that lies a story. Many years ago, it must have been in the early sixties, I was learning in the *Bobover Yeshiva* which was then located in crown heights. Two days after Purim the *Rav zt'l* called in a few of us for an important mission. Out of the *Rav's* drawer came a list, it was the famous Pesach list. I say famous because on it was enumerated all the tasks that had to be completed before Yom Tov, and just such a list had been made for generations. Given that in *Bobov* most of the *Bochurim* stayed with the *Rav* for the *Siddurim*, and that all the cleaning cooking and matzo baking took place under the yeshivas auspices, you can begin to understand how long yet vital this list was. I was in charge of procuring needed supplies. This was basically because I was the only native English speaker at the time. So in his usual detailed manner the *Rav* started reading off the shopping list. Rubin would note down everything in English and so we would soon have a bilingual set of orders. The *Rav* then came to the very important item, that was almost at the top of his paper, "*Gluzpapier*". Right, thought I, but what in the world is *gluzpapier*? I cleared my voice "*Uh Rebbe, vous is dus Gluzpapier?*" "*Rebbe, what is this Gluzpapier?*" This was said with great timidity, I wasn't all that keen on letting everyone find out that I wasn't the all knowing Yankee prodigy everyone thought I was. The *Rav* looked up at me with his kind smile, "*Gluzpapier*" he then went into a sort of demonstration of what the said article was.

My mind was now frozen. I couldn't even tell you my name. *Gluzpapier* you know? Sure I do, but I didn't. Others were called into the room *Gluzpapier...* *Gluzpapier...* On it went everyone looking at me as if I had fallen in from mars. Who doesn't know what *Gluzpapier* is? Rubin for one! All this time the *Rav* looked embarrassed for me. His poor Americana Talmud (student) was catching it from all sides. Finally one youngster came onto the scene, he listened for but a moment and then took a deep self important breath and announced; "*Gluzpapier* is sandpaper!" silence hung in the room, Rubin bowed his head in defeat, it was obvious, *Gluzpapier* was sandpaper, how simple.

Now you may ask why sandpaper was so vital for the *pesachdica* experience. Its main role was to smoothen out the rolling pins used during the baking of the matzos. For those who are even worse D.I.Y experts than me, the sandpaper rubs away any trace of embedded dough during the process, and so the rolling pins become as smooth as new after every such cleaning. Why all this tedious stuff about sandpaper? Well it got me to thinking about the entire Pesach and its preparations.

It is well known that Pesach is more than just about not eating *chometz* and the serving of a special

Seder night meal. It's about reliving the experience of our forefathers and learning to leave behind the *Metzrayim* (Egypt) that captures our own soul. The very word *mitzrayim* has its root in the word for jail or confinement. The *Yidden* were spiritually confined in the narrowness of their brutal environment, their release was of a spiritual one as much as anything physical. We too are confined within the anguish of the here and now. Every one of us faces problems that seem to torment our feelings of love and kindness, we go thru the motions but worry about our emotions. This is nothing new, nor need we be ashamed of such self doubt. *Hashem* sends us trials and tribulations so that thru them we may grow closer to His essence. Along the way He gives us moments of sanctuary that can give us the needed insight to continue out trek.

Pesach is just such a sanctuary. Everything about it gives inspiration, it's only because sometimes we feel so deluged by the ocean that is its preparation, that we forget its true meaning of hope. That's where my sandpaper, some coarse and extremely abrasive others fine and more gentle, comes in. When taking sandpaper in hand one must first understand what it is being used for. The physical preparations for Pesach are meant to cleanse our lives from *chometz*, those aspects that are derived from leaven. For some reason there are those who insist on using the most abrasive of utensils, scraping away, no, virtually stripping away everything in their path. It's like a nuclear bombardment, and whole houses become the battle field. Now we live in a pretty clean environment, and one would have thought that a good cleaning would not necessitate a scud missile. I often wonder if this extra exuberance is driven by a deeper need, perhaps one that has nothing to do with the actual task at hand. This over reaction at the physical level may be indicative of those who have a need to over react at spiritual levels as well.

It isn't always proper or even good to take harsh abrasives to our souls; it just may be that our needs will be better served by the gentle caress of a kind word instead. So many feel guilty if their own personality cries out for a more gentle approach. Everyone else is out there with the heavy duty guilt brigade, and you want to feel part of the crowd. This was not the way at *yetzius metzrayim* (the original leaving of Egypt) and we can well learn from our ancestors.

In this *Kapital* we hear, "when Israel went out of Egypt, Jacobs household (*Beis Yackov*) from a people of alien tongue, Judah became his sanctuary, Israel his dominion."

The Children of Israel stepped away from the confinement of Egypt, a place that was alien to the language of our souls. There was a place where you did as you were told, you experienced no understanding, you worked for works sake, never growing from the experience. Who was it that featured greatest in this departure from one mind set to another? *Beis Yackov*, the women, for it was always they who understood the emotional havoc that sterile servitude reeked. Now *Yehudah* could become *Hashem's* sanctuary, for now things in life would have meaning, one would do an act that would bring forth increased understanding. *Yidden* became *Hashem's* dominion because they learnt that everything in life had a purpose that could draw one closer to *Hashem*. Scrubbing for scrubbing's sake was no longer necessary, from now on the peeling away of life's debris would serve

a higher purpose.

The *Kapital* then goes on to express some of the most joyous imagery in the whole of *Tehillim*. "They saw and fled, the Jordan turned backward, the mountains skipped like rams, the hills like young lambs."

And finally' "who turns the rock into a pond of water, the flint into a flowing fountain."

The *Slonimer Rebbe zt'l* said "we read that the sea saw it and fled. Why? Because of the presence of *Hashem* who caused the earth to tremble.' We also read that the mountains skipped like rams.' Why? Because of the presence of *Hashem* who redeemed Jacob' one verse teaches of fear of *Hashem*; the other love of *Hashem*. When one person possesses both qualities in combination, then his heart of rock is changed into a pool of water, his heart of flint into a mountain."

This then is the secret of the sandpaper. We are meant to clean away the crust that forms about our hearts, but not leave scars that can't be healed. It is the coalition of fear and love that made our forefathers so special. In their presence mountains danced and oceans split. This because they had shown that thru the proper mixture of ones relationship with *Hashem* man could go into any situation with a full heart. The hardest of souls turned into the fountain that would give life to all future generations. Pesach is a time for hope and renewal. But to understand it in terms of our own uniqueness we must use the "*Gluzpapier*" in a helpful and caring way.

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