

Potomac Torah Study Center
Vol. 7 #15, January 31, 2020; Bo 5780

NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning almost 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his recent untimely death.

LATE MAARIV AT BETH SHOLOM THIS WEEK MONDAY - THURSDAY AT 8 P.M. RSVPs appreciated. To receive weekly updates or send RSVP: AfisherADS@Yahoo.com.

Devrei Torah for Shabbat Bo 5780 dedicated in loving memory of David Glyn, David ben Shmuel HaLevi v'Ester, who passed away on Shabbat Shemot. Ethan and Amy Corey and family dedicate the Torah learning in memory of their cousin David.

Special Shabbaton with Guest Scholar Rabbi Dr. Shmuel Klatzkin, Shabbat January 31 - February 1 at Chabad of Potomac. Rabbi Klatzkin, a brilliant scholar, will discuss Talmudic Sources on Issues Facing Our Nation. For more information, www.chabadpotomac.com or E-mail Sara@ChabadPotomac.com.

Bo marks a new beginning for B'Nai Yisrael with the first mitzvah that God gives specifically to the Jewish people as a nation. God tells Moshe and Aharon that this month (Nissan) shall be for Jews the beginning of the months (12:1-2). Although the birth of the world was the beginning of Tishrei, that month is the seventh of the religious year.

God continues with additional mitzvot: the holiday of Yom HaPesach (the night beginning at the end of 14 Nissan), the seven day holiday of Chag HaMatzot (a separate holiday), sixteen additional mitzvot about Pesach, and three more about first born animals. Before bringing any of the plagues, God had told Moshe to warn Paro that Israel was His firstborn son and that Paro had to let His son serve Him, or He would kill Paro's firstborn son (4:22-23). Because Paro abused God's firstborn son (B'Nai Yisrael), the Torah presents special laws of the first born here, immediately after relating the tenth plague and other happenings on the night of our freedom (ch. 13).

Bo ends with a daily reminder to teach our children of the Exodus from Egypt and that God redeemed us from slavery with a strong hand. These verses are part of the text of the Tefillin that we wear on our head and arm daily to remind us of the obligations of God's mitzvot and of His mercy in redeeming us from slavery.

More than anything else, I believe that Yosef teaches us that all Jews are part of a single family. We have common ancestors, and we have the same mitzvot. During times of promise and celebration, such as the President's announcement of a peace proposal on the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp, we should celebrate together the hope for a better future. When we lose fellow Jews, we should participate in grief together. Ethan Corey remembers his cousin, David Glyn, z"l, during Shlosim. Our friends this week observe shiva for Louise Drazin, Matthew Holtzman, and Madeline Shere, three friends from our Potomac congregations who died within the past few days. Our time on this earth is finite, and we all hope to have family and friends to remember our lives as blessings. May our children, grandchildren, and future generations remember us for blessings, work to set positive examples for their children and grandchildren, and help make the world a better place.

This week on Rosh Hodesh Shevat, we observed the second yahrtzeit of my beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l. Rabbi Cahan frequently reminded us during his Torah discussions that we Jews are all part of a family. He taught Hannah and me mitzvot and Jewish history for 50 years, and he continued by teaching our children as well.

Rabbi Shmuel Klatzkin, a brilliant scholar and close family friend from Chabad of Dayton, OH, will be discussing Talmudic Sources on Issues Facing Our Nation at Chabad of Potomac over Shabbas. If you have an opportunity to do so, spend at least part of this Shabbat learning from Rabbi Klatzkin.

Note: The Jews were in Egypt for 210 years and actively in slavery for 116 years after the death of Levi. Yaakov was born in 2108. Yosef was born when Yaakov was around 91 years old, or around 2199. The Jews came to Egypt when Yosef was 40 years old (2238). Yosef died at age 110 (2309). The Exodus was in 2448 (Chabad). These dates indicate that the Jews were in Egypt for 210 years, of which 116 years were after Levi's death – the years considered to be active slavery (https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3915966/jewish/Timeline-of-Jewish-History.htm).

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Yitzhak ben Zelda, Nossan ben Pessel, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reisel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel Ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha, Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Kaddish Yehuda ben Golda, Dov Ber ben Sima, Tuvia Zev ben Chaya Rivka, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Elisheva Chaya bas Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Miriam Malka bat Leah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Beyla bat Sara, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava bat Yachid, Ruth bat Sarah, and Tova bat Narges, all of whom greatly need our prayers.

Shabbat Shalom, Hannah & Alan

Drasha: Parsha Bo: Break No Bones About It

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 2001

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

One of the initial mitzvos of the Torah, the Korban Pesach, was given to the Jewish nation as a preface to redemption. It is filled with myriad details, surely a distinct departure from other introductory exercises that leave the participants with simple initiatory protocol.

What is truly amazing is the place where the Torah put the specific mitzvah that prohibits the breaking of the meat bones of the sacrifice, to get to the food.

At first, in the early part of the parsha, the Torah details the way the lamb is roasted and how it is eaten. "But if the household is too small for a lamb or kid, then he and his neighbor who is near his house shall take according to the number of people; everyone according to what he eats shall be counted for the lamb or kid.: They shall eat the flesh on that night — roasted over the fire — and matzos; with bitter herbs shall they eat it.: "You shall not eat it partially roasted or cooked in water; only roasted over fire — its head, its legs, with its innards: You shall not leave any of it until morning; any of it that is left until morning you shall burn in the fire: "So shall you eat it — your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; you shall eat it in haste — it is a Pesach-offering to Hashem" (Exodus 12:4-7).

It makes no mention of the command to eat it without breaking a bone. Only, some thirty verses later, later when the Torah discusses the fundamentals of the offering, does it add that law, as a seemingly misplaced detail among serious edicts: such as who is permitted to eat it; and that the korban is a mitzvah which is incumbent on every Jew.

"Hashem said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the chok (decree) of the Pesach-offering – no alienated person may eat from it. Every slave of a man, who was bought for money, you shall circumcise him; then he may eat of it. A sojourner and a hired laborer may not eat it.

Then it adds, "In one house shall it be eaten; you shall not remove any of the meat from the house to the outside, and you shall not break a bone in it. The entire assembly of Israel shall perform it: "When a proselyte sojourns among you he shall make the Pesach-offering for Hashem; each of his males shall be circumcised, and then he may draw near to perform it and he shall be like the native of the land; no uncircumcised male may eat of it. One law shall there be for the native and the proselyte who lives among you.": (ibid 43-49).

The question is: why insert the issue of broken bones, a seemingly minor detail, together with the fundamentals of this most important ritual?

When the Satmar Rav came to this country after World War II he had a handful of Hungarian immigrants, most of them Holocaust survivors, as his Chasidim. As the custom is with Chasidic rebbe, they would come for a blessing and leave a few dollars for the rebbe to give to charity on their behalf. The poor immigrants, would come in for blessings, some leaving a dollar, others some coins and on occasion a wealthier chasid would leave a five, a ten, or even a twenty-dollar bill. The rebbe would not look at the offerings; rather he would open the old drawers of his desk and stuff them in, ready, and available for them to be put to charitable use.

Of course, givers were not the only one who visited the rebbe. Those who were in need came as well. Each of them bearing their tale of sorrow, asking for a donation.

Once a man came desperately in need of a few hundred dollars, which the rebbe gladly agreed to give.

The rebbe opened his drawer, and began pulling out bills. Out came singles and fives, a few tens and even a twenty. Then the rebbe called in his Gabbai (sexton), "Here," he said, please help me with this."

The Rebbe began straightening out the bills one by one. Together, they took each bill, flattened it and pressed it until it looked as good as new. The rebbe took 100 one dollar bills and piled it into a neat stack. Then he took out a handful of five-dollar bills and put them into another pile. Then he took about five wrinkled ten dollar bills, pressed them flat, and piled them as well. Finally, he slowly banded each pile with a rubber band, and then bound them all together. He handed it to the gabbai and asked him to present it to the supplicant. "Rebbe," asked the sexton, "why all the fuss? A wrinkled dollar works just as well as a crisp one!"

The rebbe explained. "One thing you must understand. When you do a mitzvah. It must be done with grace, and class. The way you give tzedoka, is almost as important as the tzedoka itself. Mitzvos must be done regally. We will not hand out rumpled bills to those who are in need."

The prohibition against breaking bones is not just a culinary exercise. The Sefer HaChinuch explains it is a fundamental ordinance that defines the very attitude toward that Jews should have toward mitzvos. Though we eat in haste, we must eat with class. We don't break bones, and we don't chomp at the meat; especially mitzvah meat. That fact is as fundamental as the others it is placed with. A person's actions while performing a Mitzvah is inherently reflective of his attitude toward the Mitzvah itself. The Torah, in placing this seemingly insignificant, command about the way things are eaten together with the laws of who is to eat it tells us that both the mitzvah and the attitude are equally important with no bones about it.

Good Shabbos!

Praying with a Cross in the Room

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2018, 2020

A person is a patient at Holy Cross Hospital and there is a crucifix on the wall of each room. Can she make brakhot and daven there? A family wishes to have a bar mitzvah in the large, all-purpose hall of Catholic university, where there is a small cross affixed at the top of the east-facing wall, 20 feet off the ground. Can they have their bar mitzvah in that room?

The answer starts with a curious verse. Usually, when Moshe leaves Pharaoh to pray on his behalf, the Torah states, as it does in this week's parasha, that "he went out from Pharaoh, and entreated the Lord" (Ex. 10:18). But at the end of last week's parasha, during the plague of hail, Moshe tells Pharaoh that: "As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the Lord." (9:29). Why does he need to wait until he exited the city? A midrash (Shemot Rabbah 12:5), quoted by Rashi, explains:

From this verse we see that Moshe did not wish to pray in Egypt (i.e., in the city), because it was filthy with gilulum vi'shikutzim.

The term gilulum, which literally means dung, is a standard Rabbinic dysphemism (a disparaging term chosen instead of a neutral one) for idols. The word sheketz, a detestable creature, functions similarly.

This midrash, then, could be seen as a basis for forbidding a person to pray in the presence of the religious symbols and objects of worship of other faiths. The use of the terms gilulum and sheketz also reflects the reason why this should be prohibited: just as a person may not pray in the presence of dung (SA OH 76-79), something physically repulsive, it would similarly be wrong to pray in the presence of something that is theologically repulsive.

But is this conclusion correct? First, while actual idols might be properly seen as theologically repulsive (although religious pluralists would contest this point), it seems hard to apply this designation to religious symbols of other faiths. Second, this midrash does not make any halakhic claims; to the contrary, it just states that Moshe “did not wish” to pray in such a place. Finally, to apply this to praying in the presence of a cross is to assume that we treat Christianity as avodah zarah, but is this the case?

Let’s explore these various issues. We start with the last point: Is Christianity seen as a form of avodah zarah? This is a question that halakhah has dealt with over hundreds of years, not for sake of judging others and their faith, but to determine how we, as Jews, must act.

As we noted, almost all Rishonim considered Christianity to be avodah zarah, a term that means not “idolatry,” but “foreign worship.” It is a faith whose beliefs about God – the Trinity, Incarnation – are foreign to the Jewish understanding of God, and a faith which uses images and icons in its worship.

This designation of Christianity was almost universally accepted by the Rishonim, but halakhah’s approach to Christianity evolved over time. It was not ideological factors that led to a more tolerant approach, but rather economic and societal ones. Jews in the Middle Ages did business with Christians on Sunday, the major market day, in seeming violation of the mishnah’s ruling that a Jew cannot do business with a non-Jew on his religious holiday. A number of ways were offered to reconcile the common practice with the halakhah on the books, many relevant only to the particular circumstances in question. One resolution, however, led to a reformulation of halakhah’s approach to Christians in general. Tosafot argued that while Christianity was avodah zarah, Christians were not ovdei avodah zarah, were not worshippers of this forbidden faith. This hair-splitting was accomplished by asserting that Christians did not observe their religion out of piety and true religious feeling, but rather because of their culture and upbringing: *minhag avoteihem bi’yadeihem*, they continue in the practice of their forefathers.

Now, some would characterize Tosafot’s assertion about Christians’ lack of piety as both offensive and factually incorrect – Christians in the Middle Ages were known to be quite pious. But even if it was not factually correct, it became a legal fiction that allowed later poskim to do two things at the same time: they could lower the halakhic walls that separated Jews from their Christian neighbors, and at the same maintain the wall that separated Judaism from Christianity. Christianity as a faith, with its theological assertions, was taboo. Christians were people we could do business with.

The next development came when poskim, starting with Rema, argued that because Christianity believes in a transcendent, creator God, it was not to be deemed as avodah zarah for non-Jews. For Jews, however, such a faith was avodah zarah and totally off-limits. This ruling, on the ideological plane, allowed Jews to see Christianity in a more positive light, to be respectful of the faith of Christians and even to see it as a good thing (for them). On the practical plane, it permitted Jews to engage in activities that aided Christians in their worship, such as the sale of religious items to Christian priests and monks. And, like the earlier distinction between Christians and Christianity, it still kept Christianity as taboo and off-limits for Jews. Stating that we can support Christians in their worship in church is not saying that we, as Jews, are permitted to enter the church or to be present for services.

All of this brings us back to our original question. Can a Jew pray in a room with a crucifix? Since halakhah maintains the position that Christianity is avodah zarah for Jews, it would seem that it should be forbidden. For a Jew, this is to pray in a room with an item of an avodah zarah faith present. But the answer is not so simple. We must still determine whether the midrash about Moshe actually carries any halakhic weight.

The first to raise the midrash in a halakhic context was Rabbi Israel Isserlen (Austria, 1390-1460). In his work *Trumat HaDeshen* (no. 6), he takes up the question of whether a Jew who is travelling should pray on the roadside, or wait until he reaches his place of lodging where he can focus more on his prayers, but where religious statues and paintings would abound. Basing himself on the midrash, he rules that it is preferable to pray on the roadside. However, he goes on to say, if the person will be interrupted when attempting to pray on the roadside, he should pray when he reaches his lodging. Rema (OH 94:9) follows this ruling.

Two points emerge from this: (1) there is no halakhic restriction against praying in such a room; the midrash only reflects a preference and not a requirement; and (2) Christian religious statues and paintings are seen as problematic when it comes to the ideal place for prayer.

As far as a cross is concerned, we should note that Rema rules that a cross in most cases is only a religious symbol and not an object of worship (SA YD 141:1). Nevertheless, it would seem that the ideal place for prayer should be free of such objects as well. While we do not need to – indeed, should not – see the religious objects of another faith as “detestable,” we should still strive to ensure that our prayer spaces are neutral or Jewish ones.

Based on all this, many poskim rule that when a person is a patient in a hospital where there is a cross in the room, and it is not reasonable to ask that it be removed, then the patient can nevertheless pray in the room (see, for example, Shut Lev Avraham, 30).

If possible, however, the cross should be removed or covered. I do not think that this would be required for the mere making of brakhot. There is a qualitative difference between an act of worship and between a making of a blessing. Moshe left the city when he said he would “stretch out his arms to God,” that is, do a demonstrable act of worship. The verse does not relate that he leaves the city when

he makes a silent, internal supplication to God (see Ramban, 9:29). Perhaps the ideal setting is only needed for acts of worship, and for visible ones at that.

One final issue must be addressed. If a person is praying in a room where a cross is present, she should not pray facing the cross, because it will look like she is praying to the cross (Hakmat Adam 22:10, MB 94:30, based on SA OH 113:8 and YD 150:3). She must pray in a different direction, even if it requires facing away from Jerusalem, or she must find a way to cover the cross.

So what should be done about the bar mitzvah in a room with a cross 20 feet above the floor? The simple choice is that they should pray in a different direction. This is the advice I gave when consulted about this case, but the configuration of the room did not make this a feasible option. In the end, they came up with an ingenious and elegant solution: a helium balloon on a 20 foot string, anchored directly below the cross.

(For further sources on this topic, see SA OH 55:20, with Magen Avraham 15 and Mishneh Brurah 65; Taz OH 151:4, Shut Avnei Nezer, OH 32; Shut Be'er Moshe 3:22, and Torah Shleima, appendix 21.)

Shabbat Shalom!

Voices of Peace, Voices of Understanding

by Rabbi Dr. Marc D. Angel *

When bombs are exploding and tanks are rolling, it is difficult to imagine peace. When children are taught to hate and suicide/homicide murderers are called "freedom fighters", it is difficult to imagine peace. When all sides list their grievances and do not listen to the grievances of others, it is difficult to imagine peace.

But if we do not try to imagine peace, peace will not come. So let us imagine, in spite of all the "facts on the ground", that peace must be achieved. What voices can guide us? What words can be a salve to our wounds? How can we put the dream of peace into real terms?

In 1919, Rabbi Benzion Uziel, then a young rabbi, spoke to a conference of rabbis in Jerusalem. He stated: "Israel, the nation of peace, does not want and never will want to be built on the ruins of others....Let all the nations hear our blessing of peace, and let them return to us a hand for true peace, so that they may be blessed with the blessing of peace." In 1939, when Rabbi Uziel became Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, he delivered his inaugural address in Hebrew, and then added words in Arabic. He appealed to the Arab community: "We reach our hands out to you in peace, pure and trustworthy....Make peace with us and we will make peace with you. Together all of us will benefit from the blessing of God on His land; with quiet and peace, with love and fellowship, with goodwill and pure heart we will find the way of peace."

The words of Rabbi Uziel reflected the wishes of the tiny Jewish community in the land of Israel in those times. His words still reflect the wishes of the Jewish community of Israel today. Hawks and doves alike would like nothing better than genuine, secure peace. They would like Israeli society to be free and happy, without the specter of warfare and terrorism, without the constant threat and reality of Arab military, economic and political attacks. They would like to live in harmony with their Arab neighbors-and to trust that their Arab neighbors will want to live in harmony with them.

But the words of Rabbi Uziel need to be stated and restated by the leaders of Israel. The idea of reaching a mutually rewarding peace must be put into words, must be repeated, must be believed and taught. Will words create peace? Not immediately. But they will set the foundations of peace. The words will help transform the dream of peace into a framework for peace.

In 1919, at the Paris peace conference following World War I, the Emir Feisal, one of the great Arab leaders of the time, made the following comments about the Jewish desire to return to their ancient homeland in Israel: "We Arabs...look with the deepest sympathy on the Zionist movement....We will wish the Jews a most hearty welcome home....I look forward, and my people with me look forward, to a future in which we will help you and you will help us, so that the countries in which we are mutually interested may once again take their places in the community of civilized peoples of the world."

I do not know if any Arab leaders today can say these words with sincerity. Yet, if Arab leaders-especially Palestinian leaders-could find the strength to say these words, the dream of peace might be brought closer to reality. Israel wants most what the Arab world has for the most part not given: a sign of acceptance, a sign of welcome, a sign that Jews have a right to live in peace and tranquility in the land of Israel. The people of Israel need to hear what Emir Feisal said: welcome home; we will help you and you will help us. Together we will raise our peoples to great cultural and economic heights.

We need to hear these words. The people of Israel and the Arab nations need to hear these words. If we are to imagine peace, we must articulate the words that can point us to peace. If we all start saying, and believing, and teaching our children these words, we will be on our way.

But who has the courage to speak as Rabbi Uziel and as Emir Feisal did? We are waiting. Israelis and Palestinians are waiting. Jews and Muslims and Christians are waiting. The world is waiting. Let us hear these words, let us begin to understand.

* From jewishideas.org, in honor of the historic peace plan announced this week. May the new peace plan be the start of a new era of peace between Israel and neighboring countries.

Bo: The Myth of Easy Street

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine ©2020 Teach 613

It was a scary night, the night of Yetizas Mitzrayim. Following the nine plagues that afflicted the Egyptians and not the Jews, the tenth-- the death of the first born-- was to occur with particular intensity. Even a Jew could be struck, unless he or she was protected by the Mitzva of Korban Pesach. "Place some of the blood [of the Korban] on the doorway of your homes," Hashem said, "I will see the blood, and I will skip over you, so that the plague will not hurt you."

Rashi explains that "Hashem will see how you exerted yourselves for the Mitzva, and, in that merit, He will skip over you."

Certainly, this Mitzva took quite a bit of exertion, especially emotional exertion. After all, the lamb, which was the sacrifice for the Korban Pesach, was a god to the Egyptians. Many of the Jews lived side by side with the Egyptians in their neighborhoods. It must have been quite a challenge for them to observe this Mitzva. Yet they did. And, through it, they set themselves apart from the Egyptians, and took their first steps as a nation towards the noble calling of Jewish destiny.

Rashi's choice of words, "You exerted yourselves for the Mitzva," are remarkable. Why wasn't it sufficient for the Jewish people to simply fulfill the Mitzva? If the Mitzva had been easy, would it not still have the power to protect them?

I think the answer lies in appreciating the myth called "Easy Street." Our generation was raised with an expectation that if we make the right decisions and progress properly, there will be a time that life will be easy. But, the reality is that Hashem does not bestow easy life. Because, the purpose of life is challenge and opportunity. If life were simply "easy street," the very purpose of life would be gone.

Almost 100 years ago, President Hoover ran for re-election on the slogan "A chicken in every pot and a car in every garage," as if that would put every American on "easy street." Yet the reality is that, as a nation, we have achieved that level of plentifullness, and we still have serious issues to contend with, such as severe eating disorders, as well as suicide, even among children from affluent families. It seems that noble goals and aspirations are laudable and achievable. But, nothing will ever put a human being on "easy street" with nothing to be concerned about. Life moves on, and each new station of life brings with it its own challenges.

As Jews, I think we have been equally surprised not to find ourselves on "easy street." There were times that Jews had to make significant sacrifices for Shabbos and for Jewish education. But, today, with discrimination laws, a well-earned reputation in the workforce, and a solid Yeshiva system, we may well have expected that the days of challenge would be behind us. Yet, each generation has its challenges.

Recently, I was approached by a young man seeking guidance in a particular personal challenge in observance. He explained that he has trouble putting his electronic devices "to rest" on Shabbos. I discussed his challenges with him and tried to inspire him. I reminded him that as a Jew, he has what it takes to succeed, as his great-grandparents did when they came to this country and sacrificed so much to be able to keep Shabbos. He said, "It is true, Rabbi. My great-grandfather lost his job each Friday, and had to start again. It is true. We all know the stories. But this is harder."

I wonder, if perhaps it is true. Perhaps, putting electronic devices to rest on Shabbos, might be even harder, for him than he imagines losing his job would be. But, this is what Rashi spoke of. "Hashem will see how you exerted yourselves for the Mitzva." Because every generation will have its unique challenges that seem insurmountable to those who live in that generation.

A young lady called me to find out if she could turn on the hot water on Shabbos "just a little" to take the chill out of the water when she washes her face in the morning. I explained to her that she was correct in understanding that we cannot use the hot water on Shabbos, and that included even a little bit to take out the chill. In an effort to inspire her I reminded her of her righteous ancestors who went to Mikva even when the water was freezing cold, even when they had to break the ice to access it, all for the sake of a Mitzva. She exclaimed, "You don't understand Rabbi. Washing my face in cold water is even harder." I think she might be right. Hashem creates challenges that are uniquely suited to the generation. For her, freezing cold water is her challenge. Yet, it is a wondrous moment when we identify what is a challenge to us. Because it is the exertion for the Mitzva, the fortitude to meet the challenge, that makes us great.

Hashem expects of us not only observance, but also exertion. He expects us to extend ourselves for Mitzvos. And so, Mitzvos which by now should be easy-- such as Shabbos and Jewish education--remain with their share of challenges. Hashem says, "I see the 'blood.' I see it was challenging for you. But you met the challenge, you persevered..."

And so, "...Ufosachti- I will pass over" your homes at the time of plague, and instead bestow upon you eternal blessing.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos!

Rav Kook Torah Bo: The Passover Leap

Spiritual Leap

Lofty teachings cannot be revealed to those who are unsuitable and unworthy. The enlightenment itself risks becoming debased and twisted when it is associated with sordid and base individuals. There are, however, exceptional cases, when the spiritual-moral level of the one receiving may be disregarded, and a spiritual 'leap' may be accomplished.

God's revelation to the Israelite slaves in Egypt will forever stand out as an example of such a miraculous "leap." This is the inner significance of the Passover offering, the korban Pesach, which literally means to "leap" or "skip." The Jewish people in Egypt had sunken to the lowest levels of degradation and defilement. In the words of the Midrash, they were on the "forty-ninth gate" — the penultimate level — of impurity. For God to reveal Himself to them during their redemption from Egyptian bondage required a spiritual jump of historic dimensions.

Nonetheless, even the leap of Passover has its limitations.

"This is the law of the Passover offering: no foreigner may eat of it." (Ex. 12:43)

Who is a "foreigner" who may not partake of the korban Pesach? The Sages taught that this refers not only to Gentiles, but even to Jewish apostates who have abandoned God. They have forsaken the ideals of the Torah to such an extent that they fall under the category of "foreigners" (Zevachim 22b).

In other words, even the spiritual leap of the Passover redemption was not boundless in its scope. It could not encompass those Jews who had so completely assimilated into the idolatrous culture of Egypt that they lacked even an elementary faith in God.

The Light of the First Luchot

This understanding of God's revelation during the redemption from Egypt sheds light on another historic event.

Moses' act of breaking the luchot habrit (the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments) took tremendous courage and daring. How did Moses dare destroy such a uniquely holy object? How did he know that this was the correct thing to do?

The Talmud suggests that Moses' act was based on the above-quoted law of the Passover offering. "The Passover offering is just one of the 613 mitzvoth, and yet an apostate may not share in it," he reasoned. "Certainly the Jewish people, after they have sinned by worshiping idols, are unworthy of the Torah in its entirety!" (Shabbat 87a)

In light of our previous comments, Moses' a priori reasoning becomes even more forceful. What is the inner message of the Passover offering? That God revealed Himself to the Jewish people, despite their spiritual poverty. Nonetheless, even this offering cannot encompass Jews who reject the most basic tenets of monotheism. Certainly the Torah could not be bestowed to the Jewish people in their idolatrous state after worshipping the Golden Calf.

Had Moses in fact given the first set of luchot to the Jewish people, this would have bound the Torah to the state of spiritual impoverishment that enveloped the Jewish people at that time. This would have brought a terrible spiritual danger — to the world, to Israel, and to the Torah itself. Only by hiding that great light, as he broke the physical vessel that bound it to the material world, was Moses able to ensure the spiritual development of the Jewish people and the entire world.

The first luchot, however, were not lost forever. Moses' act rescued their lofty light, so that it may be revealed at the end of days, with a pure and eternal illumination.

(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, p. 178.)

Why Is Passover on a Full Moon?

By Aron Moss* © Chabad 2020

I am very connected to the zodiac and was wondering if there is a link between the stars and the timing of Passover. I have also noticed that the Seder always coincides with the full moon. What is the significance of all this?

Answer:

There is indeed deep astrological significance to the date of Passover. We celebrate the festival of freedom on the 15th of the Jewish month of Nissan, the night the Israelites were freed from Egypt. This is the full moon of the month of Aries, the ram.

The Egyptians worshipped the ram as a god. Aries is the leader of the star signs, the first and most powerful, and the Egyptians saw themselves as the leaders of the world, receiving their strength and fortitude from their god, the ram.

So the strongest time for the Egyptians would have been the month of Aries, when their god is ascendant, and the strongest day of that month would be its full moon.

Egyptian power would reach its zenith on the 15th of Nissan, and that is exactly when the Israelites left Egypt. Aries was rendered impotent at its very moment of strength.

But there's more. The Israelites ate a festive meal on the night before the exodus, and the main course was lamb roasted on a spit. They were openly eating the Egyptian deity—the ram—in front of the Egyptians, under the full moon of the strongest month, and they got away with it.

The message is unmistakable. The world is not run by capricious forces and amoral star signs. There is a G d who rules heaven and earth, who cares for the innocent and exacts justice upon the corrupt. To the stars, our actions make no difference. To G d, our actions matter tremendously. The zodiac demands nothing from us. G d, however, demands we live a life of goodness.¹

The Israelites themselves didn't always get this message. After the Exodus, some in the Israelite camp suggested that while the ram of Egypt (Aries) had indeed been trumped, it was not G d's doing, rather the next star sign, Taurus the bull, who had beaten Aries. And so they built the Golden Calf—an idol honoring Taurus. It's tempting to fall back on idolatrous beliefs because they relieve us of responsibility. But they also rob us of our freedom.²

Passover celebrates not only the Israelites' freedom from Egyptian slavery, but also freedom from being bound by destiny. Our lives are not subject to the impersonal forces of the zodiac. We are free to rise above the limitations of fate and conquer our birth signs. Your fortunes may predict one course for your life, but you are free to create another. This idea was brought home on the night of the full moon of Aries.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Derech Pikudecha of R Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov, Mitzva 6, Chelek Hamachshavah 3.
2. Abarbanel on Ki Tisa.

*. Rabbi, Nefesh Community, Sydney, Australia.

Shabbat: For the Children *

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky

G d then told the Jews that they must celebrate the anniversary of the Exodus every year as the holiday of Passover. A central feature of this celebration would be the retelling of the story of the Exodus to the children.

For the Children

You must tell your child on that day. Exodus 13:8

Interestingly, the commandment to retell the story of the Exodus – which is the source for the annual Passover Seder – is given in the context of describing “the child who does not know how to ask,” the most immature of all the four types of children to whom we must tailor our description of the Exodus. This teaches us that our duty to retell the Exodus applies mainly to this uninitiated child. We must find the words to inspire even this type of child with gratitude to G d for liberating us from Egypt and from all past, present, future, personal, and collective Egypts.

This is so because the Exodus from Egypt was absolute: not one Jew remained in Egypt. Since the Exodus was so all-encompassing, the transmission of its message must also encompass each and every individual that can possibly understand it, even if this takes extraordinary effort.

By ensuring that even “the child who does not know how to ask” understands the meaning of the Exodus, we ensure that the other children will understand it, too, much as lifting up the bottom of any structure automatically raises the rest of the structure, as well.¹

* An insight by the Rebbe
– From Chabad Torah Weekly for Bo 5780

1. Sefer HaMa'amarim 5734–5735, pp. 347–353.

Gut Shabbos,
Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
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Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Against their gods

The ninth plague – darkness – comes shrouded in a darkness of its own. What is this plague doing here? It seems out of sequence. Thus far there have been eight plagues, and they have become steadily, inexorably, more serious.

The first two, the Nile turning blood-red and the infestation of frogs, seemed more like omens than anything else. The third and fourth, gnats and wild beasts, caused worry, not crisis. The fifth, the plague that killed livestock, affected animals, not human beings.

The sixth, boils, was again a discomfort, but a serious one, no longer an external issue but a bodily affliction. (Remember that Job lost everything he had, but did not start cursing his fate until his body was covered with sores: Job 2.) The seventh and eighth, hail and locusts, destroyed the Egyptian grain. Now – with the loss of grain added to the loss of livestock in the fifth plague – there was no food. Still to come was the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn, in retribution for Pharaoh's murder of Israelite children. It would be this that eventually broke Pharaoh's resolve.

So we would expect the ninth plague to be very serious indeed, something that threatened, even if it did not immediately take, human life. Instead we read what seems like an anti-climax:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand towards the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt – darkness that can be felt." So Moses stretched out his hand towards the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived. (Exodus 10:21–23)

Darkness is a nuisance, but no more. The phrase "darkness that can be felt" suggests what happened: a khamsin, a sandstorm of a kind not unfamiliar in Egypt, which can last for several days, producing sand- and dust-filled air that obliterates the light of the sun. A khamsin is usually produced by a southern wind that blows into Egypt from the Sahara Desert. The worst sandstorm is usually the first of the season, in March. This fits the dating of the plague which happened shortly before the death of the firstborn, on Pesach.

The ninth plague was doubtless unusual in its intensity, but it was not an event of a kind wholly unknown to the Egyptians, then or now. Why then does it figure in the plague

narrative, immediately prior to its climax? Why did it not happen nearer the beginning, as one of the less severe plagues?

The answer lies in a line from "Dayeinu," the song we sing as part of the Haggadah: "If God had executed judgment against them [the Egyptians] but had not done so against their gods, it would have been sufficient." Twice the Torah itself refers to this dimension of the plagues:

"I will pass through Egypt on that night, and I will kill every first-born in Egypt, man and animal. I will perform acts of judgment against all the gods of Egypt: I (alone) am God." (Exodus 12:12)

The Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, struck down by the Lord; and against their gods, the Lord had executed judgment. (Numbers 33:4)

Not all the plagues were directed, in the first instance, against the Egyptians. Some were directed against things they worshipped as gods. That is the case in the first two plagues. The Nile was personified in ancient Egypt as the god Hapi and was worshipped as the source of fertility in an otherwise desert region. Offerings were made to it at times of inundation. The inundations themselves were attributed to one of the major Egyptian deities, Osiris. The plague of frogs would have been associated by the Egyptians with Heket, the goddess who was believed to attend births as a midwife, and who was depicted as a woman with the head of a frog.

The plagues were not only intended to punish Pharaoh and his people for their mistreatment of the Israelites, but also to show them the powerlessness of the gods in which they believed. What is at stake in this confrontation is the difference between myth – in which the gods are mere powers, to be tamed, propitiated or manipulated – and biblical monotheism, in which ethics (justice, compassion, human dignity) constitute the meeting point of God and mankind.

The symbolism of these plagues, often lost on us, would have been immediately apparent to the Egyptians. Two things now become clear. The first is why the Egyptian magicians declared, "This is the finger of God" (Ex. 8:15) only after the third plague, lice. The first two plagues would not have surprised them at all. They would have understood them as the work of Egyptian deities who, they believed, were sometimes angry with the people and took their revenge.

The second is the quite different symbolism the first two plagues were meant to have for the Israelites, and for us. As with the tenth plague, these were no mere miracles intended to demonstrate the power of the God of Israel, as if religion were a gladiatorial arena in which the strongest god wins. Their meaning was moral. They represented the most fundamental of all ethical principles, stated in the Noahide covenant in the words "He who sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6). This is the rule of retributive justice, measure for measure: As you do, so shall you be done to.

By first ordering the midwives to kill all male Israelite babies, and then, when that failed, by commanding, "Every boy who is born must be cast into the Nile" (Ex. 1:22), Pharaoh had turned what should have been symbols of life (the Nile, which fed Egyptian agriculture, and midwives) into agents of death. The river that turned to blood, and the Heket-like frogs that infested the land, were not afflictions as such, but rather coded communications, as if to say to the Egyptians: reality has an ethical structure. See what it feels like when the gods you turned against the Israelites turn on you. If used for evil ends, the powers of nature will turn against man, so that what he does will be done to him in retribution. There is justice in history.

Hence the tenth plague, to which all the others were a mere prelude. Unlike all the other plagues, its significance was disclosed to Moses even before he set out on his mission, while he was still living with Jethro in Midian:

You shall say to Pharaoh: This is what the Lord says. "Israel is My son, My firstborn. I have told you to let My son go, that he may worship Me. If you refuse to let him go, I will kill your own firstborn son." (Ex. 4:22–23)

Whereas the first two plagues were symbolic representations of the Egyptian murder of Israelite children, the tenth plague was the enactment of retributive justice, as if heaven was saying to the Egyptians: You committed, or supported, or passively accepted the murder of innocent children. There is only one way you will ever realise the wrong you did, namely, if you yourself suffer what you did to others.

This too helps explain the difference between the two words the Torah regularly uses to

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describe what God did in Egypt: otot u'moftim, "signs and wonders." These two words are not two ways of describing the same thing – miracles. They describe quite different things. A mofet, a wonder, is indeed a miracle. An ot, a sign, is something else: a symbol (like tefillin or circumcision, both of which are called ot), that is to say, a coded communication, a message.

The significance of the ninth plague is now obvious. The greatest god in the Egyptian pantheon was Ra or Re, the sun god. The name of the Pharaoh often associated with the exodus, Ramses ii, means meses, "son of" (as in the name Moses) Ra, the god of the sun. Egypt – so its people believed – was ruled by the sun. Its human ruler, or Pharaoh, was semi-divine, the child of the sun god.

In the beginning of time, according to Egyptian myth, the sun god ruled together with Nun, the primeval waters. Eventually there were many deities. Ra then created human beings from his tears. Seeing, however, that they were deceitful, he sent the goddess Hathor to destroy them; only a few survived.

The plague of darkness was not a mofet but an ot, a sign. The obliteration of the sun signalled that there is a power greater than Ra. Yet what the plague represented was less the power of God over the sun, but the rejection by God of a civilisation that turned one man, Pharaoh, into an absolute ruler (son of the sun god) with the ability to enslave other human beings – and of a culture that could tolerate the murder of children because that is what Ra himself did.

When God told Moses to say to Pharaoh, "My son, My firstborn, Israel," He was saying: I am the God who cares for His children, not one who kills His children. The ninth plague was a divine act of communication that said: there is not only physical darkness but also moral darkness. The best test of a civilisation is to see how it treats children, its own and others'. In an age of broken families, neglected and impoverished children, and worse – the use of children as instruments of war – that is a lesson we still need to learn.

The Person in the Parsha **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**

Let's Talk It Over

I have long believed that all conflicts between people could be settled if the parties to the dispute would agree to simply sit down together and talk. There are, of course, times when I have come to question this belief. I often wonder whether it is not merely a vain fantasy of mine, or perhaps just wishful thinking. I have been forced to admit that some interpersonal disputes are intractable and that no amount of discussion could resolve them. But, by and large, I still adhere to this long-held belief and try, in both my personal life and various professional roles, to put that belief into practice. I attempt to get even the

most stubborn opponents to sit down face-to-face and discuss their differences.

I had the good fortune during my training in the practice of marital therapy to experience the tutelage of a master marriage counselor. Her name was Ruth G. Newman, and she passed away long ago. I have forgotten much of what she taught me, but I clearly remember her insistence that the role of the marriage counselor was not to counsel. Rather, it was to get the husband and wife to talk to each other and to truly listen to each other. I witnessed her work many times, and was amazed at how even her most stubborn clients were able to overcome their stubbornness, engage in true dialogue, and achieve understanding of the other person's point of view.

In this week's Torah portion, Parashat Bo (Exodus 10:1-13:16), we encounter an individual who arguably was the most stubborn person in the history of mankind. I speak, of course, of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, who refused to release the Jewish people from their cruel and arduous enslavement, even after being subjected to an array of miraculous plagues. His obstinacy was partly the product of his own character but was immeasurably reinforced by the Almighty's commitment to "harden his heart." Already in last week's Torah portion, Va'era, Moses was put on notice, at the very beginning of his mission, to "speak to Pharaoh to let the Israelites depart from his land," but not to expect great success. Moses was forewarned: "But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that I may multiply My signs and marvels in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 7:2-3)

By the time we read this week's parasha, Pharaoh and his people have already undergone no less than seven mighty plagues, with an impending eighth plague in the offing. But the very first verse of our parasha tells us not to expect Pharaoh's obstinacy to soften: "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his courtiers..." Surely, if there was ever one person for whom conversation and the counsel of others were simply out of the question, Pharaoh was that man.

Nevertheless, Moses persists in his mission. He and Aaron go to Pharaoh and confront him in the name of the Lord: "How long will you refuse to humble yourself...Let My people go...For if you refuse...I will bring locusts on your territory...They shall devour the surviving remnant that was left to you after the hail...They shall eat away all your trees...They shall fill your palaces...Something that neither your fathers nor fathers' fathers have seen from the day they appeared on earth to this day."

Having delivered this dire threat, Moses then does something which is unprecedented and which catches us off guard. We are told: "With that he turned and left Pharaoh's presence." He

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does not wait for Pharaoh's response. He simply leaves the scene.

What are we to make of this sudden departure?

Rabbi Moses ben Nachman, the great exegete known as Nachmanides, or Ramban, suggests an answer which both gives us an insight into Moses thought processes and teaches us a lesson about the power of dialogue to overcome obduracy.

He writes: "Moses knew that the recent plague of hail frightened Pharaoh and his people very much. He reasoned that the fear of a deadly famine, which would inevitably result from the plague of locusts, might bring even Pharaoh to soften his heart. And so, without so much as asking Pharaoh for permission to leave, he summarily departed before Pharaoh could say yes or no. He did this to allow Pharaoh and his courtiers to discuss the matter and take counsel from one another. Indeed, this is exactly what happened. The courtiers said to Pharaoh, 'Are you not yet aware that Egypt is lost?' In the words of our rabbis of the Midrash, 'Moses observed that they were turning to each other, taking this threat seriously. So he left abruptly, so that they would indeed advise each other to repent.'"

Ramban readily admits that he was preceded by the rabbis of the Midrash in his insightful interpretation. Despite the fact that Moses had already become quite familiar with Pharaoh's extreme stubbornness, refusing to comply with Moses' demand even after seven devastating plagues, and despite the fact that the Almighty himself had told Moses that Pharaoh's heart would remain hardened, Moses still held out hope that Pharaoh would take the counsel of others, would "talk things over" and might relent. In Moses judgment, repentance is always a possibility, and what makes it possible is conversation and dialogue.

Rabbi Simcha Z. Brodie, a great twentieth-century yeshiva dean whom I was privileged to meet in person, uses this passage in the writings of Ramban as the cornerstone of his theory about the importance of dialogue and of its power to change people. He goes so far as to argue that true spiritual greatness cannot be achieved without such dialogue.

To illustrate this point, he relates a story he heard from one of the disciples of the famed nineteenth-century moralist, Rabbi Israel Salanter. Rabbi Salanter was once told about a uniquely spiritual individual, one who had attained rare levels of piety. Rabbi Salanter refused to believe that an individual, acting alone, could achieve such an unusual stature. "If you would have told me this about one of the three saintly men from the town of Reisen (three famed early nineteenth-century Pietists), I would believe you. Each of them had the others to help him ascend the ladder of holiness. But the man you just described to me

lives in utter solitude. No one can achieve sublime spirituality alone."

Ramban and Rabbi Brodie are teaching us two useful and important lessons, lessons which Moses knew well. First, dialogue and the readiness to talk things over can soften even the hardest of hearts. Secondly, solitude may have its occasional value, but only a life of dialogue with others can foster moral and psychological growth.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Rambam Min HaTorah – Minayin? (Where is Maimonides Alluded to in Chumash?)

As we all know, the Rambam played a major role in the development of Klal Yisrael. It is axiomatic that every major development in Jewish history is alluded to in the Torah. The Vilna Gaon was once asked – where is the name of the Rambam alluded to in the Torah? The Vilna Gaon cited a pasuk in Parshas Bo: "Hashem said to Moshe, 'Pharaoh will not listen to you, in order to increase My wonders in the land of Egypt (Revos Mofsei B'erezt Mitzrayim)." [Shmos 11:9]. The beginning letters of the words Revos Mofsei B'erezt Mitzrayim are Reish Mem Beis Mem – Rambam.

This is amazing because the Rambam was in fact a "wonder" in the land of Egypt. He lived a great part of his life in Eretz Mitzrayim because he was persecuted in his home country of Spain. He ran away to Egypt where he lived in Alexandria and became the court physician. He literally became a "mofes" [wonder] in the Sultan's court. He writes that lines of patients waited hours to see him. Despite all this, he authored his major works of Jewish scholarship that made a lasting impression on all subsequent Rabbinic literature. This is a Wonder. Thus, the Gaon pointed out that the words Revos Mofsei B'erezt Mitzrayim allude to Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon, both in terms of their meaning and in terms of the acronym.

Now You Are In Charge

The first mitzva that Klal Yisrael receives as a nation is "This month (Nissan) shall be for you the first of the months..." [Shmos 12:2] The Jewish Court is obligated to establish the months of the year based on the sighting of the new moon. Then, based on the proclamations of the new month, Beis Din establishes the dates of the Jewish holidays (Yomim Tovim).

Immediately after the above-cited pasuk, the Torah launches into the mitzvos associated with the Korban Pesach [Paschal offering] including the associated mitzvos of eating Matzah and Maror. This is all in Parshas Bo.

If you and I had to pick what should be the first mitzva that Klal Yisrael would receive as the Chosen Nation, I do not think any of us would have suggested that that mitzvah should be "This month shall be for you the first of the months..." True, it is a positive

commandment. Beis Din needs to do it on behalf of Klal Yisrael. However, we would not consider it a "fundamental mitzva."

Actually, if we wanted to pick a positive mitzva to be the "inaugural mitzva for Klal Yisrael", Korban Pesach is an excellent choice. Korban Pesach together with Mitzvas Milah [the mitzva to circumcise] are the only two positive mitzvos for which failure to fulfill them makes a person liable to receive the punishment of Kares [excision from the nation]. In the hierarchy of importance of positive mitzvos, the Pesach [sacrifice] ranks almost at the top if not at the top of the list.

Yet, that is not the first mitzva. Since this entire parsha – from that point on – is about Pesach, it is logical to start the enumeration of mitzvos with the mitzva to offer the Paschal sacrifice. Why then, did Hashem choose the setting up of the calendar system as the very first mitzva that Klal Yisrael received as a nation?

The Kli Yakar gives a very practical answer to this question. In order to observe the Yom Tov of Pesach, we need to begin by establishing the New Moon of the month of Nissan (so that we will be able to determine when Pesach occurs).

I recently picked up a sefer called Chikrei Lev from a Rabbi Label Hyman, who was the Rav of the "Gra Shul" in the Bayit Vegan neighborhood of Jerusalem. [He writes in the introduction to his sefer that he is originally a Baltimorean who went to the Talmudical Academy (T.A.). He has a whole section mentioning old time Baltimorean rabbis and educators who had an influence on him.] He wrote a beautiful piece analyzing why Beis Din's duty to proclaim Rosh Chodesh is in fact the first mitzva.

His basic point is that something very significant happened to Klal Yisrael when they were given this mitzva and the power to make Rosh Chodesh: They were given power over the moon. If we look in Sefer Bereshis [1:18], one of the first times that the Torah refers to the moon it says "And to rule in the day and in the night..." The sun rules during the day and the moon rules at night. The moon is a force in creation. The Ramban writes in his Commentary to Bereshis that the tides and the waters of the world are all dependent on the moon. The moon has dominion over significant aspects of nature. When Klal Yisrael was given the power to declare Rosh Chodesh – they were empowered over one of the most powerful phenomenon in the world, namely the moon. Not only were they given the power over the moon, they were given the power over the calendar as well.

In fact, Chazal say that until this point in history, the Ribono shel Olam established when the Yomim Tovim occurred. Chazal say that Yitzchak was born on Pesach, Avraham ate matzah, and Yaakov and Eisav brought the tasty dishes to their father (to receive their blessings), all on Pesach. Who determined the

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timing of Yom Tov? The Medrash says that the Almighty established when the holidays occurred. At that point in history, the power of establishing the calendar was relegated to Him. Now He gave that power to Klal Yisrael.

It is an unbelievable power. When Beis Din decides which day is Rosh Hashanna, it automatically determines which day is Yom Kippur (ten days later). If Beis Din decides, for whatever reason (and the halacha is that even if they made a mistake in their calculations, whether willfully or un-willfully their proclamation is the final word on the matter). If Rosh HaShanna is on Monday, then Yom Kippur will be on Wednesday. Even if the Ribono shel Olam in Heaven knows that this is not the way it is supposed to really be, if Beis Din said that Wednesday is Yom Kippur then that is when Yom Kippur will be. If someone eats on Wednesday, he deserves Kares. If someone does not eat on Tuesday, he will be making a mistake. That is giving unbelievable power to Klal Yisrael.

The Gemara [Rosh HaShanna 8b] states, "This teaches that the Heavenly Court does not enter into Judgment until the "Lower Court" sanctifies the New Moon." Rosh HaShanna is a very powerful day. All creatures in the world pass before Him like "bnei Maron."

The Ribono shel Olam sits in judgement on the entire world. Who will live and who die? Who determines when this auspicious day takes place? The Gemara says that the Almighty tells his Angels, "I am not going to sit in Judgement of the world until the Earthly Court establishes which day is the New Moon and therefore Rosh HaShanna.

This is an amazing power and that is the reason that this had to be the first mitzva. When a person is a slave, he is powerless. The only thing that can elevate a person out of this stage of servitude is to give the person amazing power. The Ibn Ezra writes there is nothing harder for a human being than to be a slave to another human being. Turning a nation that has been enslaved for 210 years into a free people requires a dramatic shift in their psychological mentality. The most effective way to accomplish that is to give them power – amazing power: Let them know that "Now you are in charge."

This is the medicine that was needed to remove their slave mentality. That is why Kiddush HaChodesh had to be the first mitzva.

However, there is a major problem with power. As the 19 century British historian, Lord Acton, said: "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." So what is the antidote to that? The antidote to that is to look at the story of the moon.

Chazal say that the moon complained to the Ribono shel Olam and said, "Two kings cannot share one crown." In other words, both the sun and the moon were given dominion over the heavens and such a "division of power" is simply not feasible. According to the Medrash, the Almighty accepted the

argument of the moon and therefore diminished its power. From that point forward, the moon and the sun were no longer co-equal powers, but rather, Hashem ordered the moon to diminish itself.

The Medrash continues that at that point, the moon protested – “Because I offered a valid argument, I should be punished? I was right – two equal kings is not a feasible arrangement!” The Almighty then responded, “You are right – I will give you a reward. You are called ‘the small light’ (haMaor haKatan). Yaakov Avinu was called ‘katan’; Dovid HaMelech was called ‘katan’. I am going to call the greatest people in history after you – they too are going to be called ‘katan’. Not only that, but when you come out at night, I am going to give you billions of stars to accompany you.”

This does not make any sense. The moon apparently did something wrong. The Ribono shel Olam punished the moon. Then the moon comes back and said “But that is not fair!” and the Ribono shel Olam responds, “Yes, you are right. Therefore, I am going to reward you...”

Did the moon do something wrong or did it not do something wrong?

Rabbi Hyman says a beautiful idea. Hashem told the moon to make itself smaller. It could have fulfilled the Divine Command by making itself 5% smaller than the sun. I do not know the exact proportions but the moon is far smaller than the sun. Furthermore, the moon could have just made itself smaller. It did not need to give up its own source of light (which it apparently originally had) such that it is now just a reflection of the sun. Why did the moon do that? In fulfilling the Divine Command, it did not just perfunctorily obey the command. It learned its lesson. It had been too haughty, it had been too proud and now when told to “minimize itself,” it fulfilled this mitzva “mit alle hidurim” [above and beyond the requirements of the law and the call of duty]. The moon made itself a shining example of what it means to be humble. So now, the moon demonstrates what it means to have power, but to know how to handle that power.

Therefore, as a “consolation prize,” the Ribono shel Olam says, “You are going to have billions of stars and I am going to name great people after you.” The Chikrei Lev writes that is also the lesson of the mitzva of proclaiming the new moon. I gave you amazing power. You have control over the moon and you establish when the Yomim Tovim occur. You establish when Rosh HaShanna and Yom Kippur occur. You are in control. But never forget the lesson of the moon. Never forget that too much power can go to a person’s head and it can corrupt.

Dvar Torah **Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis**

Why do I place a box on my head and a box on my arm? In Parashat Bo, the Torah presents us with two of the four paragraphs in the Torah,

giving us the Mitzvah of Tefillin. “Ot Al Yadcha – Men should place a sign upon their arms.” “Ul’Totafot Bein Einecha – Frontlets between our eyes.” There are two prime messages that the Mitzvah of Tefillin conveys.

Firstly, the Tefillin Shel Rosh is placed on my head representing my intellect. The Tefillin Shel Yad faces the heart representing my feeling and my emotion – the extent to which I care about other people.

Therefore, every morning a man is reminded that in addition to increasing his knowledge, it is crucially important as well for him to show care and compassion for others.

In our history we have placed so much prominence on the importance of learning, knowledge, studying and educating. Our chesed and our compassion must equally find importance of place in our lives.

And then there is a second great message that the Tefillin conveys to me every single weekday morning. It is the fact that the Tefillin Shel Rosh sits on the seat of thought and intention while the Tefillin Shel Yad represents action. And here we recognise that it is not only important what I think about or what I intend to do, but far more important, is what I actually achieve.

There are many who are proud to be Orthodox but I actually think there is a far more significant term than Orthodoxy. ‘Orthodox’ comes from the Greek, ‘Orthodoxos’ – meaning thinking correctly. ‘Orthoprax’ means doing what is right. And surely that is one step beyond Orthodoxy. In addition to the Tefillin Shel Rosh, which represents what we think, we must also wear that Tefillin Shel Yad with pride, to translate our intentions into meaningful and effective action.

Consequently every weekday we are reminded of the importance of both knowledge and compassion, together with intention and deed.

What better way to start every day?

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky

Synchronization of the Natural Order With the Divine Will

This parsha has the unique distinction of being the organic beginning of the Torah. Rashi, in the famous opening lines to his peirush on Chumash, quotes the midrash which asks,

“shouldn’t the Torah have started with the portion of ‘hachodesh hazeh lochem’, which is the first mitzvah that Israel was commanded? Why does the Chumash start with Bereishis? [The answer is] ...so that if the nations of the world will accuse Israel of being thieves by dint of having conquered the Land [of Israel] from the seven nations, they will reply that the entire world is G-d’s; He created it and gave it

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to whom was fit in His eyes. He gave it to them by dint of His will, and by dint of His will took it from them and gave it to us.”

This Rashi certainly can’t mean that this will convince the nations of the world of anything. It hasn’t for the last millennia, and by all accounts does not seem to be doing so now. Additionally, starting the Torah with hachodesh hazeh lachem seems odd. If we are meant to start the Torah with the world of mitzvos, then surely it is mattan Torah that we should start with. The Rambam (Peirush Hamishnayos) famously states that the validity of any mitzvah starts with the Sinaiitic revelation. Any mitzvah given before [i.e. millah or gid hanasha] is still in effect only because it was repeated at Sinai. Why, then, would it be proper to start the Torah at our parsha?

To understand the fundamental difference between Bereishis and “hachodesh hazeh lochem”, we will need to examine to fundamental contexts of “universe”: natural/determined, versus “willed”/ choice. On the one hand we can posit that the most basic structure of our universe is “law and order”, which fits so well with our experience of the immutable natural laws. In this context Hashem appeared and commanded particular deeds to be performed, and prohibited particular activities.

On the other hand, one may posit a supernatural context, wherein everything is the “will of G-d” and the natural order as such is but a temporary - albeit long-lived - particular “will of Hashem”.

If we are to ask what is the most basic unit of our universe, we may well answer: time. It is the most unbending and unyielding of the four dimensions [Einstein aside.]

Thus Bereishis begins with time: In the beginning. The core unto of time is a day. There was night and daytime, forming “one day.” This is the natural world, and time is immutable. “What was before” is irrelevant, and from the point of Bereishis on, day is a fixed unit of time. The holy day which comes out of this arrangement is Shabbos, which is characterized as “k’vi’ih v’kaymi - fixed and immutable.”

But there is another unit of time called chodesh. This is an inherently fluctuating unit, as it has no direct correlation with “days”; any given month can be longer or shorter. But more importantly, its halachic status is given to change. The length of the month and its position in the year are set by humans. Humans act not only as observers of the passage of months, but we actually can add or subtract a month, as per our need.

Thus in the first model, time is fixed and man is the variable; in the second model man is fixed, i.e. atem, and time is variable.

The nations of the world have seven mitzvos, corresponding to the seven days of creation.

Their world's framing context is a fixed natural order within which G-d is omnipotent. The additional mitzvos that we have are not simply more of the same, but rather are a function of a different contextualization of our existence. Chazal teach us that the six hundred and thirteen mitzvos represent the elements of the human body. It is the Torah of man, rather than the Torah of the world.

It would therefore not be adequate to being the Torah at mattan Torah. We must start with redefining the universe itself, such that man is the at the core and is the central point of reference of existence, and time is his obedient servant. The corresponding alternative to Bereishis is hachodesh hazeh lochem, not the Aseres Hadibros. And, indeed, the Torah's real Genesis is hachodesh hazeh.

Hashem did not want to leave creation distributed between two frameworks, one centered on temporality and one anthropocentric, which did not interface with each other. Such a bifurcation would run counter to Hashem's unity. Translating this to the world of ethics, this would mean that a system in the universe in which Hashem was ethical according to a Torah viewpoint but seemingly unjust from the perspective of a [Divinely imbued] universal morality is unacceptable. Rather, Hashem engineered a universe in which the various articulations of His will all point in the same direction, and according to which Eretz Yisroel is understandably and justly ours from both perspectives - the perspective of hachodesh and the perspective of Bereishis.

The remarkable unity between the framework centered on time and the anthropocentric framework was not put into place to convince the nations of the world of the validity of our claim to Eretz Yisroel. Rather it was created to teach us that Torah is true both from our particularistic morality and according to its reflection in universal morality as well.

Mishpetei Hashem Emmes, Tzadku Yachdav!

OTS Dvor Torah

The Internal Process in the Exodus from Egypt - by Rabbi Nechemia Krakover

Every external process starts with an internal process. The question here isn't merely what a person is prepared to exhibit, out in the open. It's mainly about how much that person is prepared to expose inwardly, or, in other words, a person's self-identification and self-determination.

It's midnight. The angel of death is passing from door to door and smiting every firstborn child in Egypt, from Pharaoh's firstborn son to the firstborn of the maid-servants. Yet there are some houses that, for a reason that is unclear, the angel spares. No external sign or indication of any kind appears on these houses. Upon closer examination, it turns out that these are

the homes of the Jewish people, who had strictly observed the commandment of Pesach, the Pascal lamb sacrifice.

We know that the sign that indicated to God which houses had observed the commandment of Pesach was the blood smeared on the doorposts. Where was this sign placed, though? Was it in the houses' interior or on the exterior?

One possibility is that the blood was smeared on the exterior of the front door, indicating that the Jew who lived in the house was prepared to unreservedly demonstrate his faith, despite the risk involved in exposing his faith to the Egyptians strolling about. This type of person is worthy of being redeemed by God. However, Rashi, Ibn Ezra and other commentators read the verses closely and conclude that the bloodstain was on the interior. If so, how could this be a sign to the angel of death to spare the residents of the house? Was would this sign symbolize?

I feel that that there is a profound message here.

Every external process begins with an internal process. The question here isn't merely what a person is prepared to exhibit publicly. It's mainly about how much that person is prepared to expose internally, or, in other words, a person's self-awareness and self-identification. Only after clearly defining oneself can one proceed to external definitions, which are much simpler.

We know the teachings of our sages, who tell us that mar'it ayin – or certain actions which give an appearance of sinning – are prohibited, even in private. Technically speaking, our sages teach us that if we do not completely prohibit mar'it ayin, a person could misstep where it's most problematic. On a deeper level, however, we could say that the greatest danger is in the most private spaces, where a person can more seriously deviate from the rules. After all, behind closed doors, no one else can see. It is there that a person comes face to face with his or her innermost self, and realizes how stable he or she is, and what that innermost self is really saying, when all of the outside considerations have been stripped away.

In today's modern, or rather, post-modern reality, this is a fundamental question. Our culture is replete with external definitions, social influences, and mutual relationships. Interpersonal communication is vast and diverse, while intra-personal communication steadily declines. Questions of self-identification are becoming even more pointed. People – and young people in particular – are increasingly struggling with how to define who

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they are, and within these vague definitions, internal contradictions and emotional difficulties emerge, to a much greater extent than ever before.

The same applies to the religious world. Increasingly, people are either unwilling or unable to boldly define where they stand, on a religious level, or to determine where they are, and where they would like to be. It's quite convenient to avoid making these determinations, since this is what allows us to behave in all kinds of ways, ways that might even be contradictory. No one is there to judge us, there are no guilt trips, and no one is criticizing us, because in this undefined reality, everything is possible. The question of what is right and what is wrong is no longer relevant. However, along with this freedom comes a sense of frustration from a lack of direction and stable ground. This frustration can be felt in the education system, but it is mainly a frustration with education at home, where the parental and educational authority is in danger – not because children don't respect their parents' authority, but because parents don't have the backbone to back up their credo with action since, oftentimes, they don't even have a credo. This situation dooms any educational initiative to failure.

The Torah is here to explain that redemption hinges, first and foremost, on internal redemption, emotional clarity, and on one's ability to stand tall and define who or what one is, while identifying strengths and weaknesses.

A social, cultural or education system need not impose its views on its students, but it must be able to tell itself what it believes, and what path it must take. Those who succeed in standing tall, marking their doorposts and the "doorposts of their souls" with their faith in their God and their own lives, will also merit to witness external and revealed redemption.

The Hebrew word geula – redemption – is derived from the root gilui – discovery. To be redeemed, we need to ensure that below all of the layers and burdens, there is something that is possible, necessary and worthy of discovery.

Bar Ilan University: Dvar Torah

Why Did the Dog Disappear?

By Yonah Bar-Maoz^{1*}

The plagues in Egypt are noted for their precise implementation of prior warnings, insofar as natural disasters of various types were common everywhere in the ancient world, and had the Egyptians not received prior warning they would have ascribed the plagues that came upon them to chance occurrence.

The precise execution of a prior warning is especially notable in the plague of the first-

¹ Pharaoh's response is divided in two—before the outcry and after it, because he was awakened by the outcries in his palace, but only when he set out to find Moses did he see the full force and extent of the plague.

borns, as is evident from this comparison of warning and implementation:

Warning: Exodus 11:4-7	Implementation: Exodus 12:29-32
1) Toward midnight I will go forth among the Egyptians, 2) and every first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, 3) from the first-born of Pharaoh who sits on his throne 4) to the first-born of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; 5) and all the first-born of the cattle.	1) In the middle of the night 2) the Lord struck down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, 3) from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on the throne 4) to the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon, 5) and all the first-born of the cattle. 8) And Pharaoh arose in the night, with all his courtiers and all the Egyptians— 6) because there was a loud cry in Egypt; for there was no house where there was not someone dead.
6) and there shall be a loud cry in all the land of Egypt, such as has never been or will ever be again; 7) but not a dog shall snarl at any of the Israelites, at man or beast—in order that you may know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. 8) Then all these courtiers of yours shall come down to me and bow low to me, saying, "Depart, you and all the people who follow you!"	8) He summoned Moses and Aaron in the night and said, "Up, depart from among my people, you and the Israelites with you!...And may you bring a blessing upon me also!"

When we compare warning to implementation we see that the dogs are notably absent; there is no indication whether or not they snarled² at the Israelites or their beasts. One of the reasons for their absence is that Moses' remarks about the dogs were intended for Pharaoh's ears at the last stage of the

theological contest between them, a contest to establish which Gd had it in His power to determine the fate of the Israelites.

In response to Moses' first request that the Israelites be permitted to go to the wilderness to worship the Lord, Pharaoh had answered, "Who is the Lord that I should heed Him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go" (Ex. 5:2), and therefore in several of the plagues Moses declared the objective of the plague beforehand or summarized its import after the fact, so that Pharaoh would know who the Lord was.³

The plague of first-borns would be the final proof that the Lord Gd of Israel had it in His power to put the Egyptians to death and to protect His servants from death, and of course had the ability to liberate them from bondage. At the same time, the utter impotence of Pharaoh's gods would become evident, for it was neither in his power to protect those who worshipped him, nor to do harm to the Israelites, and certainly not to prevent them from leaving. Therefore, the reference to a dog is a swipe at the Egyptian god Anubis,⁴ a deity represented in Egyptian culture as a jackal or a man with a jackal's head.

In ancient Egypt Anubis was perceived as a god associated with death. Earlier the Egyptians believed he brought death, but in a later period he was thought to be in charge of embalming the dead and transporting them along the Nile on their way to heaven, and was Osiris' assistant in weighing the deceased's heart in order to determine his fate.

The jackal, zoologically a canine, came to symbolize death because of the danger it posed to the body of the dead, especially someone buried beyond a settled area. Hence this deity was honored in order to lessen his threat to those who worshipped him. In densely settled urban areas the dog took the place of the jackal, as is seen even in several passages in the Bible.⁵ Little wonder, therefore, that at a site dedicated to Anubis, in the vicinity of Saqqara, over eight million mummified dogs were found.⁶ We may conclude from this that Pharaoh would have understood Moses' taunting allusion.

Even though the Egyptians ostensibly respected the jackal-god and his kindred dogs, one could offend Pharaoh's belief by calling his deity a dog, for in Egypt, as in the Bible, dogs in themselves were not considered

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creatures commanding respect. This is clearly evident in letters addressed to the kings of Egypt and in texts written by the Egyptian kings themselves. Several times, in the Amarna Letters, when a complaint was lodged about an Egyptian vassal, the target of the complaint was referred to pejoratively as a dog. Ramses II, when he was displeased by the delegate sent him by Hattushili III King of Hatti, asked, "Who is this dog?" Merneptah, on his campaign to Libya, presented himself as a lion, and his opponent, as a timid dog.

In his encounter with Pharaoh, Moses was openly scoffing at the gods of Egypt because he was irate at the flagrant violation of the promises Pharaoh had sent to the people, as it says: "And he left Pharaoh's presence in hot anger" (Ex. 11:8). In addition, the scorn for the Egyptian god that had been voiced in Pharaoh's ear now became central to the story, because this outright contempt was another stage in the spiritual liberation from Egypt which had begun with slaughtering a lamb to the G-d of Israel on Egyptian soil. Not a single Egyptian dared protest against this, even though slaughtering a lamb and eating it was designed to evoke the Egyptians' wrath, as is implied by the reason Moses had given Pharaoh for asking that the people be permitted to go out to the wilderness to make their sacrifices: "If we sacrifice that which is untouchable to the Egyptians before their very eyes, will they not stone us!" (Ex. 8:22).

Mentioning dogs to Pharaoh at this stage was essential for yet another reason. The dogs had to bark that night in the Egyptian part of the land alone, because their barking was essential to verifying the truth of the Lord's words. A precise time for implementation of the plague was only stipulated in the case of the plague of the first-born, and the most common way of ascertaining the time at night was the behavior of animals, as the Sages have described: "Rabbi Eliezer says: The night is divided into three watches...and the indications are: in the first watch, the ass brays; in the second, the dogs bark; in the third, the child sucks from the breast of his mother" (*Berakhot* 3a).

Understandably, the dogs' barking did not subside on the night of the plague of the first-born as on a regular night, rather became intensified, because the cries of the living and their unusual activity made the dogs troubled, and the many corpses stimulated their well-developed sense of smell. The quiet that

² This is the Greek form of the Egyptian name *inpu* or *inpi*. See R. Arbel, "Anubis—The Jackal Passes Judgment on the Dead," *Teva ve-Eretz*, 32-3 (1990), pp. 38-40.

³ I Kings 14:11; 16:14; 21:19; 21:23-24; 22:38; II Kings 9:10; Jer. 15:3. The danger posed to the dead by dogs living in the vicinity of human beings is illustrated in the *gemara* by the story about King David dying on the Sabbath (*Shabbat* 30b): "Then Solomon sent to the Beit Midrash: My father is dead and lying in the sun; and the dogs of my father's house are hungry; what shall I do? They sent back: Cut up a carcass and place it before the dogs; and as for your father, put a loaf of bread or a child upon him and carry him away."

⁴ The mummy catacombs had been discovered by the end of the 19th century, but it was not until June 2015 that the journal *Antiquity* published "The Catacombs of Anubis at North Saqqara," which provides a comprehensive summary of the research.

⁵ The same is true of other ancient cultures in our region, as clearly manifest in the article by Dr. Idan Breier of Bar Ilan's Department of Land of Israel Studies: Idan Breier, "Who is this Dog?: The Negative Image of Canines in the Lands of the Bible," *Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 54 (2018), pp. 47-62. I wish to thank Dr. Idan Breier for calling my attention to this instructive article.

⁶ In addition to their ability to hear sounds at frequencies not audible to the human ear. Perhaps this is the origin of the saying, "When dogs cry you know that the Angel of Death has come into town" (Babylonian Talmud, *Bava Kama* 60b).

reigned among the dwellings of the Israelites after onset of the plague of the first-born was thus surprising in all respects, since dogs everywhere always respond to the warning barks and deterrent growls of their kind, even from far away and especially at night.

The dogs' barking was not mentioned when the plague of the first-born was carried out because Pharaoh's mind was not set on checking the veracity of Moses' words on this subject. It quite sufficed him to have the first-borns in the palace begin dying off for him to immediately head out to search for Moses.

Also, the rest of the Egyptians were in a hurry to send off the Israelites before their worst fears came to pass, as it is written, "The Egyptians urged the people on, impatient to have them leave the country, for they said, 'We shall all be dead'" (Ex. 12:33), and had no time for attention to trivial details such as the barking of dogs.

Pharaoh's terrified behavior in the plague of first-borns was quite different from his insouciance when the livestock of Egypt died in the plague of pestilence: "When Pharaoh inquired, he found that not a head of the livestock of Israel had died; yet Pharaoh remained stubborn, and he would not let the people go" (Ex. 9:7). In both plagues it was decreed in advance that there would be clear discrimination in favor of the Israelites, but only in the plague of pestilence did Pharaoh bother to verify this fact, whereas in the plague of first-borns his mind was on something else entirely. The fact that Scripture does not mention the silence of the dogs when this plague was carried out lends expression to Pharaoh's thoughts being elsewhere.

The explanation we have given here for events on the night of the plague of first-borns can also explain Pharaoh's behavior later on, when he again stiffened his neck and set off in pursuit of the Israelites three days after the death of all the Egyptian first-born. It could well be that the haste with which the Israelites were sent off, before the veracity of all of Moses' words had been ascertained, was one of the factors contributing to Pharaoh's quick reversal of sentiment. Had he checked what had gone on among the Israelite dwellings he would have been hesitant to take on "this mighty Gd, the same Gd who struck the Egyptians with every kind of plague in the wilderness!" to borrow the words of the Philistines in I Sam. 4:8, who had proven that even in exceptional circumstances He reigns over all, from the life of human beings to the instinctive reactions of animals, and that whatever He wills shall forever come to pass.

[Translated by Rachel Rowen]



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Parshas Bo

Tefillin: Na'aseh before Nishma / The Power of a Hint

Insincere Converts Will Put on Their Tefillin Backwards

In the last pasuk of Parshas Bo, the Torah, in speaking about the Mitzvah of Tefillin, states: "And it shall be a sign upon your arm, and for totafos between your eyes, for with a strong hand Hashem removed us from Egypt." [Shemos 13:16] The mitzvah of Tefillin is to have Tefillin both on one's arm and on one's head. The Mechilta, which is a collection of Tannaitic teachings relating to the laws taught in the chapters of the Book of Shemos, interprets this pasuk as teaching that as long as one's hand-Tefillin are on his arm, his head-Tefillin needs to be worn on his head. The practical import of this instruction is that the sequence for putting on and removing Tefillin is that first we put on the hand Tefillin and then we put on the head Tefillin; first we remove the head Tefillin and then we remove the hand Tefillin.

The sefer Bei Chiya raises an interesting question. The Talmud states, "We will not accept converts in Messianic times" [Avodah Zarah 3b]. The reason for that is that in Messianic times, everyone will want to jump on the bandwagon of the Jewish people. Everyone will want to become a part of the obviously "Chosen Nation." However, we do not need Johnny-come-lately type of additions to Klal Yisrael. The Gemara notes that for similar reasons, converts were not accepted during the monarchies of Dovid or Shlomo. This was the apex of Jewish history, and then too, everyone was anxious to join the premier nation, which was the envy of the world.

The Gemara says that despite these restrictions, there are people who will say, "We want to join the club anyway." They are going to put on Tefillin on their heads and Tefillin on their arms and Tzitzis on their clothing—to appear as Jews. However, when these insincere converts see the pre-Messianic War of Gog and Magog and the associated trauma and stress that

will impact the Jewish community in that time, they will say "Forget it! We do not need this." They will abandon their Tefillin and Tzitzis and walk away from them.

It is interesting to note that the Talmud, in mentioning the practices of these "insincere converts," says that they put Tefillin on their heads and Tefillin on their arms. Now, as we mentioned before, that is the wrong sequence! Once they are already putting on Tefillin, they should do it right: It should first be Tefillin on their arm and then Tefillin on their head! The sefer Bei Chiya gives an interesting explanation:

Even though there is a halacha that the hand Tefillin must be worn at all times when the head Tefillin is worn, there is a great symbolism in this as well. It basically echoes the same concept as "Na'aseh v'Nishma" (the proclamation the Jews gave at Sinai: "We will do and we will understand.") Jewish theology is based on first doing and then asking questions and coming to an understanding of why I am doing. We are willing to do, even if in the interim we do not understand.

This differentiates between Klal Yisrael and the Nations of the World. The famous Medrash teaches that the Almighty took the Torah and went to offer it to the various nations of the world. Each one first inquired "What is written therein?" To one nation He said "You shall not murder." To another nation He said "You shall not commit adultery." A third nation was taught that theft is prohibited. Each nation rejected the Torah because they refused to commit to the prohibition the Almighty called to their attention.

Rav Weinberg always used to say that the problem with the nations' answer was not that they said "Well, I cannot accept a prohibition to murder", "I cannot accept a prohibition of adultery", "I cannot accept a prohibition of thievery." The nations were already disqualified as soon as they asked "What is written therein?" even before hearing a sample command and rejecting it. The very inquiry as to what is written there implies a refusal to commit. Someone who refuses to commit cannot accept Torah.

This is in sharp contrast to what Klal Yisrael said—Na'aseh v'Nishma! No questions asked! We sign a blank check and we allow Him to fill it in! We had such faith in the Master of the Universe that we were willing to do that. This is what Chazal mean when they say "Who revealed to My children this secret?"

This is why hand Tefillin precede head Tefillin (when being put on). Tefillin can be on the arm (implying action) without there being Tefillin on the head (implying understanding); but if the Tefillin are on the head (implying making an attempt to understand) without being on the hand (implying commitment for action), that does not work. Understanding (the brain) in Judaism must always come after action (the hand).

Now we understand perfectly the Talmudic reference to insincere converts who put Tefillin first on their heads and then on their arms. It was the same theology and philosophy of life as the nations who refused to accept the Torah: First explain it to me. I will decide afterwards whether to accept it or not. We see that they did not last. One who lacks the "Na'aseh v'Nishma" commitment is disqualified from being part of the Jewish nation.

Pharaoh! Wake Up and Smell the Coffee!

The Medrash in this week's parsha, on the pasuk "Go to Pharaoh..." [Shemos 10:1], states: "Rabbi Yehuda began by saying, 'Fortunate are the people who understand the call of the Teruah blast; Hashem, in the Light of Your Presence they walk.' [Tehillim 89:16] This pasuk from Psalms is obviously associated with Tekiyas Shofar. It is recited on Rosh Hashanna after the completion of blowing the first set of Shofar blasts.

This is a beautiful pasuk, but what on earth does it have to do with "Go to Pharaoh..."? There are many fundamental mitzvos in Parshas Bo—Pesach, Chametz, Tefillin, Bechor. The mitzva of Shofar does not appear in this parsha! What on earth does "Ashrei ha'Am yodei Teruah" have to do with "Bo el Pharaoh?

The Chidushei HaRim cites in this connection a very famous Rambam in the third chapter of Hilchos Teshuvah. The Rambam writes there: "Even though blowing shofar is a Divine Decree (with no apparent logic), it carries a

tremendous message within it (remez yesh bo): Arise those who slumber from your sleep, wake up from your drowsiness and repent."

A remez is a 'hint' and sometimes a 'hint' can be even more powerful than a long speech. Sometimes even the wink of an eye or the nod of one's head—the slightest gesture—can deliver a far greater impact than a twenty-minute oration. "A hint suffices for the wise."

When the Rambam says that Tekiyas Shofar contains within it a hint (remez), he is saying that Klal Yisrael respond to the remez of Tekiyas Shofar. There are no words that come out of the shofar—it is merely a series of sounds that emerge. But that sound is enough to send a message that I need to wake up from my slumber. This sound can sometimes be more powerful than the most eloquent of drashas.

The first time we hear the shofar—perhaps even in Elul, but certainly on the first day of Rosh Hashanna—we start to tremble. It sends a message. There is no screaming, there is no yelling, there is no fire and brimstone, just that kol shofar—the hint within it. And Klal Yisrael responds.

The Chidushei HaRim explains that Rabbi Yehuda in the Medrash means as follows: Come and see the difference between the Jewish people and Pharaoh. Parshas Bo contains Plagues #8, #9, and #10. Pharaoh has already gone through seven plagues. He has been banged over the head time and time again. Wake up and smell the coffee, Pharaoh! Don't you see where this is headed? Why can't you figure it out? Why don't you respond? Are you blind? Are you deaf? Are you dumb? What is it that you do not get? They are going to take your entire country down the drain!

Such is sometimes the nature of people. They can be hit over the head, they can be yelled at, they can be slapped in the face, they can have cold water poured over their head. Everything! And still they do not wake up.

Rabbi Yehudah began and expounded: Fortunate is the nation who knows the Teruah. Klal Yisrael understand the Teruah. They hear one sound and already they intuitively understand the hint contained with it. That one sound already arouses them to repent. Such is the difference between Pharaoh and Klal Yisrael.

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8:45 PM - Rav Hershel Schachter - Is My House Muktzah? Halachos of Home Automation on Shabbos]

Rabbi Mordechai Willig
Answering the Ben Rasha

I
"You must tell your son on that day saying 'It is because of this that Hashem did for me when I left Egypt'" (Shmos 13:8). Rashi adds, "Here [the Torah]

hints at the answer to the wicked son by saying 'Hashem did for me', i.e. for me but not for you, for had you been there you would not have been worthy of being redeemed". Rashi thus highlights that this passuk is the response to the wicked son, whose question (12:26) "What is this service to you?", he cites earlier (13:5).

A different version is found in the Haggadah: "Because he has removed himself from the klal, he has denied the essential (kafar b'ikar), therefore you should blunt his teeth and tell him 'Because of this Hashem did for me when I left Egypt' i.e. for me and not for him; had he been there he would not have been redeemed."

The differences between these two versions are significant. Rashi's version mentions neither the wicked son removing himself from the klal nor blunting his teeth. In addition, Rashi's answer is in the second person - "For me but not for you" - while the Haggadah instructs us to speak in third person - "For me and not for him". Finally, Rashi concludes "you would not be worthy of being redeemed", implying that perhaps he would be redeemed even if unworthy. By contrast, the Haggadah concludes starkly and definitively, "he would not have been redeemed".

Perhaps the two versions refer to two different types of sons, even though the word rasha - wicked is found in both. The question, "What is this service to you?" is disrespectful to be sure, but still ambiguous. Rashi understands that a dialogue is still possible, and thus the father responds "for me and not for you." One who disrespects the Torah's laws is not worthy of being redeemed. However, if the son accepts his father's rebuke he may become worthy. In addition, since he is still part of Klal Yisrael he may possibly be redeemed even if he personally is unworthy.

The rasha discussed in the Haggadah has already removed himself from Klal Yisrael and has denied the ikar, Hashem Himself and His Torah. No dialogue is possible, and he would not have been redeemed. The father therefore only speaks to his other children so that they will not be influenced by their brother's heresy. The rasha is, therefore, referred to in third person, "for me and not for him" (Haggadah of the Gra, and Bais Halevi 13:8-10). "Emor lo" must be rendered "say about him" (See Rashi 14:3).

II

The Bais Halevi (ibid) questions the use of the word chuka (13:10) in the context of the korban Pesach which has an obvious reason (12:27), i.e. that Hashem saved us by passing over our homes when He killed the Egyptian firstborn. If the son is unaware of this reason, as implied by the response that Hashem took me out of Egypt, he is not wicked but ignorant and it is the father's fault.

The Bais Halevi answers that the son is aware of the mitzvos and the historical reason, but he feels that the mitzvos do not apply to him. This son argues that they applied when needed as a necessary antidote to idolatry (see Rashi 12:6, Ramban Vayikra 1:9), but today the civilized world is monotheistic and therefore the korban has no purpose and the mitzva no longer applies. He argues "What is the use of this service to you, in our modern era? -"

The Torah, following this question, states, "You shall say it is a korban Pesach to Hashem for He passed over the houses of B'nei Yisrael in Egypt when He killed the Egyptians and saved our houses" (Shemos 12:27.) This is not a response to the rasha, rather it's an affirmation of faith so that the words of the rasha should not affect us at all.

The Bais Halevi explains "Because of this Hashem did for me when I left Egypt" as follows: It is not because I left Egypt that I perform the mitzvah, rather it is because of the mitzva that I left Egypt. The Torah predates Creation, and its mitzvos were performed by our forefathers before we left Egypt (see Rashi Breishis 19:3, 27:9).

In this sense, even the korban Pesach is a chok. As it says (12:43), "This is the chok of the Pesach." It must be offered even if the perceived reason no longer applies. For this reason, as the Bais Halevi (12:43) explains, the Midrash Rabbah compares the korban Pesach to the Para Aduma, the paradigmatic chok. In both essays the Bais Halevi refers to reformers and deniers of Torah in his time (the late nineteenth century) as the pasuk

continues to state that a ben-neichar (one whose actions are foreign to Hashem, i.e. a denier, see Rashi and Pesachim 96a) may not eat the korban Pesach.

This yields an additional dimension to the rasha's question. Why is this service for you, all those who eat the korban, but not for me? Why am I excluded? The answer is that you took yourself out of the klal, denied Hashem, and therefore you would not have been redeemed. Therefore, you may not partake.

III

Unfortunately, denial of the truth of the Torah, the mitzvos, and even Hashem Himself, have increased exponentially since the time of the Bais Halevi. However, as the Bais Halevi himself notes, one who is not taught is not wicked but ignorant. Today, in most cases, it is the fault of the previous generation. Most Jews are not observant and, recently, even intermarried, having never been taught otherwise.

Even amongst more observant Jews, there are cases which parallel the Bais Halevi's description. In his words, "some claim that a particular mitzva has an outdated rationale, and conclude that it no longer is binding" (translation of R.Y.I. Herczeg, 1991, p. 57). We must reaffirm our faith in the immutability of Torah and mitzvos, and convey this idea, clearly and unapologetically, to the next generation.

The pervasive ignorance of today places nearly all of the questioners in Rashi's version, rather them the Haggadah's version. As such, dialogue is possible and, in fact, has created many ba'alei teshuvah in recent decades. The aforementioned passuk (12:27) concludes, "the people bowed their heads." Rashi comments that the Jews bowed upon the tidings of the redemption, coming into Eretz Yisrael, and the tidings of the sons that they would have. The Artscroll commentary (Stone edition p. 357) notes: "Commentators have noted that the Jews bowed in gratitude for the news that they would have children, even though the child just described to them is wicked. To parents, every child is a blessing and it is up to them to cope with his rebellion and turn him to the good."

The Chasan Sofer notes that the passuk (12:26) begins, "when your sons say to you", indicating that he can't be judged as a rasha since he turns only to his father. Even though he harbors a heretical spirit, he does not entice his siblings to abandon faith and observance. Therefore, there is a still hope that his father can return him to the proper path, and the people were correct in thanking Hashem for the tidings of this son.

Only the incorrigible son, the rasha of the Haggadah who threatens the spiritual wellbeing of his siblings, despite being taught properly, has removed himself from the klal and denied the essential. In that case dialogue is not possible, and the father must reaffirm his faith and protect his other children. In most cases, however, as Rashi teaches, dialogue is possible. Parents facing these challenges are encouraged to exercise patience and wisdom in the fundamental responsibility of passing faith and observance to the next generation.

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The Story We Tell About Ourselves (Bo 5780)

Covenant & Conversation

Finding Faith in the Parsha with Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Sometimes others know us better than we know ourselves. In the year 2000, a British Jewish research institute came up with a proposal that Jews in Britain be redefined as an ethnic group and not as a religious community. It was a non-Jewish journalist, Andrew Marr, who stated what should have been obvious. He said: "All this is shallow water, and the further in you wade, the shallower it gets."

It is what he wrote next that I found inspirational: "The Jews have always had stories for the rest of us. They have had their Bible, one of the great

imaginative works of the human spirit. They have been victim of the worst modernity can do, a mirror for Western madness. Above all they have had the story of their cultural and genetic survival from the Roman Empire to the 2000s, weaving and thriving amid uncomprehending, hostile European tribes."^[1]

The Jews have always had stories for the rest of us. I love that testimony. And indeed, from early on, storytelling has been central to the Jewish tradition. Every culture has its stories. (The late Elie Wiesel once said, "God created man because God loves stories"). Almost certainly, the tradition goes back to the days when our ancestors were hunter-gatherers telling stories around the campfire at night. We are the storytelling animal.

But what is truly remarkable is the way in which, in this week's parsha, on the brink of the Exodus, Moses three times tells the Israelites how they are to tell the story to their children in future generations.

When your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when He struck down the Egyptians.' (Ex. 12:26-27)

On that day tell your child, 'I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.' (Ex. 13:8)

"In days to come, when your child asks you, 'What does this mean?' say, 'With a mighty hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. (Ex. 13:14)

The Israelites had not yet left Egypt, and yet already Moses was telling them how to tell the story. That is the extraordinary fact. Why so? Why this obsession with storytelling?

The simplest answer is that we are the story we tell about ourselves.^[2] There is an intrinsic, perhaps necessary, link between narrative and identity. In the words of the thinker who did more than most to place this idea at the centre of contemporary thought, Alasdair MacIntyre, "man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal."^[3] We come to know who we are by discovering of which story or stories we are a part.

Jerome Bruner has persuasively argued that narrative is central to the construction of meaning, and meaning is what makes the human condition human.^[4] No computer needs to be persuaded of its purpose in life before it does what it is supposed to do. Genes need no motivational encouragement. No virus needs a coach. We do not have to enter their mindset to understand what they do and how they do it, because they do not have a mindset to enter. But humans do. We act in the present because of things we did or that happened to us in the past, and in order to realise a sought-for future. Even minimally to explain what we are doing is already to tell a story. Take three people eating salad in a restaurant, one because he needs to lose weight, the second because she's a principled vegetarian, the third because of religious dietary laws. These are three outwardly similar acts, but they belong to different stories and they have different meanings for the people involved. Why though storytelling and the Exodus?

One of the most powerful passages I have ever read on the nature of Jewish existence is contained in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Considerations on the Government of Poland* (1772). This is an unlikely place to find insight on the Jewish condition, but it is there. Rousseau is talking about the greatest of political leaders. First of these, he says, was Moses who "formed and executed the astonishing enterprise of instituting as a national body a swarm of wretched fugitives who had no arts, no weapons, no talents, no virtues, no courage, and who, since they had not an inch of territory of their own, were a troop of strangers upon the face of the earth."

Moses, he says, "dared to make out of this wandering and servile troop a body politic, a free people, and while it wandered in the wilderness without so much as a stone on which to rest its head, gave it the lasting institution, proof against time, fortune and conquerors, which 5000 years have not been able to destroy or even to weaken." This singular nation, he says, so often subjugated and scattered, "has nevertheless maintained itself down to our days, scattered among the other nations without ever merging with them."^[5]

Moses' genius, he says, lay in the nature of the laws that kept Jews as a people apart. But that is only half the story. The other half lies in this week's parsha, in the institution of storytelling as a fundamental religious duty, recalling and re-enacting the events of the Exodus every year, and in particular, making children central to the story. Noting that in three of the four storytelling passages (three in our parsha, the fourth in Va'etchanan) children are referred to as asking questions, the Sages held that the narrative of Seder night should be told in response to a question asked by a child wherever possible. If we are the story we tell about ourselves, then as long as we never lose the story, we will never lose our identity.

This idea found expression some years ago in a fascinating encounter. Tibet has been governed by the Chinese since 1950. During the 1959 uprising, the Dalai Lama, his life in danger, fled to Dharamsala in India where he and many of his followers have lived ever since. Realising that their stay in exile might be prolonged, in 1992 he decided to ask Jews, whom he regarded as the world's experts in maintaining identity in exile, for advice. What, he wanted to know, was the secret? The story of that week-long encounter has been told by Roger Kamenetz in his book, *The Jew in the Lotus*.^[6] One of the things they told him was the importance of memory and storytelling in keeping a people's culture and identity alive. They spoke about Pesach and the Seder service in particular. So in 1997 Rabbis and American dignitaries held a special Seder service in Washington DC with the Dalai Lama. He wrote this to the participants:

"In our dialogue with Rabbis and Jewish scholars, the Tibetan people have learned about the secrets of Jewish spiritual survival in exile: one secret is the Passover Seder. Through it for 2000 years, even in very difficult times, Jewish people remember their liberation from slavery to freedom and this has brought you hope in times of difficulty. We are grateful to our Jewish brothers and sisters for adding to their celebration of freedom the thought of freedom for the Tibetan people."

Cultures are shaped by the range of stories to which they give rise. Some of these have a special role in shaping the self-understanding of those who tell them. We call them master-narratives. They are about large, ongoing groups of people: the tribe, the nation, the civilisation. They hold the group together horizontally across space and vertically across time, giving it a shared identity handed on across the generations.

None has been more powerful than the Exodus story, whose frame and context is set out in our parsha. It gave Jews the most tenacious identity ever held by a nation. In the eras of oppression, it gave hope of freedom. At times of exile, it promised return. It told two hundred generations of Jewish children who they were and of what story they were a part. It became the world's master-narrative of liberty, adopted by an astonishing variety of groups, from Puritans in the 17th century to African-Americans in the 19th and to Tibetan Buddhists today.

I believe that I am a character in our people's story, with my own chapter to write, and so are we all. To be a Jew is to see yourself as part of that story, to make it live in our time, and to do your best to hand it on to those who will come after us.

Shabbat Shalom

[1] Andrew Marr, *The Observer*, Sunday 14 May, 2000. [2] See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, London, Duckworth, 1981; Dan P. McAdams, *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths And The Making Of The Self*, New York, Guilford Press, 1997. [3] MacIntyre, op. cit., 201. [4] Jerome Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, Harvard University Press, 1986. [5] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and other later political writings*, Cambridge University press, 2010, 180. [6] Roger Kamanetz, *The Jew in the Lotus*, HarperOne, 2007.

Download the accompanying Family Edition here! <http://rabbisacks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/CandC-Family-edition-Bo-5780.pdf> QUESTIONS FOR THE SHABBAT TABLE:

Why do you think the Jews have the reputation of being a people who tell stories?

Why is it particularly important in Jewish tradition to tell stories to children? What is it about the Exodus story that makes it so critical that the Jewish people remember and retell it?

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subject: **Hamaayan - A Soft Heart**

Parshas Bo

A Soft Heart

BS'D Volume 34, No. 15 6 Shevat 5780 February 1, 2020

Sponsored by Martin and Michelle Swartz on the 50th yahrzeit (8 Shevat) of Martin's great-grandmother, Helen Kemeny, nee Kohn, of Vienna and Washington Heights (Zissel bat Dovid a'h)

King Shlomo writes in Mishlei (28:14), "Ashrei adam / Praiseworthy is the man who always fears, but he who is stubborn of heart will fall into misfortune." Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher z'l (14th century; Spain) writes: King Shlomo is instructing in this verse that a person should have a "soft heart"—i.e., the opposite of stubbornness. One should always fear that his deeds and actions are not up to the standard they should be, and he should introspect regarding where his deeds will lead him.

Rabbeinu Bachya continues: The verse starts with the word "Ashrei," which is plural. This word never appears in Tanach in the singular form, he writes. The reason is that a person does not deserve to be praised if he has only one good trait, but rather when he combines many good Middot. Thus we read (Tehilim 1:1-1), "Praiseworthy is the man who did not walk in the counsel of the wicked, and did not stand in the path of the sinful, and did not sit in the session of the scorners, but his desire is in the Torah of Hashem . . ." We see that the verse lists many good traits of a person who is called "praiseworthy." Our verse, too, encompasses several traits in that a person who "always fears" will weigh the advantages and disadvantages of all of his actions, he will refrain from bad actions, and he will do many good things.

Why does the verse refer to such a person as "Adam" rather than "Ish"?

Rabbeinu Bachya explains that "Adam" comes from "Adamah" / earth, and refers to a person's baser, less spiritual nature. Praiseworthy is the man who conquers the Adam aspect of his nature.

The opposite of the praiseworthy person described here is a stubborn person. A stubborn person does not examine his deeds. As described in our Parashah and the preceding ones, Pharaoh was stubborn. His punishment, writes Rabbeinu Bachya, was that, even when he wanted to repent, Hashem did not permit him to, but instead forced him to remain stubborn.

"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Come to Pharaoh, for I have made his heart and the heart of his servants stubborn [literally: 'heavy'] so that I can put these signs of Mine in his midst.' (10:1)

The Torah uses three different words to describe Pharaoh's heart as he stubbornly refused to send Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt: "Kasheh" / hard, "Kaved" / heavy, and "Chazak" / strong. Why are three different words used?

R' Naftali Herz Wesel z'l (Germany; 1725-1805) explains that there were three different reasons why Pharaoh's resolve needed strengthening: (1) to enable him to disregard the wondrous signs that Moshe performed when he first came to Pharaoh—signs that should have convinced Pharaoh immediately, even before the pain inflicted by the Plagues, that Moshe was sent by the All-Powerful G-d; (2) so Pharaoh would not capitulate as a result of the painful Plagues inflicted on Egypt—pain so great that Pharaoh should have been swayed even if the Plagues had not been wondrous miracles; and (3) so that, after everything that had happened, Pharaoh would not lose his resolve when he heard Moshe warn of even more Plagues to come.

Each of the three words used to describe Pharaoh's stubbornness corresponds to one of these. When Moshe was first sent to Pharaoh, Hashem gave Moshe

a preview of what lay ahead (7:3): “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart and I shall multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.” “Hardening” Pharaoh’s heart would enable him to withstand the pain of the Plagues that would afflict Egypt.

When Pharaoh refused to acknowledge the wondrous signs that Moshe performed (for example, turning a stick into a snake, and back again), Hashem told Moshe (7:14), “Pharaoh’s heart is ‘heavy,’ he refuses to send the people.” A heart is heavy when it is full of excuses and rationalizations, anything to avoid admitting the obvious.

Finally, we read (7:13, 7:22, 8:15), “Pharaoh’s heart was strong . . .” This refers to the strength needed to ignore Moshe’s warnings about Plagues to come.

R’ Wesel applies these explanations to some of the verses: During the first Plague, Pharaoh’s heart was “strong” (7:22). His resolve did not weaken at all, so he did not even ask Moshe to pray that the blood turn back to water. In contrast, during the second Plague, Pharaoh did ask Moshe to pray. Pharaoh’s resolve had weakened, so the Torah does not describe his heart as “strong.” But, when that Plague, too, was over, Pharaoh rationalized it away; therefore, we read (8:11), “Pharaoh saw that there had been a relief, and kept making his heart stubborn (‘heavy’).” (Ruach Chen 19)

“This Chodesh / month shall be for you the beginning of the months . . .”

(12:2)

R’ Moshe Shapiro z”l (1935-2017; Rosh Yeshiva in several Israeli yeshivot; best known for his lectures on Jewish Thought) observes: The similarity between the Hebrew words “Chodesh” / “month” and “Chadash” / “new” is a reflection of the Torah’s view of time. Time is not primarily something that passes, but rather an opportunity to build a future, to progress toward a goal. Not coincidentally, the letters of the word “Zman” / “time” form the root of the word “Hazmanah,” whose meanings include “to invite,” “to prepare,” and “to set aside for a specific purpose.” The Torah teaches this lesson in connection with the Exodus because the Exodus was not meant to be an end in itself but rather a preparation for a higher purpose, as Hashem told Moshe at the beginning of his mission (Shmot 3:12), “When you take the people out of Egypt, you (plural) will serve Elokim on this mountain,” i.e., receive the Torah. (Shiurei Rabbeinu: Parashat Ha’chodesh p.412)

“You shall eliminate leaven from your homes . . .” (12:15)

Rabbi Yehuda, one of the Sages of the Mishnah, maintains that Chametz must be destroyed by fire and not by any other means. He derives this from the law of “Notar” / leftovers of sacrificial offerings, which also must be destroyed by fire.

R’ Zvi Elimelech Shapira z”l (Chassidic Rebbe, known as the “Bnei Yissaschar”; died 1841) is quoted as saying that whenever the Talmud derives one law from another law, there must be some intrinsic connection between them. What is the connection between Chametz and Notar? R’ Yaakov Yechizkiyah Gruenwald z”l (Hungarian rabbi; died 1941) explains: Why would someone leave leftovers from a sacrificial offering rather than eat it all within the allotted time? Often, it would be because he lacked Bitachon / trust in G-d and was afraid he would not have food for tomorrow. Chametz alludes to a similar lack of Bitachon. What’s the difference between Chametz and matzah? Matzah does not expand; the way it’s made is the way it remains. Chametz doesn’t share this trait. Chametz rises as if it’s afraid there won’t be enough for tomorrow. Thus, Chametz also alludes to a lack of Bitachon. (Va’yagged Yaakov)

“When your son will ask you in the future, ‘What is this?’” (13:14)

R’ Moshe Feinstein z”l (1895-1986) writes: The question of the “simple son” (“What is this”) appears in the Torah before the question of the “wise son,” because before a person can ask the reasons for the mitzvot, he must know them thoroughly. This will give provide him with a solid foundation for his faith. (Darash Moshe)

Shabbat: A Remembrance of the Exodus

R’ Yechezkel Landau z”l (1713-1793; the Noda B’Yehuda) asks: Why may a man recite Kiddush for his wife? A man who prayed Ma’ariv has already said “Vy’chulu” and the blessing “Mekadaish ha’Shabbat”; thus, he has fulfilled his Torah obligation to recite Kiddush. All that remains is a Rabbinic obligation to recite Kiddush over a cup of wine. His wife, on the other hand, most likely has not recited Ma’ariv; thus, her obligation of Kiddush is a Torah obligation! As a general rule, one whose obligation is of a relatively lesser Rabbinic nature cannot exempt a person whose obligation is of a higher Torah nature. Why then may a husband recite Kiddush for his wife? (Dagul M’revavah ch.271)

R’ Akiva Eiger z”l answers that this is an example of the rule that one who is theoretically obligated to perform a Mitzvah can exempt another person, even if the former is not obligated at the moment. (Sh.U.t. R’ Akiva Eiger No. 7)

Some answer that there is no set text for the Torah obligation of Kiddush. Thus, when the husband comes home from Shul and his wife says “Shabbat Shalom” (or a similar greeting), she fulfills her Torah obligation to sanctify Shabbat verbally, i.e., to recite Kiddush. Now, both husband and wife have “only” a Rabbinic obligation to recite Kiddush over a cup of wine. Since their obligations are equal, the husband may exempt the wife through his recitation.

In contrast, R’ Yosef Babad z”l (Poland; died 1875) answers that even the husband has not fulfilled his Kiddush obligation through prayer because an essential aspect of Kiddush is missing from the Ma’ariv Shemoneh Esrei, namely, words that recall Yetziat Mitzrayim / the Exodus. Thus, the husband’s and wife’s obligations are equal, i.e., they both are on a Torah level, so the husband may recite Kiddush for his wife. (Minchat Chinuch, mitzvah 31)

Why is recalling the Exodus part of Kiddush? One answer is that the miracles associated with the Exodus (the Ten Plagues and the splitting of the Yam Suf) attest to Hashem’s being the Creator, just as Shabbat does, because it is intuitively obvious that no one but the Creator of the universe could have wreaked havoc with the laws of nature the way that G-d did in Egypt.

Knowing this strengthens our belief in Creation, and thus makes Shabbat more meaningful. (Zemirot Shirin Ve’rachshin p.137, citing Rambam z”l)

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Insights Parshas Bo :: Shevat 5780

Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim/Talmudic University

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

This week’s Insights are dedicated in memory of Chaim Ben Avroham

Shimon, Captain Hyman P. Galbut. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

War: What is it Good for?

And so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son’s son that I have amused Myself with Egypt... (10:2)

In Parshas Eikev, when Bnei Yisroel are on the threshold of entering Eretz Yisroel, Moshe Rabbeinu attempts to calm their fears: “Perhaps you will say in your heart, ‘These nations are more numerous than I, how will I be able to drive them out? Do not fear them! Remember what Hashem your God did to Pharaoh and to all of Egypt...’” (Devarim 7:17-18). Moshe is reminding Bnei Yisroel of the incredible miracles that Hashem performed to utterly decimate the Egyptians and free them from slavery so that upon entering Eretz Yisroel they would not be apprehensive, but rather confident of victory.

However, Moshe’s strategy to calm Bnei Yisroel is difficult to understand: Moshe is speaking to Bnei Yisroel after years of wandering in the desert - the story of the Exodus and all of the incredible miracles that Hashem performed happened almost forty years prior. In fact, almost every man who had experienced the Exodus was already dead, condemned to die in the desert.

Those men who were children when Bnei Yisroel left Egypt would only have vague recollections of what happened four decades earlier.

Moreover, just three months prior Bnei Yisroel had incredible victories against both Sichon and Og - whom the Torah labels the "arms of the world" (Devarim 33:26) (i.e. pillars holding up the world - see Rashi ad loc). Instead of recalling events that had taken place 40 years ago, why wouldn't Moshe just refer to these incredible victories over Sichon and Og that were so fresh in their minds?

When the spies wanted to convince Bnei Yisroel that entering Eretz Yisroel was not going to be a cakewalk, they warned, "The Amalekites live in the land of the Negev" (Bamidbar 13:29), meaning that, assuming they would enter Eretz Yisroel from the south, the first people they would come across would be Amalek. Rashi (ad loc) points out that since they had already been attacked by the Amalekites, knowing that they would meet them again would surely drive fear into their hearts.

But this too is difficult to understand. While it's true that Bnei Yisroel had been victims of a sneaky and brutal attack by Amalek, under the leadership of Yehoshua and Moshe, Bnei Yisroel utterly destroyed them. What kind of strategy was this of the spies to try to instill fear and dread by threatening them with an opponent they had already soundly defeated?

The answer is that in war even when you win, you lose. Even victors suffer heavy damage. Before the Six Day War 50,000 graves were dug in Tel Aviv because that was the anticipated losses and they wanted to be prepared. The United States soundly defeated the Japanese in WWII, yet there were many disastrous battles like Pearl Harbor and Iwo Jima. The strategy of the spies was to instill the anxiety of entering a war knowing that even when you win many people die and never come back home. This is why Moshe didn't bring up Sichon and Og; even though they won, it was a hard fought war.

The possuk in our parsha lays out exactly what the battle with Egyptians were to Hashem. Rashi (10:2) explains that Hashem amused himself with the Egyptians, it was like a game and He made a sport of it. This is similar to watching a cat toy with a mouse; there is never the possibility that the cat is going to lose or get hurt. It's only a matter of how long the cat wishes to amuse himself. This is what Moshe is trying to impress on Bnei Yisroel - if you're worthy Hashem will take you into Eretz Yisroel with no stress of losing battles or suffering casualties. Just as Hashem took them out of Egypt and the battle was merely an amusement, He is more than capable of bringing you into Eretz Yisroel in the same manner.

Out of Control

Moshe said, "With our youngsters and with our elders we will go, with our sons and daughters, with our flock and with our cattle shall we go..." He (Pharaoh) responded - "Not so! Let the men go now and serve Hashem for that is your request" (10:9-11).

This week's parsha opens with Moshe threatening to once again visit upon the Egyptians a horrific plague (locusts). At the urging of his advisors, Pharaoh initially relents to let Bnei Yisroel go and serve Hashem. Pharaoh recalls Moshe and Aharon to the palace and asks them, "Go and worship Hashem your God, who exactly is going?" (10:8). Once Pharaoh hears that Moshe intends that everyone as well as all the cattle will be going on this spiritual pilgrimage, Pharaoh responds, "Not so! Let the men go now and serve Hashem for that is your request." When Moshe holds fast to his request Pharaoh angrily chases them out of the palace.

This same scene repeats after the plague of darkness. Pharaoh summons Moshe and informs him that he will permit all the people to go and serve Hashem; only the cattle is to remain behind. Moshe responds by telling Pharaoh that not only will all of the cattle be going as well, but that Pharaoh himself will provide animals as offerings to Hashem. Needless to say, this comment does not sit well with Pharaoh and he responds by once again throwing him out of the palace along with the threat that if he ever comes back he will be put to death.

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni 182:2) gives the following parable: A lion and a variety of animals, including a fox, were on a ship. The ship comes to a toll where a donkey was the dock master in charge of collecting the tolls from all

the vessels. The donkey demands that the lion's ship pay the toll as well. The fox protests, "What impudence! Do you not see that the king of all the animals is among us! How dare you ask us to pay the toll?" The donkey retorts, "I am only collecting the toll to bring it to the king's treasury!" At this point, the lion asks that the ship be brought closer to the dock. He thereupon leaps from the ship and kills the donkey. The Midrash concludes that Pharaoh is the donkey, and this is what he gets for demanding a tribute from Hashem.

This Midrash is difficult to understand. The Gemara (Sukkah 30a) relates that a king once came to a toll and proceeded to pay the toll. His servants asked him, why are you paying the toll when the proceeds from tolls belong to you anyway? The king responded that if someone sees him not paying the toll then others might learn from him that it is acceptable not to pay it. Therefore, he wanted to pay it. In essence, it seems necessary that the king pay the toll. Why then did the lion kill the donkey for his impertinence? Most disputes are about control. This is particularly true in family relationships and disharmony in marriage. The circumstances that created the problem are rarely the essence of the issue. The real point of contention is invariably control.

The Gemara is saying that, of course, the king can decide if he wants to pay the toll. If he has a valid reason to pay the tax he is entitled to do so because he can do whatever he wants. However, the Midrash faults the donkey for trying to control the interaction with the king of the animals. He is tying to exert his own control by saying that he has to collect the tax in order to give it back to the king. The fact that he has the impudence to demand the tax from the king means that he doesn't really submit to the fact that the king is the one to decide whether or not he wants to pay the tax. For that, he deserves to be put to death.

The same is true for Pharaoh. Even though he somewhat acknowledges that he has to submit to the will of Hashem, he constantly tries to limit Hashem's will by placing conditions on how Bnei Yisroel are to serve Him. Of course, trying to exert his own influence means that he isn't really submitting to the will of Hashem. Just as the donkey who tries to exert control by forcing the king to remit his own taxes pays for his impudence with his life, so too Pharaoh brought destruction upon himself and his country.

Did You Know...

In this week's parsha, we find the final three makkos: locusts, darkness, and the deaths of the firstborns. Did you ever wonder why the ten makkos were split into two different parshios? In other words, what was special about the last three that they were separated from the other seven? Chazal were bothered by this as well. Here are some of their thoughts:

- Tosfos Hashalem (Bo, 10:1) suggests something quite fascinating, albeit slightly controversial. Moshe Rabbeinu had thought that there would actually be only seven makkos (similar to seven days of the week, seven heavens, seven planets, etc.). This approach is very interesting as it shows Moshe's mindset as well as the effectiveness of the first seven makkos. Tosfos explains that this is why Moshe had to be enjoined again to approach Pharaoh - Moshe had thought the makkos were over.
- Abarbanel, on the beginning of the parsha, explains two very interesting reasons why they were divided like this: 2a) Parshas Bo begins the plagues for which Pharaoh began to seriously fear and initiated negotiations with Moshe before the plague even started. 2b) These last three makkos took place in the dark. The locusts "darkened the land of Egypt" with their sheer mass. "Choshech" clearly brought darkness, and the firstborn death occurred at exactly midnight.
- Ba'al HaTurim (9:33) says that after the plague of hail the Jewish nation no longer suffered from the burdens of Egyptian oppression. Therefore, a clear distinction should be made between the first seven plagues and the last three; the ones where the Jews were free.

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Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Bo (Exodus 10:1 – 13:16)

By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – “When your children will say to you, ‘What is this service to you?’ You shall say, ‘It is the Passover service to God’”

Why does the author of the Haggada call the questioner in this sequence “the wicked child”? The reason that the Haggada itself emphasizes lies in the questioner’s exclusion of himself from the family ritual when he asks, “What is this service to you?” The Haggada explains: “Saying ‘you,’ he excludes himself, and by doing so he denies a basic principle of our faith.” For a Jew, it is considered “wicked” to exclude oneself from the Jewish ritual-familial experiences.

Also, in this instance, the child doesn’t ask his parents anything; instead, he tells them: “...when your children shall say to you” (Ex. 12:26). An honest question reveals a willingness to learn, but the wicked child is not interested in answers – only in making statements.

How might we respond to such a child? The Bible itself gives one response: “It is the Passover service to God. He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt [when he slew the Egyptian firstborn] and He saved our homes” (Ex. 12:27); the author of the Haggada gives another: “You shall cause his teeth to be on edge, and say to him, ‘It is because of that which God did for me when I went out of Egypt’” (Ex. 13:8).

Why the difference, and what is the message of each? The Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, 1817-1893) teaches that the wicked child’s statement reflects his belief that so many years after the original events there is no reason to retain such an old-fashioned and outmoded service. The biblical answer is that it is specific a Passover sacrifice to God, who saved our homes, and our families.

There are two central pillars in Judaism: family ties and Divine directions. Family has been an important Jewish value from the beginning of our history, when Abraham is told that he is distinguished and loved by God “so that he command his children and his family after him that they do righteousness and justice” (Gen. 18:19). And when Pharaoh’s servants agree to allow Moses to leave Egypt – but only with the males – Moses and Aaron respond, “We shall go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters” (Ex. 10:9). It’s a family affair.

Hence, the Bible tells this wicked child that the Passover sacrifice is a reminder of a Divine miracle that preserved the Jewish family. The Seder is precisely the kind of family ritual that is crucial for familial continuity.

The author of the Haggada cites a different verse: “When the Lord brings you to the land which He swore to your fathers to give to you... You shall tell your child on that day, saying, ‘It is because of this [ritual] that God did [miracles] for me when I went out of Egypt’” (Ex. 13:5-8).

The key words here are “did for me.” Passover teaches the two most important messages of Judaism: the inalienable right of every individual to be free and the injunction that we love the stranger because we were (unloved) strangers in Egypt. The continuity of the generations and the familial celebrations of crucial historical events demand that each Jew have the ability to transform past history into one’s own existential and personal memory. The initial biblical answer emphasizes the importance of familial experiences for familial continuity; the author of the Haggada adds that without incorporating past into present there can be neither meaningful present nor anticipated future.

I am my past. Despite the fact that the wicked child has denied his roots, we dare not tear him out of the family. He may think that he wants to remove himself from historical continuity, but it’s the task of his family to remind him that this celebration is an indelible part of his existential identity, that he is celebrating his own personal liberation.

The Haggada instructs us to set the teeth of the wicked child on edge. The phrase in Hebrew is “hakheh et shinav.” It doesn’t say “hakeh”, which means

to strike, to slap him in the teeth, but rather “hakheh,” from the language of the prophet Ezekiel, “The fathers eat the sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. (Ezek. 18:2). The prophet is expressing the fundamental unfairness in the fact that the parents have sinned but their children are the ones who must suffer the pain of exile. Indeed, children do suffer for the sins of their parents – always. Anyone who comes from a difficult or dysfunctional home will bear the burden.

But just as the child has responsibility to his past, the parent has responsibility to the future. Are we certain that the wicked child’s teeth are not set on edge because of the sour grapes that we, the parents, have eaten because we have not properly demonstrated the requisite love and passion for the beauty and the glory of our traditions? Have we been there to hear his questions when he was still ready to ask them and to listen to answers? Have we been the appropriate models for him to desire continuity within our family? The author of the Haggada subtly but forthrightly reminds both parents and children of their obligations to each other, to past and to future. Shabbat Shalom!

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Bo: Memories of the Soul

Rav Kook Torah

“Moses told the people: Remember (zachor) this day that you have left Egypt, the place of slavery.” (Exod. 13:3)

The word zachor is not in the imperative tense - z’chor! remember! Rather, it is in the infinitive absolute form. This grammatical form indicates that the Torah is not just commanding us to remember the anniversary of the Exodus from Egypt.

Zachor implies a state of being. It describes us as a people who always remember this historic date.

Ben-Gurion and the Mayflower

In 1936, the Peel Commission questioned David Ben-Gurion, then head of the Jewish Agency, concerning Jewish rights to the Land of Israel. Ben-Gurion gave the following reply:

Three hundred years ago, a ship called the Mayflower set sail to the New World. In it were Englishmen unhappy with English society and government, who sought an uninhabited coast to settle and establish a new world. They landed in America and were among the first pioneers and builders of that land.

This was a great event in the history of England and America. But I would like to know: Is there a single Englishman who knows the exact date and hour of the Mayflower’s launch? How much do American children - or grownups - know about this historic trip? Do they know how many people were in the boat? Their names? What they wore? What they ate? Their path of travel? What happened to them on the way? Where they landed?

More than 3,300 years before the Mayflower set sail, the Jews left Egypt. Any Jewish child, whether in America or Russia, Yemen or Germany, knows that his forefathers left Egypt at dawn on the 15th of Nisan. What did they wear? Their belts were tied and their staffs were in their hands. They ate matzot, and arrived at the Red Sea after seven days.

He knows the path of their journey through the desert and the events of those forty years in the desert. They ate manna and slav birds and drank from Miriam’s well. They arrived in Jordan facing Jericho. The child can even quote the family names from the Torah.

Ben-Gurion concluded his address:

Jews worldwide still eat matzah for seven days from the 15th of Nisan. They retell the story of the Exodus, concluding with the fervent wish, “Next Year in Jerusalem.” This is the nature of the Jews.1

Ingrained in Their Collective Soul

Rav Kook explained that the people were not commanded to remember the 15th of Nisan. That was unnecessary! Rather, Moses was informing them that this date would be forever etched in their collective consciousness. On this day, the Jewish people were forever changed. On this day their souls gained eternal freedom.

“This date will be ingrained in the soul of the Jewish people. That is the secret that Moses revealed to the people. They will succeed in understanding the inner nature of their souls. They will know that this day must be remembered. Therefore, the word *zachor* is in the infinitive absolute form.”

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Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Bo

פרק ב' ב' מ"ב

יכ אוי הכבתי את ל'בו

For I have made his heart stubborn. (10:1)

Kveidus ha'lev, translated as “a hardening of the heart,” making it stubborn, is derived from the word, *kaveid*, heavy; a hardened heart is a heavy heart. Why is the heart the reference point, as opposed to any other organ? *Horav Baruch Dov Povarsky, Shlita*, explains that a human being is comprised of 248 *eivanim*, organs, which coincide with 248 *mitzvos asei*, positive commandments. Each individual organ is designated for a specific *mitzvah*. Thus, if a specific organ is flawed or defective, the *mitzvah* with which it coincides will likely be compromised. In other words, organs matter because of their relationship with *mitzvos*. As an infant, Moshe *Rabbeinu* did not nurse from an Egyptian woman because his mouth, the organ of speech, would one day speak with the Almighty. Likewise, when Yosef demurred from entering an immoral relationship with Potifar’s wife, all of the “involved” organs were rewarded/blessed.

Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, explains that the *lev*, heart, is the *eivar ha'ratzon*, organ of will, the organ through which one decides if he will or will not act, go forward. Once the *eivar ha'ratzon* becomes deficient, it is no longer capable of acting willfully in a constructive manner. It is flawed, analogous to an eye that is unable to see. In other words, *kveidas ha'lev* is not simply a temporary condition whereby Hashem caused Pharaoh to refuse the Jews access to leaving Egypt. Pharaoh now had a damaged heart that was incapable of saying, “Yes.” His will was impaired and now disqualified, much like a physical impediment that precludes proper function.

The *Mashgiach* explains that the heart is the *merczaz*, center, of the body, through which all its organs function. This is much like an officer who dispatches a soldier to act on his behalf. While the soldier executes the action, the endeavor/end result, is attributed to the officer who sent him. Likewise, the heart maintains its control over the body. The eye sees what the heart wants it to see; the ear hears what the heart wants it to hear; the legs go where the heart wants them to go. Thus, a defect observed in one of the organs is attributed to the heart, the central dispatch for the body.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* suggests that this is why the rule of *devarim she'b'lev einan devarim*, “Words in the heart (which were not actually articulated) are not words.” This means that one’s thoughts do not hold halachic value, because the person did not actually voice his feelings. Why does the rule focus on *devarim she'b'lev*, when it should really say, *devarim she'b'machshavah*, words of the mind? When one just thinks of doing, the action is not binding. According to that which *Rav Yeruchem* has explained, it is quite fitting, since the mind is also an agent of the heart. The *lev* retains control over all of the body’s organs – the mind included.

למישן הספר באנוין בון ובן את אשר התעלילו במצרים

So that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son’s son that I made a mockery of Egypt. (10:2)

Relating the events preceding and surrounding the Exodus is more than a lesson in Jewish history. As the seminal event in world history, it demonstrates Hashem’s mastery over nature to all. Thus, it has become a lesson in Jewish theology and dogma. Hashem is the Creator of the world and the G-d of history. As He wrought the miracles in Egypt thousands of years ago, He continues to control and guide the events of the world (history) to suit *Klal Yisrael*. Nations have come and gone. We are still here and will continue to maintain our presence as long as it is His will. While the Torah emphasizes “son and son’s son,” it refers to all people. When we relate the events of the Exodus, our own faith is increased. The Exodus was the beginning, and it taught that all “beginnings” are generated by Hashem. Thus, our belief in Hashem is intensified and our trust in Him becomes stronger, lending to a state of calm in the comforting knowledge of what will be.

The holy Piaseczna *Rebbe*, *Horav Kolonymus Kalman Shapira, zl*, quotes the well-known *pesukim* in *Parshas Ki Sisa* (*Shemos* 33:18-22) in which Moshe *Rabbeinu* requests of Hashem, “*Hareini na es Kevodecha*, ‘Show me now Your glory.’” Moshe requested a deeper and greater sense of perception, so that he could comprehend the full extent of G-dliness, so that he could grasp how Hashem conveys the flow of His holy influence to every part of the universe. Hashem’s reply was: “*V'ra'eesa es Achorai u'Panai lo yeirau*; ‘You will see my back, but My face may not be seen.’” In other words, the fullness of Hashem’s essence is beyond anyone’s grasp. As the commentators explain, Hashem told Moshe that hindsight/introspection is the only way to comprehend Hashem’s actions to any extent.

Hashem did agree to show Moshe “something.” He said, “Behold! There is a place near Me; you may stand on the rock. When My glory passes by, I shall place you in a cleft of the rock; I shall shield you with My hand until I have passed. Then I will remove My hand and you will see my back.” Simply, this means that a human can no more survive a direct confrontation with the Divine than a person’s vision remains unharmed if he stares directly at the sun. Hashem would place Moshe in the cleft of a rock or a cave in order to shield him from the brilliance that was beyond his ability to bear. He could only experience a “dulled” degree of revelation, because this is all (even) he could tolerate.

The *Rebbe* asks a profound question: Did Hashem want to show Moshe His glory, or did He not? If He wanted to reveal His glory to him, He should have done so. If He did not, why go through the cave/cleft experience? He could have said, “No, I am not showing you anything because it is too much.”

The *Rebbe* explains that Hashem was essentially hinting to Moshe that he should inform *Klal Yisrael* that they must engrave on the wall of their hearts the belief that, even when life will be so bleak and the Divine concealment (*Hester Panim*) will be so intense that many might be driven to lose hope, to give up, they should remember the cleft that Moshe had seen. We must remember that we will always have “something.” It will never be completely dark. If we look hard enough, with complete faith and trust, we will see a shimmer of light, a glimmer of hope. It is never completely dark. Something will always emanate and illuminate, giving us hope to go on.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates a vignette that he heard from the *Slonimer Rebbe* (the *Yesod Ha'Avodah*), which demonstrates that an illuminating perspective always exists. Unless we look for it, however, it will escape us. It is this hidden light that is the glimmer within the concealment. A couple came to the *Rebbe* and presented a tragic predicament which weighed heavily on their daughter, whose husband had met with an untimely death. Since the couple did not yet have children, their young, widowed daughter was destined to *yibum*, levirate marriage. The problem was that her brother-in-law (who was obligated either to do *yibum* or to perform *chalitzah*) was only four years old. Thus, the earliest he could do *chalitzah* (removal, alternative to *yibum*, which basically revokes the obligation to marry the brother-in-law) would be in nine years, upon his *bar mitzvah*. Meanwhile, their daughter must wait and could not remarry. This, they felt, was too much for her to endure.

The *Rebbe* listened and, with a stroke of brilliance, explained to them that actually she was “fortunate.” “Imagine, if you will, that a Heavenly decree was proclaimed concerning your daughter, precluding her from entering into marriage before she reached the age of thirty. Every young man that she would meet would somehow not be right, or she would not impress any young man. During these years of waiting, her sisters would become frustrated, as the rumors suggesting that ‘something is amiss in the family’ would become stronger each year that she was not married. The entire family would suffer, because no one would ‘think’ that she was not getting married simply because she had not yet met Mr. Right.” People have the “habit” of assuming the worst when, in fact, a simple explanation clarifies whatever ambiguities might exist.

This is what the *Piaseczner Rebbe* meant when he taught that even within the greatest *hastarah*, concealment, a light exists. We just have to look harder to uncover it. *Rav Zilberstein* relates the story of *Horav Mordechai, zl*, the *Tzaddik* of Cracow. A couple was blessed with a son after a number of years of a childless marriage. They raised this son with great *mesiras nefesh*, devotion and self-sacrifice. The father was a devout Torah scholar who would study *Talmud* nightly next to Mordechai’s (boy’s name) crib, so that the *niggun*, tune, of his learning would inspire the young child.

This incident took place during the Cantonist period (1827) when Czar Nicholas called for the forced conscription of Jewish boys between the ages of 12-25 (many as young as 6 years old). Canton referred to military camps, where these boys were assigned to live in preparatory institutions until they were ready to serve in the army for 25 years, during which time their commitment to Judaism was all but forgotten. To be kidnapped by the government (which was usually the case) meant assured spiritual extinction. When their son was a lad of 7 years old, the government took Mordechai. The couple’s grief was unspeakable. Nonetheless, as faithful Jews,

they did not lose hope, believing that by some miracle their precious son would be returned to them. This changed when, after a year, they had no word. It was as if their son had vanished from the face of the earth. They maintained their prayer vigil, never waning in beseeching Hashem that He rescind His decree and allow their son to return home. The father went so far as to pray to Hashem that He take his (the father's) life in exchange for his son's life. (While this practice is highly unusual, it is cited in the preface to the *Shvus Yaakov*, in which the venerable author related that when he took ill as a young *yeshivah* student, his father went to the *bais hamedrash*, opened the *Aron HaKodesh*, and pleaded with Hashem to take his life instead of his son's life. Hashem listened.)

Forty years passed, the father was now an old man, having aged prematurely due to his son's captivity. Four decades of grief and anxiety will do that. The father now had his own problems, having been framed by the government (a very common practice, especially against Jews, during that dark period in history). Apparently, the government felt that the father's subversive activities (studying and teaching Torah) warranted a visit to their dungeon, where he would not remain very long, since he was immediately found guilty and sentenced to die. On the day designated for his execution, a guard entered the cell and asked if had a final request. The father was in the midst of learning a passage in the *Talmud*. He was engaged in a difficult topic and he remembered that the *Rashba* has a lucid explanation of the *Talmud* which would clarify the issues that were troubling him. So he asked the guard, "Could you go to a synagogue and bring back a *Rashba*?" The guard agreed, and, within a few hours, he was back with the volume that the father was seeking. The father picked up the volume lovingly and could not wait to return to his learning, with the same tune that he had always chanted when learning, the tune that he would hum as he sat and learned next to Mordechai's bed.

Suddenly, a loud cry emanated from the guard's mouth, "Tatte! Tatte!" The guard recognized the tune to which he had listened forty years ago. The father took a quick look at the guard's right earlobe and saw the dark mole with which his son was born, and he knew that his forty years of waiting were over. Their reunion was short-lived, as the father was taken to be executed. The son, however, left the Czar's army and returned to his roots. He studied diligently night and day, achieving extraordinary heights in Torah erudition. He became the saintly *Horav Mordechai HaTzaddik m'Cracow*.

Even within the *hastarah she'b'soch ha'hastarah*, concealment within the concealment (in the darkest of periods), Hashem is certainly present. *Gam mei achorei hadevarim hakashim*, "Even behind the difficult things that you are going through, I am standing."

שבעת ימים מצות תאכלו ... ושמורת את המצות

For a seven-day period, shall you eat matzos ... You shall safeguard the matzos. (12:15,17)

The association of our departure from Egypt and the prohibition against eating *chametz*, leaven, for seven/eight days, requires some explanation. Furthermore, the fact that a *mitzvah d'Oraisa*, Biblical commandment, obligates us to eat *matzah* (on the first night) begs elucidation in its relationship to the Exodus. The fact that we were compelled to rush out of Egypt, which precluded our ability to make leavened bread, is the obvious and accepted reason for eating *matzah* (for its commemorative value). Is there a deeper reason for negating leaven and replacing it with *matzah*?

Horav Moshe Shapiro, zl, explains that when one mixes flour with water, the flavor of the finished product is that of *matzah*. The leaven flavor is not derived from the actual flour/water mixture, but from the delay. Another "ingredient" is added to the equation: the dimension of time, which produces a flavor from another factor, not from the mixture itself. Thus, the law prohibits leaven, because it is a product that is incongruous to *Pesach*, a festival which decries delay, the time when *chametz* is prohibited for seven days. The underlying concept that delay of any sort undermines a *mitzvah* is a Rabbinic theme that applies to all *mitzvos*. In *Rashi*'s commentary to *Shemos* 12:17, *U'shemartem es ha'matzos*, "You shall guard the *matzos*," he writes, "Guard the *mitzvos* [same spelling as *matzos*]. A *mitzvah* that comes into your hand, *al tachmitzenah*; do not allow it to become leaven." Its performance must be devoid of any delay.

This exhortation applies to all *mitzvos*, such as Torah-study, *Tefillin*, etc. They must be executed without delay, since delay provides an added flavor that is foreign to the mixture, a false flavor that is not of the mixture itself. When we add delay to the *mitzvah*, that *mitzvah* becomes leaven.

Let us extrapolate from the above. One who delays indicates that he belongs to time. It has a hold on him, it controls him. One who acts in a timely fashion indicates that he is in control of time. The first *mitzvah* given to the Jewish people in Egypt was *Ha'chodesh hazeh lachem rosh chodoshim*, "This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you" (*Shemos* 12:2). Why was this *mitzvah* given at the time of the liberation? *Horav Avraham Pam*, zl, explains that the difference between a slave and a free human being

does not lie in how hard or how long each works. Free people often work long and hard hours at the most difficult and arduous tasks. The difference is in who controls time. A slave works as long as the master wishes that he/she work. A free person works as long as he/she chooses to work. Control over time is the essential difference between freedom and slavery. The ability to determine the calendar, to calculate when the Festivals are to occur, is based upon the power to decide when the New Moon occurs. The Jewish People were given authority, domination over time. This first command was their prelude to freedom, indicating to them the path for valuing and sanctifying time.

זהה כי יאנחו איליכם בזיכם מה העובודה חותם לאם

It shall be when your children say to you, "What is this service to you?" (12:26)

כי ישאלך בן מחר לאמר מה יעדות והחקיקות והמשפטים אשר צוה ד' אלקינו לך

If your child asks you tomorrow, saying, "What are the testimonies and the decrees and the ordinances that Hashem, our G-d, commands you?" (Devarim 6:20)

The first question which was cited in our *parsha* is that of the *rasha*, wicked son. The second question which is to be found in *Sefer Devarim* is that of the *chacham*, wise son. On the surface, they appear to be asking the same question. The difference lay in the subtle changes in their relative vernacular. The wicked son does not ask; he states. His question, if anything, is rhetorical, since he has all the answers. He refuses to acknowledge that the service is Divinely mandated, and, since *mitzvos* are "man-made," they are not binding on him. Conversely, the wise son asks, mentions G-d, and includes himself in the congregation. Interestingly, the Torah, in recording the wicked son's question, uses *lashon rabim*, plural, *b'neichem*, "your sons/children," while when referring to the wise son (and also the single son and the son who knows not what to ask) writes *bincha*, "your son," in the singular. Why is this?

Horav Yosef Nechemiah Kornitzer, zl, applies the well-known adage, "An epidemic spreads, while health is not contagious." This means that when one person becomes ill, the chances are that his germs will quickly spread to others and cause an epidemic. Health, on the other hand, does not spread. A similar idea applies with regard to spirituality. One sinner carries with him spiritual germs which can and will infect the innocent and unsuspecting. The wise, righteous man usually remains alone, since no one is lining up to receive his inspiration.

Hashem responded to this divergence (*rasha/chacham*) with two words. Hashem introduces the *Aseres HaDibros*, Ten Commandments, with *Anochi (Hashem Elokecha)*; "I (Hashem, your G-d) Who took you out of Egypt." When Hashem created the world, however, the place which would be inhabited by humans, which would require relationships, the Torah writes, *Bereishis*, "In the beginning." With regard to spirituality, it is *Anochi* with an *aleph*, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, with a numerical equivalent of one. The Torah addresses the realm of physicality and materialism with *Bereishis*, whose first letter is *bais*, two. By their very nature, friendships and relationships are implemented only via a group setting. A loner in a community remains alone. In order for the physical world created by Hashem to succeed, a sense of community, of interaction, organizations and groups must exist. If the community in which one makes his home is on a collision course with the spiritual dimension he seeks for himself and his family, then it is best that he remove himself from this community.

The Torah instructs us to carry out the *mitzvah of Korban Pesach* in a *chaburah*, group, setting. It provides, however, one stipulation: it must be *shcheino ha'karov eilav b'michsas nefashos*, which is translated as, "his neighbor who is near to his house shall take according to the number of people" (*Shemos* 12:4). Based upon the above distinction, *Rav Kornitzer* renders the *pasuk* with a homiletic twist, focusing in on the Torah's use of the words *nefashos*, souls, as opposed to *anashim* people/men/*shecheinim*/neighbors. One must seek to share his *Korban Pesach*, to include in his group individuals who are like-minded in the area of *nefashos*, who are in spiritual agreement with him and his way of life. It is important to reach out as long as the reciprocal influence is not negative to one's personal spiritual journey.

Thus, when we see that it is *b'neicham*, a cadre of children (in the plural), a movement has taken root. When the questions are coming from a movement, he may suspect that its leanings are not positive. These children are not here to build and strengthen Torah. They are here to do the opposite, and, as such, must be stopped. As long as they refuse to listen, because they have all the answers, we have no discussion with them. They do not come to learn. They come with contempt, to ridicule and destroy. Such an attitude does not become or beget a "good neighbor."

Va'ani Tefillah

ברוך אתה ד' שומע תפילה – Baruch Atah Hashem shomea tefillah. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who hears prayer.

On a basic level, we thank Hashem for His kindness in listening to our prayers. Furthermore, He is pleased to hear from us: "Hashem is *misaveh*, strongly desires, the prayer of the righteous (*Yevamos* 64a)." *Horav Avigdor Miller*, zl, explains

8. His heart wasn't hardened directly by Hashem. It was result of experiencing the *makos*, the effect of which was that he became inured to the suffering. [\[14\]](#)

1. **How can Pharaoh be punished if he has no free will**

1. He still had free will –see 1 c, g, & h, above-[\[15\]](#)
2. Was only punished for prior sins[\[16\]](#)
3. Was punished for his refusal to submit in the first 5 *makos*, as his heart wasn't hardened by Hashem in those[\[17\]](#)
4. The *makos* weren't given as a punishment but a lesson in faith /revelation of Hashem-see 1a) above, also –see-¹⁴ below
5. He had it coming to him as a measure for measure –for his obstinacy in not recognizing Hashem-see-1f) above
6. Since his actions were against the Jews, they are classified as “*bain adam Lichaveiro*” and he is being punished for his actions against the Jews. As such, Teshuva to Hashem won't help.[\[18\]](#)

2. **What are the lessons**

1. To teach us that just as we find strength within us for a difficult situation, so to one can overcome an impossible situation in spiritual struggles as well.[\[19\]](#)
2. The consequence of doing nothing and ignoring events [\[20\]](#)
3. The downward spiral of sin[\[21\]](#)

[\[1\]](#) Malbim, Ramban, Rashbam, and implied in the verses [\[2\]](#) Shemos 7:5, Abarbenel-3rd answer [\[3\]](#) Seforno [\[4\]](#) Ha'amek Davar, side point of Seforno, Various baalei mussar [\[5\]](#) The 10 Makos are a reverse parallel of the 10 ma'amaros of creation, (they also parallel the 10 commandments- see Alshich) [\[6\]](#) Shem Mi'Shmu'l -other Chasidic seforim [\[7\]](#) Malbim, Seforno, Ohr Hachaim, also Rashi –according to some commentaries on Rashi, see Sifsei Chachomim 7:3, and Sifsei Chachomim & Mizrachi 10:1 [\[8\]](#) Rashi 7:3 [\[9\]](#) Abarbanel-1st answer [\[10\]](#) Abarbanel- 2nd answer [\[11\]](#) It's unclear if they get punished for the subsequent sin, or if the greater sins and *tumah* caused by the inability to do teshuva is its own punishment [\[12\]](#) Rambam, laws of teshuva, 6:3 [\[13\]](#) Noam Elimelech shemos 4:21 [\[14\]](#) Abarbenel-3rd answer [\[15\]](#) According to the Seforno (7:4) the only punishment was the last *makah* and the *yam suf*; all the others were to inspire them to repent. the Malbim (4:22-23) views all of the makos as punishment since he had free will **as a result of the hardened heart** [\[16\]](#) Ramban 7:3 in one answer, and possibly Rambam [\[17\]](#) Ramban ibid in 2nd answer [\[18\]](#) Abarbanel-1st answer [\[19\]](#) Nesivos Shalom, Bais Avrohom of Slonim see Meorei Chassidus Shemos 10:1 [\[20\]](#) Reb Yerucham Shemos 7:23 [\[21\]](#) Reb Yerucham Shemos pgs 35-38 (maamarim)

Parshat Bo: Getting to Know You

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

Parashat Bo is an exciting, jam-packed place to be! Bo boasts:

- * The final plagues.
- * The Exodus itself!
- * Mitzvot (some of these count as more than one mitzvah):
 - a) Maintaining the Jewish calendar
 - b) Sacrificing the Korban Pesah (Passover sacrifice)
 - c) Observing Pesah (the holiday)
 - d) Eating Matza (during Pesah)
 - e) Retelling the story of the Exodus (on Pesah)
 - f) Not eating Hametz (the prohibition to eat or own leaven during Pesah)
 - g) Instructions about the plague of the firstborn (not a mitzvah for future generations).
 - h) Special instructions for firstborn humans and animals.

OUR QUESTIONS THIS WEEK:

- 1) Since "way back" in Parashat Shemot, we have noted that something totally new is happening in terms of the relationship between Hashem and humanity. What are the chief indicators, and what transition do they signal in the relationship? The answer to this question is intimately connected with the next question
- 2) In this week's parasha, the plagues appear to accomplish their purpose . . . or at least they end. But what **is** the point of all these plagues? Why does Hashem subject Egypt to plagues at all, and why so many? How does Moshe's role change as the process of the plagues unfolds?
- 3) How do the mitzvot we encounter in Parashat Bo impact powerfully on the God-human relationship? Why are these the first mitzvot given to Bnei Yisrael? (Perhaps we will get to this next week.)

"I AM Y-HVH":

In Parashat Shemot, Hashem commands Moshe to report to the elders of Bnei Yisrael that God has appeared to him and announced the coming redemption. Moshe asks Hashem what Name he should report to Bnei Yisrael to refer to the God who has appeared to him. Hashem responds enigmatically, "Ehyeh asher ehyeh" -- "I shall be what I shall be." It remains unclear whether this is a name, a description, both, or neither.

Moshe seems unsatisfied by Hashem's mysterious response; in any event, Moshe remains silent, awaiting further details than Hashem at first provides. Hashem "tries again," instructing Moshe to tell the people that the God "Ehyeh" has sent him to announce the redemption to the people. Moshe, unsatisfied, still does not respond, so Hashem seems to give in, telling Moshe to tell the people that "Y-HVH, the God of their fathers, God of Avraham, God of Yitzhak, and God of Ya'akov," has appeared to him.

This enigmatic event in Parashat Shemot sets the stage for Parashat Va-Era, which begins with Hashem's spelling out for Moshe that the Avot (Avraham, Yitzhak, and Ya'akov) somehow had access only to the name "E-I Shad-dai," but not to the name "Y-HVH"; they knew or experienced Hashem as "E-I Shad-dai" only. Of course, a quick check of Sefer Bereishit (Genesis) shows that the name Y-HVH appears 165 times. If "Y-HVH" is so ubiquitous in Sefer Bereishit, in what way can we understand that the name was hidden from the Avot? Stranger yet, Hashem explicitly refers to Himself by this name in several conversations with the Avot! Clearly, He cannot mean that the Avot did not **know** this name, as many mefarshim point out. Instead, Hashem is telling Moshe that the **aspect** of Himself which was manifested to the Avot was only the aspect of "E-I Shad-dai," not the aspect of "Y-HVH."

What do "E-I Shad-dai" and "Y-HVH" mean? What aspects of Hashem or modes of divine behavior do they represent? One way to look for differences between them is to examine in what contexts they each tend to appear:

GOD OF THE AVOT:

"E-I Shad-dai" is a fairly rare name for Hashem in Tanakh (the Bible). It appears five times in all of Sefer Bereishit; once in Sefer Shemot (Parashat Va-Era); once in Sefer Yehezkel (Ezekiel); and three times in Sefer Iyyov (Job). In Bereishit, it appears in the following very similar contexts:

- 1) The blessings Hashem gives to Avraham at the Berit Milah (covenant of circumcision) -- nation, land, and permanent relationship with Hashem -- are delivered by "E-I Shad-dai."
- 2) Yitzhak promises Ya'akov that the "blessing of Avraham" (see above) will be delivered to him by "E-I Shad-dai."
- 3) As promised, Hashem appears to Ya'akov, introduces Himself as "E-I Shad-dai," and blesses him with the blessing of Avraham (nation, land, relationship with Hashem).
- 4) Ya'akov, sending his sons to Egypt to buy food, prays that "E-I Shad-dai" place mercy in the heart of the Egyptian ruler (really Yosef) before whom his sons must appear.
- 5) Ya'akov reports to Yosef that "E-I Shad-dai" had blessed him (see #3). (Ya'akov also blesses Yosef with the name "Shad-dai," minus the "E-I.")

E-I Shad-dai appears to be the Covenant-Maker, offering a promise of nationhood, land, and relationship with Him. E-I Shad-dai is also a protector, invoked by Ya'akov to protect his sons.

MY NAME "Y-HVH" WAS NOT KNOWN TO THEM:

Now for the more difficult name: what does "Y-HVH" mean? Some mefarshim suggest that it indicates that Hashem is eternal/timeless: they understand this name as a combination of "hayah," ("was," spelled HYH), "hoveh," ("is," spelled HVH), and "yihyeh" ("will be," spelled YHYH). But if the purpose of Hashem's statement here is to communicate to Moshe that He will now begin to manifest Himself in a new way, a way in which He did not manifest Himself to the Avot in the past, this is a difficult interpretation: what does Hashem's eternity have to do with His acting one way or another now? And was Hashem not just as eternal in the time of the Avot?

Perhaps we can use some elements of the above interpretation to suggest a different one: the state-of-being verb which is at the root of this name ("HVH") does not indicate simply that Hashem exists, but that He is *present.* This aspect of Hashem -- His manifest and obvious presence in the world -- is the aspect which was not made known to the Avot. This does not mean that the Avot were unsure of His existence, but that He did not generally make Himself publicly manifest in the physical world in their lifetimes; He did not openly interfere with the natural order of the world. The patriarchal experience of Hashem is primarily a visionary and covenantal one: the Avot see Hashem in prophetic dreams and trances; He promises them a destiny of nationhood and relationship with Him. But He does not perform open miracles before them. In this sense, He is not present *in* this world in open ways, although He guides the events of the world; He is not yet ready to reveal Himself as Y-HVH, the One who is present in the world.

Y-HVH IS HERE:

All this is about to change: Hashem is about to emerge not just as a reality in the ultimate, spiritual sense, but as a concrete force in the events of history. He is about to make the front page.

This is Hashem's cryptic message to Moshe at the beginning of Parashat Va-Era. Just before He embarks on this new phase in His career, so to speak, He breaks the news to Moshe: the exodus from Egypt will not be a quiet one, subtly guided by the hidden hand of Hashem; instead, He will act powerfully with "a strong hand and an outstretched arm," striking at His enemies with open miracles, warning them to acknowledge and obey Him. Hashem is about to make Himself "present" in the world. This idea is expressed quite clearly by Hashem in the opening of Parashat Va-Era:

SHEMOT 6:2-7

Hashem spoke to Moshe and said to him, "I am Y-HVH. I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzhak, and to Ya'akov as "E-I Shad-dai," but by My name 'Y-HVH' I was not known to them. I now uphold My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their dwelling, in which they dwelled. I have also heard the groaning of Bnei Yisrael . . . and I recall My covenant. Therefore, say to Bnei Yisrael, 'I AM Y-HVH! I shall take you out from under the burden of Egypt, and I shall save you from their enslaving, and I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I shall take you to Me as a nation, and I shall be for you a God, and YOU SHALL KNOW THAT I AM Y-HVH

In Shemot 6:2, Hashem introduces Himself as "Y-HVH." This, however, requires elaboration: how does He plan to express His "Y-HVH-ness" at this point? In the next pasuk (verse) He explains that the Avot experienced only "E-I Shad-dai," but not "Y-HVH." In 6:4-5, Hashem recalls His covenant with the Avot and the suffering of their children. In 6:6, Hashem instructs Moshe to introduce Him to Bnei Yisrael *as* Y-HVH: "Therefore, say to Bnei Yisrael, 'I am Y-HVH.' This does not mean simply, "I am Hashem"; it means "I am the Present One." Hashem goes on to amplify in 6:6-8: "I shall take you out . . . I shall save you . . . I shall redeem you . . . I shall take you to Me . . . and you shall know that I am Y-HVH, when I take you out from under the burden of Egypt" Hashem is about to express the aspect of Y-HVH by bursting onto the world scene in a display of power never before witnessed.

WHY ALL THOSE PLAGUES?

This explanation of the change in Hashem's mode of interacting with the world leads us directly into our next issue: what is the purpose of the plagues with which Hashem strikes Egypt? Obviously, the plagues have little to do with the goal of taking Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt; if that were all He wanted, He could have accomplished the redemption without decimating Egypt. One well-aimed plague could have accomplished the job. Why must Paro's heart be hardened repeatedly? Why does Hashem want Paro *himself* to approve the departure of Bnei Yisrael? Fortunately, the Torah provides the answers:

SHEMOT 5:1-2 --

Then Moshe and Aharon came and said to Paro, "So says Y-HVH, God of Yisrael: 'Send forth My nation, so they may celebrate [worship] Me.' Paro said, "WHO IS Y-HVH, that I should obey His voice and send out Bnei Yisrael? **I DO NOT KNOW Y-HVH** -- and I will not send out Yisrael."

By his own admission, Paro needs to become "acquainted" with Y-HVH. Y-HVH is only too happy to oblige him, responding to his arrogant dismissal of the Hebrew God by turning his world upside down and ripping it to shreds. Paro "does not know Y-HVH"? Well, that will swiftly change!

SHEMOT 7:5 --

"EGYPT SHALL KNOW THAT I AM Y-HVH, when I stretch forth My hand over Egypt and take Bnei Yisrael out of their midst" (7:5).

Of course, this show is not just for Egypt's or Paro's benefit; Bnei Yisrael also need to get to know Y-HVH better:

SHEMOT 6:7 --

"YOU [plural] WILL KNOW THAT I AM Y-HVH, your God, who takes you out from under the burden of Egypt."

It turns out that the goal of the "Makkot," the Plagues, is to teach both Bnei Yisrael and Egypt a lesson in theology. Hashem is Y-HVH: He is the One Who Is Present. As the plagues demonstrate (as we will see), this presence is manifest in Y-HVH's control of, well, absolutely everything. Hashem is introducing Himself to the world at large. The introduction is more pleasant for some than for others: if you are an Egyptian slavedriver, you get to know Hashem through the blood in your Nile, the frogs in your bed, the lice on your body, the locusts devouring your fields If you are a Jewish slave, you get to know Hashem as He spares you from these plagues, takes you out of slavery, splits the sea for you

This theme of "da'at Y-HVH" -- knowing Y-HVH (not just knowing Hashem, but knowing Him in His capacity as Y-HVH) is a major theme

in the story of the Plagues; it appears not only in the pesukim above, which introduce the whole process of the Plagues and redemption, but also throughout the process:

BLOOD:

SHEMOT 7:16-17 -- "Say to him [Paro]: 'Y-HVH, God of the Ivrim ["Hebrews"], has sent me to you to tell you, 'Release My nation so that they may serve Me in the desert,' but you have not obeyed so far. So says Y-HVH: 'Through this *YOU SHALL KNOW THAT I AM Y-HVH*: I shall strike upon the water in the river with the staff in my hand, and it shall turn to blood!'"

FROGS:

SHEMOT 8:4-6 -- Paro called Moshe and Aharon and said, "Pray to Y-HVH, that He should remove the frogs . . ." He [Moshe] said, "As you say -- so that *YOU SHALL KNOW THAT THERE IS NONE LIKE Y-HVH*, our God."

WILD BEASTS/GNATS (AROV):

SHEMOT 8:18 -- "I shall distinguish the Land of Goshen on that day, on which My nation lives, so that there will be no wild beasts there, so that *YOU SHALL KNOW THAT I AM Y-HVH IN THE MIDST OF THE LAND.*"

HAIL:

SHEMOT 9:14-18 -- "This time, I am sending all of My plagues at your heart, your servants, and your people, *SO THAT YOU SHALL KNOW THAT THERE IS NONE LIKE ME IN THE LAND.* I could have sent forth My hand and stricken you and your people with a [deadly] plague, and you would have vanished from the land. But for this reason do I keep you standing: to show you My power, and SO THAT MY NAME [Y-HVH] SHALL BE TOLD IN THE WHOLE LAND . . ."

HAIL (again):

SHEMOT 9:29 -- Moshe said to him [Paro], "When I leave the city, I will spread my hands out to Y-HVH. The thunderclaps will stop, and the hail will be no more, *SO THAT YOU SHALL KNOW THAT THE LAND IS Y-HVH's.*"

LOCUSTS:

SHEMOT 10:1-2 -- Hashem said to Moshe, "Come to Paro -- for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, so that I can place My signs in his midst, and so that you will tell over in the ears of your son and your grandson what I did to Egypt, and the signs I placed in them, and *YOU SHALL KNOW THAT I AM Y-HVH.*"

There are several additional examples, but I think the point is demonstrated. The reason the plagues must come, the reason Paro's heart must be hardened, the reason Hashem does not want to whisk the people out of Egypt on a magic carpet, but instead wants Paro to agree to let them go, is because He wants the world, Egypt, and Bnei Yisrael to "know Y-HVH," the "One who is present."

A MESSAGE WRIT LARGE:

As the plagues unfold, there is a constant repetition of sweeping phrases like "in the whole land of Egypt," "in the rivers, in the streams, in the lakes, in the cisterns," "in you, your servants, your people, your house, your servants' houses, your bed, your ovens, your serving-trays," and many other examples which, taken collectively, shout the message: "Y-HVH controls everything!"

The same message is implicit in Y-HVH's instructions to Moshe and Aharon, at various points during the plagues, to stretch forth the Mateh Elokim, the divine staff, over the water, the land, and the sky. The message: Y-HVH controls every medium, sky, earth and water. He is not a "local" deity; He is not the God of this river, or that mountain, or of fertility, or diseases, or animals, or weather, or the sun, or death. Y-HVH controls everything. This is a message to be absorbed by both Paro, representative of human power and of the belief in a pantheon of gods who control various spheres of influence, and by Bnei Yisrael. Once Paro gets this message and truly believes it, he will "know Y-HVH" and do what he was told to do in the first place: release Bnei Yisrael.

[It is worth mentioning that the theme of "knowing Y-HVH" is prominent not only here, but in many places in Tanakh, especially Sefer Yehezkel [Ezekiel], where it appears at least 72 times! It is important to compare how this theme develops in each place and to see if it is used the same way in different places.]

MOSHE GROWS STRONGER:

Moshe Rabbeinu's stiffening posture as the plagues progress is a telling catalogue of the growth and development of our most important leader. As we know, Moshe begins his prophetic career with great reluctance, attempting several times (five times!) to avoid being selected to challenge Paro and lead the people out of Egypt. When Hashem finally loses patience and becomes angry with him, Moshe takes the job, along with his brother Aharon as spokesman. Early on, Moshe does exactly as told by Hashem: he reports to the people that Y-HVH has appeared to him, and the people believe him. But when he delivers Hashem's demands to Paro and Paro reacts by increasing the people's workload, Moshe turns to Hashem and complains: "Why did you send me to Paro? Things have only gotten worse!"

Hashem responds with a full explanation of His plan: to conduct the world's greatest public relations campaign, teaching the world about Y-HVH while rescuing Bnei Yisrael from slavery and making them His nation. Moshe reports the news to the people, but they are too depressed and busy to listen to him. When Hashem then commands Moshe to go to Paro and present His demands, the "old," reluctant Moshe returns: "Even my own people, Bnei Yisrael, did not listen to me -- how will Paro listen?!"

Hashem patiently explains to Moshe that he has misunderstood his job. His task is not to get Paro to obey! "Exactly! He will not listen to you -- that is the plan!! In fact, I Myself will harden his heart so that he does not listen, because I want the opportunity to teach him that I am Y-HVH." From this point on, Moshe demonstrates no reluctance. He now understands that it is not his job to convince Paro to obey by speaking eloquently; it is his job to deliver warnings which will be ignored, so that Hashem can break Paro's arrogance, so that Paro and Egypt will know that "I am Y-HVH."

A FEW TRICKS OF HIS OWN:

In place of his previous self-doubt, his disappointment with his failure to get Paro to knuckle under, Moshe's stance becomes one of confidence. Not only does he carry out Hashem's instructions, he independently invents ways in which to make even clearer to Paro that he is at Y-HVH's mercy. When Paro breaks down and asks Moshe to pray to Y-HVH for the removal of the swarming frogs, Moshe sarcastically says to him, "Go ahead, lord it over me -- when do you want me to pray . . . to remove the frogs?" (8:5). Paro, not wanting to appear too desperate, says "Tomorrow." Moshe agrees, adding, "So that you will know that there is none like Y-HVH, our God!" And when Moshe prays, "Hashem listened to *him*," indicating that the idea of humbling Paro by praying for him is Moshe's plan, to which Hashem agrees.

Later on, when Paro again asks for Moshe's prayers to remove the "Arov" plague, Moshe wags a finger at Paro: "I am going out to pray for you . . . but let Paro no longer deal deceitfully in not letting the people go . . ." (8:25). Once again, "Hashem did as Moshe said" -- again, it is Moshe's idea to use prayer to Y-HVH as a way to get Paro to kneel, as an opportunity to humble and chastise him.

As the plagues continue, Paro's support among his advisors crumbles and he becomes deeply sullen, grudgingly attempting to compromise with Moshe. But Moshe has begun to sound like a powerful and confident leader; not just like Hashem's messenger, but as leader of a nation which has been commanded to serve Hashem. When Paro expresses willingness to let some of the people go and asks Moshe whom he intends to take and whom he will leave behind as "insurance," Moshe confidently brushes aside the offer, asserting that he has no intention of compromising:

SHEMOT 10:9 --

Moshe said, "With our old and our young we will go, with our sons and daughters, with our sheep and cattle, for we have a festival to Y-HVH!"

Why should I settle for less, Moshe says, when I can have whatever I want?

Perhaps Moshe's most dramatic speech to Paro is his final one. After Egypt is stricken with three days of paralyzing darkness, Paro calls Moshe and makes a new offer: Bnei Yisrael, children included, can go to their worship in the desert, as long as they leave their sheep and cattle behind. Moshe rejects this offer as well: not only will Bnei Yisrael take their own animals, but in fact "You, too, will place in our hands sacrifices and offerings for Y-HVH, our God . . . not a single hoof will be left behind . . ." (10:25). Not only will Bnei Yisrael bring sacrifices to Hashem, but Paro will contribute sacrifices too! Infuriated by Moshe's temerity, Paro throws Moshe out and threatens that if he sees him again, Moshe will die. Moshe agrees: "You have spoken correctly: I shall see your face no more! . . . Your servants will come down to me [after the plague of the firstborn] and bow to me . . . and *THEN* I will go!" Then Moshe, furious (11:8), leaves.

As planned all along, in the end Paro finally "knows Y-HVH" and submits to Him, allowing the people to leave Egypt for their festival in the desert. Next week, we will talk about the Exodus, the mitzvot surrounding it, the splitting of the sea, and other events of Parashat Be-Shalah.

Shabbat Shalom

PARSHAT BO - Pesach in Sodom

This may sound rather strange, but according to Rashi, Pesach was already celebrated some four hundred years BEFORE the Exodus! Rashi, commenting on Breishit 19:3, claims that Lot baked specifically MATZOT for his guests because they arrived on Pesach.

In this week's shiur, while discussing the purpose and significance of the Korban Pesach, we show how there may be a very basic thematic connection between the destruction of Sdom and the process of Yetziat Mitzraim.

INTRODUCTION / REVIEW

In our study of Sefer Shmot thus far, we have focused on the double mission which Moshe receives at the burning bush:

- (1) The mission to Pharaoh, that he allow Bnei Yisrael to worship God in the desert.
- (2) The mission to Bnei Yisrael, that they recognize that God has come to fulfill His covenant.

Although these two missions are interrelated, each constitutes an independent Divine goal: Firstly, it is significant that Egypt, the center of ancient civilization, recognize the existence of God and Bnei Yisrael's right to worship Him. Likewise, it is crucial that Bnei Yisrael be aware not only that the God of their forefathers has come to redeem them, but also that they be willing and ready to obey Him (Shmot 6:2-9). Unfortunately, Bnei Yisrael do not heed God's call for "teshuva". Nonetheless, the miraculous redemption process (bshem Havaya) continues, for the Sake of His Name (Ezekiel 20:5-10). [See shiurim on Parshiot Shmot & Va'yeira.]

Bnei Yisrael's redemption from Egypt is merely the first step towards the fulfillment of God's covenant. However, it is not only God's responsibility to redeem them, Bnei Yisrael are expected to BECOME His Nation. [A covenant, by its very nature, requires active commitment by BOTH partners.] By following His laws and establishing a model nation in the Promised Land, Bnei Yisrael will lead all mankind toward the recognition of God - the final goal of that covenant (the theme of Sefer Breishit).

BNEI YISRAEL AND THE FIRST NINE PLAGUES

It is interesting to note that during the first nine "makot" (plagues), Bnei Yisrael appear to be 'out of the picture'. From the time that "makot" (plagues) are introduced to Moshe and Aharon (7:1-7) until the completion of the ninth plague (10:29), Sefer Shmot focuses exclusively on the confrontation between Moshe and Pharaoh, i.e. between God and Egypt. During that lengthy narrative, we find no mention of any instruction or commandment to Bnei Yisrael. The purpose of these makot is stated explicitly in the introduction to this unit:

"v'yadu MITZRAIM ki Ani Hashem" - And EGYPT will recognize that I am God, when I stretch out My Hand over Egypt..." (7:5)

These chapters form a distinct unit, for they describe the fulfillment of Moshe's mission to Pharaoh (1). Note the connection between the opening (7:1-7) & closing psukim (11:9-10) of this unit.

In contrast, from this point in Parshat Bo and onward, Chumash changes its focus from the Egyptians to the Israelites. Moshe must now complete his mission to Bnei Yisrael (2) by encouraging them to become an active partner in the process of Yetziat Mitzraim. "Parshat Ha'Chodesh" (12:1-20), containing the first "mitzvah" given to Bnei Yisrael, begins this new unit.

THE TENTH PLAGUE

During the first nine plagues, God finds no particular difficulty differentiating between Bnei Yisrael and the Egyptians (e.g. arov, dever, barad, choshech). Nevertheless, for the final plague - Makkat

Bchorot - it seems that a special sign is necessary: Bnei Yisrael must sprinkle the blood of the "korban Pesach" on their doorposts so that God can distinguish between them and the Egyptians. Surely, God is mighty enough to recognize who was an Israelite even without a sign on their doorposts. Why then is this special sign necessary?

Based on our introduction, the answer is quite simple: God does not need to see the blood on the doorposts to determine the ethnic identity of the household. Rather, God requests this sign in order to determine who is WORTHY of redemption. Through the korban Pesach, Bnei Yisrael show that they understand the purpose of their redemption. They prove to God that they DESERVE to be saved.

This explains why Bnei Yisrael are commanded to prepare this korban on the tenth of Nisan (12:3). The three (or four) days before their redemption need to be dedicated to spiritual preparation.

The korban Pesach is significant in itself. Its purpose was not only to provide the blood for the sign on the doorposts. Considering that this korban is offered as Bnei Yisrael become free from their slavery (and their oppressor is punished /see Br. 15:13-14), the korban Pesach serves as a proper thanksgiving to God for His fulfillment of Brit Bein Ha'Btarim [see Further Iyun Section].

To fully appreciate this idea, the special name of this korban - Pesach - requires additional explanation.

A change in lifestyle, especially that of a nation, cannot take place overnight. How much more so, the transformation of an enslaved people, immersed in Egyptian culture, into a free nation willing and ready to obey God. Had Bnei Yisrael begun this teshuva process prior to the first plague, as God had originally demanded, they could have been ready for the ideal redemption process. Possibly, Bnei Yisrael would have commenced their three day journey to Har Sinai immediately after the tenth plague. Spiritually ready to obey God, they would have received the Torah and continued to the Land of Israel only a short time later.

Had Bnei Yisrael truly been worthy of this ideal redemption, the sprinkling of the blood on the doorposts may not have been necessary. However, as we explained in last week's shiur, the people were not worthy; their hastened preparation for the Exodus was hardly sufficient to entirely erase their past. Now that God is about to reveal Himself b'shem Havaya, they deserve to be punished together with the Egyptians; but God has Mercy (Ezekiel 20:7-9). The fact that God has to PASS OVER their houses emphasizes this very point - that they actually deserve to be punished, but instead of smiting them, He saves them at the last minute. ["po'sey'ach" in Hebrew implies skipping over. One 'skips over' that which he should have stepped on.]

Therefore, the Korban Pesach serves a double purpose:

- (1) By sprinkling the blood of the korban Pesach on their doorposts, Bnei Yisrael display recognition that they do not deserve to be saved. [Blood is a fitting symbol.]
- (2) Offering the korban in thanksgiving for the fulfillment of the first stage of Brit Bein Ha'Btarim, reminds them that if they are saved, it is IN ORDER that they can fulfill the next stage of that covenant, i.e. to become His special Nation in the Promised Land. [The special laws which govern HOW this korban is to be eaten (12:8-11), further enhances Bnei Yisrael's perception of this purpose.]

This awareness, that although they deserve punishment, God 'passes over' them, is the primary purpose for offering this korban in this situation; and hence its name - "korban Pesach".

Any "teshuva" process must begin with both (1) man's recognition of God's Mercy in allowing him a second chance, as well as (2) man's realization of his purpose in life.

[Note: Even if Bnei Yisrael had been deserving of their redemption, it may have been proper to offer this "korban l'Hashem" at this time (or three days later at Har Sinai) in thanksgiving for Brit Bein Ha'Btarim. However, the ritual of sprinkling the blood on the doorposts would have been superfluous. One could also suggest a reason why God afforded them a second chance. Although inexcusable, their stubbornness was understandable. As we explained in last week's shiur, because of their crushed spirits and cruel bondage ("m'kotzer

ruach u'm'avodah kasha"), Bnei Yisrael did not heed God's original call (6:9). Possibly, for this reason Sefer Shmot only hints of their low spiritual level at that time, and does not record what Sefer Yechezkel mentions explicitly.]

With this background, we can return to our opening question in order to find a thematic connection between Sdom & Pesach.

PESACH IN SDOM

Lot's situation in Sdom is strikingly similar to Bnei Yisrael's in Egypt. Recall that Lot is originally attracted to Sdom because of its climatic similarities to Egypt (Nile & Jordan Rivers / See Br. 13:10). The people of Sdom, as a result of their natural resources, are confident in themselves. They find no need for God and thus evolve into a corrupt society (13:13 / see shiur on Parshat Va'yera). In total disgust for this society, God punishes them b'shem Havaya (18:20-21).

Before destroying Sdom, God first consults with Avraham Avinu. Antithetical to the society of Sdom, Avraham's offspring were destined to become a 'blessing to Mankind' by establishing a Nation characterized by "tzekek u'mishpat" (see 18:17-19). Can Lot, a disciple of Avraham, not save that city?

Upon hearing of the forthcoming destruction of Sdom, Avraham immediately assumes exactly what we have posited - that God would not punish the righteous together with the wicked:

"Will you sweep away the innocent together with the guilty?... Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (18:23-25).

Although he is more righteous than his neighbors, Lot does not merit to be saved from the destruction of Sdom. [He preferred the lifestyle in Sdom over the challenges of life with Avraham (13:10-12).] In an act of Divine Mercy (19:16!), and for the sake of Avraham (19:29), God removes Lot from Sdom before He destroys the city. Lot is so undeserving that he is not even permitted to look back and watch the destruction.

It is only God's covenant with Avraham Avinu that evokes Divine Mercy. Like Bnei Yisrael during Makkat Bchorot, Lot is saved from destruction even though he is not worthy. Based on this thematic similarity, we can appreciate Rashi's concise comment regarding the time of year when the destruction of Sdom took place.

Rashi comments on the pasuk that describes the meal which Lot prepared for the two "malachim" (who came to destroy Sdom):

"And he [Lot] made for them drinks, and baked MATZOT, and they ate..." (19:3).

On the word MATZOT, Rashi explains that 'it was PESACH' that evening. After all, why else would they be eating matzah?

Does Rashi need to inform us what time of year this episode took place? Do we need to know how 'frum' Lot was, that he kept all mitzvot, even matzah on Pesach?

Rashi is not coming to teach us "pshat" (the simple meaning of the text). Rather, he hints to the thematic similarity between Lot and Yetziyat Mitzraim.

[Note: The following explanation illustrates the danger of understanding "drash" as "pshat". When we too quickly accept "drash" as "pshat", not only are we liable to miss the beauty of "pshat", we might also lose the full appreciation of the "drash".]

According to "pshat", Lot did not bake matzot (19:3) because it was Pesach, rather he baked matzot (instead of bread) because his guests arrived SUDDENLY. In order to bake bread, the dough needs time to rise, while matzot can be baked much more quickly.

The "drash", brought down by Rashi, that Lot baked matzah because it was Pesach, thematically links the events leading to the destruction of Sdom to the story of Yetziyat Mitzraim. In both events, God reveals Himself, b'shem Havaya, in Judgement. Thus, Rashi's commentary of this pasuk does not explain "pshat", rather, it points to a much deeper biblical theme - that of 'Yom Hashem'!

YOM HASHEM

This biblical concept of a day when God reveals Himself, causing the wicked to be punished while the righteous are saved, is

known throughout Tanach as "Yom Hashem" - God's Day of Judgement.

For example, when Yeshayahu foresees the destruction of Bavel (Isaiah 13:1-22), he consistently refers to that day as 'Yom Hashem' (see 13:6,9,13). While describing that calamity, Yeshayahu even compares Bavel to Sdom:

"Bavel, glory of kingdoms, splendor of the Kassdim, shall become like Sdom and Amorah, overturned by God" (13:19)

Another important example is found in Amos. During the time period of Yerovam ben Yoash, Israel had reached prosperity and affluence. They eagerly awaited an even greater redemption, even though they were not deserving. In reaction, Amos warns the people concerning the danger involved (5:18):

"Woe, you who wish for 'Yom Hashem', why should you want 'Yom Hashem', [for you] it shall be darkness and not light."

If the people are not spiritually prepared for God to reveal Himself, Amos warns, 'Yom Hashem' will bring upon them destruction rather than salvation.

Our final example 'comes from God's 'farewell' message to Mankind; the last prophesy of the last prophet - Malachi:

[also a popular song]

"Hiney anochi sho'lay'ach la'chem..." - Behold I am sending you Eliyah the prophet BEFORE the great and terrible Day of the Lord ['Yom Hashem'] comes. And he will bring about the REPENTANCE of the fathers by the sons, and the repentance of the sons by the fathers, LEST I COME and STRIKE the entire land with DESTRUCTION." [this last phrase, we don't sing!] (3:23-24)

Here again we find the necessity to perform teshuva prior to redemption, otherwise God's revelation will lead to destruction. Since the ultimate redemption of Am Yisrael is the hope of all the prophets, it is only fitting that this becomes the closing prophetic message to Am Yisrael.

As we have seen, the redemption process begins without Bnei Yisrael being worthy of salvation. However, its continuation - receiving the Torah and inheriting the Promised Land - require spiritual readiness. In this week's shiur we explained how the offering of the korban Pesach was the 'first step' in the right direction, an important milestone on the road to spiritual redemption.

Every year, when we commemorate the events of Yetziyat Mitzraim on 'Passover', we thank God for His fulfillment of Brit Bein Ha'Btarim (MAGID) and pray for our final redemption (HALLEL/ NIRTZAH). Before that prayer, we invite Eliyah to our Seder table not only to taste our wine, and not only to encourage him to smite our enemies; Eliyah comes to remind us that we need to do proper "teshuva" PRIOR to our redemption, and to warn us of the consequences lest we do not.

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FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. THE KORBAN TODAH AND KORBAN PESACH

See Vayikra 7:11-21. The Korban Todah is special in two ways:

1) The time frame in which one can eat it is limited to the day when it was offered and that evening, while a regular Shlamim can be eaten the entire next day.

2) It must be eaten together with MATZOT:

The Korban Pesach is similar in both these aspects. It can only be eaten that evening, and it must be eaten together with matzot.

Relate this as well to when we are obligated to offer a Korban Todah (based on Tehilim 107/ "arba chayavim l'hodot")

B. Recall the pasuk that we quote as the seder before inviting Eliyah: "shfoch chamotcha al ha'goyim..." (see Yirmiyahu 10:25) and relate this to Yechezkel 20:8-9 [note "v'omar lishpoch chamati aleiyhem, v'aas l'maan SHMI..."] and to main point of the above shiur.

PARSHAT BO

- KORBAN PESACH AND BRIT MILA -

In our shiur on Parshat Bo discussing Parshat ha-Chodesh / Shmot 12:1-20, we discussed why the Torah 'prematurely' presented the laws of 'chag ha-matzot'. In the following shiur, we discuss why the Torah 'belatedly' [i.e. after Bnei Yisrael leave Egypt] presents the laws of 'chukot ha-Pesach'.

INTRODUCTION

To clarify the problem that our shiur deals with, we begin with a quick overview of the Torah's presentation of the story of Yetziat Mitzraim by charting the progression of 'parshiot' (and their respective topics) in chapters 12 and 13. As you review these two chapters, note how the topics of these 'parshiot' alternate between "mitzvot" [LAWS] and "sipur" [STORY, i.e. narrative]

PSUKIM TOPIC

12:1-20 Hashem commands Moshe to tell Yisrael the LAWS of:
a. Korban Pesach in Egypt (12:3-13)
b. Korban Pesach for future generations (12:14)
c. The laws of eating matza for seven days (12:15-20)

12:21-28 Moshe relays these laws to Bnei Yisrael, but only the LAWS of:
a. Korban Pesach in Egypt (12:21-23)
b. Korban Pesach for future generations (12:24-28)

12:29-36 The STORY of the Tenth Plague and the Exodus [How the Egyptians rushed Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt.]

12:37-42 The STORY of traveling from Egypt, baking matza, and concluding remarks regarding the '430 years'...

12:43-50 Some more LAWS re: offering Korban Pesach [This section is titled - "zot chukat ha-Pesach".]

12:51 A short summary pasuk

13:1-10 Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael more the LAWS
13:1-2 -God commands Moshe
re: 'kedushat bechor'. [laws of the first born]
13:3-10 Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael the laws of:
eating matza for seven days ["chag ha'matzot"]
not eating (or owning) chametz for 7 days

13:11-16 Moshe tells Yisrael the LAWS of the 'first born'.

As you study the above chart, note how the LAW sections relate directly to the STORY sections. For example, the laws for how to offer the korban Pesach precede the story of the Tenth the Plague, for the purpose of that offering was to protect Bnei Yisrael from that Plague (see 12:12-13 & 12:21-23).

However, at the conclusion of the story of the Exodus (in 12:42), we find yet an additional 'parshia' concerning additional laws that relate to offering the Korban Pesach - which clearly appears to be 'out of place'!

"And God said to Moshe and Aharon: These are the laws of the Pesach - anyone not circumcised may not eat from it..."

"Then Bnei Yisrael did just as God had commanded Moshe and Aharon, so they did" (see 12:43-50).

To our amazement, this entire 'parshia' appears to be recorded in Chumash a bit too late! Let's explain why:

The laws in 12:43-49 command Bnei Yisrael to perform 'brit mila' BEFORE offering the Korban Pesach. Therefore, it must have been taught BEFORE Bnei Yisrael left Egypt. Furthermore, this 'parshia' includes several other laws that would apply to offering the korban Pesach in Egypt (even though these laws apply to korban Pesach in future generations as well).

Finally, the last pasuk of this unit informs us that Bnei Yisrael

did exactly as Moshe commanded them (see 12:50).

[Note now Rashi on 12:43 immediately concludes that this 'parshia' is 'out of place'; and even Ramban agrees!]

Why then does the Torah record these laws only AFTER the story of the Exodus? Shouldn't this 'parshia' have been included together with all the other laws of Korban Pesach (i.e. somewhere along with 12:2-14 and 12:21-28)?

Considering our discussion in our first shiur that 12:15-20 may also be 'out of place' (i.e. It really 'belongs' with 13:2-8), we find a very peculiar phenomenon in chapter 12: The laws of chag ha-matzot (12:15-20), which technically should have recorded AFTER the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, are recorded beforehand - while the laws of 'chukat ha-Pesach' which should have been recorded earlier, are recorded AFTER the story of the Exodus.

In other words, to put this chapter back into its correct 'chronological order,' we would simply have to swap these two parshiot.

Nevertheless, the Torah prefers to record them 'out of order', and the obvious question is WHY.

THEMATIC ORDER

These questions relate to a wider topic of Chumash study known as "ein mukdam u-me'uchar" - that the parshiot in Chumash do not necessarily follow chronological order. However, this does not mean that Chumash follows a completely random sequence. Rather, even though the Torah usually does follow chronological order, it occasionally prefers to place a certain 'parshia' in a different place IN ORDER to emphasize a THEMATIC connection.

[One could say that this is the Torah's way of saying: 'darsheini']

If this assumption is correct, then we can conclude that the Torah presented these parshiot in this manner in order that we should search for a thematic connection between:

- a) Korban Pesach and chag ha-matzot; and
- b) the concluding story of Exodus and chukat ha-Pesach.

In Part I we discussed (a); now we must discuss (b).

Let's begin by taking a closer look at the previous 'parshia' that concludes the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim:

"...And the settlement of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt was thirty years and FOUR HUNDRED years. And it came to pass after thirty years and FOUR HUNDRED years, on this day, all of God's hosts LEFT from the land of Egypt..." (see 12:40-42).

Clearly, these psukim focus on the completion of FOUR HUNDRED years; but the Torah is not precise in regard to what these four hundred years are counting from.

BRIT BEIN HA-BTARIM & CHUKAT HA-PESACH

The commentators all agree that the 'four hundred years' mentioned in these psukim must relate in one form or other to God's promise to Avraham Avinu concerning the 'bondage of his offspring in a foreign land,' as promised in 'brit bein ha-btarim'. [See Breishit 15:13-14, see also Rashi, Ramban, Rashbam, and Ibn Ezra on 12:40.]

In other words, this final 'parshia' (12:37-42) points to the fact that this Exodus from Egypt marks God's fulfillment of His promise to Avraham Avinu at 'brit bein ha-btarim'.

With this in mind, let's take a look at the 'parshia' that follows: "And God said to Moshe and Aharon: These are the laws of the Pesach - a son of a non-Jew may not eat from it... and if he owns a servant, then he must CIRCUMCISE him, and then he may eat it... and if a stranger lives with you and wants to offer a korban Pesach, first he must be CIRCUMCISED... and anyone NOT CIRCUMCISED may not eat from it." (see 12:43-48).

Note how the primary focus of these mitzvot in 'chukat ha-Pesach' is the requirement to perform BRIT MILA before offering the Korban Pesach (note 12:43,44,48).

But as we noted above, the final psukim of the preceding story relate back to the theme of BRIT BEIN HA-BTARIM!

Therefore, this juxtaposition may point once again to thematic connection between these two central covenants of Sefer Breishit. [See last week's shiur on Parshat Va'era.]

In this manner, Chumash may be alluding to an important thematic message: If we consider Korban Pesach as the manner by which we thank God for His fulfillment of Brit bein Ha-btarim, then before doing so, we must first remind ourselves of our commitment to His covenant of 'brit MILA'.

[Recall how Brit Mila reflects the special relationship [or partnership] between God and Bnei Yisrael (to accept Him as our God - "lihiyot lachem l-Elokim" / see Breishit 17:7-8).]

Hence, this intentional juxtaposition may emphasize how one must first confirm his commitment at a personal and family level - as reflected in Brit Mila, before he can proclaim his affiliation at the national level, as reflected in the offering of the korban Pesach - to thank God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha-btarim.

This critical balance between one's commitment to God at both the personal and national level will emerge as a primary theme in Chumash, especially in our study of Sefer Shmot and Sefer Devarim.

Iy'h, we will return to this topic in the shiurim that follow; Till then,

shabbat shalom,
menachem

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FOR FURTHER IYUN:

A. The Position of 'Zot Chukat Ha-Pesach'

Three answers as to why this section is transplanted from its chronological location appear in the following commentators:

1) Ibn Ezra, Seforo and Chizkuni claim that the laws of "chukat ha'pesach" apply only to future generations, and hence this entire section is not out of chronological sequence.

The Mechilta (on 12:43) quotes a debate between Rabbi Yosha and Rabbi Yonatan as to whether these psukim refer only to Pesach Mitzrayim or to Pesach dorot, as well. The Ibn Ezra disputes both views, and claims that this section deals strictly with Pesach dorot.

In regard to the concluding pasuk of this section -"All of Bnei Yisrael did just as Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon... " - which we quoted as the strongest proof that these psukim belong earlier (see 12:50) - Ibn Ezra explains that these halachot bore relevance only for subsequent years, i.e. when they observed Pesach in the wilderness.

Chizkuni explains differently, that this pasuk tells of Bnei Yisrael's acceptance of these laws for observance in future years (even though did not apply at that time).

2) Ramban cites Ibn Ezra's approach and strongly rejects it. Despite his general aversion towards applying the principle of "ein mukdam u-me'uchar", the Ramban here nevertheless accepts Rashi's view, the one we adopt in the shiur, that this section was transmitted earlier, before Yetziyat Mitzrayim.

The Ramban explains that the Torah wished to first record the story of Yetziyat Mitzrayim immediately after Moshe conveys to Bnei Yisrael God's promise of redemption - as they express their faith by prostrating themselves (see 12:23-27). This juxtaposition underscores Hashem's fulfillment of His promise. After the story of yetziyat Mitzrayim, the Torah then returns to complete the transmission of the laws relevant to the korban pesach. Rav Eliyahu Mizrahi, in his work on Rashi's commentary, explains along similar lines.

3) A much different explanation is given by the Abarbanel and, later, by Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch. They claim that this section, which deals primarily with the procedure required before a foreigner or a convert may partake of the korban Pesach, is directed towards the 'erev rav', about whom the Torah speaks just several verses earlier. (In their respective commentaries, both the Abarbanel and Rav Hirsch go through all the halachot mentioned in this section and explain how they all address the unique circumstance of the erev rav.)

B. The Four Hundred and Thirty Years of Bondage

As we noted, the Torah says in 12:40 that Bnei Yisrael spent 430 years in Egypt. Rashi there notes that based on the genealogical record of Yaakov's family when he relocated in Egypt (in Parshat Vayigash - Breishit 46:8-27) as well as that in Parshat Va'era (Shmot 6:14-25), this is a mathematical impossibility. (In short, Kehat, Moshe's grandfather, is included among those who moved with Yaakov to Egypt; four hundred years could not have passed from Kehat's move to Egypt until his grandson, Moshe, led the slaves to freedom at the age of eighty.) Further confounding the issue is the fact that Hashem had informed Avraham of a 400-year period of bondage, not 430 years.

For this reason, most sources among Chazal and the mefarshim claim - as mentioned in the shiur - that the period in question began with the birth of Yitzchak. Hashem had promised that Avraham's offspring would be "foreigners in a land not their own" (Breishit 15:13). This period began when his heir, Yitzchak, was born in a country where he was deemed a foreigner. Why Yitzchak - and, after him, Yaakov and his children - held foreigner status in Canaan is not entirely clear. Ibn Ezra (commenting on our pasuk) cites a theory that during this period Canaan was subject to Egyptian rule. Although the Ibn Ezra claims that there is no source to substantiate such a theory, Rav Menachem Kasher (Torah Shleima on our pasuk, footnote 601) indeed brings several sources to this effect. The Maharal, by contrast, in his commentary, "Gur Aryeh" on our pasuk, posits a different explanation for this foreigner status. As Hashem had decreed that Avraham's offspring would come under subjugation in a foreign land, their residence in Canaan before their descent to Egypt was not permanent. As such, they could not be considered anything more than foreigners. Rashi, in his commentary to Breishit 15:13, cites psukim that imply that Yitzchak and Yaakov's residence in Canaan was indeed that of foreigners.

In any event, the sixty years of Yitzchak's life before Yaakov's birth (Breishit 25:26) and Yaakov's one hundred and thirty years before moving to Egypt (Breishit 47:8) combine to comprise 190 of the 400 years of exile. This leaves 210 years, the commonly accepted duration of the Egyptian exile (see Breishit Rabba 91:2).

This theory, that the period of 'exile' began with the birth of Yitzchak, dates back as early as the Septuagint, which adds onto our pasuk the words, 'u-bish'ar aratzot', meaning, that the 430 years mark the period in which Bnei Yisrael were foreigners in Egypt as well as in other lands.

As for the discrepancy between the 400 and 430 years, we find four approaches in the Midrashim and mefarshim:

1) The Mechilta on our pasuk, as well as Rashi here and in Breishit 15:13, maintain that the 400-year period began with the birth of Yitzchak, and the 430-year period began at brit bein ha-btarim, which took place thirty years prior to Yitzchak's birth. This raises a vexing problem: Avraham was 100 years old when Yitzchak was born (Breishit 21:5), which would mean that he was only 70 at the time of brit bein ha-btarim. Yet, he was already 75 years-old when he first migrated to Canaan (Breishit 12:4). How, then, could Avraham have been only 70 at brit bein ha-btarim, which occurs three chapters after his resettlement in Canaan?

The Seder Olam Rabba therefore explains that Avraham originally moved to Canaan at age 70. After the brit bein ha-btarim, he returned to Charan for five years, after which he once again settled in Canaan. The presentation in Parshat Lech-Lecha

thus does not follow chronological sequence.

2) The Ramban (in his commentary to our pasuk) argues that the 430 years began with brit bein ha-btarim; the 400 years which Hashem mentioned to Avraham marked the minimum duration of the exile, not the definite period. As a result of Bnei Yisrael's sins in Egypt, Hashem added thirty years to the decree, resulting in a total of 430 years. According to the Ramban, Bnei Yisrael were in Egypt for 240 years, not 210 as is commonly understood.

3) The Ibn Ezra and Rabbenu Yosef Bechor Shor suggest that the 430 years begin with Avraham's migration with his father from Ur Kasdim. Towards the end of Parshat Noach (11:31), the Torah tells that Terach took his family from Ur Kasdim to live in Canaan, but for some reason he never made it past Charan. These mefarshim suggest that this event, which, they claim, occurred thirty years prior to brit bein ha-btarim, marked the beginning of Avraham's period of 'exile', as this was the point at which he uprooted himself from his homeland. (The Netziv adopts this approach, as well, and elaborates further on the significance of Avraham's move from Ur Kasdim.)

4) The Abarbanel cites a view that the pasuk in brit bein ha-btarim that speaks of 400 years was imprecise; it rounded off the number 430 to an even 400. This view would then yield the same result that emerges from the Ramban's approach: Bnei Yisrael spent 240 years in Egypt. (The Abarbanel himself, however, accepts the Ramban's position.)

All these mefarshim agree that the 400 years of bondage foreseen at brit bein ha-btarim begin at that point, when Hashem informs Avraham of the exile. They argue only as to the nature of the thirty years. We do find two other views, which deny this assumption upon which all the aforementioned explanations are predicated:

Pirkei De-Rabbi Eliezer (48) cites the view of Rabbi Elazar Ben Arach that the 430-year period begins with the birth of Efrayim and Menashe, the last two tribes of Yisrael to be born. Their birth occurred five years before Yaakov and his family moved to Egypt, such that 215 years passed from their birth to the Exodus. Since the slavery required Bnei Yisrael's service both by day and night, they served as slaves for the functional equivalent of 430 years. (Haktav Ve-hakabbala explains this based on another Midrash, that the Egyptian taskmasters forced the slaves to sleep in the fields rather than going home to their families; they thus 'worked' both by day and by night.) More familiar is the Midrash cited by the Vilna Gaon, in Kol Eliyahu on Parshat Shmot, that states more simply that the torture and hardship of the 210-year slavery term rendered it equivalent to a standard, 400-year term. According to this approach, that Bnei Yisrael's slavery equaled - but did not last for - 400 years, our pasuk does not at all relate to brit bein ha-btarim.

Perhaps the most startling view is that of the Shadal, who claims, in opposition to all other commentators (including the Septuaginta, as quoted above), that Bnei Yisrael indeed spent four hundred and thirty years in Egypt. Earlier, we parenthetically noted the proof against this possibility, that the Torah identifies Kehat as Moshe's grandfather (Shmot 6:18, 20), and he was among the seventy members of Yaakov's family who descended to Egypt (Breishit 46:11). The life-spans of Kehat and his son Amram, plus Moshe's eighty years before freeing Bnei Yisrael, do not add up to anywhere near 430 years. The Shadal refutes this proof by claiming that the Torah omits several generations in its genealogical record in Parshat Va'era. In fact, he brings a very strong proof to his claim: in Parshat Va'era, the Torah lists only eight members of the tribe of Levi in Amram's generation (Amram, Yitzhar, Chevron, Uziel, Machli, Mushi, Livni and Shimi - Shmot 6:17-19). Yet, when Moshe - Amram's son - took Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt, the tribe of Levi numbered 22,000 (Bemidbar 3:39). Clearly, Levi's population could not have grown from 8 to 22,000 in a single generation. Undoubtedly, the Shadal argues, there were several interim generations that the Torah - for whatever

reason - neglects to mention.

Rav Yaakov Medan (of Yeshivat Har Etzion - Daf Kesher vol. 3, p.220) refutes this seemingly convincing proof of the Shadal. He suggests quite simply that the Torah omitted not interim generations, as the Shadal claims, but rather the brothers of those eight levites, or even the brothers of their parents. Rav Medan notes that when Yaakov bestows the bechora upon Yosef, whereby his sons, Efrayim and Menashe, become independent tribes, he adds that any future children born to Yosef will be included in those two tribes (Breishit 48:6). In other words, 'less significant' brothers often became formally included as part of their brothers' families. It stands to reason, then, that in each generation in the genealogical listing the Torah records only several brothers. In fact, Rav Medan adds, the genealogical records in Va'era, Bemidbar and Pinchas do not mention any grandsons of Yaakov besides those listed as part of the family that descended to Egypt. As Yaakov's sons were still relatively young when they relocated in Egypt, we have no reason to believe that they did not continue bearing children in Egypt. Clearly, then, there were siblings omitted in the Torah's genealogical record, thus refuting the Shadal's

PARSHAT BO

TWO REASONS FOR MATZA - OR ONE?

Ask anyone - why do we eat Matza on Pesach? Invariably you will hear one of the two following answers:

- To remind us of the 'poor man's bread' that we ate when we were slaves in Egypt ['lechem oni'];
[As we say in the Haggada - "ha lachma anya..."]
- Because we left Egypt in haste and our dough didn't have time to rise ['chipazon'].
[As we say in the Haggada - "Matza - al shum ma? al shum she-lo hispik betzeikam le-hachmitz..."]

So, which reason is correct?

In the following shiur, we uncover the biblical roots of these two reasons in Parshat Bo - in an attempt to better understand and appreciate why we eat matza on Pesach.

INTRODUCTION

In Parshat Bo, we find two Biblical commands that relate to eating matza:

In relation to **korban Pesach**, we are instructed to eat **matza** & maror together with the meat of this offering. [See Shmot 12:8.]

In relation to "**chag hamatzot**", we are instructed to eat **matza** (and not eat chametz) for seven days. [See Shmot 12:15-20 and 13:3-8.]

In Part One of our shiur, we study these two sources to show how (and why) each of these two mitzvot stems from a totally different reason.

In Part Two, we study the intricate manner of the Torah's presentation of these two mitzvot - and together with some historical considerations, we will explore an underlying theme that may tie these two separate reasons together.

PART ONE - REMEMBERING SLAVERY or REMEMBERING FREEDOM

In the middle of Parshat Bo (right before the story of the Tenth Plague), God instructs Moshe concerning several mitzvot that Bnei Yisrael must keep - more specifically, the laws of the korban Pesach (see 12:3-14) and a commandment to eat matza for seven days (see 12:15-20).

[This section (12:1-20) is better known as "Parshat ha-Chodesh", as it is read on the shabbos prior to Rosh Chodesh Nisan.]

As both of these mitzvot relate in some manner to eating matza, we begin our shiur by reviewing their definitions in regard

to how they are to be kept in future generations:

* The KORBAN PESACH - An Offering of Thanksgiving

Definition:

Each year we are commanded to offer a special korban on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan, and eat the korban on that evening, together with matza & maror; while thanking God for our deliverance from 'makkat bechorot'.

(See 12:24-27, based on 12:8-14)

Reason:

Because God 'passed over' the houses of Bnei Yisrael on that evening when He smote the Egyptians (see 12:26-27). As we eat the korban, we are supposed to explain this reason to our children.

* CHAG HA-MATZOT- A Holiday to commemorate the Exodus

Definition:

To eat matza (& NOT to eat chametz, own it, or even see it) for seven days, from the 15th to the 21st of Nisan.

(See Shmot 13:3-8, based on 12:15-20.)

Reason:

To remember the events (and their miraculous nature) by which God took Am Yisrael out of Egypt. (See Shmot 12:17 and 13:8.)

Even though these holidays 'overlap' on the night of the fifteenth of Nisan and both holidays include eating matza; each holiday serves a different purpose. By offering the korban Pesach we thank God for saving us from the Tenth Plague. In contrast, on Chag Ha-matzot we remember leaving Egypt into the desert, and hence our freedom from slavery.

[Note that each holiday has ample reason to stand alone.]

MATZA - A PRIMARY or SECONDARY MITZVA

With this background, let's examine the purpose for eating matza in each mitzvah. Clearly, on "chag ha-matzot" [the name for the holiday when we eat matza for seven days] - eating matza for seven days is presented as the **primary** mitzvah:

"Seven days you shall eat MATZA, even on the first day you shall rid yourselves from any unleaven in your houses..." (Shmot 12:15, see also 13:2-8).

As we shall soon explain, by eating matza (and not eating 'chametz') during those seven days, we remind ourselves of how God helped us when we left Egypt.

In contrast, eating matza with the korban Pesach is presented in a secondary manner, while the primary mitzvah is to eat the meat of the korban:

"And you shall eat the meat on this night, roasted on fire with MATZOT, together with bitter herbs..." (Shmot 12:8).

[Review from 12:3-13, noting how most of these psukim deal with how the **korban** is to be eaten, while matza is presented in a very secondary manner.]

Unfortunately, the Torah is not very specific in regard to WHY the Korban Pesach should be eaten with matza. It simply states in 12:8 to eat the meat roasted, together with matza & maror, without explaining why.

On the other hand, in regard to eating matza for the seven days of chag ha-matzot, the Torah is much more explicit:

"And you shall keep the (laws regarding) MATZOT, for on this very day I have taken your hosts out of the land of Egypt..." (see Shmot 12:17, see also 13:3!).

This pasuk suggests that eating matza for seven days will cause us to remember that God took us out of Egypt. But why should eating matza cause us to remember those events?

To understand why, we must return to the story of the Exodus in Chumash, and follow the narrative very carefully to show why 'eating matza' would remind Bnei Yisrael of the Exodus.

THE COMMON 'EXPERIENCE'

Contrary to the popular understanding, Bnei Yisrael had plenty of time to prepare for the Exodus. After all, already two weeks before the Tenth Plague, Bnei Yisrael had already received early warning (see Shmot 12:1-13). Furthermore, Moshe had already advised them to be ready to 'borrow' from their Egyptian neighbors the necessary gold & silver and clothing for their journey (see 11:1-3!). However, even though they had plenty of time to prepare, they were also in no special hurry to leave on the evening of the 15th of Nisan. In fact, Bnei Yisrael were under a specific directive to remain in their homes that entire evening:

"And Moshe told the leaders of Israel: Everyone should take a lamb... and none of you shall leave the entrance of your houses UNTIL THE MORNING" (see Shmot 12:21-22).

Hence, Bnei Yisrael most likely assumed that they would not be leaving Egypt until sometime the next morning. Considering that they were planning to embark on a long journey into the desert (see 11:1-3, read carefully), the people most probably prepared large amounts of dough on the previous day, with the intention of baking it early on the morning of the 15th of Nisan (before their departure). [The fresher the bread, the better!]

However, due to the sudden nature of the events that transpired that evening, these original plans changed. Recall how the Egyptians (after realizing the calamity of the Tenth Plague), **rushed** the Hebrews out of their homes. Pharaoh demanded that Moshe lead his nation out to worship their God (see 12:29-32), in hope that the sooner they would worship their God, the sooner the Plague would stop, see 12:33 (and 5:3!). The Egyptians were so eager for them to leave that they willingly *lent* their belongings.

It was because of this 'rush' that Bnei Yisrael didn't have time to bake their 'fresh bread' as planned. Instead, they quickly packed their bags and took their dough ('and ran'):

"[So] Bnei Yisrael carried their DOUGH before it had time to rise ['terem yechmatz'], as they wrapped with their garments and carried it over their shoulders.

[See Shmot 12:34.]

Two psukim later, the Torah tells exactly what Bnei Yisrael did with this dough. After setting up camp in Succot, on their way towards the desert (see 12:37-38), we are told:

"And Bnei Yisrael baked their DOUGH that they took out of Egypt as MATZOT, for it had not risen ['ki lo CHAMETZ'], for they were EXPELLED from Egypt, and they could not wait [in the their home to bake the dough properly], nor had they prepared any other provisions [and hence the only bread they had to eat was from this dough]" (see 12:39).

[This seems to be the simplest translation of this pasuk (see JPS). Note, however, that Ramban explains this pasuk in a different manner. The reason for this is discussed in the further iyun section.]

In this manner, everyone who left Egypt shared a common experience. As they set up camp on their way to the desert (the first time as a free nation) everyone shared the common predicament of: no bread; 'lots of dough'; and only makeshift methods for baking it. Therefore everyone improvised by baking their dough as thin matzot on makeshift 'hot-plates'.

This background explains the first instruction that Moshe Rabbeinu commanded Bnei Yisrael on that momentous day:

"And Moshe said to the people: REMEMBER THIS DAY that you have LEFT EGYPT from slavery, for God has taken you out with an outstretched hand - you shall not eat CHAMETZ. You are leaving in the month of the spring [therefore] when you come in the Promised Land... on this month EAT MATZA FOR SEVEN DAYS... you shall not see or own CHAMETZ in all your borders. And you shall tell you children on that day, it was for the sake of this [MATZA] that God took us out of Egypt..." (see Shmot 13:3-8, read carefully!).

In other words, the next year, by eating matza (and not owning any chametz) this generation would remember this

special experience together with the miraculous events of the Exodus. To preserve this tradition (and its message), the Torah commands all future generations as well to eat matza for seven days, while telling over these events to their children (see again Shmot 13:8).

In a shorter form, this is more or less the reason that we cite in the Haggada when we explain why we eat matza:

"MATZA... AL SHUM MA? This matza that we eat, for what reason (do we eat it)? - For the dough of our forefathers did not have time to become leaven when God the King of all kings revealed Himself and redeemed us, as it is stated (followed by the quote of Shmot 12:39)."

This certainly provides us with a logical reason for the commandment to eat matza for the seven days of "chag ha-matzot", but it certainly doesn't explain why Bnei Yisrael were first commanded to eat matza with the Korban Pesach BEFORE they left Egypt (see again 12:1-8). It simply wouldn't make sense for God to command Bnei Yisrael to eat matza in Egypt with the korban - to remember how they left Egypt!

Therefore, there must be an independent reason for eating matza with the korban Pesach, unrelated to the events that transpired when Bnei Yisrael left Egypt

To find that reason, we must return to Parshat ha'Chodesh, and consider the thematic connection between the mitzva to eat matza and all of the other mitzvot that accompany the Korban Pesach.

PESACH MITZRAYIM - A FAMILY AFFAIR

Certainly, the primary purpose of offering the Korban Pesach in Egypt was to sprinkle its blood on the doorposts to save Bnei Yisrael from the Tenth Plague (see 12:12-13). However, this commandment also included several other special laws that focus primarily on how this offering was to be eaten by its owners.

This in itself is noteworthy, for one would expect that a korban (an offering) set aside for God would be forbidden for human consumption, as is the case in an OLAH offering.] Yet, in regard to the Korban Pesach, eating this korban seems to be no less important than the sprinkling of its blood (see 12:3-11). Let's take a closer look at these special laws.

First of all, note how it was necessary to carefully plan this 'dinner' in advance:

"Speak unto all the congregation of Israel -On the tenth day of this month everyone must take a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a **household**; and if the household be too little for a lamb, then shall he and his neighbor next to him shall take one according to the number of the souls; **according to every man's eating** you shall count them for the lamb... (see Shmot 12:3-4)

Clearly, this was supposed to be a 'family meal' (see 12:3), and planned well in advance. Now, let's consider the cuisine.

"And they shall eat its meat on that night:

- * roasted over the fire
- * with MATZA
- * with MAROR (bitter herbs)
- * Do not eat it raw (uncooked)
- * [nor can you eat it] cooked in water
- * eat it only roasted,
its head, legs, and entrails, (together)
- * No 'leftovers', anything left over must be burnt.

And this is how you should it eat it:

- * your loins girded
- * your shoes on your feet
- * your staff in your hand
- * and you shall eat it in haste [CHIPAZON]

it is a PESACH [offering] for God." (Shmot 12:7-11)

As you review these psukim, note once again how eating matza is only one of many other instructions that go along with how this korban is to be eaten. Let's begin our discussion with some of the 'other' laws; afterward we'll return to the matza.

NO LEFTOVERS

The law that no meat can be left over relates once again to the special atmosphere of this evening. When someone knows that any leftovers 'go to the garbage', it is more likely that he will eat to his heart's content and enjoy the meal (ask any "Yeshiva bachur"). If it was permitted to save the meat, then people would refrain from eating to their heart's content, preferring to save some of the meat for another meal (ask any poor man).

Coming to the meal fully dressed, and eating with eagerness and readiness, certainly would make this evening more memorable. [Remember as well that in ancient time a staff ("makelchem be-yedchem") is not necessarily a walking stick for the aged, but rather a sign of importance.]

It also goes without saying that lamb is most tasty when barbecued, as opposed to being boiled in water (ask anybody).

With this background, let's consider the wider picture:

A family meal - planned well in advance,
by invitation only,
fresh lamb - well done, roasted on an open spit
(roasting is much more tasty than cooking)
with fresh pita ('eish tanur' style), i.e. matza
with a spicy salad (bitter herbs), i.e. maror
no leftovers allowed
everyone coming well dressed (best attire)
eating it with readiness, zest, excitement ('chipazon')

Any of us who have attended a formal dinner should not be surprised by these laws, for this seems to be their primary intention - to create a full fledged 'shabbos table' atmosphere.

Consider the circumstances. A nation of slaves, now about to become free, and ready to embark on a momentous journey to Har Sinai and then to the Promised Land. Certainly, we want this to be an 'evening to remember', and hence 'only the fanciest restaurant' will do!

[Recall as well that it would not be often that slaves could afford to eat 'fleishigs' for dinner.]

Our main point is that the PRIMARY reason for all of these special laws was to assure that every family would participate in a formal meal, in order to make this a memorable evening. Therefore, only the best meat, cooked in the best manner, with bread and salad; with the eager participants in their best attire.

With this in mind, let's return to consider the reason for eating matza at this meal.

Considering our discussion thus far, it would have made more sense to enjoy the korban with a fresh 'chametz' bun, rather than simple 'matza'!

To appreciate why, let's return to our analogy of 'going out to eat' to celebrate an important occasion. Now the question becomes: What restaurant would be most appropriate?

Will it be Chinese? Italian? French?

In the case of korban Pesach, the best way to describe the menu would be - 'anti-Egyptian'!

Let's explain.

Not only does God want Bnei Yisrael to enjoy a family meal on this important evening, He also wants this meal to carry a theme. The menu should not only be 'formal', but it should also carry a 'spiritual message'. [For those Americans on the list, just ask your neighbors why turkey is traditionally served for Thanksgiving dinner.]

Let's consider the menu.

LAMB FOR DINNER

As we explained, eating meat is in itself special. But why specifically lamb? Let's explain why eating lamb would be considered 'anti-Egyptian'

Recall when Yaakov and his sons first went down to Egypt, Yosef was embarrassed by their profession, that they were shepherds, for anyone who raised sheep was a 'to'eva' [an 'abomination'] to Egyptians. (See Breishit 43:32.)

Furthermore, when the Plagues began, Pharaoh first agreed

that Bnei Yisrael could offer their korbanot in Egypt, but not in the desert. To this offer Moshe replied, should Am Yisrael offer 'to'evat Mitzrayim' [an abomination to the Egyptians] in Egypt, would they not be stoned? (See Shmot 8:22.)

From that interchange, it becomes quite clear that offering a 'lamb' would be antithetical to Egyptian culture. Rashi's commentary on this pasuk seems to imply that a 'lamb' was considered a type of a god to the Egyptians, and hence offering a 'lamb' in Egypt would be a desecration in their eyes. [Sort of like burning someone's national flag. See Ramban 12:3]

[Note Ibn Ezra (on Shmot 8:22) quotes a Kaarite who explained that a 'lamb' was the symbol of the god who controls their land. He himself argues that it was not just a lamb, but any type of animal, for he claims that the Egyptians were vegetarians.]

[One could also suggest an 'astrological' explanation that relates to the fact that the Nile (Egypt's source of water) reaches its highest level in the spring during the zodiac of 'taleh' [a lamb, see Nile mosaic in Tzipori!] See also a similar explanation in Sefer Ha-toda'a by Eliyahu Ki-tov, re: Nisan (page 14).]

Therefore, burning a lamb, complete with its head, and legs and entrails, etc. on an open spit (see Shmot 12:9), and then eating it, would serve as a sign to Bnei Yisrael that they are now free from Egyptian culture, and its gods.

MATZA & MAROR

As we explained, the primary reason for eating matza would be no different than having rolls at a cook-out. But eating specifically matza could be considered once again symbolic. The simplest reason would be simply to remind Bnei Yisrael that on this evening God is taking them out of slavery. As 'matza' is the typical bread of a poor-man, or a slave, it would be most fitting to eat the meat together with this style of bread.

[This would reflect our statement of "ha lachma anya" that we say at the beginning of the Haggada.]

This doesn't mean that a poor-man's bread tastes bad. It is merely a simple style of bread that can actually taste good!

However, one could also suggest that 'chametz' itself may have been a symbol of Egyptian culture. It is well-known among historians that the art of making leaven was first developed in Egypt, and it was the Egyptians who perfected the process of 'bread-making'.

[See 'On Food and Cooking -The Science and Lore of the Kitchen' - by Harold McGee / Page 275 - based on archeological evidence, raised bread began in Egypt around 4000 BCE. On page 280 - then beer froth was eventually used as first yeast. And page 615 - bread-making became refined with invention of ovens around 3000 BCE in Egypt.]

Similarly, eating bitter herbs with the korban certainly makes the meat 'tastier' - but why specifically **bitter** herbs rather than sweet ones? Like matza, one could suggest that the reason would be to remind us on this evening of the bitterness of the slavery that we are now leaving. In fact, this is exactly what we explain in the Haggada in the section "MAROR - AL SHUM MA".

[One could also explain that the reason for eating the korban 'well dressed' and in hurriedness (even though Bnei Yisrael would not be leaving until the next morning) was to emphasize the need be 'ready & eager' for their redemption.]

In this manner, all of the mitzvot relating to Pesach Mitzrayim can relate to both the need to make this a memorable evening, with a formal family dinner etc.; but at the same time, every action also carried a symbolic function as well. This evening was to leave a lasting impression on its participants, in order that they would pass on this memory to their children and grandchildren. It had to be special!

In summary, we have shown how there may be two totally independent reasons for eating matza on the night of the fifteenth

of Nisan:

- One matza - 'lechem oni', poor man's bread - is to be eaten with the korban Pesach, in order to make this korban tasty, but at the same time to remind us to thank God for being saved from Makkat Bechorot & slavery.
- The second matza - "bread that was made in haste", 'chipazon' - is an integral part of the mitzva of chag ha-matzot (eating matza for seven days) which we eat in order that we remember the events of how God took us out of Egypt.

In Part Two we will search for a deeper connection between these two reasons for eating matza.

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PART II / FROM PESACH MITZRAIM TO PESACH DOROT

INTRODUCTION

In Part One, we offered two reasons for eating matza with the Korban Pesach: Either to remind us of the hardships of slavery (similar to the reason for why we eat 'maror'); or to remind us of the need to reject Egyptian culture as a pre-requisite for redemption (similar to the reason for why we sacrifice a lamb).

If the following shiur, we will pursue this second line of reasoning, and apply its logic to help explain some of the peculiar laws of "chag ha'matzot" [i.e. the commandment to eat matza (and not eat chametz) for seven days].

Let's begin with the very pasuk in Chumash that appears to explain the reason for "chag ha'matzot":

"And Moshe said to the people: REMEMBER THIS DAY that you have left Egypt... you shall not eat CHAMETZ.... [therefore] when you come in the Promised Land... EAT MATZA FOR SEVEN DAYS... you shall not see or own CHAMETZ in all your borders..." (see Shmot 13:2-8).

This commandment implies that by eating matza (and not eating chametz) for seven days, we will remember the events of the Exodus. In Part One of our shiur, we explained how (and why) eating matza would remind us of that experience.

However, based on that explanation, it would have made more sense for Moshe to say: "Remember this day... **by eating matza**". Instead, he commands them to remember this day by **not eating chametz**!

Furthermore, from the laws that follow, it seems like the Torah puts a greater emphasis on the prohibition of "chametz", more so than it does on the obligation to eat "matza". If we assume, as most people do, that the Torah forbids eating 'chametz' as a means to ensure we eat 'matza' instead, it certainly wouldn't make sense for the prohibition against 'chametz' to be more important than the commandment to eat matza!

It also seems rather strange that the Torah would forbid not only eating chametz, but also owning or seeing it - if the only purpose of these prohibitions was to ensure that we eat matza.

Finally, there doesn't appear to be any obvious reason for the need to observe this holiday for seven days.

[Recall that all these laws were originally given way before the story of the splitting of the Red Sea took place.]

Therefore, it would be difficult to conclude that all of these strict prohibitions against 'chametz' stem merely from the need to provide an incentive to eat matza - which are eating solely to remember an 'incidental' event that took place when Bnei Yisrael were 'rushed out' of Egypt.

Instead, we will suggest that 'chametz' should be understood as a symbol of Egyptian culture. If so, then many of these severe prohibitions begin to make a lot more sense. To explain how, we must return to Sefer Yechezkel chapter 20; and our discussion in last week's shiur on Parshat Va'era.

BACK TO YEchezkel

Let's quote once again from Yechezkel's rebuke of the elders of Yehuda, as he reminds them of the behavior of their forefathers - PRIOR to Yetziat Mitzraim:

"On the day that I chose Israel... that same day I swore to take them out of Egypt into a land flowing with milk and honey... And I said to them [at that time]: Each man must RID himself of his detestable ways, and not DEFILE ('tum'a') himself with the fetishes of Egypt - [for] ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM . But, they REBELLED against Me, and they did not OBEY me, no one rid himself from his detestable ways...and I resolved to pour out My fury upon them..." (Yechezkel 20:5-8).

In other words, God had called upon Bnei Yisrael to rid themselves of their 'avoda zara', i.e. their Egyptian culture, BEFORE the redemption process began.

Unfortunately, Bnei Yisrael did not 'listen', and hence deserved to be destroyed! Nevertheless, God saved Bnei Yisrael, Yechezkel explains, for the sake of His Name: "va-a's lema'an shmi, levilti hachel le-einei ha-goyim" (see 20:9).

This background helped us understand the need for "korban Pesach" in Egypt. This offering gave Bnei Yisrael one last chance to show their loyalty to God prior to 'makkat bechorot'.

[The word 'pesach' - the name of this korban, reflects this purpose, as God must 'PASS OVER' the houses of Bnei Yisrael (who otherwise deserve to be punished (see 12:27).]

To show their rejection of Egyptian culture, Bnei Yisrael were instructed to offer a lamb and eat it with matza (instead of chametz), due their symbolic nature.

[For a similar explanation that shows the connection between chametz and Avoda Zara, see Rav Kasher in Torah Sheleima vol #19, miluim #20.]

This can explain why 'chametz' becomes such a central theme when these events are commemorated in future generations. For example, not only must the korban Pesach of future generations must be eaten with matza, but one is also prohibited from owning 'chametz' before he can offer that korban:

"Lo tishchat al CHAMETZ dam zivchi" - "You shall not offer the Korban Pesach with chametz still in your possession" (see Shmot 23:18 and its context from 23:13-20).

If indeed chametz is symbolic of Egyptian culture, then it makes sense that one can not offer this korban, without first showing his rejection of that culture. When we offer the korban Pesach, we must remember not only WHAT HAPPENED, but also WHY God saved us, i.e. for what purpose!

To help concretize these sentiments of teshuva, a symbol is required. Hence, the korban Pesach - the 'korban Hashem' (see Bamidbar 9:7 and context) - is not just an expression of thanksgiving but also a DECLARATION of loyalty; - a willingness to obey; - a readiness to fulfill our Divine destiny.

Furthermore, in Parshat Re'eh, when Moshe Rabeinu explains the laws of the Pesach to the generation that is about to enter the Land, he reminds them:

"Keep the month of the spring, and offer a korban Pesach... You shall not eat any CHAMETZ with it, instead for the seven days [afterward] you shall eat MATZA - 'lechem oni', because you left Egypt in a hurried manner - IN ORDER that you remember the day that you left Egypt for every day of your life" (see Devarim 16:1-3).

This source also suggests that the matza that we eat for seven days relates directly to the korban Pesach, and hence it makes sense that they would share a common reason.

BACK TO PARSHAT HA'CHODESH

This interpretation can also help us understand why God's original commandment to Moshe to tell Bnei Yisrael about "chag

ha-matzot" (in 12:15-20) was recorded 'pre-maturely' (i.e. before they ever left Egypt) - immediately after the laws of korban Pesach (see 12:11-15).

After instructing the nation to offer korban Pesach in every future generation (see 12:14), the Torah records the laws prohibiting 'chametz' for the next seven days. Even though eating matza for those seven days reminds us of how we left Egypt, the prohibition of 'chametz' reminds us of how must reject 'avoda zara' in order to be deserving of future redemption. This can also explain yet another difficult pasuk in Parshat ha'Chodesh:

"Seven days you should eat matza, but EVEN ON THE FIRST DAY you must REMOVE ALL CHAMETZ from your houses, for whoever eats chametz on these SEVEN days, that person shall be cut off from the nation of Israel" (see Shmot 12:15).

Chazal understand that 'yom ha-rishon' refers to the 14th of Nisan (not the 15th), i.e. at the time when the Korban Pesach is offered. This makes sense, for one must rid himself from the symbol of Egyptian culture before offering the korban Pesach. [Note as well Shmot 23:18 - "lo tishchat al chametz dam zivchi!"]

The reason for Chag Ha-Matzot now becomes clear. Our declaration of thanksgiving when offering the korban Pesach is meaningless if not accompanied with the proper spiritual preparation. Just as Bnei Yisrael were commanded to rid themselves of their 'avoda zara' in anticipation of their redemption, future generations must do exactly the same when they commemorate those events. By getting rid of our chametz in preparation for Korban Pesach, we remind ourselves of the need to first cleanse ourselves from any corrupt culture that we may have adopted.

From this perspective, the matza that we eat for seven days, and the matza that is eaten with the korban Pesach both serve as powerful reminders that Bnei Yisrael must become active and faithful partners in any redemption process.

shabbat shalom,
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

=====f ELIYAHU AT THE SEDER

Based on the above shiur, we can explain why we invite Eliyahu ha-navi to the seder (after we finish our last 'kezayit' of matza) to remind us of the need to perform teshuva in preparation for future redemption (see Mal'achi 3:23-24). It also explains why we read these psukim (that form the final message of the Neviim in Tanach) for the Haftara of Shabbat Ha-gadol, in preparation for Pesach.

BE-ETZEM HA-YOM HA-ZEH

An important phrase that the Torah uses in its presentation of the laws of chag ha-matzot provides further support for this approach. Recall the original pasuk in which the Torah provides the reason for chag ha-matzot:

"And you shall keep [the laws] of the matzot, for ON THIS VERY DAY [BE-ETZEM HA-YOM HA-ZEH] God has taken your hosts out of the land of Egypt..." (see Shmot 12:17).

It is not often that the Torah employs this phrase "be-etzem ha-yom ha-zeh", and when it does, it always marks a very important event.

In relation to Yetziat Mitzrayim we find this very same phrase mentioned two more times at the conclusion of chapter 12, as the Torah recaps the events of Yetziat Mitzraim - in the context of God's fulfillment of His promise to Avraham Avinu at Brit bein Ha-btarim:

"And the time of Bnei Yisrael's stay in Egypt was 400 years and 30 years, and it came to pass after 430 years - ON THIS VERY DAY [be-etzem ha-yom ha-zeh] all of God's hosts were taken out of Egypt..." (see 12:40-41, see also 12:51!)

It is not by chance that we find specifically this phrase "be-etzem ha-yom ha-zeh" in relation to God's fulfillment of brit bein ha-btarim. In Sefer Breishit, we find this same phrase in two instances, and each relating to the fulfillment of a 'brit' between God and man. The first instance was God's 'brit' with Noach: "And I shall keep My covenant with you, and you will enter the ark, you and your sons and wife..." (see Breishit 6:18).

Then, when Noach actually enters the ark, the Torah uses this phrase when informing us how God kept His covenant: "Be-etzem ha-yom ha-zeh - on that very day, Noach and his sons and wife... entered the ark..." (see 7:13).

Similarly, when God enters into a covenant with Avraham Avinu concerning his future, better known as BRIT MILA; God promises:

"And I shall keep My covenant between Me and you and your offspring an everlasting COVENANT to be Your God... this is [the sign] of My covenant that you shall keep, circumcise every male child..." (see Breishit 17:7-10 and its context).

Then, when Avraham performs this mitzva, the Torah once again uses this phrase when informing us how Avraham kept His part of the covenant:

"be-etzem ha-yom ha-zeh - on this very day - Avraham was circumcised and his son Yishmael..." (see 17:26, & 17:23).

Considering that these are the only times that we find this phrase in Sefer Breishit, and both relate to the fulfillment of a major covenant between God and man; when we find that the Torah uses this phrase in Sefer Shmot, we should expect that it too relates to the fulfillment of a covenant. Clearly, this phrase in both Shmot 12:17 and 12:41 must relate to God's fulfillment of Brit bein ha-btarim. Hence, one can suggest that its use in 12:17 in relation to the mitzva to eat matza for seven days relates to Bnei Yisrael's need remain faithful to its side of the covenant with God. Based on the psukim quoted above from Yechezkel, the thematic connection is rather obvious. If Am Yisrael is truly thankful for their redemption from slavery, they must show their dedication by totally removing themselves from the 'avoda zara' of Egypt.

Note as well that the phrase of be-etzem ha-yom ha-zeh also appears in Sefer Vayikra, once in relation to Shavuot (see 23:21) and twice in relation to Yom Kippur (see 23:28-30). [Note that it does not appear in relation to any of the other holidays in Emor!]

One could suggest that here again this relates to 'britot'; Shavuot relating to 'brit sinai' - the first luchot, and Yom Kippur relating to 'brit sinai' - the second luchot. See TSC shiur on Parshat Ki Tisa on the 13 midot of rachamim.

One last mention of this phrase is found at the end of Parshat Ha'azinu in relation to 'brit Arvot Moav'.

Finally, we find this phrase in Yehoshua 5:11, mentioned as Bnei Yisrael performed both BRIT MILA & KORBAN PESACH when they crossed the Jordan River and began conquest of Eretz Canaan! Again the fulfillment of yet another stage of both brit mila and brit bein ha-btarim.

RAMBAN's APPROACH

See Ramban on Shmot 12:39, how he explains that Bnei Yisrael's original intention was to bake matza, the rushing only caused them to bake the dough matza on the road instead of in their homes in Egypt. Even though this does not appear to be the simple pshat of the pasuk, it stems from the Ramban's approach of yesh mukdam u-me'uchar, and hence God's commandment to Moshe in 12:15-20 was indeed given before Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, and hence applied to the first generation as they left Egypt as well!

BA'ZMAN HA'ZEH

It should be noted that since we don't offer a Korban Pesach now of days, we obviously cannot fulfill the mitzva of eating matza with it. Therefore, the matza that we make the 'bracha' of 'achilat matza' on at the Seder night is for the second reason, based on

the pasuk "ba-erev tochlu matzot" (see Shmot 12:17-18, and its context). On the other hand, to remember this matza, we eat an extra piece of matza together with maror - "zecher le-mikdash ke-Hillel" - to remember how this mitzva was fulfilled during the time when the Temple stood.

Parshas Bo: That the Torah of Hashem Should Be in Your Mouth

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

Our Parashah is the first to introduce Mitzvot which are an expression of the unique and exclusive relationship between G-d and the B'nei Yisra'el (note the comments of Rashi on B'resheet 1:1).

Along with the many details regarding the Korban Pesach (which we hope to revisit in anticipation of Pesach later this year), the commemoration of the Exodus is marked with the obligation to sanctify the first-born (people and animals), celebrate the anniversary of the Exodus by feasting for seven days, avoiding Hametz and relating the story to our children – and by wearing T'fillin. (all found in Sh'mot 13:1-16). It is the reason given for this final Mitzvah that I'd like to address this week as a springboard for entering into a discussion which properly belongs to next week's Parashah. Since it is, however, a two-part essay, we will begin our analysis this week in order to complete it in a timely fashion.

In defining the purpose of T'fillin, the Torah states:

In order that the Torah of Hashem shall be in your mouth (13:9).

Although the most straightforward understanding of this phrase relates to the following phrase: "that Hashem your G-d took you out of Egypt with a strong hand", nonetheless, it is Halakhically understood as relating to the entire Torah.

Thus, for instance, the Midrash Halakhah states:

"...in order that the Torah of Hashem should be in your mouth" – based on this text, the Rabbis stated that anyone who puts on T'fillin is considered as if he studied the Torah and anyone who studies the Torah is exempt from T'fillin. (Mekhilta Bo #17 – see Shulhan Arukh OC 38:10).

Note that the Mekhilta did not limit this Halakhah to someone studying about the Exodus – any study of Torah exempts one from wearing T'fillin. Regardless of how this Halakhah is practically understood and applied, the Halakhah understands that the verse is referring to the overall study of Torah and engagement in G-d's law.

Although there are a few mentions of the importance of engagement in Torah study in the Torah itself, the clearest and most powerful expression in T'nakh is found in the opening section of Sefer Yehoshua:

This Book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth; but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written on it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success. (1:8)
This command, given to Yehoshua, sets an important tone for this Sefer – one to which we will return in next week's essay.
In the meantime, since we will first meet Yehoshua in next week's Parashah, let's take this opportunity to analyze – if only briefly – this first post-Torah Navi and hero of the conquest of Eretz K'na'an.

II. ENTER YEHOSHUA

When we are first introduced to Yehoshua, we are given neither biographical background nor a resume which would explain his qualifications for being appointed by Moshe to defend the B'nei Yisra'el against the attack of the nomadic Amalekites:

Then came Amalek, and fought with Yisra'el in Rephidim. And Moshe said to Yehoshua, Choose for us men, and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of G-d in my hand. So Yehoshua did as Moshe had said to him, and fought with Amalek; and Moshe, Aharon, and Hur went up to the top of the hill... (Sh'mot 17:8-10)

Note that we do not even know his patronym nor his tribal affiliation – he is just "Yehoshua"

Although we later find out that he had a shorter name (Hoshea – Bamidbar 13:16), that his father's name is "Nun" (Sh'mot 33:11) and that he is an Ephraimite (Bamidbar 13:8), we learn very little else about him until Moshe is told that Yehoshua will be the next "shepherd" of the B'nei Yisra'el and some of his leadership qualities (Bamidbar 27:18-20). It is only through the unfolding of Sefer Yehoshua itself that we get a complete picture of the son of Nun, Moshe's disciple and the man who leads the B'nei Yisra'el through what is arguably the pinnacle of their military strength.

III. YEHOSHUA 24: TWO QUESTIONS

We will frame this week's essay by raising two questions about Yehoshua (both the man and the Sefer) which arise from the final chapter of that book. In Chapter 24 (best known for its historiography [vv. 2-13], a section of which [vv. 2-4] is incorporated into the Haggadah shel Pessach), set in Sh'khem, Yehoshua brings the B'nei Yisra'el into a covenant with G-d just before his death. We are then told:

And Yehoshua wrote these words B'sefer Torat Elokim (in the Book of the Torah of G-d)... (v. 26)

What could this phrase possibly mean? Does it mean that "Sefer Torat Elokim" is a reference to some other book, besides the Five Books of Moshe (so Y. Kil in Da'at Mikra among other contemporary scholars)? Does the prefix "B" indicate that Yehoshua wrote the conditions of the covenant on a scroll and rolled it inside of the Torah of Moshe (so Rashi, quoting the Targum)?

In any case, this text needs clarification.

There is a more enigmatic verse near the conclusion of the Sefer. After the death and burial of Yehoshua, we are told that: And the bones of Yoseph, which the B'nei Yisra'el brought out of Egypt, buried they in Sh'khem, in a parcel of ground which Ya'akov bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Sh'khem for a hundred pieces of silver; and it became the inheritance of the sons of Yoseph.

We know that the B'nei Yisra'el carried Yoseph's bones through the desert (see Sh'mot 13:19) in order to inter them in K'na'an (see B'resheet 50:25) – but why did they wait until after the death of Yehoshua to do so?

From all of the information we can glean from the text, Yehoshua was approximately 80 years old at the time of the conquest (see Yehoshua 14:6-10, especially v. 7) – and he died at the age of 110 (24:29).

Why did the B'nei Yisra'el keep Yoseph's bones "on ice" for those thirty years and only inter him in Sh'khem after the death and burial of Yehoshua? This question is exacerbated by the fact that the B'nei Yisra'el held a major covenant ceremony upon their arrival in the land – again at Sh'khem. Even if Yoseph's final resting place was pre-determined as Sh'khem, they had been there fairly soon after crossing the Yarden – why wait until Yehoshua's career was over before interring Yoseph?

IV. BACK TO YOSEPH AND HIS DREAMS

In order to answer these questions – and, thereby, gain a greater understanding of the role of Yehoshua within Israelite history – we need to go back to the first significant interaction between Yoseph (Yehoshua's ancestor) and his brothers:

As we know (and have discussed in an earlier essay), Yoseph was involved in three sets of dreams – each set consisting of two dreams:

- 1) His own dreams, presented below (B'resheet 37)
- 2) His successful interpretation of the dreams of the butler and baker (B'resheet 40)
- 3) His successful interpretation of the two dreams of Pharaoh (B'resheet 41)

Even a cursory look at these three sets reveals that the first two dreams bear little in common with the two latter sets. Each of the latter sets was clearly understood by all involved as a form of prophecy – and each of the details was meticulously interpreted by Yoseph – and each of those interpretive details came to pass. Note, for instance, Ramban's comments at the beginning of Ch. 41, (v. 4) where he points out that even Yoseph's "advice" to Pharaoh was part of the dream interpretation.

The three days, the seven years, the "fat" and "emaciated" stalks and cows, the basket on the baker's head – all of this is accounted for in the interpretation – and every detail comes to pass exactly "as Yoseph had interpreted to them".

This clear and direct interpretive process stands in clear contradistinction to the two dreams dreamt by Yoseph himself:

And Yoseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more. And he said to them: Hear, I beg you, this dream which I have dreamed; For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood around, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brothers said to him, Shall you indeed reign over us? or shall you indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him even more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brothers, and said, Behold, I have again dreamed a dream; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him, and said to him, What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow down ourselves to you to the earth? And his brothers envied him; but his father kept the matter in mind. (B'resheet 37:5-11)

Besides the painful questions that must be addressed regarding the wisdom of Yoseph's revealing these dreams to his brothers – which will be assessed in a later study – the simplest question to ask here is – when are these dreams ever realized? Do the brothers ever bow to Yoseph? Certainly the second dream seems to "fall flat" – for mother isn't even alive (see Rashi ad loc., quoting BT Berakhot) and father certainly never "bows down [himself] to the earth".

Besides the issue of the fulfillment of the dream, there is another question to ask here. It is clear why the prisoners had two dreams – each had his own dream, relating to his own future – and the import of each dream was diametrically opposite. It is also explicitly stated why Pharaoh had two dreams –

And for that the dream was doubled to Pharaoh twice; it is because the matter is established by G-d, and G-d will shortly bring it to pass. (41:32)

Why, however, did Yoseph have two dreams – two dreams with essentially the same message? If we are to focus on the addition of father and mother (the sun and moon) in the second dream, why not just grant Yoseph that one dream, which includes the subjugation of his brothers?

V. RAV SAMET'S EXPLANATION

Rav Elhanan Samet, of Makhon Herzog, suggests that we are misled in our understanding of Yoseph's dreams because we assume that the reactive-interpretations of both brothers and father are accurate. To wit, we believe that both dreams foretell Yoseph's future role as "king" of the family and that his brothers, father and mother(!) will bow to him in subjugation. That understanding seems to be adopted by Yoseph himself, as reflected by the evocation of these dreams when the brothers appear before him in Egypt:

And Yoseph knew his brothers, but they knew not him. And Yoseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, (42:8-9)

Rashi, ad loc., comments that now Yoseph saw the dreams fulfilled, since his brothers were bowing to him. Ramban disagrees and maintains that as a result of Yoseph remembering the dreams, he realized that they were not yet fulfilled, since father was not yet here, nor were all the brothers. (Ramban utilizes this interpretation to defend Yoseph against the claim that he erred in not notifying his father that he was alive and well. See the Akedat Yitzhak ad loc. for a critique of Ramban's approach).

One could argue that the brothers never did bow to Yoseph -for even when they bowed to the Egyptian governor, they did not know of his identity. The essence of subjugation lies in awareness – the slave prostrates himself before his liege because he is aware that that selfsame ruler is his master. If the brothers bowed to the Egyptian Tzaph'nat Pa'anach, that seems to have little, if anything, to do with the fulfillment of these dreams.

The only time that they knowingly bowed to Yoseph was after father Ya'akov's death (50:18) – and it seems difficult to see this act, over 40 years after Yoseph's dreams, as having anything to do with them.

Rav Samet suggests that we err in understanding Yoseph's dreams as the brothers did – because we aren't paying sufficient attention to "dream language". Since we accept the notion that the sheaves, stars, sun and moon are all symbolic – why are we assuming that the prostration is literal? If we interpret the dreams consistently, than we should understand the prostration of the family members as a symbolic act.

What, then, could their bowing to brother Yoseph symbolize?

Although bowing often indicates subservience, we find numerous occasions where it has other uses. For instance, Avraham bows to the Hittites twice during his negotiations for the Cave of Makhpelah (23:7,12) – and Avraham certainly did not accept their dominion (they called him a prince). We also find that Ya'akov bowed to Yoseph (albeit without prostration – he was in bed) when Yoseph committed to burying Ya'akov in K'na'an (47:31).

In other words, the act of bowing within T'nakh context may indicate appreciation and dependence – without implying subservience or servitude.

Let's see how this understanding of "prostration" (in dream language) plays out in an interpretation of Yoseph's dreams:

A: THE FIRST DREAM

The first dream, involving the sheaves, has clear literary "markers" which set off three independent scenes – each introduced with the word "Hinei":

- 1) For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and,
- 2) lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and,
- 3) behold, your sheaves stood around, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

The framework and setting of this dream are clear – the field, representing agriculture and sustenance.

In the first scene, the brothers are all working together – representing a common economic venture. This is most plainly understood as representing the period of "the present" – when the entire family is still working as one cohesive financial unit. In the second scene, only Yoseph is present – the brothers are "off-stage". In other words, there will be a period in the future when Yoseph will comprise an independent financial unit, separate from that of the family. This sheaf rises and stands upright – implying consistent and stable financial success in this new, independent position.

The final scene (the focus of the brothers' angry reaction) has the brothers (represented by their sheaves) bowing to Yoseph (represented by his sheaf). Once we understand "bowing" as symbolizing a relationship of dependence, we can clearly see the complete realization of this dream. When Yoseph finally revealed himself to his brothers, one of the first things he said was:

And there will I nourish you; (45:11).

Again, after the burial of Ya'akov:

Now therefore do not fear; I will nourish you, and your little ones. (50:21)

The entire family was totally dependent on Yoseph for their sustenance – a role he was only too happy to fulfill. We might even argue that this "enlightened" understanding of the meaning of the dreams occurred to Yoseph when his brothers came before his throne:

And Yoseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, (42:9) The word "Lahem" (of them) may be translated "about them"; to wit: he remembered the dreams that he dreamt about his brothers. It may, alternatively, be understood as "on their behalf", meaning "he remembered the dreams that he dreams for them." In other words, Yoseph now understood that he had risen to this great position in order to help the family out of their present financial crisis (see our essay on Parashat Vayyigash this year).

The first dream is not only less threatening to the brothers, but every detail comes true.

B: THE SECOND DREAM

Beside the shift from the agricultural to the cosmic arena (and the apparent inclusion of father and mother), the second dream is distinct from the first in that Yoseph is consistently represented as himself. The stars bow – not to Yoseph's star, rather to Yoseph himself. If we are to explain these dreams with the same rigorous attention to detail as Yoseph employs in interpreting dreams in Egypt, we must take this nuance into account. In addition to this, we must also address the overall question of what new message this dream is conveying; otherwise, what need is there for a second dream?

Again, we must focus on the setting of the dream: The stars above. What do the stars represent in Sefer B'resheet (and throughout T'nakh)? The answer is quite simple: The stars represent the B'nei Yisra'el. Note B'resheet 22:17 (Avraham), 26:4 (Yitzhak), Sh'mot 32:13 (the Avot as a group), D'varim 10:22 (Mosheh).

[Parenthetical note: Although the B'nei Yisra'el are also compared, in their vast numbers, to the sand by the shore (e.g. B'resheet 22:17, 32:16, Hoshea 2:1), Haza"l sensitively point out that these do not reflect the same type of greatness:
This people is likened to the dust and it is likened to the stars. When they go down, they go down to the dust, and when they rise they rise to the stars. [BT Megillah 16a]

The comparison to the stars is, therefore, not just about the sheer multitude of Avraham's children – it is about their greatness, nobility and achievement of the objectives of that great blessing.)

Once we take this symbolism into account, the meaning of the second dream – and its significance independent of the first dream –

becomes apparent. Again utilizing our interpretation that in dreamspeak prostration implies a dependence, the second dream means that the success of the family, as the continuation of the Avrahamic tribe and tradition, will be wholly dependent (at least at one point in time) on Yoseph.

Here is where the difference between the dreams, noted above, comes into play. Whereas Yoseph was represented by a sheaf in the first dream – putting him on somewhat equal billing (if not footing) as his kin, in the second dream they are all represented by heavenly bodies while Yoseph appears as himself.

The meaning becomes quite clear when we understand that the message of this dream is that Yoseph will be the one responsible for managing, maintaining and ensuring the success of the family in their noblest and most critical endeavor: Being a blessing for all of Mankind (B'resheet 12:3).

Indeed, upon the descent of the family to Egypt (B'resheet 46), Yoseph uses his position and cunning to create favorable conditions for the family to prosper – spiritually as well as economically – in their new environs. When presenting his brothers to Pharaoh, Yoseph advises them:

And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? That you shall say, Your servants' trade has been keeping cattle from our youth until now, both we, and also our fathers; that you may live in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians. (46:33-34)

We now understand why Yoseph appears “as himself” in the second dream. It is not Yoseph as a “symbol” or as a figurehead that will ensure the survival and success of the family; rather, it is Yoseph as a person, using his own personality, charm and cunning, who will help keep the family alive.

This is most clearly seen in Yoseph's final words:

And Yoseph said to his brothers, I die; and G-d will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land which he swore to Avraham, to Yitzhak, and to Ya'akov. And Yoseph took an oath from the B'nei Yisra'el, saying, G-d will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here. (50:24-25). How powerful a statement: It is Yoseph, the man who succeeded in Egypt like no other foreigner could have, the man who engineered the family's descent and resettlement there – it is that selfsame Yoseph who keeps the dream alive and reminds his brothers that “this is not home” and that G-d will surely bring them back home.

VI. THE SUN AND THE MOON

The section above is a synopsis (faithful, I hope) of Rav Samet's explanation of Yoseph's dreams.

There is one major problem with his explanation – the role of the sun and the moon. Although it would be tempting to accept his explanation – that the success not only of the children but also of their parents – is dependent on Yoseph, I believe that this is insufficient. If we accept the stars as symbolic of the B'nei Yisra'el, then the sun and moon have no place in their orbit. Although the sun and moon appear as the chief heavenly bodies throughout T'nakh (e.g. B'resheet 1:16, T'hillim 148:3, Iyyov 9:7), they are never associated with the B'nei Yisra'el.

The answer to this final “missing piece” of the puzzle of Yoseph's dreams is found much later in Israelite history. Whereas the “sheaf” dream is fulfilled rather immediately – within the lives of all who were originally involved with the dream – the “stars” dream is only realized after a number of generations.

Before suggesting a solution to this puzzle, I'd like to point out one last anomaly – this time at the end of Sefer B'resheet:

And Yoseph lived in Egypt, he, and his father's house; and Yoseph lived a hundred and ten years... So Yoseph died, being a hundred and ten years old; (50:22,26)

Why does the text mention his life-span twice within a matter of five verses? Even Mosheh, whose age of 120 becomes the archetype for the life of an extraordinary person (e.g. Rabbi Akiva), only has his final age mentioned once (D'varim 34:7). Mosheh does own up to his age in his farewell speech – [31:2], but that is a full three chapters away and within the context of his speech. Yoseph is still the only person in Torah whose age at death is mentioned by the text twice).

I'd like to suggest that although Yoseph died in Egypt at the age of 110, his mission (as laid out in the dreams) was not yet complete and would not be complete until the B'nei Yisra'el were brought back to Eretz Yisra'el as a nation.

This mission would only be accomplished through his descendant, Yehoshua bin-Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim – who lived to the ripe old age of 110.

VII. BACK TO YESHOSHUA

Although Yehoshua had the allegiance of all of the tribes of Yisra'el – more so than any leader since – his greatest moment was undoubtedly during the battle against the alliance of the five southern kings, as their armies fled the B'nei Yisra'el down the slopes of Beit Horon:

Then spoke Joshua to Hashem in the day when Hashem delivered the Amorites before the people of Yisra'el, and he said in the sight of Yisra'el, Sun, stand still upon Gibeon; and you, Moon, in the valley of Ayalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the Book of Yashar? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hastened not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, when Hashem listened to the voice of a man; for Hashem fought for Yisra'el. (Yehoshua 10:12-14)

There was never a man to whom the sun and moon showed obeisance – save Yehoshua bin-Nun, a member of the tribe of Ephraim, a son of Yoseph

We now understand why Yoseph's bones were kept with Yehoshua's army until his storied career came to a close. Yehoshua's task was

Yoseph's – that which the ancestor had begun, the descendant had to complete. We also understand why there is a veiled reference to the possible inclusion of Sefer Yehoshua in the canon of Torah at the end of the Sefer:

And Yehoshua wrote these words B'sefer Torat Elokim since Yehoshua's mission was the completion of the task of that hero of Sefer B'resheet, his ancestor Yoseph. Although Sefer Yehoshua remains outside of the Torah, the many textual and thematic associations which bind it to the Humash will be the focus of next week's shiur, as we attempt to understand Yehoshua, the man, the leader and the disciple of Moshe Rabbeinu.

VIII. POSTSCRIPT: SEFER HAYASHAR

In the critical section from Yehoshua 10 quoted above, the text states that this story and/or prayer/song was written in Sefer haYashar. What is this book?

Most scholars follow Ibn Ezra's lead (Bamidbar 21:14) that the T'nakh text will refer to Sefarim that existed at the time of the T'nakh and are lost to us (e.g. Sefer Milhamot Hashem, Sefer haYashar, Sefer haShir), Haza"l interpret Sefer haYashar as referring to any number of books within the canon. In the central Talmudic section, the first assay is:

What is the Sefer haYashar? – Said R. Hyya b. Abba in the name of R. Yohanan: It is the book of Avraham, Yitzhak and Ya'akov, who are designated as Yesharim (righteous), (BT Avodah Zarah 25a)

Although the Gemara goes on to find a faint allusion to the miracle of the sun and moon standing still, I'd like to suggest that if Sefer haYashar is indeed Sefer B'resheet, the text is quite clear in asking: Is it not written in Sefer haYashar?

Indeed, it is clearly written:

Behold, I have again dreamed a dream; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

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At'halta deGe'ulah: The State of Israel as Prelude to the Messianic Era

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Throughout his writings, Rabbi Haim David Halevy expressed unwavering faith that the founding of the State of Israel and the Six Day War were overt miracles. Anyone who denied the supernatural nature of these events was spiritually blind (*Mekor Hayyim* 4, pp. 367-368). There were two options: to believe that this was the beginning of the messianic era, or to be wrong (*Mekor Hayyim* 2, p. 9).

At the same time, the Sages debate fundamental aspects of the messianic age. Is redemption contingent on repentance? Will the messianic age be a supernatural era, or completely natural? Will it be a lengthy process with ups and downs, or a consistently ascending path? The Rambam concluded from these and related disagreements that there was no single authoritative tradition on the messianic age. We would not know its nature until it arrived (*Hilkhot Melakhim* 12:1-2). Rabbi Halevy was fully aware of the uncertainties inherent in identifying the messianic period.

Rabbi Halevy, quoting Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna, considered two aspects of the modern period as definite signs of the first stages of redemption: the return of agricultural fertility to the Land of Israel (cf. *Sanhedrin* 98a); and the ingathering of exiles (*Asei Lekha Rav* 1:7-12; 4:6). For Rabbi Halevy, it was the responsibility of world Jewry to recognize the miraculous nature of the founding of the State of Israel, make *aliya*, repent, cooperate with each other, and live a unique national existence in order to set a religious and moral example for the world to emulate (*Dat uMedinah*, pp. 21, 34-35). [1]

Rabbi Halevy's writings reflect a conflict. On the one hand, he firmly believed that we were at the beginning of the period of redemption. On the other hand, he acknowledged that no one knew for certain how the redemption process would unfold. Rabbi Halevy evaluated sources about messianic calculations, natural vs. supernatural redemption, repentance during the period of redemption, and other matters relating to Divine Providence.

Messianic Calculations

Confident that we were living in the period of redemption, Rabbi Halevy justified messianic calculations. Although the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 97a) had criticized such calculations, Rabbi Halevy argued that this caveat applied only if a failed prediction might diminish one's faith in the advent of the Messiah. If one certainly believed that the Messiah will come, and made calculations for the purpose of religious awakening, one did not violate the talmudic injunction. Rabbi Halevy further maintained that talmudic opposition to messianic calculations arose because redemption was so

remote from their period; now that the messianic age had arrived, there was no impediment to trying to determine its precise date. Initially, he proposed 5750/1990 as the deadline for the final redemption; but if people repented, it could come earlier (*Asei Lekha Rav* 1:2).

In a later Responsum, he offered an original interpretation of a talmudic argument about the messianic age based on events from the past century. In *Sanhedrin* 99a, the Sages debated whether the period of redemption would span 40 years, 70 years, or three generations. Rabbi Halevy explained that all three positions turned out to be true. Forty years covered the period from the 1947 U.N. partition plan until 1987; 70 years spanned the Balfour Declaration of 1917 to 1987; and three generations went back to 1897, the year of the first World Zionist Congress. Given the coincidence of those three dates in relation to 1987, Rabbi Halevy predicted the final messianic redemption for 1987, only ten years after he composed the essay (*Asei Lekha Rav* 2, pp. 253-256).

When his prediction for 1987 proved false and yet another major wave of Arab terrorism had recently begun, Rabbi Halevy did not back away from his prediction, nor did he conclude that the Jews had missed a great opportunity for the final redemption. Rather, he stressed that Arab nations were sitting down with Israel to discuss peace, a major component of redemption (*Asei Lekha Rav* 9, pp. 395-396). Rabbi Halevy had offered a similar rationale for the Yom Kippur War, which led to peace talks afterward (*Asei Lekha Rav* 1:6).

Be-itah, Ahishenah

R. Alexandri said: R. Yehoshua b. Levi pointed out a contradiction. It is written, in its time [will the Messiah come], but it is also written, I [the Lord] will hasten it! (Isa.60:22). If they are worthy, I will hasten it; if not, [he will come] at the due time. (*Sanhedrin* 98a)

This talmudic passage presented a resolution to a contradiction within a biblical verse in Isaiah: will the messianic age come “on time” (*beItah*), or will God hasten it (*ahishenah*)? The Talmud answered that the outcome would depend on the merit of Israel.

Rabbi Halevy found different ways of interpreting and applying this passage, depending on the message he was trying to convey and on current political events. For example, in *Dat uMedinah* (p. 26), Rabbi Halevy applied the interpretation of Radak (Isa. 60:22): Once the proper time for redemption arrives, the process will accelerate. Only 19 years separated the founding of the State in 1948 until the victory of the Six Day War in 1967, demonstrating the imminence of the final redemption.

But after the Yom Kippur War in 1973, Rabbi Halevy shifted to a modified reading of the aforementioned talmudic interpretation of *beItah, ahishenah*: If the messianic age were merited early, it would not be accompanied with suffering. If it came “on time,” it would be a natural process, entailing affliction. No longer did Rabbi Halevy think in terms of a quick process; he began to view the prolonged struggle of the State as part of a longer divine plan of redemption (*Asei Lekha Rav* 1:7-12).

To explain the prominent role of secular Zionism in the redemption process, Rabbi Halevy wrote that the State of Israel arose as a result of *beItah*, a natural process. The Talmud (*Megillah* 17b; *Sanhedrin* 97a) stated that wars would precede the final redemption. Historically, Jews had gradually adopted the idea of a supernatural redemption since they had suffered so much during their exile.

Thus, by the time the process of redemption began during the twentieth century, most religious Jews rejected the possibility of natural redemption. It was specifically the secularists who were able

to achieve success. Yes, some religious Jews were involved, but the majority of modern Zionists were not religiously observant. In retrospect, it had become obvious that the process of establishing and defending the State had been miraculous. God's plan of redemption was achieved, but most of the religious community had failed to respond. Unwittingly, the secularists became God's agents of redemption (*Asei Lekha Rav* 1:3).

Rabbi Halevy explained the struggles and wars of Israel not only through *beItah*, but also with the idea that it would not be dignified were God simply to deliver the Land on a silver platter. Ancient Israel understood this message, evidenced by the way they fought Amalek (Exod. 17:8-17). They did not expect supernatural intervention once they had left Egypt. Rabbi Halevy expressed disappointment that many contemporary Jews still had not recognized the messianic potential of today, mistakenly waiting for supernatural miracles (*Asei Lekha Rav* 1:4-5).

Rabbi Halevy viewed natural and supernatural as different stages in the messianic process, rather than as alternatives. *Mashiah ben Yosef* (the first stage of redemption) will be characterized by suffering, whereas *Mashiah ben David* (the final stage of redemption) will be characterized by a supernatural redemption and the ingathering of the exiles (*Asei Lekha Rav* 4:6, 4:8). He thought that the Six Day War completed the first stage in the process of redemption, but we still required national repentance to merit the final redemption (*Dat uMedinah*, pp. 23-24). To this end, Rabbi Halevy considered his five-volume series, *Mekor Hayyim*, to have been driven by his passionate desire to hasten the arrival of the messianic age through repentance (introduction to *Mekor Hayyim* 1, pp. 9-14).

The common denominator of Rabbi Halevy's responses is that we certainly are in the early stages of the messianic age. Rather than allowing the Yom Kippur War, Arab terrorism, or other tragedies to negate that belief, Rabbi Halevy offered interpretations that were in tune with unfolding realities. At the same time, he continued to advocate national repentance and unity as the primary catalysts to effect the full redemption.

Rabbi Halevy adopted a finely nuanced position toward military exemptions for yeshiva students. Fundamentally, he favored military exemptions for yeshiva students. Were the entire nation to engage in Torah study, supernatural miracles would occur to protect Israel (see *Sanhedrin* 14b). But after his praise for full-time Torah study, he emphasized that this exemption applied exclusively to those who were truly dedicated to Torah learning. Those who enrolled in yeshivot simply to dodge the draft desecrate God's Name. Additionally, *all* yeshiva students must serve in the military during actual wartime. Acknowledging the difficulty of explaining this concept to those not committed to Torah values, he praised *yeshivot hesder*, which combine yeshiva learning with military service, thereby sanctifying God's Name (*Asei Lekha Rav* 1:21, 3:58).

In a response to pamphlets opposing military service for yeshiva students, Rabbi Halevy defended his position that all yeshiva students must serve in the military during wartime. Training did not take *that* long; and even if the students could not be trained quickly, they could serve in non-combat roles. In this Responsum, Rabbi Halevy maintained that those who did not serve at all during wartime were violating halakha, not just giving religion a bad name. He also reiterated his earlier position that any exemption referred exclusively to those who were genuinely engaged in serious Torah study. Insincere students should be drafted to regular military service (*Asei Lekha Rav* 7:72).

In these discussions, Rabbi Halevy revealed a strong belief in the supernatural powers of Torah, combined with a fervent commitment to the sanctification of God's Name. He also explicated what halakha really taught about military service for yeshiva students. His deepest desire was for all Jews to be dedicated to Torah study, so as to merit God's miraculous protection and bring about the

full redemption. Until that ideal state was realized, though, Jews would have to maintain military defense forces.

The Yom Kippur War: A Challenge to Redemption?

Rabbi Halevy's earlier writings expressed unreserved enthusiasm about the redemption process. Yet, many of his followers were perplexed by the Yom Kippur War. This war had exposed Israel's vulnerability. No longer did the messianic age appear to be marching forward with increasing brightness.

Rabbi Halevy opened his *Asei Lekha Rav* series with several essays addressing this problem. He paralleled the contemporary situation with the redemption from Egypt. During the exodus, God created a moment of panic at the Red Sea, when the Israelites thought they were doomed. Only when the sea split did the Israelites retrospectively understand God's plan of redemption. Similarly, the Yom Kippur War initially seemed like a setback, but it resulted in Egypt sitting down to talk peace with Israel for the first time (*Asei Lekha Rav* 1:6).

Rabbi Halevy observed that the Yom Kippur War was not a challenge to one's messianic hopes unless one expected a consistently upward progression in redemption. Since we were not privy to God's plans, we could not assume a trouble-free road to redemption (*Asei Lekha Rav* 1:7-12, 4:6).

The Role of Peace Talks in the Redemption Process

Rabbi Halevy suggested that peace talks and recognition by Arab nations were essential to the redemption process (*Asei Lekha Rav* 1:6, end *Asei Lekha Rav* 9, pp. 395-396). Despite the losses caused by the Yom Kippur War in 1973 and the wave of Arab terrorism in 1987, Rabbi Halevy maintained his belief in the redemption process by appealing to the ensuing peace negotiations.

At the same time, he expressed skepticism about Israel's so-called peace partners. Egypt entered negotiations only because it concluded that it was unable to annihilate Israel in a war, not from a genuine desire for peace. Rabbi Halevy was troubled about Israel being pressured to make land concessions, a process that threatened Israel's security. [2] Additionally, he claimed that "the redemption of Israel will not be complete if the Land of Israel will not be complete" (*Asei Lekha Rav* 1:7-12, 3:62, 4:1). [3]

After expressing his personal reservations about land concessions to Egypt, Rabbi Halevy concluded that the ultimate decision in this matter rested with the Israeli government. Only high officials were expert in the political and security details; they had the halakhic authority to make such decisions (*Asei Lekha Rav* 3:62, 4:1). [4] Although he did not trust Egypt's motives for making peace with Israel, Rabbi Halevy expressed the hope that a new generation would arise in Egypt, accustomed to peace. [5]

Is Redemption Contingent on Repentance?

Rabbi Halevy cited the talmudic debate (*Sanhedrin* 97b) whether repentance is a precondition for redemption or not (*Asei Lekha Rav* 1:7-12). He quoted a ruling of the Rambam, that repentance was mandatory (*Hilkhot Teshuvah* 7:5). [6] But elsewhere, the Rambam wrote that the messianic king would encourage repentance, implying that the messianic age could commence prior to a full national repentance (*Hilkhot Melakhim* 12:1-2). Rabbi Halevy reconciled the two statements by proposing that the messianic process could begin without repentance, but complete redemption

required it.

Rabbi Halevy balanced optimism with realism in viewing the religious life of Israel. On the one hand, many Jews were returning to their religious roots; but many others were drifting away from religion. Rabbi Halevy noted that the *aliya* movement also started as a trickle. Yet, this trickle led to the creation of the State. Moreover, kabbalists predicted that the messianic age would be a time of religious confusion—many Jews would be religiously involved, but many others would be apathetic (*Asei Lekha Rav* 4:6). Although he appealed for more repentance, he still saw the “positive” aspect of non-religious behavior, that is, it was a characteristic of the early stages of the age of redemption. [7]

Missed Opportunities

Had you made yourself like a wall and had all come up in the days of Ezra, you would have been compared to silver, which no rottenness can ever affect. Now that you have come up like doors, you are like cedar wood, which rottenness prevails over. (*Yoma* 9b)

The Sages say: The intention was to perform a miracle for Israel in the days of Ezra, even as it was performed for them in the days of Yehoshua bin Nun, but sin caused [the miracle to be withheld]. (*Berakhot* 4a)

In the above passages, the Talmud taught that messianic opportunities could be squandered if people did not respond appropriately to the initial signs of redemption. The beginning of the Second Temple period could have heralded the messianic age; but since the Jews of the time failed to return to Israel and otherwise sinned, the redemption was postponed.

Rabbi Halevy frequently quoted the *Yoma* passage in his efforts to encourage *aliya*. He recognized that most Diaspora Jews remained in exile after the founding of the State and that assimilation among them was rampant. However, he never concluded that the current messianic potential was lost—only that we were missing opportunities to achieve gains within this definite period of redemption. [8]

Noting that many Jews were still not making *aliya* after the Yom Kippur War, Rabbi Halevy optimistically suggested that perhaps God was giving the Jews living in Israel a chance to establish and consolidate themselves financially. Increased economic stability ultimately would encourage others to come (*Asei Lekha Rav* 3:62). He further suggested that had the first 30 years of statehood been easier, perhaps the Jewish passion for independence would not have been as strong. Moreover, perhaps the Yom Kippur War would jolt Israelis out of their complacency, and intensify their devotion to the Land of Israel (*Asei Lekha Rav* 1:7-12).

Rabbi Halevy halakhically justified ascending the Temple Mount, since we know the precise dimensions of the Temple and we can avoid going to those spots that are ritually forbidden. The rest of the Mount is accessible to Jews who ritually immerse themselves and remove their shoes. He added that rabbis should not prohibit observant Jews from going to the Temple Mount out of concern that non-observant Jews will not follow the proper regulations (*Asei Lekha Rav* 1:15). He recommended that a synagogue should be built atop the Temple Mount (*Asei Lekha Rav* 6:82).

Two years after the liberation of the Temple Mount, Rabbi Halevy sadly noted that Israel had squandered the opportunity to build a synagogue there. He expressed anguish that Israel allowed our most sacred site to remain in Arab hands. Jews should have created facts on the ground by building a synagogue when we had the chance (*Dat uMedinah*, p. 117).

After the Sinai concessions and peace treaty with Egypt, he added that Jews were now forfeiting the opportunity to settle Judea and Samaria. Had a million Jews moved in right after the Six Day War, there would not have been any chance of negotiating its return. Rabbi Halevy quoted *Yoma* 9b, which criticized the Jews' failure to make *aliya* during the Second Temple Period. If Jews did not freely come now, perhaps they will be forced to come in order to complete the process of redemption (*Asei Lekha Rav* 4:1). Elsewhere, Rabbi Halevy added a more ominous note to encourage *aliya*, observing that neo-Nazi movements continued to thrive all over the world (*Dat uMedinah*, p. 15).

Rabbi Halevy thought that Jews had erred in not having made *aliya* after the Balfour Declaration in 1917, a time when the Arabs were largely inactive politically. A large influx of Jews would have changed the reality drastically. Since Jews did not come willingly, then, they were compelled to come in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Perhaps the prophetic prediction of a purging nightmare before the final redemption (Ezek.20) was fulfilled as a result of Jewish reluctance to make *aliya* earlier in the twentieth century. He again emphasized that we cannot know the workings of God's mind—but we could offer interpretations after the fact, in order to derive religious inspiration and guidance (*Asei Lekha Rav* 4:6).

Despite his claims of the forfeiture of individual blessings, though, Rabbi Halevy asserted that God never would abandon Israel (*Dat uMedinah*, p. 16). He continued to believe that the process of redemption was slowly and irreversibly unfolding, and he interpreted each new event in this light.

Halakhic Rulings

Because of Rabbi Halevy's belief that we were living in the period of redemption, he reached a number of important halakhic conclusions. He believed that Israel Independence Day (5 Iyyar) and Jerusalem Reunification Day (28 Iyyar) should be observed as formal religious holidays, with *Hallel* recited (*Dat uMedinah*, pp. 88–113). Rabbi Halevy criticized those who opposed celebrating these holidays on the grounds that they were primarily military victories. Hanukkah also was celebrated because of military victories (*Asei Lekha Rav* 5:17). He noted that these opponents were driving less observant Jews to view those events in purely secular terms. If *religious* Jews refused to acknowledge God's hand, why should secular Jews (*Dat uMedinah*, pp. 86–87)?

Rabbi Halevy reevaluated traditional practices pertaining to mourning over the destruction of the Temple. Rabbi Halevy maintained that we still must observe the Fast of the 9th of Av until the Temple itself is rebuilt (*Mekor Hayyim* 4:202, pp. 179–180). But after the Six Day War, we should reword parts of the "*nahem*" prayer into the past tense. Since the prayer laments a desolate Jerusalem without any Jewish inhabitants, it simply would be a falsehood to retain the original text of the prayer (*Asei Lekha Rav* 1:13–14, 2:36–39).

Likewise, he suggested emending a passage in the Grace After Meals, which currently reads, "We thank You, God for the good and ample land that You gave to our ancestors." Now that we are living in the age of redemption, we should say, "...that You gave to us" (*Mekor Hayyim* 2:81, p. 97).

With the settling of the Land, we should again recite the blessing, "*Barukh matziv gevul almanah*" (blessed is He who establishes the borders of a widowed [nation]). Rabbi Halevy was hesitant to rule that one should recite the full blessing with God's Name, although he noted that Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook had done so. Rabbi Halevy agreed with his reasoning (*Asei Lekha Rav* 4:5).

We still should say *kinot* (prayers of lamentation) on the 9th of Av, since the Temple is not yet rebuilt and the majority of Jews still lived outside of Israel. But we may reduce the number of *kinot*, as he himself did after 1948 (*Asei Lekha Rav* 4:34).

Although the original practice was to tear one's clothing upon seeing the desolate cities in Israel, or the ruins of Jerusalem (*Mo'ed Katan* 26a), Jews now lived in Israel and the Temple Mount was again under Jewish control. Therefore, one no longer should tear one's garments when going to the Western Wall. However, he thought that the Chief Rabbinate should issue the final ruling on this matter. [9]

The practice in Jerusalem was to don *tefillin* in the morning of 9th of Av at home, and then to come to synagogue for the recitation of *kinot*. Even one who previously did not observe this tradition should accept it, since we were living at the beginning of the redemption (*Mekor Hayyim* 1:35, p. 131).

Rabbi Halevy complained about the prevalent custom at the end of weddings to break a worthless glass rather than something of real value. After concluding that this was not a major issue worth fighting over, he added that especially now, in the age of redemption, we do not have to be as mournful as we had been in the past—and therefore the current practice may be tolerated (*Mekor Hayyim* 5:237, p. 36).

Although Rabbi Halevy allowed some room for leniency as a result of this being the period of redemption, he did not permit choir practice during the three weeks between the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av. During that period, we should remain mournful (*Mayim Hayyim* 1:35).

May we accept converts nowadays, given rabbinic traditions that we will not accept converts in messianic times (*Yevamot* 24b; 76a; *Avodah Zarah* 3b)? Rabbi Halevy noted that only a minority of Jews, and very few non-Jews, have appreciated that we now have entered the beginning of the messianic era. Thus, no one would convert to Judaism today merely to join the messianic bandwagon. Additionally, several authorities (Rambam, Rashba, Meiri) ruled according to *Berakhot* 57b, that non-Jews would convert to Judaism even in the messianic age. The Talmud (*Avodah Zarah* 3b) noted that the Messiah would weed out insincere converts, so there was nothing to fear by accepting converts nowadays (*Asei Lekha Rav* 3:29).

The Talmud (*Berakhot* 54a) stated that one should make the blessing "*Barukh haTov ve-haMetiv*" for rainfall, but that practice stopped while Jews lived in exile. Rabbi Halevy ruled that since Jews have returned to Israel, they should once again recite this blessing—either after a prolonged drought is ended by rain, or if there is unusually heavy rainfall. The final decision on when the community should make this blessing should be left to the Chief Rabbinate (*Mekor Hayyim* 2:92, pp. 181–182).

Rabbi Halevy discussed whether the original practice of lighting Hanukkah candles outdoors should be restored. He quoted the *Hazon Ish*, who ruled that we still should light indoors, since (1) people might blow the candles out if they were left outdoors; (2) Israel was surrounded by enemies, and there was no guarantee that Israel would survive. Rabbi Halevy emphatically disagreed. Since this is the beginning of the redemption, one in Israel should light Hanukkah candles outdoors, when possible (*Asei Lekha Rav* 7:42).

Rabbi Halevy opened *Dat uMedinah* (p. 9) with an idea from R. Yehudah Halevy's *Kuzari*: Redemption will not come until people desperately wanted it. Rabbi Halevy's life was dedicated to inspire messianic hopes, to encourage people to take an active role in the process of redemption, and to promote a religious awakening (cf. *Asei Lekha Rav* 8:94–95). He added (p. 26) that the special role of rabbis during this period of redemption was to devote their energy to inspire the hearts of people with an understanding of God's role in history. It comes as no surprise that he concluded his *Mekor Hayyim* series with a chapter on the Messianic age. Although the full redemption has not yet come, Rabbi Halevy did his best to hasten the Messiah's arrival. [10]

NOTES

This article is adapted from my chapter in *Rabbi Haim David Halevy: Gentle Scholar and Courageous Thinker* (Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2006), pp. 218–236.

[1] Cf. *Asei Lekha Rav* 4:7, 9, where he added that Israel should emphasize its divine rights to the Land at the United Nations. Aside from the desirability of projecting a religious image for the State, Rabbi Halevy believed that this argument would be effective in the international community. By maintaining a purely secular stance, other nations would likely respond in a secular manner, promoting their own interests, such as oil and strategic alliances with stronger nations. In *Ben Yisrael laAmmim* (pp. 3–4), he added that Israel's enemies have moved their battlefronts to "diplomacy" at the United Nations.

[2] In his discussions of Sinai concessions, Rabbi Halevy noted that land for peace negotiations would create the dangerous precedent of offering the same for Judea and Samaria. He stated unequivocally that "God forbid" that we should ever reach that state of affairs. See *Asei Lekha Rav* 1:7–12, p. 42.

[3] Rabbi Halevy quoted the Zohar, which maintained that full redemption would not occur with non-Jews *living* in the Land of Israel. Elsewhere, though, Rabbi Halevy accepted that Noahides, i.e., those observing a lifestyle of ethical monotheism, could live in the land (see his lengthy halakhic analysis in *Ben Yisrael la-Ammim*, pp. 5–71).

[4] In *Dat uMedinah*, pp. 49–60, Rabbi Halevy developed a more comprehensive halakhic analysis to explain the authority of the government of Israel.

[5] Rabbi Halevy began *Asei Lekha Rav* volume 4 with a lengthy treatment of the implications of the recently signed peace treaty with Egypt.

[6] Cf. Rabbi Halevy's further analysis of this ruling and the dissenting opinion in *Mekor Hayyim* 4:215, pp. 250–251.

[7] In *Asei Lekha Rav* 4:9, Rabbi Halevy expressed a remarkably fatalistic approach to the role of repentance in the redemption: if God gave us the Land of Israel, then it almost does not matter that many people still are sinning. God has revealed His will that the Jews should have their Land again.

[8] Zvi Zohar ("Religious Zionism and Universal Improvement of the World," in *He'iru Penei haMizrah* [haKibbutz haMe'uhad, 2001], p. 305) quotes *Ben Yisrael laAmmim*, p. 89, where Rabbi Halevy wrote that "we do not know how much longer the influence of the rise of the State will last...after which this page will be closed in history." But despite this statement, Rabbi Halevy never reached the negative conclusion suggested as possible in *Ben Yisrael laAmmim*. It would appear that Rabbi Halevy appealed to the window of opportunity to inspire others, but he maintained a firm belief that full redemption definitely would occur in our era.

[9] *Mekor Hayyim* 2:95, pp. 207-209.

[10] For further discussions of aspects of Rabbi Halevy's messianic thought, see Malkah Katz, "Rabbi Haim David Halevy as the Successor of the World and Views of the Sephardic Sages in Israel Who Associated with Religious Zionism in the Days of the Mandate"; Dov Schwartz, "Changes in the Messianic Thought of Rabbi Haim David Halevy," in the volume of papers about Rabbi Halevy, edited by Zvi Zohar and Avi Sagi; Zvi Zohar, "Religious Zionism and Universal Improvement of the World," in *He'iru Penei haMizrah* (haKibbutz haMe'uhad, 2001), pp. 298-311.

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