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**THE TANACH STUDY CENTER** [www.tanach.org](http://www.tanach.org)  
*In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag*  
**Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Menachem Leibtag**  
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**UNDERSTANDING MAGGID - A biblical Perspective**  
[revised 5768]  
**Expression of Gratitude**  
**or**  
**Recogniton of Destiny**

Should Passover be understood as our 'holiday of freedom' - a special time set aside to thank God for taking us out of slavery?

Certainly, the popular song of "avadim hayinu... ata benei chorin" ['We were once slaves, but now we are free'] - seems to state exactly that point.

However, if you *read* your Haggada carefully, you'll notice that those words never appear (in that combination). And if you *study* the Haggada, you'll notice that it states quite the opposite, i.e. that we remain 'servants', but we simply have a new 'boss'!

In the following 'Guide for Maggid', we attempt to arrive at a better understanding of how and why we tell the story of the Exodus - and how that story explains why Passover is such an important holiday. Hopefully, it will help make your Seder evening a little more interesting (and life - a bit more meaningful).

**THE SOURCE FOR MAGGID in Parshat Bo**

Even though we are all familiar with the pasuk "ve-higadta le-bincha..." (Shmot13:8) - the Biblical source for our obligation to recite MAGID - when one reads that pasuk in Chumash, it's not very easy to translate.

[Try it yourself, and you'll immediately notice the difficulty.]

So let's begin our study by taking a careful look at this 'source pasuk' within its context - as it will be very insightful towards understanding what MAGID is all about.

Towards the end of Parshat Bo, Bnei Yisrael have already left Egypt and set up camp in Succot. For food, they have just baked "matzot" from the dough that they had taken with them (in their rush to leave Egypt - see Shmot 12:37-39). After the Torah concludes this narrative, Moshe commands Bnei Yisrael to remember these events in the following manner:

"And Moshe told the people - Remember this day that you left Egypt, from the House of Slavery, for God has taken you out with a strong hand..."

[Then, when you come to the land of Israel...]  
Eat matza for seven days... and don't see any chametz..."  
(see Shmot 13:3-7)

With this context in mind, note how Moshe concludes these instructions with the following commandment:

"ve-HIGGADETA le-bincha ba-yom ha-hu leimor" -

And you must TELL your son on that day, saying:  
BA'AVUR ZEH -

for the sake of this -

ASA Hashem li BE-TZEITI mi-MITZRAYIM -  
God did for me [?] when he took me out of Egypt"  
(see Shmot 13:8).

Even though we all know this last pasuk by heart, it is not so easy to translate. In our above transliteration, we have highlighted the difficult words - which we will now discuss:

Let's begin with the meaning of the word 'zeh' [this]. Based on its context (see 13:6-7), 'zeh' most probably refers to the matzot that we eat, for the previous psukim describe the mitzva to eat matza for seven days. Hence, this pasuk implies that we must tell our children: 'for the sake of this matza - God did for me [these miracles ?] - when I left Egypt'.

Indeed, this commandment instructs us to 'remember' this day by telling something to our children; however, it is not very

clear what the Torah wants us to explain.

There are two possible directions of interpretation. Either we must explain to our children:

- **Why God took us out of Egypt** - i.e. to eat matza! - Or,
- **Why we eat matza** - because God took us out of Egypt!

Even though we are most familiar with the latter reason, the first interpretation seems to be the simple meaning of the pasuk. As you'd expect, the classical commentators argue in this regard.

Ramban (on 13:8) explains (as most of us understand this pasuk), that we eat matza to remember HOW God took us out of Egypt. However Rashi (and Ibn Ezra) disagree!

In his commentary, Ibn Ezra explains (as 'simple pshat' implies) - that we are commanded to explain to our children that God took us out of Egypt IN ORDER that we can eat matza; implying that God intentionally placed Bnei Yisrael in slavery in order to redeem them - so that we would keep His mitzvot!

Rashi provides a very similar explanation, but widens its scope by stating that God took us out of Egypt in order that we would keep ALL of His mitzvot, such as pesach matza & maror.

[Chizkuni offers a similar explanation, with a slightly different twist - i.e. in the ZCHUT (in merit) for our readiness to perform the mitzvot of pesach matza & maror for all generations - God redeemed us from Egypt.]

According to Rashi and Ibn Ezra's understanding of this pasuk, the primary mitzvah at the Seder should be not only to explain to our children **what** happened, but also **why** it happened.

In our study of Maggid, we will show how this specific point emerges as a primary theme - but first must consider where that story - that we are commanded to tell over - should begin.

**WHERE SHOULD WE BEGIN?**

Let's contemplate for a moment where would be the best (or most logical) point to start the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim from. One could entertain several possibilities.

The simplest and most obvious approach would be to begin with Bnei Yisrael's enslavement in Egypt. In fact, this is precisely where Sefer Shmot begins!

On the other hand, one could start a bit earlier with the story of Yosef and his brothers, for that would explain how Bnei Yisrael first came to settle down in Egypt. However, if we continue with that logic, we could go back another generation to the story of Yaakov, or even back to story of Avraham Avinu. [Or maybe even back to the story of Creation!]

This dilemma appears to be the underlying reason behind the Talmudic dispute between Rav and Shmuel. Let's explain:

**THE MISHNA in Mesechet PESACHIM**

The Mishna in the tenth chapter of Mesechet Pesachim sets some guidelines concerning how to fulfill this obligation 'to tell the story', including one that deals with its format:

"matchilim bi-gnut u-mesaymim be-shevach" -

- We begin our story with a derogatory comment, and conclude it with praise.

In the Gemara's subsequent discussion (see Pesachim 116a), we find two opinions concerning what this opening comment should be:

- **Rav** - "Mi-tchila ovdei avoda zara..." - At first, our ancestors were idol worshipers..."
- **Shmuel** - "Avadim hayinu..." - We were once slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt..."

At the simplest level, it seems that Rav & Shmuel argue concerning what is considered a more derogatory statement- i.e. the fact that we were once slaves, or the fact that we once idol worshipers. However, this dispute may also relate to a more fundamental question - concerning **where** the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim actually begins - from our slavery in Egypt (Shmuel), or from the time of our forefathers (Rav).

In our study of Maggid, we will show how we actually quote both of these opinions, but not as the starting point of the story, but rather as important statements of purpose.

So where does the story begin?

We will now begin our detailed study MAGGID not only to answer that question, but also in an attempt to better understand HOW we fulfill this mitzva of "sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim" when we read the Haggada.

## HOW WE [DON'T] TELL THE STORY IN MAGGID

Even though the primary obligation of the Seder evening is to 'tell the story' of Yetziat Mitzrayim, when we read Maggid at the Seder, it is not very clear where that story actually begins (or ends). To determine when, where, and how we actually fulfill this mitzva, we will examine Maggid - one paragraph at a time.

As we study each paragraph, we will ask ourselves: is this part of the story?

If it is, then we can determine how we tell the story.

If it's not, then we must explain why this paragraph is included in Maggid nonetheless.

## 'HA LACHMA ANYA'

The opening paragraph of MAGGID - 'ha lachma anya..' is definitely not the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, but rather a quick explanation to the guests about the MATZA on the table. Let's explain why:

In the opening sentence, the leader of the Seder explains how this 'special bread' on the table is what our forefathers ate in Egypt; then he quotes what our forefathers said to one another in Egypt as they prepared to partake in the first Korban Pesach.

"kol dichfin..." - reflects how they invited one another to join a common group to eat the korban Pesach (see Shmot 12:3-6);

"hashta hacha..." reflects their expression of hope that by next year they would no longer be slaves in Egypt, but rather a free people living in the land of Israel.

As we will explain later on, this quote of what our forefathers said to one another in preparation for the very first 'seder' in Jewish History is thematically very important, for at the end of Maggid, we will express our need to feel as though 'we were there' ("bchor dor v'dor...")!

Nonetheless, this section is not the story itself – however, it forms a very meaningful introduction.

[See Further Iyun Section for a discussion of the meaning of "lechem oni". Re: how the matza eaten with the 'korban Pesach' had nothing to do with being in a rush, but rather reflected a 'poor man's bread' ["lechem oni"], see TSC shiur on Parshat Bo regarding 'two reasons for matza'.]

## MAH NISHTANA

Similarly, the 'ma nishtana' is not part of the story. Rather, we want the children to ask questions to ensure that they will take interest in the story that we are about to tell.

As our obligation to tell this story is based on the pasuk "ve-higgadeta le-BINCHA" - and you must tell your children... (see Shmot 13:8), it makes sense that we try to capture their attention before we tell the story. However, as you have surely noticed, this section contains only questions, but no answers.

It should also be noted that these 'four questions' are really one question; i.e. – the **one** question is: 'Why is this night different'? Afterward, the child brings four examples/questions to support his claim that tonight is indeed different.

It is for this reason that we never answer these 'four questions'; Rather, Maggid continues with the answer to the 'one question' – of why this night is special.

## 'AVADIM HAYINU'

At first glance, the next paragraph: 'avadim hayinu...' seems to begin the story. [In fact, it appears that we have followed Shmuel's opinion (in Pesachim 116a) that we should begin the story with 'avadim hayinu'.]

However, if you take a minute to carefully read this entire

paragraph, you'll immediately notice that this paragraph does NOT begin the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. Instead, the 'avadim hayinu' section makes two very important statements, which provide the answer the 'one question' of WHY this night is so special. Hence we explain:

- **WHY** we are obligated to tell this story – for had it not been for this story of how God saved us from Egypt, we would still be slaves till this day;

And, then we explain:

- **WHO** is obligated to tell this story - i.e. 've-afilu kulamu chachamim...' - and even if we [who gather] are all very wise and learned and know the entire Torah, it remains incumbent upon us to tell that story; and the more we elaborate upon it, the better!

From this paragraph, it appears that before we actually tell the story, the Haggada prefers to first discuss some fundamentals relating to the nature of our obligation!

The first statement deals with a fundamental question regarding **why** this story is meaningful to all future generations, even though we will be discussing an event that took place thousands of years earlier.

The second statement comes to counter a possible misunderstanding, based on the source-text of "ve-higgadeta le-bincha..." - that this mitzva applies **only** to teaching **children** [i.e. those who never heard this story]. Therefore, before we tell the story, the Haggada must remind us that **everyone** is obligated to discuss the story - even 'know it alls'.

[See Further Iyun section for a more detailed discussion of how to understand this section in light of Devarim 6:20-25.]

## MA'ASEH BE-R. ELIEZER...

To prove this second point of the 'avadim hayinu' paragraph (that even 'know it alls' are obligated to tell the story), the next paragraph in MAGGID quotes a story of five great Torah scholars (in fact Tannaim) who gathered for the Seder in Bnei Brak. Even though they certainly knew the story; nonetheless they spent the entire evening (until dawn the next morning) discussing it.

[This reflects a classic format for a Rabbinic statement. First the Rabbis state the obligation [in our case, that everyone is obligated to tell the story - even 'know it alls'] - afterward they support that ruling by quoting a story [in our case, the story of the five scholars who spent the entire evening discussing the story of the Exodus, even though they surely knew it.]

Even though the Haggada does not quote their entire conversation of that evening, the next paragraph does quote one specific discussion. Let's explain why:

## AMAR RABBI ELIEZER BEN AZARYA...

The specific discussion that we quote concerns the Biblical source for our **daily** obligation to **mention** the story of the Exodus (see Devarim 16:3). In Hebrew, this obligation is commonly referred to as "**zechira**" [to passively remember], in contrast to our 'once a year' obligation at the Seder of "**sippur**" - to actively **tell** the story of the Exodus.

Most likely, the Haggada chose to quote this specific discussion as it relates to the obvious connection between these two mitzvot ("zechira" & "sippur").

One could suggest that the story we tell at the Seder ("sippur") serves as the reference point for our daily mention ("zechira") of the Exodus - when we recite the third 'parshia' of keriyat shema (see Bamidbar 15:41), every morning and evening. To mention this story on a daily basis only becomes meaningful if we first 'tell the story' in full (at least once a year).

We should note as well that the very pasuk: "I am the Lord your God who took you out of the Land of Egypt **to be for you a God**" (Bamidbar 15:41) supports the opinion of Rashi & Ibn Ezra (quoted above) that God took us out of Egypt **in order** that we keep His commandments.

Notice however, that we are still discussing the nature of our obligation - but the story itself has not yet begun!

## THE FOUR SONS

The next section of MAGGID - beginning with 'baruch ha-Makom', discusses the Four Sons. Here again, we do not find the actual story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, rather another aspect of 'defining our obligation', as this section discusses **HOW** we should tell the story.

This section reflects the statement in the Mishna: "'Ifi da'ato shel ha-ben, aviv melamdo" - based on the level of the child, the parent should teach [the story]. [See Pesachim 116a.]

Based on this dictum, the Haggada quotes a Mechilta, which offers **four** examples of **how** to tell the story to different types of children - each example based on a pasuk in Chumash (where the father answers his son).

The opening statement of this section: 'baruch ha-Makom...' serves as a 'mini' 'birkat ha-Torah' [a blessing recited before Torah study], as we are about to engage in the study of a Mechilta - the Midrash on Sefer Shmot. The quote itself begins with "keneged arba banim dibra Torah..."

[For a deeper understanding of this Mechilta, see the TSC shiur on 'The Four Sons' - [tanach.org/special/4sons.doc](http://tanach.org/special/4sons.doc)]

This section certainly teaches us **HOW** to be a 'dynamic' teacher as we tell this story, and adapt it to the level of our audience. However, note once again that the story has yet to begun!

## "YACHOL ME-ROSH CHODESH"

In the next section, beginning with: 'yachol me-rosh chodesh...' we discuss yet another aspect of our 'obligation to tell the story' - this time concerning **WHEN** we are obligated. Here, the Haggada quotes an analytical discourse which arrives at the conclusion that the story must be told on evening of the Seder.

Once again, we find another definition relating to our obligation to tell the story, but we haven't told the story yet!

[In case you'd like to follow the logic behind this discourse: Because the Torah's first command to **remember this day** is recorded in Shmot 12:14, as part of a set of commands given to Moshe on Rosh Chodesh Nisan (see 12:1-2), one might think that the phrase "v'haya ha'yom ha'zeh l'**zikaron**" (in 12:14) refers to Rosh Chodesh [that's the "hava amina"].

However, when Moshe relays these laws to Bnei Yisrael in chapter 13, he informs that they must remember this day that they left Egypt, not eat chametz & eat matza for seven days (see 13:3-7), and then they must tell the story to their children **on that day** "ba'yom ha'hu" (see 13:8) - which may refer to the **day time**, i.e. when they first offer the Korban on the 14th in the afternoon [based on Shmot 12:6 and hence "yachol m'b'od yom..."].

The drasha rejects that possible understanding based on the next phrase in 13:8 - "ba'avur zeh" - where "zeh" in its context must be referring to the matza - hence the story must be told at the same time that we eat matza and the korban Pesach, i.e. on the **evening** of the 15th.]

Once again, we find another definition relating to our obligation to tell the story, but we haven't told the story yet!

[At most Seders, probably at least an hour has gone by, but we haven't even begun to tell the story!]

## "MI-TCHILA OVDEI AVODA ZARA..."

After defining the various aspects of our obligation, it appears that MAGGID finally begins telling the story with the paragraph that begins with "mi-tchila ovdei avoda zara..." (apparently following Rav's opinion in Pesachim 116a).

If so, it would seem that we actually begin the story with the story of our forefathers [the Avot] and how Avraham grew up within a family of idol worshipers.

However, if you read this paragraph carefully, you'll notice it isn't a story at all. Instead, the Haggada is making a very important **statement**, and then proves that statement with a text-

proof from Yehoshua chapter 24.

To appreciate what's going on, let's take a closer look at this statement and its proof.

## The Statement:

"Mi-tchila ovdei avoda zara.hayu.avoteinu, ve-achshav kirvanu ha-Makom le-**avodato**"

At first, our forefathers were servants to strange gods - but now, God has brought us closer to Him - **[in order] to serve Him!**

## The Proof:

"And Yehoshua said to the people: 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Your fathers dwelt in the past - beyond the River, even Terach - the father of Avraham, and the father of Nachor - and they **served** other gods.'

And I took your father Avraham from beyond the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Yitzchak.

And I gave unto Yitzchak Yaakov and Esav; and I gave Esav mount Seir, to possess it; and Yaakov and his children went down into Egypt" (Yehoshua 24:2-4).

This statement should not surprise us, for once again we find the Haggada emphasizing the point (discussed above) that God chose the people of Israel for a purpose - i.e. to **serve** Him!

However, if you study the quoted text-proof, you'll notice that it only proves the first half of our statement, i.e. that we were once idol worshipers, but it doesn't proves the second half - that God brought us close in order to serve Him.

## RE-AFFIRMING BRIT SINAI in Sefer Yehoshua

The solution to this problem is very simple. To show how this quote from Yehoshua proves the second point as well, we simply need to read the continuation of Yehoshua chapter 24. In that chapter, after teaching a short 'history lesson' (see 24:2-13), Yehoshua challenges the people saying:

"Now - fear the LORD, and **serve Him** in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt; and **serve ye the LORD**.

And if it seem evil unto you to **serve the LORD**, choose you this day **whom you will serve**; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, **we will serve the LORD**" (Yehoshua 24:14-15).

The entire reason why Yehoshua gathered the people in Shchem and reviewed their history was in order to challenge them with this goal - i.e. their willingness to truly serve God. After all, as Yehoshua explains, it was for this very reason that God chose Avraham Avinu. Thus the proof on the second half of the opening statement comes from the continuation of that chapter!

Note as well how the chapter continues, emphasizing over and over again this same theme:

"And the people answered: 'Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; for the LORD our God, He it is that brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and that did those great signs in our sight... therefore we also will **serve the LORD**; for He is our God.'

And Yehoshua said unto the people: '**You cannot serve the LORD**; for He is a holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression nor your sins....

And the people said: 'Nay; but **we will serve the LORD**.'

And Joshua said unto the people: 'You are witnesses that **you have chosen God to serve Him**. - And they said: 'We are witnesses.'--

And the people said unto Yehoshua: '**The LORD our God will we serve**, and unto His voice will we hearken.'

So Yehoshua made a **covenant** with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem." [See Yehoshua 24:16-25!]

Hence, the proof for the entire statement of 'mi-tchila...' is found in the continuation of Yehoshua chapter 24. Most probably, when this section was first composed, the Haggada assumed that its readers were well versed in Tanach, and knew the continuation of that chapter.

[Note as well how psukim that we do quote from Yehoshua (see 24:2-4) form a beautiful summary of Sefer Breishit, as they focus on the key stages of the 'bechira' process.

Should you be looking for something novel to do at your Seder, you could have the participants read from this section. Note as well that Yehoshua 24:5-7 is an excellent (albeit short) review of the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. ]

This background can help us appreciate how this statement of 'mi-tchila' sets the stage for the story that we are about to tell - for it explains why God originally chose Avraham - i.e. to become the forefather of a nation that will serve Him. The next paragraph of MAGGID will explain its connection to the story that we are about to begin.

### "BARUCH SHOMER HAVTACHATO"

In the next paragraph we find yet another 'statement' (and not a story) followed by a proof-text, that relates once again to God's original choice of our forefathers. We will now show how this section explains why the story must begin with Avraham.

#### Statement:

"Baruch shomer havtachato... - Blessed is He who keeps His promise [of redemption] to Am Yisrael, for God had calculated the end [time for redemption] as He had promised Avraham Avinu at brit bein ha-btarim. As God stated:

#### Proof:

'Know very well that your offspring will be **strangers in a foreign land** which will **oppress and enslave them** for four hundred years. But that nation who will oppress them I will judge, and afterward they will go out with great wealth'  
[See Breishit 15:13-18].

In this statement, we thank God for keeping His promise to Avraham Avinu, at "brit bein ha-btarim", to ultimately redeem Bnei Yisrael from their affliction, after some four hundred years.

At first glance, this statement sounds like yet another expression of gratitude. However, when considering its position in Maggid, one could suggest a very different reason for its mention specifically at this point.

Recall how the previous paragraph explained that God had chosen our forefathers to establish a nation to **serve** Him. In order to become that nation, God entered into a covenant with Avraham Avinu – i.e. "brit bein ha-btarim" - which forecasted the need for Avraham's offspring to first undergo suffrage in 'a land not theirs' in order to become that nation.

In other words, this historical process of slavery, followed by a miraculous redemption, was to serve as a 'training experience' that would facilitate the formation of that nation. [See concept of "kur ha'barzel" and its context in Devarim 4:20.]

Hence, this paragraph explains why the story of the Exodus must begin with "brit bein ha-btarim" - for our slavery in Egypt was not accidental, rather it was part of God's master plan. In a certain sense, God put us into Egypt - in order to take us out!

[This does not imply that every event that happened to Am Yisrael was already predetermined since the time of Avarham Avinu. Rather, this overall framework of becoming a nation in someone else's land - followed by oppression and servitude - then followed by redemption - was forecasted. How exactly it would play out, who would be the oppressor, and how intense that oppression would be- was yet to be determined. See Rambam Hilchot Teshuva chapters 5 & 6; see also Seforno's introduction to Sefer Shmot as his commentary on the first chapter.]

As we thank God for fulfilling His promise to Avraham, we are in essence thanking God for His covenant **and its very purpose**, not just for taking us out of Egypt.

Therefore in this section of Maggid, before we tell the story of WHAT happened - we must first explain WHY it happened.

This point is proven in the next paragraph:

### "VE-HEE SHE-AMDA"

As we lift our cups and recite the "v'hee sh'amda" - we declare yet another important statement, connecting that covenant and the events of the past with today:

"ve-HEE she-amda la-avoteinu **ve-LANU**"

- And it is THIS [Promise that was part of the COVENANT, i.e. brit bein ha-btarim] which stood for our fathers, AND for us as well. For not only once [in our history] did our enemies try to destroy us; but in EVERY generation we are endangered, but God comes to save us [for the sake of His covenant]."

The word "hee" in this statement obviously refers to the promise ['havtacha'] of brit bein ha-btarim (mentioned in the previous paragraph). This statement is so important that our custom is to raise the cup of wine before reciting this proclamation!

Here we explain that "brit bein ha-btarim" was not merely a 'one-time coupon' promising one major redemption, but rather it defined an eternal relationship between God and His people. The events of Yetziat Mitzrayim are only the initial stage of this everlasting relationship. Therefore, anytime in our history, whenever we are in distress - God will ultimately come to redeem us. However, the reason why God redeems us is in order that we can return to serve Him (that's why He chose us).

This provides us with a deeper understanding of why every generation must tell-over the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. At the Seder, we are not simply thanking God for the 'event' but rather for the entire 'process'. Yetziat Mitzrayim was not simply a 'one-time' act of redemption. Rather, it was a critical stage in an ongoing historical process in which God desires that Am Yisrael become His special nation.

As this purpose is eternal, so too the need to remind ourselves on a yearly basis of the key events through which that process began.

This understanding explains why redemption requires spiritual readiness, for in every generation Bnei Yisrael must show their willingness to be faithful to that covenant.

[In our TSC shiur on Parshat Bo, we explained how this concept explains the symbolism of why we must rid ourselves of chametz, prior to and during the time when we thank God for Yetziat Mitzrayim.

This may also explain why we invite Eliyahu ha-navi, when we begin the final section of the Haggada, where we express our hope for our future redemption. According to the final psukim of Sefer Mal'achi (the Haftara for Shabbat ha-Gadol!), Eliyahu will come to help the nation perform proper 'teshuva' - to become worthy for redemption.]

At most Seder's - surely, over an hour has passed; yet we still haven't told the story!]

### "TZEY U-LMAD" / "ARAMI OVED AVI"

With this thematic background complete, the Haggada is finally ready to tell the story (for those who are still awake). However, as you may have noticed, we do not tell the story in a straightforward manner.

Take a careful look at the next section of MAGGID, noting how the Haggada takes four psukim from Devarim 26:5-8, and quotes them one word (or phrase) at a time. Each quote is followed by a proof of that phrase, usually from either the story of the Exodus in Sefer Shmot or from a pasuk in Sefer Tehillim.

[To verify this, be sure to first review Devarim 26:1-9 before you continue.]

This section begins with "tzey u-lmad: ma bikesh Lavan...." which is simply a drasha of the opening phrase 'arami oved avi', and then continues all the way until the 'makot' -the Ten Plagues. In a nutshell, this section constitutes a rather elaborate Midrash on four psukim from 'mikra bikkurim' (Devarim 26:5-8).

The reason why MAGGID chooses this format to tell the story is based once again on a statement in the Mishna in the tenth chapter of Masechet Pesachim: "ve-dorshin me-arami oved avi ad sof ha-parsha" - and then we elaborate on the psukim from 'arami oved avi' until the end of that unit - and that is exactly what the Haggada does!

In other words, the Haggada uses Devarim 26:5-8 - beginning with 'arami oved avi' - as the 'framework' for telling over the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. Even though 'technically' it would suffice to simply quote these psukim, we elaborate upon them instead, in an effort to make the story more interesting and meaningful. [In fact, we are quoting a Sifrei - the Midrash on Sefer Devarim, which most probably was composed for this very purpose.]

From a 'practical' halachic perspective, this is critical to understand - for in this section we finally fulfill our obligation to TELL THE STORY - and hence this section should be treated as the most important part of MAGGID!

[Unfortunately, this section is usually one of the most neglected parts of the Haggada, since we are usually 'out of steam' by the time we reach it. Also, if one is not aware of the elaborate nature of these quotes, it is quite difficult to understand what's going on. Therefore, it's important that we not only pay attention to this section, but we should also be sure at this point to explain the details of the story to those who don't understand these psukim.]

#### WHY MIKRA BIKKURIM?

It is not by chance that Chazal chose to incorporate a Midrash of "mikra bikkurim" - even though it is rather cryptic - as the method through which we fulfill our obligation of sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim. Let's explain why.

Recall from our shiur on Parshat Ki Tavo, that "mikra bikkurim" (see Devarim 26:1-10) serves as a yearly proclamation whereby every individual thanks God for His fulfillment of the final stage of brit bein ha-btarim.

[This is supported by numerous textual and thematic parallels between the psukim of mikra bikkurim (Devarim 26:1-9), and brit bein ha-btarim (see Breishit 15:7-18). Note as well the use of the word 'yerusha' in 26:1 and in 15:1-8!]

This proclamation constitutes much more than simply thanking God for our 'first fruits'. Rather, it thanks God for the Land (see Devarim 26:3) that He had promised our forefathers (in brit bein ha-btarim / see Breishit 15:18). The 'first fruits' are presented as a 'token of our appreciation' for the fact that God has fulfilled His side of the covenant - as each individual must now declare that he will be faithful to his side of the covenant.

As mikra bikkurim constitutes a biblical 'nusach' ['formula'] through which one thanks God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha-btarim, one could suggest that it was for this reason that the Mishna chose these same psukim as its framework for telling the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim.

[It very well may be that this custom to tell the story at the Sefer with "mikra bikkurim" began after the destruction of the Temple (note that the Tosefta of Mesechet Pesachim does not include this custom, while the Mishna (compiled later) does include it! Without the Temple, the individual could no longer recite "mikra bikkurim". However, we can at least remind ourselves of this yearly need to proclaim our allegiance to God's covenant - by quoting from "mikra bikkurim" at the Seder!]

This may explain why the Haggada only quotes the first four psukim of mikra bikkurim (where it talks about Yetziat Mitzrayim) but not the pasuk that describes how He bought us

into the Promised Land.

Finally, note also the word 'higgadeti' in Devarim 26:3 and compare it with the word 've-higgadeta' in Shmot 13:8!

See also Rambam Hilchot Chametz u-Matza chapter 7, especially halacha 4.]

#### THE MULTIPLICATION TABLES

When you study the "drashot" of these four psukim, note how the drasha of the final pasuk leads us directly into the Ten Plagues. At this point, the Haggada quotes an additional drasha - by R. Yossi ha-Gili - that there must have been 5 times as many plagues at the Red Sea than were in Egypt [based on the ratio - 'etzba' of the Makot to 'yad' at Kriyat Yam Suf, i.e. hand/finger = 5/1].

Then R. Eliezer and R. Akiva add multiples of 4x and 5x for each plague - based on Tehillim 88:49.

[Note in the Rambam's nusach of MAGGID, he skips this entire section. This suggests that this Midrash is an additional 'elaboration', but not a necessary part of the story that we must tell. In other words, if you need to skip something, this section is a 'good candidate'.]

#### DAYENU

Now that the story is finished, it's time for 'praise' -following the format of the Mishna "matchilin bi-gnut u-mesayim be-shevach" - and we will now explain how DAYENU serves as a special form of HALLEL (praise).

You are probably familiar with all the questions regarding what we say in Dayenu, for example, how could a Jew say, let alone sing, that 'it would have been enough' - even had God not given us the Torah?

And how could a 'zionist' say, let alone sing, that 'it would have been enough' - even if God had not given us the Land of Israel?

However, the answer to all those questions is rather simple, once one understands that each time we say the word "dayenu" - it really implies that 'it would have been enough - to say Hallel'.

In other words, we say as follows:

- Had God only taken us out of Egypt and not punished the Egyptians, **it would have been reason enough** to say Hallel
- Had He split the sea, but not given us the 'manna', that alone **would have been reason enough** to say Hallel...

... And so on.

With this background, the next paragraph of that poem makes perfect sense:

"al achat kama vekhama..."

- How much more so is it proper **to thank God** for He has performed **ALL** these acts of kindness ..

He took us out of Egypt, **and** punished them, **and** split the sea, **and** gave us the manna etc.

In essence, this beautiful poem poetically summarizes each significant stage of redemption, from the time of the Exodus until Am Yisrael's conquest of the Land - stating how each single act of God's kindness in that process would be reason enough to say Hallel, now even more so we must say Hallel, for God did all of these things for us.

From this perspective, "dayenu" serves a double purpose. First and foremost, it concludes the story with "shevach" [praise], and qualifies the Hallel that we are about to sing. However, it could also be understood as a continuation of the story of the Exodus. Let's explain why and how:

Recall that the last "drasha" [elaboration] on the psukim of 'arami oved avi' led into a lengthy discussion of the Ten Plagues. To fulfill our obligation at the Seder' to tell the story', we could (and do) finish right here. But the poem of "dayenu" actually continues that story, picking up from the Ten Plagues ["asa bahem shafatim" refers to the Plagues], and continuing through all the significant events in the desert until our arrival in the Land of Israel and building the Temple.

This takes on additional significance, as it concludes in the same manner as the final pasuk of "arami oved avi" - which for

some reason we do not include in our Seder (even though according to the Mishna it appears that we really should)! Recall that according to Devarim 26:9, the proclamation should conclude with: "va'yvi'einu el ha'Makom ha'zeh"

According to Chazal - he brought us to the Bet ha'Mikdash! "va'yiten lanu et ha'aretz ha'zot" he gave us the land of Israel

Even though we don't elaborate upon this pasuk in our version of Maggid, "dayenu" enables us to include it!

In this manner, the song of "dayneu" serves as both "shevach" [praise] and "sippur" [story] - at the same time!

It is also interesting to note that we find 15 levels of praise in the Dayenu, that most probably correspond to the 15 steps leading to the Bet ha-Mikdash, better known as the 'shir ha-ma'a lot', i.e. the 15 psalms in Tehillim (120-134) / composed for each step.

Finally, note how Dayenu discusses fifteen 'stages' in the redemption process. This beautifully reflects the theme that we have discussed thus far - that we are thanking God for the entire process of redemption, and not just for a specific event!

[For a full shiur on the topic of Dayenu, see:  
[www.tanach.org/special/dayenu.txt](http://www.tanach.org/special/dayenu.txt)]

### "RABBAN GAMLIEL"

Even though we have completed our story, before continuing with the Hallel, the Haggada wants to make sure that we also fulfill Rabban Gamliel's opinion (in Masechet Pesachim chapter 10) that we have not fulfilled our obligation of "v'higadta l'bincha" unless we have explained the connection between that story and the commandment to eat PESACH, MATZA & MAROR.

[It appears that Ramban Gamliel understands the word "zeh" (in Shmot 13:8) refers to the 'korban Pesach' - probably based on his understanding that the phrase "ha'avoda ha'zot" in 13:5 also relates to 'korban Pesach'. Hence, Raban Gamliel requires that we explain to our children (and whoever is gathered) why we are eating not only matza, but also pesach and maror.]

Rabban Gamliel's statement could also imply that our obligation of eating matza and maror is not complete unless we explain how they connect to the story that we just told. This would explain why it is added at the conclusion of the "sippur Yetziyat Mitzrayim" section, as we are about to fulfill our obligation to eat matza, and maror.

[In our times, this section may also be considered a 'fill in' for the KORBAN PESACH itself. During the time of the Bet ha'Mikdash, MAGGID was said while eating the korban pesach. Nowadays, since the korban cannot be offered, we mention pesach, matza, and maror instead of eating the korban. Thus, this section forms an excellent introduction to the Hallel, which in ancient times was recited as the Korban Pesach was offered, and later when it was eaten.]

This section forms the conclusion of "sippur Yetziyat Mitzrayim", and sets the stage for our reciting of Hallel - to praise God for our salvation. [See Rambam Hilchot chametz u'matza 7:5, where his concluding remark implies that "haggada" ends here.]

### "BE-CHOL DOR VA-DOR"

Considering the integral connection between the events of the Exodus and "brit avot" (discussed above) the statement of: "be-chol dor va-dor chayav adam lir'ot et atzmo ke-ilu hu yatza mi-Mitzrayim..." takes on additional significance.

Before we say HALLEL, we conclude our story by stating that in every generation - each individual must feel as though HE himself was redeemed from Egypt. As the purpose of this entire historical process of redemption was to prepare Am Yisrael for their national destiny - it becomes imperative that every member of Am Yisrael feels as though they experienced that same 'training mission'.

One could suggest that this closing statement complements

the opening statement of MAGGID (in the avadim hayinu paragraph) that had God had not taken us out of Egypt we would still enslaved until this very day. Now that we have told the story of Yetziyat Mitzrayim, we are supposed to feel as though we ourselves were redeemed.

As stated in Devarim 6:20-25, the events of Yetziyat Mitzrayim oblige Am Yisrael to keep not only the mitzvot of Pesach but ALL of the mitzvot of the Torah! [See Sefer Kuzari section 1.]

[Note how the phrase "ve-otanu hotzi mi-sham" that we recite in this section of MAGGID is quoted from Devarim 6:23!]

Note as well how Chazal most probably arrived at this conclusion based on Moshe Rabbeinu's statement in Devarim 5:2-3 (at the very beginning of his main speech) that God's covenant at Har Sinai was made with the new generation, even though they themselves were not born yet!]

### LEFICHACH / HALLEL

As an introduction to the first two chapters of HALLEL, we recite 'lefichach...'. Note how this section contrasts 'suffering' with 'redemption' (note the numerous examples). This too may reflect our theme that we thank God for the process, and not just for the event.

The two chapters of Hallel that we recite at this time are also quite meaningful. The reason for 'be-tzeit Yisrael mi-Mitzrayim' is rather obvious. But note the opening words of the first chapter:

"hallelu AVDEI Hashem, hallelu et SHEM Hashem..."

In other words, as we are now God's servants ['avdei Hashem'] - and no longer slaves to Pharaoh, it is incumbent upon us to praise our new master.

### THE 'SECOND CUP'

We conclude Maggid with the blessing of "ge'ula" [redemption] on the 2nd cup of wine.

As we recite this blessing, note how most fittingly we express our hope that we will become worthy of God's redemption speedily in our own time

### A CONCLUDING THOUGHT

Even though much of our above discussion may seem 'technical', our analysis alludes to a deeper concept, that the Seder is not only about 'gratitude' - i.e. thanking God for what happened; but more so - it's about 'destiny' - i.e. recognizing why it happened!

. Let's explain.

Many of us are familiar with a concept called 'hakarat ha-tov' - recognition of gratitude. Simply translated, this means that people should express their gratitude for help (or assistance) provided by others. In relation the Seder, by telling the story of Yetziyat Mitzrayim [the Exodus] and reciting afterward the Hallel [praise], we express our gratitude to God for our redemption from slavery in Egypt.

However, if "hakarat ha-tov" is the sole purpose of Maggid, then a very serious question arises when we pay attention to the details of the story that we have just told. Recall (from the paragraph "baruch shomer havtachato...") how we thank God in the Haggada for the fulfillment of His covenant with Avraham - that he would ultimately save Am Yisrael from their bondage. Yet in that very same covenant, God promised not only our redemption, but also our enslavement! [See Breishit 15:13-15.]

If there was a real teenager [or 'chutzpedik'] son at the table, he could ask a very good [but 'cynical'] question:

Why should we thank God for taking us out of Egypt, after all - it was He who put us there in the first place!

To answer this question, I'd like to introduce the concept of 'hakarat ha-ye'ud' [shoresh yod.ayin.daled] - the recognition of destiny [and/or purpose]; in contrast to "hakarat ha-tov".

As we explained above, our obligation to 'tell the story of the Exodus' stems not only from our need to remember **what** happened, but more so - from our need to remember **why** it happened. In other words, we are actually thanking God for both

putting us into slavery **and** for taking us out; or in essence - we thank God for our very relationship with Him, and its purpose - as we must recognize the goal of that process and the purpose of that relationship.

In our shiur, we have both discussed the biblical background that supported this approach, and shown how this understanding helped us appreciate both the content of structure of Maggid.

This point of "hakarat ha-ye'ud" is exactly that we emphasized in our introduction. As our 'ye'ud' - our destiny - is to become a nation that will serve Him, God found it necessary to send us down to Egypt in order that He could redeem us.

This could be the deeper meaning of Rashi's interpretation of the pasuk "ve-higgadeta le-bincha ... ba'avur zeh" - that we must explain to our children that God took us of Egypt **in order** that we keep His mitzvot. [See Rashi & Ibn Ezra 13:8.] Rashi understands that the primary purpose of "magid" is not simply to explain why we are eating matza, but rather to explain to our children why God took us out of Egypt - or in essence, why He has chosen us to become His nation and hence keep His mitzvot.

To complement this thought, we will show how this same theme may relate as well to the very purpose of God's first covenant with Avraham Avinu - "brit bein ha'btarim".

#### ETHICS & the EXODUS -

Recall that when God first chose Avraham Avinu in Parshat Lech Lecha (see Breishit 12:1-7), He informed him that he would become a great nation and that his offspring would inherit the land. However, only a short time later (in chapter 15), God qualifies that promise by informing Avraham Avinu (at brit bein ha'btraim) that there would be a need for his offspring to become enslaved by another nation BEFORE becoming (and possibly in order to become) God's special nation (see Breishit 15:1-18).

Even though some commentators understand this 'bondage' as a punishment for something that Avraham may have done wrong (see Maharal - Gevurot Hashem); nonetheless, the simple pshat of Breishit chapter 15 is that this covenant was part of God's original plan. This begs for an explanation concerning why this framework of 'slavery' was a necessary part of this process.

[We should note that according to Seforno (based on Yechezkel 20:1-10), even though God forecasted our slavery, it didn't have to be so severe. Its severity, he explains, was in punishment for Bnei Yisrael's poor behavior in Egypt. (See Seforno's intro to Sefer Shmot and his commentary on Shmot 1:13.)]

One could suggest that the answer lies in what we find in the mitzvot given to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai, immediately after they leave Egypt.

Recall the numerous commandments that include the special 'reminder' of "v'zacharta ki eved ha'yita b'eretz Mitzraim" - to Remember that you were once a SLAVE [or STRANGER] in Egypt. Just about every time we find this phrase, it is not a 'stand alone' mitzvah, but rather as an additional comment following a law concerning the proper treatment of the 'less-fortunate' - i.e. it serves as an extra incentive to keep some of the most very basic ethical laws of the Torah.

To prove this, simply review the following list of sources in your Chumash, paying careful attention to when and how this phrase is presented, noting both its topic and context:

- Shmot 22:20 & 23:9 (note the type of mitzvot found in numerous laws recorded between these two psukim). Note especially "V'atem y'datem et nefesh ha'ger" in 23:9, that phrase highlights our above assertion.
- Vayikra 19:33-36 (concluding "Kdoshim tihiyu"!)
- Vayikra 20:26! and 25:55! (note the context of Vayikra 25:35-55, noting especially 25:38.)
- Devarim 5:12-15 (shabbos is to allow our servants a chance to rest as well - v'zacharta ki eved hayita...")
- Devarim 16:11-12, in regard to "simchat yom tov"
- Devarim 24:17-18, noting context from 23:16 thru 24:18
- Devarim 24:19-22, continuing same point as above
- Note as well concluding psukim in Devarim 25:13-16

#### REMEMBER WHAT THEY DID TO YOU

In light of these sources (a 'must read' for those not familiar with these psukim), it becomes clear that part of God's master plan (in the need for our enslavement to Egypt before becoming a nation) was to 'sensitize' us, both as individuals and as a nation, to care for the needs of the oppressed and downtrodden.

God is angered when any nation takes advantage of its vulnerable population (see story of Sodom in Breishit chapters 18-19, noting especially 18:17-21!). In our shiurim on Sefer Breishit, we suggested that this may have been one of the underlying reasons for God's choice of a special nation, a nation that will 'make a Name for God', by setting an example in the eyes of these nations, of ideal manner of how a nation should treat its lower classes, and be sensitive to the needs of its strangers and downtrodden. [Note also Yeshayahu 42:5-6!]

Hence, after Bnei Yisrael leave Egypt, they must receive a special set of laws are Har Sinai that will facilitate their becoming that nation. As they are chosen to become God's model nation (see Devarim 4:5-8), these laws must set reflect a higher standard, to serve as a shining example for other nations to learn from. Note as well how the opening laws of Parshat Mishpatim (which immediately followed the Ten Commandments), begin with special laws for how to treat our own slaves, whether they be Jewish (see Shmot 21:1-11) or non Jewish (see 21:20 & 21:26-27). [Not to mention the laws that follow in 22:20 thru 23:9.]

With this background, one could suggest that the suffering of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt, i.e. their being taken advantage of by a tyrant etc., would help teach Bnei Yisrael what 'not to do' when they form their own nation, after leaving Egypt.

As anyone who is familiar with the prophecies of Yeshayahu and Yirmiyahu (and just about all of the Nevim Acharonim) knows, it was this lack of this sensitivity to the poor and needy that becomes the primary reason behind God's decision to exile Israel from their land, and destroy the Bet Ha'Mikdash.

#### A YEARLY 'RE-SENSITIZER'

Let's return to the very pasuk from which we learn our obligation to tell the story at MAGID -"v'higadta l'bincha... ba'avur zeh asa Hashem li b'tzeiti m'Mitzraim". If we follow the interpretation of Rashi & Ibn Ezra, then this pasuk is commanding us that we explain to our children that God took us out of Egypt in order that we can fulfill His commandments. Or in essence, God orchestrated all the events forecasted in "brit bein ha'btarim" to help us become that nation. Certainly, this approach fits nicely with our explanation thus far.

Finally, the very pasuk that Chazal chose that we must recite twice a day to 'remember' the Exodus on a daily basis (see Bamidbar 15:41) may allude as well to this very same point: "I am the God who took you out of Egypt **IN ORDER** to be your God...". In other words, God took us out of an Egypt **in order** that He become our God. Our deeper understanding of the purpose of the events (of the Exodus) can serve as a guide and a reminder to assure that we act in the manner that we assure that we will indeed become God's model nation.

In summary, when we thank God for taking us out of Egypt, we must also remember that one of the reasons for why He put us there - was to sensitize us towards the needs of the oppressed. Should we not internalize that message, the numerous "tochachot" of the Bible warn that God may find it necessary to 'teach us the hard way' once again (see Devarim 28:58-68 and Yirmiyahu 34:8-22).

In this manner, the message of the Seder is not only particular -in relation to the obligations of the Jewish people; but also universal -in relation to their purpose - the betterment of all mankind. Or in the words of Chazal - "ein l'cha ben chorin ele mi sh'osek b'Torah" - 'Who is considered free - one who can dedicate his life to keeping God's laws

Freedom - to dedicate one's life to the service of God, both as an individual and a member of God's special nation - to internalize and eternalize God's message to mankind - that's what the Seder is all about!

chag sameiach, menachem

## FOR FURTHER IYUN

### A. V'ACHSHAV KIRVANU HA'MAKOM L'AVADATO

This key statement of the MAGID section (as discussed in our shiur on MAGID), that God chose the Jewish people in order that they could serve Him (by acting as His model nation) - is proven not only from our quote of Yehoshua 24:1-3, but more so from the remainder of that chapter - a 'must read' for anyone not familiar with that chapter!

For those of you familiar with Sefer Yehoshua, here's an observation that you may appreciate. One could suggest that the gathering, as described in Yehoshua 24:1-27, may have taken place at an earlier time, even though it is recorded in the final chapter of the book. Based on the content of this speech (and challenge) by Yehoshua for the entire nation to serve God - it would have made more sense for this gathering to have taken place soon after the original wave of conquest, and not at the end of his life.

In my opinion, the most logical time for this gathering to have taken place would have been at the same time when Bnei Yisrael first gathered at Har Eival to re-convene their covenant with God, in fulfillment the God's command in Devarim 27:1-8! This covenantal gathering, similar to the original covenantal gathering at Har Sinai (compare w/Shmot 24:3-11) is described in detail in Yehoshua 8:30-35. Note that the city of Shechem - where the events in chapter 24 take place, is located at the foot of Har Eival (where the events in chapter 8:30-35 take place!)

Even though the events in chapter 24 should have been recorded after the events in 8:30-35, Sefer Yehoshua preferred to 'save' that speech for its concluding section, because of its thematic and everlasting significance.

If so, then Yehoshua chapter 23 would have been the last gathering of the people with Yehoshua prior to his death (as seems to be simple pshat of the opening psukim of that chapter), while the events described in chapter 24 were 'saved' for the conclusion of the book (even though they took place much earlier). [Note how the story of Yehoshua's death in 24:28-33 is not an integral part of the story in 24:1-27]

Hence, it may not be by chance that the Haggada quotes from this chapter to present its key point - that God chose us, and gave us the special Land, for the purpose that we would be able to serve Him. Its thematic importance results in its special placement at the conclusion of Sefer Yehoshua, and similarly, at a key position in MAGID.

### B. MAGID & SEFER DEVARIM

For those of you familiar with our Intro shiur to Sefer Devarim (i.e. in regard to the structure of the main speech), it will be easier to appreciate why the Haggada begins its answer to the "ma nishtana" with "avadim hayinu...". [Or basically, Shmuel's opinion for "matchilim b'gnut" in the tenth perek of Mesechet Psachim"/ see 116a.]

Recall how that speech began in chapter 5, where Moshe Rabeinu introduces the laws [the "chukim up mishpatim"] by explaining how they part of the covenant that God had made with Am Yisrael at Har Sinai; while the laws themselves began with the famous psukim of Shema Yisrael that begin in 6:4.

In that context, the question in 6:20 concerns the inevitable question of children relating to the very purpose for keeping all of these laws, while the phrase "avadim hayinu" (see 6:21) is only the first line of a four line answer to our children, that explains why God chose us, and why we are obligated to keep all of His laws (see 6:20-25).

Hence, it is not by chance that the Haggada uses specifically this pasuk to explain why we are obligated to 'tell the story of the Exodus' every year, as that very pasuk begins the Torah's explanation for why we are obligated to keep all of God's laws.

Note as well how the pasuk of "v'otanu hotzi m'sham **Imaan**. [for the purpose of]..." (see 6:22-23) is quoted at the end of

MAGID in the "bchol dor v'dor" section - and not by chance!

Recall as well how the final mitzvot of this lengthy speech are found in chapter 26, namely "mikra bikurim" and "viddui maasrot".

In light of our study of Sefer Devarim and the sources in Sefer Shmot for Maggid (relating to how the experience in Egypt served to sensitize the nation - to act properly once they become sovereign in their own land), one can suggest an additional reason for why Chazal chose Mikra Bikurim - from Devarim chapter 26 - as the official 'formula' by which we tell the story. Note not only how the declaration in 26:5-9 constitutes a thanksgiving to God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha'btarim, but notice also the closing line in 26:11, where once again we are called upon to be sure that the stranger and Levite share in our happiness (for they have no Land of their own, and hence not able to bring their own first fruits).

It should also not surprise us that the next law, "viddui maasrot" at the end of every three years, emphasizes this very same theme. Simply read its opening statement in 26:12-13, focusing on the need of the farmer to give the necessary tithes to the poor and needy, the orphans, widows, and strangers. Only afterwards does he have the ethical 'right' to pray to God that He should continue to bless the land and its produce - see 26:15! This law forms a beautiful conclusion for many of the earlier laws in the main speech of Sefer Devarim, again a set of laws originally given to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai (see Devarim 5:28).

One could even suggest that reciting these psukim as well may be what the statement in the Mishna in Pesachim refers to when instructing us to read from Arami oved Avi (from Devarim 26:5) until we finish the ENTIRE Parsha. If we read the entire Parshia, the should certainly should include 26:11, and may even allude to 26:12-15 ("viddui maaser"), (and in my humble opinion even to the concluding psukim of the entire speech in 26:16-19!). ["v'akmal"]

### AVADIM HAYINU & SEFER DEVARIM

To appreciate why MAGGID quotes specifically this pasuk of 'avadim hayinu' to begin its discussion of our obligation to tell the story of the Exodus, we must study its source (and context) in Sefer Devarim.

Recall from our study of Sefer Devarim how Moshe Rabeinu delivers a lengthy speech (chapters 5 thru 26), in which he reviews the numerous laws that Bnei Yisrael must observe once they enter the land (see Devarim 5:1, 5:28, 6:1 etc.). As part of his introductory remarks concerning those mitzvot - Moshe states as follows:

"Should [or when] your child will ask - What [obligates us] to keep these laws and statutes and commandments that God our Lord has commanded? -

And you shall tell him - AVADIM HAYINU le-Pharaoh be-Mitzrayim... - We were once slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but God brought us out with a mighty hand..."

(See Devarim 6:20-21, and its context.)

In other words, Sefer Devarim used the phrase 'avadim hayinu' to introduce its explanation for why Bnei Yisrael are obligated to keep ALL of the mitzvot.

But when we continue to read that explanation in Sefer Devarim, we find the reason **WHY** God took them out:

"ve-otanu hotzi mi-sham, lema'an havi otanu el ha-aretz..."

And God took us out **in order** to bring us to the Land that He swore unto our fathers [=brit avot].

And the LORD commanded us to do all these laws, to fear the LORD our God, for our good...

And it shall be the just thing to do, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He hath commanded us." [See Devarim 6:22-25.]

Here again, we find that the Torah states explicitly that God took us out of Egypt for a purpose - i.e. **in order** to inherit the

Land and to serve God by keeping His laws.

This statement supports Rashi & Ibn Ezra's interpretation of the pasuk 'ba'avur zeh...' (as we discussed earlier in this shiur), that we are to explain to our children that God took us out of (and put us into) Egypt, in order that we keep His mitzvot.

Therefore, it is very meaningful that the Haggada chose specifically this pasuk of 'avadim hayinu' to introduce its discussion of WHY we are obligated to tell the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim on this special evening.

In fact, one could suggest that this may have been the underlying reasoning behind Shmuel's opinion (in Pesachim 116a). By stating that we begin the story with the pasuk of 'avadim hayinu', Shmuel is simply stating that before we tell the story, we must explain the reason for this obligation - just as we do in MAGGID!

#### C. BCHOL DOR V'DOR & SEFER DEVARIM

Note as well how the pasuk of "v'otanu hotzi m'sham Imaan. [for the purpose of]..." (see 6:22-23) is quoted at the end of MAGID in the "bchol dor v'dor" section - and not by chance!

Recall as well how the final mitzvot of the main speech of Sefer Devarim are found in chapter 26, namely "mikra bikkurim" and "viddui maasrot". In light of our study of Sefer Devarim and the sources in Sefer Shmot for Maggid (relating to how the experience in Egypt served to sensitize the nation - to act properly once they become sovereign in their own land), one can suggest an additional reason for why Chazal chose Mikra Bikurim - from Devarim chapter 26 - as the official 'formula' by which we tell the story. Note not only how the declaration in 26:5-9 constitutes a thanksgiving to God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha'btarim, but notice also the closing line in 26:11, where once again we are called upon to be sure that the stranger and Levite share in our happiness (for they have no Land of their own, and hence not able to bring their own first fruits).

It should also not surprise us that the next law, "vidduy maasrot" at the end of every three years, emphasizes this very same theme. Simply read its opening statement in 26:12-13, focusing on the need of the farmer to give the necessary tithes to the poor and needy, the orphans, widows, and strangers. Only afterwards does he have the ethical 'right' to pray to God that He should continue to bless the land and its produce - see 26:15!

This law forms a beautiful conclusion for many of the earlier laws in the main speech of Sefer Devarim, again a set of laws originally given to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai (see Devarim 5:28).

#### D. "HA LACHMA ANYA"

This opening paragraph of MAGID is difficult to understand not only due to the Aramaic, but also due to its context and content. Let's begin by explaining the problems.

After breaking the middle matza for YACHATZ - we begin MAGGID with the following statement:

"ha lachman anya..." - 'This [matza that we are now looking at] resembles the poor man's bread that our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt.'

First of all, it would make more sense to understand this statement as the completion of YACHATZ (since it refers to the matza that we just broke), and not necessarily the beginning of MAGGID (for it doesn't tell the story). However, even if this section is not an integral part of Maggid, it will form a significant transition between 'yachatz & maggid' - as we shall soon explain.

Secondly, this opening statement leaves us with the impression that we are eating matza at the Seder to remember how Bnei Yisrael ate matza during their slavery. However, Sefer Shmot leaves us with the impression that we eat matza in order to remember the hurried nature in which Bnei Yisrael left Egypt (see Shmot 12:33-40 and subsequently 13:3 & 13:8). In other words, should we be explaining at this time that matza on our table is to remind us of our slavery, or to remind us of our redemption?

The simplest answer would be to explain that 'this is the matza that our forefathers ate in Egypt - when they brought the very first korban Pesach'. In other words, we are not stating that this poor man's bread was the 'staple' of the daily diet of our forefathers in Egypt - rather, it is the special bread that God commanded us to eat

with the original Korban Pesach (see Shmot 12:8).

Furthermore, the reason for calling this bread "lechem oni" [lit. either bread of affliction or bread of poverty] is obviously based on Devarim 16:3 ["shivat yamim tochal alav matzot lechem oni - ki b'chipazon..."]. However, when studying the context of those psukim (see Devarim 16:1-4), the phrase "lechem oni" can be understood as a description of what matza is, and not necessarily as the reason for the commandment to eat it. [The question is whether 'lechem oni' defines for us WHAT matza is, or explains WHY we eat matza.]

This returns us to our discussion of the two reasons for matza (see TSC shiur on Parshat Bo) - where we explained that the reason for eating matza with the original Korban Pesach in Egypt had nothing to do with the fact that we later rushed out on the next day. Rather, there had to be some intrinsic reason for eating matza (and not chametz) with that korban; either to remind us of our slavery, or to symbolize our need to reject Egyptian culture to be worthy of redemption.

If we continue with our understanding that this is the 'matza' that our forefathers ate together with the first Korban Pesach, then the next statement of "kol dichfin" - which otherwise is very difficult to understand - begins to make sense. Let's explain why.

The next statement (right after explaining that this matza used to be eaten by our forefathers) - at first sounds like an invitation:

"Anyone who is hungry, let him come and eat, anyone who is in need, let him come and join in the Pesach, this year 'here', next year in the Land of Israel; this year - slaves, next year - free men"

It can be understood in one of two ways, either:

- an open invitation for others to join us. - or
- a quote of what our forefathers once said.

These two possibilities are a result of how one understands the word "v'yifach" in the phrase "kol ditzrich yete v'yifach" [anyone who needs, let him come and join our Pesach].

If we take the word "v'yifach" literally, then this must be an invitation to join in the korban Pesach - and hence, it must be a quote from an earlier time period.

If "v'yifach" is not translated literally, and hence it refers to the Seder, then this section was composed to be recited as an invitation (to the Seder). But this wouldn't make much sense at this time, since everyone is already sitting down, and considering that we've already made Kiddush and eaten "karpas" - isn't it a bit late to be inviting people!

Let's return therefore to the possibility that "v'yifach" refers to the actual 'korban Pesach' (which seems to be the simple meaning of this word). If so, then we can easily pinpoint exactly who we are quoting - as it must be from a time when the korban Pesach was offered, but also when we were not yet living in Israel, and still in slavery!. There answer is simple - this must be a quote of what our forefathers said to one another (translated into Aramaic) in preparation for the very first korban Pesach (i.e. the one in Egypt, as described in Shmot 12:1-23).

It can only refer to that very first korban Pesach, for that was the only time in Jewish history when the korban Pesach was offered when we were both (1) in slavery (hoping next year to be free) - and (2) living outside the Land of Israel (hoping to be next year in the Land of Israel)! If this interpretation is correct, then the flow of topic makes perfect sense. We break the matza, and explain that this was the same type of bread that our forefathers ate with the first korban Pesach in Egypt, and then we quote what they said to one another in preparation for that special evening - fulfilling what God instructed them in Parshat ha'Chodesh (see Shmot 12:3-8!).

This quote of our forefathers, from the very first Seder in Jewish History, is quite meaningful - for we begin MAGGID by emphasizing the connection between our own Seder and the very first Seder that Am Yisrael kept thousands of years ago (and its purpose). By quoting from the special atmosphere of that very first korban Pesach family gathering, we highlight the continuity of our tradition and our hope for the fulfillment of its goals.

[Note how this would conform to Shmot 12:14, in its context!]

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#### "DA'YENU" - shiur for Pesach & for Yom Atzmaut

How could an observant Jew say, let alone sing, that 'it

would have been enough' - even had God not given us the Torah?

And how could a Zionist say, let alone sing, that 'it would have been enough' - even if God had not given us the Land of Israel?

Nevertheless, every year at the Seder, we all sing the popular song of "dayenu", which seems to convey precisely that message!

In the following shiur, we attempt to answer this question.

## INTRODUCTION

"Dayenu" is a very simple, yet beautiful poem - containing fifteen stanzas describing acts of God's kindness - each stanza stating that it would have been 'enough' had God only helped us in one way.

For example, we begin by saying it would have been enough had He only taken us out of Egypt, and not punished the Egyptians. The poem continues stage by stage through the process of redemption from Egypt (until we arrive in the Land of Israel and build the Temple), saying how each stage would have been 'enough', even had God not helped us with the next stage.

However, some of those statements appear very strange, for they include that it 'would have been enough had we not received the Torah', which simply doesn't make sense!

To understand what we are 'really saying' in "dayenu", we must consider its context, as well as its content.

## A PREP FOR HALLEL

In the Haggadah, "dayenu" does not 'stand alone'. Rather, we recite (or sing) "dayenu" towards the conclusion of Maggid; after we tell the story of the Exodus, but before we sing the Hallel.

Following the guidelines of the Mishna (in the tenth chapter of Mesechet Pesachim), in Maggid - we tell the story of the Exodus by quoting (and then elaborating upon) the psukim of "arami oved avi" (see Devarim 26:5-8). But that very same Mishna also instructs us to begin the story with a derogatory comment, and conclude it with praise ("matchilin b'gnut - u'msaayim v'shevach" / see Pesachim 10:4).

Taking this Mishna into consideration, we find that "dayenu" is recited in Maggid - precisely when we finish telling the story of the Exodus (with the discussion of the Plagues) - and right at the spot where we are supposed to begin our "shevach" [praise].

Therefore, "dayenu" should be understood as a poem that was written as a form of praise, to conform with the guidelines set by the Mishna. This consideration will allow us to explain its full meaning - in a very simple manner:

Within this context, the refrain of "dayenu" has an implicit suffix. In other words, - "dayenu" should not be translated simply as 'it would have been enough'; rather, "dayenu" means **it would have been enough - to PRAISE God**, i.e. to say Hallel - even if God had only taken us out of Egypt, or only if He had split the Sea, etc.

In this manner, the poem poetically summarizes each significant stage of redemption, from the time of the Exodus until Am Yisrael's conquest of the Land - stating that each single act of God's kindness in that process obligates us to praise Him: e.g.

- Had He only taken us out of Egypt and not punished the Egyptians, **it would have been reason enough** to say Hallel
- Had He split the sea, but not given us the 'manna', that alone **would have been reason enough** to say Hallel...

... And so on.

With this background, the next paragraph of that poem makes perfect sense:

"al achat kama vekhama," - How much more so is it proper to thank God for performing ALL these acts of kindness, as He took us out of Egypt, and punished them, and split the sea, and gave us the manna etc.

"Dayenu" relates a total of fifteen acts of divine kindness, each act alone worthy of praise - even more so we must praise God, for He had performed all of them!

From this perspective, "dayenu" serves a double purpose. First and foremost, it concludes the story with "shevach" [praise].

and qualifies the Hallel that we are about to sing. However, it could also be understood as a continuation of the story of the Exodus. Let's explain why and how:

## SIPPUR & SHEVACH

Recall that the last "drasha" [elaboration] on the psukim of "arami oved avi" led into a lengthy discussion of the Ten Plagues. To fulfill our obligation at the Seder' to tell the story', we could (and do) finish right here. But the poem of "dayenu" actually continues that story, picking up from the Ten Plagues ["asa bahem shfatim" refers to the Plagues], and continuing through all the significant events in the desert until our arrival in the Land of Israel. This is also congruent with the last pasuk of "arami oved avi", that includes arriving in Israel (see Devarim 26:9! - "va'yyi'einu el ha'Makom ha'zeh, va'yiten lanu et ha'aretz ha'zot"), which we don't elaborate upon in our version of Maggid, even though according to the Mishna it appears that we really should!

In this manner, "dayenu" is both "shevach" [praise] and "sippur" [story] - at the same time!

## The 'HASHKAFAT DAYENU'

According to our explanation thus far, "dayenu" sets the stage for Hallel, as we will now praise God [by singing Hallel] not only in gratitude for taking us out of Egypt, but also in appreciation for each significant stage of the redemptive process. We thank God not only for the Exodus, but also for the 'manna', for shabbat, for coming close to Har Sinai, for the Torah, for the Land of Israel..., and finally for the building of the Bet HaMikdash.

From a certain perspective, this poem may allude to a very profound 'hashkafa' [outlook on life], and a message that is very applicable to our own generation.

Today, there are those who focus at the Seder only on the first stanza of "dayenu," viewing 'freedom from slavery' as the final goal, and hence the ultimate goal of redemption. For them, this first stanza of "dayenu" is 'enough' - and to them, that is the entire meaning of Passover - a holiday of Freedom.

Others focus only upon the last stanza, that without the entire land of Israel in our possession, and without the re-building of the bet-ha'Mikdash, the entire redemptive process is meaningless. In their eyes, Hallel should only be sung when the entire redemption process is complete, and Am Yisrael reaches its final goal.

The beautiful poem of "dayenu" seems to disagree with both approaches. Instead, each significant stage in the process of redemption deserves our recognition and for requires that we praise God for it, even though it is 'not enough'!

It is this hashkafic message, i.e., the understanding and appreciation of each step of the redemptive process, which "dayenu" can teach us. "Ge'ulat Yisra'el" - the redemption of Israel - even in our time, is a process which is comprised of many stages. Every significant step in this process, be it simply sovereignty, or partial borders, or victory in battle; or freedom to study Torah, even without complete redemption, requires our gratitude and praise to Hashem.

For each stage in that process, it is incumbent upon Am Yisrael to recognize that stage and thank Hashem accordingly, while at the same time recognizing that many more stages remain yet unfulfilled - and reminding ourselves of how we need act - to be deserving of that next stage.

"Dayenu" challenges us to find the proper balance.

chag samayach,  
menachem

[P.S. - Save this shiur! You can 're-use' it for Yom Atzmaut.

# The Structure Of The Seder: V'Nomar L'Fanav Shirah Hadashah

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

## GOALS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE LEIL HASEDER

### A: "SEDER"

"Seder", as everyone knows, means "order" – what a strange name for a feast! Why is this meal different from all other meals, in that it is called an "order"?

Rambam's wording may prove enlightening. In *Hilkhot Hametz uMatza*, 8:1, (after having detailed all of the laws of Hametz, Matza, telling the story, drinking the four cups etc.), Rambam introduces the meal as follows: *Seder Asiyat Mitzvot Eilu b'Leil Hamisha 'Asar Kakh Hu*: – "The order of performing these [above-mentioned] Mitzvot on the night of the 15th (of Nissan) is as follows:"

In other words, "Seder" refers to a particular order in which we perform a series of (otherwise) independent Mitzvot. Why, indeed, are these Mitzvot placed in any order – and why in the order which we identify with *Leil haSeder*(Seder evening)?

Before looking into the Seder itself, we find many analogous situations in the mundane world. Some of you may remember the show "This Is Your Life". The components include a (surprised) "target" – whose life will be highlighted on the show – and significant memories and people from his or her past. A neophyte, reading this description, might think that the order in which these memories are presented is irrelevant – indeed, he may think that we could present a jumbled assortment of guests from different times in the "target's" past – and then identify the "target". He might be surprised to find that the show isn't "working" – even though all of the components are there!

We all understand why this show would not succeed – its success is dependent as much on sequence as content.. First the "target" is identified, so that he or she realizes that it is his or her life which will be highlighted – this allows the target to mentally and emotionally prepare for the evening – and allows everyone else in the hall (potential targets each and every one) to "defocus" from their own lives and hone in on the "star's" life. Each memory or personality subsequently brought up heightens the excitement – until the final guest brought out, usually a long-lost friend or relative, brings the excitement of the evening to a climax. It would be hard to envision an episode of "This Is Your Life" without tremendous attention paid to the details of sequence.

Actually, we experience the same thing every morning. Upon waking, we are obligated to wear *Tefillin*, make sure that all of our four-cornered clothes have fringes, say *K'riat Sh'ma*, say *Tefillah*. Theoretically, these acts could be performed independently; say *Tefillah*, put on a *Tallit* (and then take it off), say *K'riat Sh'ma*, then put on *Tefillin*. However, the Rabbis created a system – or "order" – of performing these Mitzvot. First we put on a *Tallit* (even if we are not technically obligated – that discussion belongs in *Hilkhot Tzitzit*); wrapped in that, we put on *Tefillin*; we then sing praises of God, raising the tone of that praise until the community "comes together" for *Bar'khu*; this takes us to a communal recreation of angelic praise, which leads directly to *K'riat Sh'ma*; at that point, if we have properly focused and not been interrupted, the experience of *Tefillah* will be very ennobling and elevating. This experiential matrix utilizes the various Mitzvot which we must do every day to build an experience which is greater than the sum of its parts.

### B: TELLING -> IDENTIFYING -> SINGING PRAISE

Before going into the details of the Mitzvot which we are obligated to perform on the night of the 15th of Nissan (*Leil haSeder*), we should first look at the overarching goal – or goals – of the evening.

It would seem – both from the prominence of "Maggid" (Telling the Story) in the feast and from the six(!) times (see below) that the Mitzvah of "Haggadah/Sippur" (Telling/Sharing the Story) appears in the Torah – that the goal of the evening is to tell the story. However, a closer look at the text of the Haggadah will demonstrate that telling the story is an objective, the purpose of which is to take us further, to achieve another goal.

Arguably, the central paragraph in the Haggadah comes on the heels of Rabban Gamliel's explanation of the meaning of the three central foods – *Pesach*, *Matzah* and *Maror*. Immediately after that, we declare that

in every generation, a person is obligated to view himself as if he came out of *Mitzrayim* (Egypt)...

– "telling the story" is a means towards "identifying with the story".

The next "turning point" comes immediately after this declaration of "identifying with the story":

Therefore, we are obligated to give thanks...to the One who performed all of these miracles for our ancestors and for us....

We have now moved up one more level – from "identification with -" to "singing praises to God for -" the Exodus. The Halakhic term for this type of singing is "Shirah". At this point, we could argue that *Shirah* is the goal of the evening -but, as always, there's much, much more.

### C: RELIVING JEWISH HISTORY IN ONE EVENING

When we examine the various *Halakhot* and *Minhagim* (customs) performed on *Leil haSeder*, we find associations with different times in our history – vastly different circumstances. The Seder evening is indeed, a fantasy evening with a very real "time-warp" component to it. We imagine ourselves as slaves in *Mitzrayim*, as refugees in the desert, as noble freemen enjoying the feast in *Yerushalayim* with the *Beit HaMikdash* standing, as nobles reclining at a feast in the manner of our Roman oppressors – and there are even pieces of the Jewish-history-which-has-not-yet-been-realized which sneak into the Seder celebration.

On *Pesach*, we identify with – and try to reexperience – the Exodus from Egypt. Beyond that, we walk a mile in the shoes of every

Jew who ever lived; every Kohen Gadol who entered the Kodesh Kodoshim on Yom haKippurim, every victim of persecution who died with "Sh'ma Yisra'el" on her faithful lips, every hearty pioneer who risked life and limb to drain swamps in order to reclaim more of the Land of Israel for her sons and daughters.

This idea is introduced rather early on in the evening – before beginning the actual "story-telling", we cover the Matzot (the object around which story-telling happens) and raise our wine glasses (glass #2) (the object used for Shirah) and sing:

v'Hi She'amdah... ...Not only one has risen against us to destroy us, but in every generation they rise against us to destroy us – and the Holy One, who is Blessed, rescues us from their hand.

The Seder is a celebration of Jewish history and of God's constant role in our survival and success.

#### **D: REASSESSING THE GOAL**

We have identified several goals of the evening – identifying with the Exodus, identifying with the rest of Jewish history and Shirah. Is there one, ultimate goal of the evening?

This question is far from moot. Once we grasp the purpose behind what we are doing, it infuses each step towards that goal with meaning and clarifies each piece as it fits into the larger picture.

The answer is likely a combination – which is only reasonable once we understand the relationship between the Exodus and the rest of Jewish history.

Besides the obligation to remember/relive it, the Exodus is presented in T'nakh in several contexts:

As a basis for the relationship between God and the B'nai Yisra'el – "I am YHVH, your God who took you out of the land of Mitzrayim, out of the house of slavery." (Shemot 20:2) (see Ibn Ezra there);

As a motivation for keeping many of the Mitzvot – e.g. just scales (Vayyikra 19:35-36);

As an internalization of developing proper characteristics: "Do not oppress the stranger – for you know the soul of the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Mitzrayim" (Shemot 23:9);

As a defining factor governing relationships with neighboring nations – "...do not reject the Egyptian, for you were a stranger in his land." (Devarim 23:8);

As a demonstration of the rebellious nature of the B'nai Yisra'el – "Remember how you angered YHVH your God in the desert... (Devarim 9:7);

As a remembrance of the faith we had in God – "I have remembered the kindness of your youth...following Me in the desert..." (Yirmiyahu 2:2);

As a demonstration of God's love for us – "Not due to your being the greatest among the nations...rather, out of His love for you...did YHVH take you out of Mitzrayim..." (Devarim 7:8-9);

There are many more facets of the Exodus experience – but it becomes clear that the entire story is something of a historic metaphor for Jewish existence – our relationship(s) with God, with each other, with other nations – our development of national and personal character and so on, are all rooted in this event which took place 3300 years ago – but which continues to take place in every generation.

The goal of the evening, then, is to not only identify with those slaves who marched out of Mitzrayim years ago under the protection of God and under the leadership of His messenger, Moshe – but to identify with all other aspects of Jewish history which are encapsulated in this story. That is, however, only a piece of the goal. Since a central part of the Exodus experience (and later "repeats") was Shirah, brought about by a deep sense of utter gratitude to God (we read about it explicitly at the Sea – but there were doubtless other occasions when the B'nai Yisra'el sang praises to God during the process of the Exodus). The goal of the evening is, therefore, to totally live through Jewish history – with the perception of it all bringing us to sincere and heartfelt Shira.

## **II. STRUCTURE OF THE SEDER**

### **A: THE MITZVOT**

In the beginning of the shiur, I pointed out that the "Seder" is really an ordering – or sequencing – of the various Mitzvot which we are obligated to perform on this evening. Before understanding the nature of that order and its structure, let's take a look at those Mitzvot:

I. Mitzvot unique to the night

A. From the Torah mid'Orayta

1. Eating Matzah 2. Telling the Story : Haggadah

B. From the Rabbis – mid'Rabanan

1. Eating Maror (although the Torah commands us to eat Maror, that is only within the context of eating the Korban Pesach (Pesach offering) – without the Korban, the Mitzvah is "only" Rabbinic in source.

2. Drinking four cups of wine

3. Displaying Haroset

4. Hallel (Shirah)

5. Reclining

II. Mitzvot not unique to the night

A. mid'Orayta

1. Kiddush (if Shabbat) 2. Birkat haMazon (blessings after a meal)

B. mid'Rabanan

1. Kiddush (if not Shabbat – according to most Rishonim, Kiddush on Yom Tov is Rabbinic in source) 2. Blessings before food and before doing Mitzvot

As mentioned above, these Mitzvot (at least in most cases) could have been performed independently; but they are interwoven in such a way as to generate the experiential matrix which lies at the heart of the Leil haSeder.

## **B: THE FOUR CUPS – FOUR PARTS OF THE SEDER**

Although the Yerushalmi (Pesahim 10:1) provides a series of “fours” in the T’nakh (most famously the “four terms of salvation” from Shemot 6) to explain the reason for four cups; it seems from the internal Halakhot of the Seder that the reason that there are four cups is because there are four “occasions” for “Shirah” in one form or another at the Seder. The Talmud (Arakhin 11a) rules that Ein Omrin Shirah Ela ‘Al haYayim – “Shirah” is only sung over wine. The four points in the seder where we drink are four “poles” of Shirah.

### **1. KIDDUSH**

Kiddush is the conventional first part of any Shabbat or Yom Tov meal – although the words change here, Kiddush is still Kiddush. However, the two major differences here are telling. Unlike any other Kiddush, at Leil haSeder, people recline, in a manner of royalty, while drinking. In addition, unlike any other Kiddush, everyone must have his or her own cup and drink the proper amount. Clearly, then, this Kiddush is somewhat unique. Both of these differences point to the essential difference – tonight we are “B’nai Horin” – nobility and royalty. Each of us has his or her own glass and we all recline like royalty. This is, however, still Kiddush.

### **2. MAGGID**

The second cup, which sits (filled) in front of us throughout the entire Maggid (telling the story) – is drunk at the end of that section. That section, as above, moves us from telling and “old” story, to putting ourselves into the story – to praising God for OUR salvation (more about that later). That praise is certainly Shirah and must be said over wine – cup #2.

### **3. BIRKAT HAMAZON**

As to whether Birkat haMazon T’una Kos – Birkat HaMazon must always be said over a cup of wine (held by the leader of the blessings – the mezamen) see Shulhan Arukh and commentaries at OC 182; however, it seems that we are again doing what we did at Kiddush – turning a “one person drinks” situation into an “everybody drinks” – hence, Shirah.

### **4. HALLEL**

The Hallel at the Seder is broken into two parts – the first part (Psalms 113-114) which focus on the Exodus, is said as the culmination of telling the story. However, there is another part of Hallel to be said – the Shirah for the rest of Jewish history – including the awaited-future which we imagine has already happened immediately after the meal. This Shirah is an anticipatory one, thanking God for the redemption for which we wait. (My high school Rabbi, Rabbi Yoel Sperka, pointed out that the verse in Psalms Kol Rina vi’Y’shua’ b’Ohalei Tzaddikim – “the voice of gladness and salvation is heard in the tents of the righteous” – (Tehillim 118:15) is presented in a seemingly backwards fashion – first, there should be the salvation, then the gladness. However, he explained, that is the way of the righteous – to thank God for a salvation even before it has been realized.) The final cup, then, is the Shirah for the anticipated redemption.

These four cups mark off the four basic parts of the Seder – Kiddush, telling the story/identifying with the story/praising God, the meal (including all of those Mitzvot associated with eating) and the praise for the anticipated redemption.

## **C: MATZAH AND WINE**

As mentioned above, the wine is central to the Seder as it is the vehicle for Shirah. Clearly (as indicated in the italicized directions throughout the Haggadah) the Matzah is the central symbol at the table. Whenever engaged in story-telling, we keep the Matzah uncovered – and at least once during Maggid (R. Gamliel says:...) we lift it up.

Matzah is called Lehem ‘Oni – (Devarim 16:3) – which literally means “bread of poverty” – or “poor man’s bread”. For that reason, it is flat and tasteless. And for that reason, we have a broken piece among the three (or two – Rambam) Matzot over which we say “Hamotzi”.

In addition, the word “Oni” could be associated with the word for “response” – (La’anot) – and Sh’muel (Pesahim 115b) makes this connection. Matzah is the bread over which we respond to questions. In other words, it is the focal point for the story-telling.

The pendulum-swinging between wine (Kiddush) and Matzah (Ha Lachma ‘Anya) and wine (v’Hi She’amda) and Matza (Tzei ul’Mad)

and wine (L'fikhakh) reflects the way that information (story-telling – with the Matzah as the “show-and-tell” piece) and reaction (Shirah -with the wine) build upon each other to the beautiful crescendo of “Ga’al Yisr’ael”. We will examine the particulars of this “buildup” later on.

## D: THE TARGET AUDIENCE OF THE SEDER

Common convention holds that the Leil haSeder is a “children’s night” – nothing could be more misleading. While the Torah commands us in four different places (and in four different ways) to teach our children about the Exodus on this night, the Torah also commands us in two other places to “remember” the Exodus. As we shall see when examining the “introductory” part of the Maggid, there are two distinct obligations, directed at two different audiences.

The obligation towards the children (which may devolve solely or chiefly upon the direct parents of each child) involves several components:

- (1) Imparting to them specific information about the Exodus;
- (2) Gearing that information to each child based on his attitude, background and sophistication;
- (3) Using specific objects to teach the child and
- (4) Using the “question-answer” method to teach – and, if the child doesn’t ask, provoking questions through odd behavior (e.g. hiding the Matzah, dipping vegetables in a liquid, etc.)

In this obligation, there is clearly a teacher (father) and a student (child).

On the other hand, everyone is obligated to participate in story-telling with each other, expanding upon the story as much as possible and analyzing in detail the components of the story. This “adult” (or, better yet, “peer”) component is different as follows:

- (1 ) It does not demand specific information be imparted, just involvement with the story all night;
- (2 ) Although any conversation, in order to be successful, must be on a level appropriate for the participants, there is no “leveling” involved here;
- (3 ) There are no objects associated with this teaching (as adults are able to think in abstract terms and generally do not use “show-and-tell” for learning) and
- (4 ) The method is discussive, not necessarily question-answer. There are no “provocations” brought on by strange behavior as part of this obligation.

In contradistinction to the “child” obligation, there are no teachers or students here.

By the way, there is no age limit for either category. There are young children who are already well-versed and enthusiastic who could easily join in with the “adults” (although their father may yet have a particular obligation to engage them in question-and-answer parrying); and there are certainly many adults who lack the background and are just starting out. “Children” and “adults” should be understood as archetypes, not as definite divisions. (See also Rambam, Hilkhot Hametz uMatza 7:1 and 7:2 – the two obligations are clearly presented as independent pieces).

The experience of the Leil haSeder is targeted at everyone present at the table. The scholars, the children, the (temporarily) disaffected, the sophisticated, the eager and the simple. When we left Egypt, Mosheh declared to Pharaoh: “We will go out with our youths and with our aged ones, with our sons and with our daughters...” (Shemot 10:9). That is the goal of the Seder – to recreate the communal experience of everyone going out – but that is a great challenge which demands multiple modes of education.

## E: BASIC BREAKDOWN OF MAGGID

### 1. PROVOKING QUESTIONS

After Kiddush, we immediately begin the story-telling (one could even argue that the reclining during Kiddush is also a provocation for the children to ask – evidenced by “reclining” as one of the “four questions”). By washing (no room here to get into that!) and dipping, we arouse the curiosity of the children (of all ages) who are unfamiliar with the practice. Then, we break a Matzah and hide it – keeping the children ever more interested – if not in the goings on, at least in the outcome of the “hunt”.

A note about the broken Matzah: as I pointed out above, we have a broken Matzah because of the “poverty” angle of Matzah – but, for that purpose, we could just bring 2 (or 1) and a half Matzot to the table to start with! We break it as part of the Seder to arouse the questions.

We then engage the child(ren) with their questions (the four questions is an entire piece which deserves its own shiur) – and we offer a very quick response (which, if you look carefully, isn’t really an answer to any of the questions.)

### 2. INTRODUCING THE MITZVAH

We then have several introductory paragraphs, which belong to a different shiur (perhaps next year?). However – one note: you will see that the two obligations of “informing” (children) and “discussing” (adults) are outlined quite clearly in these introductory paragraphs. On the one hand, we have the five sages, expansively staying up all night in B’nei B’rak, discussing the Exodus; on the other hand, we have the paragraph “Yakhol meRosh Chodesh” – which clearly limits the Mitzvah of “informing” to a particular time-frame. Note that according to the latter paragraph, the Mitzvah of Haggadah only applies when the Pesach, Matzah and Maror are in front of us. According to R. Elazar b. Azariah, the Pesach may not be eaten after midnight (Pesahim 120b). Why then did he stay up

all night discussing the Exodus? He should have left at midnight! Rather, the Mitzvah of “informing the children”, which is tied to the particular objects at the Seder, begins and ends when those objects are brought and removed. The Mitzvah of “discussing” goes on all night.

### **3. MIT'HILAH 'OVDEI 'AVODAH ZARAH...**

We then begin the pre-history – with a piece about Avraham being chosen by God. The reason for this inclusion is based upon the ruling of the Mishnah in Pesahim that we must begin the story with “disgrace” and end with “praise”. Rav and Sh'muel disagree about the “disgrace” meant by the Mishnah – Rav says it refers to the disgrace of our originally being idol-worshippers and Sh'muel maintains that it connects with the disgrace of being enslaved. We follow both leads – although the clear emphasis is on the disgrace of slavery.

There is something else lurking in this paragraph; if we look carefully at the verses chosen (from Yehoshua's farewell speech), we see the theme of wandering already introduced into our history. This sets the tone that the Exodus experience was part – and the archetypal example of – Jewish history. In addition, the two “extra” verses (after the “idolatry” verse) seem unnecessary and somewhat disconnected from the “disgrace” of idolatry -putatively the point of this paragraph. Rather, these two verses help connect the Abrahamic movement with the Mitzrayim experience – by linking Avraham – Yitzchak – Ya'akov – his children – Mitzrayim.

### **4. V'HI SHE'AMDAH**

As I pointed out above, this paragraph is a mini-Shirah, inserted at this juncture to widen the scope of our story (as has just been done with the Yehoshua' paragraph) to encompass the entire historical experience of the Jewish people. What we are about to tell is not just a story about Egypt, Pharaoh and our ancestors – it is about Shushan, Haman and our (more recent) ancestors; it is about Berlin, Hitler and our grandparents – it is about being Jewish.

### **5. TZEI UL'MAD**

This next section is one of the two central pieces of the story-telling (see Rambam, Hilkhot Hametz uMatzah 7:5). The rabbis selected this piece of Midrash (mostly from the Sifri) as it analyzes and interprets four of the verses from the Mikra Bikkurim (recited when bringing your first fruits to the Beit HaMikdash – Devarim 26:5-8); there are many explanations as to why they selected this one. I would like to suggest that since the goal of the evening is Shirah, and this is the only section in the Torah where the Exodus narrative is presented in the context of (commanded) Shirah – it is the most appropriate piece to use for describing the Exodus experience.

The “Tzei ul'Mad” section takes us through the ten plagues (and R. Yehudah's acrostic).

### **6. R. YOSSI HAG'LILI, R. ELAZAR AND R. AKIVA**

The three paragraphs which follow are surely the strangest in the Haggadah (besides “Had Gadya”). Not only are the Midrashim a bit hard to “buy into”, they also seem to have no place here. Explanation below...

### **7. DAYYENU**

This selection is really made up of two paragraphs – the 14 Dayyenus (which list 15 great “Ma'alot” which God did for us) and the “Al Achat...” which lists them again, without the “if God had done X but not Y...” formula. Again – explanation to follow...

### **8. RABBAN GAMLIEL**

This section is the second of the two core pieces of the Haggadah. Here we explain the symbolism of each of the three central foods at the table (theoretically – these days we have to make do with only two). It is interesting that each of these foods, along with their attendant explanations, represents one of the three types of experiences we go through as a people –

- (a) Pesach – chosenness, royalty, protection – i.e. the good times
- (c) Maror – persecution, slavery, vulnerability – i.e. the bad times
- (b) Matzah – poverty (but freedom), refugees (but alive and unharmed) – i.e. the slow process of building up from Maror back to Pesach.

The two cores of the Haggadah – “Tzei ul'Mad” and “Rabban Gamliel” also seem to be connected with the two obligations that evening – “Tzei ul'Mad” is a direct invitation to study together, to examine, to discuss – i.e. the “adult” mode. “Rabban Gamliel”, on the other hand, directs the attention to physical symbols, is only related to verses (no interpretation) and demands only that specific information be transmitted.

One more comment on “Pesach/Matza/Maror” – as we know from later on in the Seder (“Korekh”), Hillel's opinion is that all three must be eaten as one. Perhaps the lesson is that identifying as a Jew cannot be done selectively – our reconfirmation of our membership in Am Yisrael must include a readiness to celebrate when things are good for our people (Pesach), to share in our sorrows (Maror – see Rambam, Hilkhot Teshuvah 3:11) – and to do the hard work to recover from the difficulties we encounter (Matzah).

### **9. B'KHOL DOR VADOR**

This is the turning point, where we step into the story and make it our own. Rambam has an interesting read here – instead of *lir'ot et 'atzmo* (to view himself), he reads *l'har'ot et 'atzmo* – to show himself (as if he left Mitzrayim). This is the source for those customs of walking around the table with the Matzah (in a cover) on the person's back (as if leaving) and other “acting out” Minhagim.

### **10. LEFIKHAKH – GA'AL YISRA'EL**

Story turns to Shirah. With the one word – “Lefikhakh”, we acknowledge that, since all of these wonderful things have happened to us,

we are duty-bound to thank God for all of it. Note that in the first paragraph, we thank God who did miracles for “our ancestors and us” – whereas in the final paragraph – for “us and our ancestors” – note how the first two paragraphs of the Hallel transform us to center stage.

## **F: BACK TO THE MIDRASHIM AND DAYYENU**

Above, I left two sections unexplained – the three Midrashim of R. Yossi haGlili, R. Elazar and R. Akiva – and the Dayyenu. Since they seem to form a bridge between the two core pieces of the Haggadah – and they seem a bit strange on their own – an explanation is in order.

### **1. KOL HAMARBEH HAREI ZEH MESHUBACH**

In the introductory paragraph of the Haggadah (containing the “short response” to the children) we end off by saying “anyone who adds/increases/does more to tell the story of the Exodus, this is praiseworthy.” The question could be raised (I have heard this question in the name of the Netziv) – since we are obligated to be involved with the story all night, how can we “increase” beyond the obligation?

Besides quantity/time, there are two other ways to “increase the story”. First of all, a person could increase the praise for God by finding more praiseworthy elements in the story which are “hiding” in the verses. Second, a person could increase the scope of the story by adding his own novel explanations. In these three paragraphs, we find each of these great sages adding their own pieces to the story – increasing the story, if you will. They are also adding to the praise for God – since they are multiplying (through valid Midrashic means) the numbers of miracles God performed for us during the Exodus. These three paragraphs, coming on the heels of the obligatory “Tzei ul’Mad” piece, demonstrate for us how we should take our own place at the Seder – by adding our own novel ideas and by increasing God’s praise within the story. Note that, in the tradition of our sages, each of them builds on the previous ones’ ideas. Instead of negating and ignoring, we validate our fellows’ Torah by adding on to it and including it in our own.

### **2. SHIREI HAMA’ALAH AND DAYYENU**

Now, let’s reorient ourselves. Before reciting/singing Dayyenu, we have told the story and discussed it – and, hopefully, followed the lead of R. Yossi haGlili, R. Elazar and R. Akiva by sharing our own input into the story. Now, we look back on all that we have retold – each of these miracles alone is enough to obligate us to thank God and have this thanksgiving feast.

We could just list all of the things which God did for us; however, in order to bring home the point and not to lose sight of all the “little” things which led to the Exodus – and all of the later miracles which led us to the goal of that Exodus (Sinai, Israel, Beit haMikdash) – we detail them out, one by one.

Earlier, I mentioned that the evening allows us to imagine our way through Jewish history. At this point, as we are about to move into Shirah, we imagine ourselves in Yerushalayim, celebrating at the Beit HaMikdash. The Beit HaMikdash had fifteen steps (Ma’ilot), ascending from one section to another. On Sukkot, the Levi’im would climb these stairs, singing one of the fifteen “Shirei haMa’alah” on each – until they reached the top (Sukkah 51b). By detailing 15 things for which we give thanks (note that they are easily divisible into three even groups of five – line them up with Pesach, Matzah and Maror!) and referring to these kindnesses as “Ma’ilot”, we bring ourselves back to the Beit HaMikdash. This prepares us to recite Rabban Gamliel’s dictum -which includes the (temporarily) missing Pesach – and to fully identify with those who are redeemed.

## **III. POSTSCRIPT**

There is, of course, so much more to explain about the Seder. I hope that this shiur has proven to be a helpful guide in understanding the basic goals of the evening, the methods through which these goals are achieved and the way in which the individual components of the Seder help to create the experiential matrix of Jewish history, jammed into one evening, leaving us singing thanks to God for every piece of it.

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## **Haggadah shel Pesach: An Overview and Explanation of Three Sections from the Haggadah**

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

### **I. HA LACHMA ‘ANYA**

#### **A. The Text**

Just before beginning the “question-answer” format of the Seder, we raise the Matzah and make a three-tiered statement:

- 1) This is the bread of poverty/oppression that our ancestors ate in Egypt.
- 2) Anyone who is hungry, let him come and eat, anyone who needs to, come and partake in our Pesach (offering?) (celebration?)
- 3) This year we are here, next year – in Eretz Yisra’el. This year, we are slaves, next year – noblemen.

As can be seen, the first “tier” is a declaration regarding the Matzah – it is the lehem ‘oni (see D’varim 16:3) which our ancestors ate in Egypt. The second “tier” is an invitation; and the final piece is a prayer, that next year we should be freemen/noblemen in our Land.

#### **B. Approach #1 – an Explanation of “Yahatz”**

Just before beginning the “question-answer” format of the Seder, we raise the Matzah and According to the Rashbam, this declaration is an explanation of the previous action – breaking the Matzah in half. Although we need to have a broken piece of Matzah as part of our three (or two – according to Rambam, Rif and many other Rishonim) Matzot, we could set the table that way before the meal. Instead, we bring three (or two) complete Matzot to the table and break one of them in front of the assemblage (the most likely reason is to further provoke the children’s interest). Rashbam explains that we then explain – in the vernacular (Aramaic at that time) – why we broke this Matzah – because it represents the bread of poverty which our ancestors ate. (See further down, in our explanation on Mah Nishtanah, for a further development of this idea.)

One of the difficulties with this approach (besides it being marked as part of “Maggid” in all standard Haggadot) is that this doesn’t explain the rest of the paragraph. The declaration regarding the Matzot explains “Yahatz” – but what does that have to do with the rest of the paragraph?

#### C. Approach #2 – Re-Creation of Mitzrayim

The Rashbam explains that the rest of the paragraph – the invitation and the prayer – are not part of the explanation to the children – rather, this is what the B’nei Yisra’el would say to each other in Egypt – (it is unclear whether he means that they said this that night – see below for a problem with that understanding – or that they would speak to each other that way in general) inviting each other to share their meager meal. The prayer at the end is also a re-creation of the Egypt experience; the B’nei Yisra’el prayed to God that the next year they would be freemen/noblemen in our Land.

The difficulty with this explanation is one of language – unlike the rest of the Haggadah, this paragraph is in Aramaic. If we insist that it be said in Aramaic, it can only be a “re-creation” of our Babylonian exile, with which we have associations with that language (even in the Tanakh). If it is truly to be part of the “fantasy” of the evening (see our shiur on “The Structure of the Seder”), it should be in Hebrew, like the rest of the Haggadah.

#### D. Approach #3 – The “Apologia” for the Seder.

Before presenting a new approach, I’d like to summarize and expand on the questions we have asked regarding “Ha Lachma’Anyah”:

Why is the paragraph in Aramaic?

How could we reasonably be inviting someone into our house for a Seder – at that late hour? This question becomes more impactful once we remind ourselves that no one may partake of a Pesach offering without having joined the Havurah of that particular offering in advance; what, then, is the import of yeitei v’yiph’sach – “let him come and partake of the Pesach”?

Why is the prayer at the end presented in a doubled form – here/Eretz Yisra’el, slaves/noblemen? Why not combine the two?

What is the purpose of this paragraph?

As we defined in an earlier shiur, the ultimate goal of the evening is “Shirah” – giving thanks to God for the Exodus which, from the perspective of that evening’s fantasy, has just happened. The vehicle for that Shirah is “Hallel”, beginning (but not limited to) T’hillim (Psalms) Ch. 113-118. Since this is an evening of Hallel, it is prudent for us to examine some of the factors which “make or break” a successful Hallel experience.

The Gemara in Megillah (14b) discusses the problem of Hallel on Purim – and why it is not said. The Gemara gives three answers:

- The Megillah is the Hallel (proper treatment of this issue is beyond the scope of this shiur; perhaps next Purim?)
- Hallel is not recited for a miracle which took place outside of the Land. (The Gemara challenges this by pointing out that the Exodus itself took place outside of the Land – and responds that before we entered the Land with Yehoshua, the entire world was “Hallel-accessible”; it was only after we entered and sanctified the Land that the rest of the world became excluded from that possibility.)
- Hallel is guided by the opening line: “Give thanks, you servants of God” – the implication being that we are only servants of God, and not (anymore) servants of Pharaoh. In spite of the great salvation of Purim, we were still enslaved to Ahashverosh.

When we think about the ultimate goal of the Exodus – to bring us to Eretz Yisra’el and realize the dream of being a free people, governed only by God’s laws, serving as a moral beacon for the rest of the world (see Yeshayah 2) – we must sadly admit that much of that goal has not yet been realized. Even those components which were “real” for a time are not now part of our reality. There is no Beit haMikdash, we continue to be scattered throughout the world and our position as instructors and guides for the world is sorely tarnished by our own ethical and religious weaknesses.

We come to a Seder with only one side of the Exodus experience – the poverty and oppression; the nobility and freedom are still part of an unrealized future and a nostalgic past. There are two roles for the Matzah – as an independent Mitzvah commemorating the refugee experience and as an auxiliary to the regal Pesach offering. The only one which we can honestly point to tonight is the “bread of oppression” – we are very similar to our ancestors in Egypt – before the salvation.

Now we can understand the paragraph. Before beginning our fantasy trip through Jewish history (one symptom of which is conversation around the table in Hebrew), we declare that we are celebrating a “poor” Seder – and we pray that next year, we should be able to do it “the right way”.

We make this declaration in the vernacular, as it is the last point of “reality” during the evening.

We ironically invite people in to share our “Pesach” – at once reminding ourselves that the Pesach is missing from the table as the Temple lies in ruins and we are far away from that glory while pointing to the sad situation that we could reasonably have fellow Jews who are hungry and need a place to have their Seder. (This is not close to the dreams we had for our future as we left Egypt). This invitation underscores the pain we feel that our Seder is so incomplete and must be a “fantasy” and removed from our reality if it is to be a celebration at all.

We then point to the two factors making our Hallel (the goal of the evening) incomplete – we are “here” (even those in Eretz Yisra’el say this because the rest of us are not yet home) and we are “slaves” (under foreign rule). As we saw above, these two features get in the way of a complete and proper Hallel.

At this point, we pour the second cup, signifying the redemption which we will reenact – and, God willing, live to experience in “real time”.

## II. MAH NISHTANAH

The “Four Questions”, as they are conventionally known, present us with several difficulties – best expressed with one question: Who is reasonably asking these questions?

If the asker is honestly “clueless” as to the special nature of the evening (as seems to be the case from the nature of the opening question), how does he know that we will later eat bitter herbs and will dip another time?

If, on the other hand, he is familiar with the rituals of the Seder and knows what to expect – then he already knows how this night is different?

Note: We never really answer these questions. Although we do explain why we eat Matzah (much later on – not very effective for a very young questioner), we never explicitly explain why we avoid Hametz (which seems to be the gist of the first “question.”) We certainly do explain the meaning of Maror – but, again that is much later. The final two questions (dipping and reclining) are never (explicitly) answered.

I would like to suggest an approach which is grounded in a basic understanding about the evening:

Although the ultimate goal of the evening is “Shirah”, achieved by reexperiencing the Exodus (and, through that experience, all of Jewish history) – this can only be accomplished by successfully informing all assembled about those events which we are endeavoring to reenact. After all, it is impossible to imagine life in Egypt without first learning about it: Haggadah (telling the story) is a necessary prerequisite to reexperiencing and thanking God.

As the Mekhilta (quoted in the Haggadah: “The Four Sons”) teaches us, the Torah commands us to teach every one of our children – in a way which is appropriate for each. Not only must each child be informed in a way that he can comprehend – but he must also be drawn into the Seder in a way which is effective – as well as getting a response in an appropriate and timely manner for his level of comprehension and attention span.

I would like to suggest that the opening paragraph – Ha Lachma ‘Anya – is directed chiefly at the “child who cannot ask”. Note that unlike the rest of the Haggadah, this section is not presented in a question-answer format (and, indeed, directly precedes the opening of that format). Note that the entire message of the Seder is summarized in those three lines:

- a) This is what we experienced;
- b) We welcome everyone to join us;
- c) We pray for a completion of the process.

Ha Lachma ‘Anya, following this line of thinking, is said in the vernacular because the “child who cannot ask” will not be attracted to something in a foreign tongue.

Now, let’s take a look at the Seder from the perspective of the “third son” (“Tam” or “Tipesh”). I will assume that this child, who, in the wording of the Torah, can only say Mah Zot (“What is this”), is so young that he doesn’t yet have a sense of memory from previous years (somewhere between 4 and 6 years old). He does, however, have a sense of “conventional behavior” from regular and Shabbat meals.

What does he see? Kiddush (so far, so good); washing (okay – but why no B’rakhah?) – then, instead of the usual bread, father takes out a small vegetable, dips it in something and says the B’rakhah over it. This is a clear departure from the norm. Then, father takes the Matzot, breaks one and announces that it will be hidden until the end of the meal etc. This is decidedly strange and should evoke the question: “What is going on here?” from this child.

[That the child would ask here is premised on a household which encourages questions and which does not smother a child’s natural curiosity – food for thought].  
Now – a child who asks this type of question would reasonably be afraid of ridicule (from older siblings, perhaps) over such a “dumb” question. Father does the most effective thing here to continue to promote questions – he not only validates the question by attending to it, he also strengthens the question by adding his own information to it. “Not only have we done strange things until now, we will also avoid Hametz, eat bitter herbs etc.”

There aren’t four questions – there is one – “Why is this night so different”? The father supports this question (which is answered in the next paragraph) with added information, thus strengthening the child’s interest in participating in the education happening around the table.

## III. DAYYENU

The section known as Dayyenu is comprised of two parts: The “If...but not” section, in which each stanza ends with Dayyenu and the Al Achat Kamah v’Khamah paragraph which follows it. I would like to pose several questions regarding these two paragraphs: [I strongly suggest following this section with Haggadah in hand].

1) It seems that the Ba’al haHaggadah (author) “stretches” the narrative a bit, including both “bringing us close to Har Sinai” and “giving us the Torah”, both “taking care of our needs for forty years in the desert” and “feeding us the Mahn”. Why the stretch?

2) Why does this paragraph come immediately before “Rabban Gamliel says...”?

- 3) What is the meaning of the rarely-used word Ma'alot (kindnesses) in the opening line?
- 4) An ancillary question: Why do we use the Arami Oved Avi paragraph as the focal text of the Haggadah – and not the narratives in Sh'mot?
- 5) If this is part of the Exodus narrative, why does it end up at the Beit haMikdash – instead of at Sinai or at the Reed Sea?
- 6) Why are there two paragraphs of “Dayyenu”?
- 7) What is the meaning of Dayyenu? Is it even thinkable that we could exist without every one of these events?

In order to understand this, we have to review the point made in the “The Structure of the Seder” shiur – the goal of the evening is to relive all of Jewish history (using the Exodus as the archetype) and to give thanks to God in the form of Shirah.

The central locus of Shirah in our lives is the Beit haMikdash. Not only is our Shirah limited as a result of – and in response to – the destruction of the Temple, but one of the Avodot (worship actions) of the Levi'im performed there is Shirah.

Dayyenu is a form of Shirah – in two parts. The two paragraphs, in the style of “Talmudic” reasoning, establish the motivation for giving such thanks. Each one of these great things which God did for us is enough, on its own, to obligate us to sing praises and thanks to God. In other words, the “Dayyenu” does not mean “it would have been enough for us to exist”, it means “it would have been enough reason to give thanks” (Question #7). This is the premise established in the first paragraph. The second paragraph takes this argument to its logical conclusion: How much more so (Al Achat Kamah v'Khamah) that He did all of these things for us – are we obligated to give thanks (Question #6).

As mentioned, the goal of the evening is to relive all of Jewish history – through the prism of the Exodus. Keeping in mind that the goal of the Exodus was to bring us to Eretz Yisra'el and for us to build a House for God in the place where He chooses to make His Name dwell (i.e. Yerushalayim) – it is reasonable that we would want to include all steps leading up to that event in our Shirah of the evening (Question #5).

This explains why we use the Mikra Bikkurim paragraph (Devarim 26) as the springboard for the Haggadah – it is the Torah's example of a later generation of Jews, standing in the Beit Hamikdash and giving thanks to God (the ideal Seder – see above at Ha Lachma 'Anya) and describing the process of the Exodus (Question #4).

The Ba'al haHaggadah wants to evoke the image of the Beit haMikdash (and enhance the “fantasy” of our Seder taking place there) by utilizing Mikdash-associations. The word Ma'alot (lit. “steps”) immediately brings the 15 Shirei haMa'alah – the fifteen chapters of T'hillim (120-134) which begin with the title Shir haMa'alot (except #121 – Shir laMa'alot).

According to the Gemara in Sukkah (51b), these fifteen songs of “steps” were sung by the Levi'im as they ascended the fifteen steps from the Women's Courtyard to the Israelite Courtyard in the Beit HaMikdash – during the celebration of Sukkot (which begins on the fifteenth of Tishri). The use of Ma'alot in this context cannot help but evoke the Beit HaMikdash and the beautiful Shirah sung there (Question #3).

As we explained in the “Structure” shiur, the three symbolic foods (Pesach, Matzah and Maror) which Rabban Gamliel maintains must be explained – and which Hillel held must be eaten as one – are representative of the three stages in Jewish history – slavery/oppression (Maror), royalty and chosenness (Pesach) and refugee/transition (Matzah). If you look carefully at the Dayyenu, you will see that there are fifteen events/miracles recalled in that list – which break down very neatly into three groups of five each:

- A) Maror (in Egypt): Exodus, plagues, warring with their gods, slaying the firstborn and giving us their money;
- B) Matzah (transition): splitting the sea, walking us through, drowning them, giving us our needs, the Mahn;
- C) Pesach (special relationship with God): Shabbat, Sinai, Torah, the Land, the Beit haMikdash.

This explains why this section is immediately followed by Rabban Gamliel's statement. Once we have sung all of God's praises for each of these three steps, we explain the association with the foods in front of us (Question #2).

This also explains why some of the items seem to be a bit “stretched”; the Ba'al haHaggadah created a symmetry of these three “groups” in order to highlight (via foreshadowing) the implication of Rabban Gamliel's triumvirate of Jewish historical stages (Question #1).

By doing so, he also created fifteen “steps” from Egypt to the Beit HaMikdash – corresponding to the fifteen steps inside the Beit haMikdash itself. Just as these songs were sung on the holiday of the fifteenth (Sukkot), so we give thanks on the night of the fifteenth (Pesach).

One final note: Since the Korban Pesach is symbolic of our “chosenness”, we now understand why the Beit haMikdash is referred to as “Beit haB'hirah” (“the chosen house”) – it is reflective of our being chosen by God as He passed over our houses in Egypt.

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# OH R N E T

PESACH ISSUE: TZAV, SHEMINI, TAZRIA/METZORA, ACHAREI MOT/KEDOSHIM  
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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### Tzav

#### Shoelaces

"And raise up the ash..." (6:3)

**A**t first sight, some things in Judaism may appear somewhat weird.

I remember someone who wasn't religious discovering the halacha that you should tie your left shoelace before your right. He said to me, "I find it hard to believe that G-d cares about which shoe I tie first."

I could have explained to him that we tie the left shoe lace first as a gesture of respect to the leather strap of the *tefillin*, which is worn on the left arm. However, I decided that what was bothering him was something more fundamental.

Those of us who were born in the "West" may have grown up in a world where religion is a weekend activity. The role of the clergy is often no more than to "hatch, match, and dispatch." Religion is then compartmentalized, and, in this way, so too is G-d. This mindset is that if there is a G-d, He is limited to making guest appearances on the weekend. Any further intrusion into our lives is considered extremely irksome, as Lord Melbourne remarked in 1898 on hearing a sermon: "Things have come to a pretty pass when religion is allowed to invade the sphere of private life."

Judaism, however, doesn't see religion as a weekend leisure activity. It is not just one aspect of life. It is life itself.

Judaism views every single activity in life as an opportunity to bring ourselves closer to G-d. What we eat. What we think. What we say. What we do. What we don't do. Nothing in this world is devoid of the potential for spirituality. Nothing is neutral. If the whole purpose of the world is for us to recognize G-d, then everything in this world must be created to that end. The alternative would be that there are vast areas of this world which have no part in G-d's purpose, and that would be accusing the Master of the world of tremendous sloppiness in His creation.

In the above verse, the word for "ash" is *deshen*. *Deshen* can be read as an acronym for "*davar shelo nechshav*" — "something without importance." When the Torah says, "And raise up the ash," it is telling us to take everything, even those things that seem to us like ash, insignificant and without value, and place them next to the Altar. To raise up the little, unthought-of parts of our lives and to use them to serve G-d. There is nothing in this world that cannot be used to serve Him.

Even the humblest shoelace.

**OHR SOMAYACH WISHES YOU  
A PESACH KASHER V'SAMEACH  
-A KOSHER AND FESTIVE PESACH**

## With Courage and Bravery

*"I will be sanctified through those who are nearest Me." (10:3)*

**O**nce upon a time you could actually watch some movies. Sir Michael Balcon, the son of Jewish refugees from Latvia, was famous for giving Alfred Hitchcock his first directing opportunity and for making Ealing Studios the vanguard of the golden era of British Films in the 1950s. The "Ealing Comedies" were distinguished by the fact that they all had a moral: They were a kind of 90-minute black-and-white *mussar shmuze*.

I think my favorite was "A Last Holiday" starring Alec Guinness (*Obi Wan Kenobi* for you millennials). Guinness plays an unassuming and unmarried salesman. He goes to the doctor and he's told that he has a rare disease and he has precisely six weeks to live. So what does he do? He takes his life savings out of the bank and scoots to the ritziest hotel on the coast, where the glitterati of commerce, politics and entertainment hang out. Because he feels he has nothing to lose, he is completely candid and honest with everyone he meets. Everyone is drawn to him like a magnet. Nothing is as attractive as honesty. His advice is taken by politicians and moguls of industry. At the end of the film he finds out that his x-ray photos had been mistakenly swapped — and that he was never ill in the first place.

Ask yourself: If you knew that you had six weeks to live, how would you live your life? The way you're living it now? Would you waste your time arguing with your wife or your neighbors? I don't think so. Would you agonize over where you're going to take the kids on vacation or what color you should paint the living room?

I'm writing this towards the end of Adar, and right now no one has any idea what the next six weeks will bring. (Hashem should have mercy!) But our lives have come into focus in a way that they never were before. The only thing that is certain in life is death. And the only thing that matters is the way we leave this life. Will we leave trying to enjoy the last morsel of this world on our lips — or will we leave the world in self-sacrifice, with courage and bravery? That's really all that matters. May Hashem give us the courage to rise to the occasion and live our lives as though we only had six more weeks.

## Tazria

### Far Away

*"The Kohen shall look, and behold! The affliction has covered his entire flesh – then he will declare the affliction to be pure." (13:13)*

**T***zara'at*, frequently mistranslated as leprosy, was a disease caused by spiritual defects, such as speaking *lashon hara* (slander). (Nowadays we are on such a low level spiritually that our bodies do not reflect the state of our spiritual health in this way.)

The verse here is puzzling, for if "the affliction has covered the entire flesh" of the person, this must mean that he is far from pure, and yet the Torah tells us that the *Kohen* shall "declare the affliction *pure*." How can he be pure if the affliction covers his whole body?

The answer is that he is so far from being cured, having ignored all the warnings to do *teshuva* (repentance), that the disease ceases to perform any further purpose. Therefore, the Torah specifically says *not* that the *Kohen* shall declare *him* pure, but rather that "the *affliction* is pure." But he, on the other hand, is as far from purity as is possible.

- *Based on the Ha'amek Davar and Rabbi S. R. Hirsch*

## Metzora

### Boomerang

"And he shall be brought to the Kohen." (14:3)

**W**hen a person speaks *lashon hara*, it indicates that he has no concept of the power of speech. He considers words to be insignificant in comparison to actions. As the nursery rhyme says, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me."

Nothing could be further from the truth. When a person speaks evil, he awakes a prosecutor in Heaven, not only against the target of his speech, but also against himself. An angel stands by the side of each of us recording our every word. In order to teach those who speak slander the power of just one word, the Torah instructs that the offender be brought to the *Kohen*. But, even as he is on his way to the *Kohen*, his body covered with *tzara'at* for all to see, and until the *Kohen* actually pronounces the word "Impure!" he is still considered totally pure. Similarly, once he is impure, he cannot return to his former status of purity, even though his disease has healed completely, until the *Kohen* pronounces him to be spiritually pure once more. From this, the speaker of *lashon hara* is taught to reflect on the power of each and every word. For, with one word he can be made an outcast, and with one word he can be redeemed.

• Based on Ohel Yaakov

## Kedoshim

### Being Normal

"You shall be holy..." (19:1)

**I**t always struck me, that whenever I had the privilege to meet a great Torah Sage – how normal he seemed. It was, in fact, as if he defined the yardstick of normalcy. After meeting this person, others seemed somewhat less than normal.

The Alshich explains that G-d instructed Moshe to call all the people together when giving them the commandment to be holy in order that it would be clear that holiness is not something achievable by only the few. Every Jew has the potential to be holy, and thus it follows that if every Jew has the potential to be holy, holiness is not a voluntary affair, but an obligation.

Holiness does not consist of mortifying the flesh or of extreme abstinence. Holiness does not mean rolling in ice or lying on a bed of nails. Holiness means being more and more normal. Holy Jews live normal married lives. They eat normally. They breathe normally. However, everything they do is with consideration and within measure.

Holiness means being normal even under the most abnormal situations. It means never compromising with our lower desires, but at the same time recognizing that we are part physical beings. Being holy means resisting that extra, excessive spoonful of *cholent*, even if the *kashrut* is top-notch. Above all, holiness means going beyond the technical fulfillment of the mitzvahs. It means sanctifying that which is permitted. When something is outright forbidden, it is much easier to steer clear of it. There's no room for negotiation with our lower personas. However, when something is permitted, there is always the temptation to push the edge of the envelope. And even though technically one could stay within the letter of the law, the commandment to be holy tells us that there is more to mitzvah observance than the letter of the law. Observing the spirit of the law is itself a mitzvah. That's what it means to be normal.

• Based on the Ramban

# TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Shabbat 23-57

## A Mother's Prayer

*Rav Huna said, “One who is careful to have good light on Shabbat will merit having children who are Torah scholars; one who is careful in fulfilling the mitzvah of mezuzah will merit having a beautiful home; one who is careful in fulfilling the mitzvah of tzitzit will merit having beautiful clothing; one who careful in fulfilling the mitzvah of kiddush will merit many full barrels of wine (i.e. wealth).”*

**T**he halacha to have good light on Shabbat is codified in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 263. The Mishna Berurah explains that lighting candles for Shabbat is an obligation that is mainly to enhance fulfillment of the mitzvah of *oneg Shabbat* – enjoying Shabbat. He also cites our *gemara* that one

who is careful in this practice will merit children who are Torah scholars, as the Torah states, “For the lamp is a mitzvah and Torah is light.” The Mishna Berurah adds that it is therefore fitting for a woman to pray to Hashem after she lights that He will grant her children who will light up the world with Torah.

• *Shabbat 23b*

## The Entire Torah

*Hillel answered, “Do not do to your fellow man that which is hateful to you... This is the entire Torah. The rest is elucidation. Now, go and learn it.”*

**T**his is what the Sage Hillel told the person who came to convert to Judaism on condition that he would be taught the entire Torah while standing on one foot.

Hillel's teaching to “*Do not do to your friend that which is hateful to you*” is certainly a “rebranding” of the Torah

mitzvah to “Love one's fellow man as himself” (Vayikra 19:18). This teaching is a golden rule of thumb for fulfillment of every mitzvah of the Torah. It is a key principle to guide us in all that we do – not only for mitzvahs between one person and another, but also for mitzvahs between a person and Hashem (see Rashi's definition of “your friend”).

▪ *Shabbat 31a* ▪

## Living in Israel

*Rav Yehuda said, “Anyone who leaves Bavel to go up to Eretz Yisrael transgresses a positive mitzvah of the Torah, as it says, “They (the Jewish People) shall be brought to Babylon and there they shall be until I (Hashem) will take heed of them... and restore them to this place (Eretz Yisrael).” (Yirmiyahu 27:22)*

**T**his teaching of Rav Yehuda is codified by the Rambam as halacha for all times: “Just as it is forbidden to leave the chosen land for the Diaspora, it is also forbidden to leave Babylon for other lands, as Yirmiyahu states, ‘They (the Jewish People) shall be brought to Babylon and there they shall be until I

(Hashem) will take heed of them... and restore them to this place (Eretz Yisrael).”

Although the Rambam teaches that it is forbidden to leave Eretz Yisrael for the Diaspora (with a few exceptions, as he notes), he does not teach that it is mitzvah for a person to live in Eretz Yisrael. The

halachic matter of an obligation to live in Israel is a matter of well-known dispute between the Ramban and the Rambam.

The Torah states, “And you shall possess the Land and dwell in it, because I have given the Land to you as an inheritance.” (Bamidbar 33:53) The Ramban maintains that this verse teaches us that there is a mitzvah to settle in the Land of Israel, and that this mitzvah is applicable even in times of exile. “We have been commanded to inherit the Land that the Almighty One gave to our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov; not to leave it in the hands of other nations and not to leave it desolate. This is what G-d commanded them in the verse, “And you shall possess the Land...”

The Rambam, however, does not count this as a mitzvah in his listing of the 613 commandments, despite his statement in the Misneh Torah that “one should always dwell in the Land of Israel,” and despite his other numerous statements regarding the greatness and sanctity of the Land. (Hilchot Melachim 5:9-12.)

(For a thorough discussion of the various opinions regarding the proper understanding of the Rambam’s position — and how he understands the verse in Sefer Bamidbar — refer to Eretz Chamda by Rav Shaul Israeli.)

▪ *Shabbat 41a*

## Mitzvah Protection

*“Just as a dove is protected by its wings, so too is the Jewish nation protected by its mitzvahs.”*

**T**he *gemara* teaches that this comparison is alluded to in a verse of Tehillim (68:14) that describes the Jewish People and the mitzvahs as “the feathers of a dove covered with silver, and

its pinions with brilliant gold.” The Jewish nation is compared to a dove and the mitzvahs are compared to the dove’s feathers — which protect the dove from cold and from its enemies. (Rashi)

• *Shabbat 49a*

## Not a Mind Reader

*Rabbi Zeira said, “Even though they won’t accept your rebuke, you should nevertheless rebuke them.”*

**P**rior to this, Rabbi Zeira had told Rabbi Simon to rebuke a certain group of transgressors. However, Rabbi Simon declined to do so, claiming that his rebuking them would not effect a change in their ways for the better. To this, Rabbi Zeira countered that *“Even though they won’t accept your rebuke, you should nevertheless rebuke them.”* His reasoning: “How do you know for sure that they won’t accept your rebuke and change their ways?” Rabbi Zeira brings a support for his position from a teaching of Rabbi Acha b’Rabbi Chanina, as is explained in detail in the *gemara*.

It would seem that Rabbi Zeira’s way of thinking is obviously correct. Why would Rabbi Simon have thought differently in the first place and not have initially agreed to rebuke? From the words of Tosefot on the *daf*, we have the answer to this question.

Tosefot explains that Rabbi Zeira’s argument to rebuke them was because there was a *doubt* that perhaps the rebuke would be successful and the transgressors would do *teshuva*. But if it was certain that the transgressors would not heed the words of rebuke, they should not be rebuked — “Better that the transgressors remain *shogeg* (unaware that they were transgressing), and not be considered *meizid* (aware of the transgression and intentionally transgressing). Therefore, Rabbi Simon reasoned that the transgressors should not be rebuked, since they would not listen and the rebuke would only serve to make their transgression more serious (*meizid*). Rabbi Zeira explained to him that although he thought they would not accept his rebuke, he could not be 100% certain. And if there is a shadow of a doubt that the rebuke might work, there is a mitzvah to try one’s best. Only Hashem knows if the transgressors will reject the rebuke — or accept it.

• *Shabbat 55a*

# Q & A

## Tzav

### Questions

1. What separated the kohen's skin from the priestly garments?
2. How often were the ashes removed from upon the mizbe'ach? How often were they completely removed from the mizbe'ach?
3. If someone extinguishes the fire on the mizbe'ach, how many Torah violations has he transgressed?
4. The portion of a flour-offering offered on the mizbe'ach may not be chametz. But is the kohen's portion allowed to be chametz?
5. When a kohen is inaugurated, what offering must he bring?
6. What three baking processes were used to prepare the korban of Aharon and his sons?
7. What is the difference between a minchat kohen and a minchat Yisrael?
8. When is a kohen disqualified from eating from a chatat?
9. What is the difference between a copper and earthenware vessel regarding removing absorbed tastes?
10. Can an animal dedicated as an asham be replaced with another animal?
11. How does an asham differ from all other korbanot?
12. Unlike all other korbanot, what part of the ram or sheep may be placed on the mizbe'ach?
13. What three types of kohanim may not eat from the asham?
14. In which four instances is a korban todah brought?
15. Until when may a todah be eaten according to the Torah? Until when according to Rabbinic decree?
16. How does a korban become pigul?
17. Who may eat from a shelamim?
18. What miracle happened at the entrance of the Ohel Moed?
19. Other than Yom Kippur, what other service requires that the kohen separate from his family?
20. What are the 5 categories of korbanot listed in this Parsha?

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

### Answers

1. 6:3 - Nothing.
2. 6:4 -a) Every day. b) Whenever there was a lot.
3. 6:6 - Two.
4. 6:10 - No.
5. 6:13 - A korban mincha – A tenth part of an ephah of flour.
6. 6:14 - Boiling, baking in an oven and frying in a pan.
7. 6:15 - The minchat kohen is burned completely. Only a handful of the minchat Yisrael is burned, and the remainder is eaten by the kohanim.
8. 6:19 - If he is tamei (spiritually impure) at the time of the sprinkling of the blood.
9. 6:21 - One can remove an absorbed taste from a copper vessel by scouring and rinsing, whereas such a taste can never be removed from an earthenware vessel.
10. 7:1 - No.
11. 7:3 - It can only be brought from a ram or sheep.
12. 7:3 - The tail.
13. 7:7 - A t'vul yom (a tamei kohen who immersed in a mikveh yet awaits sunset to become tahor); a mechusar kipurim (a tamei person who has gone to the mikveh but has yet to bring his required offering); an onan (a mourner on the day of death of a close relative).
14. 7:12 - Upon safe arrival from an ocean voyage; upon safe arrival from a desert journey; upon being freed from prison; upon recovering from illness.
15. 7:15 - a) Until the morning. b) Until midnight.
16. 7:18 - The person slaughters the animal with the intention that it be eaten after the prescribed time.
17. 7:19 - Any uncontaminated person (not only the owner).
18. 8:3 - The entire nation was able to fit in this very small area.
19. 8:34 - The burning of the Parah Adumah (red heifer).
20. Olah (6:2); mincha (6:7); chatat (6:18); asham (7:1); shelamim (7:11).

## Shemini

### Questions

1. What date was “yom hashemini”?
2. Which of Aharon’s korbanot atoned for the Golden Calf?
3. What korbanot did Aharon offer for the Jewish People?
4. What was unique about the chatat offered during the induction of the Mishkan?
5. When did Aharon bless the people with the Birkat Kohanim?
6. Why did Moshe go into the Ohel Mo’ed with Aharon?
7. Why did Nadav and Avihu die?
8. Aharon quietly accepted his sons’ death. What reward did he receive for this?
9. What prohibitions apply to a person who is intoxicated?
10. Name the three chatat goat offerings that were sacrificed on the day of the inauguration of the Mishkan.

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

### Answers

1. 9:1 - First of Nissan.
2. 9:2 - The calf offered as a korban chatat.
3. 9:3,4 - A he-goat as a chatat, a calf and a lamb for an olah, an ox and a ram for shelamim, and a mincha.
4. 9:11 - It’s the only example of a chatat offered on the courtyard mizbe’ach that was burned.
5. 9:22 - When he finished offering the korbanot, before descending from the mizbe’ach.
6. 9:23 - For one of two reasons: Either to teach Aharon about the service of the incense, or to pray for the Shechina to dwell with Israel.
7. 10:2 - Rashi offers two reasons: Either because they gave a halachic ruling in Moshe’s presence, or because they entered the Mishkan after drinking intoxicating wine.
8. 10:3 - A portion of the Torah was given solely through Aharon.
9. 10:9-11 - He may not give a halachic ruling. Also, a kohen is forbidden to enter the Ohel Mo’ed, approach the mizbe’ach, or perform the avoda.
10. 10:16 - The goat offerings of the inauguration ceremony, of Rosh Chodesh, and of Nachshon ben Aminadav.

11. Which he-goat chatat did Aharon burn completely and why?
12. Why did Moshe direct his harsh words at Aharon’s sons?
13. Moshe was upset that Aharon and his sons did not eat the chatat. Why?
14. Why did G-d choose Moshe, Aharon, Elazar and Itamar as His messengers to tell the Jewish People the laws of kashrut?
15. What are the signs of a kosher land animal?
16. How many non-kosher animals display only one sign of kashrut? What are they?
17. If a fish sheds its fins and scales when out of the water, is it kosher?
18. Why is a stork called chasida in Hebrew?
19. The chagav is a kosher insect. Why don’t we eat it?
20. What requirements must be met in order for water to maintain its status of purity?

11. 10:16 - The Rosh Chodesh chatat: Either because it became tamei, or because the kohanim were forbidden to eat from it while in the state of aninut (mourning).
12. 10:16 - Out of respect for Aharon, Moshe directed his anger at his sons and not directly at Aharon.
13. 10:17 - Because only when the kohanim eat the chatat are the sins of the owners atoned.
14. 11:2 - Because they accepted the deaths of Nadav and Avihu in silence.
15. 11:3 - An animal whose hooves are completely split and who chews its cud.
16. 11:4-7 - Four: Camel, shafan, hare and pig.
17. 11:12 - Yes.
18. 11:19 - Because it acts with chesed (kindness) toward other storks.
19. 11:21 - We have lost the tradition and are not able to identify the kosher chagav.
20. 11:36 - It must be connected to the ground (i.e., a spring or a cistern.)

# Q & A

## Tazria

### Questions

1. When does a woman who has given birth to a son go to the *mikveh*?
2. After a woman gives birth, she is required to offer two types of offerings. Which are they?
3. What animal does the woman offer as a *chatat*?
4. Which of these offerings makes her *tahor* (ritual purity)?
5. Which of the sacrifices does the woman offer first, the *olah* or the *chatat*?
6. Who determines whether a person is a *metzora tamei* (person with ritually impure *tzara'at*) or is *tahor*?
7. If the *kohen* sees that the *tzara'at* has spread after one week, how does he rule?
8. What disqualifies a *kohen* from being able to give a ruling in a case of *tzara'at*?
9. Why is the appearance of *tzara'at* on the tip of one of the 24 "limbs" that project from the body usually unable to be examined?

10. On which days is a *kohen* not permitted to give a ruling on *tzara'at*?
11. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow (e.g., the head or beard), what color hair is indicative of ritual impurity?
12. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow, what color hair is indicative of purity?
13. If the *kohen* intentionally or unintentionally pronounces a *tamei* person "*tahor*," what is that person's status?
14. What signs of mourning must a *metzora* display?
15. Why must a *metzora* call out, "*Tamei! Tamei!*!"
16. Where must a *metzora* dwell?
17. Why is a *metzora* commanded to dwell in isolation?
18. What sign denotes *tzara'at* in a garment?
19. What must be done to a garment that has *tzara'at*?
20. If after washing a garment the signs of *tzara'at* disappear entirely, how is the garment purified?

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

### Answers

1. 12:2 - At the end of seven days.
2. 12:6 - An *olah* and a *chatat*.
3. 12:6 - A *tor* (turtle dove) or a *ben yona* (young pigeon).
4. 12:7 - The *chatat*.
5. 12:8 - The *chatat*.
6. 13:2 - A *kohen*.
7. 13:5 - The person is *tamei*.
8. 13:12 - Poor vision.
9. 13:14 - The *tzara'at* as a whole must be seen at one time. Since these parts are angular, they cannot be seen at one time.
10. 13:14 - During the festivals; and ruling on a groom during the seven days of feasting after the marriage.

11. 13:29 - Golden.
12. 13:37 - Any color other than golden.
13. 13:37 - He remains *tamei*.
14. 13:45 - He must tear his garments, let his hair grow wild, and cover his lips with his garment.
15. 13:45 - So people will know to keep away from him.
16. 13:46 - Outside the camp in isolation.
17. 13:46 - Since *tzara'at* is a punishment for *lashon hara* (evil speech), which creates a rift between people, the Torah punishes measure for measure by placing a division between him and others.
18. 13:49 - A dark green or dark red discolored.
19. 13:52 - It must be burned.
20. 13:58 - Through immersion in a *mikveh*.

# Q & A

## Metzora

### Questions

1. When may a *metzora* not be pronounced *tahor*?
2. In the *midbar*, where did a *metzora* dwell while he was *tamei*?
3. Why does the *metzora* require birds in the purification process?
4. In the purification process of a *metzora*, what does the cedar wood symbolize?
5. During the purification process, the *metzora* is required to shave his hair. Which hair must he shave?
6. What is unique about the *chatat* and the *asham* offered by the *metzora*?
7. In the *Beit Hamikdash*, when the *metzora* was presented "before G-d" (14:11), where did he stand?
8. Where was the *asham* of the *metzora* slaughtered?
9. How was having *tzara'at* in one's house sometimes advantageous?
10. When a house is suspected of having *tzara'at*, what is its status prior to the inspection by a *kohen*?
11. What happens to the vessels that are in a house found to have *tzara'at*?
12. Which type of vessels cannot be made *tahor* after they become *tamei*?
13. Where were stones afflicted with *tzara'at* discarded?
14. When a house is suspected of having *tzara'at*, a *kohen* commands that the affected stones be replaced and the house plastered. What is the law if the *tzara'at*:
  - a. returns and spreads;
  - b. does not return;
  - c. returns, but does not spread?
15. When a person enters a house that has *tzara'at*, when do his clothes become *tamei*?
16. What is the status of a man who is *zav* (sees a flow):
  - a. two times or two consecutive days;
  - b. three times or three consecutive days?
17. A *zav* sat or slept on the following:
  - a. a bed;
  - b. a plank;
  - c. a chair
  - d. a rockIf a *tahor* person touches these things what is his status?
18. What does the Torah mean when it refers to a *zav* who "has not washed his hands"?
19. When may a *zav* immerse in a *mikveh* to purify himself?
20. What is the status of someone who experiences a one-time flow?

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

### Answers

1. 14:2 - At night.
2. 14:3 - Outside the three camps.
3. 14:4 - *Tzara'at* comes as a punishment for *lashon hara*. Therefore, the Torah requires the *metzora* to offer birds, who chatter constantly, to atone for his sin of chattering.
4. 14:4 - The cedar is a lofty tree. It alludes to the fact that *tzara'at* comes as a punishment for haughtiness.
5. 14:9 - Any visible collection of hair on the body.
6. 14:10 - They require *n'sachim* (drink offerings).
7. 14:11 - At the gate of Nikanor.
8. 14:13 - On the northern side of the *mizbe'ach*.
9. 14:34 - The Amorites concealed treasures in the walls of their houses. After the conquest of the Land, *tzara'at* would afflict these houses. The Jewish owner would tear down the house and find the treasures.
10. 14:36 - It is *tahor*.
11. 14:36 - They become *tamei*.
12. 14:36 - Earthenware vessels.
13. 14:40 - In places where *tahor* objects were not handled

14. a. 14:44-45 - It is called "*tzara'at mam'eret*," and the house must be demolished.
- b. 14:48 - The house is pronounced *tahor*;
- c. 14:44 - The house must be demolished.
15. 14:46 - When he remains in the house long enough to eat a small meal.
16. 15:2 - a. He is *tamei*;  
b. He is *tamei* and is also required to bring a *korban*.
- 15:4-5 - Only a type of object that one usually lies or sits upon becomes a transmitter of *tumah* when a *zav* sits or lies on it. A *tahor* person who subsequently touches the object becomes *tamei* and the clothes he is wearing are also *tamei'im*. Therefore:
  - a. *tamei*;
  - b. *tahor*;
  - c. *tamei*;
  - d. *tahor*.
17. 15:11 - One who has not immersed in a *mikveh*.
18. 15:13 - After seven consecutive days without a flow.
19. 15:32 - He is *tamei* until evening.

# Q & A

## Achrei Mot

### Questions

1. Why does the Torah emphasize that *Parshas Acharei Mos* was taught after the death of Aaron's sons?
2. What is the punishment for a *Kohen Gadol* who inappropriately enters the *Kodesh Kodashim*?
3. How long did the first *Beis Hamikdash* exist?
4. What did the *Kohen Gadol* wear when he entered the *Kodesh Kodashim*?
5. How many times did the *Kohen Gadol* change his clothing and immerse in the *mikveh* on Yom Kippur?
6. How many times did he wash his hands and feet from the *Kiyor* (copper laver)?
7. The *Kohen Gadol* offered a bull *Chatas* to atone for himself and his household. Who paid for it?
8. One of the goats that was chosen by lot went to *Azazel*. What is *Azazel*?
9. Who is included in the "household" of the *Kohen Gadol*?
10. For what sin does the goat *Chatas* atone?
11. After the Yom Kippur service, what is done with the four linen garments worn by the *Kohen Gadol*?
12. Where were the fats of the *Chatas* burned?
13. Who is solely responsible for attaining atonement for the Jewish People on Yom Kippur?
14. From one point in history, installation of the *Kohen Gadol* through anointing was no longer used but was conducted by donning the special garments of that office. From when and why?
15. What is the penalty of *kares*?
16. Which categories of animals must have their blood covered when they are slaughtered?
17. When a person eats a kosher bird that was improperly slaughtered (a *neveilah*), at what point does he contract *tumah*?
18. The Torah commands the Jewish People not to follow the "chukim" of the Canaanites. What are the forbidden "chukim"?
19. What is the difference between "*mishpat*" and "*chok*"?
20. May a man marry his wife's sister?

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

### Answers

1. 16:1 - To strengthen the warning not to enter the *Kodesh Kodashim* except on Yom Kippur.
2. 16:2 - Death.
3. 16:3 - 410 years.
4. 16:4 - Only the four linen garments worn by an ordinary *Kohen*.
5. 16:4 - Five times.
6. 16:4 - Ten times.
7. 16:6 - The *Kohen Gadol*.
8. 16:8 - A jagged cliff.
9. 16:11 - All the *Kohanim*.
10. 16:16 - For unknowingly entering the *Beis Hamikdash* in the state of *tumah*.
11. 16:23 - They must be put into *geniza* and not be used again.
12. 16:25 - On the outer *Mizbe'ach*.
13. 16:32 - The *Kohen Gadol*.
14. 16:32 - Anointing ceased during the kingship of Yoshiahu. At that time, the oil of anointing was hidden away.
15. 17:9 - One's offspring die and one's own life is shortened.
16. 17:13 - Non-domesticated kosher animals and all species of kosher birds.
17. 17:15 - When the food enters the esophagus.
18. 18:3 - Their social customs.
19. 18:4 - A "*mishpat*" conforms to the human sense of justice. A "*chok*" is a law whose reason is not given to us and can only be understood as a decree from Hashem.
20. 18:18 - Yes, but not during the lifetime of his wife.

# Q & A

## Kedoshim

### Questions

1. Why was *Parshat Kedoshim* said in front of all the Jewish People?
2. Why does the Torah mention the duty to honor one's father before it mentions the duty to honor one's mother?
3. Why is the command to fear one's parents followed by the command to keep Shabbat?
4. Why does Shabbat observance supersede honoring parents?
5. What is "*leket*?"
6. In *Shemot* 20:13, the Torah commands "Do not steal." What does the Torah add when it commands in *Vayikra* 19:11 "Do not steal"?
7. "Do not do wrong to your neighbor" (19:13). To what "wrong" is the Torah referring?
8. By when must you pay someone who worked for you during the day?
9. How does Rashi explain the prohibition "Don't put a stumbling block before a sightless person?"
10. In a monetary case involving a poor person and a rich person, a judge is likely to wrongly favor the poor person. What rationale does Rashi give for this?
11. When rebuking someone, what sin must one be careful to avoid?
12. It's forbidden to bear a grudge. What example does Rashi give of this?
13. The Torah forbids tattooing. How is a tattoo made?
14. How does one fulfill the mitzvah of "*hadarta p'nei zaken*?"
15. What punishment will never come to the entire Jewish People?
16. What penalty does the Torah state for cursing one's parents?
17. When the Torah states a death penalty but doesn't define it precisely, to which penalty is it referring?
18. What will result if the Jewish People ignore the laws of forbidden relationships?
19. Which of the forbidden relationships listed in this week's Parsha were practiced by the Canaanites?
20. Is it proper for a Jew to say "I would enjoy eating ham?"

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

### Answers

1. 19:2 - Because the fundamental teachings of the Torah are contained in this Parsha.
2. 19:3 - Since it is more natural to honor one's mother, the Torah stresses the obligation to honor one's father.
3. 19:3 - To teach that one must not violate Torah law even at the command of one's parents.
4. 19:3 - Because the parents are also commanded by Hashem to observe Shabbat. Parents deserve great honor, but not at the "expense" of Hashem's honor.
5. 19:9 - "*Leket*" is one or two stalks of grain accidentally dropped while harvesting. They are left for the poor.
6. 19:11 - The Torah in *Vayikra* prohibits monetary theft. In *Shemot* it prohibits kidnapping.
7. 19:13 - Withholding wages from a worker.
8. 19:13 - Before the following dawn.
9. 19:13 - Don't give improper advice to a person who is unaware in a matter. For example, don't advise someone to sell his field, when in reality you yourself wish to buy it.

10. 19:15 - The judge might think: "This rich person is obligated to give charity to this poor person regardless of the outcome of this court case. Therefore, I'll rule in favor of the poor person. That way, he'll receive the financial support he needs without feeling shame."
11. 19:17 - Causing public embarrassment.
12. 19:18 - Person A asks person B: "Can I borrow your shovel?" Person B says: "No." The next day, B says to A: "Can I borrow your scythe?" A replies: "Sure, I'm not stingy like you are."
13. 19:28 - Ink is injected into the skin with a needle.
14. 19:32 - By not sitting in the seat of elderly people, and by not contradicting their statements.
15. 20:3 - "*Karet*" ~ being spiritually "cut off."
16. 20:9 - Death by stoning.
17. 20:10 - *Chenek* (strangulation).
18. 20:22 - The land of Israel will "spit them out."
19. 20:23 - All of them.
20. 20:26 - Yes.

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# SEASONS - THEN AND NOW

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## Thanking Hashem for the Egyptian Exile?

by Rabbi Chaviv Danesh

**W**e all know that Hashem runs the entire world and He is the cause for everything. We also know that no one has the power to go against Hashem's will. If so, we have to ask ourselves a very basic question: Why do we thank Hashem for taking us out of Egypt if He was the One Who put us there in the first place? This would seem to be like a doctor who intentionally breaks someone's leg – and then heals him. Does that deserve a thank you? (Birkas Hashir commentary on the Haggadah)

Let's begin by understanding a fundamental idea in Hashem's Divine Providence. Ultimately, everything that Hashem does is for our own good. As the Gemara says, everything that Hashem does is for the good (Berachot 60b). This even includes pain and suffering, as they too have many advantages. Firstly, the commentaries explain, suffering serves as a warning for one to improve his ways, and thus is a catalyst for *teshuva*. Furthermore, the pain itself purifies one from his sins (Shaarei Teshuva 2:1-6). According to some commentaries, suffering also increases one's reward in the World to Come by making one's test in this world harder. As the Mishna says, "According to the pain is the reward." (see Rashi on Berachot 5a "yisurin shel ahava" and Tzlach there; Shaarei Teshuva 2:1-6. But see the Ramban in Shaar Hagemul who disagrees).

Suffering also enables us to attain certain things that are acquired specifically through suffering. As the Gemara says, "Torah, Olam HaBa, and Eretz Yisrael are acquired through suffering (Berachot 5a, see commentaries there who explain why this is so). In all the ways mentioned above it is clear that: While suffering is certainly uncomfortable, it is still advantageous. It is, in fact, for this reason that the Gemara tells us to make the blessing that is recited on hearing so-called "bad news" with the same wholeheartedness and happiness as when saying the blessing on hearing "good news," because even that which seems bad is for our ultimate good (Berachot 60b and commentaries there).

Chazal tell us that the advantages of suffering exist even when it seems like someone else has control and is

causing the suffering. After all, if the suffering wasn't befitting us, Hashem wouldn't allow it. As the Gemara says, "One can not 'touch' that which is set and destined for someone else" (Yoma 38b). Furthermore, we are told that all this applies not only to an individual's suffering but also to an entire nation's suffering. Therefore, even when nations attack and torment us, Chazal always attribute it to a decree by Hashem that is ultimately for our good. Of course, even though it is all a decree from Hashem, the nations that instill the suffering on us are not innocent of guilt. They too will be punished for their evil acts (for the reason behind this, see Rambam, Hilchot Teshuva 6:5, Ramban on Bereishet 15:14 and Ohr HaChaim there).

The suffering that the Jewish People experienced in Egypt was no different. The commentaries tell us that it too was ultimately for our best. Firstly, it was atonement for previous sins. The deeper sources explain this using the idea of reincarnation. Simply put, when someone sins in one lifetime, he may be given the chance to fix his error by being brought back into this world in another body. These sources explain that the generation of Jews in Egypt was a reincarnation of the generation from the time of the flood, the generation that built the tower of Bavel, and the generation of Sedom – all of whom sinned against Hashem. Pharaoh's decrees – from the torturous labor to drowning baby boys in the Nile – were all "measure-for-measure" corrections for the sins committed in the generation's previous lifetime.

While it is certainly beyond the scope of this article to fully expand on this, the commentaries delve into and explain how everything was measure-for-measure. On a very basic level, one example of how the punishments were measure-for-measure: The very souls that sinned by working so hard to make bricks for the tower of Bavel were now forced to toil to make bricks and buildings for Pharaoh. Everything was exact – and everything was meant to bring their souls to their ultimate perfection (based on Rav Chaim Vital's Shaar Hapesukim, *parshat Shemot*).

There are other sources that attribute the suffering in Egypt to previous sins. One source attributes it to the sin of the brothers selling Yosef, which ultimately caused them to go down to Egypt (see Shabbat 10b and Abarbanel on *parshat Lech Lecha*). Another source points to a minute lack of faith on Avraham Avinu's part, which manifested itself in his descendants and had to be rectified (see Nedarim 32a, Maharsha there, and Gevurot Hashem *perek* 9). Other sources attribute the cause of going down to Egypt not specifically to sins but to other reasons. For example, the Ran explains that it was needed to instill in the Jewish People the character trait of submission, thus preparing them for a life of submission to the Torah. Furthermore, the miracles that enabled them to leave Egypt instilled in them the idea that Hashem runs all of nature, and thereby removed any doubt they had about Hashem. In these ways and more, the experience in Egypt was ultimately for our good.

There are obviously many questions that can be asked on each of the reasons above. It is beyond the scope of this short article to analyze each of the reasons in depth. The reader is encouraged to see the Abarbanel on *parshat Lech Lecha*, the Alshich on the beginning of *parshat Shemot* and the Maharal's Gevurot Hashem *perek* 9 for

a summary and analysis of all the reasons given by Chazal and the commentaries for the exile in Egypt.

Going back to the question with which we began, it is clear that we cannot compare Hashem's putting us in Egypt to a doctor breaking someone's leg. When Hashem put us into Egypt, He was essentially healing us, and it was a form of kindness from Him. We should therefore thank Him, not only for taking us out of Egypt, but for bringing us there in the first place.

According to the above, we can understand a seemingly puzzling part of the Haggadah. Immediately following the statement that Yaakov and his sons went down to Egypt, ultimately setting the stage for the exile, we praise Hashem. The commentaries point out the obvious question: Why is the praising of Hashem placed immediately after describing how we ended up going down to Egypt? Based on the above, Rashi explains that we are essentially praising Hashem for putting us in Egypt. This is our way of thanking Hashem for what is seemingly bad in the same way we thank Hashem for the good — because, ultimately, even the Egyptian exile was for our best (Ritva on the Haggadah in the name of Rashi).

## AN UPSIDE-DOWN WORLD AND THE CORONOVIRUS

by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

The world has been flipped on its head. Life as we knew it has changed. The plague known as the coronavirus has disrupted travel between countries, cities, towns, neighborhoods — and even between neighbors. The “shrinking world” is now expanding. Schools are closed, as are places of worship. Workplaces are in lockdown or on skeleton crews. Professional sports leagues have suspended their seasons. “Social distancing,” whether mandated by government or merely suggested, has become a fact of life. The world’s economy has been eviscerated. Neighbors, while no doubt caring about each other, are also often wary of each other. We have been forced to become hermits. None of us has experienced anything like this in our lifetimes. The closest comparison is probably the Bubonic Plagues, which periodically swept the world centuries ago. And since medical knowledge in those times wasn’t aware of germs and the communicability of disease, isolation wasn’t practiced.

We Jews have a very long history and a very long memory. We recount it daily in our prayers and celebrate its milestones in our holidays. The main lesson taught by this history is that nothing happens without its being the will of the Creator. He is always looking out for our good — even if it takes us a long time to recognize it.

So, what lesson can be derived from the present calamity? The obvious one is that Hashem is showing the world that He is in control. He introduced an “invisible enemy,” which mankind, for all its seeming domination of nature, lacks the tools to swiftly deal with. The expectation that our material life, based on our talents and value to society, will continue uninterrupted until we mess up, retire or die, is now gone. We now know that Hashem is the real source of our *parnassa* and well-being. As our Sages teach, “Everything is in the Hands of Heaven except for the fear of Heaven.” (*Berachot* 33b)

The only thing under our control is what we choose to believe. This is the obvious lesson.

A less obvious lesson is “the power of one.” Each individual person has the ability to influence the entire world. To the best of our knowledge, this pandemic began in Wuhan, China, with one man eating a wild animal purchased in a “wet market,” where animals are sold alive for consumption. One of the seven commandments given to all mankind is to refrain from eating *ever min hachai* – the limb of a live animal. And although this was not the first time this prohibition has been breached, it may be the last. That “patient zero” in Wuhan contracted COVID-19, which had previously been found only in certain animals and had never passed to the species of *Homo sapiens*. Patient zero then passed it on to others – and now the entire world is besieged.

The same is true for the power of good. One person can change the entire world for the better – not only for his generation, but for all generations to come. The holiday of Purim celebrates our victory over our ruthless enemy, Haman the Amalekite. The Purim story, as told in Megillat Esther, unfolds over many years: from the feast of Achashverosh and Vashti to the victory over Haman, his sons and the innumerable hordes of anti-Semites in 127 countries that comprised the Persian and Medean kingdom. Mordechai, the leading rabbi of his generation, was a lonely voice in a sea of complacency and compliance with the empire that had exiled the Jewish People. He berated his fellow Jews, urging them to hold true to their G-d and not participate in the unholy celebration hosted by the king and queen. The royal feast was meant to show what the king viewed as the failure of the fulfillment of the prophecy that the Jews would return to their land and rebuild their Temple after 70 years of Babylonian exile. Mordechai knew their calculation to be incorrect, and his devotion to Hashem and his concern for the Jewish People was contagious.

His purity of heart and devotion to Hashem entered the heart of every Jew, until they all did *teshuva* and were saved. His spiritual accomplishments live on within every Jew until today.

The holiday of Chanukah celebrates the victory of the “few over the many.” The “few” wasn’t the Jewish People – it was the family of Matityahu, which consisted of thirteen men. The vast majority of the Jews were complacent, willing to enjoy the Greek culture while still keeping kosher and Shabbat. Those “fanatics” changed the course of history and defeated one of the most powerful armies on earth. But that wasn’t their crowning glory. It was that they persuaded their brethren to rededicate and purify themselves to Hashem as they rededicated the Holy Temple and cleansed it of its impurities. Their achievements live on within us.

We today have been given the opportunity to use the lessons of this pandemic to uplift the world by our *teshuva* and by our recognition of Hashem’s control of the world and His interest in our welfare. Each one of us has the power to infect the rest of the world with a “change of heart” needed to bring about the end of this plague, and to bring about our salvation with the coming of the *mashiah*!

As we approach the holiday of Pesach – the celebration of our progression from the slavery of Egypt to the freedom of our body and soul and our becoming a nation with the Torah as our Constitution – we should keep in mind the lessons that are taught by plagues. Hashem rained down on the Egyptians ten of them over the course of a year. If all He wanted to accomplish was to free the Jews from their bondage, He could have accomplished that in one fell swoop. But each plague brought with it a new and different lesson. Each plague showed Hashem’s absolute control over a different aspect of life. May we learn from this modern-day plague, the coronavirus, that despite what we may have thought, we are not in control of the world. In reality, Hashem is in control and each one of us has the ability to convince the world of this Truth.

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# LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

## Tzav

### Pure Freedom

In various places, Rav Hirsch defines the concepts of *tumah* and *taharah* – concepts that are a centerpiece of the laws relating to the Temple.

*Tumah*, impurity, signifies lack of freedom. Man is destined to live in moral freedom, but whenever a living organism succumbs to compelling physical forces, this is liable to give rise to the notion that man lacks freedom. Impurity – *tumah* – results from encounters which threaten our awareness of the moral freedom of man. There is nothing that fosters this notion more than a dead body, which has succumbed to the inescapable forces of nature. For this reason, one who touches a dead body is rendered impure. Indeed, this resultant impurity is classified as the most stringent form of impurity.

Rav Hirsch ties the etymology of the word *tameh* to words that denote an object's loss of independence, its sinking and assimilating into something else. Hence, an object loses its own freedom and independent existence. In the symbolic sense, this signifies a loss of moral freedom and independence.

The word *tahor*, pure, by contrast, is related to the word *tur*, meaning “row.” It denotes a state in which the connection between constituent parts is fixed according to their own qualities – they are joined not by external constraints, but rather by a sole governing principle. Hence, it refers to an object which is free of external constraint and develops in freedom under its own governing principle. Symbolically, this signifies a state of moral freedom, unfettered by external restraint.

## Shemini

### You Are What You Eat

We are told not to eat non-kosher animals “because they are impure to you.” Purity and impurity are purely in the spiritual realm. The dietary laws do not hinge on nutritional considerations. The forbidden foods are antithetical to a mission of holiness. We have previously (Ohrnet, Vayikra) explained how *tumah*,

Rav Hirsch expounds upon these principles, elucidating many details of the laws regarding purity and impurity. One of these involves the legal assumptions regarding objects which have an uncertain status. In a case of doubtful impurity concerning an object devoid of reasoning – e.g. a piece of meat lies near an impure insect, and it is not clear whether they came in contact – the meat is deemed pure. However, in a case of doubtful impurity concerning the state or actions of a *person, endowed with reasoning* – e.g. there is a doubt whether an adult came in contact with a dead body – the individual is deemed impure.

This is so for two reasons. First, it disabuses us of the notion that impurity is some actual, magical and invisible influence that may be exerted on an object. If that were the case, every scenario that raised a doubt would be treated stringently. Second, relatedly, the law seeks to emphasize the importance of man's *consciousness*. The laws of impurity in their entirety seek to imbue the message of man's moral freedom and autonomous nature. Heightened consciousness is demanded for this calling.

Hence, forgetfulness, negligence and unawareness are treated stringently. Man's moral freedom must be absolutely clear to him in order for him to retain it. An object that is devoid of cognition, however, does not have autonomy, and therefore is rendered pure in the case of doubt.

- Source: Commentary, Vayikra 7:19-21

impurity, signifies lack of freedom, and how *taharah*, purity, signifies man's moral freedom.

Man's lack of freedom is most apparent when his base desires – his internal compulsions of nature – control him. And he reclaims his freedom when he tames those forces.

Animal flesh is pure for eating and fit to be absorbed by the body only if it does not tend to dull sensitivity and arouse base desire and does not heighten sensuality and thus diminish spirituality.

Thus, animals are kosher only if they are receptive to human influence and they submit to man by their nature, without requiring taming; they serve his purposes, and beastliness and passion do not overwhelmingly predominate them. Thus, the nature and character of the animal are the causes of its being forbidden. The chewing of the cud and the cleft hoof are mere symptoms. In and of themselves they do not cause permissibility, and their absence does not cause prohibition. One sign is that the animal chews its cud. The food consumed passes through two compartments of the stomach, is driven up the gullet again and chewed for the second time. Thus, these animals spend a great deal of time in the absorption of food. The cloven hooves of the permitted animals also seem to have been created more for the purpose of standing than for being used as weapons or

tools. Together, these signs indicate the presence of a tame, domesticated character.

Similarly, the signs for kosher a kosher fish also indicate a peaceful nature. Fish that have fins and scales are by and large more peaceful in nature than fish without them. Birds of prey are similarly prohibited. The more aggressive animals and fowl are prohibited. The more passive and pliant are permitted.

The Torah guards our precious human potential to strive toward holiness in many ways. But so many of them can be missed by the untrained eye or heart. Reflecting on the purposeful selection of what may be absorbed by our bodies should propel us to preserve and cultivate the great moral autonomy that earns man his nobility.

- Sources: Commentary: *Vayikra* 11:3, *Bereishet* 7:2

## Tazria

### A Social Health Danger

**F**or centuries, people have erroneously associated *tzaraat* with leprosy. Clearly, this contention must have been held only by those not knowledgeable in the laws of *tzaraat*. The possibility of *tzaraat* being an infectious disease, requiring quarantine and treatment by the priestly “public health physicians,” is belied by nearly every detail of the laws.

For example, the Kohen is commanded to have everything removed from the individual’s residence prior to examination, so that the contents of the house will not become impure. This law is intended to save the afflicted from monetary loss. But if the purpose was to disinfect his home, surely, we would want to destroy the items. Instead, we go to great lengths to spare them. Furthermore, the Kohen is supposed to examine liberally, a policy that is senseless if indeed meant to address a public health danger. Even more compelling is the fact that all examinations were suspended during the holidays, when masses of people would congregate in Jerusalem. Surely, a policy of treating and curbing infectious disease would not be held in abeyance during the time of greatest vulnerability and exposure! The list of laws undermining this notion is long. (See Commentary, *Vayikra* 13:59, in full).

The purpose of these laws was not to impose sanitary regulation, but rather to promote preservation of the dignity of man in the social sphere. The Torah instructs that

*tzaraat* is to remind the one afflicted of the experience of Miriam, who was similarly afflicted after speaking slanderous words about Moshe. Her punishment was confinement, and is described as the equivalent of a father spitting in his daughter’s face — the confinement was meant to induce feelings of shame. From Miriam’s experience we learn that afflictions of *tzaraat* are regarded as punishment for social wrongdoing, and the required confinement is meant to instill in the afflicted an awareness of his unworthiness.

*Tzaraat* is a punishment not just for slander but for other cardinal social sins as well, including haughtiness, deceit, bloodshed, rabble-rousing, perjury, sexual immorality, robbery and stinginess. (*Arachin* 16a; *Vayikra Rabba*, *Metzora*) One who discovers a *tzaraat* mark (*nega*) understands that he has been “touched” by the finger of G-d (*nega* means touch). He understands that his social behavior provoked G-d’s anger. On account of his foul social behavior, he is removed from the community. Because he incited unrest among his brethren, he is separated from everyone.

Jewish law thus provides corrective measures even for those social sins — arrogance, falsehood, slander — that are beyond the jurisdiction of human tribunals.

- Commentary, *Vayikra* 13:59

# Kedoshim

## Prerequisite for Sanctity

**P**arshat Kedoshim opens with the general directive to be “holy.” The first pillar of this sanctification is expressed in the first of many mitzvahs in this Torah portion: reverence for one’s mother and father. The essence of this reverence is obedience — subordinating one’s will to the will of the other.

Parents have a prominent place in the Torah. The command to honor them appears in the Ten Commandments. Parents convey to their children not only physical existence, but also the Jewish mission. They transmit to the next generation Jewish History and Torah. It is not the good that parents do for their children, but the mission given to the parents concerning their children that is the basis of the mitzvah of honoring them. By honoring the parents who have transmitted to us this mission, we honor G-d.

Where sanctity is the goal in Parshat Kedoshim, the mitzvah focuses on *reverence* instead of honor. Subordination of the child’s will to the parent’s will — nullification of the child’s will because of his parent’s will — is the first training toward self-control. Only by learning the art of self-control can a person become free of the fetters of his baser instincts, and

master the impulses of his will. The imperative to become holy consists of our ability to subordinate our desires, out of our own free will, to the dictates of a higher authority. The more willing and complete this subordination, the more we approach holiness. The more mastery and self-discipline, the easier it is to do good even though our physical desires may resist, and the easier it is to avoid evil even though it tempts our senses.

A child is born with no control over these desires, the newborn’s cry means either “I want” or “I don’t want.” The infant “wants” what gives him momentary pleasure and “doesn’t want” anything that gives him discomfort. These “wants” and “don’t wants” increase in intensity with time, and these babies grow into toddlers with demands, which, when unchecked, can leave a parent at his mercy. But when a parent disciplines, he accomplishes far more than smoother home management — the parent trains a child for the task of holiness. Only by training in obedience to a higher parental authority — by learning that there is a “no” to physical desires and a “yes” despite discomfort — can a child ultimately learn the art of self-control. Hence, the imperative to *revere* one’s mother and father is the very first step towards holiness.

- Source: Commentary, Vayikra 19:3

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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### TZAV

**T**he Torah addresses Aharon and his sons to teach them additional laws relating to their service. The ashes of the *korban olah* — the offering burned on the altar throughout the night — are to be removed from the area by the *kohen* after he changes his special linen clothing. The *olah* is brought by someone who forgot to perform a positive commandment of the Torah. The *kohen* retains the skin. The fire on the altar must be kept constantly ablaze. The *korban mincha* is a meal offering of flour, oil and spices. a handful is burned on the altar and a *kohen* eats the remainder before it becomes leaven. The Parsha describes the special *korbanot* to be offered by the *Kohen Gadol* each day, and by Aharon’s sons and future descendants on the day of their inauguration. The *chatat*, the *korban* brought after an accidental transgression, is described, as are the laws of slaughtering and sprinkling the blood of the *asham* guilt-*korban*. The details of *shelamim*, various peace *korbanot*, are described, including the prohibition against leaving uneaten until morning the remains of the *todah*, the thanks-*korban*. All sacrifices must be burned after they may no longer be eaten. No sacrifice may be eaten if it was slaughtered with the intention of eating it too late. Once they have become ritually impure, *korbanot* may not be eaten and should be burned. One may not eat a *korban* when he is ritually impure. blood and *chelev*, forbidden animal fats, are prohibited to be eaten. Aharon and his sons are granted the breast and shank of every *korban shelamim*. The inauguration ceremony for Aharon, his sons, the *mishkan* and all of its vessels is detailed.

**O**n the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan, Aharon, his sons, and the entire nation bring various *korbanot* (offerings) as commanded by Moshe. Aharon and Moshe bless the nation. G-d allows the Jewish People to sense His Presence after they complete the Mishkan. Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, innovate an offering not commanded by G-d. A fire comes from before G-d and consumes them, stressing the need to perform the commandments only as Moshe directs. Moshe consoles Aharon, who grieves in silence. Moshe directs the *kohanim* as to their behavior during the mourning period, and warns them that they must not drink intoxicating beverages before serving in the Mishkan. The Torah lists the two characteristics of a kosher animal: It has split hooves, and it chews, regurgitates, and re-chews its food. The Torah specifies by name those non-kosher animals which have only one of these two signs. A kosher fish has fins and easily removable scales. All birds not included in the list of forbidden families are permitted. The Torah forbids all types of insects except for four species of locusts. Details are given of the purification process after coming in contact with ritually-impure species. *Bnei Yisrael* are commanded to be separate and holy – like G-d.

## TAZRIA

**T**he Torah commands a woman to bring *korbanot* after the birth of a child. A son is to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life. The Torah introduces the phenomenon of *tzara'at* (often mistranslated as leprosy) – a miraculous affliction that attacks people, clothing and buildings to awaken a person to spiritual failures. A *kohen* must be consulted to determine whether a particular mark is *tzara'at* or not. The *kohen* isolates the sufferer for a week. If the malady remains unchanged, confinement continues for a second week, after which the *kohen* decides the person's status. The Torah describes the different forms of *tzara'at*. One whose *tzara'at* is confirmed wears torn clothing, does not cut his hair, and must alert others that he is ritually impure. He may not have normal contact with people. The phenomenon of *tzara'at* on clothing is described in detail

## METZORA

**T**he Torah describes the procedure for a *metzora* (a person afflicted with *tzara'at*) upon conclusion of his isolation. This process extends for a week and involves *korbanot* and immersions in the *mikveh*. Then, a *kohen* must pronounce the *metzora* pure. A *metzora* of limited financial means may substitute lesser offerings for the more expensive animals. Before a *kohen* diagnoses that a house has *tzara'at*, household possessions are removed to prevent them from also being declared ritually impure. The *tzara'at* is removed by smashing and rebuilding that section of the house. If it reappears, the entire building must be razed. The Torah details those bodily secretions that render a person spiritually impure, thereby preventing his contact with holy items, and the Torah defines how one regains a state of ritual purity.

## ACHAREI MOT

**G**d instructs the *kohanim* to exercise extreme care when they enter the Mishkan. On Yom Kippur, the *Kohen Gadol* is to approach the holiest part of the Mishkan after special preparations and wearing special clothing. He brings offerings unique to Yom Kippur, including two identical goats that are designated by lottery. One is "for G-d" and is offered in the Temple, while the other is "for Azazel" in the desert. The Torah states the individual's obligations on Yom Kippur: On the 10th day of the seventh month, one must afflict oneself. We abstain from eating and drinking, anointing, wearing leather footwear, washing, and marital relations.

Consumption of blood is prohibited. The blood of slaughtered birds and undomesticated beasts must be covered. The people are warned against engaging in the wicked practices that were common in Egypt. Incest is defined and prohibited. Marital relations are forbidden during a woman's monthly cycle. Homosexuality, bestiality and child sacrifice are prohibited.

## KEDOSHIM

**T**he nation is enjoined to be holy. Many prohibitions and positive commandments are taught:

**T** **Prohibitions:** Idolatry; eating offerings after their time-limit; theft and robbery; denial of theft; false oaths; retention of someone's property; delaying payment to an employee; hating or cursing a fellow Jew (especially one's parents); gossip; placing physical and spiritual stumbling blocks; perversion of justice; inaction when others are in danger; embarrassing; revenge; bearing a grudge; cross-breeding; wearing a garment of wool and linen; harvesting a tree during its first three years; gluttony and intoxication; witchcraft; shaving the beard and sideburns; tattooing.

**Positive:** Awe for parents and respect for the elderly; leaving part of the harvest for the poor; loving others (especially a convert); eating in Jerusalem the fruits from a tree's fourth year; awe for the Temple; respect for Torah scholars, the blind and the deaf.

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## WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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*Synonyms in the Hebrew Language*  
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

### PESACH: Sing and Song

*Dedicated in honor of my favorite song: Shira Yael Klein*

**T**he American historian Cyrus Gordon (1908-2001) wrote, “Our contemporaries have split the atom, reached the moon, and brought color TV to the common man. The ancients... were not less talented than today’s population, but they often expressed their intelligence in different ways. They manipulated language so deftly that it often takes the modern scholars a long time to grasp the presence, let alone all the subtleties, of ancient riddles.” One poignant example of such ancient nuances in language is the existence of two Hebrew terms for “song”: *shir/shirah* and *zemer/zimrah*. In this essay we will explore the differences between this pair of synonyms, and, in doing so we too will become attuned to the intricacies of the Hebrew language.

The simplest way of differentiating between *shirah* and *zimrah* is that *shirah* denotes verbal song, while *zimrah* refers to instrumental music. This understanding is proffered by a bevy of authorities, including Ibn Ezra (to Ps. 105:2), Radak (to I Chron. 16:9), Sforno (to Ps. 105:2), the Vilna Gaon (cited in his son’s *Be’er Avraham* to Ps. 27:6), Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Ps. 33:2), and Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer. In fact, the Yiddish word *klezmer* (roughly, “Jewish Music”) is actually a portmanteau of *klei* (“instruments”) and *zemer* (“music”).

The Malbim explains that *zimrah* (plural: *zmirot*) is somehow a higher, more intense form of song than *shirah*. He writes that this is why whenever the two terms appear in tandem, *shirah* is always first and *zemer* is always second.

In what is possibly a separate explanation, the Malbim writes that *shirah* is a more general term which can refer to “song” both in a religious sense and in a secular sense, while *zimrah* refers specifically to a religious song which speaks of G-d’s praises. Similarly, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Edel (1760-1828) writes that *shirah* is simply an expression of one’s happiness without necessarily tying it back to the source of the happiness (i.e. G-d), while *zimrah* is always a means of acknowledging G-d’s role in bringing happiness and thanking Him for it.

Similarly, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) explains that *shir* refers to the lyrics of poetic verse sans the tune, while *zimrah* refers to the tune or melody sung in a song or played by a music instrument.

#### Chop Them Down

**T**he root ZAYIN-MEM-REISH, from which *zemer* and *zimrah* are derived, appears in the verb form as *zomer* (“cutting down”) and is actually the name of one of the 39 forbidden labors on Shabbat. What does this meaning have to do with “singing”?

Judaism's concept of G-d is comprised of two almost paradoxically-opposed descriptions: On the one hand, He is transcendent and thus totally beyond our reach and comprehension; but on the other hand, He is immanent and thus ever-present for us to connect to. Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner (1906-1980) explains that the difference between *shirah* and *zimrah* reflects the tension between these two ways of approaching G-d. Both terms are expressions of "praise," but *shirah* denotes praising G-d from a position of rapture and attachment to Him, while *zimrah* denotes praising G-d as an appreciation of G-d's transcendence and how far away He is from man.

In explaining the latter assertion, Rabbi Hutner notes that *zimrah* not only means "song" but is also a verb for "cutting." When a person recognizes G-d's awesome transcendence and how He is so unapproachable, a person is essentially "cutting off" his own existence due to the recognition that his own existence pales in comparison to G-d's infinite greatness.

Rabbi Yacov Haber relates that he heard from a certain Hassidic Rebbe in the name of the *Chasam Sofer* that the word *shirah* is related to the word *shirayim* ("leftovers"), because "song" is the leftovers of the soul, meaning that it remains one of the only ways the soul can express itself in a world dominated by materialism. Interestingly, in many of the songs/poems recorded in the Bible, the speaker refers to himself in third person (for example, Gen. 49:2, Num. 24:3, Jud. 5:12), instead of in the expected first person. Rabbi Immanuel Frances (1618-1703) explains that this is because true song is like an out-of-body experience, such that the one singing sees himself as a separate entity.

Rabbi Frances further explains that the word *shir* denotes the singer's ability to mesmerize his listeners and captivate their attention as if he rules over them. In this sense, he explains that *shir* is connected to other words which connote "strength," like *sharir* ("strongly-established"), *shur* ("wall"), and *sherarah* ("authority").

By contrast, Rabbi Frances explains that the word *zemer* highlights other aspects of song/poetry: When Yaakov sent his sons to Egypt to buy food during a famine, he sent with them the *zimrah* of the Land of Canaan (Gen. 43:11), which is taken to mean the best. Rashi connects the word *zimrat* with *zemer* by explaining that it refers to the choicest produce over which people would "sing."

Alternatively, Rabbi Frances explains that the act of pruning a vineyard from unnecessary shoots is called *zomer* (Lev. 25:3), and this relates to the art of creating music — the artist must expunge any unnecessary elements from his song in order for it to be wholly good.

Rabbeinu Efrayim ben Shimshon (to Gen. 43:11) explains that the *zimrat ha'aretz* that Yaakov's sons brought to Egypt consisted of fine wine, which is called *zimrat* because drinking wine makes one happy (Ps. 104:15), and when people are happy they "sing" (*zemer*). Interestingly, Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav (1772-1810) writes that the *zimrah* of the Holy Land refers to a special *niggun* ("melody") of Eretz Yisrael which Yaakov sent the Egyptian leader.

Rabbi Eliemelech of Lizhensk in *Noam Eliemelech* (to Gen. 47:28, Ex. 19:1) explains that *zimrah* refers to "cutting" away those outer distractions which impede a person's ability to properly serve G-d. Both he and the *Chasam Sofer* similarly explain that *Pesukei d'Zimra* (literally, "Verses of Hymns" recited daily in the beginning of the morning prayers) are meant to "cut down" the *klipot* ("husks" or "peels") in preparation for our complete rapture with G-d.

## The Circle of Song

**T**he Maharal of Prague (1520-1609) explains that the word *shirah* denotes something whose beginning is attached to its end. For example, the Bible uses the word *sher* to refer to a type of bracelet (Isa. 3:19), and the Mishnah (*Shabbat* 5:1) mentions a collar worn by animals around their neck called a *sher*. Similarly, the Talmud (*Bava Metzia* 25a) discusses if one found coins arranged like a *sher* (ring or bracelet), whether that formation is assumed to have been made deliberately or not. How does this connect to the word *shirah* as a "song"?

The Maharal explains that the idea behind *shirah* is that when one reaches the completion of a certain phase or task, then one offers a "song" of thanks to G-d for allowing it to happen. Song is best associated with happiness, because happiness comes through completion and fulfillment — such that when one reaches a stage of happiness, it is more appropriate for him to offer song. As Rabbi Moshe Shapiro (1935-2017) explains, when one reaches a stage of completion, he can look back and recognize how G-d had guided the situation the entire time and brought it to its conclusion. Only with such hindsight — where the beginning can be attached to the end — is song appropriate. Not beforehand.

Rabbi Shapiro further notes that the entire Torah is called a *shirah* (Deut. 31:19), because the song of *Haazinu* is a microcosm of the entire Torah and, by extension, a microcosm of the entire history of the world. In this way, the history of the world is a circle

because at the end, Man will return to his former place of glory, as if Adam's sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge never happened.

Interestingly, the word *yashar* seems to actually mean the opposite of *shirah*, because *yashar* denotes a line that continuously goes straight, while *shirah* represents a circle, a "curved line," whose end leads into its beginning. Nonetheless, Rabbi Shapiro notes that in rabbinic literature there is clearly a connection between the two: When the Bible tells the story of the cows that returned the Ark captured by the Philistines, it says that the cows walked straight to Bet Shemesh (I Sam. 6:12) — using the word *vayisharnah*, a cognate of *yashar*. The Talmud (*Avodah Zarah* 24b) exegetically explains that *vayisharnah* means that the cows *sang* while transporting the Ark.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (1740-1814) actually connects the word *shir* to the word *yashar* ("straight"), explaining that a song follows a straight path in focusing on a specific theme without deviating off-topic. In this way, the beginning of the song and the end of the song are linked, because they are just variations on the same theme. By contrast, he explains, the term *zimrah* refers to the best segment from an entire song. He understands that *zomer*, in terms of "cutting" or "pruning," is a way of discarding the riffraff and leaving just the best. In that sense, Rabbi Pappenheim argues that *zimrah* refers to the choicest part of a song, as if the rest of the song was "cut out."

Similarly, Rabbi Shimon Dov Ber Analak of Siedlce (1848-1907) explains that *shirah* is related to the word *shur* ("wall"), because just as a wall is comprised of multiple bricks carefully arranged together, so is a song or poem composed of multiple lines carefully arranged. Just as if one brick is removed, the entire edifice may fall, so is it true that if one line or verse of a song is misplaced, the entire structure loses its impact. He explains that this is also why a *sher* refers to a circular article of jewelry. Something round must also be fully intact in order complete the circle — otherwise it is not whole. On the other hand, the word *zimrah* does not imply the entire edifice, but one small part of it, and so *zimrah* can refer to one segment of an entire song as independent or cut off from the rest of the song.

#### Mizmor Shir vs. Shir Mizmor

**W**ith all of this information, we can now begin to understand why sometimes songs in Psalms begin with the words *shir mizmor* and sometimes they begin with *mizmor shir*. Ibn Ezra (to Ps. 48:1) writes that there is no difference between *mizmor shir* and *shir mizmor*. However, I have found two credible authorities who beg to differ.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim explains that when used side-by-side the terms *mizmor* and *shir* assume specific meanings: *shir* denotes the words/lyrics of a song, while *mizmor* denotes the tune/melody of the song. Based on this, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that within a specific song, sometimes the words begin before the tune, and sometimes the tune is played before the words start. In the former case the expression used for that song is *shir mizmor*, because the *shir* element precedes the *mizmor* element, while in the second case the converse is true.

Similarly, Rabbi Shimshon Pincus (1944-2001) in *Shabbat Malketa* explains that *shir* refers to the story told by a song, while *mizmor* refers to the tune within which that story is told. When one uses words to form a narrative that expresses his happiness and thanksgiving, this is called *shir*. But when one's elation is so emotionally intense that it cannot be logically expressed in words and can only be expressed by a wordless melody, this is called *mizmor*. Accordingly, the recital of some chapters of Psalms begins with worded phrase (*shir*), and then, as the experience becomes more intense, can only be continued with a wordless melody (*mizmor*). Those chapters are introduced with the phrase *shir mizmor*. On the flip side, other chapters of Psalms begin with the intense experience of a *mizmor*, and only once that intensity subsides can the word of the *shir* begin. Such chapters open with the words *mizmor shir*.

- For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at [rklein@ohr.edu](mailto:rklein@ohr.edu)

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## Parents with Bread

*Question: I am living with my parents now and they do not keep mitzvahs, Shabbat or the holidays. They are respectful, but they just don't know and can't be bothered to learn. Pesach is coming up. My parents may or may not want to clean up, and even if we try to, I'm convinced they will bring chametz in at some point (knowingly or not). What should I do?*

*The Rabbi answers:* The Torah prohibits owning chametz on Pesach. This is derived from the verse "Nothing leavened may be seen in your possession." This prohibition applies only to chametz which you own. It does not apply to someone else's chametz even if it's in your house. If we can assume that your parents own or rent the house, and assume that all the chametz in the house belongs to them, it is their responsibility to get rid of the chametz – not yours.

Of course, chametz that you personally own, you have to get rid of before Pesach. Also, any of your personal belongings in which you might put chametz require a pre-Pesach search. For example, pockets and knapsacks should be checked for forgotten candy bars or half-eaten sandwiches. But since you are a "guest" in your parents home i.e., you have no ownership or legal rights over your room, you wouldn't say the blessing when searching for chametz.

I once spoke to Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg about this issue, and he said that a child may stay at his parents' home for Pesach even if they haven't removed their chametz. The best scenario would be if you could agree with your parents to keep the house chametz-free. That way, your parents will be doing a mitzvah, and also, neither you nor your parents will accidentally eat any chametz. But this *must* all be done in a way that causes no friction between you and your parents and conveys no disrespect to them whatsoever.

- Sources: Exodus 13:17, Tractate Pesachim 5b; Chaye Adam 119:18; Chok Yaakov Orach Chaim 436; After the Return, Rabbi Mordechai Becher and Rabbi Moshe Newman, p. 80

## The Riddle in the Middle

*Question: Why is the afikomen taken from the middle matza during the Seder rather than from the top or bottom matza?*

*The Rabbi answers:* On the first night of Pesach, we say two blessings over the matzah. The first blessing, *hamotzi*, is the usual blessing we say when eating bread. Since this blessing is always best to say on a whole "loaf," we therefore put an unbroken matzah on top of the stack.

The second blessing, *al achilat matza*, is the special blessing we say for the commandment to eat matzah on this night. This blessing applies especially to the broken matzah, because this matzah symbolizes our broken, impoverished state as slaves in Egypt. Since this blessing is the second one, the broken matzah is second in the stack.

The third matzah is included in order to complete *lechem mishneh* – the requirement on Shabbat and festivals to use two whole loaves instead of one – and it goes on the bottom. According to widespread custom, this bottom matzah is let to slip from the hands before the second blessing is said.

- Sources: Mishnah Berurah 473:57, 475:2

## What's Not In a Name?

*Question: Why is Moses' name not mentioned in the Haggadah?*

*The Rabbi answers:* The Torah attests, "Moses was the most humble person on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3). It should be no surprise, then, that the name of the world's humblest person is omitted from the story, and, instead, all the credit is given to G-d.

Your question raises an interesting point. After a full year in the desert, the Jewish People celebrated the Pesach festival. They offered the paschal lamb and ate matzah and *maror* (bitter herbs). But when it came time to tell the Pesach story, who did they tell it to? To whom did they relate the plagues and miracles, the Strong Hand and Outstretched Arm? Everybody was there! Everyone saw it with their own eyes!

Only one person had children who did not personally experience the going out of Egypt – Moses! Moses' two sons were in Midian during the Exodus. Moses, therefore, was the first person in history to relate the Pesach story to children who didn't know it first-hand.

by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

Binyamin Gordon (25)  
Johannesburg, South Africa  
Born: Port Harcourt, Nigeria  
University of South Africa (UNISA) Law  
Center Program 2019 - present

**B**inyamin's story could be titled "Out of Africa." And that would be appropriate, because shortly, on the holiday of Passover, we will be recounting our own "out of Africa" story. But his is slightly different.

Binyamin grew up in a staunchly Christian home. He's the oldest of three children. His father, Samuel Gordon, was a very popular Pentecostal minister. The church that he founded would regularly draw over 1,000 people on a Sunday.

In 2003 and 2004 his father attended a Christian conference held in South Africa. While there, he felt a calling to move to South Africa and open a church. And he did. After establishing his church in Roodepoort, a suburb west of Johannesburg, he sent for his family. Soon he was drawing large crowds of 500-600 a week and opened a branch in Soweto, a large black township nearby, where he was also very successful. He had soon opened branches in Ghana and in a number of cities in the United States.



In 2011, Samuel had a dream, which he confided to his family. In it he was wrestling with a man who kept yelling at him, "It's time for Israel. Think Israel." Until that point, Israel and the Jews had not been topics of discussion in the church or in the Gordon household, but that dream changed his perspective. After a few weeks, he began to introduce the idea of supporting Israel into his sermons. Soon afterwards he organized rallies in support of Israel and began to bring groups of Africans to Israel. He also started an organization called "Africa-Israel Initiative." The Israeli government took note of his support and sent representatives to his rallies. The South African Zionist Organization also invited his father to speak at their plenums. Binyamin, still in his teens, was the Vice President of the Youth Division of the Organization.

On one of his return flights from Israel, Binyamin's father noticed an Orthodox Jewish man reading a Jewish book. He asked him what the book was about and where he might get a copy. The book was a popular Breslov title, "The Garden of Faith." The man told him the name of a bookstore in Johannesburg that carried it. His father bought it, read it and returned to the store to buy many more books. He discussed what he read with his wife and with Binyamin. He was beginning to see the Truth of Judaism and started moving away from Christian ideology. Binyamin, alongside his siblings, were all drawn to this new pool of wisdom.

His father slowly started introducing changes in the church. His sermons were now primarily about the need to support Israel and the Jews as the "Priests to the nations." This emphasis on Jews and Israel irritated many and they dropped out of the church. As his world started crumbling before him, Binyamin felt the need to get clarity as to his own beliefs. He began a serious study of the history of Christianity.

At about the same time, his father instructed Binyamin, who was the church's music director, to substitute the name of the Christian deity for the name of G-d in all the songs that were sung at the services. Needless to say, this created a huge rift in the church.

Changes were also afoot at home. One of his father's Jewish friends invited the Gordon family to come to his home for Shabbat. Binyamin and his father went to shul on Friday night for the first time. It was an extremely emotional and spiritual experience for both of them. The structure of the prayers, the silent Shmoneh Esrei, the tunes and the Shabbat atmosphere were intoxicating. The delicious meal that followed with its *zmirot* and *divrei Torah* were nothing like they had ever experienced. The whole family was touched beyond words.

Soon afterwards, the Gordon family started to observe Shabbat and *kashrut* to the best of their understanding. That meant not leaving home on the Sabbath, having family meals and not watching TV. Their knowledge of keeping kosher came from the Written Law. Not living in a Jewish community, they weren't aware at first of kosher butcher shops, and so, armed with a book on kosher slaughtering, Binyamin and his father went out to farms, bought animals and *shechted* them for food. Not being used to killing animals, that exercise was short-lived, and resulted in their eating a lot of fish.

The Gordon family was forced to live a double life – closet “Jew-ish” people for 6 days a week, and church leaders on Sunday. They lived like this for over a year, but it couldn’t last. One Sunday, his father, in the middle of his sermon, announced that he and his family had decided to convert and that he was disbanding the church. He urged those who wished to follow him to become Noahides and he converted the church into a Noahide worship center. He was still their spiritual leader; however, he and his family decided to go all the way, and they convinced the Beit Din in Johannesburg of their sincerity. After two years, which ended this past summer, the family moved to Glenhazel, a Jewish enclave in Johannesburg and converted. His father is now learning full-time in Yeshiva Gedolah Johannesburg.

With the encouragement of his Rabbis, Binyamin came to the Center Program in December of 2019. His sister is in Neve Yerushalayim and his brother is in high school. Of his experience here, Binyamin says, “I wanted a Yeshiva that would prepare me for authentic Jewish life. Ohr Somayach is absolutely amazing. It is exactly what I wanted.”

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## LOVE OF THE LAND

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### Plenty of Room

**W**e pray daily for the return of all Jews to *Eretz Yisrael*. Is there really room in this country for so many people?

The same question was put to Rabbi Chanina by a heathen skeptic who scoffed at the claim made by the Sages that millions of Jews once lived in just a portion of the Holy Land that appeared to him too small to hold so many. *Eretz Yisrael*, explained the Sage, is compared by the Prophet Yirmiyahu to a deer. When the skin of a deer is removed from its carcass it is impossible to once again have it envelop the deer’s flesh. Similarly, when Jews live in *Eretz Yisrael* the land expands to absorb them, but when they are in exile it contracts.

The answer then is yes, there is room in *Eretz Yisrael* for every Jew.

**We wish a complete and speedy  
recovery to anyone needing it, and  
that the healthy remain healthy.  
Happy Passover!**