

Potomac Torah Study Center
Vol. 8 #15, January 22, 2021; Bo 5781

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

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah.

This Shabbat: Rabbi Avi Weiss and outstanding Rabbi/Chazzan Uri Topolosky present a special Zoom Shabbaton at Beth Shalom: Friday, 3:45 p.m.; Motzi Shabbat at 7:45 p.m. – 19th Annual Herbert Lieberman and Ruben D. Silverman Shabbaton. Details below.

LEARNING TO LIVE WITH COVID-19: PANEL DISCUSSION

Bikur Cholim of Greater Washington and several shuls in Silver Spring are presenting a panel of distinguished experts to share latest research and findings on treatment and vaccines. **Saturday, January 23, 2021, 8:15-9:15 p.m. NOTE: MOTZI SHABBIS THIS WEEK!!**

Dial-in-number: 1301-715-8592. Zoom Meeting ID: 878 2795 1873. Pass code: 699427. Speakers:

Ronald Reisler, MD/MPH, infectious diseases, clinical research, Davis Defense Group

Yosefta Hefter, MD, pediatrician, Pediatric Infectious Diseases Fellow at Children's National Hospital

Evan Fisher, MD, internist and Chief Nephrologist, Wright-Patterson AFB; and Assistant Professor, Wright State University Medical School.

Topics include:

- Main signs of COVID-19 and the various tests used to identify and treat it.
- Changes in treatments over the past 10 months and what lies ahead.
- How the virus affects children and how they spread it.
- Latest research findings about early markers of COVID-19 and its after-effects.

Bikur Cholim and shuls invite everyone in the community to listen in by Zoom.

This Shabbat: Rabbi Avi Weiss and outstanding Rabbi/Chazzan Rabbi Uri Topolosky present a special Zoom Shabbaton at Beth Sholom: Friday, 3:45 p.m.; Motzi Shabbat at 7:45 p.m. – 19th Annual Herbert Lieberman and Ruben D. Silverman Shabbaton. Friday, January 22, 3:45 p.m.: Rabbi Topolosky will lead a musical Kabbalat Shabbat, and Rabbi Weiss will offer words of inspiration. Motzi Shabbat, January 23, 7:45 p.m. Rabbi Topolosky will lead a musical Havdalah, and Rabbi Weiss will speak on “Coping with COVID: Jewish Perspectives on Dealing with Crisis.” To join on Zoom: www.BethSholom.org/zoom (Password for the event: 613613)

“The habitation of B’Nai Yisrael in Egypt was 430 years (12:40).” Really? Levi’s son Kehot, Moshe’s grandfather, was part of Yaakov’s family that went down to Egypt. Kehot and his son Amram, Moshe’s father, lived a combined total of 270 years, and Moshe was 80 when B’Nai Yisrael left Egypt. The Jews thus could not have been in Egypt more than 350 years. Indeed, the timeline is even narrower. According to Chabad, Yaakov and his family went to Egypt in the year 2238 and left Egypt in 2448, 210 years later. (See https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3915966/jewish/Timeline-of-Jewish-History.htm for the timeline.) Moreover, Egypt did not begin to enslave the Jews until after Levi died in 2332. Counting from 2332, when Sefer Shemot begins and when all of Yaakov’s sons had died, our ancestors’ actual slavery lasted 116 years. Why, then does the Torah say 430 years?

The Torah takes a longrun view of history. Reading the Torah in depth reminds me of reading a Dickens novel. Any named character in a Dickens novel is likely to return and play a much larger role later. The Torah uses key words to connect episodes and characters from different events to show connections that otherwise would not be obvious. For example, in the story of Sodom and Amorah, when the angels left Avraham to go to Lot, the Torah specifies that Lot prepared matzos to serve them. In a famous comment, Rashi explains that Lot prepared matzos because it was Pesach (Bereishis 19:3). However, the destruction of Sodom was in 2048, and the Exodus from Egypt was in 2448, 400 years later. Rashi certainly knew that Lot could not have known that 15 Nisan would be Pesach 400 years before the tenth plague, when God would pass over Jewish homes while slaying the first born of Egypt. The Torah at Shemot 12:40 dates the beginning of Jewish exile from 2018, the date of God’s covenant of the parts, in which He promised to make Avraham’s descendants a great nation and to give them the land of Israel.

In connecting Lot in Sodom to the tenth plague, the Torah is stating that neither Lot nor B’Nai Yisrael really deserved to be saved or freed on their own merit. Rather, God had mercy on Lot and B’Nai Yisrael because of their connection to Avraham and God’s promise to Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov.

The Torah pauses in the Exodus story (chapter 13) to present a series of laws of the first born sons and animals. We have an eternal obligation to sanctify every first born son and Kosher animal (plus donkey) to God. (For more on this obligation, see the Dvar by Yehuda Shurpin, page 15 below.) All first born sons were to be a bridge between the parents and the next generation, to carry on religious learning and traditions. Later, because of the sin of Egel Zahav (the Golden Calf), the first born lose this privilege, and God transfers it to shevat Levi.

As so often, one must delve beyond the text to appreciate the many levels of meanings and connections across the Torah, Tanach, and Jewish history. Even something as simple as Lot serving matzos to unexpected company, a statement about how long the Jews lived in one place, or a statement of a mitzvah can have meanings well beyond the text in the Torah. I always eagerly sought insights of this kind from my beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z”l, and uncovering these sorts of connections continues to thrill me (as well as make me feel closer to my Rebbe).

This Shabbat we have the privilege of learning from Rabbi Avi Weiss, the distinguished founding Rabbi of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah (before Shabbat and again Motzi Shabbat). A bit later, Bikur Cholim of Greater Washington is presenting a panel about advances in coronavirus research, treatment, and prevention with three distinguished physicians from our community. Those who wish to listen to the end of Rabbi Weiss’ class on Motzi Shabbat will be able to listen to the coronavirus panel by tape after the event. Watch for details or look at <https://www.bikurcholimgw.org/> for information about a rebroadcast. .

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah & Alan

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Menachem Mendel ben Chana, Eli ben Hanina, Yoram HaKohen ben Shoshana, Gedalya ben Sarah, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reizel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha, Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Ramesh bat Heshmat, Rivka Chaya bat Leah, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava bat Yachid, and Ruth bat Sarah, all of whom greatly need our prayers.

Hannah & Alan

Drasha: Bo: Out of Africa
by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 1998

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

Imagine that you are a tourist on your way to see this nation's most revered document, the one that forged our beliefs and principles. You enter the hallowed halls of the Library of Congress and ask a guard, "which way to the Declaration of Independence?" He points to a sign with bold letters. The sign has a large arrow and reads; "This way to the "Declaratsiya o Nezavisimossti" " In small print it translates the two Russian words – "Declaration of Independence."

You would be shocked. Why in the world would the United States government use a foreign language to identify the very document that symbolizes the essence of America?

Of course the story is not true, and probably can never happen.

That is why I am troubled by the Torah's choice of words to introduce us to the most Jewish of all symbols – tefillin. The Torah commands the children of Israel to wear tefillin with an interesting expression. "They shall be for totafos between your eyes." (Exodus 13:16) The Talmud in Sanhedrin is concerned with the origins of the word totafos, clearly it has no Jewish origin. The Talmud declares that totafos is a compound word that combines two foreign words. The word tot in Afriki (I assume Africa) means two, and the word pas in the Coptic language means two. The tefillin on the head has four compartments. Thus, tat-pas or totafos, means four.

How baffling! Why would the Torah use a compound of two very foreign words to describe a Jewish – perhaps the most Jewish — symbol?

What is even more interesting is that just a few verses prior the Torah refers to the tefillin boxes as a zikoron (remembrance) between the eyes (Exodus 13:9). If the Torah calls tefillin a remembrance then why does it refer to them as totafos? Moreover, if they are totafos then why call them a remembrance?

Stephen Savitsky, CEO of Staff Builders, one of America's leading home health care providers, spends quite a bit of time travelling on airplanes. It is at 35,000 feet where he has met Jews of great diversity, backgrounds, and beliefs. Once on a flight out of Baton Rouge toward Wichita, Kansas, he was bumped to first class. He was seated next to a large man who had a thick gold ring on his pinkie and an even thicker gold chain hanging loosely from his neck. The man was chewing an unlit cigar while immersing himself in a sports magazine. As soon as the seat belt sign was turned off he ordered two drinks. All the while the flamboyant jet-setter was immersed in his own self, and hardly glanced at the neatly groomed executive who was sitting next to him. He surely did not notice that Steve's head was covered during the entire flight.

The flight attendants began serving the meal. The smell of glazed ham that was wafting from his neighbor's tray made it difficult for Steve to eat his kosher food. It was only after the meals were cleared and the trays removed did Mr. Savitsky take out a small siddur (prayer book) to say Grace After Meals.

All of a sudden a pair of eyes transfixed on the siddur. "Hey, my friend!" exclaimed the man. Steve heard a Brooklyn accent cowering underneath the Southern drawl, "is that a seedoor?" Steve nodded, "sure. Do you want to look at it?"

"Look?" shouted the stranger. "I want to use it! Do you know how many years it has been since I saw a seedoor? Give it to me please!" The man grabbed it, kissed it, then he stood up in his seat and began to shake and shout with fervor! "Borucho es Adon" The entire first class section just turned around and stared in shock. For the next ten minutes the man stood and shook wildly as he recited the maariv prayer – word for word – without care and concern for anyone who was watching. For those ten minutes he left Louisiana way below, as he ascended to the heavens with the world of his childhood.

With a mixture of great pride and a bit of embarrassment, Steve watched. When the man finished praying, Steve presented the small siddur that evoked Jewish memories over the Delta as a memento to the former yeshiva boy.

Perhaps the Torah intentionally called tefillin a remembrance. And perhaps, with even more intention, did it give it a foreign name. The Torah tells us that no matter where a Jew may be, whether the jungles of the Congo or the Coptic Islands, the Jewish symbols will be there to remind him to come home. The Torah's observance is not relegated to any specific geographical location. It can be observed, albeit not in toto, every place in the world. And no matter where a Jew finds himself there are symbols to remind him of his Judaism. For there is a special spark in every Jewish soul that is waiting to be kindled. Even out of Africa.

Good Shabbos!

NOTE: In repeating this story, I am not endorsing a single davener saying "**Borucho.**"

Bo: Don't Leave the People Behind

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2014

NOTE: Rabbi Linzer's Dvar Torah for Bo was not ready in time for my deadline. For a voice preview of his new Dvar Torah, go to <https://fb.watch/39LGngDtm/>. A transcription of the Dvar Torah, possibly with some edits, will be available on Friday at www.yctorah.org. I have selected a Dvar from Rabbi Linzer's archives.

Nine plagues were proclaimed. Nine plagues befell Pharaoh and the Egyptians. With each passing plague, Pharaoh was one step closer to freeing the Children of Israel. Until this point, he had offered to release them all save the cattle. Even this Moshe refuses, and Pharaoh orders him out telling him never to return. Moshe, at this last moment, tells Pharaoh of the final plague, the slaying of the firstborn. It is then, says Moshe, that you and all your servants will come to me begging us to leave, and it is only then that we will go.

The entire story, since the beginning of last week's parasha, has been building up to this point. And yet, right in the middle of this showdown with Pharaoh, immediately after Pharaoh orders Moshe out, and right before Moshe proclaims the coming of the final plague, the story breaks, and God issues Moshe a seemingly out-of-place command:

And the Lord said to Moshe, one more plague will I bring upon the Egyptians... Speak, please in the ears of the people and let each man borrow from his neighbor and each woman from hers, objects of silver and objects of gold. (11:1-2).

What is the point of this interruption? What, we may ask, is the point of this entire request?

To answer this, we must go back to last week's parasha, and an unexpected interruption that occurs there as well. There, immediately before the ten plagues begin, and after Moshe has complained to God that Bnei Yisrael has not listened to him, the narrative is interrupted:

These are the heads of their fathers' houses: The sons of Reuven... (6:14).

All of a sudden, we are treated to an extensive list of the genealogies of the tribes of Israel, for many verses, from Reuven, to Shimon, to Levi, until we finally get to Moshe and Aharon, great-grandchildren of Levi, Aharon's wives, his children, his children's wives, until finally we resume:

These are that Aharon and Moshe, to whom the Lord said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies. These are they which spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt: these are that Moshe and Aharon. (6:26-27).

What is this genealogical list doing here?

The answer, I believe, is clear. It is coming to situate Moshe and Aharon clearly and firmly as part of the families of and the people of Bnei Yisrael. This could not be taken for granted. Moshe had come to Bnei Yisrael with a message of redemption. The people initially believed him. But then he appeared before Pharaoh, and the people were not behind him. It was only he and Aharon that stood there, all alone. Where were the people? Where were the elders? Rashi says that they slowly dropped off, one by one, until there was no one left when they finally arrived at Pharaoh's house. Their courage and their will were not strong enough for the task. Or perhaps it was Moshe who realized that this would be too much to ask from them at this stage. Either way, it was Moshe and Aharon speaking on behalf of the people, but not with the participation of the people.

And it only got worse after that. After the first meeting with Pharaoh, things only got harder for the people. It was then that the people really turned on Moshe. They were not ready for the hardship and the upheaval that comes in the wake of change, even change for the better. Remember, these were the same people who, when they faced hardship and privation in the Wilderness, would readily turn on Moshe and Aharon, yearning for the pots of meat and vegetables that had been provided to them in Egypt. Never mind that they were slaves. Never mind that they had no choice, no freedom. Never mind the back-breaking work. What was important was that their life was predictable, it was structured, it was familiar. That's what they craved. They couldn't handle the responsibility that comes with freedom. They couldn't handle the change and disruption that comes with making one's life better.

So Moshe complains to God that the people have abandoned him. And what is God's response –

And Moshe spoke before the Lord, saying, Behold, the Children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?

And the Lord spoke unto Moshe and unto Aharon, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. (6:12-13).

They won't listen to you? Fine. Ignore them. Just go speak to Pharaoh. Worry about him. Speak on the people's behalf even if they are not behind you.

The exodus would have to be forced not just on Pharaoh, but on Bnei Yisrael as well. God's "strong hand" was necessary not just to force Pharaoh to send them out, but to hold on to their hands and to drag them out as well. [And maybe some refused even then; hence the famous midrash that 80% died in the plague of darkness...]

Indeed, during the entire period of the ten plagues, we do not hear from B'nei Yisrael at all. The entire drama is a showdown between Moshe and Pharaoh. In fact, we hear more from the Egyptians than we do from the Israelites. At least Pharaoh's advisers voiced their opinions and applied some pressure. But Bnei Yisrael are invisible. They are spoken about, spoken for, but are not actually speaking themselves. They are the objects of the redemption, not its subjects.

Sometimes this is necessary. Sometimes it is the job of a leader to understand the vision of the people and help them actualize it. Sometimes it is the job of a leader to inspire the people with his vision and have them embrace his vision as their own. And sometimes a leader might need to force his vision on people if they cannot even realize what is best for them. But if the latter is the case, he'd better make darn sure that he is really speaking for the deepest needs of the people, that he is truly one of them, not some outsider who thinks he knows best, fighting his own fights for his own reasons.

Hence, at the moment that God tells Moshe to ignore the people and go confront Pharaoh, the Torah reminds us that this Moshe and Aharon are not some outsiders – a child of privilege who grew up in Pharaoh's house, an elite member of the priestly class – no, they are the Moshe and Aharon who are deeply entrenched in Bnei Yisrael, connected with all their family ties, their parents, their children, their siblings. These are who came before Pharaoh. Speaking for the people, as a part of the people. Going to Pharaoh not because of their own agenda, but because God had commanded them, because this was the leadership that was necessary.

And hence the interruption in our parasha. For you can only speak unilaterally on the people's behalf for so long. There comes a time in the process where the people must take part in their own redemption. But you have to meet the people where they are at. Mindsets do not change overnight. Slavery is still familiar, freedom is anxiety provoking. So how to get the people's buy in? Give them what they want. Focus them on the immediate material benefits that will result. Have them borrow gold and silver. And as a result, they will be taking an active part in the exodus. They will be sending themselves a message that they are invested in this process, they believe in this process, they are part of this process. Through this, you will turn (unwilling, unappreciative) beneficiaries into stakeholders and participants.

It is this turning point that enables them to achieve in greater investment: "This month is for you the beginning of months... Speak to the congregation of Israel, and you shall take each person a sheep according to their father's house, a sheep for each house." (12:1-2). The participation is now ratcheted up. It is not just the self-interest of the gold and silver. Now you will own the process, reordering the calendar, being in control, and actively showing your fidelity to God. Take a lamb, engage in this ritual, put the blood on the doorposts so you become a part of your own redemption. And do it by household, not just as individuals, but as families, as members of a community, as an entire nation.

You will own your redemption so fully so that you will continue this practice in future generations. And then,

It shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? That you shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's pesach, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when the Lord smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. (12:25-26).

It will become your story, what you tell over to your children. You will be the participants in the story and in its future retelling.

Consider then this final contrast. When Moshe first came to the people, we read:

And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the Children of Israel, and that the Lord had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped. And afterward Moses and Aharon went in, and told Pharaoh... (4:31-5:1).

The people prostrated and gave thanks, but then it was Moshe and Aharon who went and did.

But now the people have been engaged. Now, however much is needed to be forced on them before they are finally ready to buy in and to become a part of their own redemption. It is now that we read:

And the people bowed the head and worshiped. And the Children of Israel went away, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they. (12:27-28).

Their prostration is followed with their doing. Moshe and Aharon had started following God's orders and acting on behalf of the people. That type of leadership is necessary at times. But to succeed, it has to end with the people following God's orders. It has to end with the people acting on behalf of the people.

Shabbat Shalom!

<https://library.yctarah.org/2014/01/dont-leave-the-people-behind/>

Bo: Are You On The Team Yet?

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine* © 2021 Teach 613

Things were looking good. By the end of the sixth plague, it seemed like Paroh was getting the message. Paroh said, "I have sinned; Hashem is righteous. I and my people are wicked." One would think that Moshe would be overjoyed to hear these words. They sound like Teshuva! Moshe, however, responds quite boldly: "I know, that you have not yet (Terem), reached Fear of G-d." Why did Moshe feel that Paroh's level was still severely lacking?

The Mishna in Avos (2:13) writes that a person should not be "wicked in their own eyes." Rabbeinu Yona explains that when a person views themselves as wicked—it may sound very saintly and humble—but they will not refrain from doing wrong, because they see themselves as irretrievably in the opposition. Don't label yourself, "On The Other Side," the Mishna is directing. We need people to be on the same side as Hashem, even with flaws and points of contention, for us to succeed. Paroh sees himself as wicked, and "on the other side." By using the word Terem, (yet), Moshe is acknowledging the great strides that Paroh has made. Paroh has gone from thinking of himself as god, to recognizing Hashem. But Paroh still, stubbornly, places himself on "the other side," in some sort of place of opposition. Teshuva is about coming closer to Hashem, and Paroh wasn't coming any closer.

On some level, Moshe, too, was going through a great emotional reorganization. At the conclusion of Parshas Shimos, Moshe might be described as frustrated with Hashem and with the mission he was assigned. Hashem responded that He deals with different generations in different ways. Sometimes His love is hidden; sometimes it is open. "Soon," Hashem assures Moshe, "A time of clarity will come, and with it; redemption." Remarkably, the first word in this week's Parsha is "Bo-Come," because Moshe and Hashem are close; they are on the same team. Despite Moshe's challenge with his mission, and his grappling with the slavery, the pain, the suffering, and the promise of redemption "soon," Moshe still sees himself side by side with Hashem.

This distinction is critical in relationships and in conflict resolution. There are times that people seem to be on different sides of the fence. Husband and wife, boss and employee, coworkers with each other, can have different perspectives and negotiating positions that place them at odds with one another. The anger and frustration can mount to the point that one of the parties (or both) become(s) so emotionally distant that it seems like they have taken up stake in some outlying area, "on the other side of the fence." With open communication the conflict will not necessarily be solved. But open communication can enable both people to be on the same side of the fence. It is a remarkable moment when those in "outlying areas" are able to warm up to the idea of dialogue, and create an US, a unified front, albeit with diverse perspectives.

It is customary in the United States for the incoming President to accept upon himself to be President even for those who did not vote for him. We witnessed that this week, on inauguration day, as well. In doing so, the leader of the country is saying that no matter what our differences are, let us differ from the same side of the fence.

Moshe boldly asserts that Paroh is Terem (yet), to truly engage Hashem in a relationship. Paroh has acknowledged Hashem's might. He even acknowledged Hashem's right. But he does so from the other side of the fence, viewing himself as wicked.

The way of the Jew, is the way of Moshe in his relationship with Hashem. Moshe might be upset, frustrated, or disappointed, but he remains on the same side of the fence. This enables Hashem to say to him, “Come to Paroh.” This created a very special partnership that would bring about the redemption.

With heartfelt blessings for a wonderful Shabbos.

* Rav of Southeast Hebrew Congregation, White Oak (Silver Spring), MD and Director of Teach 613.
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Darkness that Leads to Enlightenment: Thoughts for Parashat Bo

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel*

Rabbi Yitzhak Shemuel Reggio, a 19th century Italian Torah commentator, offers an interesting insight concerning the plague of darkness. The Torah states that Egyptians spent three days in deep darkness while “all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.”

Rabbi Reggio opines that the plague of darkness did not befall the land of Egypt—but rather the eyes of the Egyptians. Egypt itself was full of light; but while the Israelites continued to enjoy that light, the eyes of the Egyptians were blanketed in darkness. If an Egyptian stood right next to an Israelite, the Egyptian would be unable to see—but the Israelite would see clearly.

Rabbi Reggio notes that after the plague of darkness, the Torah reports that “the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the eyes of Pharaoh’s servants and in the eyes of the people.” It seems that the Egyptians did not recognize the greatness of Moses until after they had experienced darkness. This plague somehow caused a transformation within them. They started to see things differently, more clearly. It took darkness to make them see the light!

For many years, the Egyptians did not think twice about their enslavement of the Israelites. This was a “normal” fact of life, not to be questioned. They did not see that anything was morally wrong with the status quo. They had grown so accustomed to their pattern of thinking, that they did not question the validity of their assumptions and their lifestyle. When they were plunged into absolute darkness, they began to realize how wrong they had been. They came to understand that their assumptions and patterns of behavior were immoral. When they “saw the light”, they then recognized the greatness of Moses. He was, after all, telling the truth! He—not Pharaoh—was the agent of truth.

The transformation within the minds of the Egyptians may also be evidenced by the Torah’s later statement that the children of Israel found favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, so that the Egyptians gave them presents. The Egyptians no longer saw the Israelites as slaves, as objects to be exploited; rather, they saw the Israelites as fellow human beings who had been cruelly mistreated. Egyptians felt empathy toward the Israelites, whom they had previously treated so callously and viciously. They wanted to give them presents, to demonstrate human solidarity.

Rabbi Reggio’s insight might be extended to relate to human life in general. People live with assumptions, values, and patterns of behavior typical of their societies. They do not necessarily self-reflect: are these assumptions true? Are these values moral? Are these patterns of behavior ethical? It is highly difficult to rise above one’s milieu and judge one’s reality in a dispassionate, honest manner.

Professor Daniel Kahneman, the Israeli Nobel Prize winner in Economics, has coined the phrase “illusion of validity.” He points out that we tend to think that our own opinions and intuitions are correct. We tend to overlook hard data that contradict our worldview and to dismiss arguments that don’t coincide with our own conception of things. We operate under the illusion that our ideas, insights, intuitions are valid; we don’t let facts or opposing views get in our way.

The illusion of validity leads to innumerable errors, to wrong judgments, to unnecessary confrontations. If we could be more open and honest, self-reflective, willing to entertain new ideas and to correct erroneous assumptions—we would find ourselves in a better, happier and more humane world.

The ancient Egyptians had the illusion of validity, believing that their murderous, slavery-ridden society was fine. They did not question their lifestyle, opinions or worldview. It took the plague of darkness to make them think more carefully about the nature of their society—and the nature of their own humanity. Once they “saw the light”, they were able to make positive adjustments. Although Pharaoh and his army continued to foster the pre-darkness views, the people as a whole seem to have re-oriented their way of thinking and acting.

The plague of darkness might symbolize the need for each of us to periodically clear our minds, re-evaluate our assumptions, and see where we might have fallen victim to the illusion of validity. In the darkness and quiet of our inner selves, we can try to shed light on our opinions, values, attitudes and behaviors. We can try to rise above ourselves, as honestly and objectively as we can.

An old proverb has it that “no one is so blind as the one who refuses to see.” We might offer an addendum to this proverb: “no one sees so clearly as the one who has first experienced darkness.”

* Jewishideas.org. <https://www.jewishideas.org/article/darkness-leads-enlightenment-thoughts-parashat-bo>
The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during the pandemic. The Institute needs our help to maintain and strengthen our Institute. Each gift, large or small, is a vote for an intellectually vibrant, compassionate, inclusive Orthodox Judaism. You may contribute on our website [jewishideas.org](https://www.jewishideas.org) or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023. Ed.: Please join me in helping the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals at this time.

Book Review: Memorable Sephardi Voices

Reviewed by Rabbi Hayyim Angel *

Moderate voices often are hard to come by in any arena these days, and the sphere of traditional Judaism is no exception. At the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals ([jewishideas.org](https://www.jewishideas.org)), we are dedicated to promoting the rich diversity of Jewish voices throughout the ages, which open avenues of conversation that lead to a passionate, sensible, and intellectually vibrant commitment to Jewish life and growth.

Sharing many of our core values, the Montefiore Endowment in London recently has published a small volume which compiles many teachings of (primarily) Sephardic rabbis which promote a traditional Jewish vision characterized by love and moderation, rather than extremism and exclusivity.

Lucien Gubbay, the Chairman of the Montefiore Endowment, has excerpted dozens of passages from the extensive teachings of Sephardic rabbis—primarily (but not at all exclusively) from the 19th-21st centuries. These voices often are overlooked or even downright ignored in contemporary discourse, yet they have much to add in terms of practical halakhic ruling and broader perspective toward the vital religious issues of our time.

As Rabbi Dr. Abraham Levy writes in his foreword, “The differing and often more lenient legal interpretations of Sephardi rabbis and others need not always be accepted; but they should be respected and not, as often happens today, be suppressed and even deleted from reissues of standard halakhic books.”

To this value, I would add the incalculable positive significance in citing the voices of so many members of the Sephardic rabbinate—some very well-known, but others quite obscure. This volume enables the entire Jewish world to be informed of these learned perspectives. There are many legitimate traditional avenues into Jewish thought and law, and it is essential for rabbis and the wider community to be aware of these possibilities. Who knows how many more Jews would connect more strongly to tradition were they to be knowledgeable of such formidable voices presenting outlooks and rulings different from what the popular media present?

An additional beneficial feature of this anthology is the biographical information about the rabbis who are quoted. Many communities of the Sephardic Diaspora are represented.

As with any anthology drawn from a vast database of rabbinic teachings, this book reflects the religious values of the compiler and the partnering institutions. There is a conscious effort made to present compassionate, flexible, and lenient rulings of Sephardic rabbis. Tellingly, Gubbay prefaces his book on the inner title page with two statements found in the book:

“Flexible and progressive halachic rulings will ensure the continuation of Judaism in perpetuity.”

“Leniency in halachic ruling is a better principle than stressing what is forbidden.”

Although there is some effort to cast these perspectives as characteristic of the Sephardic world, Gubbay admits that there are more extreme voices in the Sephardic world, and more moderate voices in the Ashkenazic world as well. One of the great contributions of this volume is the addition of so many moderate Sephardic voices to the panoply of contemporary opinions. When more extreme voices garner headlines, and this phenomenon is coupled with the suppression and ignoring of the more moderate voices, we are impoverished as individuals and as a community.

Some of the foremost points stressed in this anthology are:

- Diversity in opinion is a built-in feature of Torah learning. Different people bring their own unique perspectives, and we never should demand or expect conformity.
- Although we accept tradition and recognize the limitations of human wisdom and understanding, it is vital to critically examine issues rather than blindly accepting everything. We must evaluate each issue in light of the primary sources, rather than automatically deferring to decisions made by previous generations of rabbis.
- The volume presents lenient rulings on a wide array of critical contemporary issues. While of course there are dissenting and more restrictive opinions, it is critical to present these permissive voices as well.
- There are less restrictive roads to welcome converts into Judaism. Once someone converts halakhically, there is no annulling the conversion.
- There are several rulings allowing women greater participation in several areas of religious life.
- Torah scholarship must be fundamentally linked to ethical behavior, or it falsifies the Torah.
- Torah scholars must deeply respect all Jews, including those unlearned in Torah. Additionally, we are one Jewish community, and must remain united and inclusive even when many contemporary Jews are not fully observant of the Torah and Jewish Law.
- Jews must love and respect non-Jews who live ethically. This is a religious-moral principle, rather than simply a concession to living in harmony among others.
- There is value to the study of secular subjects, both for having the wherewithal to find a profession, and also because there is educational value to this study.

This enlightening volume should be in the hands of rabbis, educators, and interested lay people worldwide. These precious voices should be incorporated into discourse in communities and schools. The more Jews are exposed to the treasures of our tradition, the more they are enabled to religiously connect and find their own individual paths into tradition.

* National Scholar, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals <https://www.jewishideas.org/article/book-review-memorable-sephardi-voices>

Parshas Bo – Active Service

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer*

In discussing the first Pascal Lamb brought in Egypt, the Kli Yakar quotes a Mechilta. The Mechilta brings down in the name of Rabi Masya ben Cheiresh that at the time of the Exodus our ancestors “did not have any mitzvos in our possession in which to engage in order that they should be redeemed.” Hashem, therefore, gave us two mitzvos at that time, the mitzvah of the blood of circumcision and the mitzvah of the blood of the Pascal Lamb. This is hinted to in the verse we read every year in the Haggadah "ואת ערום ועירה" "and you were naked and bare" – meaning bare of mitzvos – "ואמר לך בדמיך חיי" "And I said to you 'By your blood you shall live' And I said to you 'By your blood you shall live'" – referring to the blood of circumcision and the blood of the Pascal Lamb. (Yechezkel 16:7)

The Kli Yakar asks two questions on this Medrash. First, he notes that there is an oft-quoted Medrash brought in Vayikra 32:5 which states that we had four distinct merits by which we were redeemed, including two important mitzvos. During our entire stay in Egypt we never changed our names to use Egyptian names, and we also never changed our mode of dress to use Egyptian dress. With these two measures we maintained our unique national identity, even in the spiritual darkness of Egyptian immorality. Throughout our stay in Egypt we never spoke slander one of another, thereby maintaining our national unity. Lastly, we never engaged in immoral relations, thereby maintaining our national purity. With such merits behind us, why does Rabi Masya ben Cheiresh state that we lacked mitzvos by which to be redeemed?

Second, the Kli Yakar notes that Rabi Masya ben Cheiresh uses an unusual language. Rather than the normal phrasing – that we lacked the mitzvos to have the merit to be redeemed, he says we lacked mitzvos in which to engage in order that we should be redeemed. What does Rabi Masya ben Cheiresh mean by adding this phrase of engaging in mitzvos?

The Kli Yakar explains that one question answers the other. At the time of the Exodus we certainly had the mitzvos to merit being G-d's nation. We had maintained our national identity, our national unity and our national purity, refraining from being swayed by the immoral Egyptian culture around us. However, at the moment of the Exodus something more was needed. At this time, the Egyptians were to be punished with the death of every firstborn, while we were protected and taken out of their bondage, finally and completely. For this level of protection, the four merits that we had were no longer enough. All of those merits were activities we had refrained from, they were all services of G-d we had done passively. It was no longer enough to simply retain the glorious heritage we had received from our ancestors. We now needed to build for ourselves. We now needed to actively display that we were not only the inheritors of that legacy, but that we ourselves would be links in the chain, building and enriching our eternal bond with our Creator. To achieve this, we needed to actively engage in the service of G-d. We needed the circumcision and the offering of the Pascal Lamb, to merit this higher level of protection.

One can easily live a life of observance, fulfilling all the commandments, without engaging in a relationship with G-d. One can view Torah and mitzvos as an obligation, a duty that must be fulfilled, as one goes about their own life. This Kli Yakar teaches us that there is a far deeper and more profound meaning to Torah and mitzvos. Living a life of Torah and mitzvos is living life with G-d. Throughout our days as we engage in Torah study and mitzvah observance, we are not only maintaining our heritage, but we are also forging our own personal connection with G-d. We are forging our own link in a chain that has lasted for thousands of years. Torah and mitzvos are not simply a duty to be fulfilled, they are the path by which we walk with G-d..

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Dvar Torah for Bo: A Torah Scroll on Pig Parchment?

by Rabbi Moshe Rube*

With Hollywood's recent trend of remakes and reboots, some alright but many only necessary for cash flow, it comes as a relief to know that one classic movie has serious opposition to being remade. When even the idea of remaking The Princess Bride was floated on Twitter, the Internet's wrath (including actors like Cary Elwes from the original) became immediate and apparent. "Why mess with perfection?!" they shouted.

Even though the Internet and I don't always see eye to eye, I can't help but agree with this. I loved watching *The Princess Bride* in my youth, and I could watch it a hundred more times now and still love it just the same. There's only one or two other films that hold that distinction for me, but that's a discussion for another day. Remake a superhero movie. Don't try to remake perfection.

One line from the movie nestled in my brain. Pretty amazing considering it's only one word. "Inconceivable!" shouts Vizzini at various points throughout when his schemes get frustrated. Wallace Shawn, the actor who uttered this immortal line, tells constantly of people who playfully shout this word at him as he's walking down the street. No other character he ever played and no other line he ever said has made a comparable impact.

Who knows why that line is so popular? I would wager it has something to do with the raw emotional outburst of it balanced by Vizzini's small size, inflated ego, and lispy accent.

Whatever the case, this line and its impact can come up in the Jewish spiritual quest. Even the Talmud, so well known for discussing every Jewish concept with rational, incisive, logic, can be heard shouting "Inconceivable!" with a biting emotional rawness in the context of law.

For instance, the Talmud states that really all milk should not be kosher as we are forbidden to eat limbs and substances that come from an unslaughtered animal. But milk is kosher. Why? Because the Torah describes Israel as a land flowing with milk and honey. And it's inconceivable that God would describe His land with a food that's not kosher. So it just has to be kosher.

In Exodus 13:9, the Torah describes the Tefillin and states that its purpose is so "the Torah of Hashem will be in your mouth." The Talmud exegetically points out that this teaches us that the scrolls of the Shema we place in the Tefillin must be written on a parchment from an animal that could conceivably go in your mouth, i.e., a kosher animal. The Talmud then asks, "But what about the straps on our Tefillin? They don't have Torah written on them so can they be made from the skin of a pig?" At this moment, I like to imagine the Talmudic Sages shouting "Inconceivable!" when they say there's a tradition from Moses that all things used to serve God be made from kosher animals.

To take this to an extreme notch, Jonah Lehrer in [How We Decide](#) considers the case of serial killer John Wayne Gacy. You might think that a serial killer is someone who can't control his emotions, but it's actually the opposite. Upon examination of Gacy's brain, the part of his brain (amygdala) thought to be most responsible for emotional responses was damaged. Gacy actually lived a normal life as an upstanding community member with a steady job. It's not that he felt too much emotion. He didn't feel any. He didn't have that gut reaction that any normal human would have that to kill someone should be inconceivable.

Gut reactions matter. Often, they are our last line of defense that shield us from our worst tendencies like murder or wearing pig-skin Tefillin.

One of the many reasons everyone should watch *The Princess Bride*. If only to get that word stuck in your head.

Shabbat Shalom!

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Rav Kook Torah **Bo: The Special Pesach Offering**

The offering brought for the Passover holiday, the korban pesach, has special laws how it is to be cooked and eaten:

"They will eat the meat on that night ... Do not eat it raw, or cooked in water, but only roasted over fire." (Ex. 12:8-9)

Why may the korban pesach only be eaten at the nighttime? And why must it be roasted?

National Holiness in Each Individual

All Temple offerings fall into two categories. Some are korbanot yachid, personal offerings brought by an individual; while others are korbanot tzibur, communal offerings brought in the name of the entire nation. An individual brings a korban yachid for private reasons — to atone for a particular sin or express gratitude for a personal deliverance. The Jewish nation as a whole, on the other hand, is represented by communal offerings which commemorate national events and holidays.

Of all the Temple offerings, the korban Pesach is unique, since it combines characteristics of both types of offerings. It commemorates a national historic event; and yet the obligation to bring this offering is not on the nation but on the individual. Why is it not like other communal offerings?

This unusual offering teaches us an important lesson about the Jewish people. The korban pesach reveals the quality of national holiness that resides in the soul of every Jew. Our ties to Knesset Yisrael are so deep that each individual's pesach offering is like a korban tzibur representing the entire nation. And this special connection of each individual to the nation is reflected in the laws regulating how the korban pesach is to be eaten.

The Unity of Israel

Our daytime activities are characterized by extensive social interaction, while at night we retire to our homes and private lives. By stipulating that the Passover offering be eaten at night, the Torah is emphasizing that our connection to the Jewish people is not based on some form of social contract, a utilitarian agreement to band together due to common interests. Rather, our ties to the Jewish people reflect a unique shared commonality that binds together all of Israel. These national ties persist even at night, a time when each individual retreats to the privacy of his home.

The manner in which the offering is cooked is similarly instructive. Were it boiled in water or cooked together with other foods, the taste of the korban would spread outside of the meat. Roasting, on the other hand, prevents the flavor from dispersing to other foods. This ensures that the offering's qualities of holiness remain concentrated inside the korban pesach. Why should this experience be so intense?

The mitzvah of eating the roasted offering has the power to uplift each individual with an intensity of pure holiness, a powerful quality rooted in the national soul of Israel. This concentrated holiness deepens our awareness of the singular unity of Israel, a result of the communal holiness that resides within each and every individual, in all of his being.

(Silver from the Land of Israel, pp. 163-164. Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, pp. 178-179.)

<http://www.ravkooktorah.org/BO63.htm>

The Necessity of Asking Questions (Bo 5777)

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

It is no accident that parshat Bo, the section that deals with the culminating plagues and the exodus, should turn three times to the subject of children and the duty of parents to educate them. As Jews we believe that to defend a country you need an army, but to defend a civilisation you need education. Freedom is lost when it is taken for granted. Unless parents hand on their memories and ideals to the next generation – the story of how they won their freedom and the battles they had to fight along the way – the long journey falters and we lose our way.

What is fascinating, though, is the way the **Torah emphasises the fact that children must ask questions**. Two of the three passages in our parsha speak of this:

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

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

There is another passage later in the Torah that also speaks of question asked by a child:

In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?" tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. (Deut. 6:20-21)

The other passage in today's parsha, the only one that does not mention a question, is:

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

These four passages have become famous because of their appearance in the Haggadah on Pesach. They are the four children: one wise, one wicked or rebellious, one simple and "one who does not know how to ask." Reading them together the Sages came to the conclusion that [1] children should ask questions, [2] the Pesach narrative must be constructed in response to, and begin with, questions asked by a child, [3] it is the duty of a parent to encourage his or her children to ask questions, and the child who does not yet know how to ask should be taught to ask.

There is nothing natural about this at all. To the contrary, it goes dramatically against the grain of history. Most traditional cultures see it as the task of a parent or teacher to instruct, guide or command. The task of the child is to obey. "Children should be seen, not heard," goes the old English proverb. "Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord," says a famous Christian text. Socrates, who spent his life teaching people to ask questions, was condemned by the citizens of Athens for corrupting the young. In Judaism the opposite is the case. It is a religious duty to teach our children to ask questions. That is how they grow.

Judaism is the rarest of phenomena: a faith based on asking questions, sometimes deep and difficult ones that seem to shake the very foundations of faith itself. "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?" asked Abraham. "Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people?" asked Moses. "Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?" asked Jeremiah. The book of Job is largely constructed out of questions, and God's answer consists of four chapters of yet deeper questions: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? ... Can you catch Leviathan with a hook? ... Will it make an agreement with you and let you take it as your slave for life?"

In yeshiva the highest accolade is to ask a good question: Du fregst a gutte kashe. Rabbi Abraham Twersky, a deeply religious psychiatrist, tells of how when he was young, his teacher would relish challenges to his arguments. In his broken English, he would say, "You right! You 100 prozent right! Now I show you where you wrong."

Isadore Rabi, winner of a Nobel Prize in physics, was once asked why he became a scientist. He replied, "My mother made me a scientist without ever knowing it. Every other child would come back from school and be asked, 'What did you learn today?' But my mother used to ask: 'Izzy, did you ask a good question today?' That made the difference. Asking good questions made me a scientist."

Judaism is not a religion of blind obedience. Indeed, astonishingly in a religion of 613 commandments, there is no Hebrew word that means "to obey." When Hebrew was revived as a living language in the nineteenth century, and there was need for a verb meaning "to obey," it had to be borrowed from the Aramaic: le-tsayet. Instead of a word meaning "to obey," the Torah uses the verb shema, untranslatable into English because it means [1] to listen, [2] to hear, [3] to understand, [4] to internalise, and [5] to respond. Written into the very structure of Hebraic consciousness is the idea that our highest duty is to seek to understand the will of God, not just to obey blindly. Tennyson's verse, "Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do or die," is as far from a Jewish mindset as it is possible to be.

Why? Because we believe that intelligence is God's greatest gift to humanity. Rashi understands the phrase that God made man "in His image, after His likeness," to mean that God gave us the ability "to understand and discern." The very first of our requests in the weekday Amidah is for "knowledge, understanding and discernment." One of the most breathtakingly bold of the rabbis' institutions was to coin a blessing to be said on seeing a great non-Jewish scholar. Not

only did they see wisdom in cultures other than their own, they thanked God for it. How far this is from the narrow-mindedness than has so often demeaned and diminished religions, past and present.

The historian Paul Johnson once wrote that rabbinic Judaism was “an ancient and highly efficient social machine for the production of intellectuals.” Much of that had, and still has, to do with the absolute priority Jews have always placed on education, schools, the Beit Midrash, religious study as an act even higher than prayer, learning as a life-long engagement, and teaching as the highest vocation of the religious life.

But much too has to do with how one studies and how we teach our children. The Torah indicates this at the most powerful and poignant juncture in Jewish history – just as the Israelites are about to leave Egypt and begin their life as a free people under the sovereignty of God. Hand on the memory of this moment to your children, says Moses. But do not do so in an authoritarian way. Encourage your children to ask, question, probe, investigate, analyse, explore. Liberty means freedom of the mind, not just of the body. Those who are confident of their faith need fear no question. It is only those who lack confidence, who have secret and suppressed doubts, who are afraid.

The one essential, though, is to know and to **teach this to our children, that not every question has an answer we can immediately understand**. There are ideas we will only fully comprehend through age and experience, others that take great intellectual preparation, yet others that may be beyond our collective comprehension at this stage of the human quest. Darwin never knew what a gene was. Even the great Newton, founder of modern science, understood how little he understood, and put it beautifully: “I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.”

In teaching its children to ask and keep asking, Judaism honoured what Maimonides called the “active intellect” and saw it as the gift of God. No faith has honoured human intelligence more.

* Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar. Emphasis added. See <https://rabbisacks.org/the-god-who-acts-in-history-vaera-5779/>

Why Is the Firstborn Donkey Holy? **On the mitzvah of peter chamor, “redeeming the firstborn donkey”** By Yehuda Shurpin *

Why Is the Firstborn Donkey Holy?

Many are familiar with the mitzvah of pidyon haben, redeeming the firstborn son on the thirtieth day of his life.¹ Additionally, there is the related mitzvah that the firstborn male offspring of any kosher domesticated mammal (cows, sheep, goats, etc.) is sacred, and is to be given to a kohen, who eats it as a sacrifice in Jerusalem.² Nowadays, since there is no Holy Temple in which to bring sacrifices, the kohen waits until the animal develops a blemish that disqualifies it for a sacrifice, and then it may be consumed like any other kosher animal.³

And then there is the donkey.

The donkey is unique in that unlike all other non-kosher animals, there is a special mitzvah called peter chamor, redeeming the firstborn male donkey.⁴

Since this is one of the rarest mitzvahs to be performed nowadays (how many Jews do you know who own donkeys?), before getting to the question of why the donkey is unique, we will give a very basic overview of the mitzvah.

Holy Donkey!

From its birth until it is redeemed, a firstborn donkey is considered to be holy, on a similar level as an animal designated as a Temple sacrifice. Hence, you may not ride it or have it carry something for you; it is even forbidden to use its hair.⁵

The obligation to redeem it lasts from its birth until its death. However, it is ideal that the mitzvah be done as soon as possible.⁶

The owner takes a sheep or goat (or an item worth the full value of the donkey), makes a blessing, and states that he is redeeming the donkey in exchange for the lamb, kid or other item of value.⁷

Afterward, the sheep or goat is given to the kohen. Once the donkey is redeemed, both it and the item it was exchanged for lose all holiness, and the respective owners can do with them as they please.⁸

The Torah tells us that if the owner refuses to redeem the donkey, then he is made to decapitate it.⁹ (This is considered negative, as preference is given in the Torah to redeeming the donkey and giving the sheep or goat to the kohen.)¹⁰

*Similar to the laws of a pidyon haben, a kohen or Levite is exempt from redeeming his firstborn donkey.*¹¹

Why the Donkey?

Addressing the question of why the donkey was singled out, as opposed to horses, mules, camels or other non-kosher work animals, the Talmud¹² explains that:

a) it is a gezirat hakatuv—a Divine edict with no logic or reason provided; and

*b) the donkey was rewarded for assisting the Jewish people during the Exodus from Egypt by carrying the riches the people had been given by their erstwhile neighbors. This was crucial, as it facilitated the fulfillment of G d's promise to Abraham that his descendants would leave Egypt with great wealth.*¹³

The Midrash explains that the reason for the mitzvah of peter chamor is that we should always remember the miracle that G d did for us during the Exodus from Egypt, when He killed all of the Egyptian firstborn—who are compared to donkeys in the Book of Ezekiel¹⁴—and saved all the Jewish firstborn.¹⁵ Some add that this is why we exchange it with a sheep, since the Jewish people are compared in Scripture to a sheep.¹⁶

Commentaries explain that this Midrash is not an independent teaching, but an explanation of the first reason brought in the Talmud.¹⁷

Firstborn Coarseness

As mentioned, we find many mitzvahs in the Torah related to giving or sanctifying the “first,” be it a person, animal or fruit.

One reason for this is that, in truth, we have nothing in the world except that which G d, in His kindness, apportions to us. So after we have exerted great effort and finally see the first fruits of our labor, we immediately “give it to G d,” showing that everything in this world comes from G d and is ultimately meant to be used in our Divine mission.¹⁸

The Chassidic masters explain that the Hebrew word for “donkey,” chamor (חמור) is linked to the word for “material,” chomer (חומר). Thus, in redeeming the firstborn donkey, a non-kosher animal, we learn to uplift even the most coarse elements of the material world, even that which appears to be negative.¹⁹

This, the Rebbe explains, is also why the prophet Zechariah describes Moshiach as one who rides a donkey. For Moshiach will usher in an era when the chomer, materiality, has become refined and transformed to the point that is a positive force in our Divine service, just as the most spiritual of creations.²⁰

May we merit the ultimate Redemption speedily in our days!

FOOTNOTES:

1. Exodus 13:2.

2. Ibid.

3. Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 319:1-2.
4. Exodus 13:13, 34:20.
5. See Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 321:8; some hold that you can sell it as long as the buyer is aware of its status and will act accordingly, Rama ad loc.
6. Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 321:1.
7. Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 321:6.
8. Ibid.
9. Exodus 34:20.
10. See Rambam and Raavad on Hilchot Bikkurim 12:1 and commentaries ad loc.
11. Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 321:19.
12. Talmud, Bechorot 5b.
13. See Maharsha, Chidushei Aggadot ad loc.
14. Ezekiel 23:2.
15. Pesikta Zutrata on Exodus 13:13.
16. See Midrash Bereishit Rabbah 96:5.
17. See Rashi on Exodus 13:13; Rabbeinu Bechaye on 13:14-15; Maharsha, Chidushei Aggadot on Talmud, Bechorot 5b.
18. See Chinuch, mitzvah 18.
19. See Torat Menachem, 5748, vol. 3, p. 90.
20. For more on this, see Moshiach's Donkey.

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https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5002237/jewish/Why-Is-the-Firstborn-Donkey-Holy.htm#utm_medium=email&utm_source=1_chabad.org_magazine_en&utm_campaign=en&utm_content=content

In the First Place: An Essay on Parshat Bo

By Adin Even-Israel (Steinsaltz)

Parshat Bo, whose climax is the plague of the firstborn, concludes with a law that is likewise connected to the firstborn: "Consecrate to me every firstborn."¹

The firstborn once possessed a special status: The firstborn in each family received a double share of the inheritance and, as a group, almost became the Priests. Nowadays, not much of this special status remains. The last remnant of it is perhaps the custom that, when there are no Levites present in the synagogue, the firstborn wash the hands of the Priests prior to Birkat Kohanim.

But what is the point of this special status? Are the firstborn more successful? It is a known fact that in the case of animals, this is not so. In fact, scientific literature has shown just the opposite – that the firstborn in many animal species have a much lower survival rate than offspring born to their mothers thereafter. In the case of human beings, however, the matter is not so simple, and in the Torah as well the matter of the firstborn is multifaceted and variegated.

In the Torah's narratives, only little importance is assigned to the firstborn. Various sources, such as "Reuben, you are my firstborn"² or "Israel is My son, My firstborn,"³ do seem to indicate preference given to the firstborn, but more prominent in these narratives is the tension between the firstborn and the chosen son. The world's first firstborn, Cain, does not distinguish himself with noble character traits. (According to one opinion among our sages, humanity today is actually descended from Cain, a possibility that would explain much of our history.) The overwhelming majority of the Torah's great personalities, with the prominent exception of Abraham, are not firstborn: Isaac, Joseph, Judah, Moses, David, Solomon – the list goes on and is quite impressive.

On the other hand, in the laws of the Torah, clear preference is given to the firstborn. Besides the laws regarding human firstborn, the Torah assigns sanctity to the firstlings of "pure" animals, designating them as *korbanot*, and to the firstlings of donkeys, instructing us to redeem them or perform *arifah*, killing them with a blow to the back of the neck. In other areas of Torah law as well, we find *mitzvot* that reflect an aspect of the firstling or firstborn laws; for example: an omer of the first of the harvest, the first fruits of the soil, *terumah* (which is called "*raishit*," meaning, "first"), the first shearing of the fleece, etc.

In the case of human firstborn, however, there is an unresolved question: How do we redeem the firstborn, and what happens if he is not redeemed? Obviously, he is neither subjected to *arifah* nor taken by the Priest. The truth is that nothing happens to him. What, then, is the point of the firstborn? What is his role? Why is he given a special status, with a position of greater privilege and sanctity?

"The first fruits of His harvest"

The answer to these questions lies not in the firstborn's own essential worth but in the special feeling and affection that we have for things that are first. The first fruit is not necessarily the choicest, but our connection to it is the deepest, and it is different from our connection to the fruit that comes after it, even if the first is not always worthy and deserving of this affection.

This can be observed in actual life as well. Everything that a person creates gives him a feeling of amazement, but some of the most powerful feelings are bound up with one's first creation. When Cain, the first child in the world, is born, Eve proclaims, "I have acquired a man together with God!"⁴ The names of her second and third children are given but not explained, and thereafter the Torah suffices with the statement, "and he begot sons and daughters."⁵ The first letter that a child writes is not necessarily the most beautiful letter that he will ever write, but it is the first; every letter that follows it will be just another letter. Similarly, the Talmud states, "A woman is [like] an unfinished vessel, and makes a covenant only with [her first husband] who fashions her into a [finished] vessel [when they are first together]."⁶ The same applies to difficult experiences, such as one's first encounter with death or other crises.

As we have stated, in all these areas the first creation or the first experience is not necessarily the best or most perfect. Its uniqueness is that we remember it in a special way; it is indelibly engraved in our memories. After all, there cannot be two firstborn children, and even if the first does not turn out to be successful – like Reuben, "exceeding in eminence and exceeding in power"⁷ – he is still Jacob's firstborn. Likewise, according to *halakha*, a firstborn who is a bastard or the son of an unloved wife still receives a double share in the inheritance, even if a different son is legitimate or more beloved.

Herein also lies the superiority of childhood education. At first glance, this superiority appears to be counterintuitive, for children are often immature and easily confused, whereas adults possess a far greater degree of understanding. In reality, however, what is absorbed as a primary experience becomes ingrained in a more fundamental way, while what is learned later in life – even if it is deeper and more nuanced – does not retain the same character of primacy.

This is what our sages mean when they say, "One who learns when young, to what may he be compared? To ink written on fresh paper. But one who learns when old, to what may he be compared? To ink written on paper that has been erased."⁸ It could be that what is written on the fresh paper is inaccurate, and what is written afterward is correct; but since the latter is not written on fresh paper, it is much less likely to be retained.

The issue of the firstborn's uniqueness is not a quantitative question of greater or lesser feeling. Just as it is always possible to find a greater number, there can always be a greater emotion as well. However, it is impossible to find a number that is "more first." The first possesses a certain quality that is immutable and ineradicable.

The Talmud presents an interpretation that seems almost hasidic:

[The community of Israel] said before [The Holy One, Blessed Be He]: "Master of the Universe, since there is no forgetfulness before the throne of Your glory, perhaps you will not forget the sin of the [Golden] Calf?" He replied: "'Even these will be forgotten'".⁹ She said before Him: "Master of the Universe, since there is forgetfulness before the throne of Your glory, perhaps You will forget [what You said at] Sinai?"¹⁰ He replied to her: "'For¹¹ your sake, I will not forget Anochi'".¹²

To be sure, after responding, "We will do and obey,"¹³ before receiving the Torah at Sinai, the people made the Golden Calf and went on to make all sorts of calves, for themselves and for the entire world. Nevertheless, what they said first – "We will do and obey" – will never be forgotten.

Loss of the beginning

The essence of the firstborn, then, teaches us what a person should do in his life, how he should devote his primary energy and creativity: "I therefore offer to God all male firstborn animals, and shall redeem all the firstborn of my sons."¹⁴ The things to which we have the deepest emotional attachment, which can never be replicated, are the very things that should be given to God. In every matter, one must scrutinize himself as to whether he truly gave "the choicest first fruits of his land" to God.

Traditionally, one of the first things a Jewish child is taught to say is "Shema Yisrael." But why bother? Does the child understand what the Shema is? He will surely understand it better when he grows up. Nonetheless, we try to arrange it so that his first sentence, the "first fruit," will be "Shema Yisrael," for that is what will be ingrained in his personality.

Just as there are first fruits of the soil, there are also first deeds and first dreams. Here as well, people become more sophisticated as they mature, as do their aspirations and dreams. Nevertheless, there is a special significance to one's first dreams.

However, there is a fundamental problem: A person who is in the stage of a fresh beginning does not always understand the world around him, and by the time he does understand, he often can no longer return to his original state of youthful freshness. In our youth, we do not always know the significance of the things we do, the activities to which we dedicate ourselves. Only after passing this stage do we understand how many things could have been done so much better, but by then it is too late – we cannot go back and correct our mistakes.

Innocence, the moment it is lost, can never be recovered. An infant possesses a freshness that is totally pure, but with time it gradually fades. For youth in general, freshness springs from the very nature of that period of life. With time, though, this fades as well.

One of the interpretations of the verse, "Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of youth,"¹⁵ is that an arrow, the moment it is shot, cannot be called back. All the arrows that we shoot when we are still "children of youth" are like "arrows in the hand of a warrior," in that they cannot be repeated. To be sure, every day of one's life is unique and original, and even in old age it is still possible to continue growing; even death itself is a new experience. But new experiences no longer come with the same regularity and succession as in the days of one's childhood and youth.

Almost any mistake can be rectified, but to reinvent oneself, to become like a new being, is the most difficult rectification of all. Regarding the verse, "For how shall I go up to my father if the youth is not with me?,"¹⁶ one explanation is that "the youth" refers to a person's youthful years, for many people leave these years behind when they ascend to heaven to meet their Creator.

"Give Me the firstborn of your sons"

What should be done with the firstborn, then, is “Give Me the firstborn of your sons;”¹⁷ that is, dedicate the first thing to God. Since there is some aspect of renewal each and every day, this dedication can be fulfilled by devoting one’s first thought each day to holy matters.

This is one of the reasons that we recite “Modeh ani” upon awakening in the morning, even before the morning ritual washing of the hands, before uttering any other words. Clearly, not everyone says “Modeh ani” with reverence; generally, it is muttered out of habit, when one is still half asleep. Nevertheless, we persist in saying “Modeh ani,” so that no matter what follows throughout the day, we always dedicate the first moment to God. For this same reason there are many people who take care not to do anything before they pray in the morning. This is also the reason why Rosh HaShana is considered one of the holiest days in the Jewish calendar: It begins a new year.

Approaching every undertaking as if it were an entirely new beginning, even if the reality is otherwise, is an extraordinarily difficult spiritual endeavor. Even with the guidance of our extensive teshuva literature, it is still incredibly challenging to become a new being, the likes of which never existed before.

Cain offered to God “of the fruit of the soil,”¹⁸ surely consisting of fine, good fruit. In contrast, Abel “also (gam hu) brought of the firstlings of his flock.”¹⁹ Abel brought not only “firstlings” but “gam hu” – he brought himself as well. One who succeeds in offering his inner self to God will be able to experience “your youth will be renewed like an eagle,”²⁰ to approach the world through the fresh eyes of a child once again.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Ex. 13:2.
2. Gen. 49:3.
3. Ex. 4:22.
4. Gen. 4:1.
5. 5:4.
6. Sanhedrin 22b.
7. Gen. 49:3, and see Rashi’s explanation there.
8. Avot 4:20.
9. Is. 49:15.
10. Namely, “I (Anochi) am God your Lord” (Ex. 20:2).
11. 49:15. This is a play on words; the simple meaning of the verse is “For your sake, I (Anochi) will not forget.”
12. Berakhot 32b.
13. Ex. 24:7.
14. Ex. 13:15.
15. Ps. 127:4.
16. Gen. 44:34.
17. Ex. 22:28.
18. Gen. 4:3.

19. Gen. 4:4

20. Ps. 103:5

* Rabbi Adin Even-Israel (Steinsaltz) (1937-2020), one of the leading rabbis of this century and author of many books, was best known for his monumental translation of and commentary on the Talmud. © Chabad 2021.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/4992107/jewish/In-the-First-Place.htm

Bo: A Message from the Moon

by Chana Weisberg *

If you were sending off your child on a long, lonely, and dangerous journey, what would your encouraging words be to him or her? What essential message would you want to give your child for the road ahead?

The Jewish people finally left Egypt after decades of back-breaking servitude. As they became a freed people, they were given their first mitzvah to observe as a nation. You'd assume this mitzvah would be of great importance, something cosmic. Perhaps it would define their character as exceptionally moral people or demonstrate the depth of their faith in G-d.

Instead, they were commanded to consecrate new months based on the rebirth of the moon's sightings. Through the moon, we establish our calendars, our holidays and traditions—a key feature of Jewish life. Nevertheless, shouldn't this first mitzvah be more integral to the essence of who we are?

But perhaps the moon more than anything defines us as a nation.

The Zohar teaches:

The people of Israel set their calendar by the moon, because they are the moon of the world. Midrash Rabbah explains: The moon begins to shine on the 1st of the month and increases in luminance till the 15th day, when her orb becomes full; from the 15th till the 30th day, her light wanes, on the 30th it is not seen at all. With Israel too, there were 15 generations from Abraham to Solomon. Abraham began to shine... Jacob added to this light... When Solomon appeared, the moon's orb was full... Henceforth the kings began to diminish ... With Zedekiah [when the Holy Temple was destroyed] the light of the moon dimmed entirely.

We had just been slaves for decades in Egypt, beaten, tortured and hated. Despite our oppression, rather than breaking us as a people, we emerged; crushed perhaps, but never broken. As the persecutions increased, the Jewish heart and soul grew stronger.

As we prepared to take our first steps as a free nation on a journey that would stretch millennia, scattering us to the far corners of the world to become a light unto the nations, G-d impressed upon our psyche a vital message for our endurance.

The story of the moon is the story of our people. Like the moon, the Jewish people dip and soar through history. Yet, from each defeat, we have risen stronger. Our highest achievements will be born of moments of despair, each descent leading to a new ascent, each decline bringing us to unprecedented new heights.

Just as the disappearance of the moon is part of its reemergence, the darkness is part of our journey. It is there so we can light the way—and more importantly, so that we can discover our own inner light.

— from Shabbat/deLights*

* An inaiht from Bo, an excerpt from Chana Weisberg's popular Shabbas deLights, from the Kehot Publication Society.

SPECIAL NOTE: This Shabbat, 10 Shevat, marks the day of passing of the sixth Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, and the anniversary of the ascension of the seventh Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, to the leadership of Chabad Lubavitch, in 1950. In honor of this auspicious day, the Kehot Publication Society is soliciting donations to enable it to reprint Oneness in Creation, a landmark discourse by Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, delivered during his historic visit to the United States in 1929-30.

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Shabbat Parashat Bo

5781 B"H

Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

The Far Horizon

To gain insight into the unique leadership lesson of this week's parsha, I often ask an audience to perform a thought-experiment. Imagine you are the leader of a people that is enslaved and oppressed, that has suffered exile for more than two centuries. Now, after a series of miracles, it is about to go free. You assemble them and rise to address them. They are waiting expectantly for your words. This is a defining moment they will never forget. What will you speak about?

Most people answer: freedom. That was Abraham Lincoln's decision in the Gettysburg Address when he invoked the memory of "a new nation, conceived in liberty," and looked forward to "a new birth of freedom." [1] Some suggest that they would inspire the people by talking about the destination that lay ahead, the "land flowing with milk and honey." Yet others say they would warn the people of the dangers and challenges that they would encounter on what Nelson Mandela called "the long walk to freedom." [2]

Any of these would have been the great speech of a great leader. Guided by God, Moses did none of these things. That is what made him a unique leader. If you examine the text in parshat Bo you will see that three times he reverted to the same theme: children, education and the distant future.

And when your children ask you, "What do you mean by this rite?" you shall say, "It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, because He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when he smote the Egyptians, but saved our houses." (Ex. 12:26-27)

And you shall explain to your child on that day, "It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt." (Ex. 13:8)

And when, in time to come, your child asks you, saying, "What does this mean?" you shall say to him, "It was with a mighty hand that the Lord brought us out from Egypt, the house of bondage." (Ex. 13:14)

It is one of the most counter-intuitive acts in the history of leadership. Moses did not speak about today or tomorrow. He spoke about the distant future and the duty of parents to educate their children. He even hinted – as Jewish tradition understood – that we should encourage our children to ask questions, so that the handing on of the Jewish heritage

would be not a matter of rote learning but of active dialogue between parents and children.

So Jews became the only people in history to predicate their very survival on education. The most sacred duty of parents was to teach their children. Pesach itself became an ongoing seminar in the handing on of memory. Judaism became the religion whose heroes were teachers and whose passion was study and the life of the mind. The Mesopotamians built ziggurats. The Egyptians built pyramids. The Greeks built the Parthenon. The Romans built the Coliseum. Jews built schools. That is why they alone, of all the civilisations of the ancient world are still alive and strong, still continuing their ancestors' vocation, their heritage intact and undiminished.

Moses' insight was profound. He knew that you cannot change the world by externalities alone, by monumental architecture, or armies and empires, or the use of force and power. How many empires have come and gone while the human condition remains untransformed and unredeemed?

There is only one way to change the world, and that is by education. You have to teach children the importance of justice, righteousness, kindness and compassion. You have to teach them that freedom can only be sustained by the laws and habits of self-restraint. You have continually to remind them of the lessons of history, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt," because those who forget the bitterness of slavery eventually lose the commitment and courage to fight for freedom. And you have to empower children to ask, challenge and argue. You have to respect them if they are to respect the values you wish them to embrace.

This is a lesson most cultures still have not learned after more than three thousand years. Revolutions, protests and civil wars still take place, encouraging people to think that removing a tyrant or having a democratic election will end corruption, create freedom, and lead to justice and the rule of law – and still people are surprised and disappointed when it does not happen. All that happens is a change of faces in the corridors of power.

In one of the great speeches of the twentieth century, a distinguished American justice, Judge Learned Hand, said:

I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws and upon courts. These are false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the

hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it. [3]

What God taught Moses was that the real challenge does not lie in gaining freedom; it lies in sustaining it, keeping the spirit of liberty alive in the hearts of successive generations. That can only be done through a sustained process of education. Nor is this something that can be delegated away to teachers and schools. Some of it has to take place within the family, at home, and with the sacred obligation that comes from religious duty. No one ever saw this more clearly than Moses, and only because of his teachings have Jews and Judaism survived.

What makes leaders great is that they think ahead, worrying not about tomorrow but about next year, or the next decade, or the next generation. In one of his finest speeches Robert F. Kennedy spoke of the power of leaders to transform the world when they have a clear vision of a possible future:

Some believe there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills — against misery, against ignorance, or injustice and violence. Yet many of the world's great movements, of thought and action, have flowed from the work of a single man. A young monk began the Protestant reformation, a young general extended an empire from Macedonia to the borders of the earth, and a young woman reclaimed the territory of France. It was a young Italian explorer who discovered the New World, and 32 year old Thomas Jefferson who proclaimed that all men are created equal. 'Give me a place to stand,' said Archimedes, 'and I will move the world.' These men moved the world, and so can we all. [4]

Visionary leadership forms the text and texture of Judaism. It was the book of Proverbs that said, "Without a vision [chazzon] the people perish." (Prov. 29:18). That vision in the minds of the Prophets was always of a long-term future. God told Ezekiel that a Prophet is a watchman, one who climbs to a high vantage-point and so can see the danger in the distance, before anyone else is aware of it at ground level (Ezek. 33:1-6). The Sages said, "Who is wise? One who sees the long-term consequences [ha-nolad]." [5] Two of the

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greatest leaders of the twentieth century, Churchill and Ben Gurion, were also distinguished historians. Knowing the past, they could anticipate the future. They were like Chess Masters who, because they have studied thousands of games, recognise almost immediately the dangers and possibilities in any configuration of the pieces on the board. They know what will happen if you make this move or that.

If you want to be a great leader in any field, from Prime Minister to parent, it is essential to think long-term. Never choose the easy option because it is simple or fast or yields immediate satisfaction. You will pay a high price in the end.

Moses was the greatest leader because he thought further ahead than anyone else. He knew that real change in human behaviour is the work of many generations. Therefore we must place as our highest priority educating our children in our ideals so that what we begin they will continue until the world changes because we have changed. He knew that if you plan for a year, plant rice. If you plan for a decade, plant a tree. If you plan for posterity, educate a child. [6] Moses' lesson, thirty-three centuries old, is still compelling today.

[1] Abraham Lincoln, "The Gettysburg Address" (Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Penn., Nov. 19, 1863).

[2] Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Back Bay Books, 1995).

[3] Learned Hand, "The Spirit of Liberty" – speech at "I Am an American Day" ceremony, Central Park, New York City (21 May 1944).

[4] The Poynter Institute, *The Kennedys: America's Front Page Family* (Kansas City, Mo.: Andrews McMeel, 2010), 112.

[5] Tamid 32a.

[6] A statement attributed to Confucius.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

"May the renewal of the moon be for you [the Festival of] the first day of each month; this month being for you the first of the months of the year" (Exodus 12:2)

This interpretation of the verse, cited by Rashi and chosen by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch as the primary translation of the text, renders each phrase of the verse another lesson bound up with the Exodus from Egypt. We must mark the Festival of the New Moon, and Nisan is to be counted as the first of the months of the year.

I understand why Nisan was chosen as the first month; it is the month in which Israel became a free nation; but what has the renewal of the moon to do with the exodus from Egypt? And why is this Festival of the New Moon the very first of God's commandments to the Israelites? The answer, and the most profound reason that we celebrate the Festival of the New Moon each month, harks back to the special Name of God identified with the book of Exodus, which

points toward the realization of Redemption. The ineffable Name Y-K-V-K (Exodus 6:1-3) is closely related to the name Ehyeh asher ehyeh, which God revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:13-15). Generally, it is translated "I am that I am" or "I am whatever is, the Source for the animation of all life." It is more correctly translated "I will be what I will be."

The first translation emanates from Maimonides (at the beginning of his *Mishne Torah*), and is closely allied to Aristotle's "Unmoved Mover" and Tillich's "ground of all being." The second emanates from Yehuda Halevi (*The Kuzari*) and is more closely allied to the plain meaning of the biblical text ("I will be what I will be").

The first is the God of Aristotelian "being," the God of Creation; the second is the God of Platonic "becoming," the God of history and of redemption.

The God of Creation exudes power and establishes limits (Kel Shakkai); He operates alone, within a specific period of time (the seven primordial days of creation). The God of history exudes patience and only guarantees a successful end-game of redemption and world peace; during usual world-time. He operates with partners – human beings, especially the heirs to the Abrahamic covenant – for whom He must wait and with whom He must be patient until they truly wish to be redeemed, until they are worthy of being redeemed.

Hence, the God of Creation and "let there be light" evokes certitude and precision, whereas the God of Redemption, "I will be what I will be," evokes open-endedness.

Such is always the case when one takes on independent partners with freedom of choice to whom one grants empowerment. And God has chosen Israel to teach and ultimately lead the world to adopt ethical monotheism and realize redemption because He believes in us and in humanity.

However, unlike the seven specific and successful acts of Creation, Redemption is fraught with advances and setbacks, successes and failures, progression and retrogression.

That is the major distinction between creation and history; the laws of nature are basically unchanging, whereas history – "his story," our story, not only God's story – is dependent on human input and is therefore subject to change.⁷

This change is positive and salutary. God created a functioning world, but one which is incomplete and therefore imperfect.

Conventional wisdom would have it that just as the laws of physics seem to be unchanging, so are the social structures of totalitarian

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empires unchanging and so human nature is unchanging.

The sun-god Ra – identified with Aries the ram (lamb) – is the zodiac sign of the spring month of Nisan. Indeed, the sun, from the perspective of people on earth, also seems unchanging.

Enter the Hebrews with their celebration of the renewal of the moon each month; sanctifying the changing moon over the static Egyptian sun. The Hebrew nation was formed out of the cataclysmic change that overthrew Egypt's slave society, the change that forced Egyptian power to bow before biblical concepts of human equality and freedom.

Hence the Jewish people fight for change, glory in change and even sanctify change. But change wrought by human faith and action demands human responsibility.

It is with this sense of responsibility that we must approach the miraculous change of our status as a nation state after close to 2,000 years of being dependent on host nations. Now we must believe in ourselves as God's full partners; we must resuscitate the vision of the prophets who insisted that our leaders and populace must be righteous and moral. We must promulgate laws that express human equality, especially in terms of women's rights and minority rights. If we expect to be respected; we must recognize the sea of change that has overtaken much of the leadership of the Christian world and warmly clasp the hand of friendship they are proffering.

National commitments (such as service in the IDF) must be taken into the account alongside of religious commitments for those Israelis wishing to convert.

Clearly, we have a long way to go. But if we change, we will not only survive; we will prevail.

The Person in the Parsha Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb "Tell Me A Story"

Since back in early autumn, when we began reading the Book of Genesis in the synagogue, we have been reading one long story. It has been a very dramatic story, extending over many centuries. It began with the creation of man, and proceeded with the narrative of the transformation of a small family into a large nation.

For the past several weeks, the plot has thickened. That nation became cruelly enslaved. In this week's Torah portion, Parshat Bo (Exodus 10:1-13:16), the story takes a suspenseful turn. We sense that the redemption from slavery is imminent. But before redemption begins, the narrative is interrupted.

The Torah shifts gears. It is no longer a story that we hear, but a set of God given

commands: “This month...shall be the first of the months of the year for you. Each member of the community shall take a lamb... Your lamb shall be without blemish... You shall keep watch over it until the fourteenth day of this month and...slaughter it at twilight, eat the flesh that same night...not eat any of it raw... not leave any of it over until morning.” (Exodus 12:1-10)

Whereas the novice reader of the Torah is jolted by this drastic transition from the narrative mode to a set of laws, Rashi and Ramban were not surprised by this sudden shift. They wondered why the Torah would focus at such length on storytelling and not proceed directly to this passage of ritual law.

“Is the Torah a story book?” they ask. “Is it not, rather, a set of instructions for ritual and ethical behavior?” They each answer these questions differently, but both conclude that much of the Torah, perhaps even most of it, is one long and fascinating story.

Why does a book designed to teach the reader about proper religious belief and practice take the form of a narrative?

I think that the reason is quite simple. The Torah recognizes the power of the story to influence the minds and hearts of men. An author who wishes to profoundly impact his reader will do well to choose the narrative mode over other modes of communication. In secular terms, a good novel is more powerful than the best law book.

Taking note of this important lesson enables us to understand an otherwise puzzling phenomenon. Despite the fact that the Exodus from Egypt was, and remains, the central experience of Jewish history, there were at least two Jews who alive at the time of the Exodus who did not experience it directly. I refer to Gershom and Eliezer, the two sons of Moses. They remained behind in Midian when Moses struggled with Pharaoh. They did not witness the ten plagues. They missed the thrilling flight from Egyptian bondage. They did not personally experience the wondrous miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea. They were brought back to Moses by their maternal grandfather Yitro, so it is not at all clear whether they were even present at Mount Sinai when the Torah was given.

The early twentieth century Chassidic master, Rabbi Yehoshua of Belz, wonders about this puzzling fact. His answer is a most instructive one: God wanted Moses to tell his sons the story of the Exodus. He wanted Moses to be the storyteller par excellence, the one who would model storytelling for every subsequent father in Jewish history. Gershom and Eliezer were denied witnessing the Exodus because God wanted them to serve as the first Jewish children who would only hear its story; who would not know the real-life experience of the

Exodus but only hear its narrative told to them by their father.

This, teaches the Belzer Rebbe, is the simple meaning of the verse in this week’s Torah portion: “...So that you (singular in the Hebrew) may tell the story, in the ears of your son and son’s son, of how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I displayed My signs among them—in order that you may know that I am the Lord” (Exodus 10:2). The singular “you” at the beginning of the verse, explains the Rebbe, refers to Moses himself. He is to tell the story to each of his sons individually, because he is the only father then alive whose sons would hear the story of the Exodus second hand. In this manner, Moses set the stage for all subsequent Jewish fathers. A Jewish father must be a storyteller!

A good story’s power is familiar to all of us. The secret of the Chassidic movement’s success was not its texts or teachings, but the inspiring stories it told to its early adherents. To this day, Chassidim maintain the tradition of storytelling in their melava malka, or post-Shabbat repast, every week.

Personally, I long ago became familiar with an approach to psychotherapy called narrative therapy, in which the patient uses his or her own personal narrative as the basis for curative change. My favorite mentor would emphasize that when a therapist first encounters a patient, his opening question should not be, “What’s your problem,” but rather, “Please tell me your story.”

As I reflect upon those of my teachers who left a lasting impression upon me, I recall the fact that they all told stories. Indeed, I remember those stories better than the academic lessons they taught me.

I remember a youth group leader named Shmuli who told us stories and gave us cupcakes every Shabbat afternoon. I later learned that he obtained those stories from an early Chabad publication entitled Talks and Tales. Those tales left me with a taste for religion that even surpassed the taste of those delicious cupcakes.

I remember my seventh-grade teacher who read us the stories of William Saroyan at the end of each class, laying the foundation for my abiding love of literature. And, of course, there were the stories my unforgettable Talmud teacher told us about the heroes of rabbinic history, which ultimately inspired me to pursue a career in the rabbinate.

Frankly, I fear that storytelling is becoming a lost art with the rapid change of our modes of communication. Grossly abbreviated electronic messages have replaced the face-to-face encounters that are essential for storytelling. The absence of the good story will effect personal development negatively and will

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impede the spiritual development of our children and grandchildren.

For me, Torah is but the most outstanding of the many stories which shaped my Jewish identity. I can think of only one modality that rivals the narrative as a basis for emotional growth. That modality is music. But space limits me to describing the narrative nature of the Torah in this column. I will reserve my take on the Torah as music for another Person in the Parsha column. Watch for it.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Pharaoh! Wake Up and Smell the Coffee!

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

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

The Chidushei HaRim cites in this connection a very famous Rambam in the third chapter of Hilchos Teshuvah. The Rambam writes there: “Even though blowing shofar is a Divine Decree (with no apparent logic), it carries a tremendous message within it (remez yesh bo): Arise those who slumber from your sleep, wake up from your drowsiness and repent.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dvar Torah

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Our children can change our lives. This is one of the key lessons in parshat Bo. The Torah instructs us through-out all generations to educate our children about all that transpired in Egypt. The purpose? "Vidatem ki ani Hashem" - "in order that you shall know that I am the Lord".

Intriguingly, the Torah surely should have said "Vayedu ki ani Hashem" - "so that they, (the students) shall know that I am the Lord" but instead it says 'vi-datem' - that you the educators shall find out. But hold on: You already know - that is why you're teaching your children about it.

The Iturei Torah gives a beautiful Peirush. He explains that often, through imparting information the educator's awareness becomes deepened.

In order for me to present a lesson I have to prepare. I have to know the subject and become a master of all the details. Then, through the process of education, thanks to the questions and the probing of the students, my own knowledge will be refined and my awareness deepened. That's why Rabbi Chanina in Mesechet Ta'anit tells us, "I have learnt much from my teachers, I have learnt more from my friends but most of all, I have learnt from my students".

I find this to be one of the most impressive features of Jewish tradition. We genuinely believe that we as adults and educators can learn a lot from our children and our students. I

so often come across people whose lives have been enormously enriched thanks to the guidance, influence and inspiration of their children and sometimes even their grandchildren.

So that is why the Torah says 'Vidatem' so that you, the parents/educators shall know. It is from our history that we can learn about the existence of Hashem in the world - a greater awareness of this can come from our children and our grandchildren.

OTS Dvar Torah

Dr. Keren Kirshenbaum

The Significance of Hardening One's Heart

We need a real leader. We must seek out those who are most humble. The ones without personal interests. The strong. The ones who are up to the task, who can hear and listen to the nation and its advisors, and aren't closed off or just "spewing."

In Parashat Bo and the texts that precede and follow it, we read the story of the redemption of the people of Israel from Egypt. We'll often note the repeated use of the notion of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. "And Hashem said to Moses, 'Pharaoh heart is heavy; he refuses to let the people go.'" (Parashat Va'era, Chapter 7, verse 14). Parashat Bo, too, begins with the verse: "Then Hashem said to Moses, 'Go to Pharaoh. For I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his courtiers, so that I may display these signs of Mine among them.'"

Onkelos translates "heavy" into Aramaic as ityakar, a word that can be interpreted either, as Rashi suggests, as a derivative of koved, heaviness, as in Jethro's words to Moses: "For this task is too heavy for you" (Exodus 18:18), or in the sense of kavod, honor, or haughtiness. That is to say that Pharaoh honors himself so much that he ends up suffering, and isn't prepared to let the nation go.

One page 141 of his book, Studies on the Torah of Land of Israel, the late Saul Lieberman quotes an ancient poem written by the poet R. Yanay: "Foolish and heavy is his heart, far from knowledge, it is becoming like his liver, expelling and not absorbing". Here, the poet explains the idea of "Pharaoh's heavy heart" in the sense that his heart adopted the traits of another organ: the liver. This poet is alluding to Mishnat Terumah, Chapter 10, Mishna 11, which deals with mixing allowed and forbidden foods (within a discussion of terumah (tithes) and holin (produce that isn't donated)). In this text, Mishnaic scholar Yohanan Ben Nuri states: "Liver renders food cooked with it in the same pot prohibited but is not prohibited itself, because while it does expel blood as it cooks, it does not absorb this blood again, since the blood diffuses only outward". In other words, if non-kosher liver is cooked with any permitted foods, the liver causes the permitted food to become non-kosher, since it expels a lot of blood, and the taste of the blood is absorbed in the permitted

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food, rendering it forbidden. Conversely, if the liver is kosher, and was cooked with foods that are forbidden, or Terumah foods, which may not be eaten, the liver may be eaten, because it does not absorb taste, i.e. it does not assume the taste of other cooked foods.

The nature of the liver is that it only expels and does not absorb. This is what is meant by Pharaoh making his heart like his liver, so even though the heart does absorb, Pharaoh's heart became closed off, like his liver. Thus, he was only capable of making himself heard, and not hearing others.

Saul Liberman mentions another midrash from Shemot Rabbah, chapter 89, verse 8: "When his liver grew angry, his heart also became heavy". It is well-known that the trait associated with the liver is anger, as we read in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Brachot 61a and 61b: The sages taught that the kidneys advise, the heart understands, the tongue shapes the sounds that emerges from the mouth... and the liver becomes angry...". Pharaoh's rage prevents him from listening to his heart and understanding that he must release the Jewish people. He sticks to his guns, subjecting himself and his people to a string of disasters.

Consequently, we see that there are four interpretations of the word kaved, corresponding to Pharaoh's four character traits:

The first is honor, etyakar, arrogance and haughtiness, echoed by his exclamation, "But Pharaoh said, 'Who is Hashem that I should heed Him and let Israel go? I do not know Hashem, nor will I let Israel go.'" (Exodus 5:2). The second is heaviness. Pharaoh couldn't let his heart work, since he was heavy and paralyzed, succumbing to heaviness. The third is the comparison with the liver, an organ that can't listen to its advisors when they speak to it. It is closed off from them, and can only make itself heard. The fourth is the liver, in the sense that the liver is associated with anger, reflecting the principle expressed by our sages - when a person is angry, all forms of diabolical forces dominate him.

Unlike Pharaoh, Moses, the shepherd of Israel who was the humblest of men, possessed the opposite character traits. Though he was "heavy of mouth, liver and tongue, more importantly, he was not heavy of heart, as Rabbi says in the Sayings of the Fathers, chapter 4, mishnah 20: "Don't look at the jug, but rather, at what it contains."

We need a real leader. We must seek out those who are most humble. The ones without personal interests. The strong. The ones who are up to the task, who can hear and listen to the nation and its advisors, and aren't closed off or just "spewing". May the Almighty will it that such a leader is found. However, as we know, the generation gets the leader it

deserves, so we must learn how to swallow (hear), and not just expel (speak). More listening and selfless love, less anger and haughtiness.

OU Dvar Torah

Inside the Exodus: Understanding the Korban Pesach

Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein

Introduction: One Thread Too Many? - Our discussion this week begins with a mitzvah that will not actually appear until the middle of Chumash Bamidbar. Although not formally one of the mitzvos that commemorate the Exodus – and there are many of those – the mitzvah of tzitzis nonetheless has a significant connection with that event. Indeed, the parsha of tzitzis, which we read daily as the third paragraph of the Shema, concludes with the Exodus from Egypt:

אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם לֵהְיוֹת לְכֶם לֵאלֹהִים
I am Hashem, your God, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, to be a God unto you.[1]

Developing this theme further, Rashi[2] quotes his teacher, R' Moshe Hadarshan, who explains numerous details within this mitzvah as reflecting aspects of the Exodus:

- The place on the garment where the tzitzis are attached, the “כִּנּוֹר” (corner), corresponds to the verse which states that Hashem took us out from Egypt “עַל כַּנְּפֵי דְשָׁרִים” – On eagles’ wings” [3]

- The tzitzis are attached specifically to a garment that has four corners, corresponding to the four expressions of deliverance from Egypt, mentioned in the beginning of Parshas Va'eira.[4]

- The eight strings of the tzitzis correspond to the eight days from when the Jewish people left Egypt until they sang at the banks of the Red Sea.

This last comment of Rashi has been the focus of much discussion over the generations, for a very simple reason: There were not eight days between us leaving Egypt until crossing through the Red Sea, there were seven – including both of the day of leaving and that of the crossing! Indeed, Rashi himself states this explicitly in his commentary to Parshas Beshalach.[5] How then, can he say elsewhere that the crossing took place eight days after leaving?

The Exodus: Process and Purpose - Coming back to the verse itself at the end of the parsha of tzitzis, we note that it not only mentions the event of the Exodus, but also emphasizes its purpose: “לֵהְיוֹת לְכֶם לֵאלֹהִים” – to be a God unto you.” Indeed, to lack awareness of this goal is to see the Exodus purely in a negative light, that is to say, to define it solely in terms of what we are not – i.e. no longer slaves to Pharaoh. However, it doesn’t touch on what we are – Hashem’s people – so that the sum-total of our freedom is simply defined as the absence of slavery. It is our singular connection to and relationship with Hashem

that was formed through the Exodus that gives a positive definition to that process. Moreover, the verse later on in Chumash Devarim[6] refers to Egypt as a “כּוּר הַבְּרֹזֶל” – smelting furnace,” informing us that everything we experienced there was in order to refine us of core impurities and enable us to become Hashem’s nation. In light of this defining statement, to lose sight of that goal would be to render the entire Egypt experience – both the subjugation therein and the deliverance therefrom – not only incomplete, but effectively meaningless.

“A Festival for Hashem” – For All

Generations - This fundamental idea will not only give us a fuller and more meaningful understanding of the Exodus from Egypt, it will also explain both its scope and its permanence. The Jewish people have not always enjoyed the political freedom that they attained on that first Pesach. There have many times in our history when we have found ourselves in conditions that were not too dissimilar to those in Egypt – if not worse. And yet, the attainment of our status as Hashem’s People has never left us. It is with reference to that aspect of the Exodus to which we refer in the Maariv prayer when we say:

וַיּוֹצֵא אֶת עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתּוֹכָם לְחֵירוֹת עוֹלָם
And He took His nation Israel out from [the Egyptians’] midst to everlasting freedom.

Political freedom has not always been with us, but the freedom of becoming Hashem’s nation is eternal and ongoing. According to the Meshech Chochmah, this profound idea is expressed in a simple reading of one of the verses in our parsha concerning the festival Pesach:

וַתִּגְדַּלְתֶּם אוֹתוֹ חֵג לִיְהוָה לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם חֵקֶת עוֹלָם תִּחְגַּדוּ
And you shall celebrate it as a festival for Hashem, for your generations, as an eternal law shall you celebrate it.[7]

As if to say: If you celebrate Pesach primarily as a festival over your temporal freedom, there may be generations where such celebration is not warranted or appropriate. However, when you celebrate it as a festival for Hashem, over the relationship with Him as His people that you attained upon leaving Egypt, then it will be a festival worthy of celebration every year – in all generations and for all time.

Initiating the Relationship - All of this should give us new appreciation of the significance of the Korban Pesach that we brought on the day preceding the Exodus. For it turns out that although the full realization of the purpose of the Exodus, namely, becoming Hashem’s people, took place at Har Sinai seven weeks after we had left Egypt, the first step of that process was actually initiated before we left – with the offering of the Pesach! Our relationship with Hashem is expressed by us being His servants. As such, the actualization of our status as “avdei Hashem” (servants of Hashem) occurred through the avodah – Divine service – of the

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korban Pesach.[8] Indeed, this idea was especially accentuated with the first korban Pesach, which incorporated a public repudiation (and renunciation) of idolatry, taking the lamb that was worshipped by the Egyptians as a deity and leaving it tied to the bed-post for four days before offering it as a korban to Hashem.

Understanding the Korban Pesach as the initiation of our relationship with Hashem will explain why neglecting to bring this korban carries the unusually severe punishment of kares (Divine excision). Failure to fulfil a positive mitzvah almost never results in any punishment, certainly not one as severe as kares. In fact, there is only one other example of this, and that is one who fails to perform milah. And indeed, we now understand that the reason for both of these is the same. They are not “only” mitzvos; rather, they both represent our entry into a covenantal relationship with Hashem. Hence, their neglect carries with it such severe consequences.

Moreover, in this light, we can further understand that the Pesach that is to be brought each year in subsequent generations is not merely commemorative in nature, but rather represents a renewal of the relationship that began with the original Korban Pesach in Egypt.[9]

Pesach as the Name of the Offering -

Developing this idea further, we know that the Korban Pesach is intimately bound up with the plague of the firstborn, with its very name deriving from the fact that Hashem “passed over” (pasach) the houses of the Jewish people during that plague, whose doorposts and lintels were smeared with the blood of the offering. Here, too, the full significance of this act was not just that the blood on the doorposts acted as a sign that there were Jews inside so that Hashem would “know” to pass over the house. Rather it was a sign that the occupants of the house had involved themselves in service of Hashem, thereby connecting themselves to Him and elevating themselves beyond reach of the plague.

Indeed, the placing of the blood on the doorposts also had a basic function within the mitzvah of bringing the korban. Every korban requires the application of some of its blood on a mizbeyach (altar). The Gemara[10] states that on the original Pesach, the doorposts and lintels of the Jewish houses assumed this role, and the blood that was smeared on them fulfilled the requirement of applying the blood of a korban! Although this appears to be a distinct idea from the blood as a “sign” for Hashem to pass over, upon deeper reflection they are the same. The fact that the doorposts attained the status of a mizbeyach was the product of the Divine presence having entered the homes of the Jewish people to initiate the relationship, thereby elevating those homes to the status of the Mishkan. Hence, the blood on the doorposts, as the sign of that elevation,

indicated that the occupants of the house were likewise elevated beyond the harmful effects of the plague.

Feasting at God's Table - Appreciating the role of the korban Pesach as establishing our unique connection with Hashem as His people will give us a deeper insight into one of the central features of the offering – partaking of its meat. Although there are numerous offerings which contain a mitzvah to partake of their meat, this element is highlighted in the Pesach to a degree not found in any other offering. Thus, for example:

· If an animal is brought as a korban Pesach, but none of its participants are capable of partaking of its meat, the offering is disqualified.[11]

· A Pesach that is brought when the people are in a state of tumah (impurity) can also be consumed by them even though they are tamei. This is in contrast to other communal offerings which, although they can be brought in a state of tumah, they cannot be consumed in that state.[12]

The central importance of partaking of the Pesach is also reflected in the Rambam's codification of the mitzvos. Whereas with other korbanos that are eaten, the Rambam categorizes the eating of the korban as a detail within the mitzvah of that korban, when it comes to the Pesach, he codifies the eating of the korban as a separate mitzvah from actually bringing the korban.

Why does the eating of the Pesach enjoy such central status within the korban? In truth, the very idea of eating from an animal that has been brought as an offering to Hashem is itself most unusual. Surely, having been sanctified and offered to Hashem as part of Divine service, the notion of people then partaking of it is seems inappropriate in the extreme! Rather, the aspect of the kohanim – or the owners of the korban – partaking of a korban is an indication of the fact that they, too, are sanctified, to the extent that they have an affinity with food even of such consecrated status. Indeed, the Talmud phrases this idea most profoundly and beautifully by saying, “They receive [this food] from the table of On High.”

The sanctification of the Jewish people to the degree that they could partake of korbanos itself took place at the time of the original Pesach offering, for it is an expression of the relationship that was initiated with Hashem as His people. Hence, this element of eating the offering receives such special emphasis within the korban Pesach.[13]

The Clocks of Redemption - Let us now return to the strings of the tzitzis, which Rashi informed us correspond to the days from when we left Egypt until we sang at the Red Sea. The connection of the mitzvah of tzitzis to the Exodus is that the reminder that it serves to fulfill all of Hashem's mitzvos is the purpose

of Hashem taking us out of Egypt. Hence, a garment must have four corners to be obligated in tzitzis, corresponding to the four expressions of redemption. The first three of those expressions refer to Hashem saving us from the Egyptians, while the fourth expresses the goal of that salvation, “And I shall take you to Me as a people and I will be a God unto you.”[14]

As we have seen, this relationship began with the bringing of the korban Pesach the day before we exited Egypt – the fourteenth of Nisan. We can now appreciate why, in terms of the association of tzitzis with the Exodus, it is that day that will be considered the first day of our freedom, with the day on which we sang Az Yashir then being the eighth – represented by the eight threads of the tzitzis![15]

[1] Bamidbar 15:41.

[2] Commentary to Bamidbar Ibid. s.v. ani.

[3] Shemos 19:4.

[4] Ibid. 6:6-7.

[5] Shemos 14:5 s.v. vayugad.

[6] 4:20.

[7] Shemos 12:14.

[8] Maharal, Gevuros Hashem chap. 35, 60.

[9] R' Leib Mintzberg, Ben Melech Parshas Bo.

[10] Pesachim 96a.

[11] Pesachim 61a.

[12] Ibid. 76b.

[13] Ben Melech ibid.

[14] Shemos 6:7.

[15] See Maharal, Gur Aryeh to Shemos 14:5. [The Maharal points out that while the mitzvah of eating matzah does not begin until the fifteenth of Nisan, the prohibition against eating chametz already starts from midday on the fourteenth, expressing thereby in that in some sense, the festival has already begun at that time. Indeed, the Taz (Orach Chaim sec 432) points out that in commanding to destroy chametz, the Torah (Shemos 12:15) refers to the fourteenth as “יום הראשון”, which generally means “the first day”. Although Rashi explains, based on the Gemara Pesachim 5a, that the word “ראשון” can also mean “prior”, nonetheless, the simple reading also indicates that while this is not the first of the seven days of the “Festival of Matzos,” it is still in some way the first day of the festival celebrating our freedom.]

Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam

The Brightest Light

HASHEM said to Moshe: “Come to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, in order that I may place these signs of Mine in his midst, (Shemos 10:1)

I have always been troubled by this verse for what may be an obvious reason. The verb that invites Moshe to deliver the last three plagues is “BO”- “come”. It should rather have said “go” not “BO”! Why is Moshe, now told to come? When I tell someone to come to a place it means that I am there. The implication of “come” is that that is where HASHEM is to be found, as if He is with Pharaoh.

Also, why does HASHEM not just pluck the Jewish People out of Egypt? Why must they gain permission from Pharaoh first? What is the benefit of this giant morality play just to

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get a permission slip from the wicked Pharaoh to let the people go!?

There is a cute reference here that every child knows about that the letter BEIS and ALEPH add up to 3 and that indicates how many Makos there are in this Parsha. Parshas Vaera starts with a VUV and an ALEPH which adds up to 7 and that's how many are found in the preceding Parsha. That can't be the reason to justify why “BO” is employed here.

“BO” – indicates a march backwards from BEIS to ALEPH. The Torah begins with the letter BEIS, as in BREISHIS. The simple and obvious question is asked, “Why does the Torah begin with a BEIS?” Rather it should have started with the first letter ALEPH! So what did precede the BEIS of Breishis? I ask a group of Jewish scientists at NASA if there is any theory about what came before the “BIG BANG”? The answer was absolutely “NO!” We know what came before the BEIS of Breishis. The ALEPH of “ADON OLAM ASHER MALACH B'TEREM KOL YETZIR NIVRA- Master of the Universe Who was King before anything was yet created...” HASHEM predated creation. The word “world” in Hebrew, “OLAM”, means hidden. In the creating of a world HASHEM became hidden form open sight.

Later by Mount Sinai HASHEM would introduce HIMSLEF as ANOCHI HASHEM... I AM HASHEM who took you out of Egypt. ANOCHI starts with the letter ALEPH! That ancient ALEPH was finally revealed and manifested in the world.

When Yaakov was both excitedly and reluctantly descending to Egypt to reunite with Yosef, he was visited by HASHEM and told, “I am G-d, the G-d of your father. Do not be afraid of going down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I (ANOCHI) will go down with you to Egypt, and I (ANOCHI) will also bring you up... (Breishis 46:3-4) HASHEM consoled Yaakov that HE HIMSELF is going down to Egypt. Not only were the Jewish People going into Exile but HASHEM HIMSELF was being confined to Exile. That ANOCHI was locked away in the viscosity of this world in the opaque materialism of Egypt and imprisoned in the deep darkness of Pharaoh's heart.

It is from that unlikely hiding place that HASHEM declares to Moshe – “BO”- COME! The Zohar says, “There is no light like the light that comes from darkness”, and so that which would emanate from the most dismal and dark place in the world is the brightest light.



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BS"D

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Home->Bo-> **5751**

"And the blood shall serve as a sign on the houses in which you are."
(12:13)

Rashi explains this sign shall be for you and not for others. Hence we may derive that the blood was smeared on the inside of the house.

The principal reason for smearing the blood on the inside of the threshold was for the Jew to comprehend the importance of self-sacrifice in the privacy of his home. He must concentrate on the inner dimensions of his personality. The essence of the Jewish act is not the one performed on the public stage, but the one performed on the inner stage, when the audience is only Hashem. The only audience to which a Jew should attach significance is the audience of Hashem. Inner heroism and self-sacrifice is the hallmark of a Ben Yisroel.

Another lesson may be learned here. Often we will attempt to help others in the fulfillment of Torah and mitzvos, even at great sacrifice to ourselves. This may be at the expense and the neglect of our own families. We will sacrifice our time and energy for others, but will we find time for our personal study and self-development? The Torah enjoins us to establish in our homes Torah sessions for ourselves. We must be aware of our responsibilities to our own children, to guide and encourage them ourselves, not by proxy through tutors. We are obliged to do for ourselves and our families that which we so readily do for others.

"And Moshe replied, we will go with our young and old alike." (10:9)
Home->Bo-> **5751**

Why does Moshe mention the young before the old? Should not the elders go before the young? The Kesav Sofer responds that the young had to be rescued as soon as possible. Since they lacked a proper spiritual upbringing, they were more susceptible than their elders to the Egyptian environment. Only after the youth had left, did the older generation, who still maintained some roots in Judaism, and were more likely to survive spiritually in Egypt, leave.

The Koznitzer Magid Zt"l applies a homiletical exposition to this posuk. As we go in our youth, we will ultimately go in our old age. If during our youth we strive to spiritually ascend to reach the proper level of what Hashem expects of us, then as we get older there will be ultimate blessing in our old age. This may be compared to wine, whose vintage is good, gets better as it ages, while wine which has an inferior vintage turns sour with age.

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Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky
Time is of The Essence

There is a theme that permeates all the mitzvos of korban Pesach and the Yom Tov of Pesach, which are given to Klal Yisroel in Parshas Bo. Specifically, time is of the essence in their performance. The korban Pesach must be offered at a very specific time; it can only be brought during the afternoon of erev Pesach. The meat of the korban Pesach must be eaten only during the night of the fifteenth of Nissan. According to one opinion, it may only be eaten according to Torah law until chatzos - halfway through the night. Unlike other korbanos that are eaten for two days, and others for a day and a night, the time to eat the korban Pesach is very limited. The mitzvos of chametz and matzah revolve around time as well - at halfway through the day of the fourteenth of Nissan, chametz becomes prohibited by Torah law. Although there are different opinions as to precisely which prohibitions (chametz on Pesach cannot be eaten, benefitted from, or owned) begin at this time, everyone agrees that the moment of chatzos on erev Pesach impacts the status of chametz. The positive mitzvah eating matza is also time sensitive. One can only fulfill the obligation to eat matzah after dark, which is different from Shabbos and most other yom tov meals. The mitzvah of eating matzah, according to some opinions, must also be performed before chatzos. The very difference between chametz and matza is related to time as well; they are made from the identical ingredients of flour and water, and differ only in that a dough that wasn't baked on time becomes chametz. What is it about the celebration of Pesach that makes it so focused on time?

Before Klal Yisroel are given the mitzvah of korban Pesach, they are commanded to observe the mitzvah of kiddush ha'chodesh - the sanctification of the new moon. It is the observance of Rosh Chodesh which determines the Jewish calendar that is the ultimate example of a mitzvah relating to time. It is this mitzvah that is the introduction to all of the mitzvos of Parshas Bo that follow. What is it about kiddush ha'chodesh that sets the stage for the entire celebration of Pesach?

There is a halacha that one cannot dedicate an object to the Beis Hamikdash unless one owns it. In a similar manner, one cannot sanctify time unless one "owns" it as well. All material possessions of a slave belong to his master; similarly, a slave's time is certainly not his own. By declaring Rosh Chodesh and sanctifying time, Klal Yisroel declare their freedom. The multiple

mitzvot that require paying meticulous attention to the details of time are most apropos for the Yom Tov of Z'man Cherusenu - our time of freedom. Only someone who is free and is in control of time can sanctify time through the performance of mitzvot. It is this connection between freedom and the holiness of time that explains the relationship that yetzias Mitzrayim has with the other yomim tovim. In davening and in kiddush, all yomim tovim are described as times that are zecher l'yetzias Mitzrayim. Pesach is obviously such a remembrance and Shavuot and Sukkos are connected historically to yetzias Mitzrayim. Yet, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Shmini Atzeres don't have any historical connection to yetzias Mitzrayim but are still referred to as zecher l'yetzias Mitzrayim. Why? Because the notion of a day endowed with holiness is a direct result of yetzias Mitzrayim. Yomim tovim which could not have existed without the prerequisite of freedom are truly zecher l'yetzias Mitzrayim.

Chazal teach us that true freedom can only be attained by studying Torah. The mitzvah of talmud Torah which requires an immense amount of time to perform properly is truly the measuring rod of freedom. By spending one's time productively on mastering Torah, one declares that he is the owner of his time and is choosing to sanctify it. Yetzias Mitzrayim enabled us to sanctify our time, not on Pesach but for the several other days of Yom Tov as well. Only because of yetzias Mitzrayim are we able to spend our time in the study of Torah. May we always appreciate the great gift of time and sanctify it to the best of our abilities.

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Reisman's Chumash Shiur - Audio and Print Version

Rabbi Reisman – Parshas Bo 5781

1 - Topic - A Dvar Halacha on the Parsha from Rav Yaakov and Rav Pam
As we prepare for Shabbos Parshas Bo. Today I would like to share with you a Machshava as well as a Dvar Halacha. I would like to start with a Dvar Halacha that has to do with the Parsha because there is a great Simcha for me to see this in the Emes L'yaakov. It is possible that I have seen this before. I don't think that I have ever mentioned it here before but you will enjoy.

The Dvar Halacha starts with a Psak Halacha from Rav Pam. Let me tell you that when we write a Kesuba at a wedding typically the Kesuba comes with blank spaces of course for the names of the Chosson and Kallah, the date and the place that the Kesuba is being written. That is typical. Everyone knows that it has to be filled in because it is unique to each wedding.

In addition, there is one word in the regular Tofes Hakesuba, the regular form which is usually left out and that is the word V'kanina. At the end of the Kesuba it says V'kanina, we did a Kinyan with the Chosson to obligate himself in the Kesuba. Why is that word left out? Halachically it does not have to be left out, however, the custom has become that first you do the Kinyan, that is usually the Mesader Kiddushin or the witnesses give a handkerchief or a pen to the Chosson and with Kinyan Chalipin the Chosson in exchange obligates himself in all of the obligations that are included in that document. The custom is not to write V'kanina until after the Kinyan has taken place.

It is important to note that that is not the Halacha. Halacha allows for the Shtar to be pre-written. Nevertheless, this is the custom among Ashkenazim that the word V'kanina is left out and is filled out after the Kinyan. That is the background.

It happens occasionally that a Mesader Kiddushin forgets to fill in V'kanina. In other words, the whole Kesuba is written but when he fills in the name and the date he can't write V'kanina yet as the Kinyan wasn't done. So he leaves it blank and they do the Kinyan and then they forget. If the Aidim already signed, writing V'kanina later doesn't work.

What Rav Pam did was to write V'ranina. That is to write in V'kanina but in the place of the Kuf to just write a Reish and then do the Kinyan and when the Kinyan is done to fill in the leg Reish so that it becomes a Kuf. I don't

say that he did it all the time but it is something that he spoke about doing. There are some Kesubos that come that way with the word V'ranina which of course doesn't mean anything and the leg of the Kuf is added after the Kinyan so that the word is completed later.

Here is the Shaila. What happens if someone forgot to add that leg of the Kuf and it remained V'ranina after the Aidim signed it and the Kesuba is given? Now what do you do?

Rav Pam had a Machberes of Halachos, he had a number of them. He once gave me one of those Machberesin for whatever reason and in it he has this Shaila and he has a Raya from a Teshuva of R' Yitzchok Elchanan that it is good. That if you wrote V'ranina it is good. Why? Because everyone knows you mean V'kanina, you mean to say the full word and V'ranina is a senseless word, and everybody knows what is meant to be written. It is not the same if you leave it blank because if you leave it blank it doesn't say that there was a Kinyan, but V'ranina works. This is the Psak Halacha that he had and I saw that he had added if I recall correctly a postscript that subsequently he had heard this Psak Halacha from Rav Moshe as well. This is a Dvar Halacha.

In this week's Parsha in the Emes L'yaakov Rav Yaakov (page 291) has a piece at the end that is a very Geshmake piece towards the end of the Parsha. By the Mitzvah of Tefillin the Tefillin has to be written of course completely. It has to be written properly. We learn out of the Posuk (וכתבתם) that the writing of a Sefer Torah, Tefillin or Mezuzos has to be complete. The language that the Gemara uses on Shabbos 103b (11 lines from the bottom) is (שלא יכתוב אלפין עינין) don't write an Aleph in place of an Ayin, (ביתין כפין) don't write a Beis in the place of a Kaf. So Rav Yaakov says why do I need a Gezairas Hakasuv, of course Tefillin have to be written properly. If an Aleph is written in place of Ayin or a Beis in the place of a Kaf of course that is not Kosher. Why would I think that it is Kosher? Why do I need a special Gezairas Hakasuv?

Rav Yaakov answers a very Geshmake Yesod. When a word is written, it is meant to convey a certain message. A written word conveys the idea of the words that are behind the written word. So if you write a letter to somebody and you write words and the person could read it then you have written the words. You may have a sloppy handwriting, but you have written the words. M'ikar Hadin if you would write instead of the words Beraishis Bara you would write Beraishis Kara, you would write a Kaf instead of a Beis. Beraishis Kara Es Hashamayim V'es Ha'aretz. Really it should be good because anybody who reads it knows that it is just missing the foot of the Beis and it means Beraishis Bara. Any normal person who reads it knows exactly what is missing.

Really as far as the rules of writing are concerned that should be written well. That is why you need a special Gezairas Hakasuv (וכתבתם שמה כתיבה) that the Kesiva has to be complete. Because except for Sefer Torah, Tefillin and Mezuzos where we have this Gezairas Hakasuv, in any other topic of writing if the writing is understood then it is considered as if the item had been written. So with this he explains why you need a Gezairas Hakasuv of (כתיבה שמה) (כתבתם שמה).

Rav Yaakov adds that with this is answered Rav Akiva Eiger's Kasha. Rav Akiva Eiger asks if Kesiva is K'dibbur Dami, if a written word is as if it is spoken. How can anybody write a Yud Kei Vav Kei, Kesiva is K'dibbur. When you write a Yud Kei Vav Kei it is as if you speak out that Sheim and of course you are not allowed to speak out that Sheim. You are not allowed to speak out the name of the Yud Kei Vav Kei. So if you hold that writing is like speaking how are you allowed to write Yud Kei Vav Kei?

Answers Rav Yaakov, nowadays Yud Kei Vav Kei as the Sheim of Adnus it is not read the way we would pronounce Aleph Daled Nun and Yud. So therefore, Zag Rav Yaakov the written word is only the way it is read. If you write Yud Kei Vav Kei today it is as you said the Sheim Adnus. This is the Yesod that Rav Yaakov says.

Mimeila, that is really the Psak of Rav Pam that V'ranina is good because everyone knows it means V'kanina. It is an important message that the written word is measured by how it is read.

Rav Yaakov there mentions that if you have an abbreviation, the abbreviation has a Din Kesiva for the way that the word is read. All Inyanei Kesiva are written to a degree in which the word is read.

I would add that it would seem according to Rav Yaakov if you have a one letter abbreviation, let's say you have a question and answer sheet, if you write Q by the question and A by the answers, even though by Shabbos you have to write two letters to be Chayuv, it maybe if someone just writes the A and it is understood to mean answer or Q and it is understood to mean question, according to Rav Yaakov it would seem to come out that he is Chayuv because he is writing a whole word. Tzorech Iyun. Al Kol Panim, the Yesod I was overjoyed to see the Yesod here in Rav Yaakov.

2 – Topic – A Dvar Torah on the Parsha

This Dvar Torah is an Inyan of Machshava that also happens to have a connection L'halacha. Most people are familiar with the fact that there is a dispute as to the proper timing of the eating of the Matzah. In other words, does the Matzah have to be eaten by midnight on Pesach night or can it be eaten all night. It is a Machlokes Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Elazar Ben Azarya in Berachos 9a (31 lines from the top). Rabbi Akiva says that the Korban Pesach is eaten (בכפזון עד שעת הפזון) until the time the Jews rushed. Rabbi Akiva understands it to mean the Chipazon D'yisrael, when the Jews rushed out of Mitzrayim it was daybreak. So therefore, the whole night is Kosher for the eating of the Matzah.

Rabbi Elazar Ben Azarya disagrees. He says it doesn't mean the Jews rushing it means Chipazon D'mitzrayim, when the Mitzrim came to rush the Jews out of Mitzrayim which took place at midnight by Makkas Bechoros.

So Rabbi Elazar Ben Azarya holds it is Chipazon D'mitzrayim so it is at midnight, while Rabbi Akiva holds it is Chipazon D'yisrael which means until the morning. This is in the Gemara. The Rambam Paskens like Rabbi Akiva. Tosafos Paskens like Rabbi Elazar Ben Azarya. There is a dispute. Therefore, the Shulchan Aruch says that a person should try to be careful to complete eating the Matzah by midnight, by Chatzos Laila which is our practice with the Afikomen.

The Kasha is why are we Yotzei eating Matza at the beginning of the night, if you need Shas Chipazon the Chipazon was at midnight for the Mitzrim and in the morning for the Jews. The beginning of the night when they brought the Korban Pesach where is the Chipazon, where is that, it is missing in the Chipazon, in the rushing of the Jews in Mitzrayim, amazing. How are you Yotzei on the first half of the night?

I saw a Yesodosdika answer. For Geulah, to be Nig'al, for someone to go out of Mitzrayim there are two things that are required. One is the Geulah of the Guf, that the body left Mitzrayim, the other is Geulas Hanefesh. That the souls of the Jews detached themselves from the connection to the Mitzrim. What is the Geulas Hanefesh? It always has to come before the Geulas Haguf. The soul has to be free in order for the Guf to be free. (קִרְבָּה אֶל-נַפְשִׁי) as is says in Tehillim 69:19. (קִרְבָּה אֶל-נַפְשִׁי גְאֻלָּה) there has to be a certain K'raivus Hanefesh for there to be Geulah.

The first half of the night was the Dam Milah and the Dam Pesach, that was the Geulah. That is the time of Geulah without any Chipazon. That is the Lashon of Pakeid Yifkod Hashem Eschem, Geulas Hanefesh and Geulas Haguf, you need both. So that the first half of the night it goes without saying you can eat the Matzah Bish'as Geulah. The Chiddush is the second half of the night which is the time of the Geulas Haguf.

When is Geulas Haguf? That is the dispute. Is it the Chipazon of Mitzrayim, when they were actually chased out, or is it the Chipazon of Yisrael when they actually walked out? That is a Machlokes. But the Geulas Hanefesh that was the first part of the night when the Yidden ate the Korban Pesach.

It is important to note that any Yid who wants to free himself of the Hash'pa of the Galus, of the Hash'pa of the influence around him has to start with Geulas Hanefesh. It doesn't work. A person can't say that he is going to be an Ehrliche Yid and he will do that without disconnecting himself from some sort of a connection with the culture, and the influence of the world around him. It just doesn't work that way. The world doesn't work that way.

A person needs to have a disconnect from the negative influence, the distracting influence. It means it is bad, it means it is not a Yiddish influence of the world around him. When a person can distract himself from the negative influence of the world around him then he can be an Ehrliche Yid. But in order to be an Ehrliche Yid he has to be able to first and foremost disconnect from the influence of the world around him. Geulas Hanefesh Kodem L'Geulas Haguf, Ai we should be Zoche to it.

If we could be Zoche to that and disconnect, we could all want to move to Eretz Yisrael. We all want to be there as what do we have here? What do we have here? Good food, comfortable homes and everything about America. Wishing one and all a wonderful Shabbos Parshas Bo a Shabbos of Geulah. Let it be a Geulas Hanefesh for all of us!

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Darkness: A Symbolic Message Rather Than a Punishment

Parshas Bo contains the end of the Makos—the Ten Plagues—the ninth of which was Makas Choshech, the Plague of Darkness. I saw an interesting observation in the sefer Milchamos Yehuda from Rav Yehuda Lubart, z"l. He points out an anomaly that exists with this plague. With virtually all the other makkos, Moshe first warned the Egyptians and then the plague started. However, there was no warning prior to the Plague of Darkness. Why did Makas Choshech break the pattern?

The Milchamos Yehuda suggests a fundamental difference between Makas Choshech and all the other plagues. The other nine plagues from Dam (#1 – Blood) through Makas Bechoros (#10 – Death of the Firstborn) were punishments. These were Divine “slaps” to break the will of Pharaoh. When punishing, there is a well-established principle: Punishments are not administered without prior warning (Yoma 81a; Sanhedrin 56b; Zevachim 107a). Even before punishing our children, we first warn them: “If you do this one more time, you are going to suffer the consequences!”

Makas Choshech was not the punishment. It was the warning! The warning was, “Pharaoh, you are blind! You cannot see what is happening before your very eyes. You should wake up and open your eyes and see what is happening to you and your people.” The Plague of Darkness, unlike the other plagues, was a symbolic message. There are none so blind as those who will not see. How does the Almighty convey this symbolic message to the King of Egypt? He does so by making Choshech. That was the warning for what was coming next – Makas Bechoros. Makas Choshech did not need any warning of its own. It was the warning.

With this idea, Rav Lubart provides new insight into two Medrashim.

The pasuk in Tehillim [105:28] says, “He sent darkness and made it dark and they did not defy his words.” The Medrash comments on this pasuk as follows. The Almighty asked the Angels: Are the Egyptians deserving to be smitten by Darkness? There was no objection from any of the Angels to such a punishment. They all agreed that it would be appropriate.

What is the psht in this Medrash? Why did HaKadosh Baruch Hu need to ask the Angels in the first place whether they agreed with Him regarding this plague? The answer is that we know this is the custom of the Almighty “to consult with His Heavenly Court” before taking dramatic action. Apparently, by the other plagues there was a difference of opinion in the Heavenly Court. Some argued that certain punishments were too harsh; the Egyptians are not deserving of such. There was at least a discussion in the “Palmarya shel Ma'alah” about the matter. The pasuk in Tehillim takes note of the fact that regarding Makas Choshech, there was no rebuttal whatsoever from any of the Angels in the Heavenly Court.

Why not? Why were there suddenly no “defense attorneys” arguing for the Egyptians in the Heavenly Court? The answer is that this was not going to be a punishment, it was only a warning. If it was not a punishment, there was no justification for weighing the issue of whether it was or was not a fair punishment.

Then Rav Lubart interprets another Medrash, using a homiletic, but very beautiful drush. The Medrash states that the Darkness of the Ninth Plague

was as thick as a dinar (a certain kind of coin). But what does this comparison indicate? Darkness is not “thick” – it is the absence of light. If we turn off the lights in a room, it will simply be dark. There is nothing to feel. So what does the Medrash mean?

Rav Lubart explains that the Medrash is alluding to the fact that a dinar (money) can also cause blindness. People do crazy things – not only for money per se, but for all types of materialistic matters. People are blinded by the tremendous ambition to make money and accumulate wealth, possessions, or any physical pleasure. We always hear about executives that somewhere along the line get burned out. They have been spending 18 hours a day at the office for decades and then suddenly, at some point in their sixties, they suddenly regret how they have spent their years. They resign from their position and say, “I want to spend more time with my family.” What family? They grew up without you and moved on during those 40+ years when you were blinded by your ambitions and busy accumulating dinars.

Just like Pharaoh was blinded, and the Almighty tried to show him that he was blinded, so too are we also blinded by our drive to accumulate more and more material possessions and physical pleasures. Maybe we are not as obtuse as Pharaoh, but we are also blinded – blinded by the dinar.

What’s the Big Simcha of a Pidyon HaBen?

I have quoted the following thought many times on the occasion of a Pidyon HaBen.

The end of Parshas Bo contains the mitzvah of the Redemption of the First Born. The Sforno on this mitzvah says an incredible idea: the Sforno defines the mitzvah as one which enables the child to engage in “secular work” (Avodas Chol). According to him, until the Pidyon HaBen ceremony is completed, the child is holy (kadosh). Just like we may not work with a first-born kosher animal because it is the property of the Kohen, so too, a human first-born child may not work.

Now if truth be told, when a child is four weeks old, there is not much work that he can do. It is the other way around—he forces his parents to do the work for him! But, theoretically, the Sforno seems to be saying that if a child was, for whatever reason, never redeemed when he was thirty days old, he would retain the status of Kedushas Bechor (first born sanctity), and would be forbidden to do any non-sacred work. It is apparently a wild Sforno!

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky asks a simple question. It is not that common to have a Pidyon HaBen today. There are many situations which rule out such a scenario. First of all, it only applies to a son. That knocks off 50% of the population. Then, it only applies to a first-born, so there is a maximum of one first born per mother. Furthermore, it only applies to natural deliveries and not to Caesarian deliveries. If a woman has a miscarriage prior to giving birth to her first live child, again there is no Pidyon HaBen. On top of that, if either the father is a Kohen or Levi or the maternal grandfather is a Kohen or Levi, again, there is no Pidyon HaBen.

So, it is a rare occurrence, but it is a beautiful Simcha. At a Bris, everyone is worried. The mother is still in pain from the delivery, the child is certainly in pain from the circumcision, and the father is nervous. Everyone is uptight. A Pidyon HaBen is a wonderfully joyous occasion. There is time to plan, it is not rushed. It is a beautiful thing. They bring in the baby on a silver platter with the sugar and with the garlic. Beautiful!

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky asks – what is this big Simcha all about? Why are we not mourning? The child changes from being holy (kadosh) to being profaned (chullin). Yesterday he was holy; now he becomes just another baby boy! Furthermore, Rav Yaakov asks, the text recited at a Pidyon HaBen is “...Let this son enter a good life, one of Torah and Fear of Heaven. May it be Thy Will that just as he entered the Pidyon (redemption), so too may he enter to Torah, Chuppah (wedding canopy), and Ma’asim Tovim (good deeds). Now we are familiar with this last phrase, which is also said at a Bris Milah. But what about the first part of this Tefillah: Let this son enter a good life, one of Torah and Fear of Heaven. Where does that come from? Why don’t we say that by a Bris?

Rav Yaakov formulates a principle he repeats many times in his sefer. There is a fundamental difference between Judaism and other religions (especially

the Christian religion). Christianity has a dichotomy between the holy and the mundane. There is a perpetual conflict between body and soul. They believe that man has both body and soul but they feel that “never the twain shall meet.” They feel it is impossible to have a blend of holiness and the mundane. This is part of the reason that their priests are celibate. They have to live a life that has nothing to do with the physicality, which marriage entails.

By Judaism, it is just the opposite. The highest level of spirituality—the reason a person was put on this earth—is to blend body and soul. The goal is not that the body and soul should negate one another, but that the soul should influence the body and make us into holy beings. “Men of holiness shall you be for Me.” [Shemos 22:30]. Human holiness is the name of the game. That is our purpose.

Ideally, a person should reach the level where his eating is for the Sake of Heaven and his sleeping is for the Sake of Heaven, and all his other physical activities are for the Sake of Heaven as well. This is the power of the soul, to rule over the body. It is a challenge. It is difficult.

This is why the only korban a non-Jew can bring is the Olah sacrifice, which is entirely burnt on the Mizbayach. Neither the Kohanim nor the person who brings the offering eat any part of it. It is entirely for G-d. A Jew, on the other hand, can bring a Korban Shlomim (“Peace Offering”). This is a sacrifice, but the person who brings it sits down and eats the steak from this animal. We eat the lamb chops! The lamb chops have a status of kodshim (holy sacrificial meat), but this consumption becomes a mitzvah because there is no contradiction between being engaged in holy and elevated spiritual activities and the body experiencing physical pleasure.

The highest spiritual goal in life for the Jew is not to rid himself of physicality but to sanctify the physicality in his life, to infuse it with holiness.

This is the simcha of the Pidyon HaBen. This child was holy until now. But remaining holy is no trick. The challenge now is to redeem the child, make him into chullin, and now challenge him to sanctify this non-sacred entity he has become. Despite the fact that he was holy before and now he is not, the game is not over. Life is just beginning for him.

With this idea, Rav Yaakov interprets the above cited text of the Pidyon HaBen prayer. To achieve this goal in life requires a lot of Yiras Shamayim (fear of Heaven). For a person to confront and engage in activities of physicality and elevate them requires Yiras Shamayim – a focus that I want to be a Servant of G-d (Eved HaShem). Therefore, this prayer invokes the hope that this young child should enter into a life of Torah and Yiras Shamayim. Only through Torah and Yiras Shamayim can a person elevate physicality and make it into holiness.

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Pearls of Wisdom by Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser
You Can Change Your Nature

By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser - 9 Shevat 5781 – January 21, 2021

“Until when will you refuse to be humbled before Me? Send out My people that they may serve Me” (Shemos 10:3).

Two verses earlier, the Torah tells us that Hashem hardened the heart of Pharaoh. How, then, could he be expected to humble himself now before Hashem?

The Medrash Rabbah (22) states that when Adam encountered Kayin after he killed Hevel, he asked him, “What happened with your verdict?” Kayin replied, “I did teshuvah and a compromise [with Hashem] was reached.” Adam responded, “I didn’t realize the power of teshuvah!”

The Zohar states that certain egregious sins have no atonement. R’ Yechiel Dancyger, the Aleksander Rebbe, however, explains that the Zohar merely means that an individual who commits certain sins no longer merits divine assistance to do teshuvah, and it’s therefore exceptionally difficult for him to defeat his yetzer hara. Hashem, however, will still offer the person a concession if he humbles himself and shows sincere remorse. No matter how far a person has strayed from the true path, he should never despair.

Pharaoh was evil and defiant, so Hashem punished him and his heart was hardened. He no longer merited divine assistance, a benefit he desperately needed. If he would have been penitent, though, he could have achieved forgiveness. And if that’s true for Pharaoh, certainly it’s true of any Jew regardless of the gravity of his sin or how low he has fallen. As we say in our prayers, “Hashem extends a hand to those who sin.”

Our sages tell us (Yoma 38b), “If one comes to purify himself, he is assisted.” The Klausenberger Rebbe points out that the Talmud uses the word “comes” to indicate that a person must merely take a few steps forward to come closer to Hashem and he will merit to be purified. In fact, receiving divine assistance to do teshuvah is a definitive proof from Heaven that his motives are sincere. And not only does heaven assist him personally, but he is imbued with added divine assistance so he can sway others to do teshuvah as well, says the Klausenberger Rebbe.

The medrash states that teshuvah is so great that it preceded the creation of the world. The Be’er HaMayim notes that even Bilaam realized that his only means of avoiding punishment was teshuvah. He therefore said, “I sinned” (Bamidbar 22:34) and was saved from the angel.

The Talmud teaches (Yoma 86a), “Great is teshuvah that reaches the heavenly throne.” Rabbeinu Chananel explains that teshuvah helps atone even for those sins that reach the heavenly throne – meaning, even if a person brought evil into the world, teshuvah will annul his sins. Of course, one main component of teshuvah is sincere remorse and penitence.

Teshuvah is difficult when it means changing one’s middos. One year, a devoted chassid of the great R’ Dovid Tzvi Shlomo, the Lelover Rebbe, brought mishloach manos to his Rebbe on Purim. The chassid was known to be hot-tempered, and when the Rebbe saw his mishloach manos, he refused to accept it. He told the chassid he would only take it if the chassid promised to control his temper.

The chassid was hesitant and replied that he could not promise to vanquish his rage, but he would certainly make every effort to do so. The Rebbe refused to accept this compromise and explained to the chassid that he would only accept the mishloach manos if he explicitly promised not to get angry anymore.

The chassid left deeply pained because he couldn’t make the promise the Rebbe demanded. All day he was acutely distressed and, finally before sunset on Purim, he returned to the home of the Lelover Rebbe. He angrily placed his mishloach manos on the table and loudly proclaimed, “May it be the will of Hashem that this rage that I have right now will be the last I ever have.”

Indeed, from that day on, he never again lost his temper and was soft as a reed, amicable and pleasant to everyone.

The elders of Yerushalayim, who were supported by this individual, testified that one would never have believed that he had been such an ill-tempered person. He was always forbearing and agreeable. Indeed, his transformation teaches us the power of teshuvah. It can even cause a person to change his nature.

from: The Office of **Rabbi Sacks** <info@rabbisacks.org> via gmail.mcsv.net date: Jan 20, 2021, 2:15 PM subject: The Far Horizon (Bo 5781)

Rabbi Sacks zt”l had prepared a full year of Covenant & Conversation for 5781, based on his book Lessons in Leadership. The Office of Rabbi Sacks will continue to distribute these weekly essays, so that people all around the world can keep on learning and finding inspiration in his Torah.

To gain insight into the unique leadership lesson of this week’s parsha, I often ask an audience to perform a thought-experiment. Imagine you are the leader of a people that is enslaved and oppressed, that has suffered exile for more than two centuries. Now, after a series of miracles, it is about to go free. You assemble them and rise to address them. They are waiting expectantly for your words. This is a defining moment they will never forget. What will you speak about?

Most people answer: freedom. That was Abraham Lincoln’s decision in the Gettysburg Address when he invoked the memory of “a new nation, conceived in liberty,” and looked forward to “a new birth of freedom.”[1] Some suggest that they would inspire the people by talking about the destination that lay ahead, the “land flowing with milk and honey.” Yet others say they would warn the people of the dangers and challenges that they would encounter on what Nelson Mandela called “the long walk to freedom.”[2]

Any of these would have been the great speech of a great leader. Guided by G-d, Moses did none of these things. That is what made him a unique leader. If you examine the text in parshat Bo you will see that three times he reverted to the same theme: children, education and the distant future.

And when your children ask you, “What do you mean by this rite?” you shall say, “It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, because He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when he smote the Egyptians, but saved our houses.” (Ex. 12:26-27)

And you shall explain to your child on that day, “It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt.” (Ex. 13:8)

And when, in time to come, your child asks you, saying, “What does this mean?” you shall say to him, “It was with a mighty hand that the Lord brought us out from Egypt, the house of bondage.” (Ex. 13:14)

It is one of the most counter-intuitive acts in the history of leadership. Moses did not speak about today or tomorrow. He spoke about the distant future and the duty of parents to educate their children. He even hinted – as Jewish tradition understood – that we should encourage our children to ask questions, so that the handing on of the Jewish heritage would be not a matter of rote learning but of active dialogue between parents and children.

So Jews became the only people in history to predicate their very survival on education. The most sacred duty of parents was to teach their children. Pesach itself became an ongoing seminar in the handing on of memory. Judaism became the religion whose heroes were teachers and whose passion was study and the life of the mind. The Mesopotamians built ziggurats. The Egyptians built pyramids. The Greeks built the Parthenon. The Romans built the Coliseum. Jews built schools. That is why they alone, of all the civilisations of the ancient world are still alive and strong, still continuing their ancestors’ vocation, their heritage intact and undiminished. Moses’ insight was profound. He knew that you cannot change the world by externalities alone, by monumental architecture, or armies and empires, or the use of force and power. How many empires have come and gone while the human condition remains untransformed and unredeemed?

There is only one way to change the world, and that is by education. You have to teach children the importance of justice, righteousness, kindness and compassion. You have to teach them that freedom can only be sustained by the laws and habits of self-restraint. You have continually to remind them of the lessons of history, “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt,” because those who forget the bitterness of slavery eventually lose the commitment and courage to fight for freedom. And you have to empower children to ask, challenge and argue. You have to respect them if they are to respect the values you wish them to embrace.

This is a lesson most cultures still have not learned after more than three thousand years. Revolutions, protests and civil wars still take place, encouraging people to think that removing a tyrant or having a democratic election will end corruption, create freedom, and lead to justice and the rule of law – and still people are surprised and disappointed when it does not happen. All that happens is a change of faces in the corridors of power.

In one of the great speeches of the twentieth century, a distinguished American justice, Judge Learned Hand, said:

I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws and upon courts. These are false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it.[3]

What G-d taught Moses was that the real challenge does not lie in gaining freedom; it lies in sustaining it, keeping the spirit of liberty alive in the hearts of successive generations. That can only be done through a sustained process of education. Nor is this something that can be delegated away to teachers and schools. Some of it has to take place within the family, at home, and with the sacred obligation that comes from religious duty. No one ever saw this more clearly than Moses, and only because of his teachings have Jews and Judaism survived.

What makes leaders great is that they think ahead, worrying not about tomorrow but about next year, or the next decade, or the next generation. In one of his finest speeches Robert F. Kennedy spoke of the power of leaders to transform the world when they have a clear vision of a possible future: Some believe there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills — against misery, against ignorance, or injustice and violence. Yet many of the world's great movements, of thought and action, have flowed from the work of a single man. A young monk began the Protestant reformation, a young general extended an empire from Macedonia to the borders of the earth, and a young woman reclaimed the territory of France. It was a young Italian explorer who discovered the New World, and 32 year old Thomas Jefferson who proclaimed that all men are created equal. 'Give me a place to stand,' said Archimedes, 'and I will move the world.' These men moved the world, and so can we all.”[4]

Visionary leadership forms the text and texture of Judaism. It was the book of Proverbs that said, “Without a vision [chazzon] the people perish.” (Prov. 29:18). That vision in the minds of the Prophets was always of a long-term future. G-d told Ezekiel that a Prophet is a watchman, one who climbs to a high vantage-point and so can see the danger in the distance, before anyone else is aware of it at ground level (Ezek. 33:1-6). The Sages said, “Who is wise? One who sees the long-term consequences [ha-nolad].”[5] Two of the greatest leaders of the twentieth century, Churchill and Ben Gurion, were also distinguished historians. Knowing the past, they could anticipate the future. They were like Chess Masters who, because they have studied thousands of games, recognise almost immediately the dangers and possibilities in any configuration of the pieces on the board. They know what will happen if you make this move or that.

If you want to be a great leader in any field, from Prime Minister to parent, it is essential to think long-term. Never choose the easy option because it is simple or fast or yields immediate satisfaction. You will pay a high price in the end.

Moses was the greatest leader because he thought further ahead than anyone else. He knew that real change in human behaviour is the work of many generations. Therefore we must place as our highest priority educating our children in our ideals so that what we begin they will continue until the world changes because we have changed. He knew that if you plan for a year, plant rice. If you plan for a decade, plant a tree. If you plan for posterity, educate a child.[6] Moses' lesson, thirty-three centuries old, is still compelling today.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com from: Torah in Action /Shema Yisrael
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Peninim on the Torah

by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

www.peninim.org Hodu l'Hashem Ki Tov!! We are happy to announce that after much effort we have successfully launched our new website www.peninim.org. This website will avail the reader access to all thirty years of Peninim Al HaTorah (over 6,000 divrei Torah) Our search engine responds to searches by year, parasha, topic and keyword. This labor of love has been sponsored *l'zchus harabim* by our dear friends Rabbi & Mrs. Roberto Szerer in memory of Bina bas Eliyahu Yehoshua Z"L. Please share your feedback. You too can have a share in Peninim on the Torah. If you would like to sponsor a weekly Parsha please call Rabbi Moshe Marcovich, Director of Development at the Hebrew Academy at 216-727-3008 or email marcovichm@hacl.org.

Shema Yisrael Torah Network Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Bo
פרשת בא תשפ"א מי וזמי ההולכים Which ones are going? (10:8)

Pharaoh seemed overly concerned with knowing whom Moshe *Rabbeinu* was taking to the “prayer retreat” in the wilderness. What difference did it make to him who went? *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, explains that Pharaoh could not accept that anyone other than *Klal Yisrael's gedolim*, Torah leadership, would be involved in this trip. Hashem is *Ram al kol goyim*, above all Nations, His glory is above the Heavens. Why would He listen to the prayers of simple people – certainly not that of children? Pharaoh wanted to know who among the leadership of the Jewish People was leaving to pray. Moshe replied that everyone would be attending, especially children, because their pure, sincere prayers have the greatest efficacy. *Horav Yaakov Mutzafi, zl*, was a *mekubal*, mystic, who was proficient in all areas of *Kabbalah*, Jewish esoteric/nistar/mystical writings. He devoted much time to praying, especially during the High Holy Days. He would stand in prayer, deep in devotion, following the *kavanos*, meditations, prescribed by the holy mystics such as the *Arizal*. Nonetheless, since his young son stood next to him during *davening*, he would make a point to look constantly to make sure that his son was following the *chazzan* who led the service. One time, he noticed that the child was “lost” in the *machzor*, prayer book, and no longer was following as he should. *Rav Yaakov* stopped concentrating on the esoteric profundities and focused on the simple translation of the words. This way, he could focus more on his son's *davening*. He was more concerned with his son's *davening* than of his own. A well-known female dentist did not yet merit to have biological children. An observant woman, she prayed constantly and went to *gedolim* petitioning their blessing, but she had yet to be answered with a child. After much contemplation, she and her husband decided to adopt an infant, a little girl, whom they raised with abundant love and care. The child attended school, and when she became six years old, she received her first *siddur* at the school's *siddur* party. Her mother was very excited to attend. It meant so much to her to finally participate in her child's educational milestone events. Her little girl walked up to the stage to receive her *siddur* and returned to be greeted by her mother's tear-filled, beaming face. The child looked up at her mother and said, “*Ima*, now that I know how to *daven* to Hashem, I am going to pray that you will give birth to a little boy, so that I could have a brother.” A year later, the mother, who was almost forty-years-old, embraced her son. The pure prayers of a young child have awesome efficacy. Inspiring stories, but why do the prayers rendered by young children have such influence? The *Maggid, zl, m'Dubno* explains with a parable. A father and son were returning from a long journey. It was getting late, and the father, concerned that the city gates might close before they returned, encouraged his son to walk faster. The boy, who was young in age and small in build, said, “I can only go so fast. I am sorry.” If they were stuck outside of the city gates for the night, they would be easy prey for violent men and wild animals that surfaced after dark. They kept pushing and even attempted to run, to no avail. By the time they reached the city, the gates were closed. Now what? They screamed, called out, made all sorts of noises, but no one heard them. The father raised his eyes Heavenward in prayer and, simultaneously, he saw a small window at the top of the gate, where the watchman slept and where the keys to the gates hung in plain sight. The father ruminated that, even if he would climb the wall, he could

never fit through the small window, but perhaps his son... He lifted his son up and directed him from the ground as the young boy climbed up the side of the wall. Finally, the boy reached the small opening/window. He wiggled and pushed, and he finally made his way through the opening. He immediately fetched the keys and threw them down to his father. The *nimshal*, lesson, is quite simple. We pray and pray, cry our hearts out, but often it is too late: the gates of prayer have closed. The obstacles, consisting of prosecuting angels coupled with our own indiscretions and shortcomings, hamper our prayers from making it in, from penetrating the partitions (many of them self-constructed by our failings) that block our prayers. However, “the world is sustained by the pure breath of children learning Torah” (*Shabbos* 119b). Their words of Torah and *tefillah* are pure, untainted by sin; thus, they have the ability to achieve what we cannot, to reach where we cannot, to sustain when we are unable. Pharaoh could not understand this.

ולכל בני ישראל היה אור במושבתם No man could see his brother... but, for all Bnei Yisrael, there was light in their dwellings. (10:23) During *Makas Choshech*, plague of darkness, the Egyptian people were overwhelmed with an opaque, fog-like condition that enveloped the country and extinguished all flames. Thus, even if an Egyptian could reach his lamp, any flame that he would kindle would immediately be extinguished. *Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita*, says that the word *b'moshvosam*, in their dwellings, contains within it the letters which comprise the word *b'shabbosam*, in their *Shabbosos*, which he feels alludes to the notion that the reason the Jewish people were able to withstand the darkness of the Egyptian exile was that they observed *Shabbos Kodesh*. Indeed, *Chazal* (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:28) teach that the Jewish People in Egypt took upon themselves to observe *Shabbos*. Concerning the *pasuk Va'yaar b'sivlosam*, “He observed their burdens” (Ibid. 2:11), Moshe *Rabbeinu* went out to his brethren and saw that they had no rest. He went to Pharaoh and contended that one who owns a slave and does not grant him one day of rest will end up burying his slave. No human being can work non-stop without time off to rest. Pharaoh acquiesced and instructed Moshe to provide the Jewish people with a rest-day. Moshe established *Shabbos* as their day of rest. The spiritual illumination engendered through the medium of *shemiras Shabbos* eradicated the darkness of the exile that suffused the lives of the Jewish People throughout the ages. This idea is alluded to in the *Havdalah* service, which we recite at the conclusion of *Shabbos*. *Hamavdil bein ohr l'choshech*; “He Who makes distinction between light and darkness.” This verse implies that immediately following *Shabbos* we enter into a period of darkness. *Rav Gamliel* explains that the weekdays that follow *Shabbos* are dark in contrast to *Shabbos*. When one observes *Shabbos* properly, he causes the *Shabbos* illumination to overflow and continue during the entire week. Thus, *Shabbos* continues to be a source of light that radiates our lives throughout the various circumstances that we confront. Entire volumes of Torah literature have been dedicated to explaining the profundity of *Shabbos Kodesh*. Yet, for the majority of the Jewish People, it remains an ancient tradition heaped together – often rejected – with the rest of Jewish tradition and values. Perhaps, it is its profundity which makes it so difficult to accept. After all, what is the difference between one day of the week and another? At times, the most profound question can be elucidated with a simple answer: To Hashem, *Shabbos* has special meaning. He asked you/us to observe this day by sanctifying it. Is it so much to ask? *Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl*, visited his *Rebbe*, the saintly *Chafetz Chaim, zl*, in Radin. *Rav Elchanan* related that in a nearby city, a number of shopkeepers had decided to keep their establishments open on *Shabbos*. He was able to convince all but two of the owners to shutter their stores for *Shabbos*. The remaining two were determined to play hardball and defy his request that they close. When the *Chafetz Chaim* heard this, he said, “Quick, we are traveling to that city, so that I can pay a visit to these two men.” *Rav Elchanan* did not want to burden his *Rebbe*, whose advanced age transformed this trip into a major hardship. Thus, he said that he would not go. The *Chafetz Chaim* countered, “Fine. So I will go myself.” Obviously, *Rav Elchanan* would not permit his *Rebbe* to travel alone; he accompanied him. They arrived at the store of one of the recalcitrant owners. The *Chafetz*

Chaim did not waste any time getting to the point. “Tell me, my friend,” he asked the owner, “do you have money?” “I have done well. I am quite comfortable.” “Do you have children?” the *Chafetz Chaim* asked. “Yes, I have a decent sized family.” “Is there anything that you are missing?” the sage asked. “Nothing, I am doing well. I have no complaints.” When the *Chafetz Chaim* heard this, he began to weep bitterly and asked, “Hashem has been so good to you. He has given you everything: wealth and children. You are lacking nothing. Yet, Hashem makes only one request of you: that you give Him *Shabbos*. Is that too much to ask? Why will you not grant this to him?” When the man heard such a “simple” request emanate from such a pure soul he could not say no. He acquiesced to closing his store for *Shabbos*. The second storekeeper agreed as well. The most profound questions can sometimes be answered with a simple, sincere response.

והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה ד' לי בצאתי ממצרים And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, “It is because of this that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Egypt.” (13:8) No religious ceremony focuses more on the inclusion of children as does the *Seder* meal. Cloaked in profound esoteric meaning, the *Seder* is brought down to an elementary level in order to engender youthful participation. Indeed, we have activities and traditions that cater to youthful imagination, all for the purpose of motivating a child’s questions and the adults’ reply. The reason for this display is that *Pesach* commemorates our liberation and the path to nationhood, which we embarked on at *Har Sinai* when we accepted the Torah. In order to ensure that *Pesach* and its eternal message remains an integral part of Jewish life, we must see to it that its significance be inculcated in our children. The only guarantee of their continued commitment is our transmission of the message and its significance to the next generation. When children grow up realizing that something, a tradition, holds great significance, it becomes a part of them and they see to it that they observe its message and transmit it to the next generation. Pharaoh was acutely aware of this verity. Thus, he instructed Moshe *Rabbeinu* to take only the adult men on their “three day” trip to the wilderness. Without the children to impress and inspire, the trip would have a low success rate. Moshe’s response was immediate: “We are all going...the old and the young...for, without the young, the trip will have no enduring meaning.” Therefore, every *Pesach Seder* night, we follow the *halachah* and do everything to motivate youthful participation, but does it succeed? Just doing the right things and following the presumed prescription for success does not guarantee success. Do we have a general recipe that works? *Horav Yitzchak Herszkowitz* relates the following story. A distinguished Torah scholar had a young son who was not successful in his learning. His problem was retention of the material. Regardless of the number of times that he reviewed the *Chumash* and *Gemarah*, he proceeded to forget what he had been taught. His father visited with professionals who specialized in this field, but they were baffled by this case. One day, father and son walked together through the fruit market and noticed the watermelon peddler calling out, “Watermelon on the knife, watermelon red and lusciously sweet!” over and over again. Half an hour later, as they continued to walk, the young boy began to call out, “Watermelon on the knife, watermelon red and lusciously sweet.” It dawned on the father that his son, who had a severe retention problem, did not seem to have a problem remembering what the fruit peddler had been calling out. The father began to wonder. Perhaps his son’s retention problem was exclusive to Torah, but he would have no problem remembering mundane education. He would seek the sage advice of a *gadol*, Torah giant. That night he met with a holy Torah giant, a *Rosh Yeshivah* whose knowledge of Torah was without peer, but whose wisdom also traversed secular disciplines as well. The *gadol* said, “I could tell you that there is a *klipah*, (spiritual) shell wrapped around your son’s soul which prevents him from learning. If you persevere, your efforts will ultimately penetrate this shell and your son will become a *talmid chacham*. I do not, however, think that this is your son’s problem. The reason that your son remembered what the fruit peddler called out is that his shouts emanate from the deepest recesses of his being. The watermelons that he sells represent his family’s livelihood. He is not simply shouting; his heart is screaming, “Buy watermelons!” Obviously, your son’s educators are not

teaching from the heart, but from the mouth and the mind. Unless his *rebbe* teaches passionately, your son will continue to have a retention problem.” As a follow-up to this notion about passionate teaching, imparting the lesson from the heart, he related another story of a father whose last words to his son remained with him throughout his life and served as his lodestar for raising and educating his own children. A Jew who was born in Austria was able to leave as a young child and make his way to Germany – on his own – alone in the world, without his parents. While in Germany, he was able to connect with one of the *Kinderstransports* ferrying children to England. From there, he finally made his way to *Eretz Yisrael*, where he settled in Petach Tikva. Since he spent most of his youth on the run, without parents, he was unable to have the “luxury” of a Torah education. He knew how to *daven* and could learn *Chumash*. Aware of his limited background and acknowledging the fact that he was not going to become a Torah scholar, he decided to devote himself so that others could learn. To this end, he became a *shamash*, caretaker, at a *shul*, handling all the maintenance, both physical and spiritual. He saw to it that the *shul* provided an array of *shiurim*, Torah classes, to satisfy the needs of its growing, diverse crowd. He lived a full life, and he merited to see each of his sons become a solid *talmid chacham*, and each of his daughters marry a Torah scholar of note. How did it happen? How did a person who grew up with no solid Jewish education become such a Torah-devoted Jew that he raised a family that would be the envy of a *Rosh Yeshiva*? This question was posed by a *Rosh Yeshiva* who was close with one of the sons: “How did your father achieve such Torah *nachas*? What motivated/inspired him to seek such *nachas*?” The eldest son explained, “We grow up taking our parents for granted. Do we bother asking them, ‘How was your life growing up? Did you have challenges? How did you achieve such success? Who helped you? Who guided you?’ One day, I decided to ask my father how he – without parents, spending most of his youth on the run – remained a Torah observant Jew who raised such a family? This is what he told me: “‘When I left Austria, I left alone. It was not supposed to be that way. My father was supposed to travel with me to Germany and attend to my arrangements. At the last minute, he had a problem with his passport which precluded his accompanying me. Instead, he took me to the train station to see me off. I never saw him again. “‘I will never forget my father as the train pulled out of the station. He started running alongside the car I was in to say goodbye. He waved to me and called out, *Zei a gutten Yid*, “Be a good/observant Jew.” He continued to run as the train picked up speed, yelling, *Zei a gutten Yid, zei a gutten Yid!* At the last minute, he tripped and fell, but he still yelled out to me, *Zei a gutten Yid!* “‘This was my father’s parting message to me. I knew that whatever happened in life, this was one thing I had to do: be a good Jew!” The son continued, “My father’s life revolved around those four parting words. This is why our family and the *shul* we grew up in looks the way it does. He never forgot his father’s plea: ‘Be a good Jew.’” We now understand the significance of our participating with the children during the *Seder*. This is the night that we impart *Pesach* to them: *Pesach*, its meaning; our nation, its meaning; Judaism, its meaning. There is, however, one stipulation: We must teach with heart; our children must feel the passion. If we teach dispassionately, if we are hungry and rush through the *Seder*, so that we can eat, this is what they will remember. We will have only ourselves to blame. If we want to make an enduring impression, we must feel as if these are the most important moments of our lives. This is the lesson that they will take from us for the rest of their lives. How we present the lesson determines the student’s ability to retain the message. This is something to take to heart.

וְהָיָה לְךָ לְאוֹת עַל יָדְךָ וּלְזִכְרוֹן בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ And it shall be for you a sign on your arm and a reminder between your eyes. (13:9) Ohr Yehudah is a city in the Tel Aviv district of Gush Dan, *Eretz Yisrael*. A member of the community was in the restaurant business. In fact, he owned all the restaurants in Ohr Yehudah. This was not because no one else was interested in competing, but rather, because he was a coarse person who did not do well with competition. Whenever someone had the “courage” to open a competing establishment, he would send his hoodlums to pay the man a visit. They subtly reminded the would-be restaurateur that there could be only

one restaurant franchise in Ohr Yehudah, subject closed. The man’s wife was on a different spiritual plane than her husband. She had a burning desire to know more about Judaism, its rituals, traditions and their observance. Thus, she attended lectures on Judaism. At a recent lecture, the *Rav* had spoken about the significance of *Tefillin* and the enormous merit accrued by one who puts them on daily. *Tefillin* altered a person’s life with the merit of eight *mitzvos* one fulfills when he wears *Tefillin*. It adds holiness to the wearer and protects him from harm. Following the lecture, the wife approached the speaker and asked him how best to encourage her husband to don *Tefillin* daily. He said that nice and easy, coaxing and explaining, was the most basic way to convince a person of his spiritual obligations. She made the attempt; she even pleaded, all to no avail. He was just not interested in putting on *Tefillin*. The restaurateur had a daily schedule which he followed like ritual. He arose at 8:00 a.m. and, shortly thereafter, he would drive his new car to one of his restaurants, where he would eat a large breakfast. He then travelled to each one of his establishments to touch base and do paperwork. One day, he did his usual; arose at 8:00 a.m., dressed and enjoyed a cup of coffee as he read the paper. At 9:00 a.m., he left his house to drive to work. As he was about to get in his car, he heard screaming from his house. He turned around and saw his wife at the door, screaming after him. He could not hear what she was saying, so he returned home. “I cannot live like this anymore!” she declared emphatically. “I have never asked you for anything. Now, all I am asking is that you put on *Tefillin*. Five minutes, put them on, and take them off. If you cannot do this, then our marriage is of no significance to you.” “Fine,” he answered. “I will put on *Tefillin*. If this makes you happy, I will do it.” They began to search for his *Tefillin*, which he had not worn since his *bar mitzvah*. He found them and tried to remember what he was supposed to do. His wife helped him. He recited *Krias Shema*. At the very moment that he covered his eyes and said the hallowed words, *Shema Yisrael*, they heard a loud explosion. They immediately ran to the window to discover that his brand new car had exploded and was burning fiercely. An investigation revealed that one of the would-be restaurateurs whom he did not allow to open, had hired someone to blow up his car – with him in it. Had he not taken the time that day to don *Tefillin*, he would have been in the car, and he would now be history. He was saved by the *mitzvah* of *Tefillin*. *Tefillin* lengthens a person’s life. This incident demonstrated this verity. Let me add one thought. We all perform activities that add to good health and longevity, but do we continue or cut them short after the “revealed” benefit has been achieved? Certainly, the man who was saved cherished *Tefillin*, but for how long? In his case, he became fully observant. He added to his life.

Va'ani Tefillah שִׁים שְׁלוֹם – Sim Shalom. Establish Peace. Peace is the ultimate blessing, because, without peace, no other blessing has endurance. If one is blessed with health, prosperity, material or (even) spiritual abundance, but does not have with whom to share his beneficence - what good is it? Thus, the seal of peace lends permanence to our other blessings. The *Ksav Sofer* teaches that we identify three levels of peace: within one’s family; within the country that one lives; and throughout the world. If one’s character is deficient, peace will elude him, writes the *Gaon, zl, m’Vilna* (in his *Even Shleimah*). Ultimately, true peace is achieved with the perfection of one’s character. The quality of one’s character seals all of the other blessings. Positive character traits preserve one’s blessings. Negative character traits undermine whatever blessing he achieves. Indeed, an unhappy/negative person is not able to achieve harmony in his life. The bitterness which overwhelms him destroys whatever good he has, thus preventing him from achieving a lasting relationship with anyone. The greatest peace one can have is peace of mind – or peace within oneself. **לְעִילָי נִפְטָר י"ג שְׁבַט תשס"ז Idu Keller נשמת אידל קעללער בת ר' יעקב שמעון פאללאקע"ה**
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List@googlegroups.com> date: Jan 20, 2021, 4:21 AM subject: [Rav Kook Torah] Bo: The Passover Leap

Spiritual Leap Lofty teachings cannot be revealed to those who are unsuitable or not ready for them. The enlightenment itself risks becoming debased and twisted when it is associated with sordid individuals. There are, however, exceptional cases, when the current spiritual-moral level of the receiver may be disregarded, and a spiritual 'leap' may be accomplished. G-d's revelation to the Israelite slaves in Egypt will forever stand out as an example of such a miraculous "leap." This is the inner significance of the Passover offering, the korban Pesach, which literally means to "leap" or "skip." The Jewish people in Egypt had sunken to the lowest levels of degradation and idolatry. In the words of the Midrash, they were on the 49th gate of tum'ah - just one before the lowest state of impurity. For G-d to be revealed to them during their redemption from Egyptian bondage required a spiritual jump of historic dimensions. Nonetheless, even the leap of Passover has its limitations. "This is the law of the Passover offering: no foreigner may eat of it." (Exodus 12:43) Who is a "foreigner" who may not partake of the korban Pesach? The Sages taught that this refers not only to Gentiles, but even to Jewish apostates who have abandoned G-d. These are Jews who forsaken the Torah's principles to such an extent that they now fall under the category of "foreigners" (Zevachim 22b). In other words, even the spiritual leap of the Passover redemption was not boundless in its scope. It could not encompass those Jews who had so completely assimilated into their surrounding idolatrous culture that they lacked even an elementary faith in G-d. Rescuing the Light of the First Luchot This understanding of G-d's revelation during the redemption from Egypt sheds light on another historic event. Moses' act of breaking the luchot habrit (the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments) took tremendous courage. How did Moses dare destroy such a uniquely holy object? How did he know that this was the correct thing to do? The Talmud suggests that Moses' act was based on the above-quoted law of the Passover offering. "The Passover offering is just one of the 613 mitzvot, and yet an apostate may not share in it," he reasoned. "Certainly the Jewish people, after they have sinned by worshiping idols, are unworthy of the Torah in its entirety!" (Shabbat 87a) In light of our previous comments, Moses' a priori reasoning becomes even more forceful. What is the inner message of the Passover offering? That G-d revealed Himself to the Jewish people, despite their spiritual poverty. Nonetheless, even this mitzvah cannot encompass those who reject the fundamental tenets of monotheism. Certainly the Torah as a whole could not be bestowed to the Jewish people in their idolatrous state after worshipping the Golden Calf. Had Moses in fact given the first set of luchot to the Jewish people, this would have bound the Torah to the state of spiritual impoverishment that enveloped the Jewish people at that time. This would have brought a terrible spiritual danger - to the world, to Israel, and to the Torah itself. Only by hiding that great light, by breaking the physical vessel that bound it to the material world, was Moses able to ensure the spiritual development of the Jewish people and the entire world. The first luchot, however, were not lost forever. Moses' act rescued that lofty light, so that it may be revealed at the end of days with a pure and eternal illumination.

from: **Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky** <rmk@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: drasha@torah.org date: Jan 20, 2021, 4:10 PM subject: Drasha - You Are What You Eat

Drasha Parshas Bo - You Are What You Eat Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

After 210 years on foreign soil, many filled with sadistic slavery, the Jewish people get a taste of freedom. The Egyptian oppressors are devastated with plagues, and the Jews are readied for freedom. But before they are released, they are charged with two mitzvot. The sanctification and establishment of the New Moon, and the laws of the Korban Pesach (Passover Lamb). These mitzvot entail some of the most complex statutes in the entire realm of Jewish law. Establishing new months and setting the calendar entails knowledge of astronomical calculations and celestial sophistication that was hardly a charge for a slave nation! The laws of the Passover sacrifice are

defined in intricate detail, not only pertaining to its preparation, but the way the sacrifice is eaten, and who may partake of it. First, the Torah tells us that the offering may only be eaten with those who have been pre-designated as members of the festive meal. The Torah also instructs that the lamb must be wholly roasted, not one piece may be pan-fried or boiled. The Torah also commands how the lamb is eaten. It must be eaten in a rush — after all, the Jews were about to exit Egypt — and there was no time for long, drawn-out festivities. In fact, the Torah tells the nation to eat the korban with their back packs readied and their staffs in hand! The instructions continue. "You must not break a bone. Do not leave over any meat." The lamb was to be eaten meticulously, every bit of meat was to be finished, yet no one was allowed to sink their teeth into it to the extent that the tender lamb's bone would break. One may ask: Why is the introduction to Judaism so abstruse and replete with detail? After all, the nation had been slaves for 210 years! Time was never a factor, let alone a lunar calendar. They probably never ate meat, the god of the Egyptians, for the duration of that time. Why not as soon-to-be free men were they not allowed to indulge the way they wanted, in high style and with unmitigated freedom? Why is the first allowance of carnivorous cuisine so restricted and detailed? Shouldn't the first commands to a fledgling people be simple feel-good symbolism? Dr. Viktor E. Frankel was a longtime prisoner in the bestial concentration camps of Nazi Germany. His parents, brother, and wife were killed and cremated in the ovens. Yet as a psychiatrist he devised a method of survival through the ravages of sadistic barbarism, detailed in his work, *Man's Search for Meaning*. He writes that though the Nazi's goal was to every eradicate every human trait, "hunger, humiliation, fear and deep anger are rendered tolerable by closely guarded images of beloved persons, by religion, and even by the healing beauties of a tree or a sunset." Frankel describes how he learned to relish every physical and spiritual entity he could grasp. These small acts would elevate their humanity. Scraps of wood formed pieces of meaningful art. He would analyze in his few free seconds every bit of good that was left to his existence. One evening a fellow prisoner rushed into the barracks and asked him to run out to the assembly grounds to watch the beautiful sunset. He whole sky became alive with clouds of ever-changing shapes and colors, from steel-gray to blood-red. They watched the contrast of the majestic billows compared to the muddy-brown earth-tethered huts. After minutes of moving silence the prisoners turned to each other, "how beautiful the world could be." Every nuance of life is actually filled with spiritual opportunities. By affording the nation two initial two commands that were replete with thousands of details, later expounded upon through thousands of pages of Talmudic and Halachic literature, The Holy One opened a new outlook to the formerly bonded. The moon that they watched for 210 years now became the embryo of spirituality. The sign of its lumens would herald the New Year and the Festivals. The experience of eating meat would become a royal meal filled with mitzvot and responses to Hashem's command. There would be no chomping at bones like barbarians. Cooked in a precise and instructed manner, every step of a seeming earthly — even physical — act took on a magnificent sense of spirituality. Those most intricate, detail and sophisticated acts forged slaves into princes. Every detail was filled with spirituality and cognizance. There were messages of dignity, of restraint. No more were they starving prisoners grabbing any available food. These prisoners needed to reserve a place to dine. The slow means of preparation entailed finesse and patience; not one morsel was allowed to be eaten raw. Instead of grabbing the food and sinking their teeth straight to the bone, they were warned, do not shatter a bone! And they could not nibble at it and leave some over, as they were commanded not to leave any meat over. In the minutest detail there is great magnitude. And in the magnitude of those actions lie the magnitude of man who recognizes the magnitude of his Creator. Good Shabbos (c)1999 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky Dedicated by Peter & Donna Kash in honor of the anniversaries of their parents Robert & Leona Kash and Herb & Marilyn Friedman

from: **Rabbi Kaganoff** <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> reply-to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Jan 17, 2021, 3:53 AM subject: Where the Deer and the Antelope Play

The yearzeit of Rav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg, often referred to by the name of his seforim, Seridei Eish, occurs this week. Since a teshuvah by him on the subject of kosher animals is the basis for much of this article, I thought it appropriate to discuss this topic this week.

Where the Deer and the Antelope Play

Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Home, home “Are there any ‘take-home lessons’ I can learn from split hooves?” Question #2: On the range “Is there a variety of wild pig that chews its cud and is kosher?” Question #3: Where the deer “May I eat the fat of a reindeer? What about the impala, the dik-dik and the kudu?” Question #4: And the antelope play “Is the American pronghorn a kosher species?”

Foreword In two places, first in parshas Shemini, and then again in parshas Re’eih, the Torah explains which species of animals, fish and birds are kosher. Since all of our opening questions are about the status of various kosher mammals, this article will limit itself to defining which of them is kosher and various other halachos that result.

Presumably, you noted that I used the word “mammal” rather than “animal” or “beast.” To the best of my knowledge, there is no word in Tanach or Mishnaic Hebrew for “mammal.” The Modern Hebrew word used is yoneik, which simply means “that which nurses,” certainly an accurate definition of what separates mammals from other members of the animal kingdom. I am using the word “mammal” as an easy and accurate way to distinguish what the Torah calls “animals that are upon the ground” from the birds, fish, sea animals, creeping creatures, locusts, insects, invertebrates and reptiles whose halachic status is discussed in the Torah.

Introduction The Torah writes, “Hashem spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, saying to them: ‘Speak to the Children of Israel, saying, these are the beasts from which you may eat. From the animals that are upon the ground: Whatever has a split hoof that is separated completely and is ma’aleh geirah [usually translated as “ruminating” or “chewing its cud”] among the animals: Those you may eat” (Vayikra 11:1-3). The Torah then lists three animals, the camel, the shafan and the arneves [intentionally not yet translated] as being non-kosher because they do not have fully split hooves, although they are ma’aleh geirah. Finally, the Torah mentions that a pig is not kosher, even though its hooves are completely split, because it is not ma’aleh geirah. Thus, the Torah defines any land animal with a totally split hoof that chews its cud as kosher. These two signs are possessed by sheep, goats, giraffe, deer, antelope, cattle, buffalo, bison, yak and okapi. The okapi lives in deep forests in the Congo, has a skull almost identical to that of a small giraffe, and, indeed, possesses split hooves and is a ruminant.

Does it ruminate too much? “Ruminating” means that an animal has many stomachs (sometimes described as a stomach with several chambers) and chews its food in two stages. First, it harvests grass, leaves and/or other vegetation which it deposits into the first chamber of its stomach, the rumen, where it is fermented and begins to decompose. The partially digested food, now called “cud,” is regurgitated back to the mouth, where it is chewed again to further break down its cellulose content, which is difficult to digest. The chewed cud then goes directly to the second chamber of the stomach, the reticulum and, eventually, to the last two chambers, the omasum and abomasum, where further digestion is assisted by various microorganisms that reside in the ruminant’s stomach. This is Hashem’s way of having grass, leaves, bark and tree roots (which the human stomach cannot digest), converted into products that can now benefit mankind in the forms of milk, cheese, meat, wool and leather. The term ma’aleh geirah might include other processes that are not the same as chewing cud. Ultimately, the question is how we translate the non-kosher species that the Torah teaches are ma’aleh geirah but do not have fully split hooves. The Torah mentions three: the camel, the shafan and the arneves. The camel chews its cud. Although its stomach has only three chambers, it still digests its food in a way similar to the four-chambered ruminants.

Hyrax? The other two animals that the Torah describes as ma’aleh geirah are shafan and arneves. We are uncertain as to the identification of these two animals. In Modern Hebrew, the word shafan sela is used to mean hyrax, sometimes called the rock hyrax, a rodent-like mammal commonly found in wooded areas in Eretz Yisroel. I often see them in the wild, a ten-minute walk from my house. It is called the rock hyrax because they often stand on rocky areas in forests, and hide in holes between the rocks. The posuk in Tehillim (104:18), sela'im machseh la'shefanim, rocks are a refuge for the shefanim, indeed implies that shafan is indeed a rock hyrax. However, the difficulty with defining the shafan as a hyrax is because the hyrax is not a ruminant.

Hare or rabbit Arneves is usually identified as a rabbit, a hare, or both. Hares and rabbits are similar to, but are not, rodents, and in modern science are categorized as lagomorphs. The main difference between hares and rabbits is the stage of development at which their young are born. Newborn hares are able to function on their own within hours, whereas newborn rabbits are blind and completely helpless. In any case, neither the rabbit nor the hare are considered ruminants.

Will the real shafan please stand up? In a teshuvah on the subject, the Seridei Eish (Shu't Seridei Eish 2:64) mentions several attempts to identify shafan and arneves. One approach insists that shafan and arneves cannot be hyraxes and hares, since

neither of these species ruminates, but that shafan and arneves must be species that indeed ruminate and yet are not kosher. These would be species that, like camels, have partially, but not fully split hooves and are therefore called cameloids. However, the only species currently known to man, other than the camel, that fit this description are native South Americans of the llama family: the domesticated llama and alpaca, the vicuna, and the guanaco, which are collectively called lamoids. Since shafan is mentioned in Tanach several times as a commonly known animal, it is highly unlikely that it refers to a South American native that was unknown in the Fertile Crescent until well after the Europeans invaded South America in the beginning of the sixteenth century. There are also descriptions of arneves in the Gemara (Megillah 9b) that indicate that, in that era, they were very certain how to identify an arneves, again making lamoids a very unlikely choice. Another option is that shafan and arneves refer to Bactrian (two-humped) camels, native to China and other parts of Asia. However, this is also a difficult approach to accept, since the differences between the one-humped dromedary (also called Arabian camel) and the two-humped Bactrian are not distinctive enough to imagine that they would not both be called gamal by the Torah. I would like to note that the Gemara was well aware of the existence of dromedary and Bactrian camels, calling them Arabian camels and Persian camels, and insisting that they qualify as one species for halachic purposes (Bava Kama 55a). (Scientifically, they are treated as two separate species, Camelus dromedarius and Camelus bactrianus. By the way, Bactria was a country in today's Afghanistan, bordering on Persia, so both the contemporary conversational term and the scientific terms for the two varieties of camel are identical to the way Chazal referred to them.)

Are you sure that you don't ruminate? The Seridei Eish also mentions a completely different approach, suggested by Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffman, that although shafan and arneves are not cud chewers, they appear to do something similar to ruminating. A hyrax has a three-chambered stomach containing special bacteria allowing it to digest leaves and grasses, similar to ruminants that can digest leaves and grass. It is also interesting to note that hyrax babies are born without the bacteria they need for digestion. For nutrition, they consume the waste matter of adult hyraxes until they are able to eat. Apparently, the adult's waste contains enough live bacteria such that the baby hyrax stomach is eventually able to digest the cellulose itself, without relying on reprocessed food. Mah rabu ma'asecha, Hashem! It is possible that either the digestive system of the hyrax or its method of feeding its offspring may be what the Torah means, when it calls them maalei geirah.

Arneves Rabbits and hares are not classic ruminants and do not possess the proper physiology for rumination, but instead digest through a process called hindgut fermentation. These animals and some rodents digest in a unique way, by the formation of cecotropes. Their first swallowing does not complete the digestion process, and they produce two different kinds of droppings: little black round ones and softer black ones known as cecotropes, or night feces, which they then eat and re-digest. The cecotropes contain lots of essential vitamins and protein. It is very possible that this process is what the Torah refers to as ma’aleh geirah, although it is not what is usually referred to as “chewing the cud.”

On the range At this point, let us examine the second of our opening questions: “Is there a variety of wild pig that chews its cud and is kosher?” To the best of my knowledge, all members of the pig/hog family, including the boar, the South American peccary, the Indonesian babirusa, and various wild species that include the name “hog” or “pig” in their common name, such as the warthog, the bushpig, and the almost extinct pygmy hog, have split hooves, and are, to some extent, omnivorous. (Please note that hedgehogs and porcupines, despite the references to “hog” and “pork” in their names, are called this because they have long snouts reminiscent of pigs, not because they have split hooves.) Although South African rangers have told me that warthogs are exclusively herbivorous, research shows that they do scavenge dead animals and also consume worms and insects while foraging. Several varieties of wild hog, among them the peccary, the babirusa, and the warthog, native to Africa, have more complicated stomach structures than does the common domesticated pig. Over the years, I have seen various news articles claiming that some of these animals are kosher, based on the assumption that they have both split hooves and ruminate. However, none of these species does, indeed, chew its cud; so, although they all have split hooves, as do all hogs, they are not kosher. Although the posuk mentions only chewing the cud and split hooves as criteria for kosher animals, there may be additional reasons why wild hog species are not kosher. Based on a passage of Gemara, some authorities contend that any species of animal without any type of horn is not kosher (Shu't Beis Yaakov #41, quoted by Pischei Teshuvah, Yoreh Deah 80:1), and the peccary, the babirusa, and the warthog have no horns. Although both the warthog and the peccary have tusks that look like horns, these are really oversized teeth and grow out of the mouth, not on the top of the head. By the way, many authorities disagree with the Beis Yaakov, contending that absence of horns does not define an animal as non-kosher (Pischei Teshuvah ad loc.).

Where the deer The third of our opening questions began “Is the fat of a reindeer permitted?” Let me explain what is presumably being asked. The Torah divides mammals into two categories, beheimah and chayah. Beheimah is usually translated as

animal or domesticated animal, whereas chayah is often rendered as beast or wild animal. However, these translations of the terms beheimah and chayah are not entirely accurate. Although most domesticated species, such as cattle, sheep and goats, qualify as beheimos, there are species of beheimah, such as the African or cape buffalo, the Philippine tamarau and the anoa, a native of the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, that cannot be domesticated. (See the dispute between the Shulchan Aruch and the Rema, Yoreh Deah 28:4, which relates to the Asian water buffalo, domesticated already in antiquity.) On the other hand, some species of chayah, such as reindeer, are domesticated and raised as livestock in the northern regions of Europe, particularly by the Lapps (the Sami), as are other varieties of deer in central Asia. So, what is the difference between a beheimah and a chayah? The Gemara (Chullin 59b) explains that it depends on the type of horn it has. If it is branched, as are all deer antlers, it is a chayah. The major noticeable difference between antlers and horns is that antlers shed annually (are deciduous) and are extensively branched, whereas horns are permanent and unbranched. Moose and elk have massive, branched, deciduous antlers, and are varieties of deer. All antelope (a general category that includes dozens of species) have unbranched horns, and therefore one would need to examine the horns of each species to determine whether it is a beheimah or a chayah, as I will explain shortly. Kudu, eland, gnu, impala and dik-dik all have unbranched horns and are varieties of antelope. The same is true of the dorcas gazelle which is a common species in Eretz Yisrael, and the largest permanent resident of the wooded area near my house where I often go for relaxing walks. There are some other differences between antelope and deer; for example, antelope have gall bladders and deer do not. So, you can rest assured that your pet moose cannot develop gallstones.

What type of horn? But what type of horn am I looking for? If an animal possesses an unbranched horn, the answer as to whether it is a beheimah or a chayah becomes more complicated: If the horn has all three features that the Gemara calls keruchos, haduros and charukos, it is a chayah; if not, it is a beheimah. There are different opinions among rishonim how to explain and define these three words, which is why I have not translated them, and depending on this answer is whether different varieties of antelope may qualify as beheimah or as chayah.

What difference does it make? There are a few mitzvos of the Torah that apply to a beheimah and not a chayah, and vice versa. Among these mitzvos is the prohibition against eating cheilev, the forbidden fat that protects the posterior-lying organs such as the stomachs and the kidneys, which applies only to a beheimah, but this fat is permitted on a chayah (Mishnah Chullin 89b). Another mitzvah is that of giving the zero'a, lechaya'im and keivah to a kohein, which applies only to a beheimah but not to a chayah (Yoreh Deah 61:17). A third mitzvah is kisuy hadam, requiring covering the blood of shechitah, which applies to a chayah (and to poultry) but not to a beheimah (Mishnah Chullin 83b). Whether the fat is permitted depends on whether a reindeer is a beheimah or a chayah. If it is a chayah, the cheilev is permitted. All deer are known to be chayah because of their antlers, and therefore "reindeer fat" is kosher, if the reindeer is properly shechted. On the other hand, when we have no mesorah whether a species of animal is a chayah or a beheimah, we treat it stringently both ways (Shach and Pri Megadim, Yoreh Deah 80:1). Therefore, unless we have a mesorah as to whether a specific species of antelope is a chayah or a beheimah, we would prohibit its cheilev and perform kisuy hadam, without a brocha.

And the antelope play At this point, we can discuss the fourth of our opening questions: "Is the American pronghorn a kosher species?" I suspect that most of our readers have no idea what a pronghorn is, let alone whether it is a kosher species. Most species of antelope in the world are in Africa. There are some in Eurasia; none are native to Australia or the Americas. However, the various fauna native to North America include a species called a pronghorn, which possesses characteristics similar to that of a deer or antelope but also is different from both deer and antelope. It is a ruminant that has split hooves. Thus, it meets the Torah's definition of a kosher species, although I admit that I have never tasted pronghorn chops. The horn of a pronghorn is unusual in that it branches into sharp front and rear sections that are reminiscent of prongs, hence its name. As I mentioned above, deer have multi-branched antlers, which are deciduous. Antelopes have unbranched horns that are permanent. The horn of a pronghorn falls off annually, which is like a deer and unlike any antelope species. On the other hand, the pronghorn has a gallbladder, which antelope have, but not deer. For these and other reasons, the scientific community considers a pronghorn to be neither a deer nor an antelope. Nevertheless, the Europeans who came to America called it an antelope, and Brewster M. Higley, who, in 1872, wrote the lyrics to the poem now called and sung as "Home on the Range," certainly meant the pronghorn when he referred to the playing of the "antelope."

Home, home At this point, let us examine our opening question: "Are there any 'take-home lessons' I can learn from split hooves?"

Although we can never explain why Hashem commanded us His mitzvos, we are permitted to explore what lessons we can derive from them, provided we realize that these are merely lessons and not a reason allowing us to decide when and whether we observe the mitzvah. It appears clear that the birds that the Torah ruled to be non-kosher are, for the most part, predators, whereas the kosher birds tend to be the

pursued. Can we possibly present a logical reason why the Torah restricted our mammal consumption to ruminants with split hooves? The following lesson might be why the Torah permitted only ruminants with split hooves. In general, animals that have split hooves flee from opposition. For example, Africa has dozens of species of antelope; when confronted by a lion, they run. On the other hand, a zebra attacked by a lion will fight, as will a honey badger. Perhaps this is a lesson to learn from a ruminant, to run as far and as fast as we can from any machlokes. Ma'aleh geirah animals spend a lot of time consuming their food. It takes a long time for their food to complete being digested. They learn patience. Thus, perhaps the lesson here is to be patient when we fulfill our basic needs (Shu't Beis Yitzchak, Even Ha'ezer, Tzela'os Habayis 5:8).

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Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Menachem Leibtag

PARSHAT BO - Pesach in Sedom

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

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

INTRODUCTION / REVIEW

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

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

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

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

BNEI YISRAEL AND THE FIRST NINE PLAGUES

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

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

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

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

THE TENTH PLAGUE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore, the Korban Pesach serves a double purpose:

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

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

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

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

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

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

PESACH IN SDOM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

YOM HASHEM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[also a popular song]

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

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

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

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

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FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. THE KORBAN TODAH AND KORBAN PESACH

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

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

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

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

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

PARSHAT BO

- KORBAN PESACH AND BRIT MILA -

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

INTRODUCTION

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

PSUKIM TOPIC

- 12:1-20** Hashem commands Moshe to tell Yisrael the LAWS of:
- a. Korban Pesach in Egypt (12:3-13)
 - b. Korban Pesach for future generations (12:14)
 - c. The laws of eating matza for seven days (12:15-20)
- 12:21-28** Moshe relays these laws to Bnei Yisrael, but only the LAWS of:
- a. Korban Pesach in Egypt (12:21-23)
 - b. Korban Pesach for future generations (12:24-28)
- 12:29-36** The STORY of the Tenth Plague and the Exodus [How the Egyptians rushed Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt.]
- 12:37-42** The STORY of traveling from Egypt, baking matza, and concluding remarks regarding the '430 years'...
- 12:43-50** Some more LAWS re: offering Korban Pesach [This section is titled -"zot chukat ha-Pesach".]
- 12:51** A short summary psuk
- 13:1-10** Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael more the LAWS
- 13:1-2 -God commands Moshe re: 'kedushat bechor'. [laws of the first born]
 - 13:3-10 Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael the laws of: eating matza for seven days ["chag ha'matzot"] not eating (or owning) chametz for 7 days
- 13:11-16** Moshe tells Yisrael the LAWS of the 'first born'.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THEMATIC ORDER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BRIT BEIN HA-BTARIM & CHUKAT HA-PESACH

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

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

With this in mind, let's take a look at the 'parshia' that follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ly"n, we will return to this topic in the shiurim that follow; Till then,

shabbat shalom,
menachem

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FOR FURTHER IYUN:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

B. The Four Hundred and Thirty Years of Bondage

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

thus does not follow chronological sequence.

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

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

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

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

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

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

reason - neglects to mention.

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

PARSHAT BO

TWO REASONS FOR MATZA - OR ONE?

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

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

So, which reason is correct?

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

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

PART ONE - REMEMBERING SLAVERY or REMEMBERING FREEDOM

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

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

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

to how they are to be kept in future generations:

* **The KORBAN PESACH - An Offering of Thanksgiving**

Definition:

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

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

Reason:

Because God 'passed over' the houses of Bnei Yisrael on that evening when He smote the Egyptians (see 12:26-27).

As we eat the korban, we are supposed to explain this reason to our children.

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

Definition:

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

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

Reason:

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

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

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

MATZA - A PRIMARY or SECONDARY MITZVA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE COMMON 'EXPERIENCE'

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

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

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

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

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

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

[See Shmot 12:34.]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PESACH MITZRAYIM - A FAMILY AFFAIR

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

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

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

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

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

" And they shall eat its meat on that night:

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

And this is how you should it eat it:

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

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

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

NO LEFTOVERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Will it be Chinese? Italian? French?

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

Let's explain.

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

Let's consider the menu.

LAMB FOR DINNER

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

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

Furthermore, when the Plagues began, Pharaoh first agreed

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

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

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

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

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

MATZA & MAROR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

of Nisan:

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

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

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PART II / FROM PESACH MITZRAIM TO PESACH DOROT

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BACK TO YEchezkel

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BACK TO PARSHAT HA'CHODESH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

shabbat shalom,
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

=====f ELIYAHU AT THE SEDER

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

BE-ETZEM HA-YOM HA-ZEH

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

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

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

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

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

It is not by chance that we find specifically this phrase "be-etzem ha-yom ha-zeh" in relation to God's fulfillment of brit bein ha-btarim. In Sefer Breishit, we find this same phrase in two instances, and each relating to the fulfillment of a 'brit' between God and man. The first instance was God's 'brit' with Noach:

"And I shall keep My covenant with you, and you will enter the ark, you and your sons and wife..." (see Breishit 6:18).

Then, when Noach actually enters the ark, the Torah uses this phrase when informing us how God kept His covenant:

"Be-etzem ha-yom ha-zeh - on that very day, Noach and his sons and wife... entered the ark..." (see 7:13).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RAMBAN'S APPROACH

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

BA'ZMAN HA'ZEH

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

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

Parshat Bo: Getting to Know You

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

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

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

OUR QUESTIONS THIS WEEK:

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

"I AM Y-HVH":

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

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

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

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

GOD OF THE AVOT:

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

- 1) The blessings Hashem gives to Avraham at the Berit Milah (covenant of circumcision) -- nation, land, and permanent relationship with Hashem -- are delivered by "E-I Shad-dai."
- 2) Yitzhak promises Ya'akov that the "blessing of Avraham" (see above) will be delivered to him by "E-I Shad-dai."
- 3) As promised, Hashem appears to Ya'akov, introduces Himself as "E-I Shad-dai," and blesses him with the blessing of Avraham (nation, land, relationship with Hashem).

4) Ya'akov, sending his sons to Egypt to buy food, prays that "E-I Shad-dai" place mercy in the heart of the Egyptian ruler (really Yosef) before whom his sons must appear.

5) Ya'akov reports to Yosef that "E-I Shad-dai" had blessed him (see #3). (Ya'akov also blesses Yosef with the name "Shad-dai," minus the "E-I.")

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

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

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

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

Y-HVH IS HERE:

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

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

SHEMOT 6:2-7

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

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

WHY ALL THOSE PLAGUES?

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

SHEMOT 5:1-2 --

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

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

SHEMOT 7:5 --

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

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

SHEMOT 6:7 --

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

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

This theme of "da'at Y-HVH" -- knowing Y-HVH (not just knowing Hashem, but knowing Him in His capacity as Y-HVH) is a major theme in the story of the Plagues; it appears not only in the pesukim above, which introduce the whole process of the Plagues and redemption, but also throughout the process:

BLOOD:

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

FROGS:

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

WILD BEASTS/GNATS (AROV):

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

HAIL:

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

HAIL (again):

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

LOCUSTS:

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

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

A MESSAGE WRIT LARGE:

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

The same message is implicit in Y-HVH's instructions to Moshe and Aharon, at various points during the plagues, to stretch forth the Mateh Elokim, the divine staff, over the water, the land, and the sky. The message: Y-HVH controls every medium, sky, earth and water. He is not a "local" deity; He is not the God of this river, or that mountain, or of fertility, or diseases, or animals, or weather, or the sun, or death. Y-HVH controls everything. This is a message to be absorbed by

both Paro, representative of human power and of the belief in a pantheon of gods who control various spheres of influence, and by Bnei Yisrael. Once Paro gets this message and truly believes it, he will "know Y-HVH" and do what he was told to do in the first place: release Bnei Yisrael.

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

MOSHE GROWS STRONGER:

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

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

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

A FEW TRICKS OF HIS OWN:

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

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

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

SHEMOT 10:9 --

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

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

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

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

Shabbat Shalom

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

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

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

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

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

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

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

Thus, for instance, the Midrash Halakhah states:

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

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

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

This Book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth; but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written on it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success. (1:8)

This command, given to Yehoshua, sets an important tone for this Sefer – one to which we will return in next week's essay. In the meantime, since we will first meet Yehoshua in next week's Parashah, let's take this opportunity to analyze – if only briefly – this first post-Toraic Navi and hero of the conquest of Eretz K'na'an.

II. ENTER YEHOShUA

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

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

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

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

III. YEHOShUA 24: TWO QUESTIONS

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

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

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

the Targum)?

In any case, this text needs clarification.

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

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

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

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

IV. BACK TO YOSEPH AND HIS DREAMS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

includes the subjugation of his brothers?

V. RAV SAMET'S EXPLANATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A: THE FIRST DREAM

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

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

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

In the first scene, the brothers are all working together – representing a common economic venture. This is most plainly understood as representing the period of "the present" – when the entire family is still working as one cohesive financial unit.

In the second scene, only Yoseph is present – the brothers are "off-stage". In other words, there will be a period in the future when Yoseph will comprise an independent financial unit, separate from that of the family. This sheaf rises and stands upright – implying consistent and stable financial success in this new, independent position.

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

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

Again, after the burial of Ya'akov:

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

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

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

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

B: THE SECOND DREAM

Beside the shift from the agricultural to the cosmic arena (and the apparent inclusion of father and mother), the second dream is distinct from the first in that Yoseph is consistently represented as himself. The stars bow – not to Yoseph's star, rather to Yoseph himself.

If we are to explain these dreams with the same rigorous attention to detail as Yoseph employs in interpreting dreams in Egypt, we must take this nuance into account. In addition to this, we must also address the overall question of what new message this dream is conveying; otherwise, what need is there for a second dream?

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

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

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

Once we take this symbolism into account, the meaning of the second dream – and its significance independent of the first dream – becomes apparent. Again utilizing our interpretation that in dream speak prostration implies a dependence, the second dream means that the success of the family, as the continuation of the Avrahamic tribe and tradition, will be wholly dependent (at least at one point in time) on Yoseph.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

will surely bring them back home.

VI. THE SUN AND THE MOON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VII. BACK TO YESHOSHUA

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

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

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

We now understand why Yoseph's bones were kept with Yehoshua's army until his storied career came to a close. Yehoshua's task was Yoseph's – that which the ancestor had begun, the descendant had to complete.

We also understand why there is a veiled reference to the possible inclusion of Sefer Yehoshua in the canon of Torah at the end of the Sefer:

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

VIII. POSTSCRIPT: SEFER HAYASHAR

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

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

What is the Sefer haYashar? – Said R. Hiyya b. Abba in the name of R. Yohanan: It is the book of Avraham, Yitzhak and Ya'akov, who are designated as Yesharim (righteous), (BT Avodah Zarah 25a)

Although the Gemara goes on to find a faint allusion to the miracle of the sun and moon standing still, I'd like to suggest that if Sefer haYashar is indeed Sefer B'resheet, the text is quite clear in asking: Is it not written in Sefer haYashar?

Indeed, it is clearly written:

Behold, I have again dreamed a dream; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Not Quite Kindled

"...and you shall not break a bone of it (the Pesach offering)." (12:46)

Living in Israel makes it somewhat difficult to buy and read English language books. Even before Corona, buying a real paper book and shipping it out from the States or the UK could take a month. Kindle promised to change all that. Amazon Kindle is a series of e-readers, devices that enable users to browse, buy, download and read electronic books, newspapers, magazines and other digital media via wireless networking to the Kindle Store — pretty much instantly.

I bought a Kindle over a year ago and I must have read twenty or more books on it. It is very convenient and certainly instant, but I realized after a while that there is something lacking in my reading experience. Having a real book, picking it up, seeing it age and spilling coffee on its pages — create a relationship with the reading matter of the book itself. The way we interface with the objects in our lives has an impact on our intellectual experience. The form influences the content.

When I cast my eyes over my bookshelves, I sense a visceral relationship with the physical books there,

and I feel in some way more connected to the content of their pages.

What remains from the Kindle experience of reading is somehow more abstract, more distant, and cold. It is not just the lack of a good cover. I do not have the same connection to the material of the book because I did not have the physical experience of touching it, opening it, cracking its cover and remembering it whenever I see its spine of my shelf.

The *Sefer HaChinuch* (Mitzvah 16) asks a famous question about why we need so many mitzvahs to remember the Exodus. One entire volume out of four of the *Shulchan Aruch — Orach HaChaim* — is devoted to the minutiae of every aspect of the observance of Pesach. Says the *Chinuch*, surely to remember our leaving Egypt all we should need is to eat a bit of matzah each year. He then outlines a key principle of human psychology: Feelings are created by actions. Our actions influence the way we feel about something. A mitzvah is a physical embodiment of a spiritual reality. The experience of the spiritual reality can only be "kindled" by physical experience.

Tu B'Shevat

The Torah likens man to a tree: "For man is a tree of the field" (Deut. 20:19). Man is like a tree in that his head is rooted in the Heavens, nestled in the spiritual soils of the Eternal, and nourished by his connection to his Creator. His arms and legs are like branches, through which he accrues good deeds, and upon which the "fruits" of his labor are laden.

Therefore, on Tu B'Shevat one should revitalize his connection to G-d, and rejuvenate his commitment to keep the mitzvahs (Midrash Shemuel on Pirkei Avot 3:24).

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Bo: *Pesachim* 65-71

The Torah Is For You

Rav Elazar said, “Everyone agrees that Shavuot requires also (the element of) ‘for you.’ Why? Because it is the day on which the Torah was given.”

A *beraita* is quoted on our *daf* that teaches a dispute between two great Torah Sages regarding how to celebrate Yom Tov. Rabbi Eliezer says that it should be celebrated and dedicated in one of two ways: Either entirely “for Hashem” in prayer and study, or “for you” with food and drink. Rabbi Yehoshua disagrees and says that a holiday should be commemorated “half for you and half for Hashem.”

Rabbi Yochanan explains that both of these opinions are learned from the same words in the Torah. In Devarim 16:8 the verse refers to the Yom Tov as being “for Hashem,” and in Bamidbar 29:12 the verse refers to the Yom Tov as being “for you.” Rabbi Eliezer explains these verses as offering a choice: A person may choose the day to be all “for Hashem” or all “for you.” Rabbi Yehoshua, on the other hand, explains that the Torah means to “divide” the day to be “half for Hashem” and “half for you.”

The *gemara*, however, cites three Sages who teach exceptions — i.e. days when even Rabbi Eliezer agrees that there is a need of “for you.” There is no choice on these days of “all for Hashem.” Rabbah said that on Shabbat there is also a need “for you” since the verse says “and you will call Shabbat a delight” in Sefer Yeshayahu 58:13. Rav Yosef said that everyone agrees that on Purim there is also a need “for you” since the verse in Megillat Esther 9:18 calls it “a day of feasting and joy.”

The *Amora* Rav Elazar said that Shavuot is also an exception. On that day, he teaches, everyone agrees that there is also a need “for you.” Why? “Since it is the day on which the Torah was given.”

At first glance, this reason might not seem all that appropriate and cogent. The Torah is not just a physical book or two stone Tablets of the Covenant. In its essence it is the way that Hashem speaks to us and teaches us how to be close to Him. It is an expression of the Will of Hashem, as it were. So, how does our receiving this seemingly purely spiritual gift of Torah lead to the need for us to celebrate the day on which it was given with food and drink? If anything, it would seem more logical to spend the entire day immersed in Torah study (and not just all night, as has been the widespread custom in many Jewish communities throughout history, and nowadays as well)!

One answer is found in the words of Rashi on our *daf*. He explains that our celebrating the day of Shavuot, the day on which the Torah was given, with food and drink, shows that our being given the Torah is “pleasant and acceptable” to us — and is not at all a burdensome list of tasks to do and activities to refrain from doing. Just the opposite! It is our way to connect to Hashem and merit eternal life, and with our physical celebration we show our great happiness in having been given it.

Another explanation that our commentaries offer for the need to experience physical pleasure on Shavuot is one that is based on the *gemara* in Masechet Shabbat 88b. Chazal relate that when Moshe Rabbeinu went up Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, the angels challenged him, saying, “What is Man that You should remember him, and the son of Man that You should be mindful of him?” (Tehillim 8:5) They asked why this mortal was intruding into their “personal space” and their spiritual domain.

Moshe Rabbeinu stated, “I have come to take the Torah for the Jewish People.” The angels then turned to Hashem, pleading, “Please leave the Torah with us and we will honor it and cherish it.” Hashem commanded Moshe Rabbeinu to “go ahead and answer them.” Moshe Rabbeinu said, “My dear angels, just look at what the Torah commands: ‘I am the Hashem, your G-d, Who has taken you out from the land of Egypt.’ Also it commands, ‘Honor your parents.’ Do you have a father and a mother? Were you enslaved in Egypt? Do you have a *yetzer hara*, an ‘evil inclination’ that tempts you to disobey the word of Hashem?”

Moshe Rabbeinu presented the winning argument, the reason why the Torah should not be given to the angels in Heaven but rather to Mankind. This reason clearly shows that the Torah is meant for physical beings with an immortal soul – to guide the Jewish People and Mankind in the “way of Hashem.” The Torah teaches physical beings how to tackle the challenges of our physical world in a way that leads to closeness to Hashem and eternal life.

Our very physicality is the reason that we, and not the angels, were deemed suitable and worthy to receive the Torah – and we should therefore celebrate the giving of the Torah with the physical pleasure of food and drink for the sake of Heaven.

• *Pesachim 68a*

**Ohr Somayach announces a new booklet
on
The Morning Blessings
by Rabbi Reuven Laufer
www.ohr.edu/morning-blessings**

Q & A

BO

Questions

1. What was Pharaoh's excuse for not releasing the Jewish children?
2. How did the locusts in the time of Moshe differ from those in the days of Yoel?
3. How did the first three days of darkness differ from the last three?
4. When the Jews asked the Egyptians for gold and silver vessels, the Egyptians were unable to deny ownership of such vessels. Why?
5. *Makat bechorot* took place at *exactly* midnight. Why did Moshe say it would take place at *approximately* midnight.
6. Why did the first-born of the animals die?
7. How did Moshe show respect to Pharaoh when he warned him about the aftermath of the plague of the first-born?
8. G-d told Moshe "so that My wonders will be multiplied" (11:9). What three wonders was G-d referring to?
9. Why did G-d command the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh to Aharon, and not only to Moshe?
10. Up to what age is an animal fit to be a Pesach offering?
11. Prior to the Exodus from Egypt, what *mitzvot* involving blood did G-d give to the Jewish People?
12. Rashi gives two explanations of the word "*Pasachti*." What are they?
13. Why were the Jews told to stay indoors during *makat bechorot*?
14. What was Pharaoh screaming as he ran from door to door the night of *makat bechorot*?
15. Why did Pharaoh ask Moshe to bless him?
16. Why did the Jewish People carry their matzah on their shoulders rather than have their animals carry it?
17. Who comprised the *erev rav* (mixed multitude)?
18. What three historical events occurred on the 15th of Nissan, prior to the event of the Exodus from Egypt?
19. What is the source of the "milk and honey" found in *Eretz Yisrael*?
20. The only non-kosher animal whose first-born is redeemed is the donkey. What did the donkeys do to "earn" this distinction?

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

Answers

1. 10:11 - Since children don't bring sacrifices there was no need for them to go.
2. 10:14 - The plague brought by Moshe was composed of one species of locust, whereas the plague in the days of Yoel was composed of many species.
3. 10:22 - During the first three days the Egyptians couldn't see. During the last three days they couldn't move.
4. 10:22 - During the plague of darkness the Jews could see and they searched for and found the Egyptians' vessels.
5. 11:4 - If Moshe said the plague would begin exactly at midnight, the Egyptians might miscalculate and accuse Moshe of being a fake.
6. 11:5 - Because the Egyptians worshiped them as gods, and when G-d punishes a nation He also punishes its gods.
7. 11:8 - Moshe warned that "All these servants of yours will come down to me" when, in fact, it was Pharaoh himself who actually came running to Moshe.
8. 11:9 - The plague of the first-born, the splitting of the sea, the drowning of the Egyptian soldiers.
9. 12:1 - As reward for his efforts in bringing about the plagues.
10. 12:5 - One year.
11. 12:6 - Circumcision and *Korban Pesach*.
12. 12:13 - "I had mercy" and "I skipped."
13. 12:22 - Since it was a night of destruction, it was not safe for anyone to leave the protected premises of his home.
14. 12:31 - "Where does Moshe live? Where does Aharon live?"
15. 12:32 - So he wouldn't die, for he himself was a first-born.
16. 12:34 - Because the commandment of matzah was dear to them.
17. 12:38 - People from other nations who became converts.
18. 12:41 - The angels came to promise that Sarah would have a son, Yitzchak was born, and the exile of the "covenant between the parts" was decreed.
19. 13:5 - Goat milk, date and fig honey.
20. 13:13 - They helped the Jews by carrying silver and gold out of Egypt.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Bo: Come To Pharaoh

In the lead-up to the Plague of Locust, G-d tells Moses: *bo el parah*, which means “come to Pharaoh” (Ex. 10:1). Many commentators have been bothered by this somewhat bizarre verbiage, as one would have otherwise expected G-d to tell Moses *lech el parah*, which means “go to Pharaoh” – the exact phraseology He used when telling Moses to warn Pharaoh about the Plague of Blood (Ex. 7:15). In exploring this issue we will study the difference between *biah* (“coming”) and *halicha* (“going”), as well as *attah*.

The *Baal HaTurim* (to Ex. 10:1) writes that the word *bo* has a *gematria* of three (as BET = 2 and ALEPH = 1), which alludes to the fact that right before the Plague of Locusts there were three more plagues left until the Jews would exit Egypt. However, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Kasher (1895-1983) notes that this cannot be why the Torah uses the word *bo* instead of *lech*, because G-d uses the word *bo* when telling Moses to meet Pharaoh two other times (see Ex. 7:26, 9:1) and at neither of those points were there three plagues remaining.

Alternatively, the *Baal HaTurim* and other Tosafists (see *Hadar Zekanim* to Ex. 9:1 and *Moshav Zekanim* to Ex. 10:1) note that when G-d tells Moses to meet Pharaoh in the latter's house, then He says *bo el parah*, but when He tells Moses to meet Pharaoh at the river, He says *lech el parah*. This seems to suggest that the difference between *lech* and *bo* is that *bo* somehow implies “entering” a building, while *lech* simply implies “going” somewhere, but not necessarily *inside* a building (see also Ramban to Ex. 8:15). Interestingly, this same idea seems to be echoed by the *Zohar* (*Bo* 34a), which explains that the wording *bo el parah* as opposed to *lech el parah* teaches us that G-d brought Moses into some sort of Heavenly Inner Chamber that was somehow associated with the sea-creature that characterized Egypt. This mystical explanation also

seems to presume that *bo* implies “entering,” while *lech* does not.

Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk (1717-1786) offers two more explanations for the difference between the wording *bo el parah* and *lech el parah*: First, he explains that *bo* implies *repeatedly* “coming” to Pharaoh, while *lech* implies a one-time occurrence. Second, he explains that *bo* implies willingly “coming” to Pharaoh, while *lech* simply implies the physical act of “going,” which can be done even if one has to go against his own will.

As an English speaker, I am tempted to say that the difference between *bo* and *lech* reflects the difference between *come* and *go*. Meaning, *bo* primarily focuses on one's destination (“come to”), while *lech* focuses on one's place of departure (“go from”). Alternatively, we could also argue that *biah* denotes a change in location from one place to another, no matter how it may have occurred. In contrast, *halichah* specifically denotes the act of “walking.” We would have to consult a Biblical concordance to see how well any of these theories truly pan out.

Another way of dealing with these words is by tracing them to their core roots and comparing them to other words derived from those roots to hone in on more precise meanings.

The Hebrew verb “to bring” (*l'havi*) is actually a conjugation of the word *bo*, as “bringing” something from one place to another essentially causes that item to “go” from one place to another. Accordingly, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) suggests reading *bo el parah* as “bring [the following message] to Pharaoh...” In this vein, Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) actually explains that the word *navi* (“prophet”) is derived from the same two-letter root from which *bo* comes (BET-ALEPH), because prophets “bring” G-d's words to their listeners.

Rabbi Pappenheim further explains that the type of “coming” denoted by the word *biah* can imply both reaching one’s destination (“I came home”) and the journey towards one’s destination (“I am coming home”). This is why Rachel was said to be “coming” while she was still on her way to the well where Jacob stood (Gen. 29:9), or why Joseph was said to be “coming” while his brothers spotted him approaching from afar (Gen. 37:19).

Rabbi Pappenheim and Rabbi Aharon Marcus (1843-1916) trace the root of *bo/biah* to the monoliteral root BET, which means “inside.” This also fits with the function of the letter BET as a non-root prefix. They explain that when one “comes” to a certain place, he goes “inside” that realm and ceases to continuing “coming” – because he has already arrived (even though *bo/biah* can be used while one is still on the way). This can perhaps give us a better understanding of the Tosafists’ and Zohar’s assumption that *bo* implies “going inside” someplace.

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) similarly connects the word *bo* with the phonetically similar *po* (invoking the interchangeability of BET and PEH), explaining that *bo* focuses on one’s final destination, just as *po* (“here”) focuses on one’s present location. He even adds that *peh* (“mouth”) also relates to this set of words, because the mouth is food’s final terminus into which it is destined to go.

Another word in the Bible for “coming” is *attah* (e.g., Deut. 33:2, Isa. 21:12). This word appears both in Hebrew and Aramaic passages in the Bible. As Rabbi Pappenheim puts it, the word *attah* implies a “coming” with more finality. Meaning, although *attah* focuses on one’s destination, like *bo* does, *attah* exclusively refers to arriving at one’s destination and never to the journey of getting there. (The Malbim in *Yair Ohr* cites Rabbi Pappenheim’s explanation of the difference between *bo* and *attah*.)

In sharpening this last point, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that the word *attah* is derived from the monoliteral root TAV. That letter represents the notion of “bordering” because it bookends the

Hebrew alphabet as the last letter. A border is a sort of invisible line that “connects” and “links” two bodies, but also “distinguishes” between them.

Thus, words derived from this one-letter root are related to “bordering” and “connecting.” For example, the word *et* functions as a grammatical sign that “connects” a verb to the object of that action, and sometimes bears the meaning of “with.” Similarly, an *oht* (“sign”) forms a semiotic “connection” between the sign and the signified. In the same way, the word *attah* can be understood in the sense of “connecting” the traveler with his destination – it means that he has finally come to his destination, as opposed to the term *biah*, which could represent him still making the journey *en route* to “coming” there. (Perhaps the finality and closure of *attah* is hinted to in the fact that its root comprises the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, while *biah* comprises the first and second letters.)

Interestingly, the name of the letter TAV also relates to the word *tav* (“sign” or “mark”). This word also derives from the monoliteral root TAV because a *tav* serves as a type of “border” that distinguishes something from the rest. In fact, the prophet Yechezkel relates that he saw G-d command an angel to make a mark (*tav*) on the foreheads of the righteous men who bemoaned the abominations that took place in Jerusalem, and the Talmud (Shabbat 55a) explains that this refers to writing a letter TAV on their forehead. Similarly, the Bible (Gen. 4:15) reports that G-d promised to protect Cain in exile by giving him an *oht* (“sign” or “letter”), which some explain refers to the letter TAV. Thus, the letter TAV not only serves a semantic role but also assumes a semiotic role as a symbol or sign.

What is perhaps even more fascinating is that in the original *Ivri* Script of the Hebrew Language, the letter TAV was written in the same shape as the English letter *x* (and the Greek letter *chi*). Thus, just as “X marks the spot” and stands for a word or number that is missing (e.g., in algebra, *x* commonly appears as the unknown variable), so too does the letter TAV symbolizes something as “distinguished.”

For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at ricklein@ohr.edu

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

A BLESSING ON YOUR HEAD (PART 1)

“May Hashem bless you and guard you. May Hashem illuminate His Countenance upon you and be gracious to you. May Hashem turn His countenance to you and establish peace for you.” (*Numbers 6:24-26*)

These three verses are the words with which G-d commanded Aharon and his descendants to bless the Jewish nation (see *Numbers 6:23*). Seeing as they are the verses that G-d uses as His means to bestow His favor upon us, it stands to reason that they contain everything we could possibly want. These are also the verses that many Jewish parents recite when blessing their children on Friday nights. Undoubtedly, every parent wants only the very best for their child.

Let us begin with the first verse, “May Hashem bless you and guard you.” Rashi, the foremost commentator on the Torah, explains that this is a blessing for material success. All wealth comes from only one source – G-d.

There is a delightful story that is told about a destitute Jew living in Jerusalem. He and his wife were extremely worried because Pesach was almost upon them and they still didn’t have money for the most basic necessities. Dejected, he went to the Western Wall to pray. His heart opened and he cried out to G-d in complete submission. A wealthy American standing nearby noticed how this impoverished Jew was praying with such heartfelt sincerity and trustingly reaching out to G-d for help. When the person finished his prayer, the American introduced himself, telling him that he had never been so touched before. And that he wanted to help him. On the spot, he wrote a check that would cover

all Pesach expenses – with plenty left over to keep him going for several months afterwards. When the poor Jew told his friends what had transpired, about his most unanticipated salvation, they asked him whether he had taken the rich American’s address for future reference. The needy Jew looked at them in astonishment and said, “Why do I need *his* address? I didn’t ask *him* for money. I asked G-d, and G-d gave me whatever I needed through this person. When I am in need again, I know exactly which address to go to!”

Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, one of the greatest Torah leaders in Europe in the nineteenth century and head of the legendary Velozhin Yeshiva, writes that the language of the blessing is deliberately left undefined because each person has their own set of needs and desires. Accordingly, the blessing uses a “generic” form: “May Hashem bless you.” And because the blessing refers to material matters, it ends with the request that G-d guard us. As Rashi points out, it is clear that the first blessing is referring to material wealth and prosperity, because physical affluence must be safeguarded vigilantly so that it is not stolen or lost. Not so in the case of spiritual wealth. Spiritual wealth requires no physical protection. In the timeless words of the Midrash, “May G-d bless you with riches and children. And may He protect you from thieves”.

To be continued...

LETTER AND SPIRIT

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

Bo

Like a Lamb

If we were to point to one act as the moment of the birth of our nation, it would be the *korban Pesach* undertaken by our ancestors more than three thousand years ago. The words conveying this instruction are, in Rav Hirsch's words, the Magna Charta of Israel, setting forth the foundational elements of Jewish nationhood.

The way in which the people were counted for this service (highlighting the prominence of the family unit), the permission of one individual to act on behalf of his brethren (declaring that all are equal before G-d, so that one is authorized to act for another), the permission for self-determination in the formation of household units (emphasizing the right to independence and free choice), and the way in which communal sharing was instructed (to those who perceive their own abundance to seek out their neighbor) — are all facets of this foundation stone in the edifice of Jewish nationhood.

The *korban Pesach* was the foundation of not only the communal and social structure, but also of the individual's relationship to G-d. At this moment of emergence into a new life, each individual, each household, each family and the entire community as a whole are to see themselves as lambs — they are to accept G-d as their Shepherd and place themselves under His guidance and direction. This concept — that G-d is our Shepherd and we are His flock — became the most comprehensive and lasting view of our relationship to G-d. (*Psalms* 100:3; 80:2, 79:13)

Indeed, our daily Temple service of one sheep in the morning and one sheep in the afternoon would symbolize this relationship — the way in which Israel was to present and dedicate itself to G-d at the start and end of each new day. This was but a continuation of the first instance of Israel, the lamb, submitting to the leadership of the Shepherd.

This Jewish lamb, however, is not a meek, sad creature, that allows itself to be led to the slaughter without offering resistance. The Paschal lamb was “complete, male, in its first year” — whole in body, with manly vigor and fresh with eternal youth. Complete and independent, but vis-à-vis G-d, forever young and following.

Both sheep and goats were fit for the *korban Pesach*. A goat characteristically shows greater independence toward the outside than does the sheep. Thus the word for goat — *ez* — denotes stiff resistance. While the goat assumes an outward posture of defiance, showing his horns to every stranger, to the shepherd he is obedient and pliant, as the sheep.

- Sources: *Commentary Shemot* 12:3-6

PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe that He is hardening Pharaoh's heart so that through miraculous plagues the world will know for all time that He is the one true G-d. Pharaoh is warned about the plague of locusts and is told how severe it will be. Pharaoh agrees to release only the men, but Moshe insists that everyone must go. During the plague, Pharaoh calls for Moshe and Aharon to remove the locusts, and he admits he has sinned.

G-d ends the plague but hardens Pharaoh's heart, and again Pharaoh fails to free the Jews. The country, except for the Jewish People, is then engulfed in a palpable darkness. Pharaoh calls for Moshe and tells him to take all the Jews out of Egypt, but to leave their flocks behind. Moshe tells him that not only will they take their own flocks, but Pharaoh must add his own too.

Moshe tells Pharaoh that G-d is going to bring one more plague, the death of the firstborn, and then the

Jews will leave Egypt. G-d again hardens Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh warns Moshe that if he sees him again, Moshe will be put to death. G-d tells Moshe that the month of Nissan will be the chief month.

The Jewish People are commanded to take a sheep on the 10th of the month and guard it until the 14th. The sheep is then to be slaughtered as a Pesach offering, its blood put on their doorposts, and its roasted meat eaten. The blood on the doorpost will be a sign that their homes will be passed-over when G-d strikes the firstborn of Egypt. The Jewish People are told to memorialize this day as the Exodus from Egypt by never eating chametz on Pesach.

Moshe relays G-d's commands, and the Jewish People fulfill them flawlessly. G-d sends the final plague, killing the firstborn, and Pharaoh sends the Jews out of Egypt. G-d tells Moshe and Aharon the laws concerning the Pesach sacrifice, *pidyon haben* (redemption of the firstborn son) and *tefillin*.

- *Pesachim 68a*

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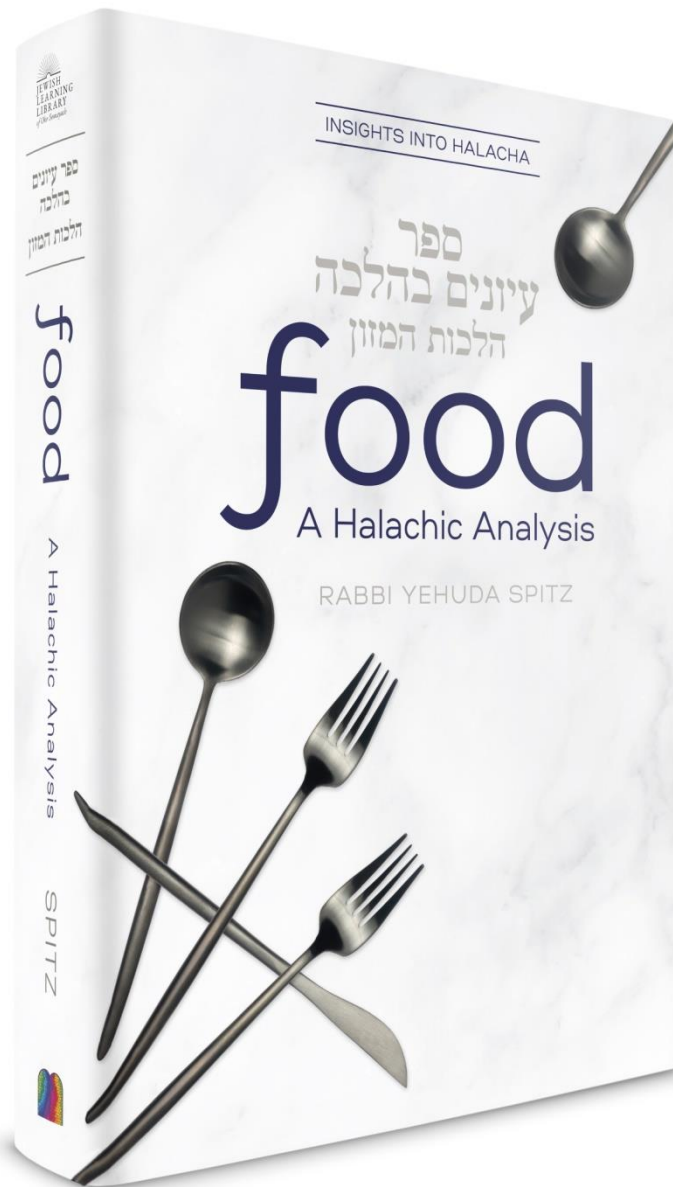
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