

Potomac Torah Study Center

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Shabbat HaGadol 5783 (10 Nisan)

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 more than 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his 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 archives.

NOTE: This issue covers Tzav and Pesach (two weeks). With only one day after Pesach before Shemini, I probably shall not be able to post another issue until Tazria/Metzora (April 21).

During a non-leap year, we normally read Tzav very close to the beginning of Pesach. Rivky Stern, who works with Rabbi David Fohrman, observes that one concept ties Tzav and Pesach. Vayikra explores the various reasons why a person would bring a korban. Tzav discusses the same korbanot – but from the perspective of how a Kohen performs the actual sacrifice for each type of Korban. (Only a Kohen could approach the alter and perform an actual sacrifice.) When we read the instructions that Hashem tells Moshe to present to Aharon and his sons (the original Kohanim), and earlier instructions on korbanot (Shemot ch. 23 and Vayikra, ch. 2), we see the same instruction. Every korban that includes grain must be matzah, not bread. The requirement not to eat, own, or derive any benefit from chametz during Pesach is consistent with a repeated warning that grains brought to the alter with a korban must be matzah, not chametz.

What is wrong with chametz that it has no place with a korban? As Rabbi Fohrman's scholars observe, matzah involves using grain the way it comes from God – as grain, cooked with oil and spices, with no real processing. Bread, in contrast, involves considerable human input. Yeast requires cultivation. The baker must then crush grain to make it flour, add the yeast, let it rise, fold together the flour, water, and yeast combination, let the mixture rise again, and then finally bake it in an oven. While the grain is what God gives the farmer from earth, seeds, water, and sunlight, bread involves many extra steps from humans. (Note: The Egyptians were the first to discover how to use yeast and ovens to turn grain into bread – another reason for Jews not to benefit from chametz with a korban or during Pesach. Earlier civilizations presumably had bread that was more like matzah.) Apparently there is a spiritual danger from chametz – a person offering chametz as a korban could think that because of all his human inputs, he is primarily responsible for making the bread rather than seeing it as a gift from Hashem. To be a proper korban, the Torah insists that the offering consist of items that are gifts that we receive from God, not items with a long series of human steps.

We see a similar pattern with the Korban Pesach. A family would acquire a lamb without blemish on 10 Nisan (Shabbat this year), guard it in a bedroom for a few days, slaughter it on 14 Nisan, and roast it whole on a fire with spices but no water. The Korban Pesach would consist of an unblemished domestic animal cooked as it was in nature, a ritual with blood, and smoke going up to heaven. The family would serve its portion of the meat with matzah and bitter herbs (for flavoring). The korban Pesach therefore is similar to a shelamim (Vayikra 3).

The korban ritual was a way that humans felt that they could come close to Hashem – not only for Jews but for humans from Kayen and Hevel to Noach, our patriarchs, and members of other ancient religions for thousands of years. When we

come to a Seder, we follow a model that is both traditional and innovative. As Rabbi Marc Angel observes, a Seder is traditional in following the order sent out two thousand years ago and taking time to include all the laws of the Seder. It is innovative when we focus on the larger meanings of the Hagaddah, including God's providence, the evil of oppression, and the importance of human freedom. Rabbi Mordechai Rhine observes that we take the matzah that Egyptians used to oppress us and use it now to help and feed others, including any needy people whom we can invite to our Seders.

Seder traditions vary widely. Rabbi Haim Ovadia observes that most sources that discuss the laws of the Seder are more strict now than they were before the 15th Century. For example, what should a family do when there are children old enough to appreciate a Seder but too young to stay awake until Havdalah time in April (with Daylight Savings time)? Rabbi Ovadia (Sephardic) discusses various approaches that could be acceptable. One should consult with his Rabbi before adopting any changes to normal practice. I suspect that a large percentage of Rabbis would have suggestions that would help cope with stringent rules that might otherwise keep some family members from attending or making it through a Seder.

This Shabbat is 10 Nisan, which will be the 30th yahrzeit of my beloved older sister, Maureen Tyson, a"h. Maureen was perhaps my closest friend and mentor when I was growing up. When Hannah and I married and started a family, Maureen gave us loving and extremely useful advice on coping with a hyperactive son. We have missed her every day since her passing.

Seders with my beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, taught me a tremendous amount that I missed growing up in an assimilated home. Rabbi Cahan introduced me to many aspects of Judaism that I did not learn at a young age, and he encouraged Hannah and me to learn more both by pointing us to sources and by encouraging us to send our sons to Orthodox day schools. He was happy when we moved on to Orthodox shuls. He was thrilled that his congregants moved to many different shuls, from Orthodox to Reform, and that many of them studied to become Rabbis and leaders of Jewish organizations. May we find nachus from our children and grandchildren as they also pursue paths in the Jewish community.

Shabbat Shalom. Chag Pesach kasher v'Samaich.

Hannah and 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 Shlema for Yoram Ben Shoshana, Leib Dovid ben Etil, Asher Shlomo ben Ettie, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Sharon bat Sarah, Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, who need our prayers. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah & Alan

Insights on Parts of the Seder: Not Everything That Counts Can Be Counted

By Rabbi Yehudah Prero © 2006

After we have completed the step of Hallel, singing the praises of Hashem, at the Seder, we move on to the final step – Nirtza. We begin Nirtza, which is composed of various songs, with a declaration and a request:

The order of the Pesach service is now completed in accordance with its laws, with all its ordinances and statutes. Just as we were worthy to conduct this order, so too may we merit performing it in the future. Pure One, who dwells up high, raise up the congregation that is without number. Soon, lead the offshoots of that which you have planted, redeemed, to Zion, with rejoicing.

In this passage from the Hagada liturgy, we see that the nation of Israel is referred to as a “congregation . . . without number.” In different places in the Torah, we find metaphorical references to the size of the nation of Israel, such as “like the stars of the heavens,” or “the sands of the sea shores.” Here, in the conclusion of the Seder evening, a similar expression is used in the liturgy; “the congregation that is without number.”

The Divrei Chaim (Shekalim 48a) explains that there are different ways of being “without number.” In Hoshea (2:1), the verse states “And the number of the people of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor counted.” The Talmud (Yoma 22b) highlights an inconsistency in this verse: The verse starts “the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea.” (The sands of the sea are a finite quantity. They can be counted, although doing such may take a very long time.) and it is also written: ‘Which cannot be numbered? (which implies that the number is infinite).” This is no contradiction: Here, it speaks of the time when Israel fulfills the will of Hashem, there of the time when they do not fulfill His will.”

The Divrei Chaim is troubled by the answer given by the Talmud. One would think that when the nation of Israel is listening to the word of G-d, they are, at that time, in the status of “cannot be counted.” Because of the nation’s adherence to the word of G-d, they merit being of great number. Conversely, when the nation of Israel does not listen to G-d, one would think the nation would not be bestowed the blessing of “not being numbered,” but rather be in the “mere” status of “being as the sand of the sea.” However, the Talmud says just the opposite!

In truth, counting can occur in different scenarios. A person can have a pile of money before him, and the individual counts the entire sum, so that he arrives at a total of the measure of currency before him. On the other hand, a person can have a variety of items of value before him. He can have gold, silver, rubies, diamonds and other precious items. He can then count how many different items he has before him. When the nation of Israel is listening to the word of G-d, it is like the counting of money, the counting of grains of sand. The entire nation is united, of like heart and soul. Counting such individuals is like counting sand. The verse does not mean to imply that this number is necessarily finite. Rather, it means that a single commodity is being counted. However, when the nation does not listen to Hashem, it is like counting numerous commodities. There is no unity or togetherness, and the count is made difficult because of the large amount of different items needing counting. This is a group that “cannot be counted.”

At the end of the Seder, we state how we have all just completed the Seder. All in the nation of Israel have gone through the same process of recalling the exodus from Egypt. We have all eaten our matzo and maror. We have had our four cups of wine. At this moment in time, we are a congregation, a group – but not just any congregation. We are a “congregation that is without number!” We are a congregation that, just like grains of sand on a beach, is together, of like heart and soul, united in our devotion to G-d. We ask G-d that He should lead this congregation without number out of exile, and into the rebuilt Jerusalem.

After the Seder has concluded, it is up to us to make sure that we remain a “congregation, without number,” so that we can indeed see the end of our exile arrive speedily.

<https://torah.org/learning/yomtov-pesach-vol12no02/>

Tzav – Two Perspectives on Korbanot

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2011, 2023

The beginning of parashat Tzav seems like almost an exact repeat of the beginning of parashat Vayikra. Each parasha deals with the details and rituals of the different korbanot, and Tzav winds up seeming like merely a repeat of Vayikra. However, closer examination shows that while they deal with the same topics, they approach them from different perspectives. Vayikra begins:

“Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: If a person from among you offers a sacrifice to God...” (Vayikra 1:2)

Tzav, however, begins as follows:

“Command Aharon and his sons saying: This is the law of the olah...” (Vayikra 6:2)

While Vayikra is addressed to the Children of Israel, to the person who is bringing the sacrifice, Tzav is addressed to the children of Aharon, the Kohanim who are offering the sacrifices. This different perspective explains why the two parshiyot are not redundant. There are, by necessity, different directions to those who bring the sacrifices than to those who offer the sacrifices. Thus, each audience is given their own set of directions.

When we look closely at the two parshiyot in an attempt to identify these differences, a number of things stand out. First, the order is different. In Vayikra the order of sacrifices is: olah (burnt offering), mincha (flour offering), shlamim (peace offering), chatat (sin offering), asham (guilt offering). In Tzav, in contrast, the order is: olah, mincha, chatat, asham, shlamim. The explanation for the different orders is now obvious: what is most significant depends on whom is being addressed.

In Vayikra we are dealing with the owner's perspective, the first list. From this perspective, what matters most is what korban they are most likely to give and most interested in giving. Now, the owner's primary motivation for bringing a korban is, as we discussed last week, to give something meaningful to God. This is first an olah, a freely offered animal, and then a mincha, a freely offered flour offering. The olah was more significant, because animals cost more, owners probably had a more personal connection to their animals than to their grain, and perhaps most significantly because animals could serve to represent the very life of the owner, whereas a mincha only represented their food or their property. Also, an olah was fully consumed on the altar, that is – symbolically given to God – whereas most of the mincha was eaten by the Kohanim, representatives of God, certainly, but still only representatives.

Next on the Vayikra list is the shlamim (peace or wellbeing offering). This was also freely given, but less of a full gift to God. The shlamim was shared between God and the owners. The blood was put on the altar and the entrails were burnt, but the meat was eaten by the owners (with a portion given to the Kohanim). While everyone gets something, it is lower on the list, either reflecting the owners' hierarchy of what he or she normally is most interested in giving, or the Torah's hierarchy of what he or she should prioritize in his giving. Better to give a full gift than a shared gift. Last on the list, of course, are the sin offerings. Clearly, the owner would rather not be in those circumstances that obligate him or her to bring these offerings.

The list in Tzav, however, reflects the concerns of the Kohanim. Olah and mincha still appear at the top, since those are the primary form of sacrifices. Let us also remember that the altar is called the mizbach ha'olah, the altar of the burnt offering. (see Shemot 30:28., 31:9; 35:16; 38:1; 40:6, 10, 29; and throughout Vayikra 4). However, once we move beyond these two, the order changes. The Kohanim's primary interest is their portion in the sacrifices. The top of this list is the chatat and asham, where they get to eat the entire animal, and only finally the shelamim, where the owner eats the entire animal and they only get a small portion.

The difference in the order of the two lists is just one of the differences between the two parshiyot, and a close reading of the two side-by-side will reveal other differences in emphasis and detail reflecting these two perspectives. The primary lesson to draw from this is that when we are speaking to an audience – be it giving a lecture, teaching a class, or

speaking to our children – the perspective of the listener is key. What is important to us may be irrelevant to them. This was a lesson that took time for me to learn as a teacher. I remember when I was once giving a lunch-and-learn parasha class on the parasha of Bamidbar. I spent a good 10 minutes discussing the different terms used for describing the directions of the compass in the Torah. Then, in the middle of one of my erudite comments, a student interrupted me and said, “*Rabbi, what does this have to do with my life?*” It is that question, or its appropriate variation, which I strive to address whenever I am teaching: “*Rabbi, what do I care about this material that you are presenting me?*”

Sometimes, of course, the goal is to get them to care. Even though the Kohanim had no meat from the olah, the Torah is telling them – this is what you must care about first and foremost. But even then we have to get them to think about how to care, and good teaching is not only getting them to care, but about finding out what a student or child does care about and finding ways to connect to it. We might have to tell over an entire parasha in a different way if we are addressing one type of class as opposed to another, or one child rather than the other. Let us strive, in our lives, to always remember that question, “*Why do I care?*,” to remember that what is important to us might not be equally important to the person we are talking to, and to understand that it might be necessary to repeat something in an entirely different way if we want our message to be heard. Necessary, and – as the Torah shows – well worth the effort.

Shabbat Shalom!

<https://library.yctorah.org/2011/03/tzav-two-perspectives-on-korbanot/>

Old Fashioned Modernity: Thoughts for Shabbat Tsav-HaGadol

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

A story is told about Rabbi Yitzhak Elhanan of Kovno, one of the great rabbinic sages of the 19th century. He was held in high regard among the Jews of Lithuania; even the “enlightened” Jews thought him to be progressive and broad-minded.

On one of his travels, his train stopped briefly at Vilna. Hundreds of Jews came to the train to see the famous rabbi. A certain maskil (“enlightened” Jew) decided to enter the train in order to meet the rabbi in person. He found Rabbi Yitzhak Elhanan wrapped in talit and tefillin, reciting his prayers. The rabbi had a long beard and was dressed in the “old fashioned” garb of religious traditionalists of those days.

The maskil waited for the rabbi to finish his prayers and then approached him: “*Rabbi, I am a writer and a member of the Jewish maskilim. Many times we have spoken of you, thinking that you were a person of the modern generation. But now I can see that you still behave like the Jews of olden times.*”

Rabbi Yitzhak Elhanan smiled and replied: “*I truly am of the modern generation; but you and your “enlightened” friends are from the olden times. As we say in the Passover Haggadah: ‘Originally our ancestors were idolators!’*”

In this retort, Rabbi Yitzhak Elhanan was indicating that what often passes for progressivism and modernity is not actually an advance in the human condition, but is rather a throwback to more primitive times. People who cast off Jewish values and observances may think they are being modern. In fact, though, they are simply reverting to the low spiritual level which existed before the giving of the Torah.

In those ancient times, society was idolatrous and people were not bound by the higher values and standards of Torah. The giving of the Torah marked a revolutionary advance for humanity, providing the basis for true human progress based on the most elevated laws and ideals. The Torah taught that humans are created in the image of God, that they have responsibilities to God and to fellow human beings, that they are ultimately answerable to God for their actions.

But human beings have always had the tendency to revert to the spiritual chaos of primitive times. It seems easier to live without the Torah’s demands. It is tempting to rationalize religious laxity as a virtue, as being progressive and modern. Rabbi Yitzhak Elhanan cut through this illusion.

When the ancient Israelites received the Torah from God, they stood at the vanguard of human civilization. The world has still not nearly approached the lofty ideas and ideals of Torah. Those who foster the teachings and practices of Torah — who appear to some to be “old fashioned” — are actually at the cutting edge of the moral advancement of our society today.

Yet, contemporary religious traditionalism — for all its internal dynamism — does frequently present itself as isolationist, rejectionist, authoritarian: it really does appear to be “old fashioned,” disconnected from the current trends that shape our civilization. In spite of the clever retort of Rabbi Yitzhak Elhanan to the maskil, the maskil was not entirely wrong in his perception.

The Passover seder can serve as a model of how to promote a religious vision which is traditional and progressive simultaneously. It is traditional when we carefully observe the laws of Passover, when we conduct the seder according to the prescribed customs. It is progressive when we focus on the larger messages of the Haggadah e.g. God’s providence, the evils of oppression, the importance of human freedom.

The Haggadah provides a progressive framework of questions and answers, of engaging each person according to his/her ability and interest. It is an ancient document that can and should be made relevant to the most modern of moderns.

It is not a virtue to be old-fashioned or to be modern, simply for the sake of seeming to be traditional or progressive. Rather, the challenge is to be spiritually alive and growing, rooted in our traditions and awake to new realities. What is needed is some good old fashioned modernity!

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

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 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.

<https://www.jewishideas.org/old-fashioned-modernity-thoughts-shabbat-tsav-hagadol>

Gratitude Never and Forever -- Thoughts for Parashat Tsav

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

A popular Judeo-Spanish proverb teaches: *Aze bueno y echalo a la mar. Do a good deed, and cast it into the ocean.* The idea is: do what is right and don’t expect any thanks or reward. The motivation for doing good...is the doing good itself, not the anticipation of gratitude or benefit.

Nevertheless, deep down in our hearts, it is difficult not to feel hurt if our goodness is not acknowledged. In “Notes from the Underground,” Fyodor Dostoevsky’s narrator says: *“I’m even inclined to believe that the best definition of man is — a creature who walks on two legs and is ungrateful. But that is not all, that is not his principal failing; his greatest failing is his constant lack of moral sense...and, consequently, lack of good sense.”*

Ingratitude is related to a lack of moral sense, a lack of good sense. A person who receives benefit should naturally and spontaneously express appreciation to the benefactor. It is not merely good manners, it is simple decency. Although the benefactor should not expect thanks, the recipient should give thanks.

Yet, we all sense the truth of Dostoevsky’s definition of man as a creature who is ungrateful. We receive so much from so many; and yet do not always express appreciation. We may simply be careless or thoughtless, or we may feel we are entitled to things without having to say thanks. We certainly feel the callousness of people who do not thank us for our

good deeds, but we also need to introspect to be sure that we ourselves are not guilty of the same shortcoming.

In the past, I have written about what I call the “*paper towel syndrome*,” where people are used and then unceremoniously cast aside. As long as a person is deemed “productive” or “useful,” the person is respected. But once the person has been fully exploited, he/she is put aside and forgotten, cast into the trash bin of human history. No one says thanks any longer; no one even gives him/her a second thought. *Aze bueno y echalo a la mar: do a good deed, cast it into the ocean.* There’s no point expecting gratitude or appreciation. Ingratitude is a hard fact of life. Do good...and that is its own reward.

This week’s Torah portion delineates offerings that were to be brought by the Israelites in their service to the Lord in the Mishkan (sanctuary). The various sacrifices in those days covered a range of themes: sin offerings, purification offerings, thanksgiving offerings. **The underlying theme of the offerings was: to come closer to the Almighty, one must have moral sense, good sense...and a sense of gratitude.** A Midrash teaches that in the Messianic future, all sacrifices will become obsolete...except for the thanksgiving offering. Thanksgiving will always be a necessary component of a healthy moral life. Being ungrateful is a serious moral deficiency. [emphasis added]

At the root of ingratitude is a basic arrogance, a self-absorbed view of life — an essential lack of humility. Egotists think of themselves, not of others. They use others to advance their own goals, and they are quick to discard people once they are no longer of use to them. Egotists validate Dostoevsky’s observation that human beings are characterized by ingratitude, lack of moral sense, lack of common sense. The Torah teaches us to be grateful, to express gratitude, to live humbly, morally and sensibly. These are difficult virtues to attain and we need to work hard to attain them. If we lack these qualities, we need to improve ourselves. If others lack these qualities, we ought to pity them.

Meanwhile: *aze bueno y echalo a la mar.*

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

<https://www.jewishideas.org/article/gratitude-never-and-forever-thoughts-parashat-tsav>

Pesach: A Matzah Conversation

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine *

The Pesach Seder is an astounding experience. We describe the desperate straits that we were once in as a nation. The Mitzriyim enslaved us and worked us mercilessly. They beat us; they threw our children into the Nile. And yet, there is no bitterness. Even the Marror (bitter herbs) meant to remind us of the difficult times is not eaten in sadness, but rather with a sense of purpose, as we perform a holy mitzva. Similarly, throughout the seder there is no feeling of victimhood or entitlement. We talk of experiences full of tragedy and trauma. Yet the mood is festive, full of hope, and thanksgiving. It is a night of Mesorah (tradition). On this night we pass on to the next generation not only our Torah legacy but also the secret of how to process and move forward after tragedy.

How is it that a nation who experienced such awesome trauma can emerge healthy and strong? How is it that a nation who intentionally recalls the abuses and the pain can emerge buoyant and hopeful?

I believe the answer lies in the way we understand the Matzoh.

The Talmud refers to the Matzah in two ways. It talks of the Matzoh as “Lechem Oni,” the bread of affliction. This is the type of simple, poor man’s bread that our ancestors ate when they were slaves. They did not have flavorful ingredients to add. Nor did they have time to let it rise and become fluffy. They were rushed to return to work lest they be beaten by their taskmasters. Yet, Matzoh is also described as “Lechem Sheonin Olav,” the bread upon which we have a lot to say. It is the bread of the Seder, the bread upon which we recite our national narrative. Not only is it the bread we ate in haste as slaves, it is also the bread we ate as we made haste to leave Mitzrayim during the redemption. I believe that the power of the seder, and the power of the Jewish people, lies in the merging of these two messages.

The Jewish people experienced pain and remember it well. Yet, we are able to talk about it. We have the power to transform “bread of affliction” into the “bread of our narrative.” We are able to not only remember events but look at them objectively and grow from them. The Torah instructs us, for example, “You shall love the stranger because you were strangers in Mitzrayim.” We remember our suffering. But it is not a catalyst for feeling victimized. Instead, it is a catalyst for being big and being helpful. Instead of saying, “We were once abused, now it is someone else’s turn,” we choose to break the cycle as best we can and strive to be sensitive and helpful.

The Jewish people have experienced much trauma over our collective history. We are remarkably strong despite it, or perhaps because of it. We have outlived absolute wickedness in the form of the Romans, the Inquisition, the Nazis, and Communism. We don’t forget anything. Matzah is “Lechem Oni,” representative of the poor man’s bread. Yet, Maztoh is also, “Lechem Sheonin Olav,” the bread upon which we have a lot to say. We talk about it. We recount our national narrative.

I do not know if language can properly describe the accomplishment of the Seder and the perspective of the Jewish people. Is it an expression of perseverance, fortitude, or faith? It is all of those and then some. It is not just that the Jewish people have survived. The word “survive” does not do justice. We have become greater because of the events and are able to ride the events like waves and incorporate them in our national narrative. To the newspapers of each generation there are significant players, and the Jews are but pawns. Yet in the truth of history the Jews are the constant, and it is the monarchies that come and go.

I would be curious to know what would happen if a precocious Jewish child would meet Haman on the street one day. The child would know quite well that this is the man who wanted to kill every Jewish man, woman, and child. I imagine that the child would first — in jolly Purim spirit — shout out the required, “Cursed be Haman.” But I think he would probably just keep walking, just about ignoring the once feared prime minister of king Achashveirosh. Then, I imagine, the young boy would think of a tasty Hamantash. As an afterthought he would turn around and call out to Haman and say, “Oh, by the way, thanks for the holiday!”

Is it gumption, confidence, or maybe Chutzpa? I suggest that it is the awareness that we are living a national journey as partners with Hashem. Countries come and go. Throughout it all we experience an ongoing conversation with Hashem, forging forward always with the knowledge that Hashem has a plan.

With awe and respect, Mark Twain wondered about us, and how we consistently outlive the nations of history: “The Jew saw them all, survived them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert but aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jews; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?”

In his recently released Journeys 5, Abie Rotenberg explores this in a song, noting the remarkable rebirth of the Jewish people after the holocaust. Similar to the theme of an earlier release, “The Man from Vilna,” it pays tribute to our ability to incorporate events into our national narrative and then step forward with hope.

The story is told of a child and his father who were experiencing the Pesach seder together in war torn Europe in the early 1940s. In the shadow of war, hunger, poverty, and holocaust, they tried their best to stay upbeat. Yet, as they began the seder and the child recited Ma Nishtana, there were tears in both of their eyes. After dutifully reciting the four questions, the child said, “I have a fifth question Father: What will be? What will be with us; what will be with the Jewish people?”

The father sat thoughtfully and then replied. “I do not know, son, what will be with us. All I know is that in the future there will always be Jewish children asking the Ma Nishtana just as you have done tonight.”

That is our collective task on Seder night and during the entire season of Pesach. To allow ourselves to ask and to reply. To acknowledge our thoughts and experiences and to talk about them — to have a Matzah conversation. To have a conversation that recognizes that Hashem runs His world and we have partnered with Him in an eternal way. The greatest of human forces will come and go, and the Jewish people will remain to comment, to recount, and to become greater from those experiences forever.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos and a enjoyable Pesach!

* Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of more than 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching. To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are www.care-mediation.com and www.teach613.org; his email is RMRhine@gmail.com. For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.

Shabbos HaGadol – Unconditional Conditional Love

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer*

The holiday of Pesach is the celebration of our identity as G-d's people. Pesach celebrates the birth of our nation, when we left Egypt and became, not just a family, but a people, led and guided directly by G-d. Pesach and the Exodus are also the foundation of our faith and trust in G-d, to the extent that the first mitzvah in the Ten Commandments states, "I am your G-d, Who took you out of Egypt from the house of slavery." The first mitzvah is for us to recognize G-d, not only as our Creator, but as a Creator who is intimately involved with our lives and concerned for our welfare and for our future.

As such, Shabbos HaGadol, the Great Shabbos, is a beautiful introduction to Pesach. The year we left Egypt, the Shabbos before Pesach was the tenth of Nissan, just as it is this year. The tenth of Nissan was the day when the Jews took sheep, an Egyptian god, and tied them to their bedposts in preparation for the Pascal Lamb. The cruel, merciless Egyptian taskmasters heard the bleating sheep and came to investigate. Having experienced the nine plagues which had already transpired, we found the strength to look the fearsome Egyptian taskmasters in the eye and state that these Egyptian gods had been set aside to be slaughtered as an offering to our G-d. This was a powerful heroic act of faith, declaring that we were now G-d's people and we that we now recognized that He is always protecting us. This was the moment we truly began to be G-d's nation.

When we attempt to apply these concepts to our lives, to find faith in times of challenge and to hope for an end to this long and bitter exile, there is a philosophical conflict which makes it difficult for us to truly rely on G-d. It is true that the Exodus and all of the surrounding events and miracles clearly show how much G-d cares for us and how far He will go for us. G-d also promises us that He will always be there for us and that we will always be His people. Yet, at the same time, G-d has placed significant demands on us and has warned us that we must continue to earn our place as His people. G-d wants us to reciprocate His love and to develop a two-way relationship with Him. How can we fully trust that G-d will help us, if it is conditional on us doing our part?

The Medrash Yalkut Shimoni (Remez 195) teaches us that G-d Himself struggled with this issue. When the time came for the Exodus, G-d saw that we were bereft of all Mitzvos and were not worthy of being redeemed. Yet, G-d had promised our forefathers that He would redeem us and that we would become His people. G-d had given His word, but we were no longer worthy. It was for this reason that He gave us the mitzvah of the Pascal Lamb. Since we weren't worthy, G-d found a way to make us worthy. When we found the faith in G-d to take the Egyptians' god and set it aside for slaughter before their eyes, we earned our place as G-d's people. The Medrash adds that this is the meaning of the verses from Yechezkel we quote at the Seder, "and you were clotheless and bare" "and I said to you, 'By your bloods you shall live.'" We were clotheless and bare of mitzvos. G-d gave us the blood of the Pascal Lamb and said by that blood we would live – we would earn our identity as His nation.

The Haftorah for Shabbos HaGadol echoes this thought. G-d promises that Eliyahu Hanavi will come and foretell the future redemption before the Messiah comes, just as Moshe came to foretell the Exodus from Egypt before it happened. *"Behold I am sending Eliyahu HaNavi to you before G-d's great and awesome day. And he will return the hearts of fathers with their sons, and the hearts of sons with their fathers."* (Malachi 3:23-24) The Rada"K explains that Eliyahu will be sent to foretell the redemption and to be a cause for repentance. G-d is concerned that when the time comes to redeem us, we may not be worthy of redemption. He, therefore, promised us – even before the exile began -- that He will send Eliyahu HaNavi to ensure that we are worthy.

G-d's promise that we will be His nation is greater than His demand that we be worthy. He will not let our past failures prevent our ultimate success. Despite the conditions He has placed, He loves us unconditionally.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD.

Pesach – The Wisdom To Appreciate

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer*

The four sons, their questions and the scripted responses take a place of prominence in the Haggadah. Before we even begin discussing the details of the story, we are instructed that the Seder night is for each and every Jew. We are guided on how to best respond to each Jew according to their individual needs and how best to connect them with the message of the evening.

There are many nuances to their questions and the responses, and many lessons to be learned. One point of much discussion is the inference in the question of the wicked son. He asks "What is this service to you?" The author of the Haggadah tells us that since he has worded his question in the second person, he has excluded himself from the service of the Seder. He is clearly stating that the service is "for you" and not for him. If we consider the question of the wise son he appears to be guilty of the same error. He asks "What are these testimonies, statutes and laws that Hashem, our G-d, has commanded you?" He too states clearly that the commandments were directed to you. Why don't we say that he too is excluding himself from the Seder?

The Kli Yakar, in his commentary on the Chumash (Shemos 13:14), offers an answer to this question, which I believe defines for us the essence of the message of the Pesach Seder, and what we can take away from the evening. The Kli Yakar notes that the Torah introduces the wise son's question differently from the wicked son's. The Torah introduces the wise son's question by saying "And it will be when your son will ask you tomorrow" (Devarim 6:20). This phrase is absent when discussing the wicked son.

The Kli Yakar explains that herein lies the difference between the two questioners. The wicked son is not wrong in recognizing that his parents understand the meaning of the Seder in a way that he does not. He is correct in asking his parents what meaning they find in the service. However, his timing shows that his intent is evil. He is sitting there at the Seder, while everyone is preparing to engage in the mitzvos of the evening, and he stops. Right then and there he turns to his parents and says, why is this important to you? His wording as he is sitting at the Seder clearly states that despite knowing how important this evening is to his family and to Hashem, it is of no importance to him. He cannot accept to do something because it is important to someone else. The action must be inherently important to him, or he wants no part of it. He cannot act for the sake of the relationship – neither with G-d nor with his parents. For this selfish, short-sighted attitude we tell him that he is on the wrong track in life. So much so, that had he been in Egypt, he would not have been redeemed.

The wise son, however, asks his question tomorrow. At the Seder, he was ready to engage in the experience of the evening because he knows that it is important to Hashem. However, once he has experienced it and still does not understand it, he wisely seeks to understand. With humility and faith, he comes to his parents and asks to understand why this is important to G-d. He wants to better understand his relationship with G-d and how to connect with G-d.

I heard said in the name of the Dubno Maggid that we see this distinction from the phrasing of their questions, as well. The wicked son asks "What is this service to you?" The wise son, however, asks "What are these testimonies, statutes and laws that Hashem our G-d has commanded you?" The wise son understands what the service is to his parents. It is the service that G- has commanded. His question is a deeper one – he seeks to understand what meaning it has that G-d should command it.

I believe this message is the core of the Pesach Seder. We gather every year, reviewing the story of our slavery and redemption, to understand that we have a relationship with G-d. This is the initial answer we give to the four questions.

We respond saying that we were slaves in Egypt, and had G-d not redeemed us, then we today would still be slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. Therefore, we are gathering here tonight and doing things differently from other nights. No matter how well we know the story, we need to stop and review every year, to recognize that we ourselves were destined to be slaves, and we ourselves were redeemed with the Exodus.

After the fours sons, as we resume the story of our history going back now to the very beginning with Avrohom, we state this message clearly with “*וְהִיא שָׁעַמְדָה*”- “And this is that which stood”. We have been persecuted and challenged in every generation. Yet, this message of the Pesach Seder is what has stood by us and given us strength throughout each and every generation. The purpose of redemption from Egypt was not only that we should leave Egyptian bondage. G-d was displaying his commitment to our physical and spiritual salvation. He ensured that we survived and thrived, becoming a vast and mighty people even while enslaved in Egypt, and then freed us, carried us, raised us and taught us to become His nation. G-d did this for us then, and He does it for us in every generation. “In every generation they stand upon us to annihilate us, and the Holy One, Blessed is He, saves us from their hands.”

The message is clear. G-d loves us and cares about us. Even before we accepted the Torah, G-d is showing His love, care and concern for us, and committing Himself to a relationship with us. The message of the Seder is to recognize and appreciate that love and commitment. A love and commitment which is not only for our ancestors, but is for us, as well. The importance of our mitzvos is far beyond what they accomplish. The importance of our mitzvos is, as the wise son understands, that they fulfill G-d's purpose in His world. How and why they are important to G-d are details. The accomplishment for me is not what my actions achieve, but that I displayed my love and respect for G-d, as He has done for us.

This idea is further illustrated in the verses we expound upon detailing the story of the Exodus. The verses are from the service of the Bikkurim – the first fruits of the harvest which a farmer brings to the Temple. When the farmer arrives and presents his produce, he is instructed to recite these verses. Each year, after harvesting his crop, he brings the first to the Temple and declares aloud how his ancestors were slaves, G-d redeemed them and now he instead finds himself a landowner working his own field. He concludes his declaration saying “And now behold I have brought the first fruits of the land that You have given me, G-d.” These verses we are reading at the Seder are verses intended to describe an individual's understanding of G-d's involvement in their personal life and that any and all successes are direct gifts from G-d. An understanding stemming from the recognition that we would be slaves, if not for the fact that G-d wants us to be here.

We express this again with “Dayeinu.” We begin with the Exodus and culminate with the Temple, recognizing that each step was a gift which was already enough for us to recognize G-d's love for us and kindness to us. We then reiterate and repeat how much more we need to recognize G-d's kindness and love now that G-d has indeed done all of these for us.

After explaining the messages of the mitzvos of the evening we then conclude the Maggid section of the Haggadah by stating this principle explicitly. The Seder is not a commemoration of national history. Rather, in each and every generation, no matter how far removed that generation may be from the original event, every Jew is obligated to see themselves as if they left Egypt. Each and every one of us must recognize and appreciate that G-d saved our ancestors from Egyptian slavery in order that we should be free from Egypt today. This is the essence of the Seder – to recognize G-d's relationship with us today.

As the Kli Yakar says of the wise son, our entire understanding of and commitment to Torah and mitzvos is built upon this foundation. We are Jews, committed to G-d and His Torah, because G-d loves us and we love Him and care about what's important to Him -- simply because we know it is important to Him. May we all merit to learn the message of the Seder, and thereby merit to bring joy and *nachas* to our Father in Heaven.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD. Rabbi Singer's new Dvar Torah did not arrive before my deadline. Since I did not receive his Dvar Torah in time, I am running his message from 2021.

Tzav and Pesach:

by Rabbi Herzl Heftor

[Rabbi Heftor was unable to send a Dvar Torah for Tzav or Pesach. We look forward to more learning from him soon.]

* Founder and dean of the Har'el Beit Midrash in Jerusalem. Rabbi Heftor is a graduate of Yeshiva University and was ordained at Yeshivat Har Etzion. For more of his writings, see www.har-el.org. To support the Beit Midrash, as we do, send donations to America Friends of Beit Midrash Har'el, 66 Cherry Lane, Teaneck, NJ 07666.

Starting Seder Early and Preparing on Shabbat and Yom Tov

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia *

Starting Seder Early

Q: As much as I have tried, I cannot keep my kids from falling asleep halfway through the Seder. Is there an opinion which allows starting the Seder early?

A: This is a common problem, and since the whole idea of the Seder is to convey the message of the Exodus to the children, it is a shame that they would be the ones to miss that experience.

There is indeed a tendency to start the Seder late and stretch it almost indefinitely. If not for the requirement to eat the Afikomen before midnight (to be discussed in a future post), I believe people would have carried on with the Haggadah until dawn. Some people enjoy this kind of Seder and they are entitled to it, but when the participants at a Seder, whether they are children or adults, are at risk of losing the whole experience because of fatigue, a solution should be presented. That solution exists, and it appears in none other than the Tur Orah Hayyim 472, the Halakhic compilation by Rabbenu Yaakov ben Rabbenu Asher:

One should have the table set in advance in order to eat at nightfall... since it is a Mitzvah to eat as soon as possible so the children will not fall asleep... one cannot eat before darkness because the time for eating Matzah is at night.

It is true that some commentators did not feel comfortable with the Tur's ruling that the Seder could start that early. They have interpreted his statement as referring to the first eating of the night, which is the dipping of the celery, or karpas. However, it is clear from the phrasing of the Tur that he refers to the eating of the matzah itself. First, he says that the reason for starting early is that the children will not fall asleep, and if we wait for darkness to start the Kiddush, we have gained nothing. Secondly, and more importantly, he says: "one cannot eat Matzah before darkness", meaning that other things, such as Kiddush and karpas, could be consumed before darkness.

The definition of darkness is contested in Halakah and it varies between 50 and 72 minutes after sunset. However, the simplest tool to measure darkness is our eyesight.

Conclusion: The earliest you could eat Matzah is after darkness. Calculate the time of darkness in your area, either by adding 50-72 minutes to sunset, or by going outside the night before Pesah to see when it gets dark. Then figure out how much time you need to get from the Kiddush to *מיצה מזון* – the point in the Haggadah where we eat the Matzah and start your Seder so you will be able to eat Matzah after it gets dark.

Preparing for the Seder on Shabbat and Yom Tov

Q: Can I start the Seder early on Saturday night, before the official time for Havdalah?

A: Several readers asked if the ruling that one could start the Seder earlier applies also on the second night, which falls [some] years[on Saturday night.

They had two concerns, which I will present here and address one at a time:

A(One is not allowed to prepare from Shabbat to Yom Tov, so how can we set the table and get ready for the second Seder?

This concern is not unique to our situation. It also exists when the second Yom Tov falls on a weekday, since one is not allowed to prepare from one Yom Tov to another.

Interestingly enough, when we refer to the Halakhic literature, we find that until the 15th century, the concept of preparation from Shabbat to a weekday or to Yom Tov was much more limited than it is today. It was understood as a prohibition of benefitting on Yom Tov from something which was created on Shabbat. The creation of a new thing could have occurred through human action (such as chopping vegetables) or natural processes (eggs laid on Shabbat). Today the practice is to avoid any action on Shabbat which can save time on Motzae Shabbat. This practice was first presented and promoted by rabbis of 16th century Germany.

This analysis, of course, does not come to diminish the status of the practice today, but it could be used to make concessions when we encounter a special situation.

That special situation, the preparation for second Yom Tov, was discussed by R Hayyim Benveniste, who lived in 17th century Constantinople:

If Pesah falls on Saturday night[one should not set the table on Shabbat but rather on Friday afternoon... I also think that one should not prepare the table for the second day on the first Yom Tov, but people do not keep this practice.

A century later, the great R Hayyim Palachi of Smyrna explained why people prepare the table on Yom Tov:

We must say that they are righteous]and not sinners[because they do not have ample houses. If they set the tables on Friday for Saturday night, they will have no room to sleep. They should therefore start setting the table after midday on Shabbat.

Note that R Palachi did not suggest that people will start setting the table after Shabbat is over, because then the Seder will start too late. As explained earlier, the concern for the ability of the children to stay alert, and of the guest to enjoy the Seder, is a serious Halakhic consideration. By extension, any activity which is allowed on Shabbat for the sake of Shabbat or on Yom Tov for the sake of Yom Tov, could be performed for the upcoming Yom Tov.

The consideration, as appears in the writing of R Hayyim Palachi, and as intuitively understood by many generations of observant Jews, is that one cannot fully enjoy the current Shabbat or Yom Tov if he is stressed and worried about celebrating the second Yom Tov.

Similarly, R Shimon Grunfeld of Hungary (1860-1930) rules that if the activity is done on Shabbat in order to alleviate stress and feel better, and not in order to save time, it is not considered preparation:

In our case also, people are not preparing in order to save time, but rather because waiting until after Havdalah will cause irreparable damage to the Yom Tov celebration, which in turn is now ruining their Shabbat experience as well.

The example which R Grunfeld uses is washing utensils, even if they are not going to be used on Shabbat, because the sight of dirty utensils is bothersome. This was also the practice of my grandfather Hakham Shaul Fetaya, and it was also confirmed to me personally by R Yitzhak Abadi of Lakewood, who allows even scrubbing of pots and pans for that reason.

The second concern regarding early Seder is:

B(The Havdalah is included in the Kiddush, and the Kiddush is the first part of the Haggadah, so if we start the Seder early, we will be saying the Havdalah before Shabbat is over.

This concern does not apply on a weekday Yom Tov because there is no Havdalah between the first and second Yom Tov. However, the question whether one is allowed to recite Havdalah early was raised in different circumstances. For example, if one needs to travel on Motzae Shabbat, or in places where Shabbat ends very late. The answer to that question was that one can say Havdalah before Shabbat is over, but he should postpone the blessing on the candle for later.

Conclusion:

One can prepare for the second night as early as needed to start the Seder on time, but not earlier than midday of Shabbat or first Yom Tov. On the Shabbat preceding Yom Tov, only activities which are permitted on Shabbat should be performed.

On the first Yom Tov, only activities which are permitted on Yom Tov should be performed.

When starting the Seder before nightfall, one can recite the Kiddush with the Havdalah, but skip the blessing on the candles and say it later when Shabbat is over. When that time comes, one can stop reciting the Haggadah in order to say the blessing of]Borei Morei HaAshe[and then light Yom Tov candles. After this, he can resume the reciting of the Haggadah.

Shabbat Shalom; Chag Pesach Kasher v'Samaich.

NOTE: Hebrew and Aramaic text omitted because of problems switching software. His material is in the original texts in Sefaria)see below(.

* Torah VeAhava. Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan)Potomac, MD(and faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school(. **New: Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria: <https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets>**. The Sefaria articles include Hebrew text, which I must delete because of issues changing software formats.

All Who Are Hungry — In And Out Of The House

By Rabbi Eitan Cooper *

You're sitting down at your seder and everyone is enjoying each other's company, when all of a sudden, you hear a knock at the door. Someone gets up to answer and finds a person who is clearly in need standing at the door. This individual is poor and destitute and is just looking for a place to eat, a place to have a seder.

What do you tell him? If you turn to the Haggadah, the answer is clear: all who are hungry should come and eat. You should invite this person in with open arms!

Yet, the answer might not be so clear, at least for most people. This is because most people in the world are not tzadikim (righteous), and at the very least might be justifiably a little uncomfortable with the notion of inviting someone in whom you have not met and have nothing to do with. Moreover, while meeting someone new at the seder can be a meaningful experience, it also might run the risk of unsettling a certain dynamic or chemistry that has already been formed around

one's table. The seder can be a very insular, family-oriented experience that is carried by the consistency of the same people coming year after year. And there is nothing wrong with this!

How can we hold on to this feeling, and at the same time maintain that "*all who are hungry should come and eat?*" Rav Shlomo Kruger, who authored the *Chochmat Shlomo* (a commentary on the *Shulkhan Aruch*) maintains that this is the precise purpose of maot chitim, the funds that many communities raise before Pesach to help those in need. Somewhat surprisingly, he maintains that it is incumbent upon us all to give maot chitim before Pesach, so that if someone were to come knocking on your door during the seder and you do not want to let them inside, you can say to them (and really, to yourself) that you already helped them find food by offering maot chitim before Pesach. Then, says the Chochmat Shlomo, you can close your door, and go back to your family.

Is this something that would be pleasant to say or be heard by the poor person at your door? Absolutely not. But at the same time, this source teaches us a valuable lesson: Sometimes it is ok for us to prioritize our family, especially on a holiday like Pesach. However, if we take this approach we must make sure that we have done the important legwork before Pesach to support those around us who are in need.

Lest one think that this might be taking the easy way out, this week's Haftarah, a special one reads on Shabbat Hagadol, seems to hint that in some ways, giving tzedakah before Pesach can be even harder than inviting someone to your seder table.

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, and let there be food in My House, and thus put Me to the test — said the LORD of Hosts. I will surely open the floodgates of the sky for you and pour down blessings on you;

and I will banish the locusts from you, so that they will not destroy the yield of your soil; and your vines in the field shall no longer miscarry — said the LORD of Hosts.)Malachi 3:10-11(

Giving maot chitim can often amount to much more, monetarily speaking, than what one would give to someone who simply wants a seat at their table. Any time someone gives from what they have, there is always a concern that you might not have enough for yourself. This is the case for many who "dig deep" when they offer maot chitim funds. These powerful verses reassure the giver that Hashem recognizes our efforts to help those around us, and will reward us by taking care of our sustenance, making sure we ourselves do not go hungry.

May we all merit a Chag Kasher V'Sameach, and most importantly, a chag in which we can all pay close attention to the needs of those around us, whether that is before Pesach, at our seder, or both!

Shabbat Shalom

* Assistant Rabbi, of Beth Sholom Congregation, Potomac, MD. Alumnus of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah and my very close personal friend. Hebrew omitted because of problems going across various software programs.

<https://library.yctorah.org/2023/03/all-who-are-hungry/>

Shavuon Tzav/Pesach

By Rabbi Moshe Rube *

I was fortunate to enjoy a wonderful and enlightening trip to the South Island, but with Pesach just around the corner, holiday stories will need to wait.

Pesach is a holiday of rituals, stories and traditions where the generations come together to discuss, question, and pass on the Jewish story of freedom.

It can also be a time of agitation and stress as we clean our houses from leavened products and try to sift through all the info on the internet on how to make our homes kosher for Pesach.

Growing up, I have seen Pesach guides get more and more complicated, and every year I hear stories of people getting scalded from pouring boiling water over expanses of the house they rarely ever bring food into.

So allow me here to give a concise and simple guide for kashering your home for Pesach. This is inspired by my Bubbe, who always kept her Pesach prep simple. My hope is you'll read this halachic guide and believe that it's doable.

1(To kasher your microwave, clean it out and place a cup of water in it and turn it on for 3 minutes so the steam fills the inside.

For your stove top, clean it and turn it to its highest temperature for 5 mins.

For your oven, clean it out and turn it to its highest temperature for 45 minutes.

For your sinks and counters, clean them with soap and water. You can use your regular cleaning service to do this.

2(Use disposables for the holidays. Paper plates and paper cutlery and foil for cooking in the oven. If you need pots, pans, or other cutlery, buy new ones. If you must kasher and the utensil is made of metal or synthetic materials, clean it with soap and water and dip it in boiling water. For pots, fill them up and boil the water in it.

For some extra information and a list of the various foods we can buy on Pesach without concern for chametz. [Click Here](#)

If there's any specific question you wish to ask me, please reach out through email or text and I will respond.

Chag Sameach!

Rabbi Rube

* Senior Rabbi of Auckland Hebrew Congregation, Remuera)Auckland(, New Zealand.

Rav Kook Torah

Tzav: The Purifying Fire of the Olah

“This is the law of the olah, the burnt offering. It is the burnt-offering which remains on the altar’s hearth all night, until morning.”)Lev. 6:2(

What is the significance of burning the olah offering throughout the night?

Elevating the Soul

The central ceremony when offering a korban is zerikat ha-dam, as blood from the offering is dashed around the foundation of the altar. What is the meaning of this ritual?

Blood corresponds to the nefesh — our soul, our life-force. *“For blood is the nefesh”)Deut. 12:15(* Dashing the blood on the altar fulfills the primary goal of the offering, purifying the soul and expiating its offenses — *“It is the blood that atones for the soul”)Lev. 17:11(*. This service elevates the foundations of the nefesh.

However, there is a level below the nefesh, a lower life-force residing closer to the body and its functions. This level of life also needs to be elevated. We seek to refine even our lowest physical tendencies and traits. This refinement is attained

through a deep yearning to be close to God — an aspiration that flows through the entire nation by way of the holy avodah of the Temple.

For this reason, the verse emphasizes: *hi ha-olah* — “*It is the [same] offering.*” The same olah offering which elevates and ennobles the nefesh also refines our baser character traits. The soul is uplifted through zerikat ha-dam, when the blood is dashed around the altar. The lower life-force is elevated when the limbs of the offering are consumed in the altar’s fire. The holy fire refines and purifies our physical nature.

Why burn the offering at night?

During the night, the physical side is dominant and the soul’s higher light is hidden. During this time of spiritual dormancy, the altar’s fire burns and purifies the physical remains of the offering. This nocturnal service guards life from sinking into the depths of base materialism.

The offering is burnt until daybreak. With the arrival of morning, the soul awakens with all of its strength and light. It is ready to stand before God, alive and vibrant, in renewed splendor.

)Adapted from Olat Re’iyah vol. I, p. 122.(

<https://www.ravkooktorah.org/VAYIKRA59.htm>

Left - and Right - Brain Judaism)Tzav 5780(

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

The institution of the haftarah — reading a passage from the prophetic literature alongside the Torah portion — is an ancient one, dating back at least 2000 years. Scholars are not sure when, where, and why it was instituted. Some say that it began when Antiochus IV’s attempt to eliminate Jewish practice in the second century BCE sparked the revolt we celebrate on Chanukah. At that time, so the tradition goes, public reading from the Torah was forbidden. So the Sages instituted that we should read a prophetic passage whose theme would remind people of the subject of the weekly Torah portion.

Another view is that it was introduced to protest the views of the Samaritans, and later the Sadducees, who denied the authority of the prophetic books except the book of Joshua.

The existence of haftarat in the early centuries CE is, however, well attested. Early Christian texts, when relating to Jewish practice, speak of “the Law and the Prophets,” implying that the Torah)Law(and haftarah)Prophets(went hand-in-hand and were read together. Many early Midrashim connect verses from the Torah with those from the haftarah. So the pairing is ancient.

Often the connection between the parsha and the haftarah is straightforward and self-explanatory. Sometimes, though, the choice of prophetic passage is instructive, telling us what the Sages understood as the key message of the parsha.

Consider the case of Beshallach. At the heart of the parsha is the story of the division of the Red Sea and the passage of the Israelites through the sea on dry land. This is the greatest miracle in the Torah. There is an obvious historical parallel. It appears in the book of Joshua. The river Jordan divided allowing the Israelites to pass over on dry land:

“The water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away ... The Priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.”)Josh. ch. 3(.

This, seemingly, should have been the obvious choice as haftarah. But it was not chosen. Instead, the Sages chose the song of Devorah from the book of Judges. This tells us something exceptionally significant: that tradition judged the most

important event in Beshallach to be not the division of the sea but rather the song the Israelites sang on that occasion: their collective song of faith and joy.

This suggests strongly that the Torah is not humanity's book of God but God's book of humankind. Had the Torah been the our book of God, the focus would have been on the Divine miracle. Instead, it is on the human response to the miracle. [emphasis added]

So the choice of haftarah tells us much about what the Sages took to be the parsha's main theme. But there are some haftarot that are so strange that they deserve to be called paradoxical, since their message seems to challenge rather than reinforce that of the parsha. One classic example is the haftarah for the morning of Yom Kippur, from the 58th chapter of Isaiah, one of the most astonishing passages in the prophetic literature:

Is this the fast I have chosen – a day when a man will oppress himself? ... Is this what you call a fast, "a day for the Lord's favour"? No: this is the fast I choose. Loosen the bindings of evil and break the slavery chain. Those who were crushed, release to freedom; shatter every yoke of slavery. Break your bread for the starving and bring dispossessed wanderers home. When you see a person naked, clothe them: do not avert your eyes from your own flesh. Is. 58:5-7

The message is unmistakable. We spoke of it in last week's Covenant and Conversation. The commands between us and God and those between us and our fellows are inseparable. Fasting is of no use if at the same time you do not act justly and compassionately to your fellow human beings. You cannot expect God to love you if you do not act lovingly to others. That much is clear.

But to read this in public on Yom Kippur, immediately after having read the Torah portion describing the service of the High Priest on that day, together with the command to "afflict yourselves," is jarring to the point of discord. Here is the Torah telling us to fast, atone and purify ourselves, and here is the Prophet telling us that none of this will work unless we engage in some kind of social action, or at the very least behave honourably toward others. Torah and haftarah are two voices that do not sound as if they are singing in harmony.

The other extreme example is the haftarah for today's parsha. Tzav is about the various kinds of sacrifices. Then comes the haftarah, with Jeremiah's almost incomprehensible remark:

For when I brought your ancestors out of Egypt and spoke to them, I did not give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices, but I gave them this command: Obey Me, and I will be your God and you will be My people. Walk in obedience to all I command you, that it may go well with you. Jer. 7:22-23

This seems to suggest that sacrifices were not part of God's original intention for the Israelites. It seems to negate the very substance of the parsha.

What does it mean? The simplest interpretation is that it means "*I did not only give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices.*" *I commanded them but they were not the whole of the law, nor were they even its primary purpose.*

A second interpretation is the famously controversial view of Maimonides that the sacrifices were not what God would have wanted in an ideal world. What He wanted was avodah: He wanted the Israelites to worship Him. But they, accustomed to religious practices in the ancient world, could not yet conceive of avodah shebalev, the "service of the heart," namely prayer. They were accustomed to the way things were done in Egypt (and virtually everywhere else at that time), where worship meant sacrifice. On this reading, Jeremiah meant that from a Divine perspective sacrifices were bedi'avad not lechatchilah, an after-the-fact concession not something desired at the outset.

A third interpretation is that the entire sequence of events from Exodus 25 to Leviticus 25 was a response to the episode of the Golden Calf. This, I have argued elsewhere, represented a passionate need on the part of the people to have God close not distant, in the camp not at the top of the mountain, accessible to everyone not just Moses, and on a daily basis not just at rare moments of miracle. That is what the Tabernacle, its service and its sacrifices represented. It was the

home of the Shechinah, the Divine Presence, from the same root as sh-ch-n, “neighbour.” Every sacrifice – in Hebrew korban, meaning “*that which is brought near*” – was an act of coming close. So in the Tabernacle, God came close to the people, and in bringing sacrifices, the people came close to God.

This was not God’s original plan. As is evident from Jeremiah here and the covenant ceremony in Exodus 19-24, the intention was that God would be the people’s sovereign and lawmaker. He would be their king, not their neighbour. He would be distant, not close)see Ex. 33:3(. The people would obey His laws; they would not bring Him sacrifices on a regular basis. God does not need sacrifices. But God responded to the people’s wish, much as He did when they said they could not continue to hear His overwhelming voice at Sinai: “*I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good*”)Deut. 5:25(. What brings people close to God has to do with people, not God. That is why sacrifices were not God’s initial intent but rather the Israelites’ spiritual-psychological need: a need for closeness to the Divine at regular and predictable times.

What connects these two haftarot is their insistence on the moral dimension of Judaism. As Jeremiah puts it in the closing verse of the haftarah, “*I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,*”)Jer. 9:23(. That much is clear. What is genuinely unexpected is that the Sages joined sections of the Torah and passages from the prophetic literature so different from one another that they sound as if they are coming from different universes with different laws of gravity.

That is the greatness of Judaism. It is a choral symphony scored for many voices. It is an ongoing argument between different points of view. Without detailed laws, no sacrifices. Without sacrifices in the biblical age, no coming close to God. But if there are only sacrifices with no prophetic voice, then people may serve God while abusing their fellow humans. They may think themselves righteous while they are, in fact, merely self-righteous.]emphasis added[

The Priestly voice we hear in the Torah readings for Yom Kippur and Tzav tells us what and how. The Prophetic voice tells us why. They are like the left and right hemispheres of the brain; or like hearing in stereo, or seeing in 3D. That is the complexity and richness of Judaism, and it was continued in the post-biblical era in the different voices of halachah and aggadah.

Put priestly and prophetic voices together and we see that ritual is a training in ethics. Repeated performance of sacred acts reconfigures the brain, reconstitutes the personality, reshapes our sensibilities. The commandments were given, said the Sages, to refine people.]1[The external act influences inner feeling. “*The heart follows the deed,*” as the Sefer ha-Chinuch puts it.]2[

I believe that this fugue between Torah and Haftarah, Priestly and Prophetic voices, is one of Judaism’s great glories. We hear in both how to act and why. Without the how, action is lame; without the why, behaviour is blind. Combine Priestly detail and Prophetic vision and you have spiritual greatness.

FOOTNOTES:

]1[Tanhuma, Shemini, 12.

]2[Sefer ha-Chinuch, Bo, Mitzvah 16.

Around the Shabbat Table

]1[Which of the reasons given above do you think best explains the institution of the haftarah?

]2[What do you think the practice of reading the haftarah achieves today?

]3[What is the message of this week’s haftarah?

A New Perspective on Taking Out the Trash

By Yossi Ives * © Chabad 2023

Let's start with some facts:

Each day in the Temple, sacrifices were offered on a stone altar. The altar had several stations with wooden pyres, upon which a variety of sacrifices were offered.

As could be imagined, this resulted in a fair amount of debris. The kohanim (priests) were mandated to remove the ashes whenever there was a significant accumulation. This was called "removal of the ashes."

In addition, each morning before the daily offering began, a kohen was required to carry out a symbolic removal of the ashes, taking some of the ashes from the altar with a shovel and placing them in a heap on the side. This was known as "the separation of the ashes."

In both cases the Torah addresses the attire to be worn when carrying out the tasks.

When mandating the removal of the ashes, the Torah instructs:

He [the Kohen] should remove his clothes and wear different clothes; he shall then remove the ashes to a clean place outside the camp.¹

Rashi elucidates:

In order that he does not sully his regular clothes while removing the ashes. By way of analogy, the clothes a servant wears to cook his master's meal should not be worn when pouring the master's drink." Rashi adds that the "other garments" were inferior to those normally worn.

It is understandable that Rashi feels the need to provide an explanation, as there is a clear problem with the text. No one needs to be told that before you put on a new set of clothes, it is necessary to remove the clothes one is already wearing! So why does the text specifically instruct the kohen to remove his clothes before continuing with the real point, which is that he should wear different clothes? Rashi therefore explains that removing the clothes is the real reason for the change. The goal is not the new outfit, but to prevent the original one from being sullied.

The remainder of Rashi's commentary, however, remains a mystery. Which part of the text compels Rashi to continue with what appears to be a new point, about how the kohen should be wearing different clothes for different tasks? And what is added with the analogy of a servant preparing food that could not be understood without it? The problem is even greater considering that Rashi insists the new clothes be of lesser importance than the ones removed, despite the fact there does not seem to be any indication of this in the text itself!

It may be fairly assumed that we are missing something here.

The Rebbe answers this by way of a keen observation that seems to have been overlooked.

As mentioned earlier, there were two tasks relating to the ashes: the daily symbolic separation, and the occasional substantial removal. The text we read above about the kohen changing his clothes refers to the removal of the ashes, but immediately before this there is a verse about the separation of the ashes, the symbolic removal of ashes that takes place early each morning.

The kohen shall wear his linen shirt and linen pants. He shall separate the ashes which the fire shall consume upon the altar, and he shall place]the ashes[next to the altar.

In other words, the kohen is supposed to wear his linen garments for this task of separating the ashes. But hold on, is this not the same type of garment he is instructed to wear for the removal of the ashes? Indeed, it is. So the Torah first instructs the Kohen to don linen garments to do the symbolic separation, and then instructs him to change out of his linen clothing and put on another set of linen clothes in order to do the larger task of removing the ashes to outside the camp when necessary.

This leaves us with an astonishing situation. The kohen is already wearing linen clothes to conduct the daily separation, yet he is being told to remove those and put on another set of linen clothes to do something that looks pretty similar to the original task. Why should the kohen change into new linen clothes when he has already changed into linen clothes to do the separation of the ashes? What could possibly be the point in that?

Both tasks - separating and removing the ashes - were messy jobs. True, removing the ashes was the much bigger task and was more likely to get the clothes dirty than the more modest removal of the ashes to the side of the altar. But how does that make any difference? Whyever should the kohen switch clothes between one not particular clean task and one that is even messier? If the kohen is already wearing linen clothes for the separation of the ashes, why ask him to change into a different set of linen clothes for the removal of the ashes? It really stretches credulity to think that this would make any sense at all.

This problem, says the Rebbe, is what Rashi is really trying to address. Rashi is introducing us to a concept of hierarchy of dress. It may seem that both the symbolic separating of ashes and the more substantial removal of the ashes are largely of a kind, but that misses an important point. Separation of ashes wholly takes place in the Temple (it is placed by the side of the altar), whereas the removal of ashes involves taking it to be disposed of beyond the boundaries of the Temple. That is why the clothes worn for the internal job of separating the ashes were to be different from the clothes worn for the external task of removing the ashes.

Rashi portrays this via the analogy of a master and his servant. Both cooking and serving drinks are largely the same idea: providing food for the master. But no rational person would equate them. Cooking is in the kitchen, behind the scenes. The kitchen is a messy place, and the food preparation that takes place there will almost certainly result in the servant's clothes being sullied. By contrast, serving the drinks takes place in the banquet hall in the presence of guests. Serving drinks should not necessarily result in the servant's clothes being dirtied.

Removal of the ashes is a lower task than separating the ashes – they are not to be treated as equal. Removal of the ashes is like the servant in the kitchen. Hence, says Rashi, it follows that the kohen should change his clothes between separating the ashes and removing the ashes; he should be wearing “lesser garments” when doing the latter. The kohen should undergo a sort of “costume change” between two acts which are similar but of unequal prestige.

But this gives rise to a question: if the two tasks are unequal, why change clothes altogether? Would it not be better if a more junior Kohen did the lesser task? If indeed removing the ashes is far inferior to separating the ashes, why would both tasks be done by the same person? To use Rashi’s analogy, would the cook also serve as the butler? Surely, these are quite separate roles for distinct people! Basically, the senior kohen would eschew such an unpopular task and relegate this for the novice kohen. Yet, this entire discussion of Rashi is predicated on the assumption that the same kohen is doing both (and thus changing clothes in between).

Here the Rebbe leaves us with a profound lesson. The same kohen who does the popular jobs has to be ready to do the unpopular ones. You don’t get to pick and choose. The senior kohen must not excuse himself from the unpleasant and messy undertakings. He must not avoid the jobs that force him to leave the Temple area. This is not how it should work. Perhaps there is a hierarchy of tasks – as Rashi says – but that does not mean there should be a hierarchy of people. Let the kohen who enjoys doing the elevated activity know that he has just as much responsibility to complete the less desirable activity. If he needs to change his clothes in between, so be it.

Get out there and get your hands dirty, if that is what is needed.

Adapted from Likkutei Sichot vol. 37, Tzav)pg. 1-6(

FOOTNOTE:

1. Leviticus 6:4.

* Rabbi of Congregation Ahavas Yisrael, Pomona, N.Y. and founder and Chief Executive of Tag International Development, a charitable organization that focuses on sharing Israeli expertise with developing countries.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5075929/jewish/A-New-Perspective-on-Taking-Out-the-Trash.htm

Tzav: Keep the Flame Alive

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky *

The Eternal Flame

The fire that will burn upon the Altar regularly must not go out.)Lev. 6:6(

We may sometimes feel so distant from the Torah's expectations of us or encumbered by negative spiritual baggage that it is hard for us to imagine how we could even begin to live in accordance with our ideals. In times of such pessimism, this verse empowers us to keep our Divine fire burning even when we feel unqualified or otherwise unable to enter realms of holiness.

By keeping our enthusiasm fired even in such times, the Divine flame within us will eventually burn away all impediments to joyful, holy living. As the Maggid of Mezeritch interpreted this verse, "*If the [inner] fire of the heart is kept burning continuously, it will extinguish all negativity.*"

But the fire can only be effective if it is kept burning continuously; any lapse in enthusiasm is an opportunity for pessimism to creep in. An intermittent fire or the memory of recent flames is therefore not enough; we must become adept at keeping our inner fires burning no matter how our moods may vary.

— From Kehot's Daily Wisdom #3 *

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Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

The Courage of Identity Crises

Good leaders know their own limits. They do not try to do it all themselves. They build teams. They create space for people who are strong where they are weak. They understand the importance of checks and balances and the separation of powers. They surround themselves with people who are different from them. They understand the danger of concentrating all power in a single individual. But learning your limits, knowing there are things you cannot do – even things you cannot be – can be a painful experience. Sometimes it involves an emotional crisis.

The Torah contains four fascinating accounts of such moments. What links them is not words but music. From quite early on in Jewish history, the Torah was sung, not just read. Moses at the end of his life calls the Torah a song.^[1] Different traditions grew up in Israel and Babylon, and from around the tenth century onward the chant began to be systematised in the form of the musical notations known as ta'amei ha-mikra, cantillation signs, devised by the Tiberian Masoretes (guardians of Judaism's sacred texts). One very rare note, known as a shalshelet (chain), appears in the Torah four times only. Each time it is a sign of existential crisis. Three instances are in the book of Genesis. The fourth is in our parsha. As we will see, the fourth is about leadership. In a broad sense, the other three are as well.

The first instance occurs in the story of Lot. After Lot separated from his uncle Abraham he settled in Sodom. There he assimilated into the local population. His daughters married local men. He himself sat in the city gate, a sign that he had been made a Judge. Then two visitors come to tell him to leave, for God is about to destroy the city. Yet Lot hesitates, and above the word for "hesitates" – vayitmamah – is a shalshelet. (Gen. 19:16). Lot is torn, conflicted. He senses that the visitors are right. The city is indeed about to be destroyed. But he has invested his whole future in the new identity he has been carving out for himself and his daughters. The angels then forcibly take him out of the city to safety – had they not done so, he would have delayed until it was too late.

The second shalshelet occurs when Abraham asks his servant – traditionally identified as Eliezer – to find a wife for Isaac his son. The commentators suggest that Eliezer felt a profound ambivalence about his mission. Were Isaac not to marry and have children, Abraham's estate would eventually pass to

Eliezer or his descendants. Abraham had already said so before Isaac was born: "Sovereign Lord, what can You give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" (Gen. 15:2). If Eliezer succeeded in his mission, bringing back a wife for Isaac, and if the couple had children, then his chances of one day acquiring Abraham's wealth would disappear completely. Two instincts warred within him: loyalty to Abraham and personal ambition. The verse states: "And he said: Lord, the God of my master Abraham, send me... good speed this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham" (Gen. 24:12). Eliezer's loyalty to Abraham won, but not without a deep struggle. Hence the shalshelet (Gen. 24:12).

The third shalshelet brings us to Egypt and the life of Joseph. Sold by his brothers as a slave, he is now working in the house of an eminent Egyptian, Potiphar. Left alone in the house with his master's wife, he finds himself the object of her desire. He is handsome. She wants him to sleep with her. He refuses. To do such a thing, he says, would be to betray his master, her husband. It would be a sin against God. Yet over "he refused" is a shalshelet, (Genesis 39:8) indicating – as some rabbinic sources and mediaeval commentaries suggest – that he did so at the cost of considerable effort. [2] He nearly succumbed. This was more than the usual conflict between sin and temptation. It was a conflict of identity. Recall that Joseph was living in a new and strange land. His brothers had rejected him. They had made it clear that they did not want him as part of their family. Why then should he not, in Egypt, do as the Egyptians do? Why not yield to his master's wife if that is what she wanted? The question for Joseph was not just, "Is this right?" but also, "Am I an Egyptian or a Jew?"

All three episodes are about inner conflict, and all three are about identity. There are times when each of us has to decide, not just "What shall I do?" but "What kind of person shall I be?" That is particularly fateful in the case of a leader, which brings us to episode four, this time with Moses in the central role.

After the sin of the Golden Calf, Moses had, at God's command instructed the Israelites to build a Sanctuary which would be, in effect, a permanent symbolic home for God in the midst of the people. By now the work is complete and all that remains is for Moses to induct his brother Aaron and Aaron's sons into office. He robes Aaron with the special garments of the High Priest, anoints him with oil, and performs the various sacrifices appropriate to the occasion. Over the word

In memory of Anna Hornestay, a"h,
(Hinda Rivka bas Chaim,
whose yahrzeit was 4 Nisan

vayishchat, "and he slaughtered [the sacrificial ram]" (Lev. 8:23) there is a shalshelet. By now we know that this means there was an internal struggle in Moses' mind. But what was it? There is not the slightest sign in the text that suggests that he was undergoing a crisis.

Yet a moment's thought makes it clear what Moses' inner turmoil was about. Until now he had led the Jewish people. Aaron had assisted him, accompanying him on his missions to Pharaoh, acting as his spokesman, aide and second-in-command. Now, however, Aaron was about to undertake a new leadership role in his own right. No longer would he be one step behind Moses. He would do what Moses himself could not. He would preside over the daily offerings in the Tabernacle. He would mediate the avodah, the Israelites' sacred service to God. Once a year on Yom Kippur he would perform the service that would secure atonement for the people from its sins. No longer in Moses' shadow, Aaron was about to become the one kind of leader Moses was not destined to be: a High Priest.

The Talmud adds a further dimension to the poignancy of the moment. At the Burning Bush, Moses had repeatedly resisted God's call to lead the people. Eventually God told him that Aaron would go with him, helping him speak (Ex. 4:14-16). The Talmud says that at that moment Moses lost the chance to be a Priest: "Originally [said God] I had intended that you would be the Priest and Aaron your brother would be a Levite. Now he will be the Priest and you will be a Levite."^[3]

That is Moses' inner struggle, conveyed by the shalshelet. He is about to induct his brother into an office he himself will never hold. Things might have been otherwise – but life is not lived in the world of "might have been." He surely feels joy for his brother, but he cannot altogether avoid a sense of loss. Perhaps he already senses what he will later discover, that though he was the Prophet and liberator, Aaron will have a privilege Moses will be denied, namely, seeing his children and their descendants inherit his role. The son of a Priest is a Priest. The son of a Prophet is rarely a Prophet.

What all four stories tell us is that there comes a time for each of us when we must make an ultimate decision as to who we are. It is a moment of existential truth. Lot is a Hebrew,

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not a citizen of Sodom. Eliezer is Abraham's servant, not his heir. Joseph is Jacob's son, not an Egyptian of loose morals. Moses is a Prophet, not a Priest. To say 'Yes' to who we are, we have to have the courage to say 'No' to who we are not. Pain and struggle is always involved in this type of conflict. That is the meaning of the shalshelet. But we emerge less conflicted than we were before.

This applies especially to leaders, which is why the case of Moses in our parsha is so important. There were things Moses was not destined to do. He would never become a Priest. That task fell to Aaron. He would never lead the people across the Jordan. That was Joshua's role. Moses had to accept both facts with good grace if he was to be honest with himself. And great leaders must be honest with themselves if they are to be honest with those they lead.

A leader should never try to be all things to all people. A leader should be content to be who they are. Leaders must have the strength to know what they cannot be if they are to have the courage to be truly their best selves.

[1] Deuteronomy 31:19.

[2] Tanhuma, Vayeshev 8; cited by Rashi in his commentary to Genesis 39:8.

[3] Zevachim 102a.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

The Sabbath before Pesach is called "The Great Sabbath" (Shabbat Hagadol) after the last verse of the reading from the prophets (haftara) for that day: "Behold I send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord" – the day of Redemption (Malachi 3:23). It is certainly logical that Elijah, the herald of the redemption, features before Pesach – the "time of our freedom" and redemption from Egyptian servitude.

But what kind of person is Elijah, who will be the "messenger of good news, salvation and comfort" (Grace after Meals)?

The biblical Elijah was a zealot who slaughtered 450 prophets of Baal after a contest at Mount Carmel, and challenged God to punish the Israelites for having rejected His covenant and allowed Jezebel to murder the Lord's prophets (I Kings 19:10). But somehow in Talmudic and folk tradition, Elijah morphs into a benign, grandfatherly figure who drinks from a special goblet at everyone's Seder table, graces every newborn male baby with his presence at their circumcision and frequently appears as a deus ex machina to teach important lessons and save people's lives at critical moments.

Just when, why and how did this fiery fanatic become a venerable sage? Let us look again at the biblical text and I believe we'll discover the dynamics of the process.

Elijah lives in Israel under the idolatrous monarchy of Ahab and Jezebel, Baal devotees who murdered the prophets of the Lord. The wrath of God is expressed in the form of a drought which wreaks havoc on the land. Elijah stages a Steven Spielberg-style extravaganza: He convinces King Ahab to invite all the Israelites to the foot of Mount Carmel, where he has the 450 prophets of Baal choose a bull. Elijah takes another bull, and each animal is cut in half and placed on an altar without a fire – one altar to God and one to Baal. The victor will be the person whose altar is graced by fire from on high.

After the better part of a day of fruitless prayers, incantations and orgiastic immolations by the prophets of Baal, Elijah drenches his offering in water and then calls out to God. A fire descends from heaven, consuming his offering together with the wood, the stones, the water and the earth. The Israelites cry out: "The Lord! He is God!"

Elijah then slaughters the 450 prophets of Baal, clouds gather and a great rain comes down. Elijah is exultant, until he receives a message from Queen Jezebel, who vows that "at this time tomorrow I shall make your soul like one of those [prophets of Baal]."

Elijah is shocked that she does not repent or seek forgiveness for her idolatrous ways. Yet he also understands the shrewdness in her words. After 24 hours, she shall have him killed! Why not immediately? Because it will take the Israelites only 24 hours to forget the immediacy of the miracle. After only one day, the Israelites will forget about God and allow the wicked queen to destroy His only remaining prophet.

Elijah escapes to Beersheba and asks God to take his soul. An angel provides him with food and sends him on a 40-day journey to Mount Sinai. When he arrives, God asks why he has come, and he responds: "I have been a zealot; yes, a zealot for the Lord God of hosts, because the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant; they have destroyed Your altars, they have killed Your prophets and they now seek to take my life as well, I who am now left alone" (I Kings 19:10).

Elijah understands that despite the great miracle he wrought at Mount Carmel, no one has repented, nothing has changed, and his life is in danger.

God then sends Elijah a vision: a great, powerful wind, but the Lord is not in the wind; an earthquake, but the Lord is not in the earthquake; a fire, but the Lord is not in the fire. And after the fire comes a still, silent sound – the voice of the Lord.

God is telling His prophet that people aren't moved in the long term by miracles on a mountain – whether Mount Sinai or Mount Carmel – and that the Israelites will not be

Likutei Divrei Torah

forced into submission by dire punishments. After the first revelation at Sinai, they worshiped the Golden Calf, and after the revelation at Mount Carmel, they didn't repent of their idolatry, despite their shouts of "The Lord! He is God!"

The Israelites will be moved only by learning of God's second revelation at Sinai – the glimpse He shared with Moses into His divine essence by the still, small voice of kindness and understanding, by the God of love and forgiveness (Exodus 34:6-8).

And this is precisely what Malachi says at the conclusion of his prophecy. There is the possibility that "the end of days" will be awesome and awe-ful, replete with war, destruction and the bare survival of the faithful remnant; but the preferred possibility is that the end of days come as a result of national repentance for ignoring the voice of God, and the return of Israel to our heavenly Father in love and gratitude rather than out of fear.

Elijah must "turn back the hearts of the parents to their children and the hearts of the children to their parents" with the still, silent sound of unconditional love. God does not want to "strike the land with utter destruction" at the end of days (Malachi 3:24).

The rabbis of the Midrash go one step further. God is teaching Elijah that the prophet wanted to punish Israel only because he grossly misjudged them when he said, "They rejected Your covenant." Elijah will be "taken to heaven" (II Kings 2: 11, 12), but he will have to shuttle between heaven and earth, he will attend every Pesach Seder where Jews celebrate God's promise of redemption, and be present at every circumcision where Jews demonstrate their willingness to shed blood for the covenant. The prophet will transform his people not by judging (or misjudging) them, but only by loving them with the still, small sound of our Father's unconditional love.

The opening words of this third book of the Bible, the Book of Vayikra, tells us that God first called to Moses and then communicated to him a specific message concerning the sacrificial offerings of the Sanctuary. Why this double language of "calling" first and then "speaking" afterwards? Why not cut to the chase: "And the Lord spoke to Moses from the Tent of Meeting"?

The Talmudic sage Rabbi Musia Rabbah, in Tractate Yoma (4b), explains that the Bible is giving us a lesson in good manners: before someone commands another to do something, he must first ask permission to give the order. He even suggests that before someone begins speaking to another, one must ascertain that the person wishes to hear what he has to say. With great beauty, the rabbis suggest that even God Himself follows these laws of etiquette when addressing Moses; asking his permission before speaking to or commanding him.

The Ramban (Nahmanides) takes a completely opposite view, limiting this double language of addressing to the Sanctuary specifically: “this (seemingly superfluous language of first calling and then speaking) is not used elsewhere (where God is addressing Moses); it is only used here because Moses would not otherwise have been permitted to enter the Tent of Meeting, would not otherwise have been permitted to be in such close proximity to the place where the Almighty was to be found” (Ramban ad loc).

From this second perspective, it is Moses who must first be summoned by God and receive Divine permission before he dare enter the Sacred Tent of Meeting of the exalted Holy of Holies.

This latter interpretation seems closest to the Biblical text; since the very last verses in the Book of Exodus specifically tell us that whenever a cloud covered the Sanctuary, Moses was prevented from entering the Tent of Meeting and communicating with the Divine (Exodus 40:34, 35). Hence, the Book of Leviticus opens with God summoning Moses into the Tent of Meeting, apparently signaling the departure of the cloud and the Divine permission for Moses to hear God’s words.

This scenario helps us understand God’s relationship – and lack thereof – with the Israelites in general and with Moses in particular. You may recall that the initial commandment to erect a Sanctuary was in order for the Divine Presence to dwell in the midst of the Israelites (Ex. 25:8); such a close identity between the Divine and the Israelites on earth would signal the period of redemption. This would have been a fitting conclusion to the exodus from Egypt.

Tragically, Israel then sin with the Golden Calf and God immediately informs them that “I cannot go up in your midst because you are a stiff-necked nation, lest I destroy you on the way” (Exodus 33:3). Only if the Israelites are worthy can God dwell in their midst. If they forego their true vocation as a “sacred nation and a Kingdom of priest-teachers” while God is in such close proximity to them, then this God of truth will have to punish and even destroy them. He will therefore now keep His distance from them, retaining His “place”, as it were, in the supernal, transcendent realms, and sending His “angel-messenger” to lead them in their battles to conquer the Promised Land (ibid 33:2,3).

As a physical symbol of the concealment – or partial absence – of the Divine (hester panim), Moses takes the Tent of Meeting and removes its central position in the Israelite encampment, to a distance of 2000 cubits away (33:7). He then remonstrates with God arguing that the Almighty had promised to show His love by means of His Divine Name, to reveal to him His Divine attributes; and to accept Israel as His special nation (33:11,12). In other

words, Moses argues that that He, God – and not an angel-messenger – must reveal His Divine ways and lead Israel (Rashbam on 33:13).

God then responds that indeed “My face will lead” – I, Myself and not an angel-messenger – and “I shall bring you (you, Moses, but not the nation) to your ultimate resting place” (33:14). Moses is not satisfied, and argues that God Himself – His “face” and not His angel-messenger – must lead not only Moses but also the nation! Otherwise, he says, “do not take us (the entire nation) out of this desert”. And finally, God agrees that although He cannot be in the midst of the nation, He can and will lead them, stepping in whenever necessary to make certain that Israel will never disappear and will eventually return to their homeland.

God may not be completely manifest as the God of love in every historical experience of our people, and will not yet teach the world ethical monotheism. Israel remains a “work-in-progress” with God behind a cloud and “incommunicado”. Our nation, albeit imperfect, still serves as witnesses that the God of love and compassion exists, and orchestrates historical redemption through Israel. God is “incorporated,” incorporealized, in Israel, the people and the land.

What God leaves behind even when He is in a cloud are the two newly chiseled tablets of stone – His Divine Torah with the human input of the Oral Law – as well as His thirteen “ways” or attributes: God’s spiritual and emotional characteristics of love, compassion, freely given grace, patience, kindness, etc. (Leviticus 34:1-7). And when individuals internalize these attributes – imbue their hearts, minds and souls with love, compassion, kindness, grace and peace – they cause God to become manifest, enabling them to communicate with God “face to face”, like Moses. Then the cloud between Moses’ Active Intellect and God’s Active Intellect disappears, and Moses is enabled to teach and understand God’s Torah.

And so, Vayikra opens when God perceives that Moses has reached the highest spiritual level achievable by mortals, the cloud is removed from the Tent of the Meeting and God invites Moses to enter it and receive more of those Divine Emanations which comprise our Bible.

The Person in the Parsha Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

Gratitude, Not Solitude

Loyal readers of this column know that I am addicted to books. Not just “holy” books, and not just Jewish books. All books.

Included in my “addiction” is my fondness for browsing bookstores. It took me a while, but I’ve even mastered the self-discipline required to enter a bookstore, browse for a long while,

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even finger a few books, and then walk out without buying any.

These days, many bookstores, particularly those which are part of large national chains, often feature an author speaking about his or her book. I find those talks irresistible and have not ever been able to leave the bookstore once the author starts speaking. I generally just sit there and listen to the author, although many writers of interesting written works make quite boring speakers.

One evening, I heard the author of a rather famous work of nonfiction brag that her book was different from most of the others of its genre. “I dedicated my book to no one,” she said. “I thanked no one, and you will find no page, indeed not even a paragraph, of acknowledgments to those who helped me in the long and arduous process of writing the book.”

There was something about that statement that made me feel quite sad. I figured that it would be futile for me to say what I had in mind, but I did consider telling her how wrong I thought she was. She missed an opportunity to publicly, and for posterity, express her gratitude to others. She had an occasion to give voice to a profoundly humane response, and she blew it.

Gratitude is a primary religious value. Many early Jewish philosophers, Bahya ibn Paquda foremost among them, consider gratitude to be the basis of our entire religion. They define the root of all worship as the articulation of thanks to the Creator for our very existence and for the many benefits we receive from Him constantly. Recognizing God’s blessings and acknowledging them is the foundation of religious devotion.

As important as gratitude expressed to God in moments of devotion is, our tradition further insists that we express gratitude to others in our lives that have helped us, even in modest ways. The Rabbis point out that even inanimate objects that have “been there” for us deserve our gratitude, and thus explain Moses’ reluctance to even symbolically strike the Nile or the sand of the desert. After all, they provided protection to Moses at an earlier stage of his life.

But there is an aspect of gratitude that is less commonly recognized, and that is what particularly bothered me that evening in the bookstore. It is the power of public expression of expressing gratitude, of doing so in a social forum, thereby inviting others to share in one’s personal feelings of thankfulness.

The importance of public statements of gratitude—nay, public celebrations of gratitude—has its roots in a number of biblical sources, one of which is in this week’s Torah portion, Parshat Tzav (Leviticus 6:1-8:25). There, we

read of the thanksgiving offering, the korban todah:

"If he offers it for thanksgiving, he shall offer together with the sacrifice unleavened cakes with oil mixed in, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes of choice flour with oil mixed in, well soaked. This offering, with cakes of leavened bread added, he shall offer along with his thanksgiving sacrifice of well-being. Out of this he shall offer one of each kind...to the priest... And the flesh...shall be eaten on the day that it is offered; none of it shall be set aside until morning (Leviticus 7:12-15)."

The Rabbis explain that this sacrifice, which combines an animal offering with no less than four species of breads, is to be given by a person who has successfully emerged from a great trial: an illness, an imprisonment, or a sea voyage or desert journey. As an expression of gratitude, he is to bring the animal offering together with a total of forty breads, ten from each species, and donate one of each species to the priest. That leaves him with the meat of an entire animal plus a total of thirty-six breads, all of which must be consumed before dawn of the next day. Can he possibly consume all that food himself?

To this, Don Isaac Abarbanel—who, as personal advisor to Ferdinand and Isabella, no less, had an eminently practical side to him, besides his skills of biblical exegesis—comments: "There was no way he could consume all this himself in such a short time. Obviously, the Torah encouraged him to invite his family, friends, and acquaintances to join him in feasting and in rejoicing. In this assembly, they would ask him to tell his story and question him about what prompted his thanksgiving feast. Thus, he would relate to them the miracles and wonders which God had bestowed upon him, and together all would join in praise of God, in a communal expression of thanksgiving and song."

One of my personal rabbinic role models was a man named Rabbi Elimelech Bar Shaul. He was the chief Rabbi of Rechovot in Israel, and was a pioneer in the field of religious outreach. He was especially adept at teaching Torah on the university campus, and many of his lectures have been published in a volume called *Min HaBe'er*, "From the Well". He passed away at a young age, under tragic circumstances, in 1965.

Rabbi Bar Shaul elaborates eloquently upon the benefits for the grateful person to share his experiences with others. "Narration of one's story changes the story," he writes. "It helps one integrate it into his behavior; it helps one remember it longer; and it helps one more fully appreciate his good fortune."

He proceeds to elaborate upon the great benefits that accrue to those who share in the celebration. "It enables them to learn skills of

empathy, to see beyond themselves, and to gain the special joy that can only come in the company of other people."

Rabbi Bar Shaul concludes his inspiring essay on the subject of gratitude by quoting a prophetic Midrash: "In the future-to-come, all the animal sacrifices will be discontinued. But the thanksgiving sacrifice will not be discontinued. All prayers will no longer be necessary, but prayers of thanksgiving will endure."

He then quotes a collection of comments on the Midrash, *Asifat Ma'amrim*, in which these words appear: "In that distant future, no one will sin; hence, sacrifices will become irrelevant. Prayer will not be necessary because there will be no illness and no woe. Not that mitzvoth will be obsolete, but if one has no roof there is no mitzvah to build a protective fence around the roof. So too: no sin, no sacrifice; no woes, no prayers. But gratitude, that will be eternally necessary, and even more so in a more perfect world."

There are certainly religious occasions which warrant solitude. But occasions for gratitude are not times for solitude. They are occasions for a party.

Dvar Torah Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

The beauty of compromise

A recipe for disaster: that's what happens when people always insist on getting their way. In Parshat Tzav, the Torah introduces us to the 'korban olah', the burnt offering, and this is how the Torah starts the passage (Vayikra 6:2): "Zot torat haolah," – "This is the Torah (law) of the burnt offering."

The sefer *Vayedaber Moshe* teaches a very important lesson from these words.

The term 'olah', he says, of course means to go up, and here it can also represent an arrogant person, somebody who is always trying to raise his or her level at the expense of others – people who have an expanded view of themselves. Now, what is the 'Torah' of the olah? What is their outlook, what is their mindset? It is all centred on the word 'zot' – this. "This is what I want." "This is what must happen." They never take no for an answer.

In Parshat Shoftim the Torah famously teaches (Devarim 16:20) "Tzedek tzedek tirdof" – "Justice, justice you must pursue."

The term 'tzedek' of course, like 'tzodeik' means to be correct and our sages teach us that the term 'tzedek' is repeated in order to tell us that sometimes the correct thing to do is to compromise. When one has the maturity and the responsibility to compromise, then one facilitates peace and harmony. Where there is compromise, everyone's a winner. And when there's no compromise, and when everybody

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strives to achieve their own aspirations without ever giving in to anybody else, there is no basis for a harmonious relationship.

So therefore in the most surprising of contexts, the Torah teaches us an important lesson about human relationships. If you wish to be an olah, always raising your own importance, always striving to get your own way at the expense of others while propelling yourself upwards, ultimately you might just come tumbling down.

Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*

Every Shabbat is Shabbat Hagadol

Below are five relatively simplistic questions that every traditional Jew should ask himself or herself, but no one seems to be bothered by these difficulties. A new concept will be introduced all five questions, This overarching idea, that explains all the questions, will help develop a new understanding of Shabbat.

The Five Simple Questions

Question 1 – For those readers who grew up in a traditional or observant home, they should ask themselves: when did they *first* hear the Hebrew expression *Shabbat HaGadol*-The Great Shabbat?

It may not surprise the reader to learn that when asked this question, i.e., when as children did the traditional Jews first hear the phrase "*Shabbat Hagadol*-The Great Shabbat", more than 90% answer "this Shabbat, the Shabbat before Passover", which is, indeed referred to as "*Shabbat Hagadol*-The Great Shabbat." *But that response is incorrect to the question asked.* The question was when was the *first time* they first heard the expression *Shabbat HaGadol*-The Great Shabbat?

The phrase "*Shabbat Hagadol*" was first heard by every observant Jewish child at the age of five or six (possibly earlier), as soon as he or she could read Hebrew or hear his or her parents recite Shabbat blessings. When? Every Shabbat, in the *Birkat Hamazon*-Grace After Meals, the special paragraph recited two or three times (at each meal) every Shabbat (Called *Retze*) – the words speak for themselves: "May it please you, Hashem, our God, give us rest through Your commandments, and through the commandment of "*Shabbat Hagadol* VeHakdosh Ha-ze-this Great and Holy Shabbat". And, just in case the Jew praying did not catch it the first time, the paragraph continues: *Ki Yom Ze Gadol Vikadosh*-for this day is Great and Holy" ("*Retze*" paragraph recited by traditional Jews in Grace After Meals every Shabbat). This is when all observant children first hear the phrase "*Shabbat Hagadol*-The Great Shabbat." Thus, it is clear: **EVERY** Shabbat is called *Gadol*-Great, not only the one before Passover. Jews recite this phrase on average 100 Shabbatot a year. And yet, most adult Jews who have recited this phrase tens of thousands of times, do not even realize that they are declaring that

every Shabbat is indeed THE GREAT Shabbat. This Shabbat is *Shabbat HaGadol*-the Great Shabbat. So is next Shabbat. Thus, the real question is why? Why is every Shabbat called *Shabbat HaGadol*? And then, what is so special about the Shabbat before Pesach, which is also called by the Rabbis (and the Jewish calendar) “*Shabbat Hagadol*-The Great Shabbat”?

Question 2 – The central words of each prayer service is the *Amida-Shmoneh Esreh*-Silent Prayer, recited three times a day by observant Jews. *Every single Amidah service is the same every day of the year* (with a few minor changes from morning to evening prayer), every day of the year. Thus, the daily *Shacharit*-morning *Amidah* contains the same words as the *Mincha*-Afternoon *Amidah*, the same as the *Arvit*-night *Amidah*. But not only in daily services. This fact is also true for every special day of the year: Rosh Hashana’s *Amida* – all 3 -- are the same (not counting any *Musaf*-additional service). So, too, Pesach and other holidays – the same words three times each day of that holiday. So, the question: which is the only day of the Jewish year that is an exception to this rule, where the *Amida* changes significantly? And why?

By process of elimination, we can see that the answer is Shabbat. While the first three and last three blessings on Shabbat remain the same as every other day of the year, the central blessing of Shabbat at night is completely different from the central blessing of Shabbat morning *Shacharit Amida* (Central paragraphs recited in each of the three *Amida*-Silent Prayer blessings each Shabbat). And for *Mincha*-Afternoon *Amida* on Shabbat, it too is a completely different text than that of the night or morning. So, the question is: why is Shabbat the only day of the entire Jewish year when the content of *Amida* changes from prayer service to prayer service?

Question 3 – Friday night Kiddush mentions the reason for Shabbat as the Creation of the world, as described in Genesis chapter 1, and is the traditional understanding of the reason for Shabbat, the seventh day of the week when all God’s Creation ceased. But then, in the Friday night Kiddush, it also says that Shabbat is “*Zeicher LiYitziat Mitzrayim-a Remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt*” (Kiddush Prayer recited Friday evenings over wine in traditional Jewish families). If we look very carefully, there is not *one* mention of Shabbat in the entire Torah when the Jews were in Egypt. Although the Jewish calendar was given in Egypt (Exodus 12), this did not include Shabbat at all. Why, then, does the Kiddush call the Exodus a remembrance of the Shabbat?

Question 4 – There is only one paragraph in all the Psalms in which King David mentioned Shabbat, Psalm 92, “A Song for the Day of Shabbat.” However, if we examine the sixteen verses of this Psalm, *there is not one word in it*

referring to *Shabbat* (Psalm 92). King David writes in the psalm about singing praises to God, but that is also an everyday activity in Judaism. God’s enemies will perish, and those who are steeped in Judaism when young will remain vibrant in old age. But nothing about Shabbat. Nothing! Why is it, then, THE psalm recited to honor the day of Shabbat in Jewish prayers three times every Shabbat?

Question 5 – In the *Amida* of Shabbat morning, Moses is described as joyous as he “brings down the Two Tablets in his arms, which contain the laws of keeping Shabbat (the Fourth Commandment), as it says in the Torah...” (Shabbat morning *Amida*, central blessing). And then, instead of quoting the actual verses in those Ten Commandments about Shabbat, which we would expect, i.e., “Remember the Shabbat and Keep it holy, etc.,” the Rabbis chose, instead, to put in this prayer other verses about Shabbat, located eleven chapters later in the Torah (Exodus 31:16-17, 20:8-11). Although these verses talk about Shabbat as well, they are *not* in the “Two Tablets in his arms” that are described in this very prayer. Why didn’t the Rabbis simply quote the obvious verses from the Ten Commandments referred to earlier in the paragraph?

Five good questions. All interesting and somewhat difficult in and of themselves. But if one singular concept about Shabbat could answer all these questions, it would be remarkable. This chapter will attempt to, indeed, answer all five questions with a new explanation. But a few background ideas are required first.

Gadol-Great Has Many Meanings

Just as in English, where the word “great” has multiple meanings, so, too, in Hebrew and other languages, this word has various meanings, depending upon the context. An experience can be great, a person can be called great due to his or her personality or accomplishments in sports, or food can also be called “great.” So, too, in Hebrew. What does *Gadol-great* signify in the Scripture and the prayers?

At the beginning of the Torah, it would be easy to translate *Gadol* in the physical sense only. Abraham is physically older/larger than his brother, God promises Abraham a great nation (that could be understood both physically and spiritually, or both) and Abraham had a large party for Isaac (Genesis 10:21, 12:2, 21:8). But in a Torah verse in Exodus, it is impossible to understand *Gadol* in the physical sense. First, in the one verse, it describes the boy Moses as becoming *Gadol-great* and growing up. Then, in the *very next verse*, it again uses the verb *Gadol* to describe Moses (certainly not an accident or coincidence). Since the Torah does not use any “extra” words or does not repeat anything needlessly, Rashi asks what this “*Gadol-greatness*” in the second verse, and answers it signifies “greatness” in the moral or

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spiritual sense (Exodus 2:10-11 with Rashi commentary). This points out that the word *Gadol* in Jewish thought, can and should be understood in a spiritual sense as well.

What about days of the week, which are not physical at all? What does it signify when the prayers say a day is “*Gadol-great*,” like Shabbat?

God’s Quantity V. God’s Quality

Two almost identical verses help explain the difference between the days of the week and Shabbat. In every morning prayer, Jews recite a verse from Psalms 104 (that describes in great detail the greatness of God’s creation) (Blessings before morning Shema, Psalms 104:24): “How *RABU-Great-Large* are the works-Creation of God.” On Shabbat, this is verse is not recited. Rather, one word is changed in the verse that is in Psalm 92, quoted above, dedicated to Shabbat: “How *GADLU-Great-exalted* are the works-Creation of God”. *RABU-Great-Large* during the week vs. *GADLU-Great-exalted* on Shabbat. This is the essential difference between weekdays and Shabbat. On weekdays, Jews admire God’s creation in terms of size: how abundant, immense, huge, and enormous it is. *Rabu* is derived from the Hebrew word, *Harbei*-quantity. On Shabbat, *Gadol* implies qualitative greatness beyond physical, spiritual, mysterious, amazing, and unlimited. Thus, Shabbat goes beyond the physical and enters the *quality* of the Creation, the “why” of life, and the purpose of man as part of that Creation.

The vastness of the universe that Jews recite daily (except Shabbat) in the verse “*מה רבינו-מעשיך*”- How *RABU*- Large are the works-Creation of God” is truly amazing if we think about it. There are 200 billion trillion stars, each averaging the size of “our” star, the sun. There are 100 billion galaxies, each with about 100 million stars (suns) in *each* galaxy, like our Milky Way. The size of the universe is estimated at 93 billion light years. At the speed of light, 186,000 miles a second (you can circle the earth seven times in one second at that speed), 93 billion light years. How can we understand how much is just one billion? If a person were to count from 1, 2, 3..., or one number each second, it would take almost 32 years for that individual to reach a billion seconds. At the very same time as this vastness, God’s creation during the Six Days encompasses such tiny things and minute entries that work so miraculously. There are about 32 *trillion cells* in each human body, all working in sync perfectly for a healthy person to function. Human beings breathe on average 22,000 times a day, and healthy people do not feel it until they are deprived of oxygen for a few seconds, and then they can die quickly. How beautiful creation is *Ma Rabu-Great-Large Maasecha Hashem*. What, then, is Shabbat?

Shabbat is not about the physicality of the universe. “**גָּדוֹל מָשָׁךְ הָרָא**” How *Gadol-Great-Mysterious are Your Works, God*” Like the *Gadol*-greatness of Moses in the verse, it is about the quality of that Creation, the values of God implanted in the universe. Shabbat is a day of contemplation; what is the purpose of the Creation? What is the goal of mankind? What is each person’s reason for being in the world? How and why does God step into historical events? And all this is a result of the Creation of the Six Days. That is Shabbat. The greatness of it is all. The unknowable. That God cares about every human being, and what happens to each individual, despite man’s infinitesimally small size, in comparison to the entire universe. Each Jew should use the Shabbat to contemplate how he or she can improve and contribute better during the next six days until the next Shabbat. That is the *Gadol*-great in Shabbat.

And, unlike the weekday prayers, the blessings on Shabbat morning before Shema twice mention the *Gadol*-great of Shabbat (including Psalm 92), and not one mention in the prayer of the *Rabu*-great-vastness of the weekday (Shabbat morning prayer service, blessings before Shema). Maimonides, in describing the Shabbat, describes Shabbat as a *Gadol*-great day (Maimonides, Sefer HaMitzvot, Positive Mitzvah 155). So, too, Chinuch uses this word twice in describing Shabbat (Sefer Chinuch, Mitzvah 31). So, what does it mean? This day of *Gadol*-qualitative greatness is certainly not the standard explanation of the concept of Shabbat, which was generally understood as a day demonstrating belief in God as the Creator of the universe, and nothing more. When did this new concept of Shabbat develop and what does it signify for us today?

The Traditional Difference Between Shabbat and Jewish Holidays

For generations, all nations in the world knew of Shabbat, as demonstrated by the seven-day week, accepted by almost every country on earth (there is no equivalent in astronomy to the seven days of the week, unlike the length of a day, month and year, and Rabbi Yehuda Halevi uses this as a proof that all nations, at one time, accepted God creating the world in six days). Thus, the general idea of Shabbat and Creation was generally accepted by all in the ancient world, including the Jewish people. This idea was totally unlike the Jewish holidays like Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot (all tied to the Exodus), where God was manifest in the world and saved the Jewish people. While these holidays were established by a declaration of the Jewish people (though celebrating the New Moon), Shabbat always just “existed”. The Talmud says (Pesachim 117b) that Shabbat will come each week whether the Jewish people keep it or not, unlike the Jewish holidays, which cannot come until the Jewish people proclaim them. Even today, this difference between Shabbat and Jewish holidays persists and affects Jewish law

and practice (Yalkut Yosef (Rabbi Yitzchak Yosef), 267:14).

But then, on one Shabbat, in the year 1312 CE, something drastic changed. It was an “AHA” moment for the Jewish people. Throughout the plagues, the Jews never connected the God that everyone accepted, the Creator, the God of Shabbat, with the God that was performing the miracles for the Jews in Egypt and bringing the Ten Plagues. But, after God commanded the Jewish people to take the Paschal lamb into their homes (the idol of Egypt) on the Shabbat before they left Egypt, something changed. The Jews realized that the God who was saving them from their Egyptian tormentors was also the same God Who created the world! And there was a connection between the Creation, Shabbat and what was happening to the Jews in Egypt. They further concluded that it was, somehow, *because* of the idea of Creation and the Shabbat, that God was also active in the world in Egypt. The active God in Egypt who helped the Jews was galvanized as a result of the Creation of the six days and Shabbat. For the first time in history, people saw and realized that the process of Creation continued after the first six days, and, thus, God became active in events of nations, bringing the Exodus.

If the idea of Shabbat had been around “forever” and God had been helping the Jews for many months, why, then did the Jews just realize this connection now? Rabbi Gestetner explains (Lehorot Natan, “Shabbat HaGadol”) that until now, God never had commanded the Jewish people to do anything. He simply helped them and did for them, without requesting anything in return. Now, that God had “demanded” and commanded that the Jews take the animal (an Egyptian god) and sacrifice it, the Jews re-examined their relationship with God and “put all the pieces together”. They realized during that Shabbat in Egypt that the concept of Shabbat was much more than a memorial to the act of Creation. It was a day of *Gadol*, of greatness that enabled all events in life to unfold. It was this realization, that Shabbat was indeed *Gadol*, that changed everything and affected Jewish as well as world history.

Nachmanides explains that these two pillars of Judaism, are portrayed in the Jewish calendar. The Jews have no names for the days of the week (only Israel and Portugal share this trait even today in the world) (Nachmanides, Derashot HaRamban, Rosh Hashana). In the Tefillah-prayers and the State of Israel, Sunday is called Day #1, Monday day #2, etc... Why? Sunday is the first day of Shabbat, which is the full name in the prayers (Psalm recited daily at the end of morning prayers). So, the days of the week are a testimony to Creation and Shabbat. Similarly, the months of the Jewish year also were not supposed to have names either, says Nachmanides (Nachmanides, commentary to Exodus 12:2). They were supposed to be called the first month (since the

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Exodus), the second month (since the Exodus), etc., (like the days of the week), recalling the events in Egypt (the Jews later gave names to the months because of their return to the land of Israel in tribute to God who returned them from the Babylonian exile). Therefore, when any Jew would say that day’s date (“Today is Monday the tenth of the month of Sivan, or “today is the second day of the week of Shabbat, the tenth of the third month from the Exodus”), he or she would be combining these two ideas that the Jews first connected on that Shabbat in Egypt in 1312 BCE. The events of the Exodus came about *because* of the events of Creation and Shabbat.

This Realization Changed the World and Changed Shabbat Forever

As noted above, Shabbat was a “standalone” day, that came and went each week, and no one had to declare the Shabbat. It was originally intended as a universal day for all nations. But when the Jewish people realized the connection between Creation, Shabbat, and their fate as a people were all connected – on that Shabbat in Egypt - then God decided to *change the nature of Shabbat itself!* It no longer would only be a universal day for all the nations to acknowledge the Creation. Because the Jews realized that the concept of Shabbat was indeed *Gadol*-qualitatively different and connected to their fate as a people, God decided to give the Shabbat to the Jewish people alone! Shabbat now would be a particularistic day for the Jewish people only. And that is one reason that even before the Ten Commandments (which are universal laws for the entire world), God gave the Shabbat to the Jewish people in the desert through the commandment of the Manna (which was taken each day except on Shabbat, in which carrying was forbidden), and also through special laws given in Mara (Exodus 16:22-27, 15:25 with Rashi commentary).

In the second set of Ten Commandments, repeated in Deuteronomy almost word for word from the first time in Exodus, one of the main “changes” is that the verse says to keep the Shabbat *because the Jews were slaves in Egypt* (in the first Ten Commandments in Exodus it says “because God created the world in six days”) (Deuteronomy 5:12-15). Some people misinterpret this idea, believing that Shabbat is a day when no slavery is permitted. Nachmanides (Nachmanides commentary Deuteronomy 5:15) explains the connection in the verse between Shabbat and slavery in Egypt, through our new understanding. There is a link between what happened to the Jews in Egypt, the events of Creation, and that very first Shabbat. The ideas of Shabbat and its “greatness” were the ultimate cause of what happened in Egypt that saved the Jewish people. That realization by the Jews themselves came on that last Shabbat the Jews spent in Egypt. It is in honor of that realization on that Shabbat in Egypt, that every Shabbat is indeed *Gadol*-great quality beyond physical creation, that the Rabbis decided to call the

anniversary of that Shabbat and realization by the Jews, *Shabbat HaGadol*-The Great Shabbat (understanding that every Shabbat is also *Gadol*-great).

This new concept of Shabbat also helps answer another question regarding Shabbat itself in the Torah. The Torah calls Shabbat a *Moed*-holiday, and couples it in Leviticus with all the other Jewish holidays. Rashi and many commentaries naturally ask the obvious question: if Shabbat is different and a standalone day of holiness, why put it together in the section with all the other Jewish holidays that had to be declared by the Jews people? (Leviticus 23:1-3 with Rashi commentary) Rashi and many other Rabbis give their answers, but now the reason that the Torah put Shabbat together with the holidays seems clear. Until the Jews in Egypt recognized and understood Shabbat for what it is relating to Jewish history, then Shabbat was indeed regarded only as alone and apart, as the day created by God. But now that the Jews understood how Shabbat relates to their experiences in Egypt, just as God obligated the Jewish people to declare all the other Jewish holidays, God *also* obligates the Jewish people to declare the specialness of Shabbat each week and make it holy. This Mitzvah-commandment, for Jews to declare Shabbat and make it holy, is expressly written in the Torah and Jewish law (Exodus 20:8-11, Maimonides, *Hilchot Shabbat* 29:10). After Shabbat was given to the Jewish people as their “own” day as a symbol of God, it, too, is called a “holiday” that must be “announced” by the Jews. That is how Rabbi Soloveitchik understands Shabbat today (Ha-adam Ve-olamo, Rabbi Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik, pages 247-248). After the Egypt experience, Shabbat is both a “standalone” day, but also must be declared a holiday by the Jews, similar to every other Jewish holiday. This declaration is the Kiddush that traditional Jews recite twice weekly.

Now We Can Understand the Anomalies in the Prayers

Unlike any other celebration, holiday, or day in the Jewish calendar, Shabbat transformed from its original “intent” or purpose, as a result of that realization in Egypt by the Jewish people, connecting their experiences to the original Shabbat. All the other days of the Jewish year never changed. Thus, the Jewish *Tefillah*-prayers on every other day of the year remain the same, never changing text from one service to the next service. But the prayers on Shabbat reflect that transformation of the purpose of the day. The three distinct prayer services describe three distinct concepts and relationships between mankind and Shabbat. On Friday night, the content of the *Amida* is only about the Shabbat of Creation, the universal Shabbat for all peoples. Nothing about that prayer and text relates at all to the Jewish people. Shabbat morning’s *Amida* speaks only of the special relationship between Shabbat, the Jewish people, and God. Shabbat

is a “sign” and bond between the Jews and the Almighty that occurred in and after Egypt, even before the Giving of the Torah. Part of the text declares “You did not give it (Shabbat) Hashem, our God to the nations of the lands... For to Israel, Your people, You have given it (Shabbat) in love...” For the afternoon *Mincha Amida*, the content speaks of a time in the future and Shabbat of the future, after the coming of the Messiah, when the Uniqueness-Oneness of God, the Uniqueness-Oneness of the Jewish people, will be acknowledged by all the nations of the earth.

Now, we can also understand why the Torah verses quoted in the Shabbat morning *Amida* morning had to be “changed” from the expected “Remember the Shabbat and keep it holy” of the Ten Commandments, to the verses about Shabbat eleven chapters later. The Shabbat verses in the Ten Commandments (and all the other commandments) are universal themes, for the entire world, and they do not reflect the unique relationship between the Shabbat, God, and the Jewish people. It is only later in Exodus that God says “to make the Shabbat an eternal covenant between Me and the children of Israel. It is a sign forever....” Thus, it is *these* verses that had to be inserted in the Shabbat morning service, whose theme is the Shabbat of the Jewish people and God.

Similarly, we can now understand the mentioning of Egypt in Friday night’s Kiddush. While it is true that the main theme Friday night is the Shabbat of Creation, it was when the Jews were able to connect their experience in Egypt to that Shabbat of Creation, that Shabbat became a turning point for the Jewish people and their relationship with God. Thus, Shabbat of Creation is also part of the Egyptian experience (*Zeicher Liytzat Mitzrayim*-A Remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt) mentioned in the Kiddush.

* This column has been adapted from a series of volumes written by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel “*The Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*” available from Urim and Amazon. For the full article or to review all the footnotes in the original, contact the author at nachum@jewishdestiny.com

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Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky

Lessons From Korbanos for Our Lives

Parshas Tzav completes the Torah’s laws regarding how to offer the different korbanos, concluding with a general prohibition about tumah that applies to all korbanos. An individual who is tamei may not partake of any korban, a kohen who is tamei may not offer a korban, and merely entering the Beis Hamikdash in the state of tumah is a serious prohibition. Included in the restrictions of korbanos and tumah is the prohibition of eating a korban that itself became tamei. Notwithstanding the many rules concerning tumah and korbanos, korbanos tzibbur that

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must be offered at a set time override many of the limitations that usually apply to korbanos.

The Rambam in Mishneh Torah classifies the laws of both korbanos and tumah as chukim, i.e. laws that we cannot truly understand. Nevertheless, the Rambam concludes Sefer Avodah, which deals with korbanos, and Sefer Taharah, which discusses tumah, in a similar way, deriving lessons from these areas of halacha even though we cannot comprehend their ultimate reason. Hashem incorporates within the chukim important lessons that we can relate to. What possible message can we derive from the prohibition of korbanos being associated with tumah? And why are korbanos tzibbur not subject to the rules that otherwise govern korbanos?

The Ramban (in the beginning of Sefer Vayikra) describes the bringing of a korban as a process of renewal of life itself. According to the strict rules of justice, a person who sins should not merit to continue to live. And yet, Hashem offers us a chance to do teshuva and to bring a korban. The Beis Hamikdash and korbanos, which signify life, cannot be associated with death. Tumah, by contrast, is the antitheses of life; it occurs as the result of either actual loss of life, such as the tumah caused by a dead body, or by a potential loss of life, such as various laws of tumah associated with different bodily emissions. It is perhaps for this reason that a kohen is not permitted to come into contact with a dead body: a kohen who offers korbanos must be a symbol of life. In the Beis Hamikdash, the korbanos, and even the kohen, must be free of tumah and representative of life.

There are halachos that govern a situation when someone designates a korban and subsequently dies. However, there is a unique status of a korban tzibbur concerning these halachos, since a tzibbur cannot die! Even if all of the previous members of the tzibbur are no longer alive, the tzibbur continues as its own entity for eternity. Relatedly, a tzibbur may offer a korban even if its members are tamei. The tumah that emanates from death does not limit a tzibbur, since death itself is not a challenge to Klal Yisrael as a whole.

Following the Rambam’s guidance to search for lessons from seemingly incomprehensible chukim, perhaps we can learn two important lessons from the halachos that govern korbanos and tumah. We are the representatives of the great gift of life that Hashem grants us through the vehicle of teshuva, which culminates in the offering of a korban. Today, in the absence of the Beis Hamikdash, our tefillos take the place of a korban. Returning to Hashem is an opportunity for renewal and optimism as we begin our lives anew, dedicated to avodas Hashem. As individuals, our time in this world is limited. But by dedicating ourselves to the tzibbur, we become eternal. Let us look at these truths that emanate from the world of korbanos and

incorporate them into our lives. In the zechus of studying both the halachos and the lessons of the Beis Hamikdash, may we merit to see its rebuilding speedily in our days.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah
by Rabbi Label Lam

Who We Work For

Halleluka... Servants of HASHEM, give praise; praise the name of HASHEM. (Tehillim 113:1) -from Hallel

Pesach is in the air! Everywhere people are working extra hard to be ready for the holy days of Pesach. Let us emphasize these words, "working hard". For some reason it is one of those Yomim Tovim that no one can escape without "hard work". Even if one is going to a hotel a lot of preparation and dislocation is involved. Why should it be so? It's not for no reason!

Now I know this statement may sound shocking to our sensibilities but here it goes, "Slavery is not necessarily a bad thing!" We all know and agree that an abusive form of slavery is bad news and everyone is repulsed by it. However, we refer to ourselves in Hallel as servants of HASHEM. It's a part of Hallel, the utmost enthusiastic praise of HASHEM! It is not a mournful dirge! It would be our crown to be included in that rare club of servants of HASHEM. Moshe was called a servant of HASHEM. Yehoshuah was called a servant of HASHEM. Dovid HaMelech is referred to as a servant of HASHEM. We aspire to be worthy of such a title. So, it sounds like being a servant, a slave is not only not a bad designation, it may just be the most noble.

Now let's get this straight. Isn't Pesach all about freedom? We commemorate and celebrate and relive our exodus from Egypt and our freedom from the tyrannic rule of Pharaoh. That's the story we grew up with! Now at this advanced age I am coming to realize that that is only half the story.

What does it mean to be a servant/slave! Your time is not your own. Your possessions are not your own. Your life is not your own. You must do many things that are not necessarily in agreement with a life of leisure. You are constantly being driven out of your comfort zone. You are being guided and yes controlled by an external force, a director, a boss.

There is a reason certain images from the world reach our eyes. They give us a way of reflecting on our situation. We have all seen the scenes of youth, most often, dressed in ways that betray their dignity. They wander about lost and drugs and violence become commonplace. I am being ginger here and circumspect but I think we can all conjure up an image or ten million. Yet if one or a group of these same young people joins the military, or submits to a sports coach, or is involved in some religious training their appearance and level of achievement is multiplied and

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amplified by the millions. What is the difference? A coach, a boss, G-d can shape a man into something he could never make out of himself.

This contrast is for our edification. We did not get out of Egypt 3333 years ago to just be free to do whatever we want to do. We actually only changed employers. Instead of working a cruel dictator that did not have our best interest mind and who bullied into submission forcing us to engage in futile labor just to break our hearts and souls, we willfully submit ourselves to HASHEM Who has demonstrated his concern for our ultimate well being and Who encourages us to do actions that breath meaning into every step and every breath we take.

I am afraid that without a Rav, without a Shul, without a community, without Torah learning, without G-d any good and well-meaning Jew is at great risk of not only falling short of his potential but even becoming a hazard to himself and others, not unlike the wayward and destructive youth we referenced.

Great potential has a way of blossoming or imploding as Langston Hughes expressed in his poem, "What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? Or fester like a sore—And then run? Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and sugar over—like a syrupy sweet? Maybe it just sags like a heavy load. Or does it explode!?"

Reb Yeruchem Levovitz said that the main metric to measure the greatness of a Jew is, "How much of an Eved HASHEM* is he?" We all work for someone and fear someone and love someone. The question is who do we work for and fear and love?! On Pesach we became free to choose Who we fear and love and Who we work for!

*Servant of G-d

Drasha Parshas Tzav - Fitting Work

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

It is not a glamorous job, but somebody has to do it. And so the Torah begins this week's portion by telling us the mitzvah of terumas hadeshen, removing the ashes that accumulate from the burnt-offerings upon the altar. The Torah teaches us: "The Kohen shall don his fitted linen tunic, and he shall don linen breeches on his flesh; he shall separate the ash of what the fire consumed of the elevation-offering on the Altar, and place it next to the Altar" (Leviticus 7:3).

What is simply derived from the verse is that the service of ash-removal is done with the priestly tunic. What is noticeable to the Talmudic mind is the seemingly innocuous adjective "fitted." Rashi quotes the derivation that applies to all the priestly garments: they must be fitted. They can not be too long, nor can they be too short. They must be tailored to fit each individual Kohen according to his physical measurements.

The question is simple. The sartorial details of the bigdei kehuna (priestly vestments) were discussed way back in the portion of Tezaveh, which we read five weeks ago. Shouldn't the directive of precise-fitting garments have been mentioned in conjunction with the laws of tailoring? Further, if the Torah waits to teach us those requisites in conjunction with any service, why not choose a more distinguished act, such as an anointment or sacrifice? Why choose sweeping ashes?

My dear friend, and the editor of the Parsha Parables series, Dr. Abby Mendelson, was, in a former life, a beat writer for the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball club. In the years that we learned Torah together, he would recount amusing anecdotes and baseball minutia. Some of his stories have retained an impact on me years after I heard them. This is one of them.

Roberto Clemente was an amazing athlete who played the game of baseball with utmost dedication. One day, late in the 1968 season, he was playing outfield against the Houston team. The Pirates were no longer contenders, and the game had no statistical meaning.

A ball was hit deep toward the outfield wall. As Clemente raced back, it seemed that the ball was going to hit the wall way over his head. With superhuman strength he propelled himself like a projectile toward the wall. Speeding at a forty-five degree angle he collided with the wall at the same time that the ball hit it, two feet above his head.

Strictly adhering to the laws of nature, both Clemente and the baseball rebounded from the wall, the former's return to earth much less graceful than the latter's. While the white sphere gently bounced to the playing surface and rolled toward the infield, the much larger uniformed and spiked entity came crashing after it with a resounding thud.

Bruised and embarrassed, Clemente clamed after the elusive orb and finally threw it to a less traumatized member of his team who completed the hapless mission.

In the post-game interview an innocent reporter asked Clemente, "Roberto, your team is out of contention. There are three games left. Why in the world did you try so hard to make that play? Was it worth bruising yourself?"

Clemente was puzzled. In a few short sentences he explained his actions. "I am not paid to win pennants. My job is to catch the ball. I tried to catch the ball. I was trying to do my job."

When the Torah tells us that the clothes have to fit perfectly for a particular service it is telling us that the job is exactly right for the man who is doing it. The ash-cleaner is not doing another Kohen's job, wearing an ill-fitted garment as if it were thrown upon him as he entered for the early morning shift.

What seems to be the most trivial of jobs is the job that must be done! That is the job of the hour, and that is exactly what the Kohen is designated to do. And for the job or service that is tailor-made for the individual the clothes must also be tailor-made for the job as well!

I once asked a high-level administrator of a major institution what was his job. He answered in all seriousness, "I do what ever has to be done to get the job done and that becomes my job."

Whatever we do, and however we do it, we must realize that the end can only come through the menials. Whatever it takes to get to the goal is as integral as the goal itself. It requires devotion and commitment, and it requires self-sacrifice. If you dress with dignity to collect the ash, if you approach every task with both with sartorial and personal pride and grace, then you are certainly up to any task.

Good Shabbos!

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Rabbi M. Kamenetzky is the Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore.

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Tzav

Don't Let It Go to Your Head!

This week's parsha begins with the mitzvah of the Korban Olah. Aharon and his children are given the tremendous responsibility of the avodah in the Bais Hamikdash, but after the Torah introduces the Korbon Olah, the first thing Aharon is instructed is, "And the kohen shall put on his linen garment and his linen pants shall he wear on his flesh, and take up the ashes, which the fire had consumed the elevating-offering on the altar, and lay them down at the side of the mizbayach" (Vayikra 6:3). This is the mitzvah d'Oraysa of "Terumas HaDeshen." Every morning, as part of the avodah, the kohen removed the ashes of the wood and offerings that had burnt the previous night.

The Chovos HaLevovos, one of the classic works on ethics and Jewish philosophy, written by Rav Bachye ben Yosef Ibn Paqda, says that the rationale behind Terumas HaDeshen is that the Torah is particularly careful that people should not become ba'alei gayyah (haughty people).

The kohen may think that he is something special—and in fact, he is something special. He is among the select few who were chosen to do the avodas hamikdash. Nevertheless, the Torah instructs him, "Take out the ashes!" The Torah is very sensitive to human emotions. Lest Aharon come to think too much of himself, the Torah tells him to begin his day with the lowly task of taking out the ashes.

A number of years ago, I realized that the last thing I do on Erev Yom Kippur is take out the garbage. Erev Yom Kippur is a very special day. We eat the Seuda Hamafsekes (last meal before the fast). We bless our children. But the last thing before going to shul on Erev Yom Kippur is taking out the garbage.

I was struck by two thoughts: First of all, this really represents what we all try to do on Erev Yom Kippur—take out the garbage in our lives. Secondly, when someone walks into Shul on Yom Kippur wearing his kittel, he may be tempted to think of the loftiness of his station, entering into Yom Kippur enveloped in kedusha. However, a person should always remember that he still needs to deal with such things as garbage bags. He remains a very human type of being. He should never forget that he needs to take out the garbage. He must eat, drink and sleep, and yes, he must still take out the garbage. If a person thinks in those terms, he will not let things go to his head and become a ba'al gayyah.

A Person's Honor Has Value

On one hand, as we explained, the Torah is concerned that the Kohen Gadol should not become a ba'al gayyah. On the other hand, the Torah is very particular about the honor of the less fortunate – that a poor person should not become depressed and broken.

There is an interesting gemara in Bava Kama (92a). The wealthy people brought their Bikurim (first fruit offerings) in gold and silver baskets. The poor people could not afford gold or silver baskets, so they carried their fruits to the kohen in baskets made out of reeds.

The Gemara says that the kohanim returned the gold and silver baskets to the wealthy people because they did not have the right to keep those precious utensils as a fringe benefit along with receiving the first fruits. However, the kohanim did keep the reed baskets that they received from the poor people. The poor person "lost" the basket in the deal as well. Rava applies to this the old rule "basar anyah azla anyusa," which means, loosely translated, "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer."

It is ironic. The rich fellow gets his basket back, while the poor person, who can ill afford it, does not get his basket back. This always bothered me. Why does the kohen keep the poor fellow's basket?

I once read that the reason why the Torah takes the basket of the poor person is to bolster his ego. The fruit looks like a more substantial gift when it is in the basket. The Torah says to let the kohen keep the basket and let the poor person suffer the financial loss, but let him at least keep his pride intact. It is better for the poor person to lose the basket in order to give the Bikurim a plentiful appearance, rather than to return the basket and make the person swallow his pride. The Torah goes to great lengths to protect a person's honor.

I remember someone asking me about raising money for hachnosas kallah. A person was marrying off his daughter and he needed financial help. The fellow who approached me wanted to raise money on the other person's behalf, in order to pay for the wedding.

His question was as follows. If he told people for whom he was raising the money, there was no question that he could raise a lot of money. (The person was well-known and well-respected in the community.) On the other hand, if he kept it anonymous, he would not be able to raise as much, because these kinds of requests occur a half dozen times a week.

At that time, I asked this question to the Rosh Yeshiva (Rav Yaakov Ruderman zt'l): Should he mention the name and raise more money, or keep it anonymous and raise less money? Without batting an eyelash or the slightest hesitation, the Rosh Yeshiva said it should be anonymous — “A mensch's kavod is vert asach.” (A person's pride is worth a whole lot.)

That is what we learn from the baskets. A person's respect and honor are worth a lot. It is even worth losing money over them. Money can always be replaced, but kavod habriyos and pride are much harder to replace.

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Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Parashat Tzav – 5783 :: Peace with People and with G-d

Parashat Tzav, the second in the book of Leviticus, continues to detail the laws of the sacrifices they made in the Mishkan, the Tabernacle – the temporary temple that accompanied the Israelites in the desert, and then in the Temple in Jerusalem. Unlike the previous parasha, this one details the laws of eating the sacrifices, and relating to this, we find three types of sacrifices: the sacrifice of “olah” is not eaten at all by a man, but is entirely sacrificed on the altar; each of the sacrifices of “chata’”, “asham” and “mincha” – part is sacrificed on the altar and part of it is eaten by the kohanim, the priests serving in the Temple; whereas the sacrifice of “shelamim” is unusual in that part of it is sacrificed on the altar, part of it is eaten by the priests, and part of it is eaten by the bringer of the sacrifice.

What is the meaning of the name “shelamim”? Rashi, the great commentator of the Torah, offered two interpretations based on the words of the Midrash Tannaim for the book of Leviticus, known as Torat HaKohanim. According to the first interpretation, the “shelamim” sacrifice has a specific ability to bring peace to the world, and the sacrifice is called “shelamim” from the word for peace (shalom) – due to its result. The second interpretation also connects the name “shelamim” to the word “peace” and explains their relationship by the fact that this sacrifice is eaten by three: The altar that “eats” part of it, the kohanim, and the person who brought the sacrifice. These three make peace between them when they participate in the eating of the sacrifice.

We can understand the concept of “peace” when it comes to the relationship between two people, or two states. Peaceful relations mean that human beings behave with each other in friendship and solidarity. But what kind of “peace” is needed for the altar? If we look at the religious expression expressed by the sacrifice, we can understand the meaning of this “peace”.

The different sacrifices convey different aspects of religious expression. The sacrifice of the “olah” expresses one's desire to give and devote oneself to holiness. Therefore, this sacrifice is not eaten at all by humans but is entirely sacrificed on the altar. This sacrifice is not limited to Jews

alone. According to Halacha, even a person who is not Jewish can bring an “olah” sacrifice to the Temple since all people can and are invited to devote themselves to holiness. In contrast, the sacrifices of “chata’” and “asham” come to atone for sin. The person who feels guilty for his sin brings a sacrifice whose meaning is a kind of reconciliation offering that allows for turning a new page in one's relationship with G-d. But the sacrifice of “shelamim” does not come to atone for sin. It is brought by a person who wants to express thanks and joy for his life.

The way to express the gratitude and joy between people is sometimes through a shared meal. Food—said the sages—brings hearts closer. This person, who strives to express gratitude and joy, expresses his feelings through a “joint meal” with G-d. Needless to say, G-d does not eat anything. This is a purely symbolic act, with the sacrifice on the altar seeming to man as G-d “eating” it, and in the language of the Torah: “pleasing fragrance to the Lord.”

But there is a third side to this “peace”: the kohanim. They, too, receive a part of the sacrifice and are also partners in this three-way “peace”. The kohanim are human beings, and the message in this is that there will be no peace between man and G-d without peace between people. Only when the bringer of the sacrifice shares with the kohanim, which expresses the “peace” between them, can there be peace between man and G-d.

Religion brings people closer together, not just when they are members of one community. When a person internalizes the proper conception of Judaism, he learns that to properly worship G-d, what is required of him includes proper relations with others. Morality does not exist parallel with the religious world, and certainly does not contradict it. Judaism includes morality and calls on all of humanity: there is no true religiosity without unity and peace between us, human beings.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

Rav Kook Torah

Tzav: The Olah Offering and Prophecy

Rabbi Chanan Morrison

The ultimate objective of the Temple service is hashra’at Shechinah, bringing the Divine Presence into our physical world. This goal is clearly connected to the unique phenomena of divine inspiration and prophecy. God’s Presence in the Temple parallels on the national level the dwelling of prophecy in the mind of the prophet.

In particular, the Olah offering, completely burnt on the altar, corresponds to the highest level of communication between us and God, a sublime level in which the material world is of no consequence. Just as the altar fire utterly consumed the physical aspect of the offering, so too, this type of spiritual encounter completely transcends our physical existence. By examining the Olah service, we can gain insight into the prophetic experience.

Beyond the Physical Realm

The daily Tamid offering was completely consumed by fire on the altar during the night. What was done with the ashes? The following day, a kohen placed one shovelful of ashes next to the altar. To dispose of the rest, he changed into less important clothes and transported the ashes to a ritually clean spot outside the camp.

Thus, we see that the Olah service involved three different locations, with descending sanctity:

- The fire on top of the altar.
- Next to the altar, where a shovelful of ashes was placed.
- A ritually clean place outside the camp for the remaining ashes.

Three Stages

The prophetic experience is a blaze of sacred flames inside the human soul, a divine interaction that transcends ordinary life. This extraordinary event corresponds to the first stage, the nighttime burning of the offering in the fire of the holy altar.

However, the prophet wants to extend the impact of this lofty experience so that it can make its mark on his character traits and inner life. This effort corresponds to the placement of some of the ashes, transformed by the altar’s flames, next to the altar. This is a secondary level of holiness,

analogous to those aspects of life that are close to the holy itself, where impressions of the sacred vision may be stored in a pure state. The lowest expression of the prophetic vision is in its public revelation. Informing the people of the content of God's message, and thereby infusing life and human morality with divine light — this takes place at a more peripheral level. Outside the inner camp, bordering on the domain of secular life, the kohen publicly brings out the remaining ashes. Even this area, however, must be ritually pure, so that the penetrating influence of the holy service can make its impact. For the sake of his public message, the kohen-prophet needs to descend somewhat from his former state of holiness, and change into lesser clothes. In the metaphoric language of the Sages, "The clothes worn by a servant while cooking for his master should not be used when serving his master wine" (Shabbat 114a).

The Constant Altar Fire

The Torah concludes its description of the Olah service by warning that the altar fire should be kept burning continuously: "The kohen will kindle wood on it each morning" (Lev. 6:5). Why mention this now?

Precisely at this juncture, after the kohen-prophet has left the inner nucleus of holiness in order to attend to life's temporal affairs, he must be aware of the constant fire on the altar. Despite his involvement with the practical and mundane aspects of life, the holy fire continues to burn inside the heart. This is the unique characteristic of the altar fire: from afar, it can warm and uplift every soul of the Jewish people. This sacred fire is a powerful, holy love that cannot be extinguished, as it says, "Mighty waters cannot extinguish the love; neither can rivers wash it away" (Song of Songs 8:7).

Yet, it is not enough for the holy fire to burn only in the inner depths of the heart. How can we ensure that its flames reach all aspects of life, and survive the "mighty waters" of mundane life?

The Torah's concluding instructions present the solution to this problem: "The kohen will kindle wood on it each morning." What is the purpose of this daily arrangement of kindling wood? New logs of wood nourish the altar's holy flames. We find a similar expression of daily spiritual replenishment in Isaiah 50:4: "Each morning He awakens my ear to hear according to the teachings" Just as renewal of the altar's hearth each day revives the holy fire, so too, daily contemplation of God's wonders and renewed study of His Torah rejuvenates the soul. This renewal energizes the soul, giving strength for new deeds and aspirations, and awakening a new spirit of life from the soul's inner fire.

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Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Tzav

פָּרָשַׁת צָבָא חִשְׁבָּנָה

וְאַתָּה תֹּרֶת הַמְּנֻחָה

This is the law of this meal-offering. (6:7)

In *Parashas Vayikra*, the Torah addresses the laws of the *Korban Minchah*. The Torah (2:1) begins the laws of *Korban Minchah* with a word not used regarding any of the other *korbanos nedavah*, voluntary offerings: *Nefesh*, soul (*v'nefesh ki sakriv*). *Rashi* explains that, concerning a *Korban Minchah*, the Torah makes an exception, since this inexpensive *korban* is usually the offering which a poor man brings. Hashem says, "I will regard it (the *korban* of an *ani*, poor man) as if he had offered his very soul. Concerning the *Korban Minchah*, *Chazal* (*Menachos* 110a) teach, *Echad ha'marbeh v'echad ha'mamit, ubilvad she'yichavein libo la'Shomayim*, "Whether one does a little (brings a *Minchah*) or one does a lot (brings an animal sacrifice) (what matters most) is that one's *kavanah*, intent, in bringing the *korban* is *l'shem Shomayim*, for Heaven's sake."

We no longer have *korbanos*; nonetheless, the imperative, "*Echad ha'marbeh v'echad ha'mamit u'bilvad she'yichavein libo la'Shomayim*," has not changed. Whether it is with regard to our *avodah she'b'lev*, service of the heart, prayer/suplication, or any spiritual activity for that matter, it is all about intent. One who acts for Heaven's sake fulfills the *mitzvah/tefillah* meaningfully. Otherwise, it is a *mitzvah* that lacks completeness and perfection.

A well-known story about the *Baal Shem Tov* gives us insight into how our *tefillos* will gain entrance to the Heavenly gate of prayer. It took place on *Yom Kippur*. The saintly *Baal Shem Tov* was leading the services, when he abruptly paused in middle of a chant. He appeared troubled, his countenance presented a strained, troubled image. When the *Baal Shem Tov* stopped, so did the rest of the congregation. The people knew something was out of sorts. Their revered *Rebbe* did not just stop in the middle of his service. During the wait, a young shepherd boy who was sitting in the back of the *shul* was troubled that he was unable to express his yearnings through prayer. He so wanted to *daven* like everyone else, to articulate his love for Hashem and supplication for the coming year. Alas, this boy had never been availed religious instruction. Sadly, he still could not read the Hebrew letters of the *siddur*. His lack of knowledge would not prevent him from expressing himself to his Heavenly father. He took his shepherd's whistle out of his pocket and decided to pray in the form of a tune. After all, Hashem "understands" the yearning and love behind the tune. Why should it be different than oral expression? As soon as the boy blew the first sound, the congregation turned around and silenced him. How could he make a farce out of the holiest day of the Jewish calendar year?

Suddenly, the *Baal Shem Tov*'s visage changed, as a smile brightened his face. The holy *tzaddik* resumed the service and brought it to a joyful conclusion. His students asked him for an explanation. They were acutely aware that every action which the *Rebbe* performed was profound and well-thought out. He explained, "I sensed the Heavenly gates were sealed to our pleas. When Hashem heard the sincere prayer emitted by the shepherd boy via his whistle, the gates were opened in our favor."

The following story has three versions – that I am aware of. Indeed, it supposedly took place with three different rabbis. In any event, the message remains the same: *Davening, avodah she'b'lev*, is all about sincerity and intent. Some of us are more well-versed than others, and, as such, we have a deeper knowledge of *pirush ha'milos*, meaning of the words. Without sincerity and intent *l'shem Shomayim*, however, knowledge of the words alone comprises imperfect prayer. As we saw above, what we say is overshadowed by how we say it. Now for the story.

One of the students of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, himself a scholar of note, was sent by the *Rebbe* (*Horav Menachem Mendel Shneersohn, zl*, third *Lubavitcher Rebbe*) to travel throughout Russia, visiting the small far-off villages where the few Jews who made these places their home would be availed some spiritual inspiration and encouragement. It was *Erev Yom Kippur* when he arrived at a village far off the beaten path to discover that its Jews, about one hundred in all, had all gone to *Vitebsk* to join in the services at its large *shul*. While he did not blame them, he was still stuck in a village nowhere in the proximity to a *shul*. One of the villagers told him that two hours away there was a Cantonist village with a small *shul*. The Cantonists were a unique group of Jews whom we would refer to as bordering on the fringe. These men had been kidnapped as young children and forced to serve in the Czar's army for 25 years. The goal of this forced incarceration was to distance these children from Judaism. In most cases, the accursed Czar's diabolical plan succeeded. Those who withstood the emotional, physical and spiritual challenge emerged as changed men, hollow, broken shells of humanity. Having survived a quarter century of debasing, cruel treatment – with their commitment to Hashem still pulsating within them – these men kept to themselves and served Hashem in the manner that they could.

When the disciple heard that a Cantonist *shul* was within a two-hour walk, he practically ran all the way. He entered the "village" comprised of a few broken down wooden shacks. The first person to see the *Rav* immediately called the rest of their group. Within a few moments, a small, motley group assembled around their honored guest. They were beyond excited. To have such a distinguished scholar visit their outpost was an honor. They asked him if he could lead them in the *Yom Kippur* service. They looked at him in such a pleading manner that he saw they really meant their request. How could he refuse? They

made, however, one stipulation: one of them had to lead the *Neilah*, closing service. The *Rav* agreed, and they all went to the makeshift *shul* to usher in the Day of Atonement.

The *Rav* was amazed by the way these men *davened*. After suffering for 25 years, to be able to maintain their faith and *daven* the way they did required almost super human effort and a connection with, and love for, Hashem that only they could have. These simple men were giants of spirituality. The *Rav* felt honored to have the privilege of joining with them in prayer.

Finally, the closing moments of *Yom Kippur* was upon them. It was time to recite the hallowed *Neilah* service. Regardless of a person's affiliation, *Neilah* is the most compelling prayer of *Yom Kippur*. As they closed the service of the holiest day of the year, it was laden with emotion and trepidation. One was either successful, or he was not. No other avenues existed. As such, the individual who leads the service must be one who understands the enormity of the moment, such that he is able to inspire the congregation. These men had chosen one of their own. The *Rav* was in for a life-altering surprise. After this *Neilah*, he would no longer be the same person.

The *chazan*, leader of the service, ascended to the lectern and proceeded to unbutton and then remove his shirt. When the *Rav* saw this, he was about to yell "Stop!" One does not remove his shirt in a *shul*. When the shirt fell to the floor, however, he saw hundreds of scars and welts on the man's back and shoulders. These scars were the result of 25 years of refusing to give up his Jewish faith. These scars represented a badge of courage. When the *Rav* saw the *chazan*'s scarred back, he broke down in tears. He knew that he was standing in the presence of greatness.

The Cantonist then raised his hands to Hashem and, with a loud voice, began his supplication, "Hashem! Please send *Moshiach*! I do not ask for the sake of our families, because we have no families. I do not ask for the sake of our futures, because we have no futures. I am not asking for the sake of our livelihoods, our comfort, our children, or our reputations, because we have none of those. We are asking *L'Maancha; Asei l'maan Shemecha*; Do it for Your sake; Do it for Your Name." He then put on his shirt and began *Tefillas Neilah*.

אם על תודה יקריבנו

If he shall offer it for a thanksgiving offering. (7:12)

One who has survived a life-threatening crisis brings a thanksgiving offering to Hashem as an expression of his gratitude. This gratitude goes far beyond the *korban*. On the contrary, it begins with the *korban* and should continue in every aspect of his life. He should never forget that he is alive by the grace of Hashem. Throughout *Sefer Tehillim*, David *Hamelech* reiterates his praises of Hashem in his gratitude to the Almighty for sustaining him throughout the difficult moments in his life. He went further than just thanking Hashem for the good. He understood that, with regard to Hashem, there is no such thing as bad. What we perceive to be negative is due to our limited perception of events. David *Hamelech* declares *Odcha Hashem ki inisani va'tehi li l'yeshua*, "I thank You Hashem, for You have answered me, and You have been a help to me" (*Tehillim* 118:21). The *Bais HaLevi* observes that the word *inisani*, which is translated as "You answered me," has the same *shoresh*, root, as *inui*, suffering, affliction. This alludes that David was thanking Hashem both for the *inui*, suffering, and the salvation. He realized that the suffering was an integral part of the salvation. We do not know the reason for what we perceive as bad; thus, we are unable to see the necessity of the suffering in the scheme of Hashem's plan. We must keep in mind that there is a Divine plan, and this is part of it.

It is all about attitude. *Horav Yaakov Galinsky*, zl, relates that he was privy to a conversation that ensued between the *Steipler Gaon*, zl, and *Horav Avraham Yoffen*, zl. The conversation was difficult, due to the *Steipler*'s failing hearing. He was hard of hearing, and, for some reason a hearing aid was not an option. *The Rosh Yeshivah* (Novardok) said to the *Steipler*, "You know there is no reason for you to suffer. Today, there are hearing-aids which are very effective."

The *Steipler* replied, "Truthfully, during *Krias HaTorah*, I strain my ears to hear every word. Other than that, what reason do I have to hear?"

When *Rav Yoffen* heard the response, he turned to *Rav Galinsky* and said, "What do I say to such a response?" The *Steipler* had not heard *Rav Yoffen*'s remark. He, however, had read his lips and replied, "Do you think that the One who made me deaf owes me? Do you realize that hundreds of people come to see me? If I was not hard of hearing, I would have to devote all my time to them. When would I be able to learn?"

"Hashem helped me by making me hard of hearing. Visitors are now compelled to write their requests on a piece of paper. Since people are, for the most part lazy, the petitions that they write are short. Thus, *Baruch Hashem*, I have time to learn!"

It is all about attitude. Who would even think that being unable to hear well would be viewed as contributing positively to one's learning? The *Steipler* did. He thanked Hashem for his handicap, because he knew that it was all part of His plan.

הנוגת מבשר הזבח ביום השלישי באש ישרף

What is left over from the flesh of the feast-offering shall be burned in the fire on the third day. (7:17)

We are enjoined to burn the *nosar*, left-over meat of a *korban*, after the time limit for its consumption has passed. The simple reason for the burning of *nosar*, is that after a few days, the meat begins to spoil and emit a putrid odor. It is no longer edible and people will be disgusted by it. Hashem does not want *kodoshim*, consecrated meat of a *korban*, to be a source of repulsion. Thus, He commands us to rid ourselves of this meat through the most effective means. (This is actually a rationale given by the *Sefer HaChinuch* for the purpose of human understanding. The actual reason for all *mitzvos* elude us. Hashem, the Divine Author of the Torah has His reasons for individual *mitzvos* – esoteric reasons which are beyond our grasp)

Second, the *mitzvah* alludes to the importance of *bitachon*, trust, in Hashem. The Almighty does not want a person to starve himself for fear that he might not have sufficient food for the next day. He, therefore, commanded that the meat should be destroyed when its time has passed. Neither human nor animal may partake of this meat. Hashem wants us to look up and rely on Him to provide us with our needs. Tomorrow? He will take care of us when the time comes. We must learn to place our trust in Him. We do not starve ourselves today out of worry for tomorrow. The One Who provided for us today can, and will, do so tomorrow.

This idea is the underlying concept, the anchor behind the *manna* that descended from Heaven. The people were enjoined to eat whatever they needed for one day. They received exactly as much as Heaven determined were their individual needs for one day – and no more. This routine continued every day (except for *Shabbos* for which they received a double-portion on Friday) for forty years. They were prohibited from saving *manna* for the next day, because such action would be indicative of a lack of faith in Hashem's ability to sustain them. As a distinguished *Rav* said, "He Who created the 'day' will also create the sustenance for it."

One who has *bitachon*, who lives his life with unreserved trust in Him, will safeguard his performance of *mitzvos* against violations which are engendered by anxiety concerning material hardship – real or imagined. *Horav S.R. Hirsch*, zl, contends that one who has not learned to trust Hashem for the next day will worry so much about the prospects of years to come that he will ultimately be led astray from Hashem and His Torah.

The *Gaon*, zl, *m'Vilna*, was asked what it means to trust in Hashem. He replied that David *Hamelech* answers this in *Tehillim* 131:2, *Shivisi v'domamti nafshi k'gamul alei imo*, "I have stilled and quieted myself like a suckling babe beside his mother." We should think of ourselves (says the *Gaon*) as a nursing infant. When he is full, he does not worry whether he will have more in a few hours when he will once again be hungry. He does not worry about what will be. Now, he is fine.

His mother provided for him. So, too, we should not worry. Our Father in Heaven has provided and will continue to do so.

The *baal bitachon* who trusts in Hashem realizes that he has no other option than Hashem. Every other source is either a figment of our imagination or one of the many agencies which Hashem employs to deliver His beneficence. How often do we petition the assistance of individuals who have *protektzia*, personal connections, as an “alternative” to relying on the only true Source of abetment? After wasting considerable time, effort and money, they come to the realization that human assistance is just that: human. Hashem pulls the strings. Sooner or later, we will have to turn to Him for an answer to our concerns. So, why not sooner?

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita (Barchi Nafshi) offers an excellent analogy that should engender contemplation on our part, to the point that we realize that we are looking for aid in all the wrong places. A benevolent king, who loved his subjects and treated them royally, sought to avail them the opportunity to obtain great wealth. As he was not giving it away, he devised a test which put their cognitive skills to a test. He announced that, at the bottom of a pond located in the royal garden, was a treasure chest filled with diamonds and other precious stones. The pond was far from shallow, and the chest was far from light. It was up to the successful person to figure out a way to retrieve the chest and somehow haul it to dry land. Everyone lined up and took his turn in attempting to drag the chest up to the garden. Some used brute strength, others were more creative, devising intricate engineering plans to bring the chest up. All failed. The people felt that the kind king had used and made fools of them. There appeared to be no way to draw the chest to the surface. They all gave up.

There was one person, a wise man, who did not give up. He knew there was a catch to this. He walked all around the pond, studied the chest, and, after contemplation, asked the king, “Is it necessary that one’s clothing become soaked in his attempt to retrieve the chest?” In other words, was it necessary to dive down into the pond in order to get to the chest? The king replied, “No.” The king was no fool. He knew by listening to the question that the wise man had solved the conundrum. He had figured out how to bring the treasure chest to the king. The wise man took a ladder and proceeded to climb the tree whose branches overhung the pond. Lo and behold, situated in the tree, supported by branches, was the elusive treasure. It was never in the water. What they saw was a reflection. They had been looking in the wrong place this entire time.

The lesson is obvious. We look all around us for someone, something, any avenue or medium that can extricate us from our situation. We look everywhere but up to Heaven.

The following story gives us a window into the perspective of *bitachon* intimated by *gedolei Yisrael*. One of the most prolific heroes of the Holocaust was *Horav Michael Dov Weissmandel*, zl. Through his tireless efforts, he saved thousands of Jews from the Nazi murderers. He could have saved more; he could have done better. These feelings gnawed at him until his last mortal breath. He had an intense love for the Jewish people and was prepared to do anything, to go anywhere, to spare their lives. As a result of his negotiations with the murderers, he was given the opportunity to save Slovakian Jewry (over 100,000 souls) for the sum of two million dollars. The ransom was indeed an exorbitant sum, but can one put a price on a Jewish soul?

Rav Weissmandel pleaded, begged and wept copious tears in his attempt to warm the hearts of the assimilated Jewish leadership both in America and in *Eretz Yisrael*. They were, however, committed to establishing a Jewish state – an ideal which, to them, took precedence over the plight of Slovakian Jewry. One cannot calmly relate one of the ugliest periods in our history, where brother could have saved brother – and chose not to. His priorities were Jewish land over Jewish life. *Rav Weissmandel* was relentless. He refused to give up. Telegram after telegram described the atrocities, the persecution, the wholesale murder. Yet, they were not moved. They had their own agenda, and it did not coincide with *Rav Weissmandel*’s. In the end, they relented and contributed some money – too little – too late. He was able to save some

Jews. The majority, however, were relegated to become martyrs as they perished sanctifying Hashem’s Name.

It was after the war, and *Rav Weissmandel* came to America. He met with *Horav Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson*, zl, the *Lubavitcher Rebbe*. *Rav Weissmandel* became very emotional when he met the *Rebbe*. The pain and anguish over his failure to save more Jews was overwhelming. He could not stop crying bitterly. The *Rebbe* said nothing, allowing him to vent his emotions.

Finally, when *Rav Weissmandel* calmed down, the *Rebbe* asked, *Uhn ver hot dos getohn*, “And who (do you think) did all of this?” *Der Bashefer*, “The Creator! You think that this was all the result of the failure of secular Jewry to assist in the plight of their brothers and sisters? Can they do anything? Are they able to achieve anything (on their own)? This was all the Hands of Hashem. Since He did all of this (and did not permit your efforts to succeed), then all this is His decree. It is all for the good – because this is what the Almighty wanted.”

V’ani Tefillah

וְאַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ יְשָׁבֵת תְּהִלָּתְךָ יִשְׁרָאֵל – *V’Atah kadosh yosheiv tehilos Yisrael*. Yet, You are the Holy One, enthroned upon the praises of *Yisrael*.

Chazal (*Bereishis Rabbah* 48:7) teach, “Whenever *Klal Yisrael* praises Hashem, He rests His *Shechinah* upon them.” The source for this is the *pasuk* in *Sefer Tehillim* (22:4), “*V’Atah kadosh yosheiv tehilos Yisrael*.” The *Midrash* is teaching us that, whenever Hashem hears any expression of praise coming from the mouth of *Klal Yisrael*, He rests His Presence among them to hear the supplications and petitions that follow the words of praise. From *Chazal*’s words, we derive the overriding significance of *Kidusha d’Sidra*, which we often say “on the run.” Whether it is an appointment, trip, business endeavor, or even to go to work, we should take heed and stop for a moment to recite this *tefillah* with proper *kavanah*, intention/devotion. It might make a world of difference in our “appointment.”

A similar idea applies to answering *Amen*, *Yehei Shmei Rabbah Mevarach...* (*Sotah* 49a). רצוני ברואו תמיד לפני עיניו גדרה היהת אהבתו לקיים הכהן ז”ל שם טוב רחץ לו בחייו המצוות אף הקטנות שמר בקנות נפטר י”ב נין תש”ס ת.ג.צ.ב.ה In loving memory of FRANK ALTMAN by his family Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, ©All rights reserved prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

*Ohr Somayach :: Talmud Tips :: Pesachim 2^a
For the week ending 1 April 2023 / 10 Nisan 5783*

Rabbi Moshe Newman

Bye, Bye, Chametz

Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav, “One who checks (for chametz), also needs to nullify (chametz).”

The “checking” that Rav Yehuda refers to in the gemara (on daf vav) is taught in connection with the first mishna of our new masechta, which teaches the mitzvah of bedikat chametz: “On the night of the 14th of Nissan, one checks for chametz by the light of a lamp.”

What is the reason for this mitzvah to check for chametz, also known as bedikat chametz? Let’s have a look at a few relevant laws of chametz and Pesach. First of all, there are prohibitions against eating or deriving benefit from chametz on Pesach. As the Rambam states, “On Pesach it is forbidden to have any benefit from chametz, as is stated in *Shemot* 13:3: ‘Do not eat chametz.’” (This verse not only prohibits eating chametz but also prohibits deriving benefit from it on Pesach.)

In addition, there are two prohibitions against the mere ownership of chametz on Pesach. “No chametz may be found in your homes” (*Shemot* 12:19). “No chametz may be seen in all your territory” (*Shemot* 13:7). So, why does our mishna insist that bedikat chametz be done? Rashi explains that bedikat chametz is required in order to not transgress the Torah prohibitions against owning chametz on Pesach. By checking for chametz and destroying it before Pesach (or selling it to a non-Jew or giving it to a non-Jewish neighbor, as I recall doing as a youngster), a Jew will not possess chametz on Pesach. (Rashi)

Tosefot questions this reason based on the teaching of Rav Yehuda in the name of Rav, that even if one does bedikat chametz he must still mevatel and nullify it. If the purpose of the bedika is as Rashi claims — to not transgress the prohibitions against chametz ownership on Pesach

— why is bedika also needed? Once a person does bitul, nullifying his chametz, he no longer owns chametz and therefore does not transgress. The gemara clearly states that according to the Torah, even bitul b'lev — “nullifying the chametz in one's heart” — suffices for avoiding the Torah prohibitions of not owning chametz on Pesach. Due to this question, Tosefot argues that although the required bitul is indeed enough to fulfill Torah law, the Rabbis enacted a stringency to also do bedika so that one will certainly be chametz-free and not mistakenly eat chametz on Pesach.

One defense offered for Rashi's explanation is that he is explaining the reason for bedika at the time of the mishna and according to the basic Torah requirement, bedika would suffice. Only later was there an additional decree added, the reason for which is explained in the gemara on 6b and by Rashi there. (Rabbeinu Nissim)

There is much more discussion in the Rishonim and Achronim surrounding the mechanism of bitul chametz and the nature of the dispute between Rashi and Tosefot. Pursuit of further study of this subject makes for fascinating Torah study on a quite practical issue and is placed highly on this author's “Recommended Reading List.”

And, in addition to the Torah's prohibitions against owning, eating and benefiting from chametz on Pesach, there are numerous additional Torah mitzvahs related to Pesach, such as eating matzah, eating marror (bitter herbs), telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt (Hagaddah), bringing and eating a korban Pesach at the time of the Beit Hamikdash, and more. In fact, there is even a mitzvah to not break a bone of the korban Pesach while eating it. “And you will not break any of its (the korban Pesach's) bones.” (Shemot 12:46)

This mitzvah has been explained in many rational ways, such as the notion that princes, unlike animals, eat with dignity, and that we should take special care to behave as royalty on the night of the Pesach Seder, not eating in an undignified manner and breaking bones of the food. (Sefer HaChinuch 16)

I would feel remiss in not citing an important life-lesson that the Sefer HaChinuch adds in noting the extraordinary abundance of “Pesach mitzvahs.” He explains that it is human nature that “a person is affected according to his actions.” Pesach is not just another holiday, but rather a time to reflect on our nation's past, present and future eternal destiny. Pesach represents this all. The greater the number of mitzvahs that we do and the greater the number of prohibitions that we refrain from on Pesach serve to help shape us into the type of individuals and the nation that Hashem wants us to be.

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Weekly Parsha TZAV/SHABAT HAGADOL

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The parsha of Tzav more often than not coincides with the Shabat preceding Pesach — Shabat Hagadol, the “great Shabat.” At first glance there does not seem to be any inherent connection between the parsha of Tzav and Shabat Hagadol and Pesach. However, since Judaism little recognizes randomness or happenstance regarding Jewish life, and certainly regarding Torah itself, a further analysis of the parsha may reveal to us an underlying connection between Tzav and Pesach.

I feel that this underlying theme lies in the description that the parsha contains regarding the consecration of Aharon and his sons as the priests and servants of God and Israel. Judaism teaches us that freedom equals responsibility. Freedom without limits or purpose is destructive anarchy. The entire narrative of the Torah regarding the construction of the Mishkan and the institution of public worship/sacrifices come to emphasize to the freed slaves from Egypt their newfound responsibilities.

The rabbis cogently and correctly defined freedom in terms of obligations and study of Torah, as opposed to the alleged freedom of hedonism. The consecration of Aharon and his sons coinciding with the consecration and dedication of the Mishkan itself brought home to the Jewish people the requirement of community service and national unity. Look at the freedom movements that have arisen in the Middle East over the past few years and the chaos and deaths of tens of thousands of people that followed in their wake. The inability to create unity, to

develop a moral and tangible national goal mocks all pretenses of positive freedom. Without Aharon and the Mishkan the promise of the freedom of Pesach would have remained permanently unfulfilled.

Part of the lesson of the Great Shabat is that without Shabat, Jewish freedom is only an illusion. Shabat is truly the epitome of freedom. The absence of workday activities, the sense of family and friends, and of the contentment that Shabat engenders all combine to create a vision of true freedom that is attainable and real.

The Great Shabat that precedes Pesach gives it its true meaning and places the anniversary of our freedom from Egyptian bondage into holy perspective. Freedom to toil 24/7 is only a different form of slavery. When Saturday looks like Tuesday but only more so since school is out and the burdens of car pooling and “having a good time” are even greater, then that cannot even remotely be related to true freedom.

In reality every Shabat is the Great Shabat and the Shabat preceding Pesach is even more so. Shabat Hagadol represents the miracle that blessed our forefathers in Egypt when they took the Paschal lamb and the Egyptians did not object. But the true and ultimate miracle of Shabat Hagadol is Shabat itself. It has preserved the Jewish people throughout the ages in the face of opposing innumerable odds and challenges. It is in the realization of our freedom that we are able to properly appreciate and give tribute to Shabat — Shabat Hagadol, the Great Shabat that we now commemorate so joyfully and gratefully.

Shabat shalom

Pesach kasher v'sameach

Rabbi Berel Wein

TZAV - Understanding Sacrifice

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ZTL

Understanding Sacrifice

One of the most difficult elements of the Torah and the way of life it prescribes is the phenomenon of animal sacrifices — for obvious reasons. First, Jews and Judaism have survived without them for almost two thousand years. Second, virtually all the prophets were critical of them, not least Jeremiah in this week's haftarah.[1] None of the prophets sought to abolish sacrifices, but they were severely critical of those who offered them while at the same time oppressing or exploiting their fellow human beings. What disturbed them — what disturbed God in whose name they spoke — was that evidently some people thought of sacrifices as a kind of bribe: if we make a generous enough gift to God then He may overlook our crimes and misdemeanours. This is an idea radically incompatible with Judaism.

Then again, along with monarchy, sacrifices were among the least distinctive features of Judaism in ancient times. Every ancient religion in those days, every cult and sect, had its altars and sacrifices. Finally, it remains remarkable how simply and smoothly the Sages were able to construct substitutes for sacrifice, three in particular: prayer, study, and tzedakah. Prayer, particularly Shacharit, Minchah, and Musaf, took the place of the regular offerings. One who studies the laws of sacrifice is as if he had brought a sacrifice. And one who gives to charity brings, as it were, a financial sacrifice, acknowledging that all we have we owe to God.

So, though we pray daily for the rebuilding of the Temple and the restoration of sacrifices, the principle of sacrifice itself remains hard to understand. Many theories have been advanced by anthropologists, psychologists and Bible scholars as to what the sacrifices represented, but most are based on the questionable assumption that sacrifice is essentially the same act across cultures. This is poor scholarship. Always seek to understand a practice in terms of the distinctive beliefs of the culture in which it takes place. What could sacrifice possibly mean in a religion in which God is the creator and owner of all?

What, then, was sacrifice in Judaism and why does it remain important, at least as an idea, even today? The simplest answer — though it does not explain the details of the different kinds of offering — is this: We love what we are willing to make sacrifices for. That is why, when they were a nation of farmers and shepherds, the Israelites demonstrated their love of God by bringing Him a symbolic gift of their flocks and herds, their grain and fruit; that is, their livelihood. To love is to thank. To love is to want to bring an offering to the Beloved. To love is to give.[2] Sacrifice is the choreography of love.

This is true in many aspects of life. A happily married couple is constantly making sacrifices for one another. Parents make huge sacrifices for their children. People drawn to a calling — to heal the sick, or care for the poor, or fight for justice for the weak against the strong — often sacrifice remunerative careers for the sake of their ideals. In ages of patriotism, people make sacrifices for their country. In strong communities people make sacrifices for one another when

someone is in distress or needs help. Sacrifice is the superglue of relationship. It bonds us to one another.

That is why, in the biblical age, sacrifices were so important – not as they were in other faiths but precisely because at the beating heart of Judaism is love: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.” In other faiths the driving motive behind sacrifice was fear: fear of the anger and power of the gods. In Judaism it was love.

We see this in the Hebrew word for sacrifice itself: the noun korban, and the verb lehakriv, which mean, “to come, or bring close”. The name of God invariably used in connection with the sacrifices is Hashem, God in his aspect of love and compassion, never Elokim, God as justice and distance. The word Elokim occurs only five times in the whole of the book of Vayikra, and always in the context of other nations. The word Hashem appears 209 times. And as we saw last week, the very name of the book, Vayikra, means to summon in love. Where there is love, there is sacrifice.

Once we realise this we begin to understand how deeply relevant the concept of sacrifice is in the twenty-first century. The major institutions of the modern world – the liberal democratic state and the free-market economy – were predicated on the model of the rational actor, that is, one who acts to maximise the benefits to him- or herself.

Hobbes’ account of the social contract was that it is in the interests of each of us to hand over some of our rights to a central power charged with ensuring the rule of law and the defence of the realm. Adam Smith’s insight into the market economy was that if we each act to maximise our own advantage, the result is the growth of the common-wealth. Modern politics and economics were built on the foundation of the rational pursuit of self-interest.

There was nothing wrong with this. It was done for the highest of motives. It was an attempt to create peace in a Europe that had for centuries been ravaged by war. The democratic state and the market economy were serious attempts to harness the power of self-interest to combat the destructive passions that led to violence.^[3] The fact that politics and economics were based on self-interest did not negate the possibility that families and communities were sustained by altruism. It was a good system, not a bad one.

Now, however, after several centuries, the idea of love-as-sacrifice has grown thin in many areas of life. We see this specifically in relationships. Throughout the West, fewer people are getting married, they are getting married later, and almost half of marriages end in divorce. Throughout Europe, indigenous populations are in decline. To have a stable population, a country must have an average birth rate of 2.1 children per female. In 2015 the average birth-rate throughout the European Union was 1.55. In Spain it was 1.27. Germany has the lowest birth-rate of any country in the world.^[4] That is why the population of Europe is today rendered stable only on the basis of unprecedented rates of immigration.

Lose the concept of sacrifice within a society, and sooner or later marriage falters, parenthood declines, and the society slowly ages and dies. My late predecessor, Lord Jakobovits, had a lovely way of putting this. The Talmud says that when a man divorces his first wife, “the altar sheds tears” (Gittin 90b). What is the connection between the altar and a marriage? Both, he said, are about sacrifices. Marriages fail when the partners are unwilling to make sacrifices for one another. Jews and Judaism survived despite the many sacrifices people had to make for it. In the eleventh century Judah Halevi expressed something closer to awe at the fact that Jews stayed Jewish despite the fact that “with a word lightly spoken” they could have converted to the majority faith and lived a life of relative ease (Kuzari 4:23) Equally possible though is that Judaism survived because of those sacrifices. Where people make sacrifices for their ideals, the ideals stay strong. Sacrifice is an expression of love.

Not all sacrifice is holy. Today’s suicide bombers sacrifice their lives and those of their victims in a way I have argued (in *Not In God’s Name*) is sacrilege. Indeed the very existence of animal sacrifice in the Torah may have been a way of preventing people from offering human sacrifice in the form of violence and war. But the principle of sacrifice remains. It is the gift we bring to what and whom we love.

[1] Jeremiah 7:22, “When I freed your fathers from the land of Egypt, I did not speak with them or command them concerning burnt offerings or sacrifice” – a remarkable statement. See Rashi and Radak ad loc., and especially Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, III: 32.

[2] The verb “to love” – a-h-v – is related to the verbs h-v-h, h-v-v and y-h-v, all of which have the sense of giving, bringing, or offering.

[3] The classic text is A. O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, Princeton University Press, 1977.

[4] The Observer, 23 August 2015.

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Tzav (Leviticus 6:1-8:36)

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – The Sabbath before Pesach is called “The Great Sabbath” (Shabbat Hagadol) after the last verse of the reading from the prophets (haftara) for that

day: “Behold I send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord” – the day of Redemption (Malachi 3:23). It is certainly logical that Elijah, the herald of the redemption, features before Pesach – the “time of our freedom” and redemption from Egyptian servitude.

But what kind of person is Elijah, who will be the “messenger of good news, salvation and comfort” (Grace after Meals)?

The biblical Elijah was a zealot who slaughtered 450 prophets of Baal after a contest at Mount Carmel, and challenged God to punish the Israelites for having rejected His covenant and allowed Jezebel to murder the Lord’s prophets (I Kings 19:10). But somehow in Talmudic and folk tradition, Elijah morphs into a benign, grandfatherly figure who drinks from a special goblet at everyone’s Seder table, graces every newborn male baby with his presence at their circumcision and frequently appears as a *deus ex machina* to teach important lessons and save people’s lives at critical moments.

Just when, why and how did this fiery fanatic become a venerable sage? Let us look again at the biblical text and I believe we’ll discover the dynamics of the process.

Elijah lives in Israel under the idolatrous monarchy of Ahab and Jezebel, Baal devotees who murdered the prophets of the Lord. The wrath of God is expressed in the form of a drought which wreaks havoc on the land. Elijah stages a Steven Spielberg-style extravaganza: He convinces King Ahab to invite all the Israelites to the foot of Mount Carmel, where he has the 450 prophets of Baal choose a bull. Elijah takes another bull, and each animal is cut in half and placed on an altar without a fire – one altar to God and one to Baal. The victor will be the person whose altar is graced by fire from on high.

After the better part of a day of fruitless prayers, incantations and orgiastic immolations by the prophets of Baal, Elijah drenches his offering in water and then calls out to God. A fire descends from heaven, consuming his offering together with the wood, the stones, the water and the earth. The Israelites cry out: “The Lord! He is God!”

Elijah then slaughters the 450 prophets of Baal, clouds gather and a great rain comes down. Elijah is exultant, until he receives a message from Queen Jezebel, who vows that “at this time tomorrow I shall make your soul like one of those [prophets of Baal].”

Elijah is shocked that she does not repent or seek forgiveness for her idolatrous ways. Yet he also understands the shrewdness in her words. After 24 hours, she shall have him killed! Why not immediately? Because it will take the Israelites only 24 hours to forget the immediacy of the miracle. After only one day, the Israelites will forget about God and allow the wicked queen to destroy His only remaining prophet.

Elijah escapes to Beersheba and asks God to take his soul. An angel provides him with food and sends him on a 40-day journey to Mount Sinai. When he arrives, God asks why he has come, and he responds: “I have been a zealot; yes, a zealot for the Lord God of hosts, because the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant; they have destroyed Your altars, they have killed Your prophets and they now seek to take my life as well, I who am now left alone” (I Kings 19:10).

Elijah understands that despite the great miracle he wrought at Mount Carmel, no one has repented, nothing has changed, and his life is in danger.

God then sends Elijah a vision: a great, powerful wind, but the Lord is not in the wind; an earthquake, but the Lord is not in the earthquake; a fire, but the Lord is not in the fire. And after the fire comes a still, silent sound – the voice of the Lord.

God is telling His prophet that people aren’t moved in the long term by miracles on a mountain – whether Mount Sinai or Mount Carmel – and that the Israelites will not be forced into submission by dire punishments. After the first revelation at Sinai, they worshiped the Golden Calf, and after the revelation at Mount Carmel, they didn’t repent of their idolatry, despite their shouts of “The Lord! He is God!”

The Israelites will be moved only by learning of God’s second revelation at Sinai – the glimpse He shared with Moses into His divine essence by the still, small voice of kindness and understanding, by the God of love and forgiveness (Exodus 34:6-8).

And this is precisely what Malachi says at the conclusion of his prophecy. There is the possibility that “the end of days” will be awe-some and awe-ful, replete with war, destruction and the bare survival of the faithful remnant; but the preferred possibility is that the end of days come as a result of national repentance for ignoring the voice of God, and the return of Israel to our heavenly Father in love and gratitude rather than out of fear. Elijah must “turn back the hearts of the parents to their children and the hearts of the children to their parents” with the still, silent sound of unconditional love. God does not want to “strike the land with utter destruction” at the end of days (Malachi 3:24).

The rabbis of the Midrash go one step further. God is teaching Elijah that the prophet wanted to punish Israel only because he grossly misjudged them when he said, “They rejected Your covenant.” Elijah will be “taken to heaven” (II Kings 2: 11, 12), but he will have to shuttle between heaven and earth, he will attend every Pesach Seder where Jews celebrate God’s promise of redemption, and be present

at every circumcision where Jews demonstrate their willingness to shed blood for the covenant. The prophet will transform his people not by judging (or misjudging) them, but only by loving them with the still, small sound of our Father's unconditional love.

The opening words of this third book of the Bible, the Book of Vayikra, tells us that God first called to Moses and then communicated to him a specific message concerning the sacrificial offerings of the Sanctuary. Why this double language of "calling" first and then "speaking" afterwards? Why not cut to the chase: "And the Lord spoke to Moses from the Tent of Meeting"?

The Talmudic sage Rabbi Musia Rabbah, in Tractate Yoma (4b), explains that the Bible is giving us a lesson in good manners: before someone commands another to do something, he must first ask permission to give the order. He even suggests that before someone begins speaking to another, one must ascertain that the person wishes to hear what he has to say. With great beauty, the rabbis suggest that even God Himself follows these laws of etiquette when addressing Moses; asking his permission before speaking to or commanding him.

The Ramban (Nahmanides) takes a completely opposite view, limiting this double language of addressing to the Sanctuary specifically: "this (seemingly superfluous language of first calling and then speaking) is not used elsewhere (where God is addressing Moses); it is only used here because Moses would not otherwise have been permitted to enter the Tent of Meeting, would not otherwise have been permitted to be in such close proximity to the place where the Almighty was to be found" (Ramban ad loc).

From this second perspective, it is Moses who must first be summoned by God and receive Divine permission before he dare enter the Sacred Tent of Meeting of the exalted Holy of Holies.

This latter interpretation seems closest to the Biblical text; since the very last verses in the Book of Exodus specifically tell us that whenever a cloud covered the Sanctuary, Moses was prevented from entering the Tent of Meeting and communicating with the Divine (Exodus 40:34, 35). Hence, the Book of Leviticus opens with God summoning Moses into the Tent of Meeting, apparently signaling the departure of the cloud and the Divine permission for Moses to hear God's words.

This scenario helps us understand God's relationship – and lack thereof – with the Israelites in general and with Moses in particular. You may recall that the initial commandment to erect a Sanctuary was in order for the Divine Presence to dwell in the midst of the Israelites (Ex. 25:8); such a close identity between the Divine and the Israelites on earth would signal the period of redemption. This would have been a fitting conclusion to the exodus from Egypt.

Tragically, Israel then sin with the Golden Calf and God immediately informs them that "I cannot go up in your midst because you are a stiff-necked nation, lest I destroy you on the way" (Exodus 33:3). Only if the Israelites are worthy can God dwell in their midst. If they forego their true vocation as a "sacred nation and a Kingdom of priest-teachers" while God is in such close proximity to them, then this God of truth will have to punish and even destroy them. He will therefore now keep His distance from them, retaining His "place", as it were, in the supernal, transcendent realms, and sending His "angel-messenger" to lead them in their battles to conquer the Promised Land (ibid 33:2,3).

As a physical symbol of the concealment – or partial absence – of the Divine (hester panim), Moses takes the Tent of Meeting and removes its central position in the Israelite encampment, to a distance of 2000 cubits away (33:7). He then remonstrates with God arguing that the Almighty had promised to show His love by means of His Divine Name, to reveal to him His Divine attributes; and to accept Israel as His special nation (33:11,12). In other words, Moses argues that that He, God – and not an angel-messenger – must reveal His Divine ways and lead Israel (Rashbam on 33:13).

God then responds that indeed "My face will lead" – I, Myself and not an angel-messenger – and "I shall bring you (you, Moses, but not the nation) to your ultimate resting place" (33:14). Moses is not satisfied, and argues that God Himself – His "face" and not His angel-messenger – must lead not only Moses but also the nation! Otherwise, he says, "do not take us (the entire nation) out of this desert". And finally, God agrees that although He cannot be in the midst of the nation, He can and will lead them, stepping in whenever necessary to make certain that Israel will never disappear and will eventually return to their homeland.

God may not be completely manifest as the God of love in every historical experience of our people, and will not yet teach the world ethical monotheism. Israel remains a "work-in-progress" with God behind a cloud and "incommunicado". Our nation, albeit imperfect, still serves as witnesses that the God of love and compassion exists, and orchestrates historical redemption through Israel. God is "incorporated," incorporealized, in Israel, the people and the land. What God leaves behind even when He is in a cloud are the two newly chiseled tablets of stone – His Divine Torah with the human input of the Oral Law – as well as His thirteen "ways" or attributes: God's spiritual and emotional characteristics of love, compassion, freely given grace, patience, kindness, etc. (Leviticus 34:1-7). And when individuals internalize these attributes – imbue

their hearts, minds and souls with love, compassion, kindness, grace and peace – they cause God to become manifest, enabling them to communicate with God "face to face", like Moses. Then the cloud between Moses' Active Intellect and God's Active Intellect disappears, and Moses is enabled to teach and understand God's Torah.

And so, Vayikra opens when God perceives that Moses has reached the highest spiritual level achievable by mortals, the cloud is removed from the Tent of the Meeting and God invites Moses to enter it and receive more of those Divine Emanations which comprise our Bible.

Shabbat Shalom

The Blessing over Trees, And Kashering the Kitchen for Pesach

Revivim

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

According to formal law, it would have been possible to recite the blessing over trees at the time of their blooming after winter, but the Kabbalists emphasized the importance of the blessing in the month of Nissan specifically * The kashering of a gas stove should be done by light libun of the stovetop grates, or wrapping them in foil; on an induction cooktop, it is sufficient to pour boiling water over them, and heat a pot on it * Kashering an oven: clean the leftover food, and heat it to the highest setting for half an hour

Our Sages said "One who goes out during the days of Nissan and sees trees in bloom says, 'Blessed is He Who did not omit anything from His universe and created in it good creatures and good trees, to benefit mankind with them'" (Berachot 43b).

The purpose of the blessing is to thank Hashem for His kindness, for reviving and flowering the trees that stood dry in winter, and now, bloom and grow flowers that eventually will develop into good fruits that humans may enjoy (Peninei Halakha: Brachot 15:8).

Time of the Blessing

The time of blessing depends on the flowering of the trees after the winter, whether before or after the month of Nisan. Regarding our Sages statement that the time of reciting the blessing is during the days of Nissan, this is because in the Land of Israel, trees usually bloom in Nissan. In the northern countries, where flowering is delayed until the month of Iyar, the blessing is recited le-chatchila (ideally) in the month of Iyar. A person located in the southern hemisphere, where the flowering of the trees occurs in the month of Tishrei, should recite the blessing over trees in the month of Tishrei (Har Tzvi, O.C 1: 118). However, the Kabbalists emphasized the virtue of this blessing, through which great tikkunim (rectifications) are made to the neshamot (souls) who have been reincarnated in trees, and these tikkunim are made precisely in the month of Nissan. Consequently, some Achronim wrote that one should be careful to say the blessing precisely in the month of Nissan. Those quick to fulfill mitzvot recite the blessing on Rosh Chodesh Nissan.

The Laws of Kashering Stoves – Types of Stoves

In order to explain the halachot of stoves, their use for meat and dairy, and koshering them for Pesach, we must first state that there are four types of stoves:

- 1) Gas stoves – they are the common stoves, in which the heat source is from a fire lit on gas, and the pots are placed on the bars above the heat source.
- 2) Electric ranges – where the source of heat comes from electric heating elements instead of a gas fire.
- 3) Ceramic burners – in which the source of heat is the flat surface on which the pots are placed. The surface is made of impervious glass, and is heated by electricity.
- 4) Induction cooktops – also in which there is a surface on which the pots are placed, which is impervious glass, but unlike ceramic burners, in which the heat source is within the ceramic surface, in induction cooktops the heat source is in the pot, which heats up by means of a magnetic field. From the pot, the heat spreads to the food cooking within it, and to the surface on which it is standing.

Use of Dairy and Meat Stoves

In gas stoves or electric stoves, it is permissible to use the same stovetop grates for meat and milk, because even if a little meat or dairy sauce spills on to them, the fire incinerates and befoils it.

The same is the case with ceramic burners, where it is permissible to place a meat pot, and other times a milk pot on the same surface, since the heat of the burners burns what occasionally spills from it.

However, one should be stringent not to eat foods that have fallen on the metal surface under the bars, because sometimes there are remnants of meat and dairy foods there. If a thick piece of food fell there, one may cut and throw away a thickness of about two centimeters from the side of the food that touched the surface, and eat the rest.

If one is sure that the surface has been cleaned well, and it is still clean, it is permissible to eat what has fallen on it, since all the concern is of actual residue or oiliness on it, but there is no need for concern that the surface has absorbed flavor that will later be released. Likewise, if dairy food has fallen there, and it is known that since the last cleaning no meat food has been cooked there, the dairy food that fell there is kosher (Peninei Halakha: Kashrut 25: 13).

Induction Cooktops

Since in induction cooktops the source of heat is not in the surface, but rather the heat spreads from the sides of the pot to the food and to the surface on which it stands, these cooktops do not have the full power to burn anything that spills from the pots. Therefore, those who are not careful to always clean what has spilled from the pots, should always make sure to heat the meat foods on one side, and the dairy foods on the other, so that it does not happen that a milk pot is placed on top of food that has overflowed from a meat pot, or vice versa.

However, those who make sure to clean every time a dairy or meat dish has overflowed, may use the entire surface for either a meat pot or a dairy pot. This is because the glass of these cooktops is non-absorbing, so as long as the overflowed food that got on them is cleaned, there is no concern. On top of that, even if the glass was absorbent, as long as the pot remains dry, there is no prohibition in the pot touching the surface (Peninei Halakha: Kashrut 25: 13).

Separation between Milk and Meat Pots

When cooking a pot of meat and a pot of milk on the stove at the same time, one should make sure that there is a space between them, so that one dish does not overflow on to the side of the other pot. And if the two pots touched each other during cooking, as long as there was no moisture that connected between them at the point of contact, the pots and the dishes are kosher, as the flavors do not pass through dry dishes (Rema YD 92: 8). But if there was moisture that connected them, such as one dish spilled over – the food in them are kosher, but the pots require hagala (Peninei Halakha: Kashrut 25: 11).

Kashering Stovetops that became Treif

Gas stove: Le'chatchila (ideally), one should clean the stove and do light libun on the grates. If it is difficult to do light libun on the grates, it is enough to clean the grates and do hagala in boiling water, and if the grate is longer than the depth of the pot, one side should be inserted first, and then the other side. For the areas of the grates that do not come into contact with the pots, the enamel cook top beneath the grates, and the burner caps it is sufficient to clean them well, and do not require libun or hagala. Le'chatchila, it is good to turn on all the flames and let them burn for about fifteen minutes.

Electric ranges and ceramic burners: Clean thoroughly and run on the highest setting for about 15 minutes, based on the principle of ke-bole'o kakh polto.

Induction cooktop: clean the surface and pour boiling water on it, and heat the pots on it for about fifteen minutes, so that they heat the surface under them according to the way they are used (Peninei Halakha: Kashrut 33: 9).

Kashering Stoves for Pesach

Gas stoves: the law of kashering them for Pesach is the same as the law of kashering them from treif. Admittedly, from ikar ha'din (letter of the law), their ruling is less stringent, since chametz is permitted all year round, and therefore some poskim are of the opinion that it is enough to clean the stove for Pesach without light libun or hagala. However, due to the severity of chametz, it is customary to kasher the grates for Pesach with light libun, as the law of kashering them from a treif (Rema 451: 4, MB as loc. 34).

Instead of this, one can cover the grates on which the pots stand with aluminum foil, in order to create a buffer between the grate on which the chametz foods are placed in Pesach pots. And it is also customary to let all the flames burn for about fifteen minutes.

For the areas of the grates that do not come into contact with the pots, the enamel cook top beneath the grates, and the burner caps it is sufficient to clean them well.

Electric and Ceramic Stovetops: clean thoroughly, and heat on the highest setting for about fifteen minutes.

Induction cooktops: they are kashered as one does for treif – clean the surface and pour boiling water over it, and in order to kasher them from the food that overflowed and got stuck to the bottom of the pot is based on the principle of ke-bole'o kakh polto: wet the bottom of the pot when they are empty, and heat them up on the cooktop for about 15 minutes. from the residue that was stuck under the pots, the bottom of the pots should be moistened with water when they are empty, and heated on the surface for about fifteen minutes, and as such they were emitted (Peninei Halakha: Pesach 11:2).

Microwave for Meat and Dairy

One is permitted to use the same microwave for dairy foods and meat foods while creating a separation between them. When separating, one should pay attention to two things: one, not to put dairy or meat foods directly on the same plate. Second, that a lot of vapor does not enter the microwave cavity into the food being heated.

Therefore, care must be taken not to place foods directly on the fixed plate of the microwave, rather, dairy foods on a dairy plate, and meat foods on a meat plate, and these plates should be placed on the microwave plate. Also, a special lid for dairy foods and a special lid for meat foods should be set aside. And even though steam comes out through the small holes in the lids designed for microwaves, the vapor coming out of them does not have the power to accumulate on the walls and ceiling of the microwave and to give them flavor, and even more so, they do not have the power to emit a flavor that may have been absorbed by the walls of the microwave, and put it into the food that is being heated.

It is also possible to determine that the regular state of the microwave is dairy, and if one wants to heat a meat dish in it, one should place another plate, or other surface, on the fixed plate of the microwave, and cover the meat foods with a lid or a box, or wrap them in a bag. This is also what one should do when he heats a parve food to eat it with meat foods.

Kashering a Microwave from Treif and for Pesach

There are three steps to kashering a microwave oven: 1) cleaning it thoroughly of any residual food resulting from spillage or steaming; 2) perform hagala with boiling water for the rotating plate; 3) heating a bowl of water for about ten minutes at the highest setting – thus, kashering it from chametz steam and vapor that stuck to, or got absorbed in it, when used with treif, or chametz.

Kashering a Baking Oven from Treif and for Pesach

The oven itself and the racks on which trays are placed are kashered by cleaning them and running the oven on its hottest setting for half an hour.

Baking trays are not kashered because they absorbed through fire, and kashering them requires libun at a temperature of 400°C, which will likely cause them serious damage. One should therefore buy special baking trays for Pesach, while the chametz trays should be cleaned and put away like all other hametz utensils. Instead of special Pesach trays, one may use disposable trays (Peninei Halakha: Pesach 11:3).

However, when one kashers an oven from treif, and there is no way to obtain new baking trays, or they cost a lot, they can be kashered by thoroughly cleaning them, and then heating them in the oven on its highest temperature for about half an hour (Peninei Halakha: Kashrut 33:7, footnote 8).

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Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

Insights Parshas Tzav :: Nissan 5783
Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim / Talmudic University
Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva
HaRav Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Dr. Ernest Herman, Isser ben Feivush z"l. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

Your Wish is My Command?

Command Aharon and his sons, saying [...] (6:2).

Rashi (ad loc) comments that the word "tzav" (command) means enthusiastically encourage (the Kohanim) beginning now and for succeeding generations.

This would seem a little incongruous. After all, have you ever tried "commanding" someone and found that the person commanded feels "encouraged" or "enthusiastic"? Hardly. For a proper understanding of this concept try "commanding" your spouse to do the dishes and let us know how that works out for you.

In addition, how could Rashi say "to encourage the Kohanim for now and succeeding generations"? Commanding this generation of Kohanim to do their duty would seem difficult enough, how would this last for succeeding generations?

The word mitzvah also etymologically has the root "tzav," which is why mitzvos are generally translated as commandments. This is, at best, an incomplete translation.

Both Targumim on this possuk translate "tzav" as "paked," which means to appoint. This is also the exact same word that Moshe uses when he asks Hashem to appoint a leader in his stead over the Jewish people: "Yifkod Hashem [...]" (Bamidbar 27:16). This is a very important concept to understand. When Hashem first chose Moshe to go lead the Jewish people out of Egypt, a week long conversation ensued. This consisted, primarily, of Moshe arguing with Hashem. This would seem very odd, after all Hashem is telling him to go, how can Moshe possibly argue?

The answer is that Hashem was asking Moshe to accept a position of responsibility, and responsibility has to be accepted willingly. This is why when Moshe finally accepts to go with Aharon the Torah uses the same exact language of "tzav" – "Vayetzavem al Bnei Yisroel" (Shemos 6:13). The same is true by the entire Torah and mitzvos, which is also a derivative of tzav. They are a responsibility. That is why Hashem had to ask us to accept the Torah, and every soul had to be present at Mount Sinai and sign on for this obligation. The Torah and mitzvos aren't merely rules we must keep. They are a complete agenda for the perfection of the world and we signed on for the responsibility to see it fulfilled.

This is also the reason that the only people who are counted (root word pokad) are those who take responsibility for the continuity of the Jewish nation, those who go to war and are willing to die for their ideals.

So too in our parsha, Hashem is telling Moshe to appoint Aharon and his sons to the permanent role of Kohanim and to do it in an encouraging

and enthusiastic manner in order that they should feel the same way. They aren't being commanded, they are being asked to accept a sacred responsibility. Once they accepted it, this responsibility became binding for all succeeding generations.

For a further discussion of how to get your spouse to do the dishes go to Rabbizweig.com/makethekidsdotherem.

An Ongoing Relationship

If one offers (a peace offering) as a thanksgiving [...] (7:12).

Rashi (ad loc) explains that this korbon, which is known as a toda, was brought when a person was delivered through miraculous means from a difficult situation. There is a fascinating Midrash related to the Korbon Toda: In the future, (i.e. in the times of Moshiach and when the Beis Hamikdosh is rebuilt) all the sacrifices will become obsolete except for the Korbon Toda (Vayikra Rabbah 9:7). What's unique about this korbon that it endures to the times of the third Beis Hamikdosh?

Since Hashem created the world to give good to mankind, a basic tenet of our relationship with Him is hakoras hatov – recognizing the good he has done for us. The first individual to recognize this was Kayin, when he attempted to bring an offering of his own. Unfortunately, his motivation was to relieve himself of the obligation that he felt he owed Hashem. This caused him to bring his offering from an inferior product, which Hashem ignored. Why was it ignored?

The ultimate in good is a closeness to Hashem, so Hashem desires, for our own sake of course, that we have a relationship with Him. Kayin wanted to relieve himself of the obligation; he didn't desire a relationship, which is why he brought his offering from an inferior product. This is akin to an individual paying his taxes to the IRS in a small truck filled with pennies and nickels. In other words, he was making a statement that said, "I despise the fact that I owe this debt and I want to let you know how unhappy I am about it." Kayin missed the whole point of why Hashem created the world.

The Korbon Toda is not one of obligation. It is in the family of korbonos known as shelamim – peace offerings. This sacrifice is not merely a recognition of the good Hashem has bestowed, it is a testimony to our ongoing relationship. The word shelamim comes from shalem – whole. This refers to the oneness that is created by this relationship, which is also the reason for "peace." When there is a unity there is no dissension. This is why this korbon will still be offered in the times of Moshiach; it is the very definition of what those times are all about.

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לע"ג

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
בילא בת (אריה) ליב ע"ה
אנא מלכה בת ישראל ע"ה

Parshat Tzav: A Sin Offering But No Sins?

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

Sefer VaYikra (Leviticus) opens with the "korbanot manual," seven perakim (chapters) of instructions about sacrifices: what different types of sacrifices there are, under what conditions we are to bring each sacrifice to Hashem, and all of the details about the actual process of sacrifice and its aftermath (e.g., when and by whom various korbanot are to be eaten). To many of us nowadays, this manual is not only technical and unfamiliar, but can seem like a closed book. Our goal, then, is to unpack some of the ideas behind the korbanot: when we bring each of the various different types of korban, what are we trying to accomplish? How do the details of the process of bringing each type of korban effectively accomplish what we want/need to do? (As usual, we draw on a variety of sources. Almost none of these ideas are my own.)

Our first step is to get our bearings. Why is this manual placed here at the opening of Sefer VaYikra, between the completion of the construction of the Mishkan (portable Temple) in Sefer Shemot (Exodus) and the Mishkan's inauguration in VaYikra? The most accessible answer seems to be that since the inauguration's centerpiece is its korbanot, we need to know what the different types are, how they are brought, and what is the purpose of each, otherwise the inauguration won't mean much to us.

LAST WEEK: THE "SHELAMIM":

Last week we looked at one of those types of korbanot -- the shelamim -- and discussed some of its details and their significance:

- 1) Possible meanings of the name "shelamim."
- 2) Under what circumstances I would bring a shelamim.
- 3) We focused especially on the parts of the shelamim offered to Hashem on the mizbe'ah (altar): the helev (certain parts of the animal's fat), a symbol of the best, richest part, given to Hashem, and the blood, the symbol of life, placed on the mizbe'ah before Hashem to show respect for life and recognition that Hashem is the master of life -- a crucial lesson in context of the shelamim, since we are given permission to take life for food. This is also why the Torah stresses the prohibition of eating blood particularly in the shelamim context: we have to be reminded that life must be respected even when we are given permission to take it. Eating the symbol of life would obviously show disrespect for the sacredness of life.

A "SIN-OFFERING?"

This week we will look at a different type of korban: the korban hattat, the so-called "sin-offering."

First of all, what does "hattat" mean? Usually, translators translate the korban hattat as "sin-offering." This is no shock, since "hattat" means "sin." When I commit a sin inadvertently, I must bring a korban hattat to Hashem to atone for the sin: in order to be forgiven for particularly serious averot, I need to do teshuva and also bring a korban hattat. The problem with this translation of "hatta" is that according to the Torah, I must bring a korban hattat not just when I sin, but also on many other occasions which seem to have nothing at all to do with sin. Here are some examples:

- 1) Yoledet: a woman who gives birth becomes tamei (ritually impure), and when she reaches the end of the period of impurity, she must bring a korban hattat. Surely there is no sin in giving birth! If anything, the parturient (yoledet) deserves a parade, not penance! What is the hattat for, then? (Some talmudic authorities, such as R. Shimon b. Yohai, propose that the yoledet, overcome by pain, swears "I'll never do this again!" and then usually violates the oath by having another baby. But see Shevuot 8a, this appears not to be the mainstream position; if so, why does she bring a "sin-offering"?)
- 2) Zav: a man who experiences a gonorrhreal genital several times becomes tamei. When the discharge stops and he goes through a period of seven clean days, he can then purify himself -- and he must also bring a hattat (in most cases). But since there is no sin here, why is there a "sin-offering"?
- 3) Zava: a woman who experiences a menstrual blood flow at an unexpected time, and which continues for three days, becomes tamei. When the blood stops and she marks a period of seven clean days, she can then purify herself -- and she must also bring a hattat. But since there is no sin here, why is there a "sin-offering"?

4) Metzora: someone who has the skin condition called tzara'at (formerly translated "leprosy," now often translated "scale disease") becomes tamei. When the metzora recovers, he or she must bring a hattat. But once again, there is no apparent sin, so why is there a need for a hattat? (Note that even according to those talmudic authorities, such as R. Shmuel b. Nahmeini, who hold that tzara'at is triggered by sin, hold that the hattat itself does not atone for the sin; instead, the suffering brought on by the disease itself atones, and the hattat serves a different function; see Shevuot 8a.)

5) The Para Aduma: people who come into contact (halakhically defined) with dead human bodies become tamei. A reddish cow (para aduma) is slaughtered and its ashes (together with other ingredients) are poured over the tamei people; this is a necessary element in purifying the people. Now, the para aduma is referred to by the Torah as a "hattat." But since there is no sin in contracting ritual impurity by touching a dead body (unless you are a kohen or a nazir), why is the para aduma called a hattat? There is no sin for which to atone!

6) The nazir: the nazir voluntarily takes on a set of prohibitions, usually for a set period of time: he or she swears off wine, lets his or her hair grow long, and must avoid all contact with dead bodies. When he or she completes the period of nezirut, or when it is cut short by his becoming tamei, he must bring a hattat. But why?

ANY OTHER POSSIBILITIES?

It looks like it will be hard to explain how all of these cases are connected in some way to sin. If so, then it is difficult to translate "korban hattat" as "sin-offering," since the hattat is offered in many cases where there seems to be no sin.

One other problem -- and here we are on the verge of a solution -- is that the word "hattat" does not grammatically come from the word "het," meaning "sin," but instead from the word "hattei," which means to "cleanse," "purify," or "decontaminate." Where is "hattat" used in the Torah to mean "cleanse" or "purify" or "decontaminate"? Some examples:

1) Shemot 29:36 -- in the instructions given to Moshe for how the Mishkan inauguration ceremony is to be done, Hashem commands: "Make a bull as a hattat each day [of the inauguration] besides the purifications, and purify ["ve-hitteta"] the altar . . ."

2) VaYikra 8:15 -- During the actual inauguration process, as part of one of the korbanot: "It was slaughtered; then Moshe took the blood and placed some on the corners of the altar all around with his finger; he purified ["va-ye-hattei"] the altar . . ."

3) VaYikra 14:52 -- in the context of tzara'at ha-bayit, a fungus-like growth which can appear on the walls of a house and causes tum'ah (impurity): "He should purify [ve-hittei] the house with the blood of the bird . . ."

4) BeMidbar (Numbers) 8:7 -- when the Leviyyim (Levites) are appointed as caretakers and transporters of the Mishkan, they are to undergo a special purification ceremony: "So shall you do to them to purify them: sprinkle upon them waters of purification ["mei hattat"] . . . and they will be purified."

If the "hattat" in "korban hattat" means "purifying"/ "cleansing" -- and not "sin" -- then the korban hattat is not a "sin-offering," it is a "cleansing offering" or a "purification offering." This makes sense not only grammatically, but also helps explain why there is a korban hattat in so many cases where there is no sin at all, but there is instead impurity: yoledet, zav, zava, metzora, nazir, para aduma (the para aduma is referred to by the Torah as a "hattat"). Since the hattat is a purification offering, it makes sense that it is brought in case of impurity.

SIN AND PURIFICATION:

It makes sense that a ritually impure person offers a korban hattat to attain full purity, but why does a person need to bring a korban hattat when he or she commits a sin? What does sinning have to do with being purified?

This brings us to a crucial element of the Torah's perspective on sin: according to the Torah, committing a sin is not just a rebellion against Hashem (of course, committing an avera on purpose is more of a rebellion than doing so unintentionally) and a rejection of His command, it also has a spiritual effect on us and the environment. It produces tum'ah in us and in the environment around us. Not only has a person done something morally wrong when he does an avera, he actually affects himself and his environment when he does so.

JUST HAVING A PUFF?

When you smoke, you're not smoking just for now -- it's not an activity in which you engage just for now and which is then over and leaves no trace. Every time you take a puff, you inhale little pieces of sticky filth which are distributed through your lungs. If you have a serious smoking habit, you eventually accumulate so much dirt in your lungs that you make it hard for yourself to breathe. And not only does smoking affect you, it also affects everyone around you -- today we call this "second-hand smoke," and medical studies show that exposure to second-hand smoke can be harmful as well.

The same is true of averot (sins): they are not just actions in which we engage and which then disappear forever (and for which Hashem may punish us) -- they have a concrete effect on our "spiritual lungs" and on our spiritual environment. According to the Torah, they make us tamei, impure. It is no surprise, then, that a person who does an avera needs to purify himself of the tum'ah caused by the avera: he must do teshuva (repent) and he must bring a korban hattat -- a cleansing offering -- to clean up the mess he has made through the avera. Note, though, that there are two completely different kinds of tum'ah in the Torah: "moral tum'ah," tum'ah produced by doing an avera (and which cannot be transmitted to others), and "ritual tum'ah," tum'ah produced by certain ritual situations, such as coming into contact with a dead body, giving birth, menstruating, becoming a metzora, etc.; there is of course nothing sinful about this latter type of tum'ah. What is common to both types of tum'ah -- moral and ritual -- is that both must be mopped up, and the "mop" for both is the korban hattat.

Getting back to "moral tum'ah": what does the korban hattat actually clean? Where is this spiritual dirt? The first place where this impurity is found is in the sinner himself. But the solution for this kind of impurity is not to go to the mikvah, it is to do teshuva. The Rambam addresses this requirement in the last section of his code on the laws of ritual purity. He begins by observing that we all know that tum'ah is not dirt which is washed away by the mikveh; it is a status invented by the Torah for a particular purpose (what exactly this purpose might be, the Rambam addresses in his Guide to the Perplexed). But in order for the mikveh to properly "work," the person who is dunking himself in it must be aware of what he is doing and intend thereby to become pure (unlike taking a shower to clean away dirt; the shower works just as well even if you are sleeping). The Rambam says that the same thing applies to "moral tum'ah":

"Just as one who sets his intent on purifying himself [from ritual tum'ah], once he has immersed in the mikveh, he is tahor [pure] even though nothing at all has changed in him physically, so it is with one who sets his intent on purifying his soul from impurities of the soul [something like what I have called "moral tum'ah" -- EM], which are evil thoughts and evil character traits; once he has decided in his heart to abandon those behaviors and has immersed his soul in the waters of knowledge, he is immediately purified . . . May Hashem in His great mercy purify us from all of our sins, transgressions, and iniquities, Amen."

Purify? From sin? What does impurity have to do with sin? Clearly, the Rambam is making the connection the Torah makes in many places between sin and moral tum'ah. Sin is not just a decision to disobey, it makes a mark in a concrete way.

Besides doing teshuva, in order to be forgiven (i.e., in order for the stain on his spirit to be cleaned) the sinner must also supply powerful "detergent," and this is provided by the Torah in the form of the korban hattat. The blood of the hattat, which is placed on the mizbe'ah, is a symbol of life. As we will see as we go further in Sefer VaYikra, life is always connected with purity, so when the blood is placed on the mizbe'ah, the person who brought it is making a statement: instead of producing death and impurity through sins, he is committing himself to producing purity and life.

SPIRITUAL ECOLOGY: CLEANING UP THE ENVIRONMENT:

The second dimension of the hattat is that the offerer must also clean up the environment: he has to find every person who has inhaled the smoke from his cigarettes and make sure that their lungs are cleaned. In terms of the korban hattat, that means that when we make the environment impure by doing an avera, we have to clean up our mess. We have to counteract the impurity with blood, which represents life and purity.

Let's look at some examples of how this works out in Sefer VaYikra:

Example 1: VaYikra 18:24-30 -- After delivering a long list of sexual crimes (incest of various sorts, male homosexual sex, bestiality, sex with a menstruating woman, etc.), Hashem warns us not to commit sexual averot so that they do not make us and Eretz Yisrael impure. This would be a strange equation (sin=impurity) unless we had made this connection earlier:

"Do not impurify yourselves through all of these [actions], for through all of these were impurified the nations whom I am sending away from before you [i.e., throwing them out of Eretz Yisrael -- EM]. The land became tamei, and I recalled its sin upon it, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. You shall keep my laws and commandments -- do not do these abominations, neither citizens nor strangers among you, for the nations who lived in the land before you did all these abominations, and the land became tamei -- so that the land should not vomit you out when you impurify it, just as it vomited out the nation before you."

The word "tamei" appears here about seven times in as many pesukim; one gets the idea that this is a concept the Torah wants to drive home very clearly. Our actions affect not only our individual fates and spiritual stature, but affect the entire community and its relationship with its holy surroundings, Eretz Yisrael. As an antidote to the impurity produced by our averot, we must clean up the mess we have made of both ourselves and our environment.

FALL CLEANING:

Example 2: VaYikra 16:15-20, 30-34. Nowadays, we think of Yom Kippur as a day of teshuva and prayer. But when we had a Beit haMikdash (Temple), Yom Kippur was not just a time for teshuva, it was also time to let loose the heavy guns of purification in the Mikdash, to release the most powerful "hattat-detergents" of the entire year:

16:15-20 -- "He [the Kohen Gadol, High Priest] should slaughter the hattat-goat which belongs to the people [the whole nation] and bring its blood inside the curtain [=into the Holy of Holies] . . . and sprinkle it on the Ark-covering and before the Ark-covering. He should purify the holy place from the impurities of Bnei Yisrael, from their transgressions with all their sins; he shall do the same with the Ohel Mo'ed [the rest of the Mishkan], which resides among them in their impurity. . . . He should leave [the Mishkan] and go out to the altar which is before Hashem and purify it: he shall take from the blood of the bull and the goat and put it on the corners of the altar all around."

What is clear from this command to purify the Mishkan from our sins is that the Mishkan is made impure by a year of the people's sins. Their sins produce tum'ah not only in themselves, but also in the Mishkan itself! Every time a person commits an avera, he not only blackens his own "lungs," he also dumps a bucket of filth into the Mikdash, so to speak.

But why is the Mishkan connected with our averot? Why is it made impure by our averot? The Mishkan is the focal point of purity and holiness in Am Yisrael. It is our spiritual lungs, so to speak, where we inhale Hashem's presence, the place where the Shekhina rests in purity and holiness, the central source of our contact with Hashem and His holiness. It is only natural that the Mishkan is blackened by averot we commit; a little bit of the Mishkan's purity is pushed out by a little bit of the impurity we produce. The same thing also happens to us as individuals, so once a year, Hashem commands us to bring on the heavy cleaning artillery and scour ourselves and the Mishkan from all the dirt with which he have filled it during the year.

16:30-34 -- Here the Torah summarizes by telling us what Yom Kippur is all about: "For on this day, you will be atoned for so that you will be purified ["le-taher"] from all of your sins; before Hashem will you be purified . . . [The kohen] shall purify the Holy of Holies, the Ohel Mo'ed, the altar, the kohanim, and the people . . . to purify the Bnei Yisrael from all of their sins once a year"

Again, the Torah makes it clear that both the Mikdash and the people are made tamei by the people's sins, and must be cleansed on Yom Kippur. The reason this is such a serious business is the same reason smoking is such a serious business. A few puffs may not really hurt us much, but it starts to accumulate quickly -- and sin, like smoking, becomes a habit. Eventually, the lungs become blocked to the degree that it is a real exertion to climb a few flights of stairs. Then the smoker develops a cough that won't go away, or a frightening case of asthma. Covered with dirt, the lungs can no longer do their job. This is not just a technicality, it can become life-threatening; sometimes, when the lungs have had enough of the dirt we keep throwing down, they rebel and the smoker develops lung cancer.

The same is true of our own personal spiritual lungs and our communal spiritual lungs. When we ignore what Hashem wants, we begin to close off our spiritual connection with Him. It becomes a little harder to "breathe," and we find that Hashem seems a lot more distant than He was before. And as we fill the Mishkan, His house, with filth, He begins to withdraw. Who would live in a house where people come to dump their garbage? Hashem is the essence of purity and holiness, and when we make the Mishkan impure, we make it inhospitable for His Presence. Inevitably, He moves out and withdraws from us. This is communal spiritual lung cancer -- that is what it means when Hashem abandons the Mikdash and withdraws His protection and Presence from us. It is only a matter of time until another nation is sent to destroy the

physical shell of the Mikdash, which we ourselves have already destroyed in a spiritual sense. And it is only a matter of time until the Land spits us out, no longer willing to tolerate our incessant dumping of filth everywhere, and we are forced to find our way in foreign countries.

Note that it is also natural that the more serious the avera, the more deeply the impurity penetrates into the Mikdash and the more powerful a detergent is necessary: when a member of the people commits an avera and must bring a hattat, the blood is placed on the mizbe'ah -- the altar in the courtyard just outside the Mishkan building proper. But when a Kohen Gadol or the High Court sins, the tum'ah penetrates further, so when they bring their hattat, the blood is placed on the inner mizbe'ah, the incense altar which is actually inside the Mishkan. And when people sin purposely, the tum'ah is powerful enough to penetrate into the Kodesh ha-Kodashim itself, where the Ark is. Of course, a korban hattat cannot be offered by an individual for an intentional sin, but that does not mean the Ark remains tamei forever -- as the Torah tells us, it is purified with the blood of the communal hattat on Yom Kippur, when the Kohen Gadol enters the holiest space on Earth and atones not only for inadvertent sins, but also for wanton sins: "peshalim."

BROADER IMPLICATIONS:

One of the most crucial implications of this system is that the entire community is together responsible, each individual for every other individual. Since everyone's action affects the Mikdash, every individual is responsible to the community to clean up his mess so that the tum'ah does not accumulate in the Mikdash and begin to force Hashem away from the entire nation as a whole. In this way, the spiritual status of every individual in the nation is linked to everyone else's -- we all suffer the consequences of the sins of each individual, unless each individual is responsible and cleans up. In closing, I can only echo the words of the Rambam: "May Hashem in His great mercy purify us from all of our sins, transgressions, and iniquities, Amen."

Shabbat Shalom

PARSHAT TZAV
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TZAV AND VAYIKRA

Is Parshat Tzav simply a repeat of Parshat Vayikra?

In the following shiur, as we undertake a 'tedious' study that will explain how and why they are very different - we will also arrive at several conclusions that will help us appreciate why we eat 'kosher' meat.

INTRODUCTION

In both Parshiot Vayikra and Tzav we find an organized set of laws concerning each of the five basic categories of korbanot: OLAH, MINCHA, CHATAT, ASHAM and SHLAMIM. However, in each Parsha, the order and detail of their presentation are quite different.

A priori, it would have been more logical for the Torah to combine all these laws into **one** unit. To understand why they are presented separately, the following shiur analyzes Parshat Tzav in an attempt to understand its internal structure, and then compares it to Parshat Vayikra.

A KEY PHRASE

The 'key' towards understanding Parshat Tzav is the phrase "v'zot torat ha...". To verify the centrality of this phrase, briefly review the seven "parshiot" that comprise chapters 6 & 7, noting how just about each "parshia" begins with this same phrase: "zot torat..." - as it introduces each new category.

For example, in 6:2 we find "zot torat ha'olah", in 6:7 - "zot torat ha'mincha", in 6:18 - "zot torat ha'chatat", etc. [See also 7:1 (asham), and 7:11 (shlamim).]

Then, study the last two psukim of this unit (i.e. 7:37-38), noting once again how this phrase forms a very fitting summary for each of these introductory phrases:

"zot ha'torah - la'OLAHLA'MINCHA, v'la'CHATAT..." (7:37).

Furthermore, recall that we didn't find this phrase (or anything similar) in Parshat Vayikra. Hence, to understand what Parshat Tzav is all about, we must first understand the meaning of the word "torah" in this context.

Today, the word "torah" is commonly used to describe the entire Torah [i.e. Chumash], and hence the most general category encompassing all of the mitzvot. However, in Sefer Vayikra the word "torah" carries a more specific meaning, as "torah" is only one of the various categories of laws, distinct from "chukim" and "mishpatim". [See for example 18:1-5.]

Another example of the use of the word "torah" in a more specific context is in regard to God's comment to Yitzchak concerning Avraham Avinu:

"ekev asher shama Avraham b'koli - v'yishmor mishmarti mitzvoti chukotei, v'TORAHtei" - (see Breishit 26:5)

Here, the word "torah" clearly implies a specific category (and not a general one); and so claim Ibn Ezra, Rashbam, Ramban, and Seforno (even though each gives a different explanation of what that category is).

To understand the specific meaning of the word "torah", let's consider its "shoresh" [root] - the verb "l'horot" - to instruct. Hence, we should expect the word "torah" in Sefer Vayikra to refer to an instructional (or procedural) law, i.e. a series of actions necessary for the completion of a given process.

[The same is true in Sefer Bamidbar, as we shall see in our discussion of Parshat Parah.]

HOW OR WHAT

Based on this context, the pasuk in Parshat Tzav "zot torat ha'mincha..." (see 6:7-10) should be translated as, "This is the

PROCEDURE for offering the "korban mincha", as this pasuk introduces the details regarding HOW the priest must offer the korban mincha. More specifically, this would include:

- a) taking it to the mizbayach;
- b) offering a handful ("kometz") from its flour and oil;
- c) eating the leftovers as "matza" in the courtyard, etc.

In this manner, Parshat Tzav details the procedures for HOW to offer all the other types of korbanot. Herein lies the basic difference between Parshat Tzav and Parshat Vayikra. Whereas Parshat Tzav deals primarily with the procedures for **HOW** to offer the various korbanot, Parshat Vayikra focuses on **WHAT** korban (or which korban) is to be offered. Let's explain.

Parshat Vayikra discusses which offerings the individual **can** bring should he wish to offer a korban ["n'dava"], as well as which offering he **must** bring should he transgress ["chova"]. In contrast, Parshat Tzav explains **how** the "kohanim" offer these korbanot, i.e. the procedures for the "kohanim" to follow once the owner presents them with the "korban".

This distinction explains why the opening pasuk of each Parsha directs itself to a different audience.

* Parshat Vayikra begins with:

"...Speak to BNEI YISRAEL and tell them, if an INDIVIDUAL among you WISHES TO OFFER a korban..." (1:1-2)

* Parshat Tzav begins with:

"Command AHARON & HIS SONS saying, this is the procedure for bringing the OLAH..." (6:1-2)

Parshat Tzav is addressed specifically to the KOHANIM for it explains HOW they must offer the korbanot, while Parshat Vayikra directs itself towards Bnei Yisrael, since everyone must know WHICH specific korban he CAN or MUST bring in any given situation.

In other words, Parshat VAYIKRA serves as a 'halachik catalogue' - guiding the individual as to WHICH korban to bring, while Parshat TZAV serves as an 'instruction manual' - teaching the kohen HOW to offer each type of korban.

Chumash presents each 'manual' independently because each serves a different purpose. This can explain why the Torah divides these details into two separate sections.

[This distinction also explains why certain details are found in both Parshiot, i.e. those laws that must be known to BOTH the kohanim and to the individual.

Furthermore, certain procedures that only the kohen can perform are also included in Vayikra because the kohen serves in this capacity as the emissary of the individual offering the korban. Ideally the owner should offer the korban, but since only kohanim are permitted to come near the MIZBAYACH, the kohen must perform the "avodah" on his behalf. Additionally, the owner must also be aware of what he is permitted to do and which rituals are restricted to the kohanim. For example, the owner is permitted to do "shchita," but may not perform other "avodot."]

THE 'NEW ORDER'

This background also explains the difference in the ORDER of the presentation of the korbanot in each Parsha.

As we explained in last week's shiur, Parshat Vayikra discusses the categories of "korban yachid," beginning with the voluntary N'DAVA korbanot - OLAH & SHLAMIM - and then continuing with the obligatory CHOVA korbanot - CHATAT & ASHAM.

In contrast, Parshat Tzav makes no distinction between N'DAVA and CHOVA. Once the korban comes to the Mikdash, the kohen doesn't need to know why it was offered. Instead, he only needs to know its category. Hence, the order in Tzav follows the level of "kedusha" of the various korbanot: OLAH - MINCHA - CHATAT - ASHAM - SHLAMIM.

[The SHLAMIM is now last instead of second, since it has the lowest level of "kedusha" ("kodshim kalim").]

THE ORDER IN PARSHAT TZAV

One could also explain that the internal order of Tzav follows according to how much of the korban is consumed on the MIZBAYACH (in Chazal, known as "achilat mizbayach"):

The OLAH is first as it is totally consumed on the mizbayach. The MINCHA follows, as it is either totally consumed, in the case of a MINCHA brought by a kohen (see 6:16); or at least the "kometz" is consumed, while the leftover flour ["noteret"] can be eaten only by the KOHANIM.

Next we find the CHATAT and ASHAM, as their "chaylev" [fat] and "dam" [blood] is offered on the mizbayach; while the meat can be eaten only by the KOHANIM.

[All of the above korbanot are known as "kodshei kodashim", as the meat either is consumed on the mizbayach or eaten by the kohanim, but must remain within the courtyard of the Mishkan. The Gemara explains that this meat eaten by the kohanim is considered a 'gift' to the kohanim from God (and not from the owner) -"m'shulchan gavohah k'zachu leh".]

The SHLAMIM comes last as some of its meat can be eaten by the owners (after the "chaylev" and "dam" are offered on the mizbayach). As this meat can be eaten anywhere in the camp (and not only within the courtyard of the Mishkan), this category is known as "kodshim kalim."

AN OUTLINE of PARSHAT TZAV

The following table summarizes the overall structure of Parshat Tzav based on the principles discussed above. As you study it, note that not every 'parshia' begins with a "zot torat ha'--". Instead, we find several 'digressions' into 'parshiot' of related topics (noted by a "***"). We will discuss these digressions at the conclusion of the outline.

TORAT ha'OLAH - 6:1-6

- 1) bringing the daily "olat tamid";
- 2) "trumat ha'deshen" - daily removal of ashes from mizbayach;
- 3) preparing the wood and fire on the mizbayach;
- 4) mitzvah "aish tamid" - to ensure a continuous fire.

TORAT ha'MINCHA - 6:7-11

- 1) the "kometz" (handful) of flour placed on the mizbayach;
- 2) the "noteret" (leftover portion), eaten by the kohen;

** RELATED LAWS: (6:12-16)

- 3) the "minchat chinuch" - the special inaugural meal offering brought by a kohen the first time he performs AVODA.
- 4) the "minchat chavittim" - offered daily by the Kohen Gadol.

TORAT ha'CHATAT - 6:17-23

- 1) the procedure how to offer the korban;
- 2) the portion eaten by the kohen;
- 3) where it can be eaten (in the "azara");

Related laws:

- 4) special laws concerning a case where the blood of a chatat touches a garment or vessel.

TORAT ha'ASHAM - 7:1-7

- 1) the procedure how to offer the korban;
- 2) the portion eaten by the kohen;
- 3) where it can be eaten;

[As "asham" forms the conclusion of the Kodshei Kodshim section, several laws concerning the reward of the kohen are added, such as the kohen's rights to the animal hides of the OLAH and the issue of who receives the "noteret" of the various types of korban mincha (see 7:8-10).]

TORAT ha'SHLAMIM - 7:11-34

- 1) the laws regarding the Korban Todah (thanksgiving);
- 2) the laws regarding a Korban Shlamim (freewill);

**RELATED LAWS:

- 3) laws concerning meat that becomes "tamey" (defiled);
- 4) the general prohibition of eating "chaylev" and "dam" (blood)
- 5) the kohen's rights to the "chazeh" (breast) and "shok" (thigh), a 'gift' to the kohen from the owner of the korban.

SUMMARY - 7:35-38 (this concludes the unit)

35-36: "This is the 'reward' of the kohanim from the korbanot.

["mashchat" = reward, but see m'forshim!]

37: ZOT HA'TORAH: I'OLAH, I'MINCHA, I'CHATAT

v'I'ASHAM... ul'ZEVACH HA'SHLAMIM".

THE DIGRESSIONS

Even though most of outline follows according to the structure set by the phrase "zot torat..." (and hence its laws are directed specifically to the kohanim) we do find several digressions.

The first such digression is the 'parshia' of 6:12-16, and follows the laws of how to bring a "korban mincha". It describes both the:

* "minchat chinuch" - the inauguration flour-offering that the kohen brings on the day he begins his service; and the .

* "minchat chavittim" - an identical korban offered daily by the Kohen Gadol.

This digression is quite logical, as this law relates to both the korban mincha and to the kohanim.

Within the laws of the korban SHLAMIM we find two additional digressions. The first (7:22-27) discusses the prohibition to eat "chaylev v'dam" from any animal, even if was not offered as a korban SHLAMIM. The second (7:28-31) explains that the owner of the korban SHLAMIM must give the "chazeh" and "shok" to the kohen. Note how both of these digressions are directed to the entire congregation (and not just to the kohanim/ see 7:22&28) for everyone is required to know these related laws.

PRIESTLY REWARD

With these digressions in mind, and after reviewing the outline we may additionally conclude that one of the primary considerations of Parshat Tzav is the compensation that the kohen receives for offering the korban. In contrast to Parshat Vayikra, which does not at all raise this issue, Parshat Tzav tells us that the kohen receives the hides of the Olah offering, the leftovers of the Mincha offering, most of the meat of the "chatat" and "asham" and the "chazeh" & "shok" of the "shlamim".

The summary pasuk in 7:35-36 reinforces the significance of this point in the eyes of Parshat Tzav, as does the introduction in 6:1-2, which directs these laws specifically to Aharon and his sons.

KORBANOT THEN / KASHRUT TODAY

As we mentioned above, in the middle of the SHLAMIM section in Parshat Tzav we find a special "dibur" to Bnei Yisrael prohibiting them from eating the "chaylev" & "dam" (fat and blood) of any animal, even if that animal is not being offered as a "korban"!

This law, and its presentation at this location, suggests that the 'kashrut laws' of "chaylev v'dam" can be viewed as an EXTENSION of the laws of korbanot. In other words, Chumash purposely includes the laws of "chaylev" and "dam" in Parshat Tzav to teach us that they are forbidden specifically because these parts of the animal, had it been a korban, belong on the mizbayach!

Ideally, as Sefer Devarim establishes (see 12:20-22), one should eat meat only within the framework of a korban shlamim. Eating "chulin" (meat which is not a korban) is allowed only when bringing a korban shlamim is unfeasible. [In Sefer Devarim this meat is referred to as "basar ta'ava" ('meat of 'desire').]

Nevertheless, even in the realistic, non-ideal condition, when one does eat "chulin," he still may not eat the "chaylev v'dam." Therefore, whenever a Jew does eat meat, he must remind himself that this animal could (or should) have been a "korban shlamim".

One could suggest that man's desire for meat may reflect an animalistic tendency latent in human behavior. By offering a korban shlamim, man can channel this desire in a more positive direction - towards the enhancement of his relationship with God.

[Recall from our shiur on Vayikra that the korban shlamim is the ideal "korban N'DAVA" in that it reenacts the covenantal ceremony between God and Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai.]

Even today (without a Mikdash), by refraining from eating "chaylev" and "dam", we can elevate our physical world with "kedusha" and retain a certain level of "kedusha" - even while eating meat.

shabbat shalom
menachem

=====

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. WHAT'S A MISHPAT?

What do you think is the difference between a "chok" and a "mishpat"? Consider the linguistic relationship between the words "mishpat" and "shofet" (= shoresh sh.p.t.), and recall Parshat Mishpatim (Shmot chapter 21) and its 'key' word (pun intended).

B. SOME MORE TORAH'

Note the similar use of the word "torah" - "procedure" - in Tazria-Metzora - see Vayikra 12:7, 13:59, 14:2,32,54.

See also Bamidbar 5:29-30, 6:21.

Note also Breishit 26:5 - see m'forshim!

Note how the word "torah" takes on a more general meaning in Sefer Devarim - see 1:5 & 4:44! Can you explain why?

See Shmot 24:12, And note the words TORAH & MITZVAH.

If "mitzvah" refers to TZIVUI HA'MISHKAN, i.e. Shmot 25->31, then to what does TORAH refer? Based on 7:37-38, could this be referring (at least partially) to Parshat Tzav?

Could it include other parshiot of mitzvot found in Sefer Vayikra and Sefer Bamidbar? If so, can you explain why?

Relate to your answers to C & D above.

C. THE PROBLEMATIC FINALE

See 7:37, which accurately summarizes the entire Parsha, except for one 'small' detail:

"zot ha'torah la'OLAH la'MINCHA, v'la'CHATAT v'la'ASHAM
v'la'MILUIIM u'ZEVACH HA'SHLAMIM..."

What is "V'la'miluim" doing in this pasuk?

1. Scan the Parsha to make sure you understand the question.
2. Note the two directions taken by the commentators in dealing with this problem. [See Rashi & Ibn Ezra.]
3. Relate these answers to 6:12-16 and the next perek (8:1-36).
4. Now relate this issue to Shmot perek 29.

Note that from 7:38 it appears that the mitzvot of Parshat Tzav were given on HAR SINAI, and NOT from the Ohel Moed as were the mitzvot in Parshat Vayikra [see Ramban].

How does this help answer the question concerning the word "miluim"?

5. Why are the laws concerning the 'miluim' recorded in Shmot (perek 29) while all the other "torot" appear in Vayikra?
6. How does all this relate to Shmot 24:12 and Parshiot Terumah - Tezaveh? To what does the word "torah" refer in that pasuk?

[Iy'h, next week's shiur will deal with this topic.]

D. THE SEVEN DAYS OF MILUIIM

At the end of Parshat Tzav (8:1-36), we find the narrative describing the seven-day "miluim" dedication ceremony. Prove from the style of this parsha that it belongs in Pkudei. (Look for the repetition of the key phrase.) Where in Parshat Pkudei does this parsha belong? Why do you think it is placed here?

How does this parsha relate to Parshat Shmini?

Why do you think this narrative is included in Sefer Vayikra rather than Sefer Shmot?

Note as well that the fulfillment of all the commandments concerning how to build the Mishkan in Parshiot Terumah Tezaveh were repeated in Vayakhel Pekudei, EXCEPT the commandment concerning the seven day milium ceremony.

E. DAM HA'NEFESH

In the related parsha of "basar ta'ava" in Sefer Devarim (12:20-28), we find what appears to be a different reason for the prohibition against eating blood:

"Be sure not to eat the BLOOD, for the blood is the 'nefesh' (life/soul), and you must not consume the 'nefesh' with the 'basar' (meat)." (12:23)

In truth, however, this reason involves the very same principle we discussed. The sprinkling of the korban's blood on the mizbayach represents the 'nefesh' of the person offering the korban - "ki ha'dam hu ha'nefesh" (12:23). This is the reason why the blood was chosen to be sprinkled on the mizbayach, and this is the reason why we are not permitted to eat the blood.

How does offering a korban or refraining from eating certain animal parts bring anyone closer to God?

Man's relationship with God stems from his understanding that he was created for a purpose. Towards that purpose, God created man "b'tzelem Elokim" (Br. 1:27), i.e. with a creative mind (see first chapter of Moreh Nevuchim of the Rambam!). It is this trait of "tzelem Elokim" that differentiates man from animal. Upon seeing the blood of an animal, man should ask himself, how am I different from that animal? The animal's shape may be a bit different, but the blood is the same blood as the human being's, just as the inner organs and limbs are the same as his.

One could suggest that the experience of offering a korban stimulates this process of introspection; it may help man recognize that despite these similarities, he is different, insofar as he was created "b'tzelem Elokim" - for a purpose. The search for that purpose sets man on the proper path. As we say in Tehilim:

"Adam bi'kar" - a man [lives] with wealth and honor - "v'lo yavin" - but does not contemplate his way in life - "nimshal k'bhay'mot nidmu" - he is like the animals that perish.
(Tehilim 49:21)

F. ANOTHER "DIBUR" OUT OF PLACE?

Imbedded within the parsha's discussion of shlamim we find yet another "dibur" to Bnei Yisrael (7:28-34). Again, why do we find a "dibur" to Bnei Yisrael in the Parsha intended for kohanim? Shouldn't these laws appear in Parshat Vayikra?

This "dibur" details the laws requiring the owner of the shlamim to give the "chazeh v'shok" to the kohen. These laws are in Parshat Tzav because they deal with the portion of the animal reserved for the kohanim. On the other hand, it must be emphasized that this portion is a gift to the kohen from the owner of the korban. As such, it requires a special "dibur" to Bnei Yisrael.

G. KORBAN TODAH & KORBAN PESACH

One could suggest that the korban Pesach is simply a 'special type' of korban Todah. The following questions (in lieu of a shiur) will help you understand their connection. (Read Vayikra 7:11-15 & Shmot 12:3-12.)

1. What is the time frame in which these korbanot can be eaten?
2. What type of bread must be eaten with each korban?

Do any other korbanot come with bread or matza?

3. Would you say these laws 'force' someone to invite people to join him in eating his Korban Todah?

Must one invite others to join him when eating the Korban Pesach?

4. What is supposed to happen during this "Todah" seudah?

Relate to Tehilim 107, especially pasuk 22!

How is this similar to "leil ha'seder"?

5. How does the recitation of "Hallel" apply to both korbanot?

Relate to Tehilim 100("mizmor l'Todah").

6. According to this comparison, why do we eat matza with the Korban Pesach?

Does it have anything to do with the matza that Bnei Yisrael baked after leaving Egypt (see Shmot 12:39)?

Iy'h, we'll have a shiur on this topic before Pesach.

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UNDERSTANDING MAGGID - A biblical Perspective
[revised 5768]
Expression of Gratitude
or
Recogniton of Destiny

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

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

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

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

THE SOURCE FOR MAGGID in Parshat Bo

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"ve-HIGGADETA le-bincha ba-yom ha-hu leimor" -
And you must TELL your son on that day, saying:
BA'AVUR ZEH -
for the sake of this -
ASA Hashem li BE-TZEITI mi-MITZRAYIM -
God did for me [?] when he took me out of Egypt
(see Shmot 13:8).

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

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

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

clear what the Torah wants us to explain.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHERE SHOULD WE BEGIN?

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

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

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

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

THE MISHNA in Mesechet PESACHIM

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

"matchilim bi-gnut u-mesaymim be-shevach" -
- We begin our story with a derogatory comment, and conclude it with praise.

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

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

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

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

So where does the story begin?

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

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

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

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

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

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

'HA LACHMA ANYA'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MAH NISHTANA

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

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

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

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

'AVADIM HAYINU'

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

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

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

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

And, then we explain:

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

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

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

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

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

MA'ASEH BE-R. ELIEZER...

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

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

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

AMAR RABBI ELIEZER BEN AZARYA...

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

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

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

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

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

THE FOUR SONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

"YACHOL ME-ROSH CHODESH"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"MI-TCHILA OVDEI AVODA ZARA..."

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

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

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

proof from Yehoshua chapter 24.

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

The Statement:

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

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

The Proof:

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

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

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

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

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

RE-AFFIRMING BRIT SINAI in Sefer Yehoshua

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So Yehoshua made a **covenant** with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem."

[See Yehoshua 24:16-25!]

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

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

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

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

"BARUCH SHOMER HAVTACHATO"

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

Statement:

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

Proof:

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

[See Breishit 15:13-18].

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This point is proven in the next paragraph:

"VE-HEE SHE-AMDA"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHY MIKRA BIKKURIM?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

into the Promised Land.

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

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

THE MULTIPLICATION TABLES

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

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

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

DAYENU

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

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

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

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

In other words, we say as follows:

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

... And so on.

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

"al achat kama vekhama..."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"RABBAN GAMLIEL"

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

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

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

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

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

"BE-CHOL DOR VA-DOR"

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

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

One could suggest that this closing statement complements

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

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

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

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

LEFICHACH / HALLEL

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

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

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

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

THE 'SECOND CUP'

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

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

A CONCLUDING THOUGHT

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

. Let's explain.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ETHICS & the EXODUS -

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

REMEMBER WHAT THEY DID TO YOU

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

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

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

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

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

A YEARLY 'RE-SENSITIZER'

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

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

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

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

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

chag sameiach, menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

B. MAGID & SEFER DEVARIM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AVADIM HAYINU & SEFER DEVARIM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Land and to serve God by keeping His laws.

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

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

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

C. BCHOL DOR V'DOR & SEFER DEVARIM

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

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

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

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

D. "HA LACHMA ANYA"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

A PREP FOR HALLEL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SIPPUR & SHEVACH

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

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

The 'HASHKAFAT' of DAYENU

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Dayenu" challenges us to find the proper balance.

chag samayach,
menachem

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

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

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

GOALS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE LEIL HASEDER

A: “SEDER”

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

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

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

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

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

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

B: TELLING -> IDENTIFYING -> SINGING PRAISE

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

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

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

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

– “telling the story” is a means towards “identifying with the story”.

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

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

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

C: RELIVING JEWISH HISTORY IN ONE EVENING

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

On Pesach, we identify with – and try to reexperience – the Exodus from Egypt. Beyond that, we walk a mile in the shoes of every Jew who ever lived; every Kohen Gadol who entered the Kodesh Kodoshim on Yom haKippurim, every victim of persecution who died with “Sh’mah Yisra’el” on her faithful lips, every hearty pioneer who risked life and limb to drain swamps in order to reclaim more of the Land of Israel for her sons and daughters.

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

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

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

D: REASSESSING THE GOAL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II. STRUCTURE OF THE SEDER

A: THE MITZVOT

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

I. Mitzvot unique to the night

A. From the Torah mid'Orayta

1. Eating Matzah 2. Telling the Story : Haggadah

B. From the Rabbis – mid'Rabanan

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

2. Drinking four cups of wine

3. Displaying Haroset

4. Hallel (Shirah)

5. Reclining

II. Mitzvot not unique to the night

A. mid'Orayta

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

B. mid'Rabanan

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

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

B: THE FOUR CUPS – FOUR PARTS OF THE SEDER

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

1. KIDDUSH

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

2. MAGGID

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

3. BIRKAT HAMAZON

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

4. HALLEL

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

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

C: MATZAH AND WINE

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

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

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

The pendulum-swinging between wine (Kiddush) and Matzah (Ha Lachma ‘Anya) and wine (v’Hi She’amda) and Matza (Tzei ul’Mad) and wine (L’fikhakh) reflects the way that information (story-telling – with the Matzah as the “show-and-tell” piece) and reaction (Shirah -with the wine) build upon each other to the beautiful crescendo of “Ga’al Yisr’ael”. We will examine the particulars of this “buildup” later on.

D: THE TARGET AUDIENCE OF THE SEDER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

E: BASIC BREAKDOWN OF MAGGID

1. PROVOKING QUESTIONS

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

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

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

2. INTRODUCING THE MITZVAH

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

3. MIT’HILAH ‘OVDEI ‘AVODAH ZARAH...

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

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

4. V’HI SHE’AMDAH

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

5. TZEI UL’MAD

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

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

6. R. YOSSI HAG’LILI, R. ELAZAR AND R. AKIVA

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

7. DAYYENU

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

8. RABBAN GAMLIEL

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

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

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

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

9. B’KHOL DOR VADOR

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

10. LEFIKHAKH – GA’AL YISRA’EL

Story turns to Shirah. With the one word – “Lefikhakh”, we acknowledge that, since all of these wonderful things have happened to us, we are duty-bound to thank God for all of it. Note that in the first paragraph, we thank God who did miracles for “our ancestors and us” – whereas in the final paragraph – for “us and our ancestors” – note how the first two paragraphs of the Hallel transform us to center stage.

F: BACK TO THE MIDRASHIM AND DAYYENU

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

1. KOL HAMARBEH HAREI ZEH MESHUBACH

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

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

2. SHIREI HAMA’ALAH AND DAYYENU

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

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

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

III. POSTSCRIPT

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

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

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I. HA LACHMA 'ANYA

A. The Text

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

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

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

B. Approach #1 – an Explanation of "Yahatz"

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

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

do with the rest of the paragraph?

C. Approach #2 – Re-Creation of Mitzrayim

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

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

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

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

Why is the paragraph in Aramaic?

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

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

What is the purpose of this paragraph?

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

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

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

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

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

salvation.

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

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

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

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

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

II. MAH NISHTANAH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now, let’s take a look at the Seder from the perspective of the “third son” (“Tam” or “Tipesh”). I will assume that this child, who, in

the wording of the Torah, can only say Mah Zot (“What is this”), is so young that he doesn’t yet have a sense of memory from previous years (somewhere between 4 and 6 years old). He does, however, have a sense of “conventional behavior” from regular and Shabbat meals.

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

[That the child would ask here is premised on a household which encourages questions and which does not smother a child’s natural curiosity – food for thought].

Now – a child who asks this type of question would reasonably be afraid of ridicule (from older siblings, perhaps) over such a “dumb” question. Father does the most effective thing here to continue to promote questions – he not only validates the question by attending to it, he also strengthens the question by adding his own information to it. “Not only have we done strange things until now, we will also avoid Hametz, eat bitter herbs etc.”.

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

III. DAYYENU

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

- 1) It seems that the Ba’al haHaggadah (author) “stretches” the narrative a bit, including both “bringing us close to Har Sinai” and “giving us the Torah”, both “taking care of our needs for forty years in the desert” and “feeding us the Mahn”. Why the stretch?
- 2) Why does this paragraph come immediately before “Rabban Gamliel says...”?
- 3) What is the meaning of the rarely-used word Ma’alot (kindnesses) in the opening line?
- 4) An ancillary question: Why do we use the Arami Oved Avi paragraph as the focal text of the Haggadah – and not the narratives in Sh’mot?
- 5) If this is part of the Exodus narrative, why does it end up at the Beit haMikdash – instead of at Sinai or at the Reed Sea?
- 6) Why are there two paragraphs of “Dayyenu”?
- 7) What is the meaning of Dayyenu? Is it even thinkable that we could exist without every one of these events?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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