

Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary  
Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future

THE BENJAMIN AND ROSE BERGER  
**TORAH TO-GO<sup>®</sup>**

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Dedicated in memory of Tzvi Elimelech ben Moshe Charytan  
by his children Hilda & Jeremy Cohen, Ann & Michael Sarner,  
and Morris & Penny Charytan and families.

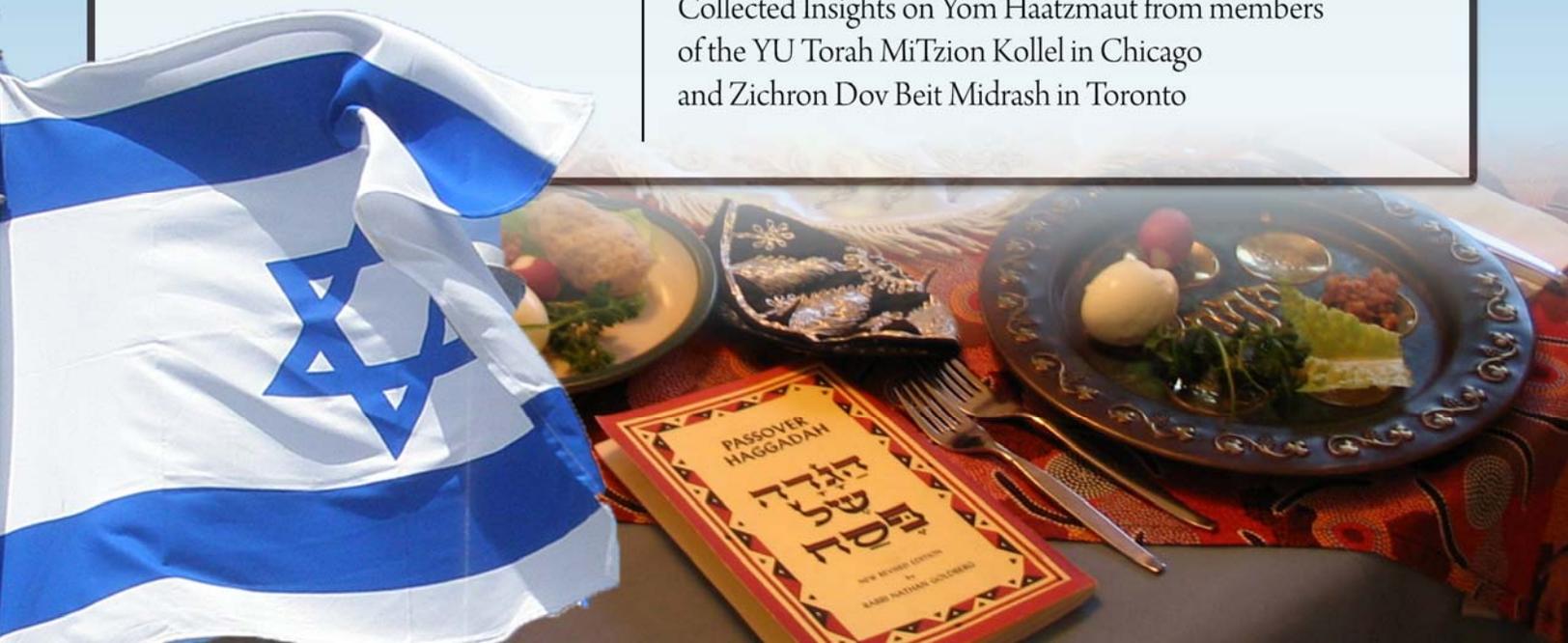


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Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Collected Insights on Pesach from members of the  
Masters of Arts in Biblical and Talmudic  
Interpretation program at Stern College for Women

Collected Insights on Yom Haatzmaut from members  
of the YU Torah MiTzion Kollel in Chicago  
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# Introduction

## Before Consuming Chametz [on Peasch] Recite with Proper Intent

“Heavenly Father, it is apparent to You that our will is to do Your will and to celebrate Passover by eating matzah and by refraining from chametz. But on this our hearts are distressed, because the oppression prevents us [from fulfilling these commandments] and we find our lives in danger. We are ready and willing to fulfill Your mandate that we ‘live by the commandments and not die by them.’ And we are observing Your warning: ‘Protect yourself and sustain your soul greatly.’ We therefore beseech You to keep us alive, sustain us and redeem us speedily, so that we may observe your statutes, carry out Your will and serve You wholeheartedly. Amen.”



This prayer was compiled by Rabbi Yissachar-Bernard Davids who, prior to World War II, served as Chief Rabbi in Rotterdam, Holland. During the war, he and his family were transferred to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. On Pesach in Bergen-Belsen, Rabbi Davids instructed his fellow prisoners to eat *chametz* due to the Jewish principle of *pikuach nefesh*—the paramount rule that preserving life takes precedence above all other commandments. During the clandestine Pesach seder held at Bergen-Belsen, the rabbi recited the regular blessings for matza, but then added the above prayer for the specific situation.

I always wondered what God was doing during this seder at Bergen-Belsen. I imagine that *Hakadosh Baruch-Hu* was crying at the tragedy and simultaneously smiling at the holiness of this moment. Even in the most horrid of locations and in the most challenging of experiences, when everything was taken away from these Jews, this group of Pesach commemorators showed themselves to be truly free people, contributing a sense of eternity to the genetic makeup of our people.

In every generation we are, as a community and as individuals, confronted with pressures and experiences that enslave us. Some are extremely challenging—like those in Bergen-Belsen—and some are not filled with as much darkness, but are perplexing nonetheless. The Pesach agenda is to remove the *chametz*, the obstacles, the barriers, the stagnation that hinders our engagement with a purposeful lifestyle. *Bedikat chametz* is about recognizing that the darkness that clouds the crevices of our existence can be minimized or even fully dissipated. That process begins with the realization that a search is required and the leavening process that occurs in our lives can be reversed. Rabbi Davids showed us that no condition can forcibly deter us from celebrating the true Pesach experience—the opportunity to lead lives as free people.

May we all be blessed to engage in a Pesach experience that inspires us. I hope that this issue of *Torah To Go* helps to stimulate that personal journey.

Wishing you a *Chag Kasher V'Sameach*.

### Kenneth Brander

Vice President for University and Community Life  
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# Pesach in the Days of Chizkiyahu - the Dream and the Reality

Rabbi Ezra Frazer

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Divrei HaYamim II (Chapter 30) tells the story of a major Pesach celebration in the days of King Chizkiyahu of Judah (8<sup>th</sup> century BCE).<sup>1</sup> This essay examines the significance of that event within the broader context of Chizkiyahu's reign.

## Religious and Political Background

Chizkiyahu inherited the throne following the death of his father, the wicked King Achaz, who defiled the Temple, as Divrei HaYamim II (Chapter 28) describes:<sup>2</sup>

21. For Achaz took away a portion from the house of the Lord, and from the house of the king, and from the princes, and gave it to the king of Assyria; but he did not help him. 22. And in the time of his distress he trespassed still more against the Lord; this is that king Achaz... 24. And Achaz gathered together the utensils of the house of God, and cut in pieces the utensils of the house of God, and shut the doors of the house of the Lord, and he made himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem. 25. And in every city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods, and provoked to anger the Lord God of his fathers.

כא כִּי־חִלַּק אַחָז אֶת־בַּיִת ה' וְאֶת־בַּיִת  
הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים וַיִּתֵּן לַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר וְלֹא  
לְעֲזָרָה לוֹ: כִּב וּבָעֵת הַזֶּה לָּו וַיֹּסֶף  
לְמַעַוְל בְּה' הוּא הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחָז...  
כִּד וַיֹּאסֹף אַחָז אֶת־כְּלֵי בַיִת־הָאֱלֹהִים  
וַיִּקְצֹץ אֶת־כְּלֵי בַיִת־הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּסָּגֵר  
אֶת־דְּלֵתוֹת בַּיִת־ה' וַיַּעַשׂ לוֹ מִזְבְּחוֹת  
בְּכָל־פְּנֵי בִירוּשָׁלַם: כֵּה וּבְכָל־עִיר  
וְעִיר לַיהוּדָה עָשָׂה בְמוֹת לְקַטֵּר  
לְאֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וַיִּכְלֵם אֶת־ה' אֱלֹהֵי  
אֲבוֹתָיו:

Chizkiyahu opened his reign by immediately reversing his father's sinful policies. According to Divrei HaYamim (II Chapter 29), he summoned the Kohanim (Priests) and Levites as soon as he ascended the throne, and he ordered them to rectify his father's behavior toward the Temple:

3. [Chizkiyahu], in the first year of his reign, in the first month, | ג הוּא בַשָּׁנָה הָרְאשׁוֹנָה לְמַלְכוֹ בְּחֹדֶשׁ

<sup>1</sup>Shortly after King Shlomo's death (approximately 200 years before Chizkiyahu's reign), his kingdom split in two: the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The kings of Judah descended from David and Shlomo and maintained Jerusalem as their capital city.

<sup>2</sup>Translations of the Bible in this essay were copied from Davkawriter (Version 6.6.3) with minor changes.

opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them. 4. And he brought in the Kohanim and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street, 5. And he said to them, “Hear me, you Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry out the filth from the holy place. 6. For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord our God, and have forsaken Him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord, and turned their backs.

הָרְאוּ שׁוֹן פֶּתַח אֶת־דִּלְתוֹת בַּיִת־ה'  
וַיְחַזְקוּם: ד וַיִּבְרָא אֶת־הַכֹּהֲנִים  
וְאֶת־הַלְוִיִּם וַיֹּאסְפֵם לְרֶחֱבֵב הַמִּזְרָח:  
ה וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם שְׁמַעוּנִי הַלְוִיִּם עַתָּה  
הַתְקַדְּשׁוּ וְקַדְּשׁוּ אֶת־בַּיִת ה' אֱלֹהֵי  
אַבְתֵּיכֶם וְהוֹצִיאוּ אֶת־הַנִּדָּה מִן־הַקֹּדֶשׁ:  
ו כִּי־מָעַלְו אָבִיתִינוּ וְעָשׂוּ הָרַע כְּעֵינֵי  
ה'־אֱלֹהֵינוּ וַיַּעֲזֹבוּהוּ וַיִּסָּבּוּ כַּנְּיָגֵם  
מִמִּשְׁכַּן ה' וַיִּתְּנוּ־עֲרָף:

During this same period of history, a major political change was transpiring in the Ancient Near East. Assyria was rising as a superpower, and the Assyrian army subjugated many smaller nations. Achaz allied Judah with Assyria, whereas his northern neighbor, the Kingdom of Israel, resisted Assyria. During the early years of Chizkiyahu’s reign, the Assyrians destroyed and exiled Israel. Hence, as Chizkiyahu’s reign progressed, his northern Israelite neighbors lost their independence and were reduced to a small number of survivors of the Assyrian exile.

## The Goals of Chizkiyahu’s Pesach

Divrei HaYamim II Chapter 30 recounts how Chizkiyahu organized a major Pesach celebration in Jerusalem. Based on the aforementioned religious and political background, it appears that Chizkiyahu sought to accomplish two distinct goals through this celebration:

1. Chizkiyahu saw Pesach as an opportunity to formally rededicate the Temple—the culmination of his mission to purify the Temple from his father’s defilement.
2. In light of the Kingdom of Israel’s collapse, Chizkiyahu hoped that his major Pesach celebration would attract remnants of Israel’s tribes to Jerusalem and thus reunite them under his rule.

However, Chizkiyahu’s lofty goals faced formidable challenges. He apparently could not successfully prepare the Temple for rededication by the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, “because the Kohanim had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, nor had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem” (30:3). The northern tribes had been living as a separate kingdom for roughly 200 years, so—not surprisingly—many of them scoffed at the idea of traveling to Jerusalem—the capital of a foreign kingdom—to observe Pesach.

## Chizkiyahu’s Attempted Solution

Sensing that they were not ready to rededicate the Temple, Chizkiyahu consulted with other leaders and citizens, and they decided to delay Pesach by one month. During this extra time, Chizkiyahu sent letters to the remnants of Israel, urging them to “return to the Lord” (30:9) by joining the Pesach celebration in Jerusalem. Although most remaining Israelites mocked this message, “A few men of Asher and Menashe and of Zevulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem” (30:11).

A cursory reading of the text indicates that when the Pesach observance finally took place —one month late—it was a smashing success. The text depicts such tremendous joy that the nation stayed for an additional week after the formal holiday concluded: “And the whole assembly took counsel to keep another seven days; and they kept another seven days with gladness” (30:23). Hence, it would appear that Chizkiyahu made the correct decision to delay Pesach by one month.

## Delaying Pesach

However, a closer look at this event raises serious questions about Chizkiyahu’s course of action. While the decision to delay Pesach succeeded in increasing the number of participants, the text never provides us with Chizkiyahu’s legal justification for this bold action. Two possible halachic models exist for this decision:

1. **Pesach Sheini** – An individual who legitimately cannot bring the *korban Pesach* in Nisan is permitted to bring it one month later, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Iyyar.
2. **A Leap Month** – According to Talmudic law, an extra month of Adar can be added before Nisan when certain circumstances would cause Pesach to occur too early in the year.

Of these two models, a simple reading of Divrei HaYamim seems to indicate that Chizkiyahu followed the model of *Pesach Sheini* by actually moving Pesach to Iyyar. Divrei HaYamim II 30:3 provides two reasons for Chizkiyahu’s decision to delay Pesach— “כי הכהנים לא־התקדשו למדי” — “because the Kohanim had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, nor had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem”) —and they parallel the two legitimate reasons that the Torah gives for waiting until *Pesach Sheini* to bring one’s sacrifice: a) ritual impurity, and b) geographic distance from the Temple (Bemidbar 9:10-11):<sup>3</sup>

10. If any man of you or of your posterity shall be **impure because of a dead body**, or is **in a journey far away**, he shall still keep the Passover to the Lord. 11. On the fourteenth day of the second month at evening they shall keep it.

יֵאֱיִשׁ אִישׁ כִּי-יְהִי-טָמֵא | לְנֶפֶשׁ אוֹ  
בְּדֶרֶךְ רַחֲקָה לָכֶם אוֹ לְדַרְתֵּיכֶם וְעָשָׂה  
פֶסַח לַיהוָה: יֵא בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר  
לַיּוֹם בֵּין הָעֲרֵבִים יַעֲשׂוּ אֹתוֹ

Moreover, the text repeatedly refers to Chizkiyahu’s Pesach as taking place “in the **second** month,” which is the biblical date for *Pesach Sheini*. These similarities to the circumstances described in Bemidbar 9 seemingly lead to the conclusion that Chizkiyahu essentially advised the entire nation to withhold their sacrifices until *Pesach Sheini*. Indeed, one view in the Tosefta (*Pesachim* 8:4) and Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 12b) asserts that Chizkiyahu “coerced the congregation to observe *Pesach Sheini*” (מעשה בחזקיה מלך יהודה שהעשה את הצבור לעשות פסח שני).<sup>4</sup>

Despite this evidence, most commentators reject the possibility that Chizkiyahu’s celebration was a communal *Pesach Sheini*. They note that the Torah presents *Pesach Sheini* as a solution for

<sup>3</sup> For detailed parameters of which circumstances entitle someone to participate in *Pesach Sheini*, see Rambam, *Hilchot Korban Pesach*, Chapters 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> This quote comes from the Tosefta; the Gemara presents this view with a slightly different formulation. These two sources also differ regarding the author of this statement—R. Yehudah (Tosefta) or R. Shimon b. Yehudah citing R. Shimon (Gemara).

**individuals** who are unable to observe *Pesach* with the rest of the nation in Nisan, whereas Chizkiyahu delayed the holiday for **the entire nation!** Furthermore, *Pesach Sheini* is a one-day event on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Iyyar in which individuals bring the *korban Pesach* (the ritual sacrifice) that they could not bring in Nisan. Those individuals still observe the seven-day festival and its restrictions on leavened products in the month of Nisan, along with the rest of the nation.<sup>5</sup> But Chizkiyahu did not merely delay the **sacrifice** by one month; he delayed the **entire seven-day festival!** As Ibn Ezra observes (Long Commentary to Shemot, Introduction to Chapter 12), the claim that Chizkiyahu told everyone to observe the seven-day festival as *Pesach Sheini* in Iyyar, must assume:

*that [Chizkiyahu] ate and fed chametz to all of Israel in Nisan... and that he devised on his own to observe the Festival of Matzot in Iyyar for seven days... because God did not command to observe the Festival of Matzot in Iyyar, but rather to eat the Pesach sacrifice one night [in Iyyar]. Indeed, all of the impure individuals [who bring their sacrifice in Iyyar] eat matzah with the rest of Israel in Nisan. Heaven forbid that Chizkiyahu would have done such evil things!*

שאכל והאכיל כל ישראל חמץ בחדש הראשון... שבדא מלבו לעשות חג המצות בחדש השני שבעת ימים... כי השם לא צוה לעשות חג המצות בחדש השני, רק על אכילת הפסח לילה אחד; כי כל הטמאים אוכלים בחדש הראשון מצות עם כל ישראל. חלילה חלילה, שעשה חזקיהו רעות כאלה

Most commentators therefore assume that Chizkiyahu did not instruct the nation to withhold their sacrifices until *Pesach Sheini*. Instead, they argue that Chizkiyahu added a leap month before Pesach, so that “the second month” was not, in fact, Iyyar, but rather was Nisan delayed by a month. While this assumption would explain why they observed the entire seven-day festival in “the second month,” the Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 12a-b) still takes issue with Chizkiyahu’s conduct. The Gemara suggests that Chizkiyahu behaved improperly, either because the nation’s ritual impurity was not a sufficient reason to add a leap month,<sup>6</sup> or because Chizkiyahu waited too long to declare this leap month.<sup>7</sup>

Ibn Ezra (ibid.) and Radak defend Chizkiyahu. After adopting the view that Chizkiyahu’s only error was declaring the leap month too late, Ibn Ezra downplays the severity of such an error by claiming that God would not have responded favorably to this holiday if it had entailed grave sins. Radak (*Divrei HaYamim* II 30:2) goes even further by asserting that no textual evidence supports the claim that Chizkiyahu waited too long to declare the leap month.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> In the words of the Mishnah (*Pesachim* 9:3), one may possess chametz and matzah together in one’s home while offering the *korban Pesach* on *Pesach Sheini* (והשני חמץ ומצה עימו בבית).

<sup>6</sup> According to this line of reasoning, no leap month is necessary when most of the nation is impure, since halachah permits the *korban Pesach* to be offered in a state of impurity when most of the nation is impure (טומאה הותרה) (בצירור). For the details of this legal principle regarding Pesach, see Rambam, *Hilchot Korban Pesach*, Chapter 7.

<sup>7</sup> The Gemara explains that once the month of Adar ends, the next month automatically becomes Nisan, so a leap month can no longer be added. The Gemara claims that Chizkiyahu failed to declare the leap month until the date that could have been the first day of Nisan.

<sup>8</sup> Although Radak is clearly correct that *Divrei HaYamim* never specifies the date on which Chizkiyahu proclaimed the leap month, the Talmud presumably based its claim on textual evidence from the previous chapter of *Divrei HaYamim* (II 29:17), where the Kohanim began a 16-day process of purifying the Temple on “the first day of the first month.” The Talmud likely assumed that Chizkiyahu began his plans for a national Pesach celebration on the

## Ritual Impurity

In addition to the issue of delaying Pesach by a month, Chizkiyahu engaged in another legally problematic decision during the Pesach celebration. Divrei HaYamim lists which group performed each step of the process for offering the *korban Pesach*:

16. And they stood in their place according to the form prescribed for them, according to the Torah of Moshe the man of God; the Kohanim sprinkled the blood, which they received from the hand of the Levites. 17. For there were many in the congregation who were not sanctified; therefore the Levites slaughtered the paschal lamb for everyone who was not clean, to sanctify them to the Lord. 18. For a multitude of the people, many of them from Ephraim and Menashe, Yissachar and Zevulun, had not cleansed themselves, so that they ate the paschal lamb otherwise than what it was prescribed. But Chizkiyahu prayed for them, saying, “May the good Lord pardon every one 19. Who prepares his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, even though he is not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.”

טז ויַעֲמְדוּ עַל־עַמֻּדָם כַּמִּשְׁפָּטִים  
כְּתוּרַת מֹשֶׁה אִישׁ־הַאֲלָקִים  
הַכֹּהֲנִים זָרְקִים אֶת־הַדָּם מִיַּד  
הַלְוִיִּם: יז כִּי־רַבַּת בְּקֹהֶל אֲשֶׁר  
לֹא־הִתְקַדְּשׁוּ וְהַלְוִיִּם עַל־שְׁחִיטַת  
הַפֶּסַחִים לְכֹל לֹא טָהוֹר לְהַקְדִּישׁ  
לָהּ: יח כִּי מֵרַבִּית הָעָם הָעָם רַבַּת  
מֵאֲפָרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה יִשָּׁשָׁר וּזְבֻלוֹן  
לֹא הִטְהָרוּ כִּי־אָכְלוּ אֶת־הַפֶּסַח  
בְּלֹא כְפָתוּב כִּי הִתְפַּלֵּל יְחִזְקִיָּהוּ  
עָלֵיהֶם לֵאמֹר ה' הַטּוֹב יְכַפֵּר בְּעַד:  
יט כָּל־לִבָּבוֹ הִלְכוּ לְדַרְוֹשׁ  
הַאֲלָקִים | ה' אֲלֵקֵי אֲבוֹתָיו וְלֹא  
כְּטָהַרַת הַקֹּדֶשׁ:

This passage indicates the Levites slaughtered each sacrifice, the Kohanim sprinkled its blood, and the sacrifice's owners ate it. According to normative halachah, any Jew from any tribe may slaughter a sacrifice,<sup>9</sup> which raises the question of why only the Levites slaughtered the sacrifices. Pseudo-Rashi<sup>10</sup> (30:16-17) suggests that the text emphasizes the fact that many of the people were ritually impure for this reason—Levites were charged with slaughtering the sacrifices, because ritual impurity disqualified many of the owners from slaughtering their own sacrifices.

However, the fact that many of the Pesach's participants were ritually impure calls into question whether they should have been offering sacrifices at all, since impure individuals are forbidden to offer a *korban Pesach*. Chizkiyahu apparently recognized this problem, which is why he prayed that the “good Lord” should pardon them. Yet Chizkiyahu's prayer begs a further question: if he knew that their impurity precluded them from offering or eating their *korban Pesach*, and not just from slaughtering the animal themselves, then why did Chizkiyahu not prevent them from bringing a *korban Pesach* to the Temple.

I believe that the following analogy to our times might best explain Chizkiyahu's conduct. Imagine a rabbi who invites a group of unaffiliated Jews to his seder. As Pesach arrives, he

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same day that the Temple's purification began (i.e. “the first day of the first month”), which would mean that he decided to add a leap month on the day that should have been the first of Nisan. The Kohanim presumably worked straight through the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, without concern for the fact that the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month was a holiday, because it was understood that this “first month” was a leap month and thus was not Nisan.

<sup>9</sup> Gemara, *Zevachim* 31a; Rambam, *Hilchot B'iat HaMikdash* 9:6.

<sup>10</sup> Rashi did not write a surviving commentary to Divrei HaYamim, so scholars use “Pseudo-Rashi” to refer to the medieval Ashkenazic commentary on Divrei HaYamim that is labeled as Rashi in most printed editions of Tanach with commentaries. See Eran Viezel, *The Commentary on Chronicles Attributed to Rashi* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 2010) for an analysis of this commentary.

realizes that a) some of his guests plan on driving home after the seder, and b) some of his guests are not halachically Jewish, and his wine is not *mevushal* (cooked).<sup>11</sup> In order to ensure that no non-Jewish guests pour the wine, the rabbi tells everyone that only the host family pours wine at the seder, so that the guests can experience freedom. In truth, there is no halachic prohibition against guests pouring their own wine, but the rabbi invents this rule, because he wants to guarantee that the wine will be served according to halachah, without embarrassing his non-Jewish guests by saying that only they are forbidden to touch the wine. Although the rabbi knows that many guests will be violating Yom Tov by driving home after the seder, he does not disinvite them, since his entire purpose in hosting this seder is to reach out to unaffiliated Jews. Indeed, he hopes that God will forgive these individuals for driving home, since they at least made the sincere effort to observe the seder despite their unfamiliarity with halachah.

In essence, Chizkiyahu faced a similar situation with the residents of the Northern Kingdom. Despite the extra month that he delayed Pesach, many of these people failed to purify themselves. Once he knew that they were still impure, Chizkiyahu could have simply told them that impure people may not participate in the *korban Pesach* at all. However, if he did so, then he would alienate precisely those members of the Northern Kingdom who cared enough to come to Jerusalem when most of their neighbors had mocked Chizkiyahu's invitation. So instead, Chizkiyahu implemented a policy in which only Levites were permitted to slaughter the sacrifices. Although Israelites are normally permitted to slaughter sacrifices, Chizkiyahu restricted the slaughtering to Levites in order to prevent impure Israelites from slaughtering their own sacrifices without embarrassing them. Chizkiyahu knew that these impure people would anyway eat from their sacrifices outside the Temple, but he did not want to bar them from the entire event. Therefore, he controlled what happened in the Temple and prayed that God would pardon any other transgression that well-intentioned but impure people might commit.<sup>12</sup>

## Assessing the Event

The story of Chizkiyahu's Pesach concludes with a seemingly happy ending:

*5. And all the congregation of Judah, with the Kohanim and the Levites, and all the congregation that came from Israel, and the foreigners who came from the Land of Israel, and who lived in Judah, rejoiced. 26. And there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. 27. Then the Kohanim the Levites arose and blessed the people; and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, to heaven.*

כה וישמחו | כל־קהל יהודה ויהונתן  
והלויים וכל־הקהל הבאים מי־שֶׁרָאֵל  
והגרים הבאים מארץ ישראל  
והיושבים ביהודה: כו ותהי שמחה  
גדולה בירושלם כי מימי שלמה  
בִּרְדּוּדֵי מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא כָזָאת  
בִּירושלם: כז ויקמו הכהנים הלויים  
ויברכו את־הָעָם וישמע בקולם ותבוא  
תפלתם למעון קדשו לשמים:

<sup>11</sup> See *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh De'ah* 123) for the details of how and when uncooked wine can become forbidden through contact with a Gentile.

<sup>12</sup> The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* *ibid.*) treats Chizkiyahu's prayer for divine forgiveness as proof that Chizkiyahu sinned by delaying Pesach. However, Radak (30:2) points out that a simple reading of the biblical text clearly demonstrates that Chizkiyahu's prayer relates to ritual impurity and has nothing to do with the date of Pesach.

Ralbag (30:26) observes that the comparison to Shlomo's time alludes to the holiday of Sukkot in the year that Shlomo inaugurated the Temple. Shlomo juxtaposed a seven-day celebration of the Temple to the seven days of Sukkot, thus creating 14 consecutive days of celebration (Melachim I 8:65, Divrei HaYamim II 7:9). Chizkiyahu's rededication of the Temple once again entailed a seven-day biblical festival juxtaposed to an additional seven days of celebration.

Nevertheless, despite the apparent success of Chizkiyahu's Pesach, it soon lost its standing as the greatest Pesach of the First Temple Era. Chizkiyahu's great-grandson, King Yoshiyahu, organized his own major Pesach celebration, about which the text attests: "And there was no Passover like that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; **nor did any of the kings of Israel keep such a Passover**" (Divrei HaYamim II 35:18). Radak (*ad. loc.*) remarks that Yoshiyahu's Pesach overshadowed his great-grandfather's Pesach due to the aforementioned drawbacks of Chizkiyahu's event—the scorn of those residents of Israel who refused to attend and the impurity of many of the people who did participate.

The story of Chizkiyahu's Pesach blends hope and optimism with difficult realities. It was remarkable to host an event 200 years after the nation split into two kingdoms, where people now came from throughout the Holy Land to rededicate the newly-cleansed Temple. In modern terms, Chizkiyahu could have arranged a "photo-op" to prove that he accomplished his two goals—rededicating the Temple and bringing residents of the north to Jerusalem. On the other hand, that photo-op would conceal the reality that most members of the northern tribes boycotted the entire event, that most of those who did attend ate their *korbanot* in a state of impurity, and that the event was delayed by a month through a questionable legal procedure. Chizkiyahu's Pesach thus reminds us of the constant challenge of pursuing one's ideals while remaining pragmatic enough to implement them to the best of one's ability in a complex reality.

# “*Davar Acher*”: On Dual Narratives in the Haggadah<sup>1</sup>

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## On the significance of expounding “*Arami Oved Avi*”

The Pesach Haggadah centers on the exposition of the biblical passage of “*Arami Oved Avi*— My father was a wandering Aramean” (Devarim 26:5-8).<sup>2</sup> This sons-less and song-less section of Maggid is often sped through, unexamined, due to its textual density. Rambam (Laws of Chametz and Matzah 7:4), however, formulates this exegetical exercise in a manner that challenges us to pay careful attention to these verses and their midrashic elucidation:

*One must begin (telling the story of the Exodus) with disgrace and conclude with praise... this requires one to expound from “Arami Oved Avi” until one completes the entire portion. And anyone who adds to and expounds excessively on the exegesis of this portion, this is to be praised.*

וצריך להתחיל בגנות, ולסיים בשבח... והוא שידרוש מ"ארמי אוֹבֵד אָבִי", עד שיגמור כל הפרשה; וכל המוסיף ומאריך בדרש פרשה זו, הרי זה משובח.

<sup>1</sup> This article is adapted from a *Shabbat HaGadol drasha* delivered at Young Israel Ohab Zedek on *Shabbat HaGadol* 5773. It was dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Herschel Schacter z"l, who passed away on *erev Shabbat HaGadol*. I would like to acknowledge the many helpful comments and suggestions of YIOZ congregants and the YU/SAR HS Kollel Fellows on an earlier draft, which have been incorporated into this article.

<sup>2</sup> See Mishnah, *Pesachim* 10:4: “He begins with disgrace and ends with praise, and he expounds from ‘My father was a wandering Aramean’ until he finishes the entire section.” Numerous scholarly works and articles have examined this mishnah and its subsequent interpretation, including the question of verse 9 and its original inclusion at the seder. See, among others, the sources cited recently in: Mitchell First, “*Arami Oved Avi*: Uncovering the Interpretation Hidden in the Mishnah,” *Hakirah* 13 (Spring 2012), p. 127 note 1: <http://www.hakirah.org/Vol13First.pdf>. Even more recently, Professor David Henshke has comprehensively examined the relationship between this mishnah and the other mishnayot in *Pesachim* which detail Maggid, as well as the development of both the Haggadah and the seder ritual as a whole. See David Henshke, “On the Strata in the Passover Haggadah in the Mishnah,” (Hebrew) *Tarbiz* 81 (2013) p. 25-45- [http://www.hum.huji.ac.il/upload/\\_FILE\\_1378043981.pdf](http://www.hum.huji.ac.il/upload/_FILE_1378043981.pdf); David Henshke, “*Seudat Leil HaSeder: Bein Hallel L’Haggadah* (Hebrew),” *Shoshannat Yaakov: Jewish and Iranian Studies in Honor of Yaakov Elman*, eds. Shai Secunda and Steven Fine (2012) pp. 1-27 (Hebrew section). This article draws from much of this previous scholarship, especially that of Henshke.

For Rambam, reciting these verses and their exegesis should not be viewed as a pro-forma act to be discharged; rather, it represents an opportunity to analyze and expound upon the central text of the seder, a particularly praiseworthy undertaking not to be overlooked.

Following Rambam's charge, this article will examine the final verse (Devarim 26:8) from the biblical passage cited in the Haggadah:

*The Lord brought us forth from Egypt by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm, and with awesome power, and by signs, and by portents.*

וַיּוֹצֵאנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֵרַע נְטוּיָה וּבִמְרָא גָדֹל וּבְאֵתוֹת וּבְמִפְתֵּיִם.

Through an analysis of the Haggadah's unique exegesis of this verse we will:

1. Expand, expound, and explicate a fixed and opaque portion of the Haggadah's text.
2. Understand and appreciate the formula of "begin with disgrace and conclude with praise," as well as how the exegesis of *Arami Oved Avi* advances this narrative device.
3. Uncover and reveal an alternative narrative embedded in Maggid, a narrative that yields a different way of reading, understanding, and experiencing the Exodus from Egypt.

## Two Midrashic traditions

The text of our Haggadah reads as follows:<sup>3</sup>

1. **"With a mighty hand,"** this refers to the **dever** (pestilence) as it is said: "Behold, the hand of the Lord will be upon your livestock in the field, upon the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds and the flocks, a very severe pestilence."
2. **"And with an outstretched arm,"** this refers to the **sword**, as it is said: "His sword was drawn, in his hand, stretched out over Jerusalem."
3. **"And with awesome power,"** this refers to the **revelation of the Divine Presence**, as it is said: "Has any God ever tried to take for himself a nation from the midst of another nation, with trials, signs and wonders, with war and with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with great manifestations, like all that the Lord your God, did for you in Egypt before your eyes!"
4. **"And with signs,"** this refers to the **staff**, as it is said: "Take into your hand this staff with which you shall

1. בְּיַד חֲזָקָה - זוֹ הַדָּבָר, כְּמָה שְׁנֹאמַר: הִנֵּה יָד יְיָ הוֹיָה בְּמִקְנֶה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה, בַּסּוּסִים, בַּחֲמֹרִים, בַּגְּמֵלִים, בַּבְּקָר וּבַצֹּאן, דָּבָר כְּבֹד מְאֹד. (שמות ט:ג)
2. וּבְזֵרַע נְטוּיָה - זוֹ הַתְּרֵב, כְּמָה שְׁנֹאמַר: וַחֲרַבוּ שְׁלוֹפָה בְּיָדוֹ, נְטוּיָה עַל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם. (דברי הימים א, כא:טז)
3. וּבִמְרָא גָדֹל - זוֹ גְלוּי שְׂכִינָה, כְּמָה שְׁנֹאמַר: אוֹ הִנֵּסָה אֱלֹהִים לְבֹא לְקַחַת לוֹ גּוֹי מִקֶּרֶב גּוֹי בְּמִסַּת בְּאֵתוֹת וּבְמוֹפְתִים, וּבְמִלְחָמָה וּבְיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֵרַע נְטוּיָה, וּבְמוֹרָאִים גְּדֹלִים, כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְכֶם יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם בְּמִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֵיךָ. (דברים ד:לד)
4. וּבְאֵתוֹת - זֶה הַמַּטֵּה, כְּמָה שְׁנֹאמַר: וְאֵת הַמַּטֵּה הַזֶּה תִּקַּח בְּיָדְךָ, אֲשֶׁר

<sup>3</sup> The exegesis immediately preceding this, on the first words of verse 8: "The Lord brought us forth from Egypt," has occupied much scholarly interest, partially due to it not appearing in all early versions of the Haggadah, and primarily because it emphasizes God's role in the Exodus to the exclusion of all agents, including Moshe. See, for example, David Arnou, "The Passover Haggadah: Moses and the Human Role in Redemption" *Judaism* Vol. 55 (2006), pp. 4-27, <http://www.ajcongress.org/site/DocServer/Thepassoverhaggadah.pdf?docID=2122> and David Henshke, "The Lord Brought Us forth From Egypt' On the Absence of Moses in the Passover Haggadah," *AJS Review* 31:1 (April 2007), pp. 61-73.

perform the signs."

5. "And with wonders," this refers to the **blood**, as it is said: "And I shall show wonders in heaven and on earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke."

**Another explanation:** "Strong hand" indicates two [plagues]; "Outstretched arm," another two; "Great manifestation," another two; "Signs," another two; and "Wonders," another two. These are the Ten Plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians...

5. תַּעֲשֶׂה בּוֹ אֶת הָאֵתוֹת. (שמות ד:יז)  
וּבְמִפְתָּיִם - זֶה הַדָּם, כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר:  
וְנִתְּתִי מוֹפְתִים בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ, דָּם  
וְאֵשׁ וְתִימְרוֹת עֶשֶׂן. (יואל ג:ג)  
דָּבָר אַחֵר: בְּיַד חֲזָקָה - שְׁתִּים,  
וּבְזְרַע נְטוּיָה - שְׁתִּים, וּבְמָרָא גְדֹל -  
שְׁתִּים, וּבְאֵתוֹת - שְׁתִּים, וּבְמִפְתָּיִם  
- שְׁתִּים. אֵלּוּ עֶשֶׂר מִכּוֹת שֶׁהֵבִיא  
הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל הַמִּצְרִים  
בְּמִצְרַיִם, ...

Note that this passage is distinguished by being the only section for which the Haggadah offers two different exegeses, as indicated by the phrase "davar acher." This *sui generis* phenomenon is perplexing. Why did the compiler of the Haggadah not choose one *drasha* in this case? Indeed, some early versions of the Haggadah contain only the second *drasha*.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the second exposition, at first glance, should be the preferred *drasha* as it is straightforward, while the first is highly problematic. According to the *davar acher*, the verse describing the manner in which the Israelites were brought out of Egypt is alluding to the ten plagues. While the count of ten is midrashic (5 x 2, leading to a host of other multiples of plagues in the Haggadah), understanding the verse as referring to the plagues corresponds with the simple meaning of the text and is attested to by other biblical verses.<sup>5</sup>

The first exegesis, by contrast, is puzzling from start to finish for several reasons. First, what makes the plagues of *dever*/pestilence and *dam*/blood (numbers 1 and 5 above) worthy of being singled out from the other plagues and specifically mentioned at the beginning and end of the exposition? Second, why is "the sword" (#2) relevant when it is not mentioned anywhere in the biblical description of the plagues? Third, what is the significance of the term "giluy Shekhina/Divine Revelation" (#3) and how does it contribute to the exegesis of the verse?<sup>6</sup> Fourth, the connection between the *matteh*/staff and "the signs" (#4) is tenuous, at best, since the staff was only involved in a few of the plagues. Furthermore, understanding "the signs" as

<sup>4</sup> See Shmuel and Zev Safrai, *Haggadat Hazal* (Hebrew) (1998) p. 143; Jay Rovner, "A New Version of the Eres Israel Haggadah Liturgy and the Evolution of the Eres Israel *Miqra Bikkurim* Midrash," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 92:3,4 (2002) p. 427.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Devarim 6:21-22: "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the Lord freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand. The Lord wrought marvelous and destructive signs and portents in Egypt, against Pharaoh and his entire household before our eyes."

<sup>6</sup> An additional problem with the exegesis of "u've'mora gadol—and with awesome power" is that the derivation of *mora* from *mareh* (understood to be the "revelation of the Shekhinah") instead of from *yirah* (awe), is unsupported by the verse cited as a proof text from Devarim 4:34 which merely repeats the wording of "mora." This problem is beyond the scope of this article as it touches upon the two different midrashic genres present and intermingled throughout the exegesis of this passage in the Haggadah: explanatory exegesis and mere citation of parallel verses. See E. E. Urbach's review of Goldschmidt, "The Passover Haggadah: Its Sources and History (Hebrew)," *Kiryat Sefer* 36 (1961) pp. 145-146; David Henshke, "The Midrash of Arami Oved Avi (Hebrew)," *Sidra* 4 (1988) pp. 33-52; and, most relevant to this particular exegesis, see David Henshke, "'By a Mighty Hand': an explication of the exegesis of the Passover Haggadah," *Kenishta* 4 (2010), pp. 11-27, and especially pages 22-27.

referring to the staff is strange since the staff was merely the instrument which brought about several plagues and not “the signs” themselves!<sup>7</sup>

## Proposed solutions in the Rishonim<sup>8</sup>

These questions on the first midrash are based on an important assumption, shared by nearly all of the Rishonim in their commentaries on the Haggadah. These commentators viewed the first and second midrashim as fundamentally similar:

*Until now (the first midrash, prior to *davar acher*) the verse was interpreted and it proved a few of the plagues that the Egyptians suffered; and now, it (the *davar acher* in the midrash) wishes to prove all ten plagues that afflicted the Egyptians...*

**Commentary of *Shibolei HaLeket* on the Haggadah  
(R. Tzidkiyah b. Avraham HaRofei, 13<sup>th</sup> c. Italy)**

דבר אחר ביד חזקה שתיים כו'. עד הנה פי' הפסוקין בענין אחד והוכיח מהן קצת מהמכות שלקו ועתה רוצה להוכיח מהם כל עשר מכות שלקו במצרים ביד חזקה שתיים. ובזרוע נטויה שתיים. ובמורא גדול שתיים. ובאותות שתיים. ובמופתים שתיים.  
פירושו של בעל שבולי הלקט (ר' צדקיה בן אברהם הרופא) להגדה, סדר פסח סימן ריח

Given the central premise that the first midrash, like the *davar acher*, refers to the ten plagues visited upon the Egyptians, Rishonim brought to bear all of their creative ingenuity and extensive knowledge of midrashic literature to tackle each of the difficulties raised above. The *Shibolei HaLeket*, for example, quotes his brother who employed *gematria* to explain why the plagues of blood and pestilence (דם and דבר equal 250, the total number of plagues at the Splitting of the Sea, according to one opinion cited later in the Haggadah) are singled out in the midrash. Additionally, he cites an Amoraic midrash (*Tehillim Rabbah* 78:16, see parallels cited in *Torah Shleimah Shemot* 7:105), which states that each plague was accompanied by *dever*, thus justifying its special mentioning (but not the singling out of blood).

As to the relevance of “the sword,” *Shibolei HaLeket* offers two explanations. The first posits that *cherev* refers not to an actual sword, but rather to the *Shem haMeforash* (the Tetragrammaton), which Moshe invoked as his verbal weapon to perform the plagues. A second explanation, citing another late midrashic tradition, advances the eye-opening view that an actual plague of swords was visited upon Egypt by their own firstborn children. According to this legend, the first-born

<sup>7</sup> Scholars have focused on two midrashic texts to try to resolve some of the difficulties in the Haggadah’s exegesis. 1. Several scholars have proposed that that the compiler of the Haggadah transferred some of this exegesis (specifically *dever* and *cherev*) from the *Sifre* in *Bamidbar* (paragraph 115). See, for example, E. D. Goldschmidt, *The Passover Haggadah: its sources and history* (Hebrew), (1960) p. 46 and Safrai and Safrai, *Haggadat Hazal*, p. 141, and, most recently, Joshua Kulp, *The Schechter Haggadah: Art, History, and Commentary* (2009). However, in addition to not solving all of the difficulties in our midrash, it is more likely, as David Henshke explains (“By a Mighty Hand”, pp. 15-18), that the *Sifre* transferred these citations from the Haggadah! 2. Two of the difficulties raised in the Haggadah’s midrash are resolved by *Midrash Tannaim* (*Devraim* 26:5) via two changes to the text. First, a different verse for “*mora*,” which references ‘seeing’ God’s hand at the Splitting of the Sea (*Shemot* 14:31), is substituted for *Devarim* 4:34. Second, the exegesis for “and with wonders,” does not refer just to the plague of Blood but to all ten plagues. However, as noted by Henshke (*ibid.* notes 8-10), these emendations implicitly attest to the difficulties of our original version of the midrash and do not appear in any versions of the Haggadah.

<sup>8</sup> All of the commentaries of the Rishonim to the Haggadah cited herein can be found in Mordekhai Leib Katzenelenbogen, *Haggadah shel Pesach: Torat Chayyim* (1998), pp. 110-125.

used swords to kill their own family members on the night of the Exodus for refusing to let the Israelites out. The Raavan (R' Eliezer ben Natan, 12<sup>th</sup> c. Mainz) suggests a third possibility, that the sword is a reference to the actual plague of the firstborn who were struck down by swords.

In discussing the exegesis of “and with signs” as referring to the staff, several commentators (see *Torat Chayyim* pp. 116-117) explain the association as based on the fact that through the staff, the plagues were performed. This explanation just reinforces the question of why the instrument is singled out as opposed to the actual signs themselves. A number of other commentators (ibid.) explain, based on an Amoraic midrash, that the staff had the mnemonic of all ten plagues written on it thus explaining the exegesis.

Each of the suggestions raised by the Rishonim is intriguing and requires further research.<sup>9</sup> Yet each explanation remains problematic for a variety of reasons, including the fact that many are rooted in midrashim which post-date the composition of the Tannaitic midrash found in the Haggadah. Moreover, each suggestion on its own fails to account for all of the difficulties we have raised. Most significant, even were we to combine all of the answers together to resolve each difficulty with the five elements of the first midrash, they would offer no coherent explanation for the first midrash as a whole. Set opposite the more comprehensive and straightforward *davar acher*, the first midrash appears to be an unnecessary exegetical hodgepodge. Why, then, did the compiler of the Haggadah include this midrash in the first place?

## A new approach to the first midrash

In order to explicate each of the parts of the first midrash, as well as to appreciate its underlying message and its reason for inclusion in the Haggadah, we need to reassess its relationship with the second midrash. Is the *davar acher* merely an alternative take on the same general idea as the first midrash, as assumed thus far, or does it perhaps signal a fundamentally different reading of the verse? If so, what is this other focus of the first midrash?

A clue to a whole new understanding of the first midrash’s exegesis can be found in a comment of R’ Aharon haKohen (14<sup>th</sup> c. Provence) in his *Orchot Chayyim*, on the very last piece of the midrash (p. 117 in *Haggadat Torat Chayyim*):

**“And with wonders,” this refers to the blood, to explain: this does not refer to the plague of blood visited upon the river; rather it refers to the blood on the land when he (Moshe) performed the signs before (lit. in the eyes of) the people. For through that very sign, all of Israel believed in him.**

”ובמופתים- זה הדם”: פירוש לא ממכת היאור קאמר אלא מאשר היו לדם ביבשת כאשר עשה האותות לעיני העם שעל ידי אותו האות האמינו בו כל ישראל.

According to *Orchot Chayyim*, the midrash regarding *dam* is not referring to the plague visited upon the Egyptians, but to one of the signs that Moshe was commanded to perform for Bnei Yisrael so that they would believe in him and in the mission to fulfill their covenantal destiny by

<sup>9</sup> See *Torat Chayyim* p. 115-116 for an explanation suggested by several Rishonim to the “*giluy Shekhina*” exegesis. The commentaries point to the end of the verse (Devarim 4:34) not cited in the Haggadah, which includes the word “*le’ainekha*—before your eyes” to find a connection to sight, or “*mora’im*.” See David Henshke (ibid. note 10) for the problematic nature of this suggestion.

leaving Egypt. Indeed, a verse in Shemot (4:9), well before the account of the plague of blood, describes this gambit:

*And if they will not believe even these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land; and the water which thou take out of the river shall become blood upon dry land.*

והיה אם לא יאמינו גם לשני האותות האלה ולא ישמעון לקלך ולקחת ממימי היאר ושפכת היבשה, והיו המים אשר תקח מן היאר והיו לדם ביבשת.

Later on in the chapter (4:30-31), the Torah attests to the fact that Moshe carried out these instructions and that the Israelites, for the moment, were galvanized to believe in him and in their imminent redemption.

Following through with this insight of *Orchot Chayyim* is the key to unlocking the seemingly puzzling and disjointed elements of the entire midrash. We will examine each piece in reverse order from “the blood” exegesis. The preceding line associates “the signs” with the staff of Moshe. Once we have suggested, as per *Orchot Chayyim*, that the midrash is not referring to the plagues visited upon the Egyptians, but to the ingredients needed to convince the Israelites of the veracity of Moshe’s prophecy, the staff is not a peripheral instrument but constitutes “the signs” themselves! Recall, the staff was used by Moshe to perform the signs for the Israelites, long before any plague brought on Egypt was commanded.<sup>10</sup> As the proof text (Shemot 4:17) cited in the midrash states:

*And take with you this staff, with which you shall perform the signs.*<sup>11</sup>

ואת המטה הזה תקח בידך אשר תעשה בו את האותות.

The puzzling third piece of the midrash: “and awesome power”—this refers to the revelation of the *Shekhina*,” can now be understood given the different focus of the exegesis. The midrash is not stating that God revealed his *Shekhina* to the Egyptians via the plagues; the subject of the midrash, rather, is the Jewish people themselves—or at the very least their leaders—to whom the Divine Presence was revealed in Egypt.<sup>12</sup> As the verse in Shmuel (I Shmuel 2:27) explicitly states:

*And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him: 'Thus saith the LORD: Did I reveal Myself unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in bondage to Pharaoh's house?'*<sup>13</sup>

ויבא איש אלקים אל עלי ויאמר אליו כה אמר ה' הנגלה נגליתי אל בית אביך בהיותם במצרים לבית פרעה.

<sup>10</sup> This, in fact, is the explanation of the *Peirush Kadmon* in the *Torat Chayyim Haggadah*, pp. 116-117. On the identity of the author of this commentary, see the editor’s introduction pp. 8-9.

<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, the midrash does not mention the other sign given to Moshe to convince the people, namely the *tsara’at* on his hand. This fits with both the specific formulation of the proof text (the staff was not involved in the sign of *tsara’at*) and with the Haggadah’s aim to totally exclude mention of Moshe (see note 3 above).

<sup>12</sup> This is consistent with the assumption of *Mekhilta* (Shemot 12:1), which questions whether the *Shekhina* can be revealed outside of Israel, to prophets like Moshe and Aharon. The midrash does not contemplate the *Shekhina* being revealed to the Egyptians! See also *Sifre Zuta* on *Bamidbar* 10:35 and *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai* on *Shemot* 3:8.

<sup>13</sup> One could also suggest that the revelation referred to by the midrash is not limited to the house of Eli (namely Moshe and Aharon), but to the fact that God makes Himself known, albeit through Moshe, to all of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt by a new name, as per *Shemot* 6:3-4.

The crux of the first midrash, that the Jewish people required proofs and other coercive measures to be redeemed from Egypt, is most dramatically attested to by the first two pieces of the midrash. *Dever* and *cherev* in this reading are not plagues brought on the Egyptians, but threats needed to induce the Jewish people to leave to serve God. Remarkably, before any of the ten plagues, there is an explicit verse in the Torah which states this (Shemot 5:3):

*And they said: 'The God of the Hebrews hath met with us. Let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God; lest He strike us with pestilence, or with the sword.'*<sup>14</sup>

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֱלֹקֵי הָעִבְרִים נִקְרָא עֲלֵינוּ  
נִלְכָה נָא דֶרֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים בְּמִדְבָר  
וְנִזְבַּחַהּ לַיהוָה אֱלֹקֵינוּ כִּן יִפְגַּעֵנוּ  
בַדָּבָר אוֹ בַחֶרֶב.

This verse serves as the basis for the entire midrash: without “a mighty hand”—namely pestilence that would have stricken the Jewish people, and “an outstretched arm”—the threat of the sword—we may never have left Egypt. These threats, coupled with the awesome power, signs, and wonders (the revelation of the *Shekhina*, the staff, and the sign of blood, respectively) ensured their redemption. According to this midrash, the Jewish people, left to its own devices, may never have gone out from Egypt.

We now can appreciate the fundamentally different (though not necessarily mutually exclusive) points of view projected by the two sets of exegesis. The first midrash is no longer a partial list of calamities that befell the Egyptians, but a more sobering catalog of what we needed imposed on us in order to get out. While both midrashim engender thanks for salvation, the first midrash zeroes in on the shortcomings of the Israelites and the forces marshaled against them, while the *davar acher* focuses on what was done to the Egyptians in the course of redemption.<sup>15</sup>

## Narratives at the Seder

Now that two essentially dissimilar midrashic traditions have been uncovered within the Haggadah’s dual (and, perhaps, dueling) exegesis of the final verse of *Arami Oved Avi*, we may contemplate the significance of this phenomenon and its inclusion in the canonical ritual of the seder. Our understanding of the first midrash highlights an “unpleasant truth” about the Exodus. Basically, the first midrash maligns the Jewish people. This harsh reality may seem incongruous with the festive atmosphere of the seder. Indeed, this may be one reason why the commentators

<sup>14</sup> One commentator (R’ Shimon ben Tzemach Duran (Algiers 14<sup>th</sup> c.) cites this verse in his commentary (*Torat Chayyim* p. 112), but in line with Amoraic midrashim (see *Torah Shleimah* on Shemot 5:3, paragraph 30) he explains that this verse refers to Pharaoh: “We do not find amongst the plagues in Egypt any mention of **sword**. And it appears that it is mentioned in what they said to Pharaoh, ‘lest He fall upon **us** with pestilence, or with the sword.’ What they meant to say, ‘lest He fall upon **you**’, but because of respect for royalty they said fall upon us. Therefore, we see in the plagues of Egypt that they were scared with the sword.”

<sup>15</sup> There are two textual reasons why this compelling explication of the first midrash was overlooked. 1. The very first *drasha* regarding the “mighty hand” of *dever* cites the verse of the plague *dever* as its proof text. Though the text is merely cited to link the phrase “*yad chazaka*” with *dever*, and not to posit that *dever* refers to the plague, the proof text misdirects the reader. 2. This explication of the midrash is further obscured by the midrashic material preceding it (which refers to God’s exclusive role in the plague of the firstborn) and succeeding it (about the ten plagues as a whole). Both of these pieces of exegesis focus on what God did to the Egyptians through the plagues, leading to the midrash in between being misunderstood. The body of the article will suggest a third, more conceptual, reason for overlooking this compelling interpretation of the midrash.

assumed the midrash to be referring to the plagues of the Egyptians.<sup>16</sup> However, much biblical and rabbinic evidence supports the alternative narrative of our midrash. The verse in Shemot (6:9) expresses that the Israelites did not listen to Moshe, following the initial setback when he first appeared before Pharaoh. While commentators debate the root cause and precise definition of the “*kotzer ruach*—weakness of spirit” which plagued the Jewish people at the time, the prophet Yechezkel (20:8) explicitly states that God sought to wipe out all of Israel in Egypt due to their refusal to serve God and sever their connection with Egypt’s idols:

*But they rebelled against Me, and would not hearken unto Me; they did not every man cast away the detestable things of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt; then I said I would pour out My fury upon them, to spend My anger upon them in the midst of the land of Egypt.*

וַיִּמְרוּ-בִי, וְלֹא אָבוּ לְשָׁמַע אֵלַי--אִישׁ  
 אֶת-שְׁקֻצֵי עֵינֵיהֶם לֹא הִשְׁלִיכוּ, וְאֶת-  
 גְּלוּלֵי מִצְרַיִם לֹא עָזְבוּ; וְאָמַר לְשַׁפֹּךְ  
 חֲמָתִי עֲלֵיהֶם, לְכַלּוֹת אֶפְי כָּהֶם,  
 בְּתוֹךְ, אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.

Early midrashic literature goes even further. According to *Mekhilta* (*petichata to Vayehi*), much of the Israelite population (with estimates ranging from four-fifths to 499/500) was wiped out while still in Egypt! *Mekhilta* (*Mesikta d’Pischa*, paragraph 5) also dramatically records that it was only at the final, fateful moment that the remaining fraction summoned the spiritual fortitude to finally reject Egyptian paganism and merit the redemption via the *korban Pesach*.<sup>17</sup>

With the two distinct narratives of midrash *Arami Oved Avi* explicated and clearly necessary, we can now more fully appreciate the richness of the seder’s storytelling device encapsulated in the Mishnah’s phrase *matchil b’genut u’msayyem b’shevach*. Upon closer examination, the disgrace/shame and praise/glory at the seder are not presented in a linear or fairy-tale fashion. Instead, the story is imparted in a manner matching reality. It is told in a complex, nuanced, and oscillating fashion, moving between moments of ignominy and triumph. Within Maggid we detail how we were slaves and then redeemed. We then shift gears to describe our lowly lineage of paganism followed by the spiritual apex of receiving the Torah and worshiping God at Sinai. And finally, embedded at the very end of the *Arami Oved Avi* exegesis are two midrashim which are themselves a microcosm of the first shame (the first midrash) and then praise (the *davar acher* midrash) movement and dialectic. Together, the two sets of exegesis on the last verse underscore the “warts and all,” multi-dimensional, and non-monochromatic narrative of the birth of the Jewish people.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> A similar phenomenon may be traced in the interpretation of *arami oved avi* as referring to Lavan, rather than the more straightforward reading that it refers to our forefathers. See sources in note 2 at length.

<sup>17</sup> It is even possible to suggest that the purpose of the first nine plagues was not merely to punish Pharaoh and the Egyptians while making God known to them, but also to restore and fortify *Bnei Yisrael’s* faith. Note the verses in Shemot 4:21-24, which reference the final plague of the firstborn prior to any of the other plagues. While some commentators interpreted this as mere foreshadowing, the simple reading of the verses suggests that had *Bnei Yisrael* been up to the challenge, the commandment of *korban Pesach* and the events of the night of the Exodus could have taken place much earlier. According to this view, the narrative of *davar acher* detailing the ten plagues also constitutes a critique, albeit an almost imperceptible one, of *Bnei Yisrael*.

<sup>18</sup> There are additional hints to other sources of *genut* in the *haggadah* which further enrich the story. See Gilad J. Gevaryahu & Michael Wise, “[Why Does the Seder Begin with Karpas?](#)” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* vol. 27, no. 2 (1999), pp. 104-110. The article proposes the interesting theory that the dipping of the *karpas* originally alluded to the

Ultimately, the seder and its accompanying text—the Haggadah—is the finest rabbinic example of an orchestrated, oscillating narrative. It is a story that through its telling and retelling by families for over two millennia, has perpetuated the Jewish story. In the words of Rambam, all who expand and expound upon the passage of *Arami Oved Avi* and its exegesis are indeed praiseworthy.<sup>19</sup>

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dipping of Yosef's *ketonet passim* in blood, the event that led to the slavery in Egypt. For other allusions to the rift between the brothers and Yosef at the seder see that article and the commentary of the Rashbat"z on the Haggadah (*Torat Chayyim* p. 44): "And now, the answer to the question *Mah Nishtanah* is 'we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.' And our Rabbis taught that one should begin with disgrace and the disgrace is based on what the midrash states: You sold your brother Joseph as a slave, by your lives you will have to recite each year 'we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.' And the glory is that just like Joseph became King, so too we are freed..." Many other narratives in Breishit enhance the story of the seder. See, for example, the commentaries of Ramban (Breishit 12:10) and Radak (Breishit 16:6). For further study along these lines, see Yair Zakovich, "*And You Shall Tell Your Son...*" *The Concept of the Exodus in the Bible* (Jerusalem: 1991) and David Silber, *A Passover Haggadah: Go Forth and Learn* (Philadelphia: 2011).

<sup>19</sup> When delivering this *drasha*, I developed two additional themes. 1. Oscillating movement is not only characteristic of the Haggadah's recounting of the Jewish national story, recent research of social scientists has demonstrated the critical importance of a strong family narrative, and especially an oscillating (non fairy-tale) one, for the development of strong, resilient children. For a summary of this research, see Bruce Feiler, "The Stories that Bind Us," *The New York Times*, March 15, 2013. [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/fashion/the-family-stories-that-bind-us-this-life.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/fashion/the-family-stories-that-bind-us-this-life.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) 2. The value of transmitting even the unpleasant truths regarding our national history at the seder is relevant to the larger question of truth, memory and history. See, R' Dr. J. J. Schachter, "Facing the Truths of History," *The Torah U-Madda Journal*, vol. 8, pp. 200-276, for an important overview of this topic.

# The Seventh Day of Pesach: Seeing the Supernatural within Everyday Nature

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The messages of the first days of Pesach, those of redemption and freedom, are experienced through our Pesach seder as we transition, *me'avdut l'cheirut*, from servitude to freedom. In fact, we reference our redemption from Egypt every Friday night during Kiddush and twice a day at the end of *kriat Shema*. However, the seventh day of Pesach challenges us to incorporate the miracle of *kriat Yam Suf*, the splitting of the sea, into our daily lives. How is this done?

It is necessary to ask two more questions before understanding how to integrate the *kriat Yam Suf* experience into our daily lives.

First, the passuk describes the crossing of the *Yam Suf* in an interesting way:

*And the Jewish people walked on dry land in the sea, and the water was a wall for them on their right and their left.*

**Shemot 14:29**

ובני ישראל הלכו ביבשה בתוך הים והמים להם חמה מימין ומשמאלם.  
שמות יד: כט

Why does the passuk state that the *Bnei Yisrael* crossed the *Yam Suf* by walking “on dry land in the sea”? Wouldn't it be more correct to say (as it does prior in 14:22) that they traversed “in the water on dry land”?

Second, the Talmud teaches in the name of R. Yose that although one who recites the standard text of Hallel daily is considered a blasphemer, one who says *Pesukei De-Zimrah* daily is considered to have completed the Hallel every day:

*R. Yose said: I wish to have my portion with those who conclude Hallel every day. Is this so? But doesn't Mar say that one who reads Hallel every day is considered a blasphemer! Rather he (R. Yose) was referring to the Pesukei De-Zimrah.*

**Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 118b**

אמר רבי יוסי: יהא חלקי מגומרי הלל בכל יום. איני? והאמר מר: הקורא הלל בכל יום - הרי זה מחרף ומגדף! - כי קאמרינן - בפסוקי דזמרא. תלמוד בבלי, שבת קיח:

What is wrong with reciting Hallel daily and in what way does the *Pesukei De-Zimrah* constitute a more permissible daily hallel?

An insight of Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik<sup>20</sup> brings greater clarity to the nature of *Pesukei De-Zimrah* and its contrast to Hallel. The Rav explains that Hallel is recited to commemorate a spectacular miracle. As such, if one recites Hallel daily he is considered a blasphemer because:

*... One should not require the daily invocation of overt miracles to appreciate God's greatness. R. Yose thus says that he would like to be among those who recite Hallel (i.e. Pesukei De-Zimrah) every day, because they appreciate God's true greatness. When one truly appreciates that God of nature is His most magnificent possible manifestation on earth, he recites Pesukei De-Zimrah, reflecting the profound sense of awe that is experienced upon witnessing natural phenomena.*<sup>21</sup>

The purpose of *Pesukei De-Zimrah* is to thank God for all of the hidden daily miracles. For example we thank God for our livelihood and our health (e.g. "... פותח את ידך, You open Your hand" and "נותן לבהמה לחמה, He gives bread to the animal"). On the other hand, Hallel is recited in order to commemorate a supernatural occurrence.

However, there seems to be one exception to this rule: our recital of *Az Yashir* at the end of the *Pesukei De-Zimrah*, which celebrates the supernatural splitting of the sea. In fact, perhaps due to this difficulty, the Rambam<sup>22</sup> cites the practice in some communities to recite *Az Yashir* after completing *Pesukei De-Zimrah*.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps one can suggest a rationale for the insertion of *Az Yashir* based upon the Talmud, which states that both man's ability to support his family and the fact that his digestive system functions well are no less of a miracle than the splitting of the sea of the Jewish People upon their redemption from Egypt:

*R. Shizbi said in the name of R. Elazar b. Azariah: The livelihood of a person is as difficult as the splitting of the Sea of Reeds as it states "He gives bread to all flesh" and subsequently, "Who parted the Sea of Reeds into parts." R. Elazar b. Azariah said: [a blocked] digestive system of a person is as difficult as the day of death and the splitting of the Sea of Reeds as it states "the prisoner tries to free himself quickly" and that is followed by "[G-d Who] stirs the sea*

אמר רב שיזבי משמיה דרבי אלעזר בן עזריה: קשין מזונותיו של אדם כקריעת ים סוף, דכתיב נתן לחם לכל בשר וסמיד ליה לגזר ים סוף לגזרים. אמר רבי אלעזר בן עזריה: קשין נקביו של אדם כיום המיתה וכקריעת ים סוף, שנאמר מהר צעה להפתח

<sup>20</sup> As cited in Arnold Lustiger's *Derashot HaRav: Selected Lectures of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (New Jersey: Ohr Publishing, 2003), 153-156. For an alternative explanation see Maharah in *Gevurot Hashem* in both the introduction and at the end of Hallel.

<sup>21</sup> See *Meshech Chochma*, Bamidbar 26:4 for a similar approach: והנה על דרך נס בלתי סדור הטבעי אינו מן הפלא כמו מן וכיוצא אצל הענין הנפלא בהטבע הוא ההזנה התמידית שזה קיום הנמצאים והרכבת הנפרדים ובדרך טבעי כל יום קבוע הזנה לאלפי אלפים בלי מספר נמצאים מזון אשר כל אחד יזון מן הטבע הוא פועל מורה על חכמה ושלמות וכבוד השי"ת למבין It is also appropriate to reference the Ramban, Shemot 13:16, for his general perspective on how Hashem only performs miracles in order for us to to greater appreciate the daily miracles "עד שנאמין בכל דברינו ומקרינו שכולם נסים" "אין בהם טבע ומנהגו של עולם בין ברבים בין ביחיד"

<sup>22</sup> *Hilkhot Tefillah* 7:13.

<sup>23</sup> See also *Arukh Ha-Shulchan, Orach Chaim*, 52:1 for another explanation of this practice.

and causes its waves to rage.”  
**Talmud Bavli, Pesachim 118a**

וכתיב בתריה רגע הים ויהמו גליו.  
תלמוד בבלי, פסחים קיה.

This new insight links our appreciation of the natural course of life with supernatural historical events. As such, when reciting the *Az Yashir* chapter, which is intentionally placed at the end of the *Pesukei De-Zimrah*, a feeling of appreciation for these “daily miracles” should be felt on a personal level as well. As such, the climax of the daily *Pesukei De-Zimra* is purposefully and precisely *Az Yashir*, an overt miracle of crossing the sea, thereby demonstrating the concept that all of *Pesukei De-Zimra*’s focus on the mundane and natural should be seen through the lens and appreciation of the supernatural.

Perhaps the theme of the seventh day of Pesach is of seeing the natural daily occurrences as supernatural, since in fact they both stem from the same source, our Creator and Sustainer. We begin the holiday of Pesach and experience the seder by commemorating the miracles of the ten plagues and our redemption from Egypt, but as we transition towards the end of Yom Tov and back to our everyday lives, we need to read about *kriat Yam Suf* and its focus of not only the supernatural but the natural daily miracles that we experience. With this keen sense of appreciation, one needs to be just as thankful if not more thankful for “ניסך שבכל יום עמנו” Your miracles that are with us every day.”<sup>24</sup>

This is how the great Chassidic master, the *Noam Elimelech*,<sup>25</sup> explains the concept of Bnei Yisrael walking, “on dry land in the sea.” The higher level of faith draws not from the miraculous, but rather from viewing the mundane walking on “dry land,” as if we are walking through the depths of the sea!

In a similar vein, Rabbi Soloveitchik<sup>26</sup> offered a novel approach to explain the debate in the Talmud<sup>27</sup> as to whether the great joy and celebration experienced in the Beit Hamikdash throughout the *Simchat Beit HaShoeiva* on Sukkot, was brought about by the drawing of the water ceremony or by the aura of prophecy experienced at that time. The Rav explained that the two opinions are not mutually exclusive, but rather one builds upon the other. The celebration over the offering of the water expresses an appreciation of the mundane daily gifts we receive from G-d. One must appreciate those gifts, like the oxygen we breathe, the water we drink, and our bodily functions, and not take them for granted. No life can exist without simple plain water. Yet simultaneously, one must see and experience the miracle of the mundane. As the Talmud<sup>28</sup> teaches, the blue water of the sea reminds us of the sky, which ultimately reminds us of the *Kisei*

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<sup>24</sup> My rebbe, Rabbi Michael Rosensweig explains this as part of the transition within the seder itself, since after the meal we say “Hallel Hagadol” which concludes with “נותן לחם לכל בשר כי לעולם חסדו” He gives bread to all flesh because His kindness is everlasting.”

<sup>25</sup> See last page of *Lekutei Shoshana*.

<sup>26</sup> As cited by Rabbi Joshua Hoffman

<http://yeshivasbrisk.freeservers.com/Netvort/shemos/beshalach/Netvort%20Beshalach%205774.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> Talmud Bavli, *Sukkah* 50b. See also Tosfot.

<sup>28</sup> Talmud Bavli, *Menachot* 43b.

*HaKavod*. Therefore, explains the Rav, the heightened appreciation of everyday life act as necessary first step before prophecy.<sup>29</sup>

The seventh day of Pesach is the time to reflect upon all of our daily blessings: our family, friends, vocation, accomplishments, health—and to feel a level of appreciation and gratitude toward Hashem, **as if** he delivered us through the stormy sea with the Egyptians in close pursuit from behind! And it is this deep level of *hakarat hatov*, appreciation, that one should feel **daily** upon reciting the *Az Yashir* as the climax of the *Pesukei De-Zimrah*.

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<sup>29</sup> See also Rashi Bamidbar 14:41 s.v. “*Petil Techelet*,” who suggests a connection between the eight strings on the *tzitzit* and the eight days from the time of the Exodus and the time the Jews sang praise at the Red Sea.

# The Four Kosos: Songs of Silence

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## The Four *Kosos*: a Meaningful Foursome?

Possibly the most popular selection of the otherwise obscure Talmud Yerushalmi explains the symbolism of the four cups of wine that frame the seder night:

*Rabbi Banya states that [the four cups] correspond to the four [languages of] redemption. [The verses state (Shemos 6:6-8)] "I will take you out, I will save you, I will redeem you and I will take you [for Myself as a nation].*

**Talmud Yerushalmi, Pesachim 10:1**

רבי בנייה כנגד ארבע  
גאולות ... והוצאתי  
והצלתי וגאלתי ולקחתני.  
תלמוד ירושלמי י:א

Rabbi Banya teaches that each of the four cups marks a gift, national and individual, bestowed upon us through *yetzias Mitzraim* and highlighted in the pesukim that predict it: Freedom, life, redemption and chosenness.

Yet our practice poses two questions regarding this most familiar commentary: Do our seder nights confirm that the four cups memorialize these four facets of our redemption? Does drinking the wine raise substantial discussion that probes these four elements and does the wine in any way raise our curiosity to delineate each term? Would these four components not receive greater study and attention through a brief but explicit presentation similar to Rabbon Gamliel's three principle mitzvos of the evening, or similar to the four sons or the four questions of the *Ma Nishtana*? Surely the four stages of redemption deserve a more explicit text or a more promising springboard than the four sons or the 13 count of *Echod Mi Yodea* that concludes the evening.

Furthermore, Rav Banya's interpretations, along with other similar approaches in the writings of Chazal, call our attention to what is altogether a halachic stretch. After all, one cup accompanies the Kiddush and is required at every Yom Tov meal. Another cup enhances the Bircas Hamazon, which is the preferred practice after every meal. Is it accurate to call them a foursome and relate them to a parallel and unique foursome of our *yetzias Mitzraim* experience? Are there really four extra cups or are there only two?

## Tosfos' Position

This second question becomes quite pressing upon studying the opinion of Tosfos, *Sukkah* 38a, s.v. *Mi Shehaya*, who view the four cups of wine entirely as "*kosos shel berocho*":

*It seems from here that women are exempt from reciting Hallel on Sukkos and Shavuos because it is a time-bound positive mitzvah. Although the Gemara implies that women are obligated in the four cups of wine on the first nights of Pesach, and the rabbis ostensibly only instituted the four cups to enhance the recitation of Hallel and Maggid, Hallel of Pesach is different because it commemorates the miracle and [women] also were part of the miracle.*

משמע כאן דאשה פטורה מהלל  
דסוכות וכן דעצרת וטעמא משום  
דמצוה שהזמן גרמא היא אע"ג דבהלל  
דלילי פסחים משמע בפרק ערבי  
פסחים (דף קח.) דמחייבי בד' כוסות  
ומסתמא לא תיקנו ד' כוסות אלא  
כדי לומר עליהם הלל ואגדה שאני  
הלל פסח דעל הנס בא ואף הן היו  
באותו הנס.

A “kos shel berocho.” is a cup of wine used to enhance specific berochos or mitzvos, for example, the kos of Kiddush or the kos under a *chupah* (wedding canopy). Tosfos similarly understand the four cups at seder night to be *kosos shel berocho*, each one augmenting a mitzva of the evening: Kiddush, *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*, Bircas Hamazon and Hallel.<sup>1</sup>

We understand this to be Tosofos' position because they say elsewhere (*Pesachim* 99b s.v. *Lo Yifchesu*) that the halocho does not require every participant to drink the wine. As the leader of the seder drinks the wine, the obligation to drink that cup is fulfilled and each participant can personally opt out, having fulfilled their obligation vicariously. Would Tosfos hold that there is an independent rabbinic obligation to actually drink the wine, similar to the obligation to eat marmor in our time, then they would have to insist on every individual drinking his or her own cup.

Our practice does not follow this position of Tosfos.<sup>2</sup> Maharal writes that he was baffled by the opinion of the Tosfos that the *kosos* are not mandated as independent mitzvos:

***I don't understand this idea because it is impossible that one person can fulfill the mitzvah of the four cups on behalf of others. How is this different from matzoh and marmor? Just as one cannot fulfill matzoh and marmor on behalf of others, so too one cannot fulfill the four cups because it is a mitzvah incumbent on oneself.***

**Gevuros Hashem no. 48**

ולא הבנתי דבר זה דלא שייך  
שיהיה מוציא את אחרים בד' כוסות  
דמאי שנא ממצה ומרור דכמו שאין  
יכול להאחד להוציא את האחר במצה  
ובמרור כך אינו יכול להוציא בד'  
כוסות דמצוה דרמיא עליה הוא.  
גבורות ה' ס' מה

## Rambam's position

Rambam clearly does identify two distinct aspects of the four cups. The first is to add greater festivity and joy to the celebration of our freedom in a manner not unlike a celebratory party. The second, like Tosfos, to enhance the mitzvos of the evening by reciting them with a cup of wine in hand.

Thus, in fulfillment of the first aspect of the four cups, the Rambam writes:

*In each generation, one must present oneself as if one is personally leaving the bondage of Egypt ...*

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם להראות את עצמו כאילו  
הוא בעצמו יצא עתה משעבוד מצרים ... לפיכך

<sup>1</sup> R. Chaim Soloveitchik inferred this idea from a comment of Tosfos, *Pesachim* 99b, s.v. *Lo Yifchesu*. See *Haggadah Shel Pesach Mibeis Levi*, pg. 104.

<sup>2</sup> *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, Siman* 472.

Therefore, when one eats on the night [of the seder], one must eat and drink in a reclined manner like a free person and each person, whether man or woman, must drink that night four cups of wine.

**Rambam, Hilchos Chametz Umatzoh 7:6-7**

כשסועד אדם בלילה הזה צריך לאכול ולשתות והוא מיסב דרך חירות וכל אחד ואחד בין אנשים בין נשים חייב לשתות בלילה הזה ארבעה כוסות של יין.

**רמב"ם, הל' המין ומצה ז:ו-ז**

The Rambam obligates every participant to drink from them and juxtaposes this mitzvah with the biblical duty, incumbent on every generation, to view themselves, on seder night, as newly redeemed and celebrating newly found freedoms. Additionally, Rambam, *Hilchos Chametz Umatzoh 7:9*, assigns to each *kos* a specific part of the Haggadah and rules that if one drinks all four cups at once, without spreading them through the seder, one will have duly rejoiced but in so doing, only fulfilled one aspect of the four cups.

The rule that to fully accomplish the mitzvah of the four cups one needs to spread them out over the mitzvos of the seder is found in the Talmud Bavli, *Peaschim 108b*. The Talmud Bavli further points out that if one drinks a wine concentrate unfit for general drinking before it was diluted properly, then one has satisfied the mitzvah of making Kiddush. However, by drinking wine that would not appear at a festivity, one has not yet celebrated his freedom in the manner required by Chazal.

In other words, Rambam understands that Chazal wove together both the independent obligation to drink four cups with the four separate cups of wine that strengthen the fulfillment of four separate mitzvos of the evening. The two parallel obligations add different observances of the quality of wine and the timing of the cups. Accordingly, the four cups are meaningful beyond the mitzvos that they support. This additional meaning, in Rambam's view, is to celebrate our freedom anew. According to Rabbi Banya, the purpose of this aspect of the four *kosos* is to recall the four stages of our redemption.

## *Kos Shel Berocho*

Does Rabbi Banya's explanation of the four *kosos* fit with Tosfos' opinion? Can one assume that the four *kosos* are all the ordinary *kosos shel berocho* that we find on many occasions, and still see a message in each *kos*? Whether we follow Tosfos or Rambam, the four cups may help us understand the idea of a *kos shel berocho* as we practice it so often throughout the year.

Indeed, it seems to me that our familiarity with the *kos shel berocho*, seeing it every Shabbos at Kiddush and every Motzai Shabbos at Havdalah, twice at every *chupa* and at every *Sheva Berochos*, has left it largely unexplored. How does the presence of wine at a bris or at a wedding enhance the event? When Chazal (*Peaschim 106a*) taught us “*zochreihu al hayayin*,” to announce the sanctity of Shabbos with wine in hand, what did they want us to understand, express or experience that is not captured by the text?

Our curiosity should be further piqued as we recall the many ways in which Chazal ask us to celebrate the very cup of wine. It should be cleaned and filled full with untouched wine, received in two hands, held in the right, raised and focused upon, and finally, allocated lovingly.<sup>3</sup>

The *Machzor Vitri*, born out of the *bais hamedrash* of Rashi, in his discussion of the four *kosos*, advances the Gemoro's phrase (*Berochos* 35a) “*ein shira elo al hayayin*—there can be no song without wine.” Whereas many of the Chachmei Ashkenaz<sup>4</sup> and the Maharitz Gayis, *Hilchos Kiddush*, as well attach this phrase to Kiddush and Bircas Hamazon, it becomes particularly instructive in the context of seder night. After all, there is the full Hallel, the Hallel Hagadol (the extended Hallel at the end of the seder), *Nishmas*, the closing piyutim, the Bircas Shir (the closing *berochos* of Hallel), the matzoh and the Torah of young and old, but apparently without the wine all of these songs are incomplete.

The phrase “*ein shira elo al hayayin*” has its root in the *nesachim*, the wine libations in the *Bais Hamikdash*. There, too, are the songs and the symphony of the *Leviim*, the majesty of the *bigdei kehuna* (the priestly garments) and the surreal sense of Hashem's presence. What could the wine possibly add to the song?

Perhaps that is precisely the idea to which we are directed. There is the song that cannot be expressed. In fact, what words could we put together that would express our appreciation for the promise of freedom (*vehotzeisi*), for being snatched from oppression and death (*vehitzalti*), for the catharsis of redemption (*vegoa'alti*) and for the dreams of nationhood (*velokachti*)? The cup of wine simply reminds us that there are sublime songs that are present, songs that would be terribly diminished by the limitations of the human tongue.

Perhaps Chazal understood that every sacrifice brought in *Mikdash*, from those that inspire introspection, achieve forgiveness and reconnect one to Hashem to those that create the daily discipline of the *Mikdash* ritual, speak to the privilege of housing Hashem's presence in this world. Now, would any imaginable lyrics capture that?

Similarly in our own lives the appreciation of the gift of Shabbos, its access to sanctity and to the spiritual moment, its refreshing disconnect and familial reconnect, finds much greater expression for us in the soulful music of *Kabolas Shabbos* than in any liturgy that we could pen. Hence Chazal established “*zochreihu al hayayin*.” So too, the *bris* and the *chupa*, events that are rich with legacy and promise, memories and aspirations challenge us to find the words that would do justice to our thoughts and emotions. The silent cup of wine reminds us of the great songs that silently reverberate in our hearts.

I believe that this insight can be found in a midrash that records a discussion about a feast that takes place in the future, where Hashem celebrates the accomplishments of His children:

*Hashem will one day prepare a feast for the righteous on the day that He provides kindness to the descendants of Yitzchak. After they eat and drink, they will give Avraham*

עתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא לעשות סעודה לצדיקים ביום שיגמל חסדו לזרעו של יצחק. לאחר שאוכלין ושותין נותנין לו לאברהם אבינו כוס של ברכה לברך,

<sup>3</sup> *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, Siman* 183.

<sup>4</sup> See *Tosafos, Pesachim* 106b, s.v. *Mekadesh*.

*Avinu a cup of wine to recite [Birkas Hamazon]. He says: I will not recite it because I begot Yishmael. They say to Yitzchak, "Take the cup and bless." He says, I will not recite it because I begot Esav. They say to Ya'akov "Take the cup and bless." He says, I will not recite it because I married two sisters and the Torah would later prohibit that. They say to Moshe, "Take the cup and bless." He says, I will not recite it because I did not merit entering the Land of Israel during my lifetime or after death. They say to Yehoshua, "Take the cup and bless." He says, I will not recite it because I never merited having a son ... They say to Dovid, "Take the cup and bless." He says, it is appropriate for me to bless, as it states, "I will raise the cup of salvation and I will call out with the name of Hashem."*

### **Pesachim 119b**

ואומר להן: איני מברך, שיצא ממני ישמעאל. אומר לו ליצחק: טול וברך! אומר להן: איני מברך, שיצא ממני עשו. אומר לו ליעקב: טול וברך! אומר להם: איני מברך, שנשאתי שתי אחיות בחייהן, שעתידיה תורה לאוסרן עלי. אומר לו למשה: טול וברך, אומר להם: איני מברך, שלא זכיתי ליכנס לארץ ישראל לא בחיי ולא במותי. אומר לו ליהושע, טול וברך! אומר להן: איני מברך, שלא זכיתי לבן דכתיב יהושע בן נון בן יהושע בן נון בן נון בן נון. אומר לו לדוד: טול וברך: אומר להן: אני אברך, ולי נאה לברך, שנאמר כוס ישועות אשא ובשם ה' אקרא.

**פסחים קיט:**

In the conversation, each points to their personal vulnerability and finds themselves unworthy of taking the lead. It is only when Dovid proclaims "*kos yeshuos eso*, I will take the cup of salvation," reciting his Birkas Hamazon with his *kos shel berocho* in hand, does he bring the meal to a thankful conclusion. In so doing, Dovid, the master lyricist of all time, showed that with a raised cup of wine in hand, perhaps giving recognition to the humbling and shortcoming of our language, one can sometimes soar beyond human weaknesses.

## **A Closing Thought**

I believe there may be another way to read this midrash. Avraham will refuse to lead the song as he is consumed with the pain of fathering Yishmael; Yitzchak will refuse because he is too shaken by the disappointment of raising an Eisov; Yaakov will feel unworthy as he married two sisters that will ultimately be prohibited by the Torah; Moshe Rabbeinu will see himself as censured as he was barred from entering Israel; Yehoshua will feel similarly distanced from Hashem for his prayers for a son went unanswered.

Dovid Hamelech will indeed accept the *kos* and explain that he does deserve to hold it, as his mantra was not guilt or disappointment, but rather to savor the moments of Divine assistance, even when those moments are only temporary. Dovid Hamelech was able to let go of the larger worries of his life—and they were many and seeming unending—long enough to dwell on the happiness of moments of grace and success.

The midrash is teaching us that often the happiest moments of life visit hearts that ache with pain and worry and even sadness. The *kos shel berocho* expresses for us that this is a moment of great joy that may have to be shared with our lingering doubts and painful worries. The *kos* expresses of us that the moment of joy has a beautiful song even if we are not ready to give it full voice.

The same is certainly true regarding the night of seder. Whereas most families will enjoy the Yom Tov and the seder nights with family, there are too many homes who will be reminded of

those who should have a seat at the table and are not there. Looking around the table can often bring both the overwhelming gratitude for what one has and the heartache of those unfulfilled dreams and prayers, all at once. Chazal remind us of the triumph of Dovid Hamelech to find the joys—maybe even the lesser joys of life—and to give them their moment—even as they are the silent song of the *kos* that we hold.

# A Night of Questions

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The Talmud (*Pesachim* 115b) quotes Shmuel who teaches that matzah is called “*lechem oni*, bread of affliction” (Devarim 16:3), because it is bread upon which we are to answer many questions; *lechem she'onin alav devarim harbeh* (the root ענה in this verse connotes poverty, but it could also connote answering). However, a careful examination of the Haggadah indicates that while we ask many questions, we do not always give direct answers.

The Mishnah (*Pesachim* 116a) teaches that after the first cup of the night is utilized to recite Kiddush, a second cup is to be poured. Rashi (s.v. *Vekan Haben Shoel*) points out that it is most unusual to start a meal and then have a second cup of wine without having yet eaten any bread or matzah. This unusual behavior is meant to trigger questions from the children, who will ask the *Mah Nishtanah*; why is this night different? The Mishnah lists four topics that the child is to question. Why on this night are we only eating matzah and not having bread and matzah? Why are we only eating marror? Why are we only eating the roasted meat of the *korban Pesach*? Finally, why are we dipping vegetables twice during the meal? The Mishnah concludes with the fact that the father is to answer the child based on his intellectual abilities.

The answer is our Maggid. In the Maggid section, we read the statement of Rabban Gamliel:

*Rabban Gamliel taught that anyone who does not explain these three items on Passover has not fulfilled his obligation: korban Pesach, matzah and marror.*

**Pesachim 116b**

רבן גמליאל אומר כל שלא אמר שלשה דברים אלו בפסח לא יצא ידי חובתו ואלו הן פסח מצה ומרור.  
פסחים קטז:

The seder leader answers three of the questions. When he explains that we eat matzah because Hashem took us out of Egypt in a rush, he answers the question of why do we eat matzah on this night and not chametz? When he explains that the marror is because the Egyptians embittered our lives with harsh labors, he is explaining why we eat marror and not other vegetables. When he explains that we are to eat a roasted lamb to commemorate Hashem passing over Jewish homes, he is answering the question, “why on this night is the meat roasted?”

But there is no explicit answer to the question, “why do we dip twice on this night?” Why have questions with no answers?

On an even more basic level, the entire night is called the seder. Seder means order. This night, each stage is in its spot, in its correct setting. Yet on this night we eat matzah and then we eat marror. Marror is eaten to remind us of the slavery and the bitterness we experienced. Matzah is eaten to remind us of the freedom. The quickly baked bread is a reminder of Hashem rushing us out of the land of Egypt. We were slaves and then we were freed. Shouldn't we first eat the marror, and remember the affliction, and only afterwards eat the matzah and remember salvation and freedom?

Rav Moshe Wolfson shlit”a<sup>1</sup> points out that at the end of the Haggadah, we have the Chad Gadya (one goat) song. According to many commentators, the goat is a symbol of the Jewish nation. In the song we declare that the one goat was purchased by [my] father for two zuz. This, many explain, refers to the two *luchos* (tablets) and reminds us of the revelation of Sinai. Through the Sinai experience, Hashem purchased us and we became His. If so, the cat who bites the goat is not a symbol of the positive features of the world. A nation that would harm God's nation is certainly bad. Many take the cat to refer to the Egyptians or the Babylonians, peoples who enslaved the Jews. The dog that bit the cat that bit the goat would be a force of goodness. Those who struggle with the enemies of the Jews are good. If this is so, the song ends with an impossibility. If the dog is good, then the stick that hits the dog is bad, then the fire that burns the stick is good, and the water that puts out the fire is bad, and the ox who drinks the water is good, the slaughterer bad, the angel of death is then ... good?! How could the angel of death be good? And the next stanza presents the Almighty as killing the angel of death, and in light of our reasoning, this would leave the Almighty with an untenable classification. Thus, at the very end of the seder, we are left with a question; why on this night of answers, do we leave with such difficult questions?

The deeper answer is that as people of faith we can live with questions. Faith is not that there are answers to all questions. Faith does not mean that we understand all that happens and why. Faith means that our soul is attached to the Almighty. Hashem is beyond all matters limited and physical. His existence is greater than our existence. As people of faith, we feel the truth of His existence. He does not need to explain Himself to us. We know that we are in His hands and He is taking care of us. He is beyond the grasp of our intellect. This is why on the seder night, some questions are left without answers. Once we have faith we do not need answers. We have faith, which contains all the answers.

Matzah is the bread of faith. When we eat matzah and remember Hashem taking care of us, we feel the security of faith that resolves all questions. Perhaps this is another layer of meaning to *lechem sheonin alav devarim harbeh*; the bread itself provides many answers, for it strengthens our feelings of *emunah* and *bitachon*.

Even during the darkest moments of our history, when we were faced with horrific challenges to our faith, our Torah leaders held on to faith and with faith felt that the questions were not a problem.

*A vivid description of such an episode is found in the writings of Rav Tzvi Hirsch Meisels,<sup>2</sup> the Rabbi of Vac, Hungary, who found himself deported to Auschwitz in the Spring of 1944. Rav Meisels relates how his tallis was adorned with an atarah (ornament) which he received as a gift from his father-in-law<sup>3</sup> that once belonged to the author of Yitav Lev.<sup>4</sup> When the Nazis came to take him to Auschwitz, he wore the tallis with the atarah until it was taken away from him at Auschwitz. He managed to find*

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<sup>1</sup> *Emunas Itecha*, Volume 3, pages 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> The entire story appears in Rav Meisel's introduction to *Mekadshei Hashem* pages 17-19. The introduction was translated to English in *The Forgotten Memoires* by E. Farbstein pages 281-285.

<sup>3</sup> Rabbi Chaim Yaakov Teitelbaum.

<sup>4</sup> Rabbi Yekusiel Yehudah Teitelbaum, 5568-5646, 1808-1883, was a great *tzadik* and Chassidic Rebbe in Sighet, Romania. He authored the work *Yitav Lev*. He was a grandson of the author of the book *Yismach Moshe*, and the grandfather of the Satmar Rebbe, Rav Yoel Teitelbaum o.b.m.

where the stolen possessions were stored and retrieved his tallis, but knowing that he would not be able to wear the tallis as is, he cut it so that he could wear it under his clothing without the Nazis knowing.

One day, Rav Meisels was leaving the bathroom when a guard decided to inspect him and discovered the garment. When the guard asked Rav Meisels what the garment was, he answered that it was a "Godly garment." The guard started to beat him mercilessly and said: How can you mention God when your people including your own family members are being killed? The guard then said that if Rav Meisels didn't give a good answer, he would be killed. Rav Meisels answered him with the following parable:

What is this similar to? To a world famous surgeon known for a particular operation to treat a dangerous illness. He was called to perform this operation on a distinguished individual and in order to perform the operation, he began to make a large incision in the body as well as some other smaller incisions as were necessary. Imagine that there is a shoemaker watching from the side who doesn't know anything about the illness and how it is treated. He will begin to wonder why the surgeon is torturing this poor patient for no reason at all. Is the patient not suffering enough from his illness that he should be subjected to much greater pain? Why is he cutting his body to pieces? When I fix shoes, I would never cut the leather in a place that looks nice! Would we expect the surgeon to stop his surgery because the shoemaker, who doesn't understand what the surgeon is doing? The fact that others don't understand what he is doing is not a reason to prevent him from finishing what he sees as necessary.

The same applies to the actions of the Creator. The truth is that we don't understand or comprehend all of His actions and why He makes a cut at the finest part from within the Jewish people. Nevertheless, we should know that the fact that, we, who have limited minds, people of flesh and blood, cannot comprehend or understand His ways, doesn't minimize, Heaven forbid, His greatness.

**Mekadshei Hashem pg. 19**

למה הדבר דומה לפראפעסער גדול המפורסם בכל העולם שהוא איש מוצלח לעשות נתוח על גוף חולה ומסוכן, ופעם נקרא לשר גדול לעשות לו נתוח כזה, וכדי לבצע את הנתוח התחיל לחתוך חתך עמוק ורחב בתוך גופו של החולה וגם חתך בתוך גופו חתיכות שונות כפי מה שראה לנחוץ. לדוגמא אם אומן מנעל מסתכל מן הצד במעשי הפראפעסער ואינו מבין שום דבר על דבר המחלה ודרך רפואתה, ישתומם ויחשוב בלבו, ראה נא כיצד הוא מענה ומייסר את החולה האומלל הזה ללא תכלית וסיבה, לא די לו במחלתו הנוכחית שהוא בא ומוסיף לו עוד יסורים נוראים גדולים כאלו בחתכו את גופו הנאה באמצע הגוף לחתיכות, הלא אם אני מתקן מנעלים לא אחתוך העור במקום היותר נאה ומשובח, וכי ס"ד שהפראפעסער לא יגמר מה שנחוץ לו לעשות מכח אומן הזה שאינו מבין ומשיג מה הוא עושה. דע"י זה שאין אחר מבין ומשיג מה הוא עושה לא יפסיק הוא מלגמור מה שרואה נחיצות לעשות. כך הענין עם הנהגות הבורא יתברך שמו, האמת כך הוא שאנחנו אין משיגים ואין מבינים כל הנהגתו, ולמה עושה החתיכה במקום היותר נאה בתוך כלל ישראל, עכ"ז עלינו לדעת, שבזה, שקצרי דעת כמונו, אנשי בשר ודם, אין משיגים ומבינים הנהגתו יתב"ש, עי"ז אינו מתקטן ח"ו אצלינו.  
**מקדשי השם עמ' יט**

The guard was impressed with Rav Meisels' answer and not only allowed Rav Meisels to live but told him that Rav Meisels should visit the guard's block whenever he needed some extra food.

Seder night is the night of questions, it is the night of eating matzah and reliving the Exodus and feeling faith, it is thus the night when we do not need an answer to why we dip twice, eat matzah before marror, or seemingly have the angel of death positioned in a place of goodness. With faith, we have trust in Hashem, and that is enough.



the Torah states “ben neikhar” it refers to one who worships idols.

מרדות וכן נכר האמור בתורה זה  
העובד אל נכר.

The exclusion of a *meshumad* from the Korban Pesach requires our attention as it has no parallel in any other *korban*.<sup>8</sup> With regard to the laws of *akhilat kodshim* in general, the status of a *meshumad* is identical with that of a Yisrael.<sup>9</sup> If anything, the law of *ben neikhar lo yokhal bo* runs contrary to halakhah’s general posture toward *meshumadim*, which recognizes their full *kedushat Yisrael* and obligates them in all mitzvot—ישראל אף על פי שחטא, a Jew who sins is nevertheless a Jew (*Sanhedrin* 44a).<sup>10</sup> Why, then, is the *meshumad* excluded specifically from the Korban Pesach,<sup>11</sup> and why is this halakhah featured as the law of Pesach—*zot chukat haPesach*?

The *Sefer Hachinukh* (mitzvah 13) suggests, with typical aperçu, that the exclusion of the *meshumad* stems from the very essence of the *korban Pesach*.<sup>12</sup> Unlike other *korbanot*, the character of the *korban Pesach* was forged by its role in initiating Bnei Yisrael into the covenant of Torah and emunah on the eve of *yetziat Mitzraim*; it was through the *korban Pesach* that Bnei Yisrael, for the

<sup>8</sup> See the comments of the R. Yitzchak Ze’ev Soloveitchik in *Chidushei Maran Ri”z ha-Levi, Ma’ akhalot Asurot* 2:23.

<sup>9</sup> This is certainly true with respect to the laws governing *akhilat kodshim* for a Yisrael. The question becomes more complicated with regard to the laws of *akhilat kodshim* for a kohen *meshumad*—does he retain aspects of his *kehunah*, or is it sufficient to treat him as an ordinary Yisrael? On this point, the Rishonim debate whether a kohen *meshumad* is qualified for *birkat kohanim*, even after he does teshuva. See Tosafot *Menachot* 109a s.v. *Lo*; *Teshuvot R. Natronai Gaon* (ed. Brody) *Orach Chaim* no. 35; Rambam, *Hilkhot Tefillah* 15:3.

On the more immediate question whether a kohen *meshumad* can eat *kodshim* and *terumah*, see the discussion of the Rishonim in *Yevamot* 71a, and *Pesachim* 96a; Tosafot, *Yevamot* 71a s.v. *Ve’ ein*; Rashbah, *Yevamot* 71a s. v. *Mumrut*; and Meiri, *Pesachim* 96a s.v. *Vezev*. The Meiri clearly did not have the *girsah* of בתרומה המרת דת פוסלת in *Pesachim*.

The Mishnah at the end of *Menachot* (109a) compares a kohen *sheshimeish biveis chanya* to a kohen *ba’al mum* who is disqualified for *avodah* but qualified for *akhilat kodshim*. See Rashi, *Menachot* 109a, s.v. *Harei*, and note the Rambam’s formulation in *Biat Mikdash* 9:13 and the comment of the *Minchat Chinukh* (276:13).

<sup>10</sup> Although the Gemara explicitly rules that a *meshumad’s kiddushin* are effective, reflecting his fundamental identity as a Jew, some Rishonim distinguish between different areas of halakhah. (1) *Ribbit* (interest): the *Yereim* (no. 156) argues that a *meshumad* is not included in mitzvot rooted in *achvah*, kinship or fraternity, and thus a Yisrael can charge a *meshumad ribbit*, as the Torah states “*achikha lo tashikh*.” Rashi (*Issur Ve’heter* no. 99) disagrees, citing *Yisrael af al piy shechata Yisrael hu*. (2) *Yerushah* (inheritance): R. Natronai Gaon (*Choshen Mishpat* no. 369) rules that a *meshumad* does not inherit his father, for he no longer stands in direct familial relation with him (*she’eino mityacheis achar aviv Yisrael*). Rosh (*Kiddushin* 1:22) disagrees on the basis of *Yisrael af al piy shechata Yisrael hu*. See the comment of the *Beit Yosef* in *Shut Avkat Rokheil* no. 90, countering the Rosh’s application of *af al piy shechata*. (3) *Yibum* (levirate marriage): some Rishonim suggest that a *meshumad* is uniquely excluded from *yibum* given its ideal of *lehakim sheim le’achiv* and *lo yimacheh shemo miyisrael*. See Ritva, *Yevamot* 22a, s.v. *Ve’achiv*, Meiri, *Yevamot* 16b, s.v. *Goy Shekideish*, and Mordekhai, *Yevamot* no. 107. (4) *Birkat Kohanim*: see the discussion in the above note. There are some Geonim who believe that one’s fundamental Jewish identity is indeed alienable, see Meiri, *Yevamot* 16b s.v. *Goy*. Others distinguished between the *meshumad* himself and his children, see *Shut Mahariy Bei Rav* no. 39 and, possibly, *Sefer Ha’Itur, Kiddushin* pg. 78a s.v. *Kuti*. Others, still, distinguished between the *meshumad’s* status as a Jew regarding *gittin vekiddushin* and mitzvot. See *Sefer Ha’Eshkol, Hilkhot Chulin* pg. 174a s.v. *Umeshumad*.

<sup>11</sup> This would also lead to the intriguing conclusion that the *meshumad* is actually commanded to bring the *korban Pesach* and yet forbidden from doing so, essentially required to violate a *mitzvat aseh* of *karet*. Of course this entails no paradox because the *meshumad* should not remain a *meshumad*.

<sup>12</sup> Note his remark that he neither has nor needs any source for this: ועל כיוצא בזה נאמר בתלמוד לפעמים סברא הוא ואין צריך ראייה אהרת.

very first time as a nation, demonstrated their commitment and faith in Hashem, *ad sheyishchitu eloheihem le'eineihem* (they slaughtered the gods of the Egyptians in front of their eyes):

*The root of this mitzvah is what was written regarding the mitzvah of slaughtering, which is to remember the miracles of Egypt, and for this reason, it is proper that an apostate should not eat it, because we do this as a sign and remembrance that at that time we came under the wings of the Divine presence and we entered into the covenant of Torah and faith, and [therefore] it is not proper to give [the apostate] who represents the opposite view by excluding himself from the people and denying faith to eat from [the korban Pesach].*

### Sefer Hachinukh mitzvah 13

משרשי מצוה זו, מה שכתוב בשחיטתו, לזכר ניסי מצרים, ועל כן ראוי שלא יאכל בו משומד, אחר שאנו עושין אותו לאות ולזכרון שבאנו באותו הזמן לחסות תחת כנפי השכינה ונכנסנו בברית התורה והאמונה, אין ראוי שנאכיל ממנו למי שהוא הפך מזה שיצא מן הכלל וכפר באמונה.  
ספר החינוך מצוה יג

Given the character of the *korban Pesach* as the expression of that *brit ha-Torah v'eha'emunah*, to then include a *meshumad*, who rebuts the core of Jewish values and repudiates the covenant of Torah and mitzvot, would be to undermine its very character. He who denies the values embodied in the *korban Pesach* cannot partake in its consumption. Thus, it is the *korban Pesach*—and only the *korban Pesach*—that proscribes the *meshumad's* participation.

To better understand the character of the *korban Pesach* and its special exclusion of the *meshumad*, we must turn to analyze the nature of the mitzvah of *kol ben neikhar lo yokhal bo*. The straightforward reading of the pasuk suggests that the mitzvah is incumbent upon the *meshumad*: the Torah addresses him directly and forbids him from ingesting the *korban Pesach*. This indeed is the ruling of the *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol* (*lav* no. 353), who codified the *lav* as “*shelo yokhal meshumad baPesach*, an apostate should not eat the *korban Pesach*.”<sup>13</sup>

However, the Rambam, both in *Sefer Hamitzvot* (*lav* no. 128) and *Yad Hachazakah* (9:7), abandons this straightforward interpretation and formulates the mitzvah as directed to the Yisrael,<sup>14</sup> prohibiting *him* from serving the Pesach to a *meshumad*:

*The 128<sup>th</sup> mitzvah prohibits us from feeding the korban Pesach to a Jew who became an apostate.*

והמצוה הקכ"ח היא שהזהירנו מהאכיל הפסח לישראל שנשתמד.

The novelty of the Rambam's position is twofold. First, the Rambam maintains that the injunction of *ben neikhar* falls on the Yisrael, contrary to the straightforward implication of the pasuk. Indeed, the *Minchat Chinukh* (13:3) is so astonished by the Rambam's position that he concludes that the Rambam must be working off some source unbeknownst to us: אך ודאי מצא הר"ם דין זה באיזה מקום ואנחנו לא נדע<sup>15</sup> Second, according to the Rambam, the mitzvah of *ben*

<sup>13</sup> See the Rambam's similar formulation in his *Koteret* to *Hilkhot Korban Pesach* no. 9, in contrast to the position of the Rambam discussed below. See below, note 12, for a possible resolution.

<sup>14</sup> Yisrael throughout this article is meant to denominate a devout Yisrael, in contradistinction to a *meshumad*. Technically, given the stance of *Yisrael af al piy shechata Yisrael hu*, the term creates an inaccurate contrast. It would be more precise, though less economical, to preface every 'Yisrael' with 'a devout.'

<sup>15</sup> The *Kesef Mishneh* (*Korban Pesach* 9:6) suggests that the Rambam felt it inconceivable that the Torah would direct itself to *meshumadim* who deny its authority, and so it could only be addressing a Yisrael. (See the *Meshekh Chokhmah's* parallel comment with respect to gentiles, cited above, note 2.) This, however, is an extremely difficult

*neikhar* does not apply at all to the *meshumad* himself; no injunction prohibits a *meshumad* from eating the *korban Pesach*, only for a Yisrael to serve him. This ruling perturbed the *Minchat Chinukh* so deeply that he refused to acknowledge it as the Rambam's authentic position; after all, contends the *Minchat Chinukh*, if the *meshumad* himself is not prohibited from eating the Pesach, what sense does it make for the Torah to prohibit a Yisrael from serving him? Instead, the *Minchat Chinukh* maintains, what the Rambam really holds is that since the Yisrael is prohibited from feeding the *meshumad* then, *a fortiori*, the *meshumad* himself must be prohibited from consuming it. The prohibition on the Yisrael is only sensible given the antecedent, unstated prohibition on the *meshumad*. The latter prohibition is so readily deducible from the former that the Rambam felt it unnecessary, and unworthy, of mention.

This argument of the *Minchat Chinukh*, though lucid and clever, is hardly satisfactory. The Rambam's crisp language, both in *Yad Hachazakah* and *Sefer Hamitzvot*, is distinctly unambiguous that the mitzvah falls exclusively on the Yisrael, and it is difficult to contend that the Rambam meant the contrary of what he wrote.<sup>16</sup> Why, then, did the Rambam abandon the straightforward meaning of the pasuk, and what motivated his novel interpretation of *ben neikhar*? To answer these questions, let us turn to another anomaly in the Rambam's codification of *kol ben neikhar lo yokhal bo*.

In *Hilkhot Korban Pesach* (9:7) the Rambam rules that there is no punishment of *malkot*, lashes, for the violation of *ben neikhar*, but offers no explanation why. The *Kesef Mishnah* (s.v. *U-ven Neikhar*) suggests that only prohibitions stated explicitly in the Torah are punishable with *malkot*, not those derived from *derashot*. Since the wording of the pasuk never explicitly refers to the Yisrael serving the *meshumad*—the pasuk says *lo yokhal* (do not eat) and the Rambam reinterprets it as *lo ya'akhil* (do not serve)—transgression of the *lav* cannot be penalized by *malkot*.<sup>17</sup> The Meiri (*Yevamot* 71a, s.v. *Ben Neikhar*) and the *Sefer Hachinukh* (no. 13), however, offer a different rationale. They adduce the general principle of *ein lokin al lav sh'ein bo ma'aseh*, only action-oriented transgressions incur *malkot*. As *ben neikhar* is not action oriented, *malkot* are not warranted. But this line of reasoning is truly astonishing. If the prohibition of *ben neikhar* involves the act of serving the *meshumad*, in what sense is it not an action oriented *lav*; is not serving itself an action?<sup>18</sup>

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argument to accept. As the *Minchat Chinukh* notes, since the *meshumad* has the status of a Jew and is commanded in all mitzvot, should he want to do teshuva, he would be obligated to receive *malkot* for his violation. Regardless of whether he will listen to the commandment while he is a *meshumad*, the Torah should have to mention that he is liable for such a transgression should he ever want to return to the Jewish community.

<sup>16</sup> Although, we can reconcile the *Minchat Chinukh's* contention with the Rambam by maintaining that the *meshumad* violates *ben neikhar*, not on account of eating the Pesach, but for serving it to a *meshumad*, i.e. himself. Since he retains his status as a Yisrael- ישראל הוא - he is obligated to not serve a *meshumad*. He violates *betorat ma'akhil* and not *betorat okheil*.

<sup>17</sup> The suggestion of the *Kesef Mishneh* has to be assessed against other instances where there is *malkot* even though the prohibition is not explicit in the Torah. See the *Priy Megadim's* discussion in *Orach Chaim, Mishbitzot Zahav* 343:1; see the Rambam's own ruling in *Hilkhot Kelaim* 10:31, regarding *malbish et chavero kilaim*, and the *Kesef Mishneh's* comments there (s.v. *Hamalbish*) which seem to contradict his comments in *Hilkhot Korban Pesach*; see as well the Rambam's ruling in *Aveilut* 3:5 and the *Lechem Mishneh's* comments there. In both of these instances the Rambam rules that there is *malkot*, even though the prohibition is not explicated in the Torah. See the *Minchat Chinukh* 13:7.

<sup>18</sup> Mahariy Kurkus (*Korban Pesach* 9:7 s.v. *U'mikol Makom*) was similarly troubled by this question, prompting his suggestion that since there are scenarios where the *meshumad* may not actually eat the Pesach and hence no

The answer lies in how the mitzvah of *ben neikhar* frames the character of the *korban Pesach*. Through obligating a Yisrael to exclude a *meshumad*, the Torah accents the themes of faith and commitment as the essence of the *korban Pesach*; part of a Yisrael's mitzvah of *achilat haPesach* is his cognizance of its character, which the Torah incorporates through the mitzvah of *ben neikhar*. The crux of the *lav* of *ben neikhar* lies not in the act of serving the *meshumad*, but in how his participation would cast a shadow over the themes of the Pesach. Though technically the *lav* is transgressed via an act, the act *per se* is not the violation, and therefore does not constitute a *lav she'yeish bo ma'aseh*; the violation is the subversion of the motif of the Pesach. Thus, the Torah felicitously singles out *kol ben neikhar lo yochal bo* as *the law of the Pesach – zot chukat haPesach*—for it is the exclusion of the *meshumad* which frames the essential theme of the *korban Pesach*.<sup>19</sup>

Why the Rambam abandoned the straightforward interpretation of the pasuk is now readily apparent. The mitzvah of *ben neikhar* could have been interpreted in one of two ways: either as *ma'akhalot asurot*, a prohibited food substance to the *meshumad*, like *treif* food to a Yisrael, or as a *kiyum*, a component, in the mitzvah of *akhilat korban Pesach*. If the *korban Pesach* was *ma'akhalot asurot* to the *meshumad*, then it would be a *lav sheyeish bo ma'aseh* and warrant *malkot*, as the transgression would be immanent in the act of consumption. Moreover, it would be nonsensical for the prohibition to fall exclusively on the Yisrael, as indeed the *Minchat Chinukh* contended. But the Rambam understood that the *korban Pesach* is not *ma'akhalot asurot* to the *meshumad*, as is evident from his ruling on *malkot*. Therefore, *ben neikhar* must be a *kiyum* in the mitzvah of *akhilat Korban Pesach*; the Yisrael's obligation to exclude a *meshumad* brings the theme of the *korban Pesach* into focus as a necessary component of his mitzvah of *akhilah*. Consequently, the mitzvah of *ben neikhar* is incumbent upon the Yisrael—and *only* on the Yisrael.

If this indeed is the Rambam's position, we must reassess another contention of the *Minchat Chinukh*. According to R. Avahu's view in *Pesachim* (21b), any food substance prohibited for consumption—any *ma'akhalot asurot*—formulated in the Torah as “*lo yokhal*,” “*lo tokhal*” or “*lo tokhlu*,” is accompanied by an attendant *issur hana'ah*, prohibiting any derivative benefit from the substance. On this basis, the *Minchat Chinukh* (13:6) argues that, since the *lav* of *ben neikhar* is formulated as *lo yokhal*, the *meshumad* is prohibited from both eating and deriving any benefit from the Pesach. However, in light of our analysis of the Rambam's position on *ben neikhar*, this would not be the case. For according to the Rambam, the *korban Pesach* is not *ma'akhalot asurot*

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violation of *ben neikhar*, the handing over of the meat itself cannot constitute a *ma'aseh aveirah*. The *Minchat Chinukh* (13:9), however, finds this line of reasoning flawed, since it leaves unanswered the case where the Yisrael actually feeds the *meshumad* by placing the meat directly in his mouth—*tachav lo bibeis habelialah*. The Mabit in *Kiryat Sefer* (*Hilkhos Korban Pesach* 9) clearly didn't accept any of these approaches, as he in fact ruled that there is *malkot* for violating *ben neikhar*.

<sup>19</sup> For a similar example see the Rambam's ruling in *Hilkhos Gezeilah* 1:9 של כל החומד עבדו או אמתו או ביתו וכליו או חבירו או כל דבר שאפשר לו שיקנהו ממנו והכביד עליו ברעים והפציר בו עד שלקחו ממנו ... ואין לוקין על לאו זה מפני שאין בו מעשה, ואינו עובר בלאו זה עד שיקח החפץ שחמד—Anyone who covets the servant, maidservant, house or utensils of one's friend or any other item that can be acquired and makes that friend uncomfortable by using pressure to procure the item from him ... one does not receive lashes for this prohibition because there is no action. One does not violate the prohibition until one has procured the item that one coveted. The Rambam writes that *lo tachmod* is a *lav she'ein bo ma'aseh* and, in the very same breath, that an action is necessary to violate it. While it needs an action, the crux of the *issur* is not inherent to the action. See my treatment of *Lo Tachmod* in *Beit Yitzchak* vol. 19.

to the *meshumad*. The *meshumad*'s exclusion is, instead, a dimension of the Yisrael's mitzvah of *akhilat korban Pesach*, framing the Yisrael's obligation and the Yisrael's fulfillment. Since the *korban Pesach* never attains the status of *ma'akhalot asurot*, there is no place for an accompanying *issur hana'ah*. Consequently, it would be permissible for a Yisrael to allow a *meshumad* to derive *hana'ah* from the *Pesach*.<sup>20</sup>

This special character of the *korban Pesach*, discerned through the halakhah of *kol ben neikhar lo yokhal bo*, is affirmed, and buttressed, by the Rambam's treatment of the *psul arel li-Pesach*, the disqualification of the uncircumcised from the *korban Pesach*. For other disqualifications, such as the *onein*, someone whose relative died but has yet to be buried, the Rambam (no. 151) codifies one broad mitzvah, encompassing all of *kodshim* (sacrifices); he did not feel it necessary to count a separate mitzvah of *psul onein* for the *korban Pesach*, as it would be redundant to do so. And yet, as R. Yitzchak Ze'ev Soloveitchik notes (*Ma'akhalot Asurot* 2:23), with respect to the disqualification of *arel*, the Rambam counts a special *lav* for the *korban Pesach* (no. 127) in addition to the general *lav* for all *kodshim* (no. 135).<sup>21</sup>

Why did the Rambam count a special *lav* for *arel li-Pesach* and not for *aninut li-Pesach*; why not subsume the *psul arel li-Pesach* within the *lav* of *arel li-kodshim*, as he did for *aninut*? The answer lies, yet again, in the special character of the *korban Pesach*. In addition to its status as a regular *korban*,<sup>22</sup> the *korban Pesach* has the distinction of marking Bnei Yisrael's embrace of the covenant of Torah and mitzvot; what a *brit milah* marks for the individual—*lehakhniso lebrito shel Avraham Avinu* (entering into the covenant of Avraham)—the *korban Pesach* marks for the *tzibur*. As such, the *kedushat Yisrael* of an individual, the *brit milah*, becomes a *sine qua non* for the *korban* that celebrates the *kedushat Yisrael* of the nation; an *arel*, therefore, cannot participate in the *korban Pesach*. Unlike the *psul onein*, which is a disqualification invariable to all the *kodshim*, the *psul arel* is uniquely at variance with the *korban Pesach* and fundamentally in tension with its inherent character, aptly warranting a *lav* of its own.<sup>23</sup>

That the *korban Pesach* on the communal plane mirrors the *brit milah* on the individual plane is manifest in the suggestion of the *Mekhilta*:

<p>[The verse states] "If a convert shall live in your midst and offers a <i>Pesach</i> offering to Hashem," I might think that as soon as someone converts, he offers a <i>Pesach</i> sacrifice immediately, therefore the verse states, "he shall</p>	<p>וכי יגור אתך גר ועשה פסח לה', שומע אני כיון שנתגייר יעשה פסח מיד ת"ל והיה</p>
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<sup>20</sup> It goes without saying that it would be permissible for the *meshumad* himself to derive benefit.

<sup>21</sup> See also the Rambam's formulation in *Peirush Hamishnayot*, *Yevamot* 8:1. His language there assumes that the disqualification of *arel* for *korban Pesach* is distinct from the general disqualification for *kodshim* and *terumah*.

<sup>22</sup> See our discussion below whether this formulation isn't too imprecise, as the *korban Pesach* may not have a generic *sheim korban* at all.

<sup>23</sup> This would explain many of the the subtle indications that the *korban Pesach*, though owned and brought as a *korban yachid*, has elements of a *korban tzibur*, since the motif of the *Pesach* is the *tzibur*'s embrace of the *brit Torah uMitzvot*. See, for example, the Gemara in *Zevachim* (13a), that the *korban Pesach* is considered *yeshnah betzibur*, and the special halakhah that it must be brought *bikenufya*, in a group (*Yoma* 51a). *Tosafot Harosh* (*Shabbat* 4a s.v. *Vechi*) contends that the *korban Pesach* has the status of *aseh derabim* with respect to the halakha of *chatei kidei sheyizkeh chaverkha*. See, as well, the Rambam's classification of the *korban Pesach* in a class of its own as a *korban yachid ki'ein tzibur* (*Peirush Hamishnayot*, Introduction to *Kodshim*, s.v. *Ve-hasug Harevi'i*).

be like a resident of the land.” Just as a resident [offers the sacrifice] on the fourteenth, so too, a convert [offers the sacrifice] on the fourteenth.

### Mekhilta, Bo Parsha 15

כאזרה הארץ מה אזרה ב"ד  
אף גר ב"ד.  
מכילתא, בא, פרשה טו

According to the suggestion of the *Mekhilta*, a *ger* must bring a *korban Pesach* as an essential component of his conversion process.<sup>24</sup> What has the *korban Pesach* to do with conversion? Latent in the *Mekhilta*'s reasoning is the notion that the *korban Pesach*, like *milah*, is an essential *rites de passage* for entering the *brit* of Torah and mitzvot, not just for Bnei Yisrael on the eve of *yetziat Mitzraim* but for all generations. Surely it is no coincidence that the only two *mitzvot aseih sheyeish bahem kareit* (positive commandments that are punishable by being cut off) are the *brit milah* and the *korban Pesach*. As the Midrash put it, it was in the merit of these two *damim*, *dam Pesach* and *dam milah*, that Bnei Yisrael were redeemed from Egypt:

What did the Holy One Blessed be He see to protect [the Jewish people] with blood? In order to remind them of the blood of the circumcision of Avraham. The Jewish people were saved from Egypt with two bloods, the blood of the *korban Pesach* and the blood of circumcision as it states “And I say to you, in your blood, you will live, in your blood, you will live,” the blood of the *korban Pesach* and the blood of circumcision.

### Shemot Rabah 17

מה ראה הקב"ה להגן עליהם  
בדם כדי לזכור להם דם מילת  
אברהם, ובב' דמים ניצולו  
ישראל ממצרים בדם פסח ובדם  
מילה, שנא' (יחזקאל טז) ואומר  
לך בדמך חיי ואומר לך בדמך  
חיי, בדם פסח ובדם מילה.  
שמות רבה יז

This intrinsic relationship between the *korban Pesach* and *brit milah* also lies at the heart of an otherwise perplexing commentary of the *Targum Yonatan* (Shemot 12:13):

The blood of the *korban Pesach* and circumcision will be combined for you to place on the homes that you dwell in and I will see the merit of the blood and have mercy on you and the Angel of Death will not harm you, as I have given him permission to kill in the Land of Egypt.

ויהי דם נכסת פסחא וגזרת מהולתא מערב  
לכון למעבד מניה את על בתיא דאתון שרין  
תמן ואחמי ית זכות דמא ואיחוס עליכון ולא  
ישלוט בכון מלאך מותא דאתיהב ליה רשותא  
למחבלא במקטלי בארעא דמצרים.

According to the *Targum*, Bnei Yisrael were commanded to mix the blood of the *milah* with the blood of the *korban Pesach* and spread the mixture on the *mashkof* and *mezuzot*. While the symbolism of mixing the *dam milah* with the *dam Pesach* speaks for itself, it poses somewhat of a halakhic challenge. As R. Yechiel Mikhel Feinstein notes (*Chidushei haGrim*, Shemot 12:13), the position of the Chakhamim in the Gemara, *Zevachim* (77b; Rambam *Psulei Hamukdashim* 2:22) is “*dam mevateil dam*”: if foreign *dam* mixes with the *dam* of a *korban*, the *dam hakorban* is disqualified and unfit for sprinkling on the *Mizbe'ach*. How, then, could Bnei Yisrael have mixed the *dam korban Pesach* together with the *dam milah*? If, however, the *dam milah* and *dam korban Pesach* constitute a single, unified theme, one integrated *kiyum*, the question dissipates; rather than interfering destructively with one another—*mevateil ze et zeh*—the *dam milah* and *korban Pesach* are harmonized in constructive consonance, like the crest of one wave riding atop another.

<sup>24</sup> Even according to the conclusion of the *Mekhilta*—that a convert only brings the Pesach on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan—the implication is that it is still a component of his conversion process.

The distinctive nature of the *korban Pesach* is evident in the laws of *machshavah shelo lishmah bikodshim*, invalidating intentions during the sacrifice of *korbanot*. As the first Mishnah in *Zevachim* states (2a), when a *korban* is brought *shelo lishmah*, with the intention of bringing it as a different *korban*, the halakha renders it *kasher velo alah leba'alim lesheim chovah*, the *korban* is valid and fit for consumption, but the owner does not fulfill his obligation; he is required to bring another one in its stead. Only two exceptions break this rule: the *korban chatat* and *korban Pesach*; a *machshavah shelo lishmah* renders them entirely invalid. Why are the *chatat* and *Pesach* singled out? Whereas the rationale for *chatat* is readily discernible—its identity is inextricably intertwined with the sin for which it comes to atone, and thus, the moment it loses its ability to be *mekhapeir*, it loses its status as a *korban*—the rationale for the *Pesach shelo lishmah* is not at all apparent.<sup>25</sup>

While the *Pesach* and *chatat* share the same *psul shelo lishmah*, the Rambam introduces a subtle and telling distinction. A *chatat* is invalid only if it is slaughtered with the intention for it to be a different *korban* (for example, *chatat lesheim shlamim*); if, however, it is slaughtered with the intention of *chulin*, of bringing a non-*hekdesh* animal, the *chatat* remains kosher.<sup>26</sup> Yet, when it comes to the *korban Pesach* (*Psulei Hamukdashim* 15:11), the Rambam rules, without any source in the Gemara, that even the intention of *chulin* renders it *pasul*.<sup>27</sup> The *korban Pesach* emerges, then, as more sensitive to *machshavah shelo lishmah* than the *chatat*. What accounts for this discrepancy?<sup>28</sup>

The Meiri in *Pesachim* (59b s.v. *Hashelishit*) suggests, albeit a bit cryptically, that the Rambam's source lies in the Torah's characterization of *Pesach* as "*Pesach L'Hashem*." While the Meiri doesn't elaborate, what he had in mind, perhaps, is that the *korban Pesach* is in a class of its own. Whereas every other *korban* has two *sheimos*, two dimensions, a generic status as a *korban* and a particular designation, the *korban Pesach* is defined exclusively by its particular designation as *Pesach L'Hashem*. Therefore, when a *korban* is brought *shelo lishmah*, although it can no longer count for its particular *sheim*, it can default onto its generic status as a *korban* and will be *kasher velo alah leba'alim lesheim chovah*. The *korban Pesach*, however, has no generic *sheim korban* to fall back upon; it is either a *Pesach* or nothing at all.

This special status of the *korban Pesach* is implicit in the Torah's presentation of *korbanot*: Every other *korban* is articulated in Sefer Vayikra, where the Torah delineates the general laws of *korbanot*—but not the *Pesach*; it has the distinction of being a *korban* of Sefer Shemot, independent and distinct from the general category of *korbanot*. Consequently, the *Pesach* has no generic *sheim korban* to default upon, and thus, even *machshavah lesheim chulin* renders it entirely *pasul*.

The uniqueness of the *korban Pesach* may account for another intriguing halakhah. The Mishnah in *Pesachim* (50a) records a prohibition against doing *melachah* on Erev *Pesach* after *chatzot* (midday). The Gemara there (50b) observes that this halakhah of Erev *Pesach* is distinct from, and more severe than, the general prohibition of *melachah* on Erev Shabbat and other holidays.

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<sup>25</sup> See Tosafot, *Nazir* 28b s.v. *Kivsei*.

<sup>26</sup> See the Rambam's formulation in *Psulei Hamukdashim* 15:4.

<sup>27</sup> See *Kesef Mishneh* and *Mishneh Limelech*, *Psulei haMukdashim* 15:11 s.v. *haPesach*.

<sup>28</sup> See the suggestion of the *Or Sameach*, *Psulei haMukdashim* 15:11, that the *korban Pesach* shares a greater affinity with *chulin*, as its focus is on the *akhilah*.

On those other occasions it is merely a matter of *siman berachah* (not an auspicious time to do work) and unenforceable; on Erev Pesach, however, the prohibition is enforceable through excommunication. The Rishonim debate why Erev Pesach is singled out. Rashi (*Pesachim* 50a s.v. *Shelo*) accounts for it as a special concern lest one be too preoccupied in his labors and forget to destroy his chameitz, bake his matzah, or slaughter his Pesach. Tosafot (s.v. *Makom*) demurs and cites the Yerushalmi which contends that Erev Pesach is special because it is the time of the *korban Pesach*, quite apart from any concern of preoccupation and distraction.

The Rambam (*Yom Tov* 8:17-18) adopts the position of the Yerushalmi and attributes the *issur melachah* to the *moed* of the *korban Pesach*, literally the holiday of bringing the Pesach; he goes so far as to compare Erev Pesach with Chol Hamoed and points to the additional obligation to bring a *korban chagigah* on Erev Pesach, the *chagigat yud daled*, as evidence for this quasi yom tov status. Unlike Tosafot, who understood the *chagigat yud daled* as merely a component of, or a *kiyum* in, the mitzvah of *achilat korban Pesach al hasova*, eating the *korban Pesach* while satiated,<sup>29</sup> the Rambam understood it as the *korban chagigah* that celebrates the holiday of the *korban Pesach*.<sup>30</sup> All *chagim* have a *korban chagigah*, and so Yud Daled Nisan has one as well. It is the special stature of the *korban Pesach* which transforms the day of Erev Pesach into a yom tov.

This yom tov status of Erev Pesach as the *chag* of the *korban Pesach* is latent in the psukim of *Parshat ha-Moadim*. The very first “*moed*” inaugurating the *Parshah*, and immediately following the Torah’s introduction “*eleh mo’adei Hashem*,” is Erev Pesach, the *moed* of the *korban Pesach* (*Vayikra* 23:5): 'בהודש הראשון בארבעה עשר לחדש בין הערבים פסח לה'. On this basis, the Gra maintains (*Yoreh Deah* 399:9) that Erev Pesach has the status of a separate yom tov with respect to *Hilchot Aveilut*.<sup>31</sup>

The unique halakhot of the *korban Pesach*—the exclusion of the *ben neikhar* as an obligation upon the Yisrael; the enumeration of a special *psul arel* for Pesach; the fundamental relationship between *dam milah* and *dam Pesach*; the disqualification of a *Pesach shelo lishmah*; and the transformation of Erev Pesach into a yom tov that celebrates the *korban Pesach*—underscore the special character of the *korban Pesach*, and the powerful, nuanced themes of *kedushat Yisrael* and *Chag HaPesach*. *Zot chukat haPesach: kol ben neikhar lo yokhal bo*.

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<sup>29</sup> See Tosafot, *Pesachim* 70a s.v. *Lav* השובע על הפסח כדי שיאכל באה אלא כדי שיאכל הפסח על השובע.

<sup>30</sup> The nature of the *chagigat yud daled* is intimately connected with the question of when it should, or could, be brought: before or after the *tamid* of *bein ha'arbayim*. See the lengthy discussion of the *Mishneh Limelech*, *Klei Hamikdash* 6:9 s.v. *Shuv*.

<sup>31</sup> See the parallel comments of the Netziv (*Vayikra* 23:5): גם זה העת נקרא יום מועד, שהרי בזמן הבאת קרבן אסור, והוא מקרא קודש להלל שבשעת פסח, במלאכה, this time period is called a festival because when the *korban [Pesach]* was brought, labor was prohibited, and it is a festival for the purpose of reciting Hallel while the sacrifice is being offered. Rabbenu Chananel (*Pesachim* 98a s.v. *Rav Ashi*) also maintains that Erev Pesach is a yom tov on account of the *korban Pesach* and points to the recitation of Hallel as proof: רב אשי אמר לעולם דמת אהר הצות ולא חל עליו אנינות דהא משעת הפסח כיום טוב חשוב שאומר בו הלל, לפיכך לא חל עליו אנינות.

# What Does This Avodah Mean to You?

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One of the most dazzling insights of the sages was to connect the dots—the three places in the Torah where children are spoken of as asking questions, and the fourth where we are commanded to “teach your child on that day”—and turn them into the series of vignettes known as the *arba'ah banim*, the four children of the Haggadah, one wise, one “wicked,” one simple and one not yet able to ask.

Most fascinating and perplexing is the *rasha*. Today we would probably call him the rebel, the sceptic, the delinquent. I for one find it hard to describe any child as a *rasha*, hence the quotation marks. One puzzle is simply this: what is wicked or subversive about the question, “What is this service to you?” (Ex. 12: 26). It seems straightforward. The child wants to know why his parents are doing what they do. That is what most inquisitive children want to know about the behaviour of adults.

The Torah itself does not treat the child as a rebel or the question as a provocation. The passage continues:

*You must answer, 'It is the Passover service to God. He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians, sparing our homes.'*  
**Exodus 12:27**

וְאָמַרְתֶּם זִכְבַּח-פֶּסַח הוּא לֵה' אֲשֶׁר פָּסַח עַל-בְּתֵי  
בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם, בְּנִגְפוֹ אֶת-מִצְרַיִם, וְאֶת-  
בְּתֵינֵנוּ הִצִּיל; וַיִּקַּד הָעַם, וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ.  
שְׁמוֹת יב:כז

This is a straightforward answer to a straightforward question. Nonetheless, the sages heard something discordant and dissident in the text, leading them to conclude that something is not quite right. What was it? To this, there are three main answers.

The first is the approach taken by the Haggadah itself. On this reading, the key word is *lakhem*, “to you.” “‘To you,’ he says, not ‘to him.’” Famously the text continues,

*By setting himself apart from the community, he denies an ikkar, a fundamental principle of faith.*

ולפי שהוציא עצמו מן הכלל כפר בעיקר.

What exactly the fundamental principle is that the *rasha* denies is a question worthy of study in its own right, but one thing is clear. For the Haggadah the discord lies in the word *lakhem*.

R. Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, *Meshekh Chokhmah* to Exodus 13:14, offered a second interpretation. He noted that the biblical text at this point says, “And when your children say to you ...” (Ex. 12:

26). This is unusual. The normal verb introducing a question is *lishol*, not *leimor*, “to ask” not “to say.” To ask is to seek an answer. To say is to express an opinion. Hence, concluded R. Meir Simcha, what makes this child different is that he is not asking a genuine question but a rhetorical one. He seeks not to learn but to dismiss. He asks but is not interested in the answer. On this view the key word is *yomru*.

The Talmud Yerushalmi, though, takes a different view again. It understands the question of the *rasha* to be,

*What is all this effort [torach] that you undertake each year?*

**Talmud Yerushalmi, Pesachim 10:4**

מה הטורח הזה שאתם מטריחין עלינו בכל שנה ושנה.

תלמוד ירושלמי, פסחים י:ד

According to one reading of the Yerushalmi, the child is asking about all the effort involved in preparing the *korban Pesach* (*Shibbolei haLeket*). According to the Ritva he is asking about the Haggadah itself: why delay the meal with so much talking, so many questions, answers and explanations? What is clear, though, is that for the Yerushalmi the key word is *avodah*. When the child says *Mah ha-avodah ha-zot lakhem*, he is not asking, “What is this *service* to you?” but rather, “What is this *hard work* to you?” This is a deep insight. I will argue that it goes to the very heart of the Jewish condition today.

To understand the power of the Yerushalmi’s reading we need to go back to a passage at the opening of the Torah’s narrative of slavery.

וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּפָרֶה. וַיִּמְרְרוּ אֶת-חַיֵּיהֶם בְּעֵבֶדֶת קִשָּׁה, בְּחֹמֶר וּבְלִבְנִים, וּבְכָל-עֲבֹדָה, בְּשָׂדֵה--אֵת, כָּל-עֲבֹדָתָם, אֲשֶׁר-עָבְדוּ בָהֶם, בְּפָרֶה.

Here is the text in the Kaplan translation:

*The Egyptians started to make the Israelites do labour designated to break their bodies. They made the lives of [the Israelites] miserable with harsh labour involving mortar and bricks, as well as all kinds of work in the field. All the work they made them do was intended to break them. (Ex. 1: 13-14)*

And here it is in Robert Alter’s translation:

*And the Egyptians put the Israelites to work at crushing labour, and they made their lives bitter with hard work with mortar and bricks and every work in the field—all their crushing work that they performed.*

What these translations fail to convey—inevitably, because of the literary conventions of English – is that these two verses contain the word *avodah* in one form or another *five times*. Translated more literally, they read:

*The Egyptians made the Israelites labour with crushing rigor. They embittered their lives with hard labour, with mortar and bricks and all kinds of labour in the field: all the labour they laboured for them was crushing.*

In total, the word appears seven times—a significant number—in the first two chapters of Exodus. So the Torah intends us to hear, as the motif of the Israelites’ suffering in Egypt, the

word *avodah* in its dual sense of hard work and slavery. Hence our surprise when, during Moses' epiphany at the burning bush, we hear God saying:

*I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship [ta'avdun] God on this mountain.*

**Exodus 3:12**

וַיֹּאמֶר, כִּי-אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ, וְזֶה-לְךָ הָאוֹת, כִּי אֲנֹכִי  
שָׁלַחְתִּיךָ: בְּהוֹצִיאֲךָ אֶת-הָעָם, מִמִּצְרַיִם, תַּעֲבֹדוּן  
אֶת-הָאֱלֹהִים, עַל הַהָר הַזֶּה.  
שְׁמוֹת ג:יב

The Israelites will know that they have left Egypt and slavery when they arrive at the mountain and there engage in *avodah* to God. *The same word is used to describe slavery and freedom, bondage and liberation, Egypt and Exodus.* That, according to the Yerushalmi, is the point the *rasha* is making. “What is this *avodah* to you? Nothing has changed. There we were *avadim*, here we are *avadim*. There we had to work for a master, here we have to work for a Master. There it was hard, here it is hard. All that has changed is the master’s identity. There it was Pharaoh. Here it is God. But we remain *avadim*. Tell me, dear father, how we are better off now than we were. Why is being Jewish such hard work?”

## According to the Effort is the Reward

As I write, the Jewish world has been reflecting on the Pew Report on American Jewry, showing that outside Orthodoxy the outmarriage rate has risen to 71 percent. Thirty-two percent of young Jews describe themselves as “of no religion.” Less than a third of American Jews belong to a synagogue. Forty-eight percent cannot read Hebrew.

More interestingly from a sociological standpoint, the report confirms an unusual feature of American Jewry. There used to be a saying in Yiddish: *Vi es kristels zich, azoy yiddles zich*. Jews adapt to the coloration of the surrounding society. If non-Jews are religious, Jews tend to be religious. If they are secular, Jews tend to be secular.

America is different. Taken as a whole, the population of the United States is one of the most religious in the world, but the Jewish community is significantly less so. 56 percent of the general population, but only 26 percent of Jews, describe religion as an important feature in their lives. Sixty-nine percent of the general population believes in God; only 34 percent of Jews. Fifty percent of the general population attend a place of worship monthly; only 23 percent of Jews. This is a longstanding phenomenon: it was already remarked on by sociologists in the 1960s. But it remains a striking anomaly.

Let me suggest one possible explanation. Throughout a century of reflection on how to sustain Jewish identity in an open, secular society, the case has often been made that we need to make Judaism easier. Why make the barriers so high, the demands so steep, the laws so rigorous and demanding? So, one by one, the demands were lowered. Shabbat, kashrut and conversion were all made easier. As for the laws of *taharat ha-mishpacha*, in many circles outside Orthodoxy they fell into abeyance altogether. The assumption was that the less demanding Judaism is to keep, the more Jews will stay Jewish.

To show that this is a fallacy, I once asked a mixed group of observant and non-observant Jews to list the festivals in order of difficulty. Everyone agreed that Pesach was the hardest, Shavuot the easiest, and Sukkot somewhere in between. I then asked, which festivals are kept by the greatest number of Jews. Again, everyone agreed: Pesach was kept by most, Shavuot by the least, with Sukkot in between. There was a pause as the group slowly realised what it had just said. It was counterintuitive but undeniable: *the harder a festival is, the more people will keep it*. The proof is Yom Kippur, by far the most demanding day of all, and by far the best attended in synagogue.

This is not an isolated phenomenon. Those familiar with the work of behavioural economist Dan Ariely, for example, will know of the experiment he performed in which he invited a group of people to make origami shapes. Their work was then demonstrated and participants and bystanders were asked how much they would pay for them. On average, the people who made the models were willing to pay five times as much as were the bystanders. He then did a second experiment, similar to the first but with one difference: this time there were no instructions as to how to make the models. The task, in other words, was even harder. This time the makers were prepared to pay even more. His conclusion? The tougher the challenge and the more skill and time we have invested into it, the more we value it. The sages said this long ago. *Lefum tza'ara agra*: according to the effort is the reward (*Avot* 5:23).

A host of recent studies of outstanding achievement, among them Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers*, David Shenk's *The Genius In All Of Us*, Geoffrey Colvin's *Talent is Overrated*, Matthew Syed's *Bounce* and Daniel Coyle's *The Talent Code*, have shown precisely this, that high achievement is the result of tireless dedication (at least 10,000 hours of it) and deep practise. That is why people strive to get into the great universities, or win an Olympic medal or a Nobel Prize. It is also the phenomenon that Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls "flow" or "peak experience," the point at which a challenge tests us to the limits, calling for total focus. To be sure, there are some challenges that are simply too hard and leave us feeling overstressed and inadequate. But in general we value most highly what tests us most deeply.

Sometimes of course the opposite is true. We appreciate the one-click buy, the one-stop shop, the instant communication and the computer search that takes microseconds. *But this applies when we are seeking convenience, not when we are seeking meaning*. If what we are looking for in a religion is convenience, no one in his or her right mind would recommend Judaism. But if we are looking for meaning, no religion has ever been more profound.

## An Answer to the Question

The Yerushalmi does not tell us how to answer the child who asks why Judaism is such hard work, such *avodah*. Speaking personally, this is the answer I would give.

"My child, you ask a good question and I respect you for your honesty. You are telling it the way you see it. It is important that you speak what is in your mind. I cannot give you an answer that will end your doubts, but I can say what I have learned in the course of my lifetime.

"People are prepared to undergo a long and arduous training to earn a living—to become a doctor or a lawyer or a therapist or an economist. Judaism asks us to undergo an equally long and arduous training in order to live: to be not just a doctor or lawyer or therapist or economist

but also a human being who is bigger than his or her specific roles. That is because Judaism takes life—the art of living in the image of God – with absolute and ultimate seriousness.

“The ancient Egyptians enslaved whole populations to build monumental buildings, pyramids, temples and royal palaces. They saw buildings as the end and human lives – the lives of the labouring masses—as a means to that end. Jews, guided by God, believed the opposite. Buildings are a means to an end. What matters are lives. Lives are holy.

“The Greeks produced great works of art. Jews believed that life itself is an art. Just as an artist invests time in perfecting his or her craft, so we invest time in perfecting our lives. Ancient Egypt and ancient Greece were great civilizations. They left us imperishable masterpieces of architecture and art. But neither valued life—our lives as individuals possessed of inalienable dignity—the way Jews and Judaism did.

“Judaism is hard work because freedom is hard work. Pesach is especially hard because it is the festival of freedom. Freedom is threatened in two ways: by individualism and collectivism. Collectivism—worship of the system, the state, the nation, the race—has produced the worst tyrannies of history. That was true not only in the days of Moses. It was true in the twentieth century in the form of fascism and communism. It is true in many countries today.

“Individualism represents the opposite danger. When individuals put private gain ahead of the common good, a society eventually collapses. That has been true of every affluent society in history. It has a brief flurry of success and then enters a long or short decline. You can tell in advance when a society is about to begin a decline. There is a breakdown of trust. Leaders lack stature. Divisions grow between rich and poor. There is a loss of social solidarity. People spend more and save less. In their focus on the present they endanger the future. There is less discipline and more self-indulgence, less morality and more pursuit of desire. Cultures grow old the way people grow old, and they begin to do so when they are at the very height of their powers.

“I once asked the non-Jewish historian Paul Johnson who wrote a great *History of the Jews* what had most impressed him in the years he spent studying our people. He replied that in his view no civilization in history had managed as well as Jews had done the balance between personal and social responsibility—the road that avoids collectivism on the one hand, individualism on the other.

“That is what Pesach is about. It is about my personal experience of freedom: On Pesach we must each see ourselves as if we personally had left Egypt. But it is also about our shared experience of freedom as we tell the story of our people and hand it on to future generations. Judaism is about the ‘I’ and the ‘We.’ Without our willingness to encourage questions, argument, debate, and endless new interpretations of ancient texts, we would lose the ‘I.’ Without halakhah, the code that binds us together across centuries and continents, we would lose the ‘We.’ And yes, it’s hard work. But I tell you from the depth of my heart that there is no achievement worth having that is not hard work.”

What we need in Jewish life today is not ways of making Judaism easier. What costs little is valued even less. We need to find ways of showing how Judaism lifts us to greatness. When that happens people will not ask, *Mah ha-avodah ha-zot lakhem*, “Why all the hard work?” Neither an

athlete going for an Olympic gold medal nor a scientist trying a new line of research ever asks that question; nor did Steve Jobs at Apple or Jeff Bezos at Amazon. The pursuit of greatness always involves hard work. The real challenge of our time is to rediscover why Judaism, because it asks great things from us, lifts us to greatness. The rest is commentary.

In 2008 two teenage Americans, Alex and Brett Harris, wrote a book that became a best-seller. It was called, *Do Hard Things*, and subtitled: *A teenage rebellion against low expectations*. We need a Jewish equivalent. That will be the answer to the question young Jews still ask, “What does this *avodah* mean to you?”

# Biblical Descriptions of the Exodus

Collected insights from members of the Graduate  
Program in Biblical and Talmudic Interpretation at Stern  
College

## Bemidbar 15:38-41: Serving No One But God

Goldie Guy

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Is the story of *yetziat Mitzrayim* really about an exodus from slavery to freedom? In the third paragraph of the *Shema*, we find the mitzvah of *tzizit* in conjunction with remembering the Exodus from Egypt:

*Speak unto the Children of Israel, and bid them that they make for themselves fringes throughout their generations in the corners of their garments, and that they put with the fringe of each corner a thread of blue. And it shall be for you a fringe, that you may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that you not go after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you use to go astray; that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy unto your God. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD your God.*

**Bemidbar 15:38-41**

*(Translation from mechon mamre.org)*

דָּבַר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם,  
וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִית עַל-כַּנְּפֵי בְגָדֵיהֶם,  
לְדֹרֹתָם; וְנָתַנּוּ עַל-צִיצִית הַכְּנָף, פֶּתִיל  
תְּכֵלֶת. וְהָיָה לָכֶם, לְצִיצִית, וּרְאִיתֶם  
אֹתוֹ וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹת ה',  
וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם; וְלֹא-תִתּוּרוּ אַחֲרַי  
לְבַבְכֶם, וְאַחֲרַי עֵינֵיכֶם, אֲשֶׁר-אֹתָם  
זָנִים, אַחֲרֵיהֶם לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ, וַעֲשִׂיתֶם  
אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹתַי; וְהִייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים,  
לְאֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם, אֲשֶׁר  
הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, לְהִיוֹת  
לָכֶם, לְאֱלֹקִים: אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם  
במדבר טו:לה-מא

The *beraita* in BT *Menachot* 43b, famously reads verses 39-40 as a sequence of cause and effect: “... that you may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord...” Seeing leads to remembrance, and remembrance leads to performance (of mitzvot).” *Yetziat Mitzrayim* is the source of our obligation to perform the mitzvot—Hashem took us out of Egypt in order to be our God, and thus we are commanded to keep the mitzvot. The *tzizit* remind us that we were taken out of Egypt not to be free, but for the purpose of serving God. The Gemara in *Menachot* 43a, in fact, compares the *tzizit* to a *chotam*, a symbol of servitude worn by slaves.

Our slavery to God, however, signifies a broader freedom. On the pasuk “For unto Me the children of Israel are servants; they are My servants” (Vaykira 21:55), the Gemara famously comments, “They are My servants—and not servants to servants” (*Baba Metzia* 10a). In declaring ourselves to be subservient to God, we declared our freedom from anything and to anyone else. The Torah does not want us to be enslaved but to God.

In Hasidic thought, *Mitzrayim* symbolizes a *meitzar*, a narrow, limited perspective, and the Exodus from it, the transition, symbolizes a *merchav*, a broader mindset. The mitzvah to remember the Exodus from Egypt, taken from this psychological perspective, translates into a demand that we cultivate a mentality of freedom. The Gemara in *Masechet Kiddushin* explains that this is the message communicated by the juxtaposition of Matan Torah and the laws of *eved ivri* in the Torah. In explaining why the *eved nirtza* is marked specifically in his ear and specifically by the doorpost, the Gemara picks up on the juxtaposition of the climactic moments at Har Sinai and the *eved nirtza*, and expresses the surprise it engenders:

*The ear which heard My voice on Mount Sinai saying “For unto Me the children of Israel are servants; they are My servants,” and not servants of servants—and this individual went and acquired for himself a master?! He will have his ear pierced.*

**Kiddushin 22b**

אזן ששמעה קולי על הר סיני  
 בשעה שאמרתי כי לי בני ישראל  
 עבדים ולא עבדים לעבדים והלך  
 זה וקנה אדון לעצמו ירצע.  
 קדושין כב:

The Gemara wonders, how could a person who experienced *yetziat Mitzrayim*, and heard God say that Bnei Yisrael are not to be slaves, possibly say, “I don’t want to go out from servitude”? Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch (Shemot 21:6, s.v. *Va’avado*) explains that the narrow, skewed perspective of the *eved ivri* causes him to think that the security of life in his master’s house is better than the uncertainty of living life as a free man. Rav Hirsch explains that when God commanded Bnei Yisrael to place blood on the *mezuzot* before the plague of the firstborn sons, He was marking Bnei Yisrael as free people, and giving them the responsibility to build homes that would reflect their new God-given freedom. The master therefore pierces his slave’s ear against the *mezuzah*, the same doorpost that God passed over. The doorposts are reminders that when God took us out of Egypt he declared that we would be His slave, and a slave to no other. A slave who chooses servitude over freedom is marked specifically in his ear, which heard but forgot God’s message of freedom at Har Sinai.

The Gemara teaches us that while the *mezuzah* “testifies” to God’s taking us out of Egypt, it also testifies to our essential freedom as individuals. “They are My servants”—our status as God’s chosen nation is a calling to embrace freedom from all other servitude. Perhaps the *eved ivri* fears his freedom after having become habituated to his master’s house. He may think that he is actually incapable of making the transition from life in his master’s home to maintaining a home of his own. Seeing the *mezuzah*, the *eved ivri* recalls the transition from slavery to freedom that we made as a nation. He then remembers that he too has made the leap from a familiar reality of servitude to an unknown reality of independence, and that he can do it again.

At times in our lives we take on the mentality of the *eved ivri*. We get stuck in old patterns of behavior or thought and we think change is improbable, or impossible. We get comfortable in the way we are and we fear change, becoming like the *eved ivri* who sees his servitude as ideal. So the

Torah gives us reminders that even though the transition might be risky and frightening, we have been through it in the past, and we can do it again. Seeing the mezuzah, we remember that we have experienced the exodus from slavery to freedom. Tzitzit reminds us that we are servants to God, to the exclusion of everything else. The mitzvah to remember *yetziat Mitzrayim*, on this level, is thus an exhortation to live an intentional life. We must remember that we all have the ability to shape our own perspective. Every moment we remember that, we are not slaves to our actions, but retain the freedom to choose how we think, feel, and act. With this awareness we have the ability to achieve an exodus in our everyday lives, from living in service of our old narratives and habits, to the freedom of choosing to serve God alone. On Pesach, the time of our liberation, may we all take the opportunity to recognize our ability to make the journey from slavery to freedom.

## Yirmiyahu 23:7-8: A Meaningless History?

Gabrielle Hiller

Class of 2015

The Exodus from Egypt is such a focal point of our religious experience that not only do we celebrate a holiday dedicated to bringing it to life, but we are also commanded to remember this unrivaled demonstration of God’s strength and presence in our lives every day and night. The derivation of this commandment, discussed in *Berachot* 12b, is quoted by the Haggadah toward the beginning of the Maggid section. In it, Ben Zoma expounds the source for *zechirat yetziat Mitzrayim*, remembering the Exodus from Egypt, from the verse (Devarim 16:3) “*kol yemei chayecha*, all the days of your life.” “*Yemei chayecha*” teaches us to remember the Exodus during the day, and the superfluous “*kol*” extends the obligation to the night. The Sages, however, understand this verse differently: “*yemei chayecha*” obligates us in the commandment of *zechirah* (mentioning the Exodus) in *olam ha-zeh* (in this world), while the extra “*kol*” includes *olam ha-ba* (the World to Come). The Haggadah ends the discussion at this point. In reality, though, the discussion in the Gemara continues. Ben Zoma challenges the Sages from a verse in Yirmiyahu:

*Assuredly, a time is coming—declares the LORD—when it shall no more be said, “As the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt,” but rather, “As the LORD lives, who brought out and led the offspring of the House of Israel from the northland and from all the lands in which I have banished them...”*

**Yirmiyahu 23:7-8<sup>1</sup>**

הנה ימים באים נאם ה' ולא יאמרו  
 עוד חי ה' אשר העלה את בני ישראל  
 מארץ מצרים, כי אם חי ה' אשר  
 העלה ואשר הביא את זרע בית  
 ישראל מארץ צפונה ומכל הארצות  
 אשר הדחתים שם ...

ירמיהו כג:ז-ח

This verse, Ben Zoma points out, strongly indicates that the Exodus from Egypt will not be relevant in the days of Mashiach, thus contradicting the Sages’ explanation of “*kol*.” The Sages, however, respond that *yetziat Mitzrayim* will only be *tafel*, secondary, to the ultimate redemption, but will never be wholly forgotten. Ben Zoma’s understanding of the verse from Yirmiyahu is understandable, being that this is the simple reading of the verse. What, then, is motivating the Sages to disagree with Ben Zoma?

<sup>1</sup> JPS 2000 translation.

Author Eric Weiner indirectly sheds light on this question in his book, *The Geography of Bliss: One Grump's Search for the Happiest Places in the World*. In his pursuit to uncover the causes of happiness, Weiner relates, "I had asked a Swiss man what the glue was that held his country together, given the linguistic, if not ethnic, diversity. Without hesitation he answered: history. Can history really do that? Is it that powerful?"<sup>2</sup> Perhaps, through their explanation of the verse in Yirmiyahu, the Sages are answering Weiner's question with a resounding "yes." As demonstrated by the numerous references to it in Tanach, *yetziat Mitzrayim* is central to our history as a nation. It represents both God's mighty hand and the beginning of our journey to receive the Torah and enter the Land of Israel. Pesach, which serves as a concentrated period of time to focus on this event, embodies *yetziat Mitzrayim*'s foundational historic importance to the Jewish nation. This may be what inhibits the Sages from foreseeing a time when the Exodus would be forgotten, as Ben Zoma did. Such a central moment in our national history can never be discarded, lest we, as a nation, lose the elements that unite us.

And yet, the importance of the message of the verse in Yirmiyahu, with its vision of a greater future, cannot be underestimated. History is important, but it is not enough. The Jewish people in the days of Yirmiyahu knew their history, but it had no significant relevance to them. It did not motivate them to strive for a higher spiritual level, a closer relationship with God. Aware of this danger, Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch relates a novel approach to Shemot 13:8, which instructs parents to educate their children about the Exodus. He warns that dryly relaying our history and laws is insufficient. Instead, parents must act as living role models, instilling in their children a true understanding of their obligations and inspiring them to excitedly embrace their lives as Jews. In this way, we can avoid the dangers that ensnared the people in the days of Yirmiyahu. Only if we convey to future generations that our history is meant to motivate us to strive to even greater heights, that *yetziat Mitzrayim* is just the beginning of our journey to an even greater redemption, can we successfully fulfill the message of Yirmiyahu.

If this actually is the message of the verse, however, one would think it would be a necessary point to highlight in the Haggadah. Why, then, was the argument between Ben Zoma and the Sages cut short? In his commentary to the Haggadah, Rav Shlomo Aviner quotes a comment of Maharal that hints to an answer to this question.<sup>3</sup> Maharal explains that, ultimately, the first redemption, *yetziat Mitzrayim*, is the reason for the final redemption. Already at the time of *yetziat Mitzrayim*, the Jewish people possessed the potential to reach the higher spiritual level that would make them worthy of the future redemption. Only when that potential is acted upon will they merit the coming of Mashiach. Thus, while it is necessary to focus on the future—and indeed, references, like *le-shanah ha-ba'ah be-Yerushalyim ha-benuyah*, are made in the Haggadah, ultimately, we must use the seder night as an opportunity to completely focus on *yetziat Mitzrayim*. We need to discuss, examine, and unlock the hidden potential of *yetziat Mitzrayim* waiting to be used. *Be-chol dor va-dor chayav adam lir'ot et atzmo ke-ilu hu yatza me-Mitzrayim*, in every generation, a person

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<sup>2</sup> Eric Weiner, *The Geography of Bliss: One Grump's Search for the Happiest Places in the World* (New York: Hachette Book Group USA, 2008), 108.

<sup>3</sup> Rav Shlomo Aviner, *Haggadah shel Pesach* (Bet El: Sifriyat Chavah, 2001), 34.

must see himself as if he left Egypt. Hopefully this year, we can truly tap into the potential of *yetziat Mitzrayim* in order to reach our true and ultimate redemption.

## Yehoshua 24:1-28: A Lesson in Chosenness

Davida Kollmar

Class of 2015

The story of *yetziat Mitzrayim* in Maggid begins with a brief description of the roots of the Jewish family. These pesukim, excerpted from the last perek of Sefer Yehoshua, feature Yehoshua's final speech to the Jewish people before his death, when he gathers the Jews to Shechem and reestablishes the covenant between them and Hashem. Yehoshua begins by describing the early history of the Jews. Terach was the father of Avraham and Nachor, and worshipped *avodah zarah*. Avraham was chosen and brought to the Land of Israel, where Yitzchak was born to him. Yaakov and Eisav were then born to Yitzchak; Eisav was given Mt. Seir, and Yaakov and his family went to Egypt. Yehoshua continues with a description of the salvation from Egypt and the conquest of the Land of Israel. He then tells the people that they could either remove their foreign gods and serve Hashem or worship the foreign gods of their ancestors, but that he himself was going to serve Hashem. The people respond that they would continue to serve Hashem, because He was the one who took them out of Egypt and brought them to Israel. Yehoshua reminds the Jews of the consequences of choosing to serve Hashem, but the Jews are adamant. They then renew the covenant, which Yehoshua writes down in a "book of Hashem's Torah," and then Yehoshua puts up a stone as a monument and sends the people home.

Among the many questions that can be asked on this perek, there are two that stand out in connection to the seder:

1. Why does Yehoshua start his story with Terach? Why not begin at a later point in time, such as the actual descent to Egypt? This question is highlighted by the fact that the Jews do not reference this part of their history in their declaration that they will serve Hashem.
2. Of Yehoshua's whole speech, why does the Haggadah quote specifically this part?

The first of these questions is addressed by *Metzudat David*, Alshich, and Malbim.

*Metzudat David* says that these pesukim emphasize the kindness that Hashem provided to the Jewish people. Although the Jews had humble beginnings, starting out as idol worshippers, Hashem, in His kindness, brought Avraham to the Land of Israel to remove him from that path.

Alshich explains that these pesukim are about how Avraham was chosen as the start of the Jewish people. Although the Jews technically descended from Terach, the fact that he served idols and we do not, highlights the fact that our true spiritual ancestry begins at Avraham.

Unlike *Metzudat David* and Alshich, Malbim does not explain these pesukim as a contrast between the current Am Yisrael and the idol worshipping forefathers they left behind. Rather, he focuses on the way the pesukim highlight the process necessary for the Jews to develop into the nation they became. He explains that until the time of Avraham, only a select few people were

Godly people, yet there was a necessity for the Jews to develop into a Godly nation of 70. There were three reasons why the Jews were not yet worthy: their location, their ancestry, and their lack of preparedness to serve Hashem. The pesukim describe the process to lose each of these negative attributes. Avraham was sent to Israel, so their place changed. Avraham then had only some descendants who were chosen, in the process weeding out the negative traits which were found among his ancestors. Finally, the descent to Egypt gave the Jews a chance to become accustomed to serving Hashem.

What these three interpretations have in common is that they highlight the chosenness of the Jewish people. In the *Metzudat David's* read, Hashem's special kindness to the Jews signifies that He chose them to be His people, and Avraham to be the one to start them on that path. Alshich also highlights the chosenness of Avraham. The Malbim, by explaining the process needed for the development of the Jewish people, is explaining how Hashem developed the Jewish people so that they would be ready to be chosen on a national level.

This discussion of chosenness is fitting for the renewal of the treaty between the Jewish people and Hashem. Hashem has chosen us even before we became a nation, and so it is proper for us to choose him in return. This also explains why Yehoshua mentioned a choice of serving Hashem or other gods—choosing Him is not a choice if there are no alternatives.

It is also understandable why this section is mentioned in the Haggadah of Pesach. On Pesach, we are celebrating the Exodus from Egypt. Because of our focus on *yetziat Mitzrayim*, when we were already a large group of people, we may think that this marks the point that Hashem chose us. Starting Maggid from here reminds us that in fact, the start of our journey began much earlier. It was because Hashem chose us that we were able to become a nation, and we continue to renew our commitment to Him to this day.

## **Psalms 114: 1-3: The day that gave us Hallel**

Kaitlyn Schlusberg

Class of 2014

*Hallel Ha'Mitzri*, colloquially referred to as “Hallel,” is a compilation of Psalms 113-118. Typically, we recite Hallel on holidays and Rosh Chodesh, between Shacharit and Mussaf, either in its full or abridged form. However, when it comes to Pesach, Hallel takes on a whole new persona, as it is recited at night as an integral part of the Haggadah. Some communities even have the *minhag* (custom) to communally recite Hallel after Maariv. What is it about the intersection between Pesach and Hallel that creates a divergence from the normally prescribed time to say Hallel? Another unique aspect of the Hallel/Pesach relationship is that while most of the pesukim of Hallel extol Hashem, Psalm 114 begins with “*B'tzeit Yisrael mi'Mitzrayim*”—when Bnai Yisrael left Egypt—and then continues on and references *kriyat Yam Suf* (splitting of the Red Sea). Why are *yetziat Mitzrayim* (the Exodus) and *kriyat Yam Suf* mentioned in the middle of Hallel, when no other specific miracles are mentioned?

The Rambam in *Hilchot Chanuka* (3:6) digresses slightly from teaching the laws of Chanuka to briefly discuss Hallel and enumerate the days on which it is said. The *Magid Mishne* there, analyzes whether Hallel is a biblical or rabbinic commandment, and notes the different reasons we say Hallel. On holidays that contain an added *kedushat hayom* (sanctity of the day), there is a rabbinic requirement to incorporate Hallel into our tefilah due to the inherent *kedusha* of the day. However, there is a biblical requirement to recite Hallel after a person witnesses or experiences a miracle. This Hallel is more of a personal recognition of, and demonstration of thanks to G-d.

This comment of the *Magid Mishne* can shed some light onto the distinctive nature of Hallel on Pesach night. Like all other holidays, Pesach is a *moed* and Hallel would therefore be included as part of the morning tefilah. The first night of Pesach, however, ushers in an added dimension. Not only are we celebrating the sanctity of the day, we are also reliving *yetziat Mitzrayim*—our Exodus from Egypt and transformation from slaves to free men as G-d's nation. The Mishna in *Pesachim* (10:5) mentions that every year each person is required to feel like he himself left Egypt. While every day we have the obligation of *zechirat yetziyat Mitzrayim* (recalling the Exodus), on Pesach night we have a special requirement of *sippur yetziyat Mitzrayim*. The mitzvah of *sippur yetziyat Mitzrayim* is to discuss and mention at length all that happened in Egypt and our nation's miraculous exit. This helps to explain the requirement to recite Hallel at the seder. At the seder we do not merely mention the Exodus in passing, we need to completely relive it ourselves. Once we accomplish that through the recitation of Magid at the seder, we break out in song and praise G-d for allowing us to leave Egypt and become free men. We can see this from the continuation of the Mishna in *Pesachim* 10:5. After mentioning that we need to experience the redemption ourselves, the Mishna continues by saying that “we are required to praise, glorify, exalt [...] to the One who did all these miracles for us and our forefathers.” [This idea was developed by Rabbi Yosef D. Soloveitchik and is quoted in *Harerei Kedem* Vol. II no. 101.] The Hallel of the seder accomplishes both the “*sippur*” and the “*zechira*” obligations of the night. By singing songs of praise to G-d we are reliving the feelings of appreciation and jubilation for the Exodus, but by mentioning “*b'tzeit Yisrael m'Mitzrayim*” —we also fulfill the *zechira* aspect by mentioning it.

The Gemara in *Pesachim* (117a) discusses who authored Hallel and who inaugurally recited it. One possibility the Gemara entertains is that after *kriyat Yam Suf*, Moshe and Bnai Yisrael broke out in Hallel, making them both the authors of Hallel and the first ones to have said it. Although this suggestion would conflict the presumption that David HaMelech (who lived many years after the Exodus) wrote Hallel, it would explain the reference within Hallel to the Exodus. When composing a prayer to be said for generations to commemorate miracles, it only makes sense to include the first and most significant miraculous phenomenon that ever occurred in Bnai Yisrael's history.

When we say Hallel at the seder night, it should cause us to pause and take notice. We must understand why exactly we are singing songs of praise for G-d, especially at this specific moment of the seder. We should take stock of all the miracles we have enumerated up until this point in the Haggadah and realize that this demands our recognition and appreciation. While saying the

words of the Hallel, we should specifically focus on the internal reference of “*b’tzeit yisrael m’Mitzrayim*” and recognize that with this we are not only fulfilling the commandments of *zecher l’yetziyat Mitzrayim* and *sippur yetziyat Mitzrayim*, but that we are connecting to the first moment in our nation’s history that necessitated the *shira* (song) of Hallel.

## ***Mikra Bikkurim: Lessons from the Maggid’s Source for the Exodus Story***

Mitzi Steiner

Class of 2014

On Passover night, one might expect that the book of Shemot, which details the journey of the Israelites from bondage to divine redemption, would play a central role in the telling of the Exodus story. Instead, however, the text expounded upon during Maggid is a recap of these events from “*mikra bikkurim*” (Devarim 26:5-9), the proclamation made by bearers of first fruits in the Temple. While one could argue that the selection of *mikra bikkurim* was made for practical reasons, noting that the passage describes in five sentences what spans several chapters in Shemot, I wish to argue that the purpose of this selection is not simply a matter of brevity; rather, it reflects deeply on the purpose of Passover night itself.

One similarity between *mikra bikkurim* and our experience on Passover night is the act of *retelling*. Unlike the generation described in Shemot, which lived through slavery and redemption, the Israelites bringing first fruits knew of those miraculous events only secondhand. Yet, despite this historical distance, subsequent generations were guided to consciously engage the narrative of their history through the proclamation of *mikra bikkurim*.

On Passover night, we too seek to personalize crucial events of generations past. Indeed, the Mishnah *Pesachim* (10:5) dictates that in every generation one must see oneself as if he or she personally left Egypt. Famously, Rambam (*Hilchot Chametz’ U’Matzah* 7:6) translates the word “*lirot*” —to see—into “*li’harot*” —to present oneself, as though he or she experienced the Exodus. Thus, *mikra bikkurim* reminds us of the need to integrate ourselves into our nation’s past and to internalize its lessons.

A further parallel between *mikra bikkurim* and the process of Passover night is the element of generational continuity. Since those reciting *mikra bikkurim* would not have lived through the actual Exodus, they actively connected themselves to the tale of their forefathers by beginning their proclamation with “*Arami oved avi*” —*my father was a wandering Aramean*.

Similarly, on Passover night, the focus is not solely on stating a historical narrative or on establishing a personal relationship to it, but also on passing on a legacy to the next generation. Indeed, the Torah repeats the injunction to transmit the Exodus story to our children four times. Interestingly, the act of passing on the Exodus story was deemed so critical to the divine plan, that Hashem stated it explicitly as a purpose of His actions, even before the Exodus took place. As Hashem tells Moshe, the wonders of the Exodus are (Shemot 10:1-2) “*li’maan*” —*so that*— we should tell *bincha u’ben bincha*—*your children and your children’s children* of Hashem’s

greatness that was witnessed in Egypt. In this way, *mikra bikkurim* highlights a primary purpose of recounting the Exodus story – to connect the next generation to the story of our national redemption.

Beyond modeling the way in which we should transmit the Passover story, *mikra bikkurim* hints to us the instinctive response that the retelling of the miracles of Exodus is supposed to elicit—that of abundant praise and gratitude to Hashem. The mitzvah of *mikra bikkurim*, as Rambam writes in *Sefer Ha’Mitzvot (Mitzvat Aseh 132)*, is not simply to tell the story of how Hashem saved us from the brutality of Egypt, but to be actively grateful for all of the goodness that He has granted us by means of our redemption and subsequent nationhood.

Similarly, the Rambam writes in *Sefer Ha’Mitzvot (Mitzvat Aseh 157)*, that the mitzvah of reciting the Exodus story on Passover night is not just to recall our historic journey to freedom, but also to offer praise for the kindness Hashem has demonstrated by redeeming us. Thus, the reading of *mikra bikkurim* guides us to the ultimate goal of our recitation of the Exodus story—to feel compelled to give thanks to Hashem for the kindnesses he bestowed on us and to burst forth in the songs of Hallel that follow.

A final reason why *mikra bikkurim* rightly serves as our central text on Passover night is that it highlights a crucial plot point which is missing from our modern Maggid—that of the arrival of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel. The text of *mikra bikkurim* culminates in a statement of gratitude for having been brought to the Land of Israel:

*And you brought us to this place and gave this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.*

**Devarim 26:9**

וַיְבִאֵנוּ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וַיִּתֵּן לָנוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֲרָץ  
זָבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ.  
דְּבָרִים כו:ט

Despite the fact that this declaration would have served as the climax of *mikra bikkurim*, our Haggadah texts stop short of this sentence. This glaring omission forces us to grapple with the discomfort that we no longer have the ability to celebrate Passover in all of its grandeur, with the Paschal lamb and Temple services that were once its central components. As a result, the Maggid of our Haggadah keeps us yearning, longing for a time when we will be able to celebrate not only our Exodus from Egypt, but also our return as a people to our Jewish homeland.

## Ezekiel 16: The Bloods of Redemption

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In chapter 16 of Ezekiel, the prophet presents a provocative metaphor for the relationship between the Jewish people and G-d in an effort to highlight the treacherous behavior of the nation. The metaphor begins with G-d finding a newborn girl who has been abandoned, and is covered with the blood of her birth. G-d tells the baby, “Live in your blood; live in your blood. (בדמיה חיי, בדמיה חיי)” He causes her to physically mature, she remains naked, and she becomes beautiful. He then “clothes” (marries) her and enters into a covenant with her, finally washing away her blood. After He showers her with gifts, she betrays Him by committing adultery. The Israelites have betrayed G-d in a similar fashion.

In the context of the metaphor, the blood left on the baby symbolizes the pain of the birthing process and is understood by many medieval commentators as symbolizing the hardship of the slavery in Egypt. The Midrash, however, in *Shemot Rabba* (17:3), and a parallel Midrash cited by Rashi (Ex. 12:6), explain the symbolism of the blood, as well as the doubling of the phrase, “Live in your blood” as follows: G-d saw that the Jews were “naked” of mitzvot and gives them two blood-related mitzvot, *brit milah* and the *korban Pesach*, as a way for them to accrue merit. What in the text prompts the authors of the Midrash to make this claim?

Looking at the metaphor story itself, what motivates G-d to invest in and marry this woman? There are two possibilities. G-d may have been moved to take care of this helpless baby out of mercy. The infant has no hope to live if not taken care of. In fact, the Talmud (*Shabbat* 129b) learns from these verses which activities are permissible on Shabbat in order to ensure a newborn’s survival. The second possible reason is that the woman is beautiful. While G-d helps the baby grow before it has become beautiful, investing effort into the baby for other reasons, what ultimately causes the commitment of marriage may be the woman’s beauty.

What exactly does G-d mean when he tells the baby to “live in her blood”? Radak explains that G-d is encouraging the baby, by telling her that despite her challenges, (namely the slavery of Egypt), she should persevere. However, as Rabbi Alex Israel<sup>4</sup> points out, it is possible that the prefix “כּ” does not mean *in*, but *through*. The phrase then means, “Live through your blood,” i.e. live on account of, or because of, your blood.

This is why the Midrash believes that the Jewish people were redeemed because of two bloods. According to the Midrash, G-d redeemed the Jewish people at first only because of His promise to our forefathers, specifically Abraham, that He would take us out of the foreign land in which we were enslaved and bring us to Israel. Initially, this promise was the only motivation; the Jews themselves were in no way deserving of redemption. The Midrash believes that the Jews had completely assimilated into the surrounding pagan culture, and many Midrashim posit that the Jews were at the lowest levels of impurity. This initial motivation is symbolized in the Midrash by “*dam milah*,” the blood of the covenant with Abraham. In its merit, the Jews were redeemed.

Though the Jews were lacking any of their own merit at first, they were commanded to bring a Passover offering while in Egypt. There is seemingly little reason for this commandment—G-d can easily pass over the Jews’ homes without any markers and there is no other obvious reason for why this ritual must be done now, on the eve of their departure. The Midrash therefore posits that the commandment to eat the Paschal lamb, eat matza, and observe Passover is a way of enabling the Jews to have merits of their own to make them worthy of redemption. G-d essentially commands the Israelites to celebrate the Exodus before it happens, and tells them to eat unleavened bread, whose significance as a symbol of the hurried departure from Egypt is still pending. By performing these mitzvot, the Jews show G-d that they trust Him and are committed to following Him, further motivating G-d to commit Himself to the Jews as well and redeem them.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.alexisrael.org/#!pesach--blood-on-the-doorposts/c13a>

It is now clear why the text from Ezekiel prompts the comments of the Midrash. The two reasons for the Exodus—originally G-d’s promise to Abraham, followed by the display of commitment to G-d shown by the Israelites—align with the two reasons G-d saves and marries the abandoned child in Ezekiel. G-d was first compelled for a reason external to the baby (i.e. His mercy, paralleling G-d being bound by His promise) and was subsequently motivated because of something intrinsic to the woman (i.e. her beauty, paralleling the merit of the Jews).

This explanation resolves another issue in the text of Ezekiel. Why does G-d not wash off the blood of the childbirth until after the marriage? If washing off the blood symbolizes that the purpose of the blood has been fulfilled, the blood of circumcision cannot be “washed away” until G-d’s promise to Abraham has been fulfilled, which occurs only after the Jews enter the Land of Israel. The blood of the Passover offering, which represented the one set of merits the Jews had to reflect their commitment to G-d, can be “washed away” once a full covenant is in motion, and Passover takes its place as only one of many mitzvot.

This Pesach let us remember the commitment that G-d has kept to the Jewish people and let us recommit ourselves to G-d in return.

## **Kings I 9:9 The Exodus from Egypt: An Active People**

Galit Wernick

Class of 2014

In the ninth perek of Kings I, the Exodus from Egypt is mentioned in reference to God’s promise to Shlomo, subsequent to the completion of the building of the Beit Hamikdash. God tells Shlomo that if he should uphold the Torah and all its commandments, He will preserve the Davidic dynasty. However, if he or the Jewish people should fail to uphold the Torah, God will destroy the Temple and the Land of Israel, such that when other nations pass by, they will wonder to themselves why the Jewish people suffered such misfortune. Ultimately, they will conclude that such has happened to the people of Israel because they abandoned their God, who brought their ancestors out of Egypt. God specifically uses the Exodus from Egypt to demonstrate His close relationship to the Jewish people. Granted, the Exodus from Egypt is a defining feature of the Jewish people’s relationship with God, but it would seem that God should have used the Torah as the singular defining feature of His relationship with the Jewish people. Ultimately, the fact that we, as the Jewish people, exclusively, were given the Torah is what makes us special; therefore, it seems odd that God chose to recount the Exodus from Egypt as the most salient feature of our relationship. This question becomes stronger given the fact that Amos, one of the later prophets, tells us (Amos 9:7) explicitly that we are not the only people who were redeemed by God. God also redeemed the Plishtim from Caphtor and Aram from Kir.

One explanation for God’s decision to invoke the Exodus from Egypt is that in a sense, the Exodus from Egypt is itself an allusion to Matan Torah but with an important new perspective. Though God’s decision to present the Jewish people with the Torah ultimately implies their active participation, namely their keeping of its commandments, the actual giving of the Torah and a reference to it implies a passive people, a people that simply received a document, possibly

even against their will. Though the Exodus from Egypt would also seem to suggest a similar level of passivity, it is clear that a reference to the Exodus from Egypt does not exclusively refer to itself. Rather it reflects the reason the Jewish people were redeemed. The Jewish people are not special because they were redeemed; other nations were also redeemed. The Jewish people attain their uniqueness through the Torah; the Jewish people were redeemed for a purpose. The significance of recounting the Exodus from Egypt stems from the fact that it is the beginning of the process leading to Matan Torah and implies an active people. They did not simply receive it; they accepted it. Furthermore, it goes without saying that the Exodus also successfully exhibits an instance of God's love for the Jewish people. The Exodus from Egypt thus captures and demonstrates the true relationship between God and the Jewish people. Simultaneously, it expresses God's active commitment to the Jewish people and His love for them, while also expressing their active role in receiving the Torah, their acceptance of the Torah.

# Yom Haatzmaut

## 2014/5774

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# Celebrating a Complex Reality<sup>1</sup>

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## A Phenomenon

Despite more than six decades and an abundance of halachic discussion and responsa, a peculiar phenomenon remains regarding the observance of Yom Haatzmaut: its liturgy. A simple, anecdotal survey will reveal a wide range of divergent practices within the Torah community: those who do not recite Hallel in the morning, those who recite it even at night with a bracha, those who recite *Tachanun*, those who add sections of Tehillim ordinarily recited at *Kabbalat Shabbat* (Friday night services), and shofar blowing. Even within the Religious Zionist community, practices vary from community to community, with some liturgical prescriptions resulting in what could be seen as a cacophonous medley of biblical and rabbinic holiday prayers. While specific practices are unquestionably the result of halachic discussion,<sup>2</sup> especially with regard to the recitation of Hallel, this overall reality should give us pause. This divergence may simply be the result of multiple halachic viewpoints and inadequate time for collective practice to coalesce. However, it can be understood as manifesting a profound spiritual reality. Perhaps this ambiguity reflects a Torah view of the complex reality of the founding and standing of the State of Israel- an idea that has precedents in Jewish history.

## A Precedent: Communal

The destruction of the Beit Hamikdash by the Babylonian Empire dealt an unprecedented, crushing blow to the Jewish people. It wrought a deep spiritual crisis of faith, in addition to the accompanying political, material and physical hardships. When Coresh, the Persian king, allowed the resettlement of Israel and the construction of a new Beit Hamikdash, it was obviously a great cause for celebration. Yet the book of Ezra describes the mixed reaction of those who assembled in Yerushalayim for the inauguration of the new Beit Hamikdash:

*And they sang aloud with praise and with thanks to the Lord for it is good, for His kindness is eternal over Israel, and the entire people*

וַיִּעֲנוּ בְהַלֵּל וּבְהוֹדוֹת לַיהוָה, כִּי טוֹב -  
כִּי-לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ, עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל;  
וְכָל-הָעָם הֲרִיעוּ תְרוּעָה גְדוֹלָה

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank *Avi Mori*, Mr. Etzion Brand, for his help with the article.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion in English of the halachic issues regarding the Tefillot of Yom Haatzmaut, see articles by Rabbi Ralph Pelcovitz and Rabbi Dr. Solomon Rybak in the *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society*, volume VII. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's opinion regarding the liturgy of Yom Haatzmaut is discussed in a letter published in *Covenant, Community and Commitment*, pp. 123-124.

*shouted with a great shout with praise to the Lord because the foundation of the House of the Lord was laid. And many of the priests and the Levites and the heads of the fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first Temple when its foundation was laid, [when they saw] this Temple with their eyes, were weeping with a loud voice, and many with a shout of joy to raise [their] voice. And the people did not recognize the voice of the shout of joy because of the voice of the people's weeping, for the people were shouting a great shout, and the voice was heard from afar.*

**Ezra 3:11-13 (Judaica Press Translation)**

בְּהִלָּל, לַה', עַל, הוֹסֵד בַּיִת-הַ'.  
 יְבוֹרְבִים מִהַפְּתָנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם וְרֵאשֵׁי  
 הָאֲבוֹת הַזְּקֵנִים, אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ אֶת-  
 הַבַּיִת הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּיָסְדוֹ--וְזֶה הַבַּיִת  
 בְּעֵינֵיהֶם, בְּכִים בְּקוֹל גְּדוֹל;  
 וְרַבִּים בְּתַרוּעָה בְּשִׂמְחָה, לְהַרִים  
 קוֹל. יַג וְאִין הָעָם, מִכִּירִים קוֹל  
 תְּרוּעַת הַשִּׂמְחָה, לְקוֹל, בְּכִי הָעָם:  
 כִּי הָעָם, מְרִיעִים תְּרוּעָה גְדוֹלָה,  
 וְהַקוֹל נִשְׁמַע, עַד-לְמִרְחֹק.  
**עזרא ג:יא-יג**

Perhaps the disappointment of the old timers can be explained by the Gemara (Yoma 21b), which enumerates several features of this new house of Hashem that were missing:

*These are the five differences between the First Temple and the Second Temple: The Ark; the Covering; The Chreubs; the fire, Divine presence and Divine inspiration; the Urim v'Tumim.*

אלו חמשה דברים שהיו בין מקדש ראשון למקדש שני ואלו הן ארון וכפורת וכרובים אש ושכינה ורוח הקודש ואורים ותומים.

Hence, despite its significant spiritual achievement, the second Beit Hamikdash was fraught with complexity, a reality mirrored in the people's initial reaction.

Furthermore, even after the Beit Hamikdash had been rebuilt, many Jews continued to live in exile. They even wondered whether they should still continue to observe Tisha Bav once the new Beit Hamikdash had been established:

*And Sharezer and Regem Melech and his men sent to Bethel to pray before the Lord, to say to the Priests of the house of the Lord of Hosts and to the prophets, saying, "Shall I weep in the fifth month (i.e. on the ninth of Av), abstaining as I have done these many years?"*

**Zechariah 7:2-3 (Judaica Press Translation)**

וַיִּשְׁלַח בַּיִת אֶל שְׂרָאצָּר וְרֵגֶם מְלֶךְ  
 וְאֲנָשָׁיו לְחַלּוֹת אֶת פְּנֵי ה'. לֵאמֹר אֶל  
 הַכֹּהֲנִים אֲשֶׁר לְבֵית יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת וְאֶל  
 הַנְּבִיאִים לֵאמֹר הֲאֵבָכָה בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַחֲמִישִׁי  
 הַזֶּה פֶּאֶשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי זֶה כַּמָּה שָׁנִים.  
**זכריה ז:ב-ג**

We learn that even the construction of the Beit Hamikdash itself, built under the specific direction of prophets of Hashem, was viewed with ambiguity by many due to unfulfilled spiritual expectations.

## A Precedent: Individual

This notion of complexity can be further enlightened by a Talmudic passage regarding a historic, great spiritual leader, Chizkiyahu, king of Yehuda:

*The Holy One Blessed be He wished to appoint Chizkiyahu as the Messiah and Sancheriv as Gog and Magog. The Attribute of Justice said before The Holy One Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, you did not appoint as Messiah David, king of Israel, who recited before you many songs and praises and you are going to appoint as Messiah King Chizkiyahu for whom You*

ביקש הקב"ה לעשות חזקיהו משיח וסנחריב גוג ומגוג אמרה מדת הדין לפני הקב"ה רבש"ע ומה דוד מלך ישראל שאמר כמה שירות ותשבחות לפניך לא עשיתו משיח חזקיהו שעשית לו כל הנסים הללו ולא אמר

*performed all of these miracles and he didn't recite before you any praises or songs ... At that moment, the earth opened up and said: Master of the Universe, I will recite song before You instead of this righteous individual. Appoint him as Messiah.*

**Sanhedrin 94a**

שירה לפניך תעשהו משיח ... מיד  
פתחה הארץ ואמרה לפניו רבש"ע  
אני אומרת לפניך שירה תחת צדיק  
זה ועשהו משיח פתחה ואמרה שירה  
לפניו.

**סנהדרין צד.**

The question is glaring: why did Chizkiyahu, the righteous king, not sing a song of praise? The Maharal (Rabbi Yehuda Loew, c. 1520- 1609, Prague) suggests that it wasn't Chizkiyahu's lack of will or interest that precluded him from singing a song to Hashem, and his disqualification as Mashiach was not a punishment. He simply couldn't do so because of a lacuna in his generation:

*And it's not the explanation that he did not want to sing a song, for it is not so. Rather, that there were those in the generation who knew they were not worthy of singing a song.*

**Netzach Yisrael, Chapter 43**

ואין הפי' שלא רצה לומר שירה שאין  
הדבר כך רק היו באותו דור יודעים שאין  
ראויים לומר שירה.  
**נצח ישראל, פרק מג**

Perhaps we can expand the idea of the Maharal and suggest that Chizkiyahu could not burst forth with a song of joy because of the complexity of the reality which he faced. For just beyond the corpses of the Assyrian hordes, whom Hashem had killed miraculously, lay the utter destruction and exile of the entire land and people of Israel. Maybe this great king could not raise his voice in song after seeing the entire empire of Torah study and observance that he had built and nurtured from Dan to Beer Sheva reduced to ruins. From the perspective of history, Chizkiyahu is considered one of our greatest leaders and Torah giants; not singing Shira and becoming the Moshiach can be viewed as a natural consequence of his complex circumstance, perhaps not even a shortcoming.

## A Complex Reality

In light of these precedents we can understand why the establishment and development of the State of Israel has engendered a complex response from the Torah world. Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Hakohen Kook (1891- 1982, Israel) once described his emotions upon hearing the news of the partition plan in 1947 that would shape the contours of a future Jewish state. On the eve of the Six-Day War, in what has become one of the most famous public discourses of this iconic Religious Zionist Torah giant, Rav Zvi Yehuda told his listeners:<sup>3</sup>

*Nineteen years ago, on the night when news of the United Nations decision in favor of the Reestablishment of the State of Israel reached us, when the People streamed into the streets to celebrate and rejoice, I could not go out and join in the jubilation. I sat alone and silent; a burden lay upon me. During those first hours I could not resign myself to what had been done. I could not accept the fact that indeed "they have . . . divided My land." (Joel 4:2)! Yes [and now after 19 years] where is our Hebron—have we*

לפני י"ט שנה, באותו לילה מפורסם, בהגיע  
ארצה החלטתם החיובית של מושלי אומות-  
העולם לתקומת מדינת ישראל, כשכל העם  
נהר לחוצות לחוג ברבים את רגשי שמחתו  
לא יכולתי לצאת ולהצטרף לשמחה. ישבתי  
בדד ואדום כי נטל עלי. באותן שעות  
ראשונות לא יכולתי להשלים עם הנעשה,  
עם אותה בשורה נוראה, כי אכן נתקיים דבר  
ד' בנבואה בתרי-עשר - "ואת ארצי חילקו!"

<sup>3</sup> The speech appears in *Go'el Yisrael* pp. 297-298.

*forgotten her?! Where is our Shechem, our Jericho, where?! Have we forgotten them?! And all that lies beyond the Jordan—each and every clod of earth, every region, hill, valley, every plot of land, that is part of Eretz Israel—have we the right to give up even one grain of the Land of G-d?! On that night, 19 years ago, during those hours, as I sat trembling in every limb of my body, wounded, cut, torn to pieces—I could not then rejoice.*

*The next day HaGaon HaRav Y. M. Harlapp zt"l came to our house—he felt the need to come and how could he not come?! We sat together, the two of us, in that small hallowed room in "Beit HaRav" [the room that had been the study of HaRav Zvi Yehudah's father, HaRav Avraham HaCohen Kook]—where else if not there—we sat shocked and silent. Finally, regaining our strength, we said, the two of us as one: "This is the L-rd's doing;/It is marvelous in our eyes." (translation: mercazarav.org)*

איפה חברון שלנו - אנחנו שוכחים את זה?!  
 ואיפה שכם שלנו - אנחנו שוכחים את זה?!  
 ואיפה יריחו שלנו - אנחנו שוכחים את זה?!  
 ואיפה עבר הירדן שלנו?! איפה כל רגב  
 ורגב? כל חלק וחלק, של ארבע אמות של  
 ארץ ד'?! הבידינו לוותר על איזה מילימטר  
 מהן? חלילה וחס ושלום!  
 באותו מצב מזועזע בכל גופי, פצוע כולי  
 וחתוך לגזרים - לא יכולתי אז לשמוח. כך  
 היה המצב לפני י"ט שנים, באותו לילה  
 ובאותן שעות. למחרת בא אל ביתנו איש  
 ברית קדשנו, הגאון רבי יעקב משה הרל"פ  
 זצ"ל - היה לו צורך לבוא וכלום יתכן שלא  
 היה בא?! התייחדנו אז שנינו, רגעים  
 אחדים, באותו חדר קטן ומקודש שב"בית  
 הרב" - ולאן יבוא אז אם לא לשם?!  
 מזועזעים ישבנו ודמומים. לבסוף התאוששנו  
 ואמרנו שנינו כאחד: "מאת ד' הייתה זאת,  
 היא נפלאה בעינינו".

Rav Zvi Yehuda's ambivalence was an expression of the complexity of the situation: it was an achievement but not the fullest expression for which he had dreamed.

From a different vantage point, with different concerns, Rav Aharon Kotler<sup>4</sup> (1891- 1962, Lithuania, United States) expressed similar disappointment at the founding of the State in a parable: Two people lived during the time of the destruction of the Second Temple. The first was a farmer who lived far away from Jerusalem. The Romans came, torched his farm and expelled him from the country. Years later, the Romans allowed him to come back and even helped him restore his farm. This farmer was truly happy about the new situation. A second person lived in Jerusalem before the destruction of the Second Temple. He was an eyewitness to the splendor of the Temple. He experienced the great events that took place there. Then the Temple was destroyed, and he was exiled. Years, later, he was allowed to return, but without the Temple. Is he going to rejoice about his current situation? Despite the achievement of a Jewish state, its lack of Beit Hamikdash and its overall nonreligious character created a sense of ambiguity for him.

## A Response

Rabbi Shimon Gershon Rosenberg (1949-2007, Israel), known as Rav Shagar, posits that the liturgical ambiguities of Yom Haatzmaut can be correlated with the religious complexities of the State of Israel. In an essay written in 1986, in his work *Bayom Hahu*, he notes:

*Most of the Jewish people do not recite song or Hallel on Yom Haatzmaut—some because they are not believers and some because they are believers. It therefore seems that the practice that most reflects our situation is the widespread practice*

רוב עם ישראל אינו אומר שירה והלל  
 ביום העצמאות- אלו משום שאינם  
 מאמינים ואלו משום שהנם מאמינים. לכן  
 נראה שהנהוג המבטא את מצבנו יותר  
 מכול הוא המנהג הרווח בחלק גדול

<sup>4</sup> Cited by R. Eliyahu Schlesinger, *Al Mishkenot Haroim* pp. 100-101.

among large segments of the Religious Zionists based on the rulings of previous chief rabbis, Rabbis Herzog, Unterman and Nissim, of blessed memory, to recite Hallel without a blessing. This practice expresses our situation and standing. There are those who mock this incomplete situation, one that reflects anachronism. It is a condition with a gap between what you feel and what you do in practice. It is possible to feel contempt towards those who place themselves in this anachronistic situation, but it's possible that it expresses this very feeling, the feeling that we have not reached perfection. The Jewish people is not reciting song and if that is the case, this seems to be the will of God—Chizkiyahu was not punished, but it was clarified that he was not the Messiah.

**Bayom Hahu pp. 201-202**

מהציבור הדתי-לאומי, על פי פסק הרבניים בעבר, הרבנים הרצוג, אונטרמן ונסים זצ"ל, לומר הלל בלי ברכה. במנהג זה באים לידי ביטוי מצבנו ועמדתנו. יש הלועגים למין מצב לא שלם כזה, המבטא אנכרוניזם; מצב שיש בו פער בין מה שאתה מרגיש לבין מה שאתה עושה בפועל. אפשר לחוש בזו כלפי אלה המציבים עצמם במצב אנכרוניסטי זה, אבל ייתכן שהוא מבטא את ההרגשה הזו עצמה, את התחושה שלא הגענו לשלמות. עם ישראל כיום אינו אומר שירה ואם זהו המצב, כנראה זהו רצון ה' - חזקיהו אינו נענש אלא מתברר שהוא איננו משיח.  
**ביום ההוא, עמ' רא-רב**

In this light, the wide variety of practices and perspectives can be well understood and appreciated. Each approach reflects a true aspect and facet of the State, including its historic contributions and its persistent challenges.

Yet, a spiritual danger continues to lurk for each and every perspective. For those whose expression of tefillah on Yom Haatzmaut is muted, the potential for not acknowledging the role of Hashem's Divine providence and a lack of gratitude to G-d for the Divine gift of the State of Israel is ever present. For those whose prayers contain exalted praises and thanks on this great day, the risk of accepting the spiritual status quo of a secular state and not striving for ambitious religious aspirations is also a constant. Perhaps our response today needs to address both of these concerns.

Regarding the first lesson, we must deepen our appreciation of the role of Hashem in guiding the destiny of the Jewish people:

*Judaism confirmed ... the important idea that God might be found not only in nature but in history. And if we search for revelation in history, we will find it, more compellingly than anywhere else, in the history of that unusual people, our ancestors. For almost two thousand years Jews remained a distinctive nation without any of the usual prerequisites of nationhood. They had no land, no sovereignty, no power, no overarching political structures, not even a shared culture. They were scattered over the face of the earth, and almost everywhere they were a minority. For the most part, they refused active efforts to convert them and resisted the passive pull of assimilation. No other people kept its identity intact for so long in such circumstances.*

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *The Letter in the Scroll* pp. 37-38

The establishment of a State of Israel, a sovereign entity recognized by the world powers is certainly another step in Hashem's unfolding master plan of Jewish history, expressing the teaching of Shlomo Hamelech, the most insightful of all men:

*A king's heart is like rivulets of water in the Lord's hand;*

פְּלִגֵּי מַיִם לֵב מֶלֶךְ בְּיַד ה' עַל כָּל אֲשֶׁר יַחְפֹּץ יִטְּוּ.

wherever He wishes, He turns it.

משלי כא:א

### Mishlei 21:1

The heart of the monarch—the national destiny—rests squarely and only in the hand of G-d. Each step in the history of the Jewish nation is being guided by unique *hashgacha* (Divine providence), which is obvious when considering the historical context of the founding of Israel. Hence, scores of the leading rabbis, roshei yeshiva and Chassidic rebbes from across the Torah world united in its early years to proclaim that the State is an expression of the “first buds of the beginning of the redemption.”<sup>5</sup>

Yet this achievement is also to be understood as a step in a long process, much like the slow, developing dawning of a new day:

*R. Chiyah Rabbah and R. Shimon b. Chalafta were walking in the Arbel Valley at dusk and they saw the first rays of light. R. Chiyah Rabbah said to R. Shimon b. Chalafta: This is how the Jewish people will be redeemed, in the beginning it will be slow and as it continues it will speed up.*

**Yerushalmi, Peah 1:1**

רבי חייא רבא ורבי שמעון בן חלפתא הוו מהלכין בהדא בקעת ארבל בקריצתה, וראו איילת השחר שבקע אורה. אמר רבי חייא רבא לרבי שמעון בן חלפתא בירבי: כך היא גאולתן של ישראל, בתחילה קמעא קמעא, כל מה שהיא הולכת היא רבה והולכת  
**ירושלמי פאה א:א**

This dawning can be complex, and although it is never deterred, it can sometimes be occluded from view by clouds and storms.

Our current State of Israel is not the final destination as described by our prophets. The final vision features a rebuilt Beit Hamikdash as the centerpiece of the Divinely inspired Jewish society settled securely in the full land of Israel. Wherever one locates our current step of the process—the State of Israel—on the continuum of exile and redemption, we must still work to seek the day when our ultimate destiny is fulfilled. This notion of anticipating our redemption, considered a biblical mitzvah by the Semak (*siman* no. 1), calls upon us to constantly check and align our spiritual compass for the complete future redemption.

## A Cause for Celebration

Despite the complexities of this reality reflected in the liturgy, we must always be mindful of an important lesson, imparted to us by the Rambam. The Rambam introduces the laws of Chanuka in his *Mishneh Torah* with a peculiar “halacha”:

*In the time of the second Temple, when the Greeks ruled over Israel, they issued evil decrees against them, proscribing their religion and forbidding them to study the Law and to fulfill the commandments. They laid hands on their property and on their daughters, and they entered the Temple and made breaches in it, and defiled that which was ritually pure. Israel was in dire straits*

בבית שני כשמלכי יון גזרו גזרות על ישראל ובטלו דתם ולא הניחו אותם לעסוק בתורה ובמצות. ופשטו ידם בממונם ובבנותיהם ונכנסו להיכל ופרצו בו פרצות וטמאו הטהרות. וצר להם לישראל מאד מפניהם ולחצום לחץ גדול עד

<sup>5</sup> See R. Menachem Mendel Kasher's *Hatekufah Hagedolah* ch. 19. The list includes Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Yechezkel Sarna and many other great rabbis from that generation.

*because of them and suffered great persecution until the G-d of our Fathers took pity on them and saved and delivered them from the hands of the Greeks. The Hashmonaim, descendants of the high priests, won a victory over them in which they slew the Greeks and saved Israel from their hands. They set up a king from among the priests and restored Israel's kingdom for more than two hundred years until the destruction of the Second Temple.*

**Rambam Hilkhos Hanukka 3:1**

שריחם עליהם אלהי אבותינו  
והושיעם מידם והצילם וגברו בני  
חשמונאי הכהנים הגדולים והרגום  
והושיעו ישראל מידם והעמידו  
מלך מן הכהנים וחזרה מלכות  
לישראל יתר על מאתיים שנים עד  
החורבן השני:  
רמב"ם הל' חנוכה ג:א

This passage is highly unusual. The *Mishneh Torah* is a legal code, not one which usually includes historical or philosophical selections; hence this paragraph is puzzling. What practice do we learn from this background? The Rambam is teaching that the historical background is essential to understanding the significance of the miracle of Chanuka and the laws that derive from it. Our prayers of thanks and praise must be expressed from within an understanding of the historical context. However, what is most striking is the concluding phrase: “[They] restored Israel’s kingdom for more than two hundred years until the destruction of the Second Temple.”

These two hundred years and the tragic history of the Hasmonean dynasty and Second Temple Period is well documented. The Kohanim and the Beit Hamikdash were corrupt and the political troubles of Israel were profound and ongoing. Strife and infighting were rampant. Yet, the Rambam includes the fact that there was Jewish autonomy and self-governance as an important accomplishment to be celebrated in the holiday of Chanuka. It was a complex reality, yet it was one that deserved celebration, according to Chazal.

In this light, we can say regarding the State of Israel that there is much for us to give praise and thanks as we do on Chanuka.<sup>6</sup> We have merited to see the return of Jewish sovereignty to much of Eretz Yisrael, the ability of all Jews to return to our homeland and the flourishing of Jewish and Torah society within its confines. Today we can literally walk in the footsteps of our Avot and Imahot and experience Tanach come alive in Israel’s rolling hills and valleys. We hear about halachic concepts, such as Shabbat and *Shemittah*, becoming part of a public and national discourse and feel the sanctity of holy places under Jewish control. While all of these are fraught with complexities, they are surely reason enough for celebration, in whatever liturgical form it will be.

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<sup>6</sup> This connection between Chanuka and the State of Israel and its implication for appreciation is developed by Rav Yehuda Amital in a talk originally delivered on Chanuka 5757 [1996]. It appears in Hebrew in *Alon Shevut* #151 and in *Alon Bogrim* #11. It can be accessed online at <http://www.vbm-torah.org/yjerush/atz59.htm>.

# And to Their Seed After Them

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Rosh Beit Midrash, Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov, Toronto

It was a mature, experienced, weary and wary nation that Moshe addressed on the edge of the Jordan River on the first day of the eleventh month in the last winter of their desert journey. He gazed upon faces that had witnessed war and death and the hopelessness of their fathers, and he spoke to them of an earlier time, when their world had been new.

Moshe quoted the Divine words that he had first delivered to the nation nearly 40 years earlier.

*Hashem, our G-d, spoke to us at Horeb, saying: You have spent sufficient time surrounding this mountain. Turn and travel and come to the mountain of the Emorites and its neighbors, the plains, the mountain and the lowlands and the desert and the shore of the sea, the land of the Canaanites and Levanon, to the great river, the river Euphrates.*

**Devarim 1:6-7**

ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ דָּבַר אֵלֵינוּ בְּהַרְבֵּי לְאֹמֶר  
רַב־לְכֶם שָׁבַת בְּהָר הַזֶּה. פָּנּוּ וְסַעוּ לְכֶם  
וּבֵאוּ הַר הָאֱמֹרִי וְאֶל־פְּלֵשְׁתִּינְיוֹ בְּעֶרְבָה  
בְּהָר וּבְשָׂפְלָהּ וּבְנֹגֵב וּבְחֹוֹף הַיָּם אֶרֶץ  
הַקְּנֻעֵי וְהַלְכָנוּן עַד־הַנָּהָר הַגָּדֹל  
נְהַר־פָּרָת:  
**דְּבָרִים א:ו-ז**

And then Moshe conveyed an ancient promise and a modern charge:

*See! I have placed the land before you. Come, conquer the land that G-d has sworn to your ancestors, to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov, to give to them and to their seed after them.*

**Devarim 1:8**

רְאֵה נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיכֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ בְּאוֹ וְרָשׁוּ  
אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע ה' לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק  
לְיַעֲקֹב וּלְיַעֲקֹב לְתַת לָהֶם וּלְיֶרֶעָם אַחֲרֵיהֶם:  
**דְּבָרִים א:ח**

## One Midrash

Our Sages were troubled by the wordiness of this sentence. Once the Jews are informed that G-d promised the land to "your ancestors," why is there any need to spell out, "to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov"?

*"That G-d has sworn to your ancestors." It need not have said, "to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov." What does "to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov" teach us?*

*Avraham is worthy on his own, Yitzchak is worthy on his own, Yaakov is worthy on his own.*

*This may be compared to a king who gave his servant a field as*

"אשר נשבע ה' לאבותיכם", שאין תלמוד  
לומר "לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב". ומה  
תלמוד לומר "לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב"?  
כדי אברהם בעצמו, כדי יצחק בעצמו,  
כדי יעקב בעצמו.  
משל למלך שנתן לעבדו שדה אחת במתנה

a gift, but he gave it to him only as it was. The servant rose and improved it and did not leave it as it was, and he planted a vineyard and bequeathed it to his son, and he [the son] did not leave it as it was, and he improved it and bequeathed it to his son, and he [the grandson] did not leave it as it was, and he improved it. So, too, when G-d gave the land to our ancestor Avraham He gave it to him only as it was, as Bereishit 13:17 says, "Rise, walk the land, its length and breadth, for to you I will give it." Avraham rose and improved it, as Bereishit 21:33 says, "And he planted an orchard<sup>1</sup> in Be'er Sheva." Yitzchak rose and improved it, as Bereishit 26:12 says, "And Yitzchak planted in that land, and that year he found one hundred-fold returns." And Yaakov rose and improved it, as Bereishit 33:19 says, "And he acquired the portion of the field where he had spread his tent."

**Sifri Devarim 8, per the edition of the Vilna Gaon**

ולא נתנה לו אלא כמות שהיא. עמד העבד והשביחה ולא הניחה כמות שהיא ונטעה כרם והוריש לבנו, ולא הניחה כמות שהיא והשביחה והוריש לבנו, ולא הניחה כמות שהיא והשביחה. כך כשנתן הקדוש ברוך הוא לאברהם אבינו את הארץ לא נתנה לו אלא כמות שהיא שנאמר (בראשית יג:יז) "קום התהלך בארץ לארכה ולרחבה כי לך אתננה." עמד אברהם והשביחה שנאמר (בראשית כא:לג) "ויטע אשל בבאר שבע." עמד יצחק והשביחה שנאמר (בראשית כו:יב) "ויזרע יצחק בארץ ההיא וימצא בשנה ההיא מאה שערים." עמד יעקב והשביחה שנאמר (בראשית לג:יט) "ויקן את חלקת השדה אשר נטה שם אהלו."

**ספרי, דברים פר' ח' ע"פ גירסת הגר"א**

On first read, this midrash simply offers two explanations for the listing of each of our patriarchs:

- First: the merit of each ancestor, individually, would have sufficed to earn the land for his descendants.
- Second: each of these ancestors presented a model for his descendants; the new generation should be prepared to toil and improve the land, as had Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov.<sup>2</sup>

## Two Visions

Our midrash does more than simply explain the biblical verse, though; it provides two fundamentally different views of the Jewish mission in this new land.

In the former vision, the land is a present handed to the Jews by the Master of the Universe in the merit of remembered ancestors. Not only are your collective ancestors the source of this birthright, but each patriarch, individually, could have been your sole benefactor and still you would have been gifted this remarkable land. Be grateful to those who walked before you, for by dint of their righteous path you will receive that for which other nations must sacrifice lives and treasure.

In the latter vision of our midrash, the land is a blank slate transferred by a king to his slave "as is", with the expectation that the slave will make of it whatever he can. You will receive that which you invest, and nothing more. Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov made the most of their individual opportunities, and you are expected to emulate their industrious approach to their heritage.

Perhaps this double vision is inspired by Moshe's own words in that verse, presenting both of

<sup>1</sup> Sotah 10a.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the verses selected by the midrash show our ancestors doing more than planting and purchasing land; each of the cited examples of "improving the land" comes from a passage in which one of our ancestors was compelled to deal with a potential foe within the land. The first citation follows Avraham's summit with Avimelech regarding wells; the second citation is sandwiched by hostile encounters with Avimelech and his Philistines; the third citation is bracketed by his meeting with Esav and the kidnapping of Dinah.

these elements:

- "See! I have placed the land before you." It is a gift.
- "Come, conquer the land." You are responsible to conquer and develop the expanse awaiting you on the other side of the Jordan River.

Both visions may also be seen within the mitzvah of settling the land of Israel, as formulated by Ramban:

*We were instructed to settle the land which G-d gave to our ancestors, to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov, and not to leave it in the hands of other nations or in desolation.*

**Hasagot haRamban l'Sefer haMitzvot, Aseh 4**

שנצטוינו לרשת הארץ אשר נתן הא-ל יתברך  
ויתעלה לאבותינו לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב ולא  
נעזבה ביד זולתינו מן האומות או לשממה.  
**השגות הרמב"ן לספר המצוות עשה ד'**

Ramban informs us that this is the land given by G-d to our ancestors, a present, but he then instructs us to build up the land, protecting it and nurturing it. The Jew who lives in Israel and does not contribute to its development is as deficient in his mitzvah as the Jew who contributes to the upkeep of the land from afar; we are instructed to live in the land, which is a gift to us, and to develop it as well.

## A Third Vision

The appropriateness of this message for each generation is clear. Whether the neophytes camped at Sinai, still blinking in the new sunlight of their freedom, or the grizzled desert wanderers gazing across the Jordan River, the Jew must always understand that the Land of Israel is both gift and expectation. It is a gift, handed to us in the merit of our ancestors, and it is an expectation, an anticipation that we will earn our keep.

However, our midrash presents a third vision as well, most appropriate for that mature, experienced, weary and wary nation waiting to cross the Jordan. The servant did not only plant a vineyard and work the land given to him; he also bequeathed the land to his child, who likewise improved the land and passed it along to the ensuing generation. Certainly, this is a message of responsibility, but it is also a message of hope, a pledge that if they work the land, there will rise a new generation to receive it. For those who had lost their fathers in the wilderness, this was no small thing.

Our midrash seizes upon the closing words of Devarim 1:8, promising "the land that G-d has sworn ... to give to them and to their seed after them." Avraham received the land, worked it, and passed it to Yitzchak, who did likewise and passed it to Yaakov. But move forward in history and watch the generation that leaves Egypt falter, and die in the wilderness. Their children may well wonder: what happens if we falter? Will there be another generation? To which Moshe pledges, in the words of our midrash, "The servant rose and improved it and did not leave it as it was, and he planted a vineyard and bequeathed it to his son, and he [the son] did not leave it as it was, and he improved it and bequeathed it to his son."

Live in the land that has been given to you in the merit of your ancestors. Work the land and build it up, following the model of your ancestors. Then your children will rise, a new generation, and you will pass a stronger land to them, for them to receive as a gift and for them to work.

As we celebrate another year of the State of Israel, may we commit ourselves to do likewise with this gift, building up the land and passing it to our children after us.

# Collected Insights on Israel from Members of the YU Torah MiTzion Community Kollelim

## אין מזל לישראל

ר' יוסף ברמן<sup>1</sup>

אברך, ישיבה אוניברסיטה תורה מציון כולל בשיקגו

חז"ל במסכת שבת, דף קנו:; מספרים לנו אודות מקרה מעניין שאירע ביום חתונת ביתו של רבי עקיבא. ומעשה שהיה כך היה: באותו היום, עת הכלה המהוללה התכוננה לאירוע המרגש, הסירה את סיכתה מעל לראשה ותחבה בחור שבקיר – על מנת שישתמר שם. למחרת היום, ניגשה לקחת את הסיכה בחזרה ולתדהמתה מצאה נחש שנמשך יחד עם סיכתה, והתגלה הדבר כי בעת נעיצת הסיכה בקיר נדקר הנחש בעינו. שאלה אביה, רבי עקיבא, "מאי עבדת?", קרי, בזכות איזה מעשה ניצלת מהכשתו של הנחש? ענתה לו ביתו – אשתקד, בעיצומה של מסיבת החתונה, בא עני ודפק על הדלת וכנראה כולם היו טרודים בסעודה ולא היה מי שישמע אותו, וניגשתי אני, אמרה הכלה, והגשתי לו את מנתי.

עד כאן סיפור יפה ונחמד, לולא העובדה המרתקת והקצת מטרידה אותה השמטתי, ויש לתת עליה את הדעת. בתחילת הסיפור התלמוד מציין שיום אחד, ניגשו ה'חוזים בכוכבים' לרבי עקיבא וציינו בפניו – שיידע, כי ביום חופתה של ביתו יכיש אותה נחש ותמות!

יש מספר תהיות שניתן להעלות בהקשר זה. ראשית, מה פשר הדבר שביתו של רבי עקיבא אמורה למות ביום נישואיה דווקא? ה'חוזים בכוכבים' לא מנבאים ותולים את מותה בתאריך מסוים אלא באירוע. אירוע החתונה. ולפני זה יש לשאול, מדוע בכלל נגזר עליה למות? הרי ברמת העיקרון ה'חוזים' צדקו. הנחש היה כפסע מלהמיתה, אלא שנעיצת הסיכה חסמה וקטלה את הנחש. ועל כך יש לתמוה מדוע? מדוע נגזר עליה כך מלכתחילה? ותמיהה אחרונה שבוודאי מטרידה היא, אם אכן ידע רבי עקיבא שביתו עתידה למות ביום חתונתה, איך שמר אביה את הדבר? איך איפשר לה אביה להיכנס כך לחופה, בשוויון נפש, ולא מנעה מלהינשא??

נדון בדברים. רבי עקיבא מתבשר שביתו עתידה למות אם תחתן. אך אין זו גזירה שלא ניתן לשנותה. רבי עקיבא שם אל ליבו כי המוות תלוי לא בתאריך מסוים אלא בפעולת הכניסה לחופה, במעשה. מעשה של ביתו יקבעו אם אכן תמות או לא. יש כאן התמודדות בין גורל שמונחת מלמעלה לבין כוחו ואחריותו של האדם

<sup>1</sup> חלקים ניכרים מן המאמר מבוססים על שיחה מאת מו"ר הרב אליהו בלומנצוויג, ראש ישיבת ההסדר בירוחם, ישראל.

לשנות את גורלו ע"י מעשיו. התמודדות בין מה ש'צריך' לקרות, בין ה'מוכתב', לבין האמירה שבאפשרותנו לשנות ולמחוק כיתוב זה. ביום חתונת האדם ישנו סיכון אדיר. דווקא יום זה המסמל את תחילתו של בניית בניין חדש בישראל טומן בחובו חשש גדול. בוודאי שקל ופשוט יותר לחיות בהוויה הקודמת, המוכרת. קפיצת מדרגה עלולה להוביל להתרסקות, לנפילה. באופן פרדוקסאלי, דווקא הרחבת החיים והמעבר לקומה גבוהה עלולים להוביל לאיבוד היציבות ולמוטט את כל מה שנבנה עד כה. ההתחדשות מזמינה התמודדות. התמודדות שסופה עלולה להתגלות ככישלון. הקפיצה למים יכולה לגרום חלילה לטביעה.

על ביתו של ר' עקיבא נגזר למות ביום חתונתה כי אירוע זה, של בניית קומה אדירה, מטבעו הינו גם סיכון אדיר שעלול להוביל להתרסקות, למוות. ה'חוזים בכוכבים' מסמלים את הטבע, את מה שסביר על פי הנורמה, את ההסתברות, את מה ש'אמור' להתרחש עת מסתכנים ומנסים לבנות בניין. במעשה החתונה (ללא קשר לתאריך או יום מסוים) יש חשש וסיכון טבעי לחידלון ולנפילה.

רבי עקיבא הבין שאין להישאר סטטיים. אין להיכנע לכוחות הטבע, לנורמה. ישראל לא כפופים למזלות ולגרמי השמיים. בידני הכוח לנתן את 'גזר הדין'. בדומה לנאמר במשנה במסכת עדויות (פרק ה' משנה ז') – "מעשיך יקרבוך ומעשיך ירחקוך." מעשי האדם יכולים לשנות את גורלו. אין כאן המקום להיכנס לסוגיה איו רמת סיכון הינה ריאלי ביהסי ביטחון והשתדלות. וודאי שאת זאת גם יש לקחת בחשבון, אך דבר אחד ברור – אין כניעה למהלך מוכתב. יש מציאות, ובידינו ליצור אותה, היכולה לפרוץ את המציאות הטבעית.

החלטת הכרזת העצמאות היא הרי החלטה מטורפת ובלתי הגיונית בעליל. היא בוודאי מזמינה את חיסולו של הקיום הקודם. ערעור וסיכון הסטאטוס קוו שהתרגלו לחיות בתוכו. ויתרה מזו, גם עלולה להוביל לתוצאות הרות אסון. וכידוע, מיד אחרי ההכרזה על תקומת המדינה פלשו צבאות ערב השכנים לארץ ישראל על מנת לנסות ולמוטט את היוזמה ה'הזויה' של הקמת מדינה ליהודים ובעצם לכלותינו. השאלה למה רבי עקיבא מתיר לביתו להינשא חופפת לשאלה מדוע דוד בן גוריון מסתכן ומכריז על המדינה.

רבי עקיבא בהכירו את ביתו האמין בכוחותיה, ביכולותיה לפרוץ את המציאות המוכתבת. הוא האמין במעשיה. ועל כן לא חשש להתרסקות עת יצאה החוצה לבנות את בניינה. רק שאלה – 'מאי עבדת?' מה עשית? בוודאי היה מעשה שבזכותו הצלחת לדלג מעל המכשול ולהצליח לבנות את בניינך. מה היה אותו מעשה שעל ידו ובזכותו הצלחת לגבור על כוחות הטבע?!

ביתו של רבי עקיבא היא היחידה ששמה לב לעני הרעב. כולם טרודים בשמחת החתונה אך דווקא 'כוכב האירוע' היא זו ששמה את ליבה אל הדלפון העומד בפתח. תשומת ליבה לסיטואציה הזו – בשעה שהייתה בוודאי עסוקה, מעידה עליה כמה הבינה והפנימה את גודל אחריותה, את תפקידה לשנות את פני המציאות – להשביע את העני הרעב ולשנות את מזלו ואת גורלו. לגבור על הטבע שהוא נתון בתוכו – כאדם רעב, מסכן ושפל ולבנות בו קומה של שובע – רוממות. היא הבינה שבידה הדבר – באפשרותה לשנות. לכן זכתה שביום חתונתה ניצלה מהמוות, מהחידלון. וזאת, מפני שקמה ועשתה מעשה. הראתה שאינה מכפיפה עצמה לחוקי הטבע אלא מאמינה בכוחה לשנות את מציאותו של העני ולכן אף היא לא הייתה כפופה לטבע ולמזלות וניצלה ממיתה.

עלינו להודות לקב"ה שנתן בלב מנהיגינו את העוז לעשות את המעשה – להכריז על תקומת מדינתנו. כעת, בידינו האחריות להמשיך בכוחות העשייה. עלינו לזכור ש'אין מזל לישראל'. אילו הייתה התנהלות טבעית לישראל לא היינו יכולים להגיע למעמד הזה של יכולת להכריז על עצמאותנו. על פי ה'טבע' וה'היגיון', שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכלותינו, ובייחוד עת היינו נפוצים בארבע כנפות הארץ, לא היינו אמורים להיות אלא שריד ארכיאולוגי נושן. כעת משמנהיגנו קפצו למים, העיזו, עלינו להמשיך לשחות בכל הכוח ונגד כל הגלים המאיימים להטביענו, נגד כל הנחשים המאיימים להכישנו, להמשיך ולעשות, להמשיך ולבנות את הבניין המופלא הזה שקוראים לו מדינת ישראל כמגדלור לשאר הארצות והעמים. ועניין זה יצלח כל עוד בלבב פנימה תשכון התקווה, האמונה. כל עוד נאמין כי מעשינו הם אלה שיקרבונו או חלילה ירחקונו. כל עוד נפנים כי בידינו הדבר וש'אין מזל לישראל'!

# The Significance of Eretz Yisrael: Halachic Implications

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There are many halachic issues that are closely associated with the land of Israel. The Rishonim debate the extent of one's obligation to live in Eretz Yisrael,<sup>2</sup> and there are a multitude of *mitzvot hateluyot ba'aretz*, mitzvot that apply only to those who live in the land of Israel, such as *terumah*, *ma'aser* and *shemittah*. However, it is interesting to note that the significance of Eretz Yisrael, both regarding the value of dwelling there as well as its elevated degree of *kedusha*, has halachic implications in seemingly unrelated areas.

The Gemara, *Menachot* 44a, writes that one who rents a house in the Diaspora is not obligated to affix a mezuzah upon his doorpost during the first 30 days of his residence. However, if one rents a home in Eretz Yisrael, the obligation begins immediately.<sup>3</sup> The Gemara continues to explain that the reason for this distinction is due to *yishuv Eretz Yisrael*, the value of settling the land of Israel. Rashi explains this distinction in the following manner: The halacha<sup>4</sup> states that if a Jew will be taking over the residence of another Jew, the first renter is not permitted to remove his mezuzot when he leaves. Rather, he must leave them for the incoming tenant. Therefore, requiring the renter to put up the mezuzot immediately creates a deterrent for him to vacate his residence, since he will have to acquire other mezuzot for his new home. The rabbis of the Talmud considered the importance of living in Eretz Yisrael, and shaped the halacha regarding mezuzah in a manner that would encourage people to do so.

A further manifestation of this notion is found in the Gemara, *Gittin* 8b. The Gemara concludes that if one is purchasing land in Israel from a non-Jew, he may commission a non-Jew to write the bill of sale even on Shabbat. Despite the fact that generally one is not permitted to request a non-Jew to perform what would be considered a Torah prohibition for a Jew to perform, even in a situation when attempting to fulfill a mitzvah, due to the vital nature of the mitzvah of acquiring land in Israel, an exception is made and one may ask a non-Jew to perform an activity that is considered a Torah prohibition (writing on Shabbat).<sup>5</sup>

In addition to encouraging the settling of Eretz Yisrael, there are halachot that reflect its unique status as well. In *Makkot* 7a, the Gemara discusses a case where a person is sentenced in one court, flees before the sentence is carried out, and is subsequently brought before a different court. An apparent contradiction is raised as to whether the second court should simply implement the initial decision or re-try the case. The resolution reached by the Gemara is that if the defendant fled from Eretz Yisrael to the Diaspora, the original verdict is automatically implemented. But if he fled from the Diaspora to Eretz Yisrael, the case is re-tried. The reason given is that the *zechut*, merit, of Eretz Yisrael creates a possibility that a new angle will be

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<sup>2</sup> See Ramban, *Shich'chat Haesin* no. 4.

<sup>3</sup> This is codified in *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh De'ah* 286:22.

<sup>4</sup> See *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh De'ah* 291:2.

<sup>5</sup> Tosafot, s.v. *Af Al Gav*, quote the Bahag who seems to apply this to the mitzvah of *brit milah* as well.

discovered that could lead to the innocence of the defendant. The elevated level of *kedusha* in Eretz Yisrael can even cause a trial to have a different result.

The Gemara, *Megillah* 28b, reflects an additional application of this idea. In a discussion regarding the appropriate usage of a *beit haknesset*, synagogue, the Gemara suggests that בתי כנסיות שבבבל על תנאי הן עשויין, the synagogues in Bavel were built with a stipulation, and therefore certain activities, such as eating and drinking, that would generally be prohibited in a synagogue, are permitted in the synagogues of Bavel. Tosafot, s.v. *Batei Knesiyot*, explain that this stipulation only works in Bavel (and other lands in the Diaspora) because at the time of the Redemption, the *kedusha* of those synagogues will dissipate. However, in Eretz Yisrael, where the synagogues will maintain their sanctity, such a stipulation would not be effective.<sup>6</sup> Eretz Yisrael's status as the ultimate destination of the Jewish people affects the halacha even before that time arrives.

The significance of Eretz Yisrael can be traced throughout Tanach as well as throughout the thoughts and writings of great Jewish leaders over the course of history. The fact that Chazal went as far as to incorporate its value into shaping halacha as well, is a clear indication of the central role it plays in the mindset of the Jewish people.

## Does Israel Need Foreign Aid?

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Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's visit to Israel in January 2014 attracted the attention of Jews worldwide. As the Prime Minister addressed the Knesset, vowing unwavering support of the Jewish nation because "it is right to do so," many Jews from other countries looked on, longing for the day when their leader would be as supportive.

The trip was successful; it strengthened the relationship between political allies and furthered the economic relationship between the two countries through trade agreements. Foreign support, from Canada and other nations, especially in such an overt way, is often viewed as critical to the survival of our small state. In fact, most of AIPAC's work is focused on this exact goal. And an important one it is. Without the foreign military and economic support provided to Israel, how is a country of eight million, surrounded by over 100 million Arabs, many of them hostile toward the Jewish state, to survive?

While this attitude seems completely logical, a cursory look at Tanakh may prove otherwise. In the military realm, the poet (Tehillim 20:8) says, "Some [nations] with chariots, and some [nations] with horses; but we, in the name of Hashem, our G-d, call out." Rabbi David Kimkhi explains that the poet is informing us that while our enemies come upon us with chariots and horses, and believe that their military might will ensure their victory, we will call out in the name of G-d, and we will be victorious, despite our lack of physical weapons.

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<sup>6</sup> See *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 151:11 and the comment of *Mishna Berurah* 151:37.

Moving from Tehillim to Sefer Bamidbar, we find a prophecy stating that the Jewish people are destined to dwell alone. After being hired by King Balak to curse the Jewish nation, Bilam predicts that the Jewish people “shall dwell alone, and will not be reckoned among the nations” (Bamidbar 23:9). Onkelos explains that the trait of living in solitude was inherited from our forefathers, yet despite this isolation, Am Yisrael will not be annihilated.

King Balak accuses Bilam of failing, in that he blessed the Jewish people when he was commissioned to curse them (Bamidbar 24:10), and from this we may infer that dwelling alone is a positive. Yet our sages aren’t as convinced that it is a blessing to dwell in isolation. Rabbi Abba bar Kahana (*Sanhedrin* 105b) said, “All of [Bilam’s blessings] were eventually transformed into the curse [he had intended] except for [the curse regarding] shuls and *batei midrashot*.” The idea that dwelling alone is truly a curse is not hard to accept. The Torah introduces the concept of loneliness in a negative context, “It is not good for man to be alone” (Bereishit 2:18). Other references to solitude in Tanakh are made in regards to a leper (VaYikra 13:46) and Jerusalem in a state of destruction (Eikha 1:1), not placing this attribute in the greatest light. Perhaps this is why the commentators do not read Bilam’s statement as one that prophesizes detachment, functioning without partners or allies. For example, Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra suggests that the prophecy speaks of the Jews avoiding assimilation, while Rabbi Ovadiah Seforno posits that dwelling in solitude refers to a solely Jewish presence in the Land of Israel. The commentators specifically avoid saying that Bilam’s blessing meant living without the need for allies.<sup>7</sup>

Having allies can be extremely beneficial, as Shlomo HaMelekh learned. Inheriting an empire that was strong and stable, Shlomo HaMelekh’s main goal was to build the Temple his father did not merit to build. He also expanded foreign relations, building strong ties with many leaders of other nations. While the direct benefits can be seen in trade agreements that were made—which enabled Shlomo HaMelekh to access much-needed supplies such as wood and gold—these relationships were clearly not only pragmatic. Melakhim I, Chapter 9:10-14, describes but one of the relationships with a foreign leader that Shlomo maintained well after the Temple’s construction was complete. Investing in these relationships with foreign diplomats and creating new ones enabled Shlomo HaMelekh to expand his empire, enhancing both its physical, as well as its intellectual, property.

But for what? What was his end goal? If the Jewish people were safe and secure, why did Shlomo HaMelekh continue to grow and solidify these foreign relationships? An answer can be found in the previous chapter:

*If the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel, comes from a distant land for the sake of Your Name—For they shall hear about Your Great Name and Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm—when he comes to pray towards this House, listen in Your heavenly abode, and grant all that the foreigner asks You for. Thus, the peoples of the earth will know Your Name and revere You as does Your people*

וְגַם אֶל־הַנִּכְרִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־מֵעַמְּךָ יִשְׁרָאֵל הוּא וּבָא מֵאַרְצוֹ רְחוֹקָה לְמַעַן שְׁמֹךָ. כִּי יִשְׁמָעוּן אֶת־שְׁמֹךָ הַגָּדוֹל וְאֶת־יָדְךָ הַתְּזַקָּה וְיִרְעוּ הַנְּטוּיָה וּבָא וְהִתְפַּלֵּל אֶל־הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה. אַתָּה תִשְׁמַע הַשָּׁמַיִם מִכּוֹן שִׁבְתֶּךָ וְעָשִׂיתָ כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא אֵלֶיךָ הַנִּכְרִי לְמַעַן יִדְעוּן כָּל־עַמֵי הָאָרֶץ אֶת־שְׁמֹךָ לְיִרְאָה אֹתְךָ

<sup>7</sup> Ideas in this paragraph came from Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks: [www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-5771-balak-a-people-that-dwells-alone/](http://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-5771-balak-a-people-that-dwells-alone/).

Israel, and they will recognize that Your Name is attached to this House that I have built.

**Melakhim I, 8:41-43**

בְּעֵמֶק יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלָדַעַת כִּי־שִׁמָּה נִקְרָא  
עַל־הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בְּנִיתִי.  
מַלְכִים א' ח:מא-מג

Shlomo HaMelekh hopes to build an empire that will be magnificent and impressive, one that foreigners will hear of and come to see with their own eyes. Once there, they will encounter a kingdom that is both wealthy and knowledgeable, but most significantly, in a direct relationship with G-d.

Mark Twain's famous quote about the immortality of the Jew carries truth.<sup>8</sup> The Torah<sup>9</sup> promises us that our people are eternal. This is true, irrespective of the existence of friends and/or allies. But it does not mean we will thrive in isolation, and it does not mean that it will be easy to be alone. But perhaps more importantly, on the ideological level, we can't accomplish our divine mission, to be a "*mamleket kohanim v'goy kadosh*,"<sup>10</sup> without allies and friends. Our goals of Kiddush Hashem and spreading the true faith<sup>11</sup> will not be realized if nobody takes notice of who we are, what we have created, and above all, what we have to offer. As Shlomo HaMelekh showed us, perhaps the relationship is circular. Our allies can provide us materials, both physical and intellectual, that increase our country's splendor, and in turn, the nations of the world will then be drawn to come and see our magnificence. However, the circle will only be complete once they have blessed God, fulfilling their true purpose, and ours.<sup>12</sup>

## Lessons from the First *Heter Mechirah*

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One of the issues regarding the *shemittah* (sabbatical) year that generates much debate is the permissibility of the *heter mechirah*.<sup>13</sup> A look back at the debate surrounding the first large scale *heter mechirah* can teach us important lessons for the *shemittah* year and help us gain a better appreciation for the mitzvah.

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<sup>8</sup> "The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed; and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other people have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat 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 and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?" Mark Twain, "Concerning The Jews," *Harper's Magazine*, 1899.

<sup>9</sup> Vayikra 26:39-45, for example.

<sup>10</sup> Shemot, 19:6.

<sup>11</sup> Rambam, Hilkhos Melakhim, Chapter 12:1.

<sup>12</sup> Rabbi Ovadiah Seforno to Shemot 19:6, comments on the verse, "And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests," writing: "Through this you will be more treasured (*segulah*) than the others, for you will be a nation of priests to understand and to teach all of humanity to call out in the name of God, and to serve Him as one unified group, as will be the nature of the Jewish nation in the future, as it says, (Yeshayahu 61:6), 'And you shall be called the priests of the Lord,' and as it says, (ibid, 2:3), 'for out of Zion shall the Torah come forth.'"

<sup>13</sup> The sale of land in Israel to a non-Jew to avoid the prohibition of working the land during the *shemittah* year.

During the first aliyah, beginning in 1882, thousands of Jews relocated from Eastern Europe to the Land of Israel, then known as Palestine. The new immigrants, many of whom were involved with Zionist organizations in Europe, wanted to develop and settle the land. They worked tirelessly to transform the barren wasteland and swamps into flourishing communities and blooming fields. But as the *shemittah* year of 5649 (1888/1889) drew near, the settlers were concerned about leaving the land fallow for a full year. They hoped to find a way to continue working the land while not compromising their commitment to Jewish law.

After the leading rabbis living in Palestine refused to offer any leniencies and insisted on an uncompromising observance of the *shemittah* year, the settlers, backed by Baron Rothschild, turned to the European rabbis for their support on the matter. With the approval of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spektor, one of the leading halakhic authorities of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the suggestion was put forth to sell the land to a non-Jew, thus allowing the fields to be worked even during the *shemittah* year.

This issue erupted into a widespread debate: a group of rabbis supported the *heter mechirah*, while a group opposed it.<sup>14</sup> The supporters were concerned that leaving the land fallow for a full year would spell disaster for the renewed efforts to settle the land. They were therefore willing to put forth a halakhic solution to the problem. The opponents argued that observing *shemittah* in the traditional manner would benefit the farmers as they would receive the blessing reserved for those who perform this mitzvah. However, while the rabbis on either side of the debate reached opposing halakhic conclusions, ultimately, the values underlying their rulings were similar.

Both sides had sincere respect and concern for those settling the land. As evident from their halakhic ruling, the supporters of the *heter mechirah* were willing to create a halakhic loophole in order to protect the settlement. But even the rabbis opposed to the *heter mechirah* supported the effort to resettle the land. They praised the settlers who had come to the land and observed all of the commandments related to the Land of Israel. They thought the settlers were involved in important work and prayed that God bless their efforts. Yet they opposed the *heter* for they believed that observing the *shemittah* year would be beneficial for the land and its settlers because the land would be blessed as a reward. Their unwillingness to advocate for the *heter mechirah* was due to an unwavering commitment to the words of the Torah rather than a lack of concern for the land and its settlers.

Another similarity between the two groups was the desire to observe the *shemittah* year. It had been almost 1800 years since it was last observed on such a large scale, and the opponents of the *heter mechirah* wanted to take advantage of this unique opportunity. They noted that the exile was attributed to the failure to observe the *shemittah* year and that observing the mitzvah would bring an end to the exile. Though the supporters of the *heter mechirah* permitted a loophole to circumvent the prohibitions of working the field during the *shemittah* year, they recognized the imperfect nature of the situation. They concluded their letters of support with the hope that the situation would be different in the future. The *heter* was only to be implemented for that year, and the circumstances would have to be reevaluated in the *shemittah* years to come. While the

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<sup>14</sup> The letters expressing both the support and opposition to the *heter mechirah* can be found in *Sefer HaShemittah* written by Rabbi Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky p. 66-70.

supporters of the *heter mechirah* wanted to observe the *shemittah* in a traditional manner, the fear of the consequences of leaving the fields fallow for one year pushed them to allow an exception for the time being.

As the next *shemittah* year approaches, it is appropriate to reflect upon the lessons from the first *heter mechirah*. It is important to remind ourselves to support the development in the Land of Israel and to be invested in the agricultural success of the land. Furthermore, the desire to strive to fulfill G-d's commandments in its fullest should be at the forefront of our thoughts and actions. These two ideals that emerge from each side of the debate should hopefully strengthen our commitment to the Land of Israel and our enthusiasm in the observance of the *shemittah* year.

## Eyes Wide Open

Rabbi Aaron Kraft

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There is not just one type of darkness. There is the dark thicket of a starless nighttime sky, an imposed blackness often associated with fear and danger, perhaps even suffering. When the Jewish tradition associates darkness with the *galut*, exile, we usually envision this sort of oppressive image. But there is another type of darkness as well, a blindness that can exist even in broad daylight. This latter manifestation can be manufactured even with eyes wide open. Perhaps this is the intention of various verses that invoke the image of “faint eyes” in describing *galut*. In fact, the *Midrash Hagadol*, on the verse in Devarim 28:65, picks up on this with the following comment. The verse states, “And among those nations, you will not be calm, nor will your foot find rest. There the Lord will give you a trembling heart and faint eyes.” The Midrash elaborates, “trembling heart—this is fear and weakness; faint eyes—this is the long duration of exile.” As such, we find two potential impacts of *galut*, both equally harmful—trembling heart and faint eyes.

The experience of feeling distant or estranged from Hashem can come from one of two places. It can stem from an imposed darkness, a feeling of abandonment and oppression. Alternatively, it can result from within, from the eye that has become unaccustomed to seeking a relationship with our Creator. This is the eye blinded by preoccupation with life in the exile, distracted by engagement in the surrounding culture. The weakened organ cannot properly focus on the ultimate *geulah*, redemption.

It is perhaps this second aspect of *galut* that has the most profound impact on us living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The potential to become completely absorbed in the opportunities afforded us by modern culture is both tempting and ever-present. Perhaps this is why we recite thrice daily the prayer of *ברחמים לציון בשובך עינינו*, asking Hashem to mercifully open our eyes to His return to Zion. Why not simply *daven* that Hashem return to Zion? Why the need to request that our eyes be opened to His return? It has been suggested that the prayer is emphasizing that the risk of being blind to the progress of history and the unfolding of the *geulah* is great. It is therefore not enough to pray just that Hashem return to Zion. That request is insufficient because it leaves open the possibility that we might be so caught up in and blinded by exile life

that we may actually miss the fulfillment of the prayer. We not only *daven* that the redemption should happen, but also that we should successfully witness its arrival.

Yom Ha'atzmaut provides the perfect opportunity to take a step back, commemorate, observe and celebrate the advances that have been made toward the final *geulah*. Our presence in and sovereignty over the Land of Israel marks an enormous step in the fulfillment of Hashem's promise for the complete and ultimate redemption. Let's not let the chaos of *galut* distract us from recognizing the precious gift that is the State of Israel and let us continue to pray for the ability to open our eyes and pierce through the darkness of exile.

## **Yom Haatzmaut: An Ahavat Yisrael Dependence Day**

Rabbi Reuven Lebovitz

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Yom Haatzmaut marks a day on the Jewish calendar that is enveloped in controversy. Unfortunately, what should be a celebratory day has become one overshadowed with clashes and disputes. There are arguments about whether Yom Haatzmaut should be a day of celebration; whether we should say Hallel and if so, with or without a blessing? Should we say *Tachanun*? Can one shave on Yom Haatzmaut, even though it is during Sefirat Haomer?<sup>15</sup> These common questions call for a reflection on the need for *ahavat Yisrael* (love for other Jews) both specifically on Yom Haatzmaut and, more generally, every day.

The Torah tells us in Vayikra 19:18 that there is a mitzvah "to love your neighbor just like you love yourself." There is a midrash<sup>16</sup> that states that Rabbi Akiva holds that this very mitzvah is a *klal gadol baTorah* (fundamental idea in the Torah). Rabbi Akiva explains that a person should not say, "because I do not care if I am degraded, therefore, I may degrade my friend." This is because if a person belittles someone else they are belittling a creation of Hashem's. This notion is exemplified in *Masechet Shabbat* 31a, where a prospective convert came to Hillel and asked him to teach him the whole Torah while standing on one foot. Hillel responded to him, "do not do to others what you do not want done to you. This is the Torah and the rest is just commentary!" Hillel was indicating that this mitzvah of *ahavat Yisrael* is the essence of the Torah.

The idea conveyed by Hillel is demonstrated in *Masechet Yoma* 9b. The Talmud depicts how before the destruction of the Second Temple, Torah learning, performance of mitzvot, and chessed (acts of kindness) were thriving. So why was it that the Second Temple was destroyed? The Talmud answers that the Second Temple was destroyed because of the baseless hatred that the Jewish people had towards each other. The nonexistence of *ahavat Yisrael* is what led to the destruction of the Second Temple. The loss of our Temple has led to a spiritual deficiency in our nation that has stung us until today. However, we can see that the repercussion for not carrying out this mitzvah extends to our physical destruction as well. This is illustrated in *Masechet Yevamot* 62b, where it states that 24,000 of Rabbi Akiva's students died because they did not show respect

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<sup>15</sup> *Yom Haatzmaut* is the day 20th day of the *omer*.

<sup>16</sup> Bereishit Rabbah 24:7.

to one another. These students were the Torah prodigies of their generation, yet due to their lack of *ahavat Yisrael* they were not worthy of living. Interestingly, these two *Mesechtot* are paralleled in that they both describe how Torah learning is meaningless without *ahavat Yisrael*.

Furthermore, the loss of Rabbi Akiva's students is the very reason we mourn for the first 33 days of Sefirat Haomer. During those days, we don't shave<sup>17</sup> in order to exhibit our mourning for their loss. This law's application to Yom Haatzmaut is the subject of a *machloket*. Some hold that shaving is permitted during Yom Haatzmaut,<sup>18</sup> and others say it is forbidden.<sup>19</sup> While each side of the debate has a legitimate halachic basis, the issue should not cause conflict between people or groups of people, especially since the whole reason for our grieving during Sefirat Haomer is due to Rabbi Akiva's students' lack of *ahavat Yisrael*.

We can see that the consequences for the absence of *ahavat Yisrael* are quite harsh. Therefore, we need to pursue a desire for *ahavat Yisrael*. Rav Kook<sup>20</sup> famously writes that "if hatred is what brought about the destruction of the Second Temple, then surely love will bring about the construction of the Third Temple." Moreover, Rav Kook profoundly expresses elsewhere<sup>21</sup> that in order to ensure *ahavat Yisrael*, we need to eliminate the notion of the separate camps in the Jewish community, since the moment we place someone in a different camp they become irrelevant to us. When someone is extraneous to us, the chance of loving them is minimal. Through making each other relevant we will learn to have *ahavat Yisrael*. Consequently, the very fact that we all are Jews is reason enough to love each other, regardless of our differing opinions.

On Yom Haatzmaut, a day that is both celebratory and controversial regarding the Land of Israel, it is worth noting the impact that the Land of Israel has on *ahavat Yisrael*. The *Avnei Nezer*<sup>22</sup> quotes the Maharal who portrays how, until Bnei Yisrael entered into the Land of Israel, their responsibility for one another did not take effect. This is because the Land of Israel is what makes Bnei Yisrael "like one man with one heart." Therefore, on Yom Haatzmaut, which is the celebration of Israel's independence, it is absolutely crucial to understand the magnitude of *ahavat Yisrael*, and our dependence on it. The essence of Yom Haatzmaut is perhaps not found in the details of the day itself, but rather in the inspiration leading us toward a greater *ahavat Yisrael*.

## Appreciating the Land of Israel

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The Land of Israel lives in the heart of the Jewish people. From our very inception, our collective journey has been intertwined with this special place. In fact, the first time that the Torah informs

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<sup>17</sup> *Shulchan Aruch* OC 493:1 and *Rama* *ibid*.

<sup>18</sup> See *Peninei Halacha* by Rabbi Eliezer Melamed, "Yom Haatzmaut" section.

<sup>19</sup> *Yaskil Avdi* 6:10.

<sup>20</sup> *Orot HaKodesh*, Vol. III, pg. 324.

<sup>21</sup> *Ma'amarei HaRa'ayah*, Vol. I, pg. 76.

<sup>22</sup> *Avnei Nezer*, *Yoreh Deah* 126:3-4.

us of G-d's interaction with the first of our forefathers, Avraham Avinu, G-d directs him to travel "to the land which I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). Throughout our history, the prophets and sages have inspired within us a deep love for the land. Why? What makes the land so special?

Highlighting the land in which we live seems so arbitrary. Whether in Cypress, North Dakota or Peru, one can still say the same prayers, eat the same food, and have the same way of life. It is not the land per se that gives flavor to a community, but rather the people who are superimposing their personalities and beliefs upon the place they live. If our homeland is considered to be of such monumental importance, we must understand why.

In the first chapters of the Torah, we find many characters, or groups of people, losing their land. Adam and Chava are kicked out of the Garden, Kayin is forced to be a wanderer, and the entire generation of Noach is wiped away through the means of waters erasing all of the land in the world. Sin continuously seems to induce the punishment of losing one's place. This notion is underscored as well when the Jewish people are exiled from Israel twice. In the other direction, we see times in which one can merit land. For instance the resting place of the forefathers in Me'arat Hamachpeila is an earned place. The question that begs to be answered at this point is why? Why is *land* the specific point of reward or punishment?

The answer to our question can perhaps be found by a major teaching of the Ramban in his *Commentary on the Torah*, Bereishit 2:3. In a discussion about the creation of the world, the Ramban suggests that the six days of creation are a microcosm of the course of history. The Talmud, *Avodah Zarah* 9a, teaches that the Mashiach is supposed to come by the year 6000 of the Jewish calendar and this number can be divided into six portions of 1,000 years each. Each 1,000 years matches one day of creation. He goes on to explain that the years 1000-2000 parallel day two of creation because day two is the day of the waters splitting and the generation of the flood of Noach, lived during those years. Avraham Avinu was born at the end of that era in 1948 of the Jewish calendar, just in time to welcome in day three, the time of land and fruit. The Ramban explains that righteous people will produce good deeds and acts of kindness, which is the fruit of their labor. In other words, the notion of land is a place to facilitate growth in this world. The produce of our world is acts which fuse this world with goodness and righteousness. This stands in stark contrast with the generation of the flood who wreaked havoc upon the world and filled it with darkness and emptiness. Their generation produced no fruit and therefore no longer needed land.

With this new understanding, let's return to our earlier questions. Why do we see such a theme of land in the Torah? The answer is that the world has been given to us to facilitate a relationship with Hashem. We are to work the land of the world and fill it inside and out with rich produce of good deeds in every which way. Whether this is manifest through Torah learning, acts of loving kindness or a simple whispered prayer from our hearts, we have chances to produce fruit all the time. If, however, the fruit are not coming about, then the land is no longer needed. Gan Eden had to expel Adam and Chava because the sin of the tree uprooted the purpose of that existence. The baseless hatred of our people took away our homeland in the times of the Roman Empire. By contrast, the good deeds of Noach in his times and Avraham Avinu in his, earned them both places upon which to live. The Ark was granted to Noach because his righteousness was insular. It was a righteousness that only existed in contrast to the rest of the generation. This is similar to

the Ark, which produced an insular space. Avraham Avinu on the other hand was not an insular person. Just the opposite—his greatness elevated those around him. Therefore, he did not just merit land for himself but rather he was the one who created a forum for the rest of the world to perform acts of righteousness. He was granted the Land of Israel, which would remain the example par excellence of which fruits of righteousness can be produced.

Finally, though the Jewish people remain in the times of exile, the opportunity of having the Land of Israel must open our eyes to a window of opportunity. For almost 2,000 years we have groped in the darkness of the world, striving to find a place to stand and join together to once again be a people in our land. With the State of Israel comes an opportunity to fulfill a purpose of being a shining light to all those around us, just as our forefather, Avraham Avinu, was. May we continue to be and increasingly fulfill that purpose. *הג שמח!*

## "ציפית לישועה"? הכיצד?

ר' אפרים רימל

אברך, ישיבה אוניברסיטה תורה מציון כולל בשיקגו

הגמרא במסכת שבת דף לא עמוד א מצינת

אמר רבא: בשעה שמכניסין אדם לדין אומרים לו: נשאת ונתת באמונה? קבעת עתים לתורה? עסקת בפריה ורבייה? ציפית לישועה? פלפלת בחכמה? הבנת דבר מתוך דבר?

השאלות האלו כולן, מתייחסות לעקרונות חשובים בדרכו של האדם המאמין בקודשא בריך הוא ואורייתא, ולא רק בקיום נקודתי של מצוות מסוימות. לכן השאלות שנשאלות הן לא על קיום אלא על התעסקות, חיים המונחים לאור עקרונות אלו.

רש"י שם מסביר שהשאלה של "ציפית לישועה" מתייחסת לכך שיש לצפות להתגשמות דברי הנביאים. אבל דבריו אלו של רש"י לא כל כך ברורים, הרי מצווים אנו להאמין שתבוא ישועה לישראל לעתיד לבוא, מה כל כך מיוחד בציפיה זו? הרי זהו הבסיס לאמונתנו שתבוא ישועה לישראל! לזאת מתייחס הר"ן על אתר:

ועוד צריך לבאר צפית לישועה **בימיך**. ולא אמר צפית שתבוא ישועה לישראל, דמי שאינו מאמין זה, אפיקורס הוא, שהאפיקורסים אינן מאמינין שתבוא ישועה לעולם לישראל.

לאור זאת מבאר הר"ן שהציפיה היא לזה שהישועה תגיע בימינו. לא רק שתהיה גאולה מתישהו, אלא ציפיה שהיא תגיע עוד בימינו.

אבל השאלה היא, מהו היסוד של השאלה הזאת? מאיפה נובע החיוב לציפיה שכזו, על בסיס מה?

הרב יצחק מקורביל זצ"ל בספרו ספר מצוות קטן, מבאר שהבסיס לציפיה זו היא מהדיבר הראשון בעשרת הדיברות -

שכשם שיש לנו להאמין שהוציאנו ממצרים דכתיב אנכי ה' אלהיך אשר הוצאתיך וגומר. ועל כרחין מאחר שהוא דיבור, הכי קאמר, כשם שאני רוצה שתאמינו כי שאני הוצאתי אתכם כך אני רוצה שתאמינו כי שאני ה' אלהיכם ואני עתיד לקבץ אתכם ולהושיעכם. וכן יושיענו ברחמינו שנית. (מצוות התלויות בלב, מצוה א').

ההבנה הבסיסית היא שלאדם מישראל צריך שתהיה ידיעה כי הקב"ה הוא הגואל היחידי של אומתנו, והוא זה שגאל אותנו בעבר ממצרים, והוא זה שיגאלנו לעתיד לבוא.

השאלה הנשאלת היא האם יש עלינו לעשות משהו עם הציפיה הזאת? האם היא צריכה להיות אקטיבית או שהציווי יכול להישאר רק במחשבה?

מסופר על בעל החפץ חיים, הרב ישראל מאיר מראדין זצ"ל שכל לילה לפני שהיה הולך לישון היה מכין ליד מיטתו את בגדיו היפים ביותר על מנת שיהיה מוכן לביאת המשיח אפילו באמצע הלילה, ולא יצטרך להתמהמה ולו לרגע קט ויהיה מוכן מיד לילך לארץ ישראל. כמו כן ככהן היה מתעסק תמיד בסדר קדשים מכיוון שתכף יגיע המשיח ויבנה המקדש ונצטרך לדעת איך מקריבים קרבנות.

הרב אברהם יצחק הכהן קוק זצ"ל מבאר בהרחבה נקודה זו באומרו, כי הציפיה צריכה להוביל למעשה. בספר אוצרות הראי"ה הובא מאמר מהרב קוק ובו הוא מסביר את השימוש דוקא במילה "ציפיה":

שואלים לאדם צפית לישועה ולא קוית. צפיה היא מגורת צפה. תפקיד הצופה להשתמש בכל מאורע שהוא להזהיר על תקלה ולעורר למפעל של ישועה. וכך עלינו להשתמש בכל המאורעות שבעולם, שעל ידם תוכל לבוא או לצמוח תשועה לישראל. אנו אמונים על האמונה שכל דבר שיוכל להועיל לבני הארץ ולחזוק האומה צפון בו דבר ה' לתחית הקודש בארץ הקודש. (אוצרות הראי"ה חלק ב' עמ' שלג)

דבריו של הרב קוק בעצם מטווים לנו את הדרך בה עלינו לחיות חיים של "ציפית לישועה". עלינו לראות בכל ארוע שמתרחש ברחבי העולם איך הוא מתקשר לתהליך הגאולה והישועה של עם ישראל. הרב קוק שחי ערב תקומת מדינת ישראל הבין שהמאורעות שהתרחשו בימיו הינם חלק מהותי מתהליך הגאולה של עם ישראל. מאורעות דוגמת מלחמת העולם הראשונה, הצהרת בלפור, מאורעות ת"ח, ת"ט, ות"פ"ט, ועוד הם כולם חלק מהמסע אל עבר הישועה. בודאי דבריו אלו של הרב קוק נכונים אף להכרזה על הקמת מדינה יהודית בארץ ישראל – יריית הפתיחה של הגאולה בימינו.

אנו שזוכים לחיות בימים אלו שבהם יש לנו ב"ה בית קבוע בארץ הקודש, חובה עלינו לראות את כל המאורעות המתרגשים עלינו ולהשכיל ולהפנים כיצד הם כולם חלק מתוכנית אלוקית אל עבר גאולתנו השלמה, במהרה בימינו.

## Between Israel and the Diaspora: A Shaliach's Reflections

### Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Sgan Rosh Beit Midrash, Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov of Toronto

A few months ago, at the beginning of Shevat, my family and I returned from more than two years of *shlichut* in Toronto. We served there as part of Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov. Our work there, apart from being extremely fruitful and beneficial on a personal level, also raised my awareness of relations between Israel and the Diaspora: as they are, and as they ought to be.

When we turn to look on reality as it is, we find quickly enough that one of the major challenges we are facing is the cultural contrast. Of course, this is hardly a new problem; already in the time of the Amoraim we can see that such differences created a chasm between the communities. Thus, for example, Rabbi Zeira declared, "How foolish are these Babylonians, who eat bread with bread!"<sup>23</sup> The Gemara continues to explain that Rabbi Zeira was referring to a specific food that was eaten in

<sup>23</sup> Beitzah 16a.

the Babylonian Diaspora. Obviously, Rabbi Zeira the sage was hinting to some deeper meaning<sup>24</sup>—but he used a common idiom, which demonstrates widespread contempt towards the Babylonians and their lifestyle. This attitude was not one-sided—the Babylonians, boosted by their pristine pedigree, claimed that in comparison to them, the Jews sitting in Israel were similar to mixed dough.<sup>25</sup> Again, without entering the halachic and other evaluations of this statement, it also contributed toward feelings of estrangement and distance between the communities.

The cultural differences between Jews living in Israel and those abroad today are no less striking than they were at the time of Rabbi Zeira—from food to clothing to language to manners. Naturally, these differences lead each side to disregard the other, causing emotional distance far beyond the physical one. These details can easily create a wide chasm; unfortunately, too many times they do.

That is what there is now—but as in many other cases, the difficulties and the challenges can give us a roadmap to what ought to be. The same differences that seem to us as the source of the problem can be seen, from a different angle, as the most important value of the relationship between the communities.

I would like to briefly mention a few areas in which I think that Jews in Israel and in the Diaspora can contribute to each other:

- A. Israel as a physical refuge: The lowest form of relationship is a physical give and take, but nonetheless it is a very strong one. As Rav Yosef Dov Soloveichik emphasized in *Kol Dodi Dofek*, the bond connecting the Jews is not only the covenant of destiny and shared values, but also the covenant of history and shared fate. This common cast as a persecuted and fought-against people is the first motivation to show a united front. The contributions made by each side to our national defense are clear—the Israeli Jewish community gives its efforts and, if needed, its blood, to keep our homeland open to any Jew in the world, and the Diaspora Jews must help with any means possible.
- B. On a higher plane, Israel can be seen as the Jewish national center. This is the place where the ancient Jewish language can retain its vitality,<sup>26</sup> and the Jewish rhythm of life prevails, even among non-observant Jews. From this angle, the role of the *shaliach* is to reconnect the individual Jews living in exile with the Jewish national center located in Israel,<sup>27</sup> a necessary act for both sides—for the former to keep their identity as part of a nation, and for the latter to keep its members alive.
- C. On yet a higher plane, the connection between the Jewish people in Eretz Yisrael and abroad cannot be summarized in physical terms or even in cultural terms; its highest end is the establishment of "a priestly kingdom and a holy nation,"<sup>28</sup> led by the Divine law—the Torah. Our struggle toward realizing this goal is long and complex. A crucial part of this is to be

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example, *Ateret Tzvi* (Taksin) 39a. It is also important to note Rabbi Zeira's Babylonian origin.

<sup>25</sup> *Kiddushin* 71a.

<sup>26</sup> See *Peirush Hamishnayot, Terumot* 1:1.

<sup>27</sup> See *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shegagot* 13:2.

<sup>28</sup> *Shemot* 19:6.

accomplished in Yerushalayim, from which the word of G-d shall go forth,<sup>29</sup> but history has taught us that the word of G-d does sometime reveal itself in exile – such as the most important halachic work, the Talmud itself. In this mission of discovering our destination, both sides must cooperate, and abandon the claims for supremacy for the sake of humility, so that between one and the other the conclusion will be reached,<sup>30</sup> “and one will call to the other, declaring: Holy, Holy, Holy!”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Yeshayah 2:3.

<sup>30</sup> *Pesachim* 88a.

<sup>31</sup> Yeshayah 6:3.



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