

למען תספר

A Journal of *Divrei Torah*
in honor of Pesach 5784

Compiled by the Members of the



*Bais Medrash
of Ranchleigh*





A project of the
Zichron Yaakov Eliyahu Fund
of the Bais Medrash of Ranchleigh

6618 Deancroft Rd
Baltimore, MD 21209

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I am deeply grateful to Rabbi Naiman, *shlit"a* for allowing me the opportunity to once again sponsor this Kuntress in honor of the Chag HaMatzos. This annual Kuntress has sparked both *lilmod* and *lelamed*. Many have been inspired to put their Torah thoughts and insights into writing, giving others the ability to imbibe and learn from these thoughts and teachings. May all the contributors and readers be blessed with nachas, good health, and happiness. A special shout-out to Mr. Jeffrey Silverberg who did not give up on us until we had enough entries!

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 36a) tells us that matzah is called *lechem oni*. Chazal famously tell us that one reason matzah is thus called is because *she'onin alav devarim harbeh*, we recite many things over the matzah. The Hagadah itself tells us that it must be recited while pesach, matzah, and maror are in front of us.

Rav Eliyahu Boruch Finkel, *zt"l*, therefore wonders why *Rashi* in the Gemara expands on the definition of the Gemara and comments that it is called *lechem oni* because “we complete the recitation of Hallel and the Hagadah” over the matzah. Where does *Rashi* get the notion that Hallel during our Seder is part and parcel of our obligation of “reciting many things” with the matzah present before us?

Rav Finkel answers by stating that it is clear and obvious to *Rashi* that our expression of Hallel, thanks, and appreciation to HaKadosh Boruch Hu must be included in our *avodah* of the evening. Ours cannot be a mere recitation of the Hagadah text but an emotional and internally motivated expression of our *hakaras hatov*. And, adds Rav Finkel, *Rashi* in his comment mentions our saying of Hallel even prior to our obligation of reciting the Hagadah.

That our *hakaras hatov* and heightened sense of appreciation to Hashem is a vital component of Seder night, can also be learned from *Sefer Shoftim* (6:13). Klal Yisrael is being oppressed by Midian, and a heavenly messenger is sent to Gidon to lead the counter-attack. Gidon responds by saying, “... and where are all the

wonders of which our forefathers told about when they left Mitzrayim?” *Rashi* there informs us that this episode took place on Pesach, and “last night my father recited Hallel and *Betzeis Yisrael*.” Here, as well, *Rashi* is sure to let us know that the Pesach Seder and expression of the Hagadah must include Hallel along with our inner feelings of *hakaras hatov*.

With this in mind as we approach our own Pesach Seder, I wish to express my own appreciation by dedicating this year’s Kuntress to all those behind the scenes, as well as all those on center-stage, who work tirelessly and with great devotion and lack of fanfare, to make our shul running smoothly.

First and foremost, my thanks to Rav Naiman for his leadership, guidance, and *derashos* which keep us in “growth mode.” Many thanks to all the Gabbaim. If not for you, we would be forever waiting to start davening. Let us not forget how much work it takes to set up the shul for the Yomim Tovim. Thank you to all the Shlichai Tzibbur and Baalei Kriyah for making our davening most meaningful. A big Yasher Koach to those who prepare and clean up for the weekly Kiddush. Finally, a tremendous thanks to all those who support the shul financially and in any other manner. We all are indebted to you.

May Hashem bless all the above and all the mispallelim with a Chag Kasher Vesamei’ach!

Sincerely,

Moshe and Sara Lea Dear



Preface

You hold in your hands our thirteenth Pesach *kuntress*, the work of the members of our *chashuveh kehillah, bs" d*.

You may remember that in last year's preface I wrote that due to what I thought was reduced interest *שכר על הדרישה* כך מקבלים שכר על הפרישה, i.e., we would quit while we were ahead. So you may be wondering why you are holding this publication. The answer can be summed up in two words, "Jeffrey Silverberg." He would not let this annual work go down into the dustbins of history, so he rallied the troops to send in their valuable articles in a timely manner. In this way, the work could be completed without too much time-consuming stress.

Others deserving the credit for this issue are Arkady Pogostkin, our senior editor; Rabbi and Mrs. Moshe Dear, for once again dedicating our *Kuntress Lemaan Tesapeir*; R' Avi Dear for creating yet another beautiful cover; and all those who contributed articles and sponsorship pages.

I am writing this while we are still in the middle of the war that began on *Simchas Torah*. We have responded with the *Tehillim* we recite after davening; the list of soldiers related to our members that we continually update for special *tefillot*; and our general strict adherence to *kavod hatefillah* – including not talking at all during davening, not looking at cellphones, and following the *halachah* about listening to *kaddish* (not motioning, not folding *tallis* and *tefillin*, etc.).

On our recent trip to Eretz Yisrael, we observed first hand how *acheinu* there were handling the *eis tzarah*. You can read the "Message from the Rebbetzin" for a thoughtful presentation of the *matzav* there. I have also suggested throughout the year to read the thoughtful essays of our alumnus R' Shmuel Chaim Naiman (no nepotism intended) regarding how we should react to this ongoing conflict. Because his work is better than anything I could write, I have included a chapter of his new book "*Land of Health*" that begins his discussion on this topic. And for you to get a yet better taste of this important work, I have added a chapter about the composition of Eretz Yisrael. Unfortunately, our black-and-white presentation does not do justice to the full-color pictures that permeate his book. But I hope it will be an incentive for you to buy the original on Amazon.com and to check out his website at <https://healthyjew.org/>.

A final thank you is due to my *eishess chayil*, the *Rebbetzin*, who once again allowed me to spend time away from my family duties to work on this *kuntress*.

Each year I express the wish that we be *zocheh* to produce another *kuntress* next year, in Eretz Yisrael, with the coming of the *Mashiach*. We have produced another *kuntress*, but sadly we are still in *galus* as of this writing. May we be speedily redeemed with the *geulah sheleimah, bimheirah biyameinu, amen*.

Abba Zvi Naiman
Adar HaSheni 5784

Message from the Rebbetzin: *Nosei B'ol Chaveiro*

I don't believe in fun. I do believe in relaxation, rejuvenation, and a lot more, but not in fun.

So, even when I go to Eretz Yisrael for a simchah, I set myself a goal or two to focus maximally and avoid lowering the experience to "a vacation." When we traveled this past February for a bris and stayed in Ramat Bet Shemesh 1 near our son and his family, my goal was "*Nosei B'ol Chaveiro*," to carry my fellow Jew's burden. I was *zocheh* to Hashem's help through two major pathways.

I had heard about the women's shiurim at the grand Yeshurun Beit Knesset in Rechavya but had never gone. This trip, I was determined to get there, which I did, for two of the three Mondays we were there. Mrs. Hindy Mendelowitz moves through Navi weekly. Studying the Pesach event in which Sancheiriv's army is destroyed by the Angel of Death and the question of Chizkiyahu's refraining from singing *shirah* to Hashem for this miracle, Mrs. Mendelowitz presented the perfect shiur: a combination of clear *pshat*, deeper meaning, and connection to the war. I was hooked. (See scshiur.org, the library tab, after setting up a free account.) Drawing from Midrash, Mrs. Mendelowitz described how Nevuchadnetzar sang *shirah* when he witnessed the miracle Hashem performed for us. An angel slapped him, saying, "You think this is amazing? Jews sing *shirah* to Hashem when there is a *tzarah*; when there is a partial salvation; and when there is a complete salvation. Would you sing before a salvation, Nevuchadnetzar?" Of his own free will, the king stopped.

Israelis are singing now – a lot. Soldiers sing and dance at the Kosel. Performers compose music dedicated to the soldiers right and left. One such song is by Shmuel, an up-and-coming music artist, who performs his song, "HKB" H Yoter Gadol Mizeh" with Matt Dubb. The refrain of this upbeat song dedicated to the soldiers is this:

We crossed (*avarnu*) the sea/
We will pass through (*na'avur*) this, too/
HaKadosh Barchu is greater than this.

Many new versions of "Am Yisrael Chai" and "Acheinu" abound. In fact, the Bais Yaakov Elementary School of RBS1 broadcasts a recording of "Acheinu" daily at dismissal! How is the country filled with music when we do not even know which hostages are alive at this time?

We can understand this through the writing of HaRav Dovid Cohen *shlit"á* of Yeshivas Chevron, who explains that when the soul experiences a new inspiration, an expansion or overflow, song will ingrain this overflow into the soul forever. We see this in the term "For the conductor," *LaMenatzaech*, which precedes many *Tehillim*. This same term can mean "preserved, for eternity, *LeNitzchiyus*."

Furthermore, because song is heard and therefore moves from singer to listener to singer, through the generations, we can understand that the inspiration is handed down through the generations through the power of song. Mrs. Mendlowitz provided the example of the famous Modzitz "Ani Maamin" from the Holocaust. This song, composed and sung in a cattle car, was an expression of *shirah* during a time of *tzarah*. Two boys there agreed to attempt escape and bring the *nigun* to the world. Spying a hole in the roof, these two boys jumped out as the train sped down the tracks. One survived, bringing the *nigun* to the Modzitzer Rebbe in Eretz Yisrael after the war. This Rebbe brought it to the senior Modzitzer Rebbe in NY, who sang and, in this way, taught, the *nigun* to his chassidim during the *tefillos* of Yom Kippur that year. In fact, the rebbe taught that this Ani Maamin will be Mashiach's song.

Our greatness lies in the ability to address Hashem in song before the pain disappears. This singing is so precious, so high, that the Melech HaMashiach will proclaim *geulah*/ redemption with these songs containing an overflow of *Emunah*, composed during the darkness.

So now I understand the new songs, the broadcast songs, and the power of song to communicate *emunah* and encouragement throughout the generations. These songs, dedicated to the soldiers or Am Yisrael, are a manifestation of *Nosei B'ol Chaveiro*, sharing the burden of one's fellow Jew.

Then Rachel Polin spoke at a shul five minutes away from our apartment. Rachel is the mother of Hirsch, a sweet, sweet young man who was captured by Hamas on October 7. In a standing-room-only social hall, Rachel told us about herself, her son, and his capture. I cannot do justice to the full power of her presentation; but I will share one message here. At one point, she described the footage from a discarded Hamas helmet camera showing her son and three others being ordered to stand and walk to a truck taking them to Gaza. Hirsch stood up, one arm blown off by a grenade from the elbow down. Hirsch had had the wherewithal to bandage it so that it was no longer bleeding. She watched him walk out of the tiny safe room and onto the open back of the truck. And, she

explained, that truck is “on my chest” since that day. All of us there left carrying a bit of that truck on our chests. That Friday night when I davened for the hostages with a list of names, there he was... Hirsch ben Perel Chana. And when I looked out a bus window to a bus stop in Yerushalayim, there was his sweet face smiling on a poster. Hirsch, like all the others, were names. Now they are individuals. As Rachel told us, we are a powerful tefillah army of women. She added, “I am you; you are me; I am him; ... we are one.”

One more poignant note: When war planes pass overhead, some people say a quiet, personal *tefillah* like, “May you arrive at your destination safely, succeed in your mission, and return safely.” Perhaps they add a *pasuk* from *Tehillim*. They do this day in, day out. We in America do not hear the war planes, but we can and must carry their burden. After all, many soldiers are quoted saying, “We are fighting so that you can live your regular lives. Please, live life fully!” Similarly, Rachel Polin enjoined us to daven for Hirsch and the others whenever we say “*Matir Asurim*” in our *tefillas*.

Rachel began her speech by saying she is sure Hashem is the Only One who will bring Hirsch home. That in itself is a *shirah LaShem*.

Rochel Naiman
Adar HaSheni 5784



SHMUEL CHAIM NAIMAN

LAND OF HEALTH

Israel's War for Wellness



Two relevant Chapters from this important work.

See Preface for further details about the work and how to purchase it.



LEV HATORAH PICKED 20 TONS OF ORANGES IN AN ORCHARD NEAR GAZA.

ISRAEL NEEDS HEALTHY JEWS

When the history of this terrible war is written, one of its motifs will be Israel's farms.

When October 7 struck, hundreds of Israeli farms lost their Arab and Asian workers in the middle of the fall harvesting season. To save their brothers' produce and livelihood, Jews from all over the world poured into Israel's countryside to work as farm hands for a day or a week.

Israel's farmers need help, and Israel's people are showing up to help them.

Land of Health

But Israel's people also need help – not only those living in Israel, but Jews everywhere.

In recent months, our nation has suffered terrible pain:

- Thousands have been through unspeakable, Holocaust-esque horrors.
- Hundreds of thousands have lost their homes and livelihoods.
- Millions more are watching along with shock (“How can this happen?”) and fear (“Are we next?”).

LIFE IS IN SESSION

Yet traumatic experiences are nothing new to the Jewish people, or, for that matter, to humankind.

By leaving our mothers' wombs, we signed up for challenges and stresses of all shapes and sizes:

- wars
- serious illness
- family crises
- financial troubles
- that irritating boss, friend, parent, child, you name it

- just going through everyday life (that's often the hardest one!)

Hard times can break us - or grow us.

We can't know ahead of time whether a crisis will leave us stronger or shattered. But we don't need to be innocent bystanders, watching ourselves unravel while we look on. Our choices influence how life's struggles will affect our lives.

We can meet and greet any challenge with healthy Jewish living - not only to make life possible, but because that's where good choices begin. We can put ourselves first, because God thinks we're worth it.

I don't mean a vague "do what feels good." That can end up with all sorts of unhealthy coping behaviors.

I'm talking about investing time and effort to live with Healthy Jewish principles and employing special strategies for stressful situations.

BATTLES OF LIVING

Bullets brutally kill bodies; terror subtly kills minds and hearts. Terror teaches that the world is a bad place, that life is more pain than joy. When it's too much to process, it morphs into permanent stress of a thousand colors and degrees. PTSD.

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Perhaps terrorism's most insidious and widespread casualty is our attention: the addictive drama is designed to distract our minds and hearts from life. Instead of tending to ourselves, our families, and our communities, we're pulled away from today's reality, fired at with questions we can't possibly answer, bombarded with feelings too intense to process. It's all part of the enemy's plan. They want to stop us from living, caring, connecting, being.

Hamas, Hezbollah, and their cronies seek to terrorize a thousand times more victims than they ever hope to kill, hurt, or kidnap. Will you let them get you?

Look at yourself as a soldier. Some soldiers fight the **war of bodies** (with guns and tanks), others the **war of minds** (online and in the media). But everyone must enlist to combat stress, fear, and anxiety. In this **war for wellness**, our weapons are practicing healthy Jewish living and appreciating Israel's natural world.

We dress for battle by importing the battlefield into our own minds and hearts. This war isn't happening anywhere "out there," in Gaza or on our bright little screens, but in the hundreds of personal choices we make every day.

In the following chapters, I'll share with you some methods to fight and win the war for wellness.

This isn't a full presentation of healthy Jewish living – that's a much larger book. (Many of its chapters have already been drafted in the

weekly Healthy Jewish newsletter. You can find them in the archive at healthyjew.org.)

Here we're focusing on healthy choices that are particularly helpful during stressful times. Every effort for your health costs time and energy; some cost money. I'll show you investments that will give you the best returns when the market of wellness is crashing.

We'll begin with the Healthy Jewish spiritual approach to troubled times, followed by suggestions for each of our three areas of wellness: Eat well, Move well, and Be well. We'll conclude with a summary and additional resources.



SUNRISE OVER THE JUDEAN LOWLANDS, SEEN FROM TEL GODED, AN ANCIENT HILLTOP VILLAGE THAT OFFERS STUNNING PANORAMIC VIEWS OF JUDEA.

THE ANATOMY OF ISRAEL

Israel is a human life: the eternal Nation is its eternal soul, and the material Land is its material body.

But we're used to human bodies having arms, legs, eyes, ears, and a heart tucked inside two lungs. Israel is a land of earth and water: what's alive about it?

THE BODY'S THREE CAVITIES

To understand Israel as a live, breathing body, we must expand our conception of body. Not every human body looks exactly like yours and mine, but they all have some common characteristics.

Anatomy textbooks teach that all human life processes happen in three vertically arranged cavities. Everything else protects and transports these three containers of life.

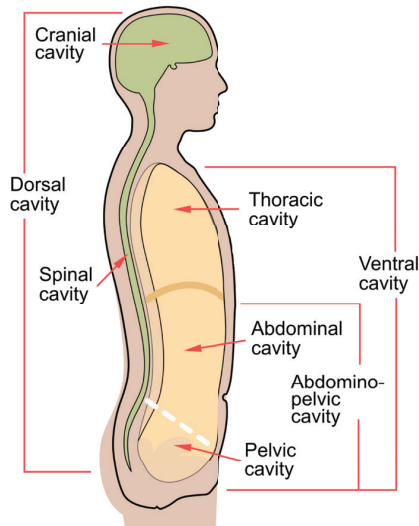


Image credit: <https://training.seer.cancer.gov/anatomy/body/terminology.html>

- The **cranial cavity** holds the brain – life's management center that interprets stimuli from the environment, decides how to respond, and commands the relevant organs to act. (Anatomists also include the spine in this cavity.)

- The **thoracic cavity** holds the lungs and heart – the flow of life itself, constantly entering, exiting, and circulating. Here we experience the emotions and personality traits that originate from our brain’s perceptions and reactions.
- The **abdominopelvic cavity** holds the digestive and reproductive systems that sustain life and seek to live forever through offspring. There’s no mind or heart here. This is the “body of the body”: raw, visceral, sensual, instinctual, desirous.

Notice the differences between the cavities’ location, colors, and texture.

- The **cranial cavity** contains one white organ that’s as pure and mysterious as the consciousness it holds. It rises above the rest of the body, separated by the thin avenue we call the neck.
- Moving downwards, we first reach the **thoracic cavity**. The lungs, like the brain, are white and clean. The heart, however, is a more complicated character: a single, life-holding organ - but red and bloody. Instead of one single king ruling from its cranial-cavity throne, here three musicians play together the symphony of life.
- Finally, we cross over the diaphragm, enter the **abdominopelvic cavity**, and cleanliness and simplicity disappear altogether.

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The stomach and intestines grind and absorb food, then churn out putrid waste. The bladder filters the blood - a time consuming, messy affair that the heart couldn't be bothered with - and sends the extras downward and outward.

The liver, spleen, and pancreas, with their thousands of biochemical processes, busily repair, realign, and reject, maintaining life in a world of internal and external threats.

The moral of the story?

The cranial and abdominopelvic cavities teach that human life is both simple and complicated, clean and messy, white and red, wisdom and desires.

But life isn't only a superficial dichotomy of disconnected, contradictory parts, because the independent thoracic cavity holds everything together in harmony.

The heart of life - literally! – mediates between the white pureness of wisdom and the blind darkness of instincts. Through the breath, heartbeat, and emotions, the brain and mind reach and guide life's most remote reaches, directing our desires with balance and purpose. The body's anatomy reflects the anatomy of the soul.

ISRAEL'S THREE REGIONS

The Land of Israel, taught the Vilna Gaon²⁰, contains these three parts of human life in the three regions that were delineated by the Mishna regarding several areas of Jewish law.²¹

- The land's **cranial cavity** holds Jerusalem: from there the divine presence – as expressed by the Temple service, Davidic kings, and the Sanhedrin - guided the entire country's Jewish life. The region surrounding Jerusalem is called Yehuda (Judea) after the tribe that lived in most of Israel's southern half.
- The land's **thoracic cavity** is the windswept hills of the Galil that breathe air and life into the land. The many Mishnaic and Talmudic Sages who lived there, and later the brilliant Kabbalists of Tzefas, taught most of the Torah's Oral Tradition – the beating pulse of Jewish life on earth.²²

²⁰ *Aderes Eliyahu* on *Eichah*

²¹ *Shevi'is* 6:1, 9:2; *Bava Basra* 3:2, and more.

²² Some prominent examples: Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi compiled the Mishnah in Tzippori. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai of Meron, and later the Kabbalists of Tzefas (Safed) taught the Torah's inner secrets - its heart. Rabbi Yochanan compiled the Jerusalem Talmud in Teveria (not Jerusalem!) and is buried there next to the Rambam. Rabbi Yosef Karo compiled the basic texts of contemporary Jewish law in Tzefas.

The Gaon adds another allusion to explain the division of Yehuda and Galil. When facing east, which in Torah sources is always considered forward, Yehuda (to the south) is on the right, and Galil (to the north) is on the left. The right is the side of the body that dominates, like the brain's guiding role. The

Land of Health

- The Jordan River, adds the Gaon with his trademark flourish, is Israel's stretched **diaphragm**, cleanly separating the brain and heart from Israel's **abdominopelvic cavity**. Called in Torah sources Ever Hayarden ("across the Jordan"), this region stretches across most of modern Jordan and large swaths of Iraq and Syria, ending at the Euphrates River.

Although most of Ever Hayarden isn't inside the modern State of Israel (just in case that wasn't clear), it's clearly part of the biblical Land of Israel. Two-and-a-half of Israel's twelve tribes called it home.

Yet it has always been regarded as secondary to the rest of the country. For example, Moshe (Moses) was forbidden to enter Israel proper - but conquered (and is buried in) Ever Hayarden.

Based on Rashi²³, one author suggests that Ever Hayarden is like the entranceway to the palace of Israel on the west of the Jordan.²⁴

Altogether, Israel's body contains all three facets of human life, neatly arranged as in every human body. The message is clear: your Jewish identity is right here on earth, and reaches every area

left supports and balances, like the heart's role in circulating life everywhere. (The heart also leans to the left inside the body!)

²³ Numbers 27:12

²⁴ Rabbi Ariel Buckwald in *Ani Hashem Shochen Besocha* Chapter 5. See there for much more about the differences between the regions of Israel to the east and west of the Jordan.

of your life: mind, feelings, and instincts. Don't run to heaven to find God – He's right here in Israel the Land.



Image 4b. Caption: This map shows the borders of biblical Israel. To adapt to the modern Middle East, notice the Persian Gulf in the southeastern corner, into which the Euphrates River flows. That river, which today flows through Iraq and Syria, is the eastern and northeastern border. (Image Credit שוכן בתוכה)



Ever Hayarden viewed from the Golan Heights. Notice the snow-capped Mount Hermon on the top-left.

POSTSCRIPT

“From the River to the Sea” has become a common antisemitic catchphrase for ethnically cleansing Israel of Jews.

That’s unfortunate, for two reasons.

1. The source of this phrase is the Torah. When referring to the borders of the Land of Israel, the Torah often includes, among other landmarks, a river and a sea.
2. They’ve got the wrong river. It’s the Euphrates River that ends Israel’s Ever Hayarden region, not the Jordan River that begins it.

For example:

“From the desert [south] and Lebanon [north], until the **great river** the Euphrates [northeast and east]... until the **great sea** [west], your border will be (Joshua 1:4)”

I wonder what folks in Jordan, Iraq, and Syria would think if they knew that the world is chanting a biblical verse that gives Jews large swaths of their countries.

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א הרב רפאל שעפטיל הלוי נויברגר

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A Pesach Postponed

How Technical Difficulties Under the Beis HaMikdash Forced the Creation of a Jewish Leap Year¹

Rabbi Yoav Elan

The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: We do not make a leap year on account of tumah. Rabbi Yehudah says: We do make a leap year. (Sanhedrin 12a-b)

In Beis HaMikdash times, the weeks leading up to Pesach included not only preparing the house but the body as well, for anyone who had contracted corpse-*tumah* had to purify themselves before partaking of the Pesach offering or visiting the Beis HaMikdash. The procedure entailed a one-week quarantine during which the individual was sprinkled with spring water mixed with the ashes of the *parah adumah*. It was not necessary to travel to Yerushalayim to do so; rather, this could be carried out in the comfort of one's home city since the family groups [*mishmaros*] of *Kohanim* living throughout the land of Israel possessed small, but sufficient, amounts of ashes for this express purpose.

It once happened in the First Beis HaMikdash era, during the reign of King Chizkiyah, that an unprecedented breach of ritual purity was discovered in the Beis HaMikdash. As a result, the king declared a leap year, thereby delaying the festival of Pesach for a full month (*Sanhedrin* 12a). One theory as to the source of this *tumah* is that the skull of Aravnah the Yevusi was discovered beneath the Altar (*Tosafos* ad loc., based on *Yerushalmi Sotah* 5:2). Aravnah was the

¹ This article is adapted from the author's blog post on this topic and from his book *The Original Second Beis HaMikdash* (Feldheim, 2020). For more information about the Beis HaMikdash and the book please visit BeisHamikdashTopics.com.

owner of the threshing floor purchased by King David to serve as the site of the future Beis HaMikdash (*II Shmuel* 24:18-25).


There are a number of difficulties with this approach:

- 1) If it was a matter of corpse-*tumah*, the purification procedure only takes one week; so why was a whole extra month needed?
- 2) If the remains of Aravnah were causing the *tumah*, could they not simply be removed from the Beis HaMikdash precincts (where they obviously did not belong) and reinterred elsewhere?
- 3) Why was it that the skull was only discovered at this point?
- 4) A closer look at the source in *Yerushalmi* indicates that this incident of the skull being found occurred in the *Second* Beis HaMikdash era, not the First Beis HaMikdash era (as *Tosafos* understand).

The *Chasam Sofer* (to *Sanhedrin* 12a) offers a novel historical perspective which addresses each of the above questions. When Aravnah sold his threshing floor to King David, he reserved a small portion of his estate for himself, and it was there that he was eventually buried. In that region of Yerushalayim there were many natural subterranean tunnels and the *tumah* from Aravnah's tomb made its way through them to the area beneath the Beis HaMikdash. Now, when the First Beis HaMikdash was built, King Shlomo was well aware of this situation and designed the underground structures in such a way to form a *halachic* barrier against the *tumah*, which kept it from invading the Beis HaMikdash grounds.

Many years later, the evil King Achaz destroyed the original Altar and built a new one for idol worship in its place, and the extent of his "renovations" was such that it disrupted the *halachic* barriers put in place by Shlomo. When King Chizkiyah took office and began to repair the Beis HaMikdash, the *tumah* from Aravnah's tomb was rediscovered. Although the *Gemara* speaks of Aravnah's גלגל (literally: *skull*), *Chasam Sofer* explains that the term גלגל actually refers to the spreading of *tumah* underground (see further there). The

remains could not be moved since they were in their rightful place, so Chizkiyah needed to repair the *halachic* barriers in order to ready the Beis HaMikdash for use. This, however, was not a simple matter, and he found it necessary to delay the festival of Pesach by one month in order to allow his men time to carry out the repairs.

When the First Beis HaMikdash was destroyed by the Babylonians, they razed the building down to its very foundations [*aru, aru, ad hayesod bah*], once again breaking down the barriers that shielded the Beis HaMikdash from the *tumah* of Aravnah's tomb. The *Yerushalmi* that indicates that the skull was discovered during the Second Beis HaMikdash era is describing what happened when the returnees of the Babylonian exile began to rebuild the Beis HaMikdash. When they saw the extent of the subterranean destruction, they once again had to address the issue of Aravnah's remains. ^א 

Living with Newness¹

Danny Menchel

One of the key skills children learn is how to read a clock; what time is it?

Beyond answering the basic question with hours and minutes, there is something deeper behind the question; knowing the time means knowing what to do. The time of day and time of year, the seasons, and the calendar establish the boundaries and time frames upon which our world is built, with specific routines for morning, afternoon, evening, and night; summer, fall, winter, and spring.

Different cultures have established various numeral systems and calendars to measure time. Today, most of the world uses the Gregorian calendar, a fixed calendar determined by how long the Earth takes to make one complete orbit around the Sun.

The Torah asks us to track time using the Moon as a frame of reference; when people spot the new moon, they would report it to the highest court, which declares the beginning of a new month – Rosh Chodesh. It's not Rosh Chodesh because there's a new moon, but because the Jewish leaders say so. It's the very first commandment in the Torah, given to the Jewish People still enslaved in Egypt:

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לְכֶם רֵאשׁוֹן חֳדָשִׁים רֵאשׁוֹן הוּא לְכֶם לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה, *This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you* (12:1).

¹ With permission from the author – <https://torahredux.com/>

There are lots of mitzvos, so one of them has to come first. But why is establishing the lunar calendar through Rosh Chodesh the first mitzvah as opposed to any other?

The story of the birth of the Jewish People begins at a time of stuckness, so to speak, with the Jewish People systematically subjugated and oppressed, powerless objects with no choice or control over their circumstances.

Although slavery is illegal in most of the world, it persists. Moreover, slavery isn't just a legal status; it's a state of mind, body, and soul. If you have ever felt helpless or stuck, you have experienced an element of slavery.


When we internalize that forces of change exist and that we have the power to harness and steer them, the possibilities are limitless. This moment can be different than moments that have come before; this newness is the beginning of all newness: הַחֲדָשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשִׁים רֵאשׁוֹן. הוא לָכֶם לְחֲדָשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה.

The *Shem MiShmuel* explains that the power of the Exodus story is that its story of freedom on a national level offers us the opportunity to become free of the tendencies and troubles that hound us on a personal level. With the power to change, hard times do not need to be so scary anymore, and the world is not threatening; it can be full of exciting possibilities. It follows that the first mitzvah is the one that empowers us to change by giving us a symbol of change.

The sense of futility, powerlessness, and stuckness that come from being burnt out or overwhelmed is poison. But as much as stuckness can come from attachment to the past, R' Nachman of Breslov teaches us to avoid dwelling too much on the future and focus on the present day and present moment.

The world tracks time using the Sun; the *Sfas Emes* notes that the nations of world history rise and fall like the Sun, lasting only when things are bright. The Jewish People track time using the Moon, persisting in darkness, and even generating light among total blackness.

The very first mitzvah is the lunar calendar, the only calendar with a visual cue for changing times; and a powerful symbol of change, a natural metaphorical image of a spiritual reality. It's not just an instruction to count the time but a commandment to rule over time and even natural phenomena. It's a mitzvah to live by and with the power of change and renewal.

Every day, every week, and in truth, every moment, is brand new, brimming with freshness, vitality, and renewal. ^א 

Southwest Airlines and the *Korban Pesach*

Dani Zuckerbrod

Southwest Airlines is famous for their brand recognition; Bags Fly Free®, the red, blue, and gold heart logo, and the non-reserved seating that comes with three-tiered boarding classes are all a part of Southwest branding. This last icon of Southwest Airlines is how I always picture the halachah that the *korban pesach* is brought in three groups or shifts. The Mishnah in *Pesachim* (64a) bases that on the *pasuk* in *Bo* 12:6, עַדְת יִשְׂרָאֵל, כָּל קְהָל אוֹתוֹ; there were three shifts in the Beis HaMikdash on *erev Pesach* for people to bring the *korban pesach*. For the first shift, the doors of the *Azarah* would open, and the masses would enter (one person per *chaburah*) until the *Azarah* was full. The doors would then miraculously close on their own, the trumpets and *shofaros* were blown and the *avodas korban pesach* was performed. When they were finished, the doors opened, and the first shift left to go wait on *Har HaBayis*; and the same events occurred for the second and third shifts. While the first and second groups were waiting on *Har HaBayis* they would sing Hallel and would repeat Hallel (even multiple times) if they finished it before the latter groups were finished. At this point it was dark, so they could roast and eat their *korbanos*.

The Gemara continues with defining the minimum number of people that must be present in each shift to qualify as a real group. We know from the *pasuk* that we need thirty people, (*kehal* = 10, *adas* = 10, *Yisrael* = 10); but does that mean thirty across three groups (10 each) or thirty in each group (for a total of ninety)? The Gemara determines that the best way to solve the question is to have fifty people. Thirty enter for the first shift; ten leave at the end; and another ten enter for the second shift. After the second shift is over, another ten leave, and ten additional people enter. In this way, each group has ten new people, but has thirty present.

Chazal tell us in *Mechilta D'Rashbi* (Bo 12:6) and *Tosefta* (*Pesachim* 8:8) that even when the Jewish people brought the first *korban pesach* in Mitzrayim it was brought in three shifts. This is confusing because the halachah to bring the *korban pesach* in the consecutive groups seems to require the presence of the Beis HaMikdash, or at a minimum to require the masses to bring their *korban pesach* in a central location. We know that in Mitzrayim (*Tosefta Pesachim* 8:7) families slaughtered their paschal lambs in their own homes. How could *Chazal* say that this was practiced in Mitzrayim?

The Gemara *Yerushalmi* (*Pesachim* 5:5) explains that when it came to actually offering the *korban pesach*, Hashem gave Moshe an incredible power that his voice carried to the four corners of Egypt so that everyone heard him. He announced “from place X to place Y you are one group, from place Y to place Z you are another group.” The *Pnei Moshe* and *Korban Eidah* (ibid) say that this fulfilled the halachah of bringing the *korban pesach* in three shifts.¹

The *Yerushalmi* continues and says that we know that Moshe could have such power since if he was able to throw ash during the *makkas shechin* and it spread throughout the whole land, then certainly a voice, which typically carries much better than ash, could be conveyed that far. Hashem also gave Pharaoh a tremendous voice the night of *makkas bechoros*. When the *makkah* struck he yelled out קומו צאו מתוך עמי (Bo 12:31); in the past you were servants to Pharaoh and now you are servants to Hashem. At that point the Jews started to sing *Hallelu Avdei Hashem, V'lo Avdei Pharaoh*.

¹ The *Rashash* in his notes to Rav Tzvi Hirsch Katzenelenbogen's *sefer Nesivos Olam* (13) says that although the *Yerushalmi* states that Moshe designated only two groups, it is often found in *Tanach* and *Chazal* that three groups are implied when only two are stated.

This *Yerushalmi* describes some of the logistics of dividing the offering of the *korban pesach* into three groups in Mitzrayim; however, it still leaves many questions unanswered. The halachah fits well into a Beis HaMikdash setting, but seems a little forced in a Mitzrayim environment where *Bnei Yisrael* were dispersed. Why was a miracle required for Moshe to announce this on the night of Pesach? Why could Moshe not have told the Jewish people this halachah two weeks earlier when he told them all of the other nuances of *korban pesach*?

The *Torah Sheleimah* (*Bo* 12:6:125) tries to answer this with a *Sifri Zuta* (*Behaloscha* 9:3) that says that every Pesach after the original Pesach in Mitzrayim should be *K'chol Chukosuv, V'chol Mishpatav*. Everything we do in future Pesachim is learned from *Pesach Mitzrayim*. So, if we are going to have the concept of splitting the masses into three groups to offer the *korban pesach* in the Beis HaMikdash, we would also have needed to have done that in Mitzrayim. While this may be true, it does not answer why the three groups were split up and were announced the way they were in Mitzrayim.

The *Kol HaRemez* (*Pesachim* 9:5) says that this *Chazal* must be read in light of the *Targum Yonason Ben Uziel* on the *pasuk* of וַאֲשָׂא אֶתְכֶם וְאֶשְׂרִים עַל כַּנְּפֵי נְשָׂרִים (*Shemos* 19:4); i.e., when Hashem said he would take us to Eretz Yisrael on the wings of eagles, he meant on the night of Pesach. Hashem actually transported the entire Jewish people to Yerushalayim, to the site of the Beis HaMikdash, on the night of Pesach. They brought their *korbanos*, ate them, and returned back to Mitzrayim to be freed by Pharaoh and leave the land as we read in the *Chumash*.² So why did Moshe wait to tell them about the halachah of three groups until the night of Pesach? Hashem had told him that there was a halachah to do it that way, but he understood that it was only to

² See *Shu"t Divrei Yatziv YD* 50:3 for why this detail of the story is critical to the Pesach experience.

be done at the Beis HaMikdash that way. He was not aware that they were actually going to be bringing their Korban Pesach at the site of the Beis HaMikdash until that evening.

The *Zera Shimshon* (Bo 18) adds that there is a halachah in *Shulchan Aruch* (YD 267:85) that states if a slave runs away from his master to go to Eretz Yisrael he goes out free. *Beis din* will force his master to write a *get shichrur* proving his freedom. When the Jews were bringing their *korban pesach* in Eretz Yisrael and they were told that they were going to return to Mitzrayim, they challenged Moshe Rabbeinu with this halachah. They are free people since they left to go to Eretz Yisrael, and they therefore don't need to return to Mitzrayim be freed by Pharaoh! Moshe said that they must return to Mitzrayim to be freed by Pharaoh through the mighty hand of Hashem and hear from the mouth of Pharaoh קומו צאו מתוך עמי. The importance of *Bnei Yisrael* hearing Pharaoh free them, and with his own voice, was a critical part of the *Yetzias Mitzrayim* process.

Rav Binyamin Silver of Kiryat Sefer writes in *Eifas Tzedek*, his commentary to *Mechilta D'Rashbi* (Bo 12:4) that when you look at the mitzvos specific to bringing the *korban pesach* in Mitzrayim there is a common theme surrounding them. This is mainly highlighted in the *Tosefta* (*Pesachim* 8:7) where it lists the differences between *Pesach Mitzrayim* and the *Pesachim* of future generations. You should gather together specifically with the neighbor adjacent to your house to bring it and not a friend from far away. You paint the doorposts of your house with the blood. You should not leave your house until the next morning. Each person brought the *korban* in his house. The place you eat is the place you sleep. Even though many of these halachos may have some analogue to what we do in future *Pesachim*, they are specific and unique to the *korban pesach* brought in Mitzrayim. That being the case, we can say the same thing about bringing the *korban pesach* in three groups. While it may seem connected to what we did in future *Pesachim*, it is actually another portion of the theme of

“house” that we found in *Pesach Mitzrayim*. We divide up the nation by geography and proximity of their houses to decide when they bring their *korban pesach*.

The *Tosafos Yom Tov (Pesachim 9:5)* comments on the Mishnah listing the differences between *Pesach Mitzrayim* and future Pesachim (called *Pesach Doros*) that it does not call out “three groups” as a difference. He brings the *Yerushalmi* mentioned above that *Pesach Mitzrayim* also had the halachah of “three groups” as we have been discussing. He ends off that *Tosafos* does not agree with this, and that according to *Tosafos* they did not have the halachah of three groups in Mitzrayim. *Yesh Seder L’Mishnah, Rashsash (ibid.)* and many others are confused by this comment of the *Tosafos Yom Tov*. There is no *Tosafos* in *Shas* that says that the *korban pesach* in Mitzrayim was not brought in three groups, so what is the *Tosafos Yom Tov* quoting?

Based on a brief comment by the *Torah Sheleimah (Bo 12:6:125)* I believe that by looking at the *Rishonim* on the general halachah to bring the *korban pesach* in three groups we might be able to answer the question on the *Tosafos Yom Tov*.

The *Meiri (Pesachim 64a)* explains the halachah of the *korban pesach* brought in three groups as I would have explained it myself before learning the *sugya*. It is a way to break up the large multitudes of people bringing their *korbanos* into manageable and appropriately sized groups that fit in the *Azarah*. There is a *rov am hadras melech* aspect to this mitzvah, so there is a large number of people in attendance; but it is best done if broken into shifts. This halachah is not a critical and integral part of the mitzvah, and the *derashos* made in Chazal about it may only be an *asmachta* and not rise to the category of a *d’oraisa*. If everyone brought his *korban* at once, there would be no halachic issue and it would be kosher.

In contrast to the *Meiri*, the *Rambam* (*Korban Pesach* 1:9-11) takes a very different approach. The three groups are an integral part of the mitzvah and should not, *l'chatchila*, be brought with less than 50 people and hence not the minimum for three groups. Rav Yerucham Fishel Perlow (*Aseh* 57, s.v. *V'Al Pi Zeh Nireh*) says that the *Rambam* holds that ideally the *korban pesach* should be brought with 50-plus people as the halachah of three groups is very important. It gives the *korban pesach* a status of a public *korban*, and without that status the *korban* is *pasul*. The *Rambam* is willing to let the *korban* span the spectrum we mentioned earlier in the Gemara where the minimum number of people in three groups ranges from 30 to 50. The *Rambam* is saying *l'chatchila* with 50-plus, *b'dieved* with 30-plus and *pasul* with less than 30 people. Where the *Meiri* said this is a minor halachah and practical rule, the *Rambam* says it is critical and integral to the *korban*.

When it comes to *Pesach Sheni*, the *Rambam* (*Hil. Korban Pesach* 10:15) lists all of the differences between *Pesach Rishon* and *Pesach Sheni*. The *Rambam* does not list bringing the *korban pesach* in three groups as a difference. We know that the *Rambam* holds that bringing the *korban* in three groups is very important, and if it is not on this list, then it must be needed for *Pesach Sheni*. The *Chofetz Chaim* in *Likutei Halachos* (*Pesachim* 95b, *Zevach Todah* s.v. *V'Od*) points out this *Rambam* is in contradiction to the *Tosefta* (*Pesachim* 8:3) where *Rebbe* says that we do not bring the *korban pesach* in three groups on *Pesach Sheni*. How could the *Rambam* ignore this *Tosefta*?

The *Chofetz Chaim* answers that later in the *Tosefta*, R' Nassan argues on *Rebbe*. We know from the Gemara (*Pesachim* 93a) that *Rebbe* and R' Nassan have another disagreement as to the nature of *Pesach Sheni*. *Rebbe* holds that *Pesach Sheni* is a complete holiday on its own merit, whereas R' Nassan says it is merely a make-up for the real *Pesach*. We know from other places in the *Yad HaChazakah*, that the *Rambam* follows *Rebbe* in his disagreements with R' Nassan in *Pesachim*. R'


Nassan, who holds that *Pesach Sheni* is only a reconciliation of the first Pesach, says there is no need for three shifts since it is not a real holiday. *Rebbe* who says it is a complete and stand-alone holiday says that it does require three shifts. This being the case, the *Rambam* is not disregarding the *Tosefta*, just taking sides in that *machlokes*.

The Mishnah (*Pesachim* 9:3) lists the differences between *Pesach Rishon* and *Pesach Sheni* and does not say anything about there not being three groups on *Pesach Sheni*. Like the *Rambam*, this would imply that there are three groups in both instances. However, *Tosafos* (*Pesachim* 95a s.v. *Mah Bein Rishon L'Sheni*) invokes the rule of *tanna veshi'er* on this Mishnah. Normally any Chazal that makes a list is assumed to be all-inclusive. Anything not on the list is specifically left off and is unrelated to the rule unifying the list; however, if we find two things that we know could have been on the list and are not, then we know the list is not exhaustive, and many things may have been left off but could belong on that list. This exception is called *tanna veshi'er*. This Mishnah leaves off the three groups which we know from the *Tosefta* is a difference between *Pesach Rishon* and *Pesach Sheni*. Checking the animal for 4 days in advance of Pesach is also left off the list, and we know from the Gemara (*Pesachim* 96a) that this also was not done for *Pesach Sheni*. Invoking *tanna veshi'er*, the Mishnah is not implying that *Pesach Sheni* was offered in three groups, rather the list is just not exhaustive, and it was brought in one large group.

Keeping in mind the opinions of the *Rambam* and *Tosafos*, let us return to Pesach in Mitzrayim and the three shifts. The Mishnah (*Pesachim* 9:5) lists the differences between *Pesach Mitzrayim* and *Pesach Doros*. It does not list three shifts as a difference, which implies that both were brought that way (congruent with the *Mechilta D'Rashbi*, *Tosefta* and *Yerushalmi* above). However, we see from *Tosafos* that we can apply *tanna veshi'er* to these *Mishnahs*, and the lists may not be exhaustive. We see from the *Rambam* that this can be

done in contradiction to a *Tosefta*. The *Tosefta* (*Pesachim* 8:7) lists numerous *halachos* of *Pesach Mitzrayim* not listed in this Mishnah; just as those were not included in a list of differences, so too the three shifts could have been left off. Since *Tosafos* is the one who applied *tanna veshi'er* to the previous Mishnah, he could be applying it here as well. This is a possibility for what the *Tosafos Yom Tov* meant when he said that *Tosafos* holds that *Pesach Mitzrayim* was not brought in three shifts.

We can then infer that there are four concepts, which are not mutually exclusive about the unusual idea that *Pesach Mitzrayim* was brought in three groups like it was done in the Beis HaMikdash.

1. It had to be brought that way because that was what we were going to do in the future (*Sifri Zuta*).
2. We brought *Pesach Mitzrayim* at the Beis HaMikdash which requires three groups and is the same halachah as *Pesach Doros* (*Kol HaRama"z*).
3. It is part of a larger theme of "house" that is found in *Pesach Mitzrayim* and is unrelated to the general halachah of three groups (*Eifas Tzedek*).
4. It wasn't brought in groups of three according to the Mishnah (*Tosafos / Tosafos Yom Tov*). ^א 

Lavan's Plot

Moshe Kravetz

Where do we see that Lavan attempted to uproot everything?

I would like to share several explanations.

Regarding the words, *An Aramean attempted to destroy my father*, *Rashi* comments: "Lavan sought to eradicate everything when he chased Yaakov. Because he thought to do this, Hashem considered it for him as if he did it. For the nations of the world, *HaKadosh baruch Hu* considers for them a wicked thought as an action."

In other words, according to *Rashi* the simple explanation is that Lavan is considered to have actually eradicated Yaakov since he plotted to do so; therefore, the Torah says *Arami oved avi*, implying that he actually did so.

Alternatively, the *Kedushas Levi* (*Parashas Chayei Sarah*) explains this based on the following teaching of the Gemara (*Gittin* 64a): Rav Yitzchak said: If a man told his agent, "Go and *mikadeish* a woman for me" without specifying any particular woman, and his agent died before he could return to identify the woman, the sender is forbidden to marry any woman in the world because there is a presumption that the agent completed his assignment before he died. Since any woman the sender chooses to marry could possibly be a forbidden relative (such as a sister or daughter) of the woman whom his agent was *mikadeish* for him, he may not marry any woman in the world.

Avraham Avinu appointed Eliezer as his agent to *mikadeish* a wife for Yitzchak, but he did not specify which woman to *mikadeish*; he relied on him to find an appropriate match. Chazal teach that when Eliezer arrived at Rivkah's home, Rivkah's brother Lavan poisoned Eliezer's food, so that he would die and Lavan could appropriate all his money.

In the end, Eliezer's plate was switched with that of Besuel, who died in place of Eliezer.

Had Lavan succeeded in killing Eliezer, whom Avraham had designated as his agent in finding a wife for Yitzchak, Yitzchak would have been forbidden to marry any woman in the world, and then Yaakov could not have been born. In that way, says the *Kedushas Levi*, Lavan *attempted to uproot everything*.

The *Alshich* and the *Vilna Gaon* offer a different explanation of how Lavan *attempted to uproot everything*. When Yaakov arrived at Lavan's home, he told him (*Bereishis* 29:18): *I will work for you for seven years, for Rachel your younger daughter*. However, even though Yaakov specified clearly which daughter he wanted to marry, Lavan deceived him by giving him Leah as a wife instead of Rachel.

Leah's first son was Reuven, and Rachel's first son was Yosef, whom Yaakov loved more than any of his other sons, and for whom he made a *kesoness passim*. Yosef's brothers envied him, since he was the youngest of the *shevatim* (other than Binyamin), and yet their father loved him the most. This envy spurred them to sell him to the Egyptians, which ultimately resulted in Yaakov and his family descending to Mitzrayim. We see, then, that their descent to Mitzrayim was caused by the sin of selling Yosef, which was caused by the envy of Yosef's older brothers.

Had Lavan not switched Rachel for Leah, Yaakov would have married Rachel first, as he had planned, and Yosef would have been born first – in which case his brothers would not have envied him, for he would have been the firstborn, and Yaakov's love for him would have been accepted as justified. Then, the brothers would not have sold Yosef to the Mitzrayim, and the Jewish people could have been spared all the suffering they endured in Mitzrayim.

So, in this sense, Lavan attempted to uproot everything.^א

Exodus Nearly Aborted

Yehoshua Dixler

Pesach night we recount the many interesting stories that occurred before, during, and after the Exodus from Egypt. One of the more fascinating events, actually not mentioned in the Haggadah, occurred when Moshe was traveling with his family from Midian down into Egypt. As Hashem instructed Moshe to now take the Jewish people out of Egypt, this trip is arguably the very beginning of the Exodus. How does the *bris milah* that occurred during this trip connect to Egypt?

First a quick summary of the events in *Shemos* (4:24-26) according to *Rashi*. Moshe and his family, consisting of his wife Tzipporah and his two sons—Gershom, born long before in Midian, and Eliezer, born recently—were traveling from Midian to Egypt. While settling into a hotel, a snake attacked and swallowed Moshe first from his feet up to his *milah* and then from his head down to his *milah*. Understanding the significance, Tzipporah gave a *milah* to Eliezer, at which time the snake relented. Moshe was attacked because he focused first on arranging the hotel stay before giving the *milah* to Eliezer. After this event, on the suggestion of Aharon who met them soon after, Tzipporah returned to Midian with her children as Moshe and Aharon proceeded to Egypt.

This strange episode evokes a lot of questions, but I'll focus on just two. The story shows the importance of the *milah*, but why focus on this right now at the time Moshe travels to Egypt? We must assume Moshe had a good reason for delaying the *milah*, as he may simply have been concerned with the danger of traveling while the child was recovering. If so, why was he attacked by the snake?

Regarding this incident, *Shemos Rabbah* (5:8) focuses on the importance of *milah*: so beloved is *milah* that Moshe wasn't given even one moment of forbearance. It appears the key to understanding this event is to focus on the importance of *milah* to the Exodus.

The Haggadah quotes these verses from *Yechezkel* (16: 8-9)

עָרֹם... וְאֵעָבֵר עָלֶיךָ וְאֶרְאֶה מִתְבוֹסֶסֶת בְּדַמֶּיךָ וְאָמַר לָךְ בְּדַמֶּיךָ חַיִּי וְאָמַר לָךְ בְּדַמֶּיךָ חַיִּי וְעָרִיךָ, *through your blood shall you live... through your blood shall you live...you were naked and bare.*

Hashem gave the Jews in Egypt, who were bereft of mitzvos (“naked and bare”), the mitzvah of the *korban pesach* and the mitzvah of *bris milah* so that they would have sufficient merit for redemption (*Rashi, Shemos*, 12:6). The repetition of “through your blood shall you live” corresponds to the blood of *milah* and the blood of the *pesach* (*Rashi, Yechezkel*). The blood of the *pesach* and the blood of *milah* became mixed and both were applied to the doorposts before the plague of the firstborn (*Shemos Rabbah* 19:5). The merit of these two mitzvos not only protected the Jews that night, but also provided them the needed merit to be redeemed.

Why were *pesach* and *milah* singled out for this merit out of all the 613 mitzvos? While we rely on the oral tradition to inform us that Avraham kept all the mitzvos (*Kiddushin*, last Mishnah), the Torah is explicit about two mitzvos Avraham kept: belief in the One Hashem and *milah*. Avraham was not just the father of the Jewish nation in a physical capacity; he was our spiritual father as well. He followed the One Hashem—an intellectual and spiritual commitment, and performed the *milah* on himself in his old age—a physical commitment and self-sacrifice. This dual commitment of body and soul encompasses the entire being. Such is the inheritance that his offspring, through Yosef and Yaakov, brought with them into the Egyptian exile.


However, in Egypt the Jewish people went astray and ceased to adhere to these two mitzvos. They assimilated by worshipping Egyptian idols and stopped performing the *milah*; the tribe of Levi was the only exception. Slaughtering the *pesach* lamb, an idol of the Egyptians, as a sacrifice to God served to break their connection to Egyptian idol worship while the *milah*, performed on the same day (!), helped them break away from the impurity of promiscuous Egyptians. Hashem, seeing the Jews' full commitment of both of body and soul redeemed them.

That day in Egypt was not the only time the Jewish people performed a national *milah* in order to eat the Pesach sacrifice. Just after entering the land of Israel to wage war against the seven idol-worshipping nations, Yehoshua gave *milah*¹ to hundreds of thousands of men and boys who were born during the 40 years in the desert (*Yehoshua* 5:2-10). Why was this necessary? The parents, except for Levi's tribe, were afraid to do a *milah* because at any time they could be expected to travel at Hashem's command, which, in their minds would endanger the children. Was this a correct decision? *Malbim* does not think so.

According to *Malbim* (*Yehoshua* 5:4-7), just as the Leviim were exceptional in Egypt as the lone tribe performing *milah*, they continued the tradition in the desert despite the perceived danger posed by travel. The other tribes, instead of following their lead both in Egypt and in the desert, used the danger presented by travel as an excuse. How do we know *Shevet Levi* was right and travel is not a legitimate excuse to postpone *milah*? *Malbim* points to the story of Moshe being attacked by the snake! Hashem told Moshe to travel to Egypt shortly after the birth of Eliezer, but due to the perceived danger of travel, Moshe did not perform the *milah*. The fact he was attacked shows delaying the *milah* was wrong.

¹ Some say Yehoshua alone did the *milah* on everyone, both at this time and in Egypt (*Meam Loe'z*).

We can now answer the original questions. As the *Medrash* taught, *milah* is so important that even a man as great as Moshe was punished when he delayed it. Given that Moshe, from the tribe of Levi, was soon to become the leader of all Jews in Egypt, it was imperative to ensure *his* adherence to this mitzvah properly. To be Hashem's agent to redeem the people, who would ultimately need a mass *milah* to merit the redemption, he must be perfect from the very beginning of the redemption, which started now as Moshe is about to enter Egypt. That is why this story occurred and is recounted to us in the context of Moshe's travel to Egypt. Through the merit of his wife's swift action to perform the *milah* herself, Moshe was now fit to be the leader.²

Universally observed by the Jews in Europe and even post-WW2 America, the popularity of halachic *milah* has been waning along with the general assimilation of American Jewry. The events surrounding Pesach, recounted at the Seder, remind us of the importance of this mitzvah. 

² There are several other interpretations of this event. Instead of Moshe being swallowed, other say it was the baby Eliezer who was swallowed (*Rabeinu Bachaya*). Or the older brother Gershom, whom Moshe agreed not to circumcise as a condition of marriage, was swallowed (*Targum Yonason*). Ibn Ezra describes Moshe's attacker not as a snake, but as a debilitating disease. According to *Daas Zekanim*, the entire event occurred *after* Moshe met Aharon. When Moshe, at Aharon's behest, decided to send the family back to Midian, he then should have performed the *milah* and paid for the family to stay in the hotel, as the baby recovered, while Moshe headed off to Egypt with Aharon.

Pharaoh's Loopholes

Eli Lazar Singman

In *Parashas Va'eira* 7:3, Hashem says "I shall harden Pharaoh's heart," indicating that he will give Pharaoh the fortitude to withstand the plagues sent against Egypt. The *Maasei Hashem* (R' Eliezer ben Eliyahu Ashkenazi [1512-1585]) indicated that it was Pharaoh's pride and the way in which he needed/wished to present himself that forced his decisions. According to R' Immanuel Bernstein (*Dimensions in Chumash*, volume 1, p. 335), Hashem created circumstances that manipulated Pharaoh's "ego-driven tendency to reach conclusions instantly and then stick with them even as they unraveled before his eyes. Rather than Hashem directly influencing Pharaoh, instead for each plague, there was in Pharaoh's eyes a loophole permitting self-delusion. This loophole was "some irregularity that did not match with Moshe's prediction, permitting Pharaoh to cling to his belief that Hashem was not all powerful."

Hashem started "small" and slowly ramped up the heat on Pharaoh. Moshe's first attempt to convince Pharaoh about Hashem's power was turning a staff into a snake, something the children in Egypt showed that they could also do. Even though the staff (not snake!) then ate all the occultists' other snakes, Pharaoh felt that Moshe was just another practitioner of magic. This set the stage for Pharaoh to look for loopholes as more unusual events occurred.

Plague 1: Blood

The *Bechor Shor* suggests a novel idea that the Nile became blood but only for a short while. During that time all the fish in the Nile died and then the Nile reverted to water. The putrefaction of the rotting fish made the water unpotable, but it was this water that Pharaoh's occultists had available to show that they too could turn water into blood, albeit only in small bottlefuls (according to *Me'am Loez*).

Pharaoh concluded that his deity, the Nile, could defend itself by reverting to water and that his occultists could reproduce Moshe's "trick." enabling him to hold onto the delusion that Hashem did not hold ALL the power in the universe.

Plague 2: Frogs

Me'am loez notes that the plague of frogs did not affect Goshen, where the Israelites lived. Furthermore, Pharaoh's occultists were able to create frogs. Finally, the frogs brought some good to Egypt by delineating a border dispute with Ethiopia and bringing peace to those countries for the first time in many years. Aside from the fact that Pharaoh could say that the frogs were just a trick which occultists could reproduce, he might also be able to think to himself that Hashem did NOT have control over all of Egypt, since Goshen was spared. He might even be able to convince himself that Hashem could not punish Egypt without leaving some benefit for it, suggesting a limitation of Hashem's ability to punish. Of course, these ideas are a stretch, but Pharaoh proved time and again that when one is determined to see good or bad in a situation, he will usually be successful.

Plague 3: Lice

The *Me'am loez* explains that all the fields in Egypt turned into lice. Furthermore, even the dust in the plowed fields of Goshen where the Israelites dwelled became lice. Could not Pharaoh then convince himself that Hashem was limited in protecting the Israelites' property?

Plague 4: Wild beasts

R' Shimon Schwab notes that *Shemos* (8:18-19) states that there would be no wild beasts in Goshen. Any Egyptian who sought shelter in Goshen was spared. This permitted Pharaoh to tell Moshe to serve Hashem "in the land," i.e., Egypt. Since Moshe proved there was a portion of Egypt with special providence, there was no need for the Israelites to leave! It also gave Pharaoh the opportunity to tell himself that Hashem could not punish Egyptians in all places since they

proved to be safe in Goshen. This ostensible limitation could have been enough for Pharaoh. Why couldn't Pharaoh remind himself that in the first three plagues, Egyptians were affected regardless of their location just as Israelites were safe regardless of their location? But Pharaoh proved to be very good at avoiding retrospection, especially when the plagues left no remnants of their cause – other than frogs, which remained in enormous, decaying, malodorous heaps.

Plague 5: Death of the animals

Me'am loez states that Pharaoh sent agents across Egypt to learn about the plague killing the animals and learned that Israelite livestock survived, even ones that were previously ill and might have succumbed naturally. Furthermore, livestock owned jointly by Israelites and Egyptians survived as did Egyptian livestock that were brought indoors (with the exception of Pharaoh's own animals, all of which perished!). It was the very survival of Israelite livestock that permitted Pharaoh to harden his heart because he assured himself that he could expropriate Israelite livestock.

Concerning the last five plagues, there have been many commentaries concerning Pharaoh's ability to withstand the first four:

- In *Shemos Rabbah*, R' Shimon ben Lakish states that "Since God sent five times to him (i.e., the first five plagues to Pharaoh) and he took no notice, Hashem then said, "You have stiffened your neck and hardened your heart; well, I will add to your uncleanness." *Rashi* and *Rambam* explain this to mean that from the sixth through the ninth plague, Hashem removed Pharaoh's free will and instead used him to demonstrate how Hashem is Master of the Universe.
- *Abarbanel* suggests that because Pharaoh's heart was hardened AFTER each plague, it meant the Hashem kept offering Pharaoh the temptation to harden his own heart and he succumbed each time. In other words, Pharaoh desperately

searched for, and in his eyes, found the loophole he needed to refuse Moshe.

- *Sforno* suggests that Hashem simply provided Pharoah with sufficient anesthesia so that he would still have the free will to repent or refuse Moshe.
- The *Chafetz Chaim* believed that Hashem did not remove Pharoah's free will but rather removed His assistance that any penitent requires. He derives this from *Shemonei Esrei* when we ask Hashem to “*cause* us to return in complete repentance before You.”

At any rate, it seems that Pharoah was unable to overcome his nature until after the tenth plague. But how did he make it through plagues 6-9?

Plague 6: Boils

The plague of boils was horrific. It spread all over Egypt and even distant Egyptian colonies. It attacked Pharoah's occultists, all of whom died during the plague. And Pharoah himself was in agony, covered from head to foot with all manner of eruptions. *Me'am loez* mentions that the primary treatment for boils in ancient Egypt was soot and ashes, which as the cause of the plague now removed any hope of a cure. What could possibly have hardened Pharoah's heart? Perhaps it was simply that the boils are a natural event and disappeared after seven days, just the way all the previous plagues ended. Pharoah found himself healed. Pharoah was not one to dwell on the past.

Plague 7: Hail

The plague of hail that pelted Egypt was particularly miraculous, a co-existence of fire and ice! But Pharoah could tell himself that hail, in the balance, was still a natural phenomenon. Moreover, this hail only damaged what was outside, not indoors; might not Pharoah view that as a limitation of Hashem's reach? The hail also spared the wheat and spelt, even those shoots that were already sprouting. This too could

create a doubt in Pharaoh's mind as to Hashem's abilities. In addition, after Pharaoh asked Moshe to stop the thunder and hail but did not mention stopping the rain, he believed that because Moshe caused all the precipitation to cease, including the rain, then Moshe must have simply been conjuring up dark powers again (see *Me'am loez*). Finally, Pharaoh was able to console himself by directing Egyptians to confiscate the crop fields of the Israelites in Goshen, which were completely spared.

Plague 8: Locusts

Shemos (10:13) states that "Moshe held out his rod over the land of Egypt and Hashem drove an east wind over the land all that day and all night; and when morning came the east wind had brought the locusts." And from this plague not one single locust remained in Egypt after the arrival of "a very strong west wind which lifted the locusts and hurled them into the Yam Suf" (*Shemos* 10:19). To the average Egyptian, this plague of locusts, albeit greater than any locust swarm that ever (or would ever again) affected Egypt, was brought and dispersed by the wind. Was this the loophole Pharaoh wanted to see? Even Pharaoh's advisers, who suggested letting the men (not women, children, or livestock) leave to serve Hashem, and asked "How long must this man be a menace to us?" made it clear that they were convinced it was Moshe's sorcery and not Hashem bringing the plague.

According to *Me'am loez*, the locust plague clarified the boundary between Egypt and Ham, ending a long dispute. Might Pharaoh not see this as a silver lining and believe that the plague was not the pure punishment it was intended to be, thereby demonstrating a limit of Hashem's power? It should also be noted that the locusts devoured those crop fields in Goshen confiscated by the Egyptians after the plague of hail. Might this not permit Pharaoh to convince himself that Goshen was no longer under special protection by Hashem? Finally, one could opine that Pharaoh found solace in the knowledge that the

locusts spared the Israelite produce, which he could confiscate anytime.

Plague 9: Darkness

The plague of darkness came, Pharaoh initially relented, and then he refused to keep his word after the plague lifted. Pharaoh could use the excuse that the darkness was natural, even during the day. It is likely that Pharaoh's astronomers knew that solar eclipses could turn daytime into night. Certainly, it would be harder to rationalize away the miraculous nature of the darkness during the second half of the plague when the darkness was palpable and so thick it immobilized the Egyptians. However, the plague of darkness lasted only six days, not the seven days that Pharaoh expected, based upon all of the previous plagues. *Rashi* explains that at the end of the plague of darkness, there was a seventh day, starting at night, so there really were seven days of darkness. But could this have been the first time Pharaoh thought about the past and convinced himself that the shortened plague demonstrated a limitation of Hashem's power? Wouldn't someone like Pharaoh explain that Hashem only had a six-day supply of darkness? (Notably, *Me'am loez* indicates that the remaining seventh day of darkness was used against the Egyptians at the Yam Suf!)

Plague 10: Death of the firstborn

Pharaoh, concerned for his own life since he was a firstborn, and probably for other reasons, ran screaming to Moshe to take all the Israelites, and their animals, and leave Egypt to worship Hashem. The Torah does not say that Pharaoh freed the Israelites. On the contrary, he expected them to return. When they failed to do so, Pharaoh hardened his heart again. This time he was encouraged by the fact that not only was his idol Ba'al Tzephon left standing after the final plague (unlike all the other idols in Egypt) but that the Israelites seem to go astray in the wilderness and had encamped by this statue. This was enough to convince Pharaoh to attempt to capture the Israelites.

In summary, one could say that Pharoah retained his free will by actively looking for wisps of clues he could use to convince himself that Hashem was not omnipotent and not even the only G-d. Yet Pharoah seemed to be **forced** by his *yetzer hara* (evil impulse) to make his choices. In the Gemara Rav Assi says: At first the *yetzer hara* is as thin as a spider's web, but in the end it is as thick as a cart-rope (*Succah* 52a). Rava says: At first the *yetzer hara* is called a wayfarer, then a guest, then finally a master (*Succah* 52b). R' Jonathan Sacks posits that Pharoah is "trapped in an obsession which may have had rational beginnings...but which had taken hold of him. R' Sacks writes that the Torah's treatment of free will is not as if it were an all-or-none duality. Rather, there are degrees of freedom and we are required to exercise our free will in order to gradually strengthen it and prevent it from atrophying or dying. Without free will we become "objects swept along by the tides of fashion, or the caprice of desire, or the passion that becomes an obsession." Pharoah seems to have descended into self-destructive irrationality; "a man born free but become his own slave," a man who kept searching for loopholes. ^א

Were the Jews Planning to Bake Matzah or Bread When They Left Mitzrayim?


Chaim Zuckerbrod

I really enjoyed this *Dvar Torah* in the *Little Medrash Says Haggada* that we borrowed from Mr. Weiss's Haggadah Gemach. The following is a quote from page 206 and is based on *Mizrachi* (*Shemos* 12:34):

The Haggadah says: מצה זו שאנו אוכלים על שום מה? על שום שלא הספיק בצקם של אבותינו להחמיץ

This seems to mean that had *Bnei Yisrael* had enough time in Mitzrayim, they would have baked bread from their dough. But because they rushed out, the dough had no time to rise, and it became matzah. However, we know that the *Bnei Yisrael* left Mitzrayim on the fifteenth of Nissan, the first day of Pesach. Hashem had previously told them that they were forbidden to eat chametz on Pesach. So how is it possible that they planned to bake bread for themselves?

Hashem gave the Jews laws for this first Pesach in Mitzrayim that were different from the laws of all future holidays of Pesach. Pesach in Mitzrayim lasted for one day. And even though the Jews were forbidden to eat chametz, they were allowed to have chametz in their homes on that day. They were therefore allowed to prepare bread on the day of Pesach before leaving Mitzrayim to eat the day after Pesach, the sixteenth of Nissan. However, since the Egyptians rushed them so much, they were forced to carry the raw pieces of dough on their shoulders. The sun baked these; they did not rise, but became matzos.

(Hashem knew that this would happen. Therefore, He gave them the Yom Tov of Pesach and the mitzvah of eating matzah even before they left Mitzrayim.) 

Moshe Repairs Relationship with Hashem

Rabbi Yitzchak Friedman

The sin of the Golden Calf, for the purposes of this article, begins at Sinai. Hashem offers the Jewish People a deal. The *pasuk* in *Shemos* (19:5) reads: “If you vigilantly heed My voice and keep My Covenant, you will be My treasure from amongst the nations, for the entire world belongs to Me.” The next *pasuk* states, “And you shall be for Me a kingdom of nobles and a holy people...” This covenant is restated at the end of *Devarim* (26:17-19). This is the deal, in a nutshell. If you are serious about keeping the Torah and satisfying My will, I will make you a special treasure vis-a-vis the other nations.

Our Rabbis have taught us that on the day we received the Torah at Sinai, we were considered Hashem’s bride. This covenant Hashem made with the Jewish People is analogous to a marriage contract. What are the main elements of marital stability? Fidelity and respect. Yes, there are other important factors that contribute to marital success: being flexible, having a sense of humor, warmth, common goals, and industriousness. However, the bedrock of marriage is fidelity and respect.

That is why marriage is called קדושיך, *holiness*, and infidelity is called טומאה, *defilement*. A holy object is something that is set aside for a higher purpose, while a defiled item is used in pursuit of an unseemly purpose. Whether in a covenant with Hashem or with a spouse, one sets aside his own needs and desires on behalf of one’s partner. Hashem’s commitment is eternal. Our commitment must try to approximate that level of loyalty. Similarly, when you marry, the assumption is that your commitment to your spouse is absolute!

Our Torah reading starts in the middle of the Golden Calf debacle. The Jewish people¹ have erected a Golden Calf. This was done to compensate for the absence of Moshe's leadership. At this point, *Moshe Rabbeinu* is with Hashem, learning the Torah. Hashem reveals to Moshe that the Jewish People had a calamitous fall into depravity. They erected a calf out of gold and are worshipping it. Our Rabbis find hints in the *pesukim* that they were also engaged in immoral behavior. They say that this sin was tantamount to a bride violating her marriage vows on her wedding day.

Moshe descends the mountain and sees the feast of the Golden Calf in real time. He hurls the Two Tablets of the Covenant from his shoulders, breaking them into smithereens. Shortly thereafter, Moshe begins to beseech Hashem with the *pesukim* that we read on regular fast days, those of *ויחל*, *Vayechal*. These *pesukim* (*Shemos* 32:11-14), begins with Moshe pleading to Hashem, hoping to spare the Jewish People from His wrath:

י"א) ויחל משה את פני ה' אלוֹקָיו ויאמר למה ה' יחרה אפך בעמך אשר הוצאת מארץ מצרים בכח גדול וביד חזקה. י"ב) למה יאמרו מצרים לאמר ברעה הוציאם להרג אותם בהרים ולכלותם מעל פני האדמה, שוב מחירון אפך והנח על הרעה לעמך. י"ג) זכור לאברהם ליצחק ולישראל-ל עבדך אשר נשבעת להם בך ותדבר עליהם ארבה את זרעכם ככוכבי השמים וכל הארץ הזאת אשר אמרתי אתן לזרעכם ונחלו לעולם. י"ד) וינחם ה' על הרעה אשר דבר לעשות לעמו.

In *pasuk* 11, Moshe beseeches “the face” of Hashem and asks why He is mad at the Jewish People whom He had recently and miraculously taken out of Egypt. Is Moshe serious? They are worshipping the Golden Calf three months after they were finally freed from the Egyptian inferno! That should make anyone mad! *Rashi* explains that

¹ Or the *Eirev Rav*, according to some commentators. Other *Rishonim* indicate that the *Eirev Rav* started the sinning, but then the rest of the Jewish People joined them.

Moshe questioned the equity of blaming the Jewish People as a whole, when it was the *Eirev Rav* who started the sinning.

If we are to take the analogy to a broken marriage a step further, Hashem is the aggrieved spouse. Moshe, representing the Jewish People, is trying to rehabilitate a wounded relationship with Hashem. From Moshe's approach, we learn two important principles in how to placate one's hurt spouse. First, Moshe solicits the *Pnei Hashem*, the embarrassment that the cheated-upon spouse feels when in public. His spouse's lack of respect and fidelity will become known to the community, and He will be humiliated. This must be addressed if this marriage can be saved.

Secondly, when we are negotiating a disagreement with our spouse, we tend to bring in all the spouse's past wrongs to justify our actions. *Rashi* is telling us that Moshe's message was that Hashem should focus on the true hurt, the *Eirev Rav's* actions, and not generalize the pain by punishing the entire Jewish People.

To pacify Hashem, Moshe highlights the love that Hashem has shown the Jewish people. In the past, Hashem had promised to give the Jews everything they needed, including a land to call their own. Moshe's strategy might have been akin to a therapist who tries to get the couple to focus on why they originally fell in love. This might help the couple renew their past feelings for each other, giving the wronged spouse a greater capacity to forgive, following a spouse's disrespectful actions.

In *pasuk* 12, Moshe, cognizant of the fact that the Jews' sin constituted a *chilul Hashem*, turns that irrefutable fact to the Jews' advantage. If Hashem casts away the Jewish People in such short order, He will be viewed as unfaithful to a nation to whom He pledged allegiance. In other words, rejecting the Jewish People in response to their abandonment will only deepen the *chilul Hashem*. The message in the context of a hurt spouse might be not to act out of anger and

embarrassment. The result probably will be counterproductive to your best interests.

Pasuk 13 can be understood through the words of Rav Hutner (I heard it on a recording but can't find it currently in my tape library or in the *Pachad Yitzchak*.) He quotes *Rashi*, on the words of אשר נשבעתי להם לא נשבעתי להם בדבר שהוא כלה, לא בשמים ולא בארץ ולא בהרים, בך, who says, ולא בגבעת, אלא בך שאתה קיים ושבועת קיים.

Rav Hutner explains that our relationship with Hashem is not based on anything that one has done or created. Any physical creation has a temporal quality to it. If the relationship were based on Hashem's act of creation alone, a creation can be destroyed just as easily as it had been created. It is temporal, after all. However, if the covenant is with the Almighty Himself, it is permanent, never to be rescinded. Similarly, a successful marriage is more than just a contract to do nice things for one's spouse. It is a meeting of the minds and hearts to build a life together. It is each spouse giving major amounts of time and energy to the other because of a deep-felt love and commitment.

Hashem ultimately regrets the suggestion that He eliminate the Jewish People. However, as with every scorned lover, He does not want to be burned again. From here on in, Hashem announces that an angel will lead the Jewish People. Insubordination to the surrogate is not as painful as straying from the dictates of the King Himself. This creates a distance between Hashem and the Jews, which can be laid at the feet of the Jews' infidelity. Hashem also insisted that the Jews remove their finery, the crowns that they received at Sinai. Hashem said he needed "time" to consider His next steps.

Our Torah reading begins at the point when Moshe feels that Hashem is not completely pacified. If Hashem really forgave the Jewish People, why is He sending a surrogate? Why did He remove the

crowns? Moshe decides he needs to go full tilt and ask for Hashem to return His *Shechinah* to the Jewish People.

How he accomplishes this feat, will have to wait for the next year's *kuntress* from Yerushalayim! ^א _א

A Seder to Remember

Irvin Naiman

Pesach was a very busy time in our household and my favorite Yom Tov. There was never a dull moment. There were no stores to buy a lot of products that we now have. Even with major cooking and cleaning for several weeks before Yom Tov, we all looked forward to staying up late when my father's parents and brother would join us every year for the Sedarim. Other family members would stop over and visit as well. As we got older, we soon began to realize how much time and effort our parents put into Pesach to make it such a beautiful time year after year. Each year was special in its own right. The anticipation each year did not change. This continued as I began making our own Seder along with my children and even these past couple of years with my mother joining us for the Sedarim.

One of the best and everlasting memories was of my grandmother, Fayge Naiman, listening to my then three-or-four-year-old youngest brother, Dovid, saying the *Ma Nishtana*; not just in Hebrew, but in Yiddish and English as well. I will always remember the look on her face as he read and sang, a look so intent as if she was swallowed up by the moment. Each year the same look and intensity. I saw my mother do the same thing when my grandson Yaakov read and sang the *Ma Nishtana* at our Seder the past two years. I too had this overwhelming feeling as he read and sang, his face lit up as everyone around the room took in each word as if they were pearls.

The rest of the Seder was beautiful, but not the same look and feel as when the *Ma Nishtana* was read. I was trying to come up with reasons why those moments were so important. What is so meaningful about those moments and Pesach as a whole?

What is Pesach about? There is the obvious: feeling free and belonging and remembering the ones that helped bring us to where we are today.

However, seeing my grandmother's and mother's reactions and my own feelings during the Four Questions, I feel there is something more.

We say *Dayenu* during the Seder with fifteen different phrases stating if a specific action did not happen it would have been enough. I heard the following many years ago.

What does *Dayenu* mean? The key is the first-person plural: "If Hashem had not given *us* their wealth... not led *us* into the land of Israel..." Who is "us"? It is you and me. It is all Jews alive today and all Jews in every generation who sang *Dayenu* – who were *not* there when we left Egypt. So how does the song include *us*?

Dayenu is not a recounting of ancient events, not a record of history. Its meaning is directly related to another line in the Haggadah: "A person is obligated to see himself as if he personally has gone out of Egypt."

Pesach is not a celebration of the past. It is a *reliving* of the past, a moment of *re-experience*. When a person sees himself at the Seder as if he personally has gone out of Egypt, he is living through all the events of that era. He is reliving being enslaved, then reliving being liberated, all the way to entering the Land of Israel and the eventual construction of the ancient Bais HaMikdash.

Pesach is each Jew's personal identification with the ancient leaving of Egypt, from beginning to end.

With this perspective, *Dayenu's* record of each major step in the liberation appears very different. At the Seder we do not scrutinize these steps with detachment. After all, they happened to *us*. We *re-live* these steps – a person is obligated to see himself as if he

personally has gone out of Egypt. And each *relived* moment is self-sufficient.

When a baby boy is born, the question of how he will perform at his Bar Mitzvah does not enter the parents' consciousness. The moment, the miracle of birth, is utterly full.

Each major moment in the liberation from Egypt was utterly full. No future moment entered the freed slaves' consciousness.

They approached the Sea. There was no hope. The Egyptians were thundering behind them. Suddenly, the sea opened up! The greatest, most awesome, most unexpected, most amazing event unfolded before their eyes. The moment was utterly full.

The splitting of the sea indeed was sufficient! *Dayenu* – as it was with each of Hashem's miracles.

"If He had given us the Torah and not led us into the Land of Israel, it would have been sufficient." Yes, it would have been sufficient! Our minds, our hearts, were utterly filled with this gift from Hashem – the Torah! We were not thinking of the next moment.

Now I may understand a bit of what my grandmother and mother were feeling as well. The overwhelming moment of what is different this year from all other years was the sense of belonging and being part of something so much bigger. It was a transport back in time to a different place and a different feeling. I would like to think that the intense feelings of these remarkable women were truly just that. As if it were they who were leaving Egypt. The feeling was there each and every year, and now I can understand so much more how they felt. Which is why I believe there is the custom that the youngest of the household reads the Four Questions. It brings hope that the next generation will continue to have the same feelings that our ancestors have and had reliving the *nissim* of Hashem. ^א

The Mitzvah of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*

Moshe Grossman

It is a common understanding that the mitzvah of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* is the obligation to relate the story of the Exodus by reading, explaining, and discussing the suffering that the Jewish people experienced in Mitzrayim and Hashem's redemption of His people that is found in the *Maggid* section of the Haggadah. However, the *Sefer HaChinuch*, in his explanation of this mitzvah, adds another requirement to its proper fulfillment.

Sefer HaChinuch explains that the mitzvah entails relating (Hebrew: *haggadah*) the story "each one according to his clarity of language and to praise and extol Hashem for all the miracles that He did for us there." Clearly, the mitzvah of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* is not just a history lesson. Beyond relating the story, the purpose of the mitzvah is to engage us emotionally to appreciate all that Hashem did for the Jewish people then and to rejoice, in particular, over the immense kindness He showed to our ancestors and to us by revealing Himself to the world through open miracles in order to make us His people. In fact, the *Abudraham* in his commentary on the Haggadah, at the beginning of *Maggid*, states that some actually explain that the word *haggadah* means to praise and thank Hashem for taking us out of Egypt. According to this translation of *haggadah*, the fundamental reason for the mitzvah is to give thanks and praise to Hashem. Telling the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is a means to that end. (Note that these introductory remarks at the beginning *Maggid* are not found in the *Toras Chaim Haggadah*. They are, however, in the *Abudraham's* commentary printed in the *Divrei Sofrim Haggadah*.)

Based on the *Sefer HaChinuch* and the *Abudraham*, it appears that simply relating the events and miracles is not sufficient. According to them, it is a major part of the mitzvah of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, but

not the complete mitzvah. In order to properly fulfill the mitzvah of relating the story of the Exodus, one must be greatly inspired by the story to the degree that he is impelled to give praise to Hashem for all that He did for us in Egypt. *Maggid* must be supplemented with praise and thanks to Hashem to fulfill the mitzvah of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*. Therefore, we complete the mitzvah when we recite Hallel. The recital of Hallel following *Maggid* is vital to the fulfillment of the mitzvah of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*. Thus, the mitzvos of *Maggid* and Hallel at the Seder are tightly linked.

In the Haggadah, at the end of *Maggid*, we find the statement of Rabban Gamliel from the Mishnah in *Pesachim* (116a-b), “Anyone who has not explained these three things on Pesach has not fulfilled his obligation... Pesach, Matzah, and Marror.” It would seem that the obligation referred to is the mitzvah of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* since that is the mitzvah of relating the story of the Exodus. This is the view of the Rambam and many Rishonim. However, other Rishonim, among them the *Abudraham*, say that Rabban Gamliel is referring to the mitzvos of *korban pesach*, matzah, and marror, since we are about to perform those mitzvos.

This opinion presents several problems. If Rabban Gamliel is telling us that we must explain the significance of these three mitzvos in order to properly fulfill them, why is the explanation here? It should be just before we actually perform the mitzvos. Secondly, we are not required to verbalize the purpose of any other mitzvah before we perform it. Why are these mitzvos different? Regarding them, there is another general question that one might ask. In the beginning of *Maggid*, following the four sons, we are told that the reason that we do not recite *Maggid* before nightfall is because the *pasuk* states that *Maggid* can only be fulfilled when the matzah and marror are placed before you. Furthermore, many commentaries add that one must point to them and show them to everyone at the Seder. Why is this so

important? They are separate mitzvos from *Maggid*. Why must *Maggid* be recited only with them at the Seder?

These questions can be answered based on the *Abudraham's* explanation of the mitzvah of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*. These mitzvos serve to enhance the story by bringing us to feel the pain and the suffering that our ancestors endured in Egypt and the tremendous and overwhelming joy that they experienced when Hashem redeemed them. Thus, fulfillment of these mitzvos through our actions allows us to become more engaged emotionally in order that we can truly praise Hashem for all that He did. They allow us to identify more deeply as Hashem's people and fortify our confidence and trust in Hashem's constant care and concern us. The explanations of the mitzvos are placed just before Hallel to increase our feelings of gratitude to Hashem before we begin to say Hallel. The actual performance of the mitzvos of matzah and marror must be later as part of the festive meal.

Emotional involvement in mitzvos, in general, is crucial to our spiritual growth. People generally see themselves as sensible and rational beings. However, our emotions and physical drives are very strong. In truth, we are often guided by emotion rather than reason since our emotions and physical desires are so strong that they often override our rational judgement. One might think that emotion is detrimental to serving Hashem. *Shemiras hamitzvos* brings us closer to Hashem by doing His will. They discipline us to control our emotions and be driven strictly by our intellectual awareness of right and wrong. Emotional involvement in the mitzvos can channel our feelings to amplify the truth that we know intellectually, and thus reach even higher levels of serving Hashem. ^א

Finding Our Voice: From *Sippur* to *Sefirah*

Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Schuchman

Sefiras HaOmer* – Absent *Shehecheyanu

The *Rishonim* ask: Why is no *berachah* of *Shehecheyanu* recited on the second night of Pesach upon counting the first day of the *Omer*? Generally, the *brachos* for mitzvos performed at distant intervals, whether *d'Oraissa* or *d'Rabbanan*, are accompanied by a *Shehecheyanu*. Why is *Sefiras HaOmer* different?

The *Baal HaMaor* (cited by the *Ran* on the *Rif* at the end of *Maseches Pesachim*) deals with this difficulty. He answers based on the conclusion in the Talmud (*Menachos* 66a) that *Sefirah* today is only Rabbinic, as a commemoration for the mitzvah that is Biblically ordained when a *Korban Omer* is offered in the *Beis HaMikdash*. Since this commemoration is a source of grief, a reminder that we no longer have a Torah-level performance in our present state of *galus*, it does not warrant reciting *Shehecheyanu*, which signals a state of joy.¹

However, this resolution is not sufficient for the *Rambam* (*Temidim U'Musafim* 7:24-25), who rules that counting *Sefirah* today remains *d'Oraissa*, and is in force as much as it was when a *Korban Omer* was offered.²

¹ The *Baal HaMa'or* contrasts this with the enactment made by *Rabban Yochanon ben Zakai* to take *lulav* outside the *Mikdash* during the latter six days of Succos as a remembrance for the way the mitzvah was performed when the *Beis HaMikdash* stood. *Lulav* is *Zecher laMikdash*, while *Sefirah* is *Zecher LaChurban*. *Shu"t Rashba* I:126 has a similar approach. See *Harerei Kedem* II:107, *Nora'os HaRav* vol. XIV p. 95.

² The omission is all the more glaring since in the same chapter (*Temidim U'Musafim* 7:18) the *Rambam* mentions reciting *Shehecheyanu* by the kohen who offers the first *Korban Minchah* from the new grain harvest each year, after *Shte HaLechem* are brought on Shavuos. In *Hilchos Berachos* (11:9) he rules to recite *Shehecheyanu* for all mitzvos occurring מוזמן לזמן.

Despite this, he omits the *berachah* of *Shehecheyanu* for this mitzvah. How does *Rambam* explain the discrepancy?³

He might accept one of the other approaches to this question found in Rishonim and early Acharonim.⁴ The *Shibalei HaLeket* (234) proffers in the name of his older brother, R' Binyanim, that since the timing of the mitzvah of *Sefirah* is a function of when the Yom Tov of Pesach was established, the *Shehecheyanu* introducing the first night of Yom Tov suffices for *Sefirah* as well. Mitzvos involving a physical performance (מעשה), such as *lulav* and *Shofar*, warrant an independent *Shehecheyanu* even though one was recited the previous evening. But *Sefirah*, he submits, which is fulfilled by mere utterance (דיבור), can be viewed as a continuation of the mitzvos of the first night and is covered by that initial *Shehecheyanu*.

This answer needs further explanation. How is the mitzvah of *Sefirah* on the second night of Pesach deemed a continuation of the first night? Does *Sefirah* not mark a separate period in time? Furthermore, how is the attribute of *Sefirah*, a mitzvah performed through speech, a rationale to connect it with the *Shehecheyanu* recited a full day earlier?

³ The *Rambam*, apparently, does not *pasken* like the *maskana* of the *sugya* in *Menachos* 66a. Rav Chaim of Brisk explained this is consistent with his ruling in *Hil. Beis HaBechirah* (6:14-15) that the original *kedushas haMikdash* endowed by Dovid and Shlomo *HaMelech* endures even after the structure was destroyed (קדשה לשעתה ולעתיד לבוא ומקריבים אע"פ שאין בית). Since the obligation to offer the *Korban Omer* exists today – although we are precluded from actually doing so due to numerous factors – that inherent possibility is enough to precipitate the Biblically obligated mitzvah to count *Sefiras HaOmer*. After all, while the *Mikdash* stood, if for some reason the *Omer* was not offered, surely there was still a Biblical mitzvah to count. Evidently, counting is a function of the obligation and not the physical offering. (See *Vayigdal Moshe – Mo'adim*, quoting Rav Moshe Twersky citing his grandfather, Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik, who heard it from his uncle, the Brisker Rav.)

⁴ See *Shu"t Radbaz* IV:256

Common Cognates

Among the many mitzvos performed on *Leil HaSeder*, there is one which stands out in particular for sharing features with *Sefirah*. Like *Sefirah*, the mitzvah of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* is also accomplished through speech. Moreover, the appellations for these mitzvos stem from a common linguistic root.

The word *sippur* in conjunction with *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*⁵ is derived from the *pasuk* at the beginning of *Parshas Bo* (10:2):

וּלְמַעַן תִּסְפֹּר בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֶדְךָ וּבְנֵדְךָ

*And in order that you will **tell** in the ears of your son and your grandson*

The root ס-פ-ר conjugated in the פִּעֵל verb construct, לִסְפֹּר, means to relate or tell, hence the mitzvah of *Sippur* (in the gerund form). This same root when conjugated in the קל form, לִסְפֹּר, means to count or enumerate, which is how it appears in *Parshas Emor* (23:15) in the context of marking the days from Pesach to Shavuos:

וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמִּזְחֶרֶת הַשַּׁבָּת

*And you shall **count** for yourselves from after [the first day of Pesach]*

By employing cognates of the root ס-פ-ר for both mitzvos, *Sippur* (telling) and *Sefirah* (counting), the Torah reveals their common theme. The significance of this word is magnified by the opening of *Sefer Yetzirah* which describes how the letter combination ס-פ-ר can also be read as *sefer* (סֵפֶר), a book, which forms the basis for all Creation. This shared terminology suggests that, somehow, these mitzvos of *Sippur* and *Sefirah* advance the mission of Creation itself.

⁵ The appellation *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* originates in the Haggadah and was adopted as the name for the mitzvah by the *Rambam* (*Sefer HaMitzvos*, *Asei* 157; *M.T.*, *Chometz u'Matzah* 7:1), and subsequently by *Sefer HaChinuch* (21), and all other Rishonim.

***Sippur* vs. Haggadah**

The *pasuk* in *Parshas Bo* (13:8), which the Rishonim identify as the source for the mitzvah of *Sippur*, states, “*V’higaddta l’vinchah*” (וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ).⁶ The verb *l’haggid* (להגיד, in להגיד-הפעיל-causitive construct) also connotes a meaning of telling and relating. The text that our *Chachomim* gifted us as a guide for *Leil HaSeder* is called Haggadah (הגדה), with its core section called *Maggid* (מגיד). Why, then, is the mitzvah named ***Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*** and not ***Haggadas Yetzias Mitzrayim***?

A plausible suggestion is that the term *haggadah* / *l’haggid* indicates reciting a specific formulation or relating particular information. The *Radak* in *Sefer HaShoroshim* writes that the root of the verb is ג-ג-ג,⁷ which implies a situation or thing that is standing opposite; it’s here and present.⁸ This verb also appears in the mitzvah of *Mikra Bikkurim* where the *pasuk* says “*higgadti hayom*” (*Parashas Ki-Savo* 26:3), referring to the recitation of a finite text when bringing first fruits of the Seven Species to the Bais HaMikdash. Likewise, the Pesach Haggadah, which is based upon those same *pesukim* of *Mikra Bikkurim*, is a prescribed text that serves as an outline for what must be mentioned over the course of the evening.

While the required act, the *maaseh* mitzvah, for *Leil HaSeder* involves reciting passages from a Haggadah, the actual fulfillment (the *kiyum* mitzvah) is not limited to that formulation. In fact, the Haggadah itself encourages engaging in *Sippur*,⁹ which entails elaborating on the ideas beyond what’s contained in the text. One can discharge his obligation with a dispassionate intonation of *Maggid*, relating all the essential material for the mitzvah. Or one can perform *Sippur* by weaving together linking threads from episodes and events to form a tapestry that serves as a backdrop for an uplifting experience resulting in

⁶ *Rambam* and *Sefer HaChinuch*, *ibid*.

⁷ When conjugating a root that starts with a *nun*, the initial letter falls away (נופל).

⁸ The *Radak* himself paints the contrast between the terms *haggadah* and *sippur* along different lines.

⁹ כל המרבה לספר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משובח

personal attachment.¹⁰ This is similar to the way a *sefer* (סֵפֶר) successfully tells a tale (ספיר) in a way that leads the reader to identify and forge an emotional relationship with the protagonists and their adventures.

Sippur is the goal and Haggadah is the tool.¹¹ Following our premise, the question to explore based on the *Shibalei HaLeket's* approach, is this: how does the experience of *Sippur* carry forth into *Sefiras HaOmer*? Is *Sefirah* merely a mechanical action, or does it project a deeper intention?

וְלִמְעַן תִּסְפֹּר בְּאַזְנוֹי בְּנֵי וְכוּ' בְּנֵי
וְסִפְרָתְכֶם לְכֶם מִמִּקְרַת הַשָּׁפָת

Peh-sach

The *Arizal* revealed that the name for the Yom Tov, Pesach (פסח), can be dissected into its component syllables to spell *Peh-sach* (פה-סה), 'the mouth speaks.' Evidently, the mouth plays a crucial role in harnessing the *kedushas hayom*. A predominant feature shared among all the mitzvos of *Leil HaSeder* is that they involve the mouth. Matzah, marror, cups of wine, *Korban Pesach* too, are fulfilled by foods entering the mouth. (And the prohibition against consuming chametz involves keeping foods away from the mouth.) *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* is accomplished with words exiting the mouth.

Paradoxically, all year one is enjoined to minimize the amount he eats and the words he speaks,¹² but on the exalted night of Pesach, the opposite holds true. Each additional word spoken about the miracles and wonders that took place during the Exodus from Egypt constitutes

¹⁰ חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים

¹¹ Many sources interpret the word הגדה as related to the Aramaic term הגד, which means to pull. (פר' וישב לו: כה - נִימְשָׁכוּ וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת יוֹסֵף, תרגומו וַיִּגְדוּ וַאֲסִיקוּ) This supports the notion of the Haggadah functioning as a tool to achieve a greater purpose.

¹² ע' אבות א:יז, רמב"ם הל' דעות ד:טו

another mitzvah.¹³ Similarly, while ingesting a *kezayis* of matzah is a minimum, eating more matzah increases the mitzvah fulfillment.¹⁴

Every Yom Tov, the *nussach ha'tefillah* also accentuates the characteristic of Pesach as an auspicious time to elevate and rectify the mouth and its faculty of speech. In the *berachah* of *Kedushas HaYom*, the paragraph of בְּהַרְתַּנּוּ אֶתָּה contains two tripartite sections, with each segment corresponding to one of the *Shalosh Regalim*:¹⁵

אֶתָּה בְּהַרְתַּנּוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים (פסח), אֶהְבֶּתָּ אוֹתָנוּ (שבועות), וְרָצִיתָ בָּנוּ (סוכות),
 וְרוֹמַמְתָּנוּ מִכָּל הַלְשׁוֹנוֹת (פסח), וְקִדְשָׁתָנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ (שבועות), וְקָרַבְתָּנוּ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ
 לְעִבּוֹדְתֶךָ (סוכות), וְשָׂמַךְ הַגָּדוֹל וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ עָלֵינוּ קִרְאתָ (שמיני עצרת)

1st Line: Pesach - Hashem disengaged us from Mitzrayim and chose us to be His nation; Shavuos – He betrothed us through His beloved Torah; Succos – He displayed His lasting desire for us when the Clouds of Glory that were dispersed following *Chet HaEigel* were subsequently restored on the 15th of Tishrei, pursuant to atonement on Yom Kippur and four days of amassing materials for constructing the *Mishkan*.¹⁶

2nd Line: **Pesach - He elevated us from all tongues / languages;** Shavuos - He endowed us with sanctity through His commandments; Succos – Our King brought us close, granting us the privilege to serve Him with a multitude of services; Shemini Atzeres – He conferred His Great and Holy Name upon his, as His representatives in the world.

¹³ See *Vayigdal Moshe* p. 126, about when Rav Moshe Twersky discussed in shiur the *shitah* in Rishonim that the *berachah* of *al achilas matzah* goes on *Afikomen*. *Shaar HaTziyon* adds that according to this opinion one should refrain from speaking *devarim beteilim* during the meal so as not to constitute a *hefsek*. While relating this Rav Twersky grew excited and asked in astonishment, “When every word spoken is a potential fulfillment of the mitzvah of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, who could think about speaking *devarim beteilim*!?”

¹⁴ משמעות הרמב"ם פרק ו' מהל' חמץ ומצה הלכה א', וכ"כ הנצי"ב בהגדת אמרי שפר

¹⁵ Heard originally as a 10th grade *talmid* in TA from Rav Shraga Herskovitz א"שליט", in his sukkah on *Chol HaMoed*.

¹⁶ *Gra z"l* to *Shir HaShirim* (1:4)

Thus, *tefillah* too, draws an association between Pesach and refinement of speech.

Freedom from the Malevolent Mouth

What about the liberation from Egyptian bondage relates to rectification of the mouth? Why are the mitzvos of Pesach, which derive from the miracles of the Exodus, affiliated with the mouth?

In *Hallel*, when mentioning our departure from Egypt, there is a curious reference to our former host nation:

בְּצֵאת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם, בֵּית יַעֲקֹב מֵעַם לֵעָז

*When Yisrael departed from Mitzrayim, the house of Yaakov from
the nation of foreign speech*

Egypt is referred to as a “nation of foreign speech.” This indicates that their use of speech was a contributory factor to our harsh treatment in this *galus* and, therefore, a cause for celebration after escaping its influence.

Indeed, the Gemara *Sotah* (11b) demonstrates the primary role that speech had in conditioning us to slavery:

”וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּפִרְדֵּי”, רַבִּי אֱלֵעָזָר אָמַר: בְּפִה רַךְ
רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר נַחֲמָנִי אָמַר: בְּפִרְיָהּ.

The Egyptians initially seduced *Bnei Yisrael* to accomplish their nefarious goals by using gentle, encouraging words and the power of persuasion (בפה רך, literally, with a soft mouth).¹⁷ Once we were firmly ensnared in their grip and engaged in hard labor, brutal force kept us enslaved under debilitating conditions (בפרייה).

Pharaoh, as the king and chief policy maker, personified his people and set the tone and example for them to follow.¹⁸ When rearranged, the letters of his title, פרעה, spell "פה רע", Evil Mouth. In a different

¹⁷ *Chizkuni* (5:4) cites a Midrash that initially Pharaoh himself joined in the physical labor as a ploy to encourage everyone else to participate willingly.

¹⁸ ע' ערכין דף יז. - פליגי בה רבי יהודה נשיאה ורבנן חד א' דור לפי פרנס וחד א' פרנס לפי

configuration they spell “הערף”, the nape of the neck, which is diametrically opposite the mouth. His degenerate and malevolent use of speech was an essential characteristic of both his wicked leadership and the nation (עם לוועז) he inspired. Fittingly, Chazal inform us (*Rashi, Vayechi* 50:6 from *Sotah* 36b) that Pharaoh, no matter how hard he tried, was unable to understand *Lashon HaKodesh*, a language suitable only for a refined and rectified mouth.

A passage from the Haggadah provides an example of how malicious speech was used tactically against the enslaved people:

וַיַּרְעוּ אֶת־נוּ אֶת־נֹסְרִים – כָּמָה שְׁנֵאָמַר: הִבֵּה נִתְחַכְּמָה לּוֹ פֶּן יִרְבֶּה, וְהִנֵּה כִּי תִקְרָאנָה
מִלְחָמָה וְנוֹסְרִי גַם הוּא עַל שְׁנֵאֵינוּ וְנִלְחַם־בָּנוּ, וְעָלָה מִרְהָאָרְזִי.

The Egyptians did evil to us – as it says: Let us deal with them wisely lest they multiply and, if we happen to be at war, they may join our enemies and fight against us and then leave the country.

Here, the word *ra* (רע), evil, adopts the form of a verb, with Egyptians as the subject doing an action to *Bnei Yisrael*, the direct object. What does it mean they “did evil to us” out of supposed concern for a disloyal fifth column in their midst?

The verb (וַיַּרְעוּ) in the passive-causative construct (הִפְעֵל) signifies the Egyptians impugning *Bnei Yisrael* as “רע,” an evil people. They ran the first (known) propaganda campaign in history, baselessly maligning us by calling our loyalty to the host country into question. (Such canards have unfortunately long since been at the forefront of our enemies’ tactics; including a major part of the global war that erupted against us on Shabbos-Shemini Atzeres 5784.) The deleterious effect of this campaign had a dual result: 1) Such rhetoric and the false impressions it spread convinced citizenry to oppress those (purportedly) seditious foreigners, 2) We fell for the conniving use of speech and changed the way we viewed ourselves (known today as gaslighting). We were induced to over-compensate by zealously demonstrating our devotion to the fatherland, which led to our being stuck in perpetual servitude.

The order of the Haggadah implies that this slander was unleashed before the forced bondage had begun and the accusation was nothing

more than a ruse to enslave us. Objectively, why would they think *Bnei Yisrael* were anything less than upstanding guests? Living in Goshen, *Bnei Yisrael* were apart from the rest of society, not bothering anyone. If anything, Yosef *HaTzaddik* set a precedent for his clan to act in Pharaoh's best interest. Our only 'crime' recorded in the Haggadah, was proliferating and achieving success in alien territory. Pharaoh and the Egyptians reacted to their jealousy with spite and enmity, determined to bring us down (not unlike subsequent epochs of *galus*).

Galus HaDibur

How did *Bnei Yisrael* react to this gradual enslavement by an '*am lo'eiz*'? Although they were once a proud extended family with noble lineage, we do not find any resistance to their transition from aristocracy to underclass. Apparently, the Egyptians carried out the process effectively and subtly in a way that did not provoke protest. By the time the suppression was complete, the sole response was silence.

This silence on part of the *Bnei Yisrael* is evident from the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 2:23) that describes what happened after the king of *Mitzrayim* died:

וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָרַבִּים הָהֵם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּאֲנָחוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־הָעֲבֹדָה וַיִּזְעָקוּ וַתַּעַל
שׁוֹעַתָּם אֶל־הָאֱלֹקִים מִן־הָעֲבֹדָה:

And it transpired in those many days, and the king of Egypt died, and the Bnei Yisrael sighed from their enslavement, and they screamed out and their plea went up to Elokim from their enslavement.

Upon the king's death *Bnei Yisrael* "sighed from the *avodah*," then they screamed, and ultimately their cries ascended to *Elokim*.¹⁹ The implication is that until this point not even a sigh ever escaped their lips.²⁰ Since the *shibud* began, the unremitting daily grind of crushing labor followed by exhaustion prevented their minds from processing

¹⁹ See Rav Pincus's *sefer*, *Shearim BaTefillah*, on the differences between the terms זעקה and שועה and נאקה. Also, *Shaar HaTefillah* by the author of *Siduro shel Shabbos*.

²⁰ *Agra DiPirka* (307) by the author of *Bnei Yissaschar* makes this point.

their condition. The very first moment they had a chance to reflect upon and absorb their dismal situation was during a brief respite for the royal funeral, whereupon they audibly conveyed their agony.

This behavior is symptomatic of the reality of slavery in general. Slaves are used to their circumstances. They neither cry nor feel sorrow; they are inured by the unrelenting barrage of abuses, physical and emotional. It's the only life they know. Lacking expectations for anything better, they suffer quietly; voices muted and passions dulled.

Reaching a point where they could express hurt was a milestone. Producing visceral, wordless sounds was a significant start. It meant they finally felt and registered pain. At this nascent stage the ability to articulate feelings or needs was yet undeveloped.

After the sigh (אנחה) came a vocal scream (זעקה). It does not seem from this *pasuk* that the scream was offered as a plea to Hashem or directed toward any being or for any purpose. Eighty-six years of physical and psychological torment left them with no conception of a Supreme Master of the Universe as an address for relief. Rather, it served to release a wellspring of emotions. Nevertheless, the cries ascended heavenward.

The next *pasuk* (2:24) relates:

וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נַאֲקָתָם וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֶת־אֲבְרָהָם אֶת־יִצְחָק וְאֶת־יַעֲקֹב:
(שמות ב:כד)

And Hashem heard their groaning, and Elokim remembered His covenant with Avraham, with Yitzchok and with Yaakov.

Although their cries were directionless, Hashem, the Merciful One, compassionately received them. He invoked the merit of His Covenant with the *Avos* that He guaranteed unconditionally. The unarticulated painful wailing was treated as if it constituted a prayer for salvation.

The *Zohar* (II:25b) terms this exile of silent servitude ‘*Dibbur B’galusa*’ (דבור בגלותא). Speech itself was constrained and subjugated

under the Egyptian taskmasters.²¹ In contradistinction to Pharaoh, the leader of *Bnei Yisrael*, Moshe, was characterized as a *k'vad peh va'aral sefosayim* (כבד פה וערל שפתים), having a “heavy mouth” and “blocked lips.”²² Moshe’s impeded speech was emblematic of the plight suffered by all *Bnei Yisrael*.²³

Galus HaDaas

Rav Chaim Vital (*Pri Eitz Chaim, Sha'ar Chag HaMatzos* 1), and subsequently others (*Baal Shem Tov, Shemos* 20; *Me'or Einayim*, Bo; et. al.), refer to the Egyptian exile as a *Galus HaDaas* (גלות הדעת; exile of the intellect). Pharaoh and his cohort controlled not just the bodies but also the mindset of *Bnei Yisrael*, obstructing intimate knowledge of Hashem from entering their consciousness. It follows that the process of *geulah* involved restoring the capacity of *daas* and awareness of the *Ribono Shel Olam* to its rightful place.

Numerous *pesukim* throughout the *parshiyos* of *Shemos, Va'eira, Bo*, and *Beshalach* declare that the purpose of the plagues and miracles was to instill *daas* into *Bnei Yisrael*.²⁴ Other *pesukim* mention the *makkos* as a means to implant *daas* within the Egyptians.²⁵ The

²¹ *Mitzrayim* itself is a word that connotes constraint and tightening.

²² See *Derashos HaRan, Derush* 5, who explains Moshe’s speech defect was necessary to prove the authenticity of his message as coming from Hashem. Had he been an eloquent speaker one could have erroneously attributed his success to powerful speaking ability and charisma. R’ Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov in *Agra D'pirka* (166) cites the *Zohar* that at *Mattan Torah* Moshe’s speech was ameliorated. *Midrash Devarim Rabbah* (1:1) states this explicitly - הרי משה עד שלא זכה לתורה כתיב בו (שמות ד, י): לא איש דברים אנכי, פיון שזכה לתורה - נתרפא לשונו והתחיל לדבר דברים וגם כך) (ואמינו לעולם), the reason for impeded speech was no longer relevant. See below for *Maharal*’s approach.

²³ ע' גמ' ערכין יז. הובאה למעלה; תמיד מצבו של משה משתקף על מצב העם, רש"י פר' כי- תשא לב: ז ופר' דברים ב: טז

²⁴ וידעתם כי אני ה' (ו:ז, י:ב), בזאת תדע (ז:ז), למען תדע (ו:ו, ח:ה), למען תדעו (ז:ז), וידעתם כי ה' הוציא אתכם (ט:ו), וידעתם כי אני ה' אלקיכם (ט:יב)

²⁵ לא ידעתי את ה' (ה:ב), וידעו מצרים כי אני ה' (ז:ה), בעבור תדע (ט:ד), למען תדע (ט:כד), הטרם תדע (י:י), וידעו מצרים (י:ד, יד:יח)

makkos functioned simultaneously²⁶ to inflict punishments on the Egyptians for their atrocities, thus breaking their obstinate refusal to acknowledge an Absolute Power, as well as a vehicle for *Bnei Yisrael* to break away from idolatrous influences and culture and allow them to progress in their knowledge of a Creator who actively controls the world.²⁷

Ha'Dei'ah v'HaDibbur

These faculties of *dei'ah* and *dibbur*, intellect and speech, are not separate entities; one results from the other. *Rabbeinu Bechaye* (intro. to *Parshas Behar*) demonstrates this from *Mishlei*:

לב צדיק יהגה לענות ופי רשעים יביע רעות (משלי טו, כח) . . . אמר כי הצדיק לבו יהגה ויחשוב תמיד כל היום מחשבת ההכנעה והשפלות, ומלת לענות מן (שמות י"ג): לענות מפני, שחרגום להתכנעא, וכיון שזאת מחשבתו בידוע שדבורו כן, לפי שהדבור באדם מגלה מצפון המחשבה, וכמו שאמרו חכמי המוסר הלשון קולמוס הלב, כי מאחר שנסתרי מצפוניו טוב הלא נגלהו כמוהו, כי הוא שליח קולמוסיו ומעיד עליו, והנה הרשע בהפך, שאין צריך לומר שהוא מחשב הרעות במצפון לבבו ודברי גאווה ובוז, אך יביע אותן בפיו כי יוצא מפיו ויפרסם אותם ואמר לכל סכל הוא.

The heart of a tzaddik will articulate humility, and the mouths of resha'im will express evil (Mishlei 15:28)... he [King Shlomo] says that one who is a tzaddik in his heart contemplates and thinks all day constantly thoughts of humility and subjugation... and since these are his thoughts it is confirmed that he will speak accordingly, because a person's speech reveals his hidden thoughts, as the ethical masters convey: the tongue is the quill of the heart, for once his inner and hidden realms are good, his revealed expression will follow suit, for it [his inner self] sends its quill and testifies upon itself. And behold the opposite is such for the wicked, he certainly harbors evil thoughts inside his inner heart, and words of haughtiness and scorn, which

זוהר פרשת בא (ד) - תנ"א אָמַר רבי יוֹסֵי, בְּהֵוּא מִמֶּשׁ דְּאִשְׁתַּכַּח דִּינָא לְמַצְרָא, בְּהֵוּא מִמֶּשׁ אִשְׁתַּכַּח רַחֲמֵי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, הִדָּא הוּא דְקָתִיב, וְרֵאִיתִי אֶת הַדָּם וּפְסָחִי עֲלֵיכֶם... תִּנָּא רַבִּי חֲזַקְיָה, קָתִיב, (ישעיהו יט:כב) וְנָגַף יְיָ אֶת מִצְרַיִם נָגוּף וְרָפָא. נָגוּף לְמִצְרַיִם, וְרָפָא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל.

²⁷ Other *pesukim* in *Parshas Shemos* referring to the *Da'as* of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* require a separate treatment.

become expressed outwardly through his mouth, broadcasting his foolishness to all.

Working in tandem, *daas* is expressed through *dibbur*, and *dibbur* reflects *daas*. Spoken words are the vehicle through which one outwardly conveys his inner *daas* to others. Conversely, one's *dibbur* is a function of his *daas*. In halachah, a deaf-mute (הרש שאינו מדבר) is not deemed a *bar daas*.²⁸ A lack of external expression reflects a lack of functional *daas* and a diminished intellectual experience.²⁹

This notion is demonstrated physiologically. Humans and mammals share identical vocal cord and larynx structures. An animal larynx transplanted into a human could theoretically produce spoken words. So why don't animals speak? Because humans alone have the *daas* to articulate thoughts as spoken words. Infants are born with fully developed vocal cords capable of enunciation. So why don't babies talk? Because they lack adequate *daas*. A person gains the ability to speak as he acquires *daas* and his thought process matures.³⁰

²⁸ See *Chagigah* 2b, *Gittin* 23a. Unlike a *shoteh*, a *cheiresh* may have weakened *daas*, see *Yevamos* 113a, *Rashi* to *Shabbos* 153a. A *cheiresh* who lost the ability to hear/speak after first developing language skills has a different halachic status than someone born with that condition (see *Darkei Teshuva*, Y.D. 1:174).

²⁹ Along these lines, I heard from Rav Moshe Shapiro that someone with limited vocabulary and fluency is incapable of sophisticated thought and nuanced comprehension. Our active mind thinks in terms of words. Therefore, a rich reservoir of words and syntax is a prerequisite for deep understanding.

³⁰ The *Maharal* in *Gevuros Hashem*, chapter 28, sees Moshe's inhibited speech as a sign of his lofty connection to the highest levels of *ruchniyos*. His level of transcendent Revelation cannot be reduced to finite words which are inadequate to portray supernal reality. Moshe was connected to the level of *Binah* (*Rosh Hashana* 21b; *Zohar Chodosh*, *Yisro*; *Me'or v'Shemesh*, *Pinchas*) and *Mishnah Avos* (3:17) teaches, "אם אין בינה, אין דעת. אם אין דעת, אין בינה". See *Maharal's* commentary in *Derech Chaim*, how *binah* is a higher than *daas*. Hence, *dibbur* from *daas* could not convey his experience. (Even *Shlomo HaMelech* achieved only *daas*, see *Mei HaShilo'ach* II, *Likutim*, *Mishlei* 30.)

Rashi, Parshas Bereishis (2:7), refers to this relationship between *dibbur* and *daas* in the *pasuk* describing how Hashem fashioned Man's body from dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils a living soul (נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים) which became his life force (וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה). *Targum* identifies this as the source for Man's ability to speak (לְרִיחַ מִמְּלֵאָה). *Rashi* explains:

אף בהמה וסיה נקראו נפש חיה, אף זו של אדם חיה שבעלן, שנתוסף בו דעה ודבור
*Even animals possess a living soul, but the soul of Man is more alive,
 for he was granted the addition of dei'ah v'dibbur [knowledge and
 speech].*

What differentiates Man from beast? His *dei'ah* and *dibbur*. *Rashi* could have simply said that Man is superior to animals because he can talk. But instead, he writes that Man is unique because he alone among creatures possesses both *dei'ah* and *dibbur*.

Ha'aderes v'HaEmunah (הַאֲדָרַת וְהָאֱמוּנָה), the sublime hymn attributed to the Kohen Gadol, Rabi Yishmael ben Elisha, mimicking the praises he heard sung by *Malochim*, proclaims in the fourth line:

הַדְּעָה וְהַדִּבּוּר, לחי עולמים! (נוסח אחר: הַדְּעָת וְהַדְּבוּר)

Man shares attributes with other earthly creatures, but he exclusively is endowed with *dei'ah* and *dibbur* bestowed upon him from the realms of eternity.

Specifically with regard to *Galus Mitzrayim*, the Baal Shem Tov taught (*Shemos* 20):

הנה סוד גלות מצרים שהיה הַדְּעָת בגלות. דורו של משה שהיה בסוד הַדְּעָת. כמבואר
 בכתבים הלכות פסח יע"ש. ולכך היה הַדִּבּוּר בגלות.

Galus HaDibbur is a direct consequence from *Galus HaDaas*; both are facets of the same phenomenon. Egyptian dominance prevailed over our *daas* and consequently over our *dibbur*, too.

Reciprocal Influences

If *daas* influences *dibbur*, then exerting control over another's mindset will control his mode of speech. Reciprocally, limiting another's verbal autonomy will impact on his *daas*.

Authoritarian regimes throughout the centuries have exploited this reality to manipulate their populations and quell all forms of dissent.³¹ Even among democratic societies, "He who controls the language controls the masses"³² is a truism adopted by social activists. Orwell's dystopian novel *1984*, written in 1949, depicts a language called 'Newspeak' imposed by the government on its citizens. Its vocabulary is managed by the Ministry of Truth with the goal of enforcing total political and social conformity. By limiting linguistic expression through censorship and a rigidly mandated lexicon, authorities can effectively constrict the thoughts of their subjects and shape worldviews. Currently, this is a powerful tool in the arsenal of 21st century political and media establishments who focus on engineering society to assume their viewpoints.³³

Subjugating the body can be achieved through brute force. How did *Mitzrayim* gain control over our minds and thoughts, a *Galus HaDaas* where we perceived ourselves as no more than chattel of the master?³⁴

³¹ See *The Language of the Third Reich* (1957) by Victor Klemperer, and *Cogs in the Wheel: The Formation of Soviet Man* (1988) by Russian historian Mikhail Heller.

³² A phrase coined by Saul Alinsky in *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals* (1971). Interestingly, both דְּבַר, speech, and דָּבָר, leader / commander, are cognates of the common root, ד-ב-ר. One who controls speech will control the person (R' Akiva Tatz, *Worldmask*, page 131).

³³ "Freedom of speech is a principal pillar of a free government: When this support is taken away, the constitution of a free society is dissolved," wrote Benjamin Franklin in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*.

³⁴ This is in contrast to later painful episodes of *galus* where our bodies were subjugated but not necessarily our spirits. The Germans used every method imaginable to strip inmates of their identities and individuality (numbers branded on arms, shaved heads, nondescript shabby uniforms) and reduce them to *Untermenschen*. Yet, in innumerable cases the Jewish spirit prevailed. Heroically, they resisted spiritually and psychologically, even to

It happened through *Galus HaDibbur*, by implementing strategies of language control, limiting the scope of allowable speech. This quelled the development of words of hope and the notion of prayer, and even cries and screams, from entering the minds of their servile laborers.

Granted, *Bnei Yisrael* continued to tenaciously speak the *Ivri* language throughout the years of *galus*.³⁵ That certainly helped preserve our identity as a distinct nation and warded off assimilation amongst our Egyptian hosts. But it had no bearing whatsoever on easing the *Galus HaDibbur*. Our horizons of consciousness were still not permitted to venture beyond Egyptian imposed constraints.³⁶

Redeeming Speech

Central to the process of redemption, and forming the backbone of our Pesach Seder, are the four *leshonos* of *geulah* from the beginning of *Parshas Va'eira* (*Yerushalmi Pesachim* 10:1). Words clearly play a prominent role in the process of redemption. Akin to the ten Divine Utterances (עשרה מאמרות) which produced the Creation,³⁷ the process of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the creation of the *Am HaNivchar* moved along a path marked by Divine words.

At what point did the tide turn? When were the shackles of mental and verbal bondage loosened?

the last moments of life, terribly aggravating the German oppressors. See Esther Farbstein's *Hidden Thunder*.

³⁵ שיר השירים רבה ד:יב - רבי הונא בשם בר קפרא אמר: בזכות ארבעה דברים נגאלו ישראל ממצרים: שלא שינו את שמם, ולא שינו את לשונם, ולא אמרו לשון הרע, ולא נמצא בהן אחד פרוץ בערוה

³⁶ We find a similar phenomenon occurring in the last century where Yiddishist culture firmly embraced ancestral language, insulating from interfaith mingling, yet the themes were atheistic and often virulently anti-religious. Among the 1-2 million Jews residing in New York in the early 20th century, rife with Yiddish media and entertainment, a pitifully small minority remained halachically observant. Similar to *Mitzrayim*, the Soviet Union prior to World War II cynically supported and promoted the languages and cultures of its ethnic minorities, including Yiddish, but solely as an instrument for spreading Communism and hatred toward religion.

³⁷ בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם (אבות ה:א)

Earlier, we saw the *pesukim* in *Parshas Shemos* which read, *prima facie*, as if there were no form of *tefillah* in Mitzrayim, a strong symptom of *Galus HaDibbur*. Yet, in *Parshas Chukas* (20:16), when Moshe sends a message to Edom requesting passage through their territory en route to Eretz Yisrael, he depicts the beginning of the end to our slavery as occurring when:

וַנִּצְעַק אֶל ה' וַיִּשְׁמַע קוֹלֵנוּ וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָךְ וַיֹּצֵאנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם

And we cried out to Hashem and He heard out voice, and He dispatched a messenger and he took us out from Mitzrayim

Targum interprets “וַנִּצְעַק” as, “וַנִּצְלִינָא”, indicating there was *tefillah* in *Mitzrayim*. How is this reconciled with *Parshas Shemos*?

The answer lies in the next words, “and he dispatched a messenger” (וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָךְ), which *Rashi* says refers to Moshe being sent by Hashem to represent Him to *Bnei Yisrael* and to Pharaoh. Evidently, the *pasuk* in *Shemos* describes an earlier phase of the slavery, replete with full slave mentality and primitive articulation. However, *Chukas* discusses the situation later, close to Moshe’s return from his years in Midyan. Evidently, as the wheels of *geulah* were gaining traction, the liberation of *dibbur* advanced and we discovered the possibility of beseeching Hashem in prayer.³⁸

A further display of redemption from *Galus HaDibbur* happened on the night of the 15th of Nissan. Gemara *Berachos* (9a) raises a contradiction between the *pasuk* at the end of *Parshas Re’eih* (16:1) which says Hashem took us out from Mitzrayim at night, and *Parshas Massei* (33:3), which says it occurred the next morning. The resolution suggests that while the physical departure came about in the morning,

³⁸ This could possibly explain the two cries mentioned at the *s’neh*, in 3:7 and again in 3:9, the first from raw pain, and a second as a fledgling *tefillah*. See *Rabbeinu Bechaye* (*Shemos* 2:23) who explains that *tefillah* is always a necessary catalyst to spark *geulah*. Even after the appointed end of *galus* arrives, *tefillah* (coupled with *teshuvah*) is needed to activate redemption. He says that was true in Mitzrayim and is also true in the final *geulah* for which we eagerly await.

the spiritual and emotional redemption took place already the previous night.

What transpired that evening? We can imagine the tense atmosphere, a mixture of apprehension and excitement a few hours after fearlessly slaughtering the Egyptian sheep-god. Families huddled together, eating the *Korban Pesach*; no one was permitted to leave their houses by order of Moshe from Hashem. When the pre-ordained time of *chatzos* arrived, exactly as Moshe foretold, blood-curdling shrieks and screams were heard throughout the land.

The *Yerushalmi* (*Pesachim* 5:5) records what happened at that point:

אמר רבי לוי, נתן הקדוש ברוך הוא כח בקולו של פרעה בלילה ההוא, והיה קולו מהלך בכל מצרים, והיה אומר: קומו צאו מתוך עמי! לשעבר הייתם עבדי פרעה, מכאן ואילך אתם עבדי ה'! באותה שעה פתחו ואמרו: הֲלֹלוּ יְ-הוָה הֲלֹלוּ עֲבָדֵי ה', ולא עבדי פרעה! ובכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים
R' Levi said: Hashem gave power to Pharaoh's voice on that night, and his voice travelled throughout Mitzrayim, and he said, "Get up and leave from the midst of my nation! Previously, you were in servitude to Pharaoh, from now you are in servitude to Hashem!" At that moment, they [Bnei Yisrael] burst out and said, "Praise Hashem, Praise O' servants of Hashem, and not servants of Pharaoh!"

At midnight, there was a spontaneous reaction of joyous *Hallel* and praise to Hashem! For the very first time, the once mute slaves, whose actions, words, and thoughts were forcibly dictated by *Mitzri* masters, finally found their own voices! They took advantage of the moment to declare their appreciation to Hashem and devote themselves to His service. *Dibbur* was liberated!

The passage in *Yerushalmi* concludes with how our own Seder narrative echoes this original exuberant outburst. The *Maggid* section of the *Haggadah* ends with the first two paragraphs of *Hallel HaMitzri*.³⁹ Each year, we recount and relive the experiences of that

³⁹ This term is used by *Rashi* and *Chachmei Ashkenaz* to differentiate between 'standard' *Hallel* and *Hallel HaGadol* (*Tehillim* 136). It appears in the Talmud, *Berachos* 56a, as הלל מצראה.

miraculous night, reaching a crescendo at the moment of redemption, breaking out in song and proclaiming words of praise and devotion, precisely the same as our ancestors that night in Mitzrayim - הַלְלוּ יְהוָה הַלְלוּ עַבְדֵי ה'.

Indeed, the structure of our Seder commemorates the freedom of *dibbur* from Egyptian control. The *Sfas Emes* (*Vayikra*, 5633, first night) references the five sources of enunciation (tongue, lips, palate, throat, and teeth) as being represented by eating matzah (with teeth) and drinking four cups of wine (one for each of the other four enunciators). Celebrating the Seder with songs of praise and acknowledgement to Hashem, he writes, recalls the liberation of *dibbur* that was manifest on this glorious night.⁴⁰

Following this abbreviated *Hallel*, we recite the *berachah* over the second cup of wine. The text expresses our anticipation for an era when we will sing anew – על גְּאֻלְתֵּנוּ וְעַל פְּדוּת נַפְשֵׁנוּ – for our redemption and for the liberation of our souls. These are two different aspects of *geulah*: 1) freedom from physical subservience to a slave owner or other controlling entity (which includes all external factors that place limitation on where we reside and how we occupy our time), 2) freedom from self-identification with foreign influences that, consciously or subliminally, dominate our modes of thought and intellectual expression, i.e. liberation of *daas* and *dibbur*.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Maggid*, the telling of the story, is also a form of שְׂבַח. Accordingly, Ritva and Avudraham rule that it should be said as דְּבַר הַיּוֹדָא in a joyous tone of שמחה. *Darkei Moshe* (473:12) writes the reason we wash our hands prior to *karpas* is because we are about to engage in *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* which is like a *tefillah* of praises to Hashem, and *tefillah* requires *netilas yadayim* - “דְּסִפּוּר הַהֲגָדָה הוּי כְּמוֹ תְפִלָּה שֶׁאֵנוּ מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹד הַקֵּל וְשִׁבְחֵיו יִתְעַלֶּה לָּכֵן צָרִיךְ כִּאֵן נְטִילָה.”

⁴¹ Along the lines of the interpretations by Rav Soloveitchik (*Festival of Freedom, Seder Night: An Exalted Evening; Pesach-To-Go 5768*), and Rav Elyashiv in their commentaries to Haggadah.

Building On the Past, Marching Toward the Future

Our immediate departure from Mitzrayim was a start along the journey toward complete *geulah*.⁴² Truly, much had already been accomplished, but it was just a beginning. The first task that was assigned to the freshly enslaved nation had been to build the city *Pisom* (*Shemos* 1:11). Spelled “פי-תום”, the name symbolizes the underhanded Egyptian plan to “close up [our] mouths” and impose a *Galus HaDibbur*. Years later, on the morrow of *geulah* we found ourselves facing *Pi HaChiros* (פי החירות, *Beshalach* 14:2), literally “The Mouth of Freedom.” *Rashi*, from *Mechilta*, identifies this location as *Pisom*, which was now renamed to reflect our newly gained status. Nonetheless, our *dibbur* was not yet fully articulated. There was still a learning curve ahead on the journey toward total *cheirus*.

Just six days later, *Bnei Yisrael* were in a rough predicament, surrounded by danger on all sides. On one side was the sea; wild predators and foreboding desert loomed in the other directions. Meanwhile, the menacing Egyptian army was fast bearing down. What were the options? *Mechilta D’Rashbi* (*Beshalach* 14) records that there were four groups, each advocating a different course of action. One said to submit themselves to the waves of the sea, another said to surrender and return to Egypt, while a third group said to take up arms and fight the Egyptian army. Only the fourth group thought the proper course of action was to daven to Hashem.

It seems these groups represented different stages along the process of *geulah*. Those who wanted to return to Mitzrayim were still mired in *Galus HaDaas* and *Dibbur*, rebuffing the transformative impact of the *makkos* and *gilui Shechinah*. The group that prepared to fight had advanced beyond that, no longer under the influence of the Egyptians, but still lacking full *daas* of Hashem’s absolute control and power. The people who gave up hope and advocated leaving their fate to the waves of the sea did not possess adequate *daas* to enable converting

⁴² *Ramban*, in his introduction to *Shemos*, famously writes that full *geulah* was achieved only by building a *Mishkan* where *Shechinah* resides among the nation.

miraculous experiences into practical living. Only the last group had learned the lesson.

וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל ה' (בשלה יד:)

And Bnei Yisroel cried out [in prayer] to Hashem

This is the first time the verb ק-ע-צ, signifying direct *tefillah* to Hashem, appears. Unencumbered by foreign influences they possessed the level of *daas* needed to activate *dibbur* and intreat Hashem for their salvation.⁴³

Climbing the levels of *daas* to the point where the entire nation was released from the chains of *galus* took forty-nine days of incremental growth. The activity of counting up towards the glorious event of *Mattan Torah* was itself a demonstration of freedom. An *eved* does not count elapsed time. He has no past to recall, no story to tell, and no future to anticipate. Neither does he have a future to anticipate. Just as he is a slave, so were his father and grandfather, and so will be his children and grandchildren. Without aspirations or goals, his interests reside in the present circumstance, surviving and doing the bidding of his master.⁴⁴

A *ben chorin* has goals! He aspires to increase his achievements and attain new heights. He understands and appreciates the past that brought him to the present and views his current activities in light of their long-term repercussions. His mission is charged by the progenitors who laid the foundations for his existence, and he is driven to transmit the rich legacy he carries to succeeding generations. Only a free man counts the days between origin and destination.

Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim entails recounting the past. This is not for the sake of remembering history, but to see one's present state as the result of all that which occurred previously. Contemplating the heritage bequeathed to him can and should leave one concurrently

⁴³ See *Agra D'Pirka*, *ibid*.

⁴⁴ This explains the significance of *Kiddush HaChodesh* being the first mitzvah transmitted to *B'nei Yisrael* before any other. The concept of time, particularly creating and influencing time, is a major marker of freedom.

ennobled and overwhelmed with feelings of gratitude. What does one do with that heritage? A culture predicated solely on nostalgia for the past has no future! It will die out in a generation or two. Continuity of heritage depends on actualization.

That is the role of *Sefiras HaOmer*. It involves taking the past, that was brought to the forefront by *Sippur*, and carrying forth its lessons to the future. *Sippur* was the initial stage of discovering our own voice, individually and collectively. *Sefirah* then takes the newly gained voice and empowers it with full-throated energy. They are two parts of a unified progression along one continuum, from confinement of body and soul under an intrusive authority to attaining self-actualization and supreme freedom in service of Hashem.

From this perspective, reciting one *Shehecheyanu* not only suffices for both mitzvos, but is most appropriate. *Sefirah* is a direct continuation from *Sippur*.

Ultimate Destination

Apasuk in *Tehillim* (81:11), said daily in *Pesukei DeZimra* and weekly in the *Shir Shel Yom Chamishi*, informs us what is expected of us after emerging from Mitzrayim:

אָנְכִי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ הַמַּעֲלֶיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, הִרְחַב-פִּיךָ וְאִמְלֵאֶהוּ

*I am Hashem your G-d, who elevated you from the land of Egypt;
open your mouth wide and I will fill it.*

Hashem instructs that once He unilaterally elevated us from Mitzrayim (אִיתְעַרְוּתָא דְלַעִילָא) – enabling us to sigh, cry, and ultimately sing His praise – He now enjoins to open our mouths wide ourselves (אִיתְעַרְוּתָא דְלַתְתָּא) and He will then fill them up. With what will he fill our mouths?

Gemara Berachos (50a) provides the answer:

”הִרְחַב פִּיךָ וְאִמְלֵאֶהוּ” — הֵהוּא, בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה כְּתִיב.

With words of Torah! The culmination of escaping a *galus* of *dibbur* is when the *dibbur* acquired with our newfound freedom is utilized as an instrument for Torah.

Likewise, *Gemara Sotah* (49a) teaches that acquisition of *daas* is synonymous with acquisition of Torah:

אין דעת אלא תורה, שְׁנֵאמַר: "נִדְמּוּ עִמִּי מִבְּלֵי הַדְּעַת (הוֹשֵׁעַ ד:ו)
There is no Daas other than Torah

In fact, the Torah itself explicitly states the purpose of all the mitzvos of Pesach is to impart Torah into our mouths (*Parshas Bo* 13:9):

לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה תוֹרַת ה' בְּפִיךָ
*In order that the Torah of Hashem will be in your mouth*⁴⁵

Successfully completing the mitzvos of Pesach merges *Daas*, which is Torah, with *Dibbur*. This union results in ultimate freedom:

שְׂאִין לָךְ בֶּן חוֹרִין אֲלֵא מִי שְׁעוֹסֵק בְּתַלְמוּד תוֹרָה (אבות ו:ב)
*One is not truly free except unless he is immersed in the study of
Torah*

These elements are prerequisites for fulfilling one's very *tachlis* in Creation. *Iyov* (5:7) says:

כִּי־אָדָם לְעֵמֶל יוּלָד
For man was born to toil

Man was created to toil. What type of toil? The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 99b) demonstrates from *Mishlei* (16:26)⁴⁶ that it refers specifically to toil of the mouth. Precisely which activity of the mouth? Hashem's admonishment to Yehoshua resolves the question:

לֹא־יִמּוּשׁ סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה מִפִּיךָ וְהִגִּיתָ בּוֹ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה וְגו' (יהושע א:ח)
*This Sefer Torah shall not be removed from your mouth, and you
shall contemplate it day and night*

⁴⁵ The immediate context of this *pasuk* is the mitzvah of *tefillin*, which concretizes the lessons of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* for the duration of the year.

⁴⁶ נֶפֶשׁ עֵמֶל עֵמֶל לֹא כִי־אָכַף עָלָיו כִּי־הוּוֹ

Invariably, man will toil in this world. Every cycle of Pesach-*Sefirah*-Shavous takes us away from toil in the temporal physical world and brings us closer to the objective of our existence, which is to toil in the words of Torah.

Sfas Emes (*Va'eira* 5635) remarks that the Ten Utterances (עשרה מאמרות) with which Hashem created the world were transformed into the Ten Commandments (עשרת הדברות), comprising the outline of Torah, through the Ten Plagues (עשר מכות). The miracles of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* imparted us with *daas* and rectified *dibbur*, promoting us from living passively as inhabitants of Hashem's world dependent totally on His *chesed* (see Talmud *Pesachim* 118a), to becoming full partners with Him. As co-authors in the Divine *Sefer*, we are jointly responsible for sustaining the world and leading it toward *shleimus*. א

Removing Things from the Seder Plate

Rabbi Abba Zvi Naiman

Among the many memories of the Pesach Seder at my parents was how my father, *a"h*, removed the small plates of the *zero'ah* and *beitzah* before *Ha Lachma Anya*. Because I saw this for so many years I also do so at my Seder. But I always wondered why this is done. I know the Hagados talk about removing the *Ke'arah* (Seder Plate), but I also see how they say *not* to remove the *zero'ah* and *beitzah*. Where did this custom come from?¹

The *Shulchan Aruch* (473:6) mentions two actions done at the Seder: (1) Picking up the *Ke'arah* before *Ha Lachma Anya*, and (2) removing the *Ke'arah* before *Mah Nishtanah*, so the children will ask why the food is being removed before we have eaten.

The source of these actions is a single Gemara in *Pesachim* (115b). It says that we remove the table from the one reciting the Haggadah so that the children should notice something unusual and be stimulated to ask why we are doing this.

The *Rashbam* explains that the custom of removing the table was practical only in the times of the Gemara, when each participant ate on a small tray-like table. Today, however, the participants sit at one large table, and the current custom is therefore to move the *Ke'arah*, which contains the essentials of the meal, to the end of the table rather than move the table itself. *Tosafos*, too, write that it would take too much effort to remove our large tables, so the custom became to move the *Ke'arah* to the side. The *Rosh* (§29) says similarly, that since it would take a great effort to remove our large tables, we just remove

¹ The following is based on what I discovered in the Gemara *seder* I have with my long-time *chavrusa*, Mark Hettleman.

the *Ke'arah*, adding that since it has the matzos on it, it will appear as if we do not want to eat any more.

Now, the *Rashbam* continues that some have the custom to pick up the *Ke'arah* rather than remove it, and before they do it they remove the meat items – the *zero'a* and the *beitzah* – from the *Ke'arah* so they will not be lifted. This is in accordance with the halachah that when we recite Rabban Gamliel's explanation about pesach, matzah, and maror we do not lift the *zero'a* when we talk about the *korban pesach* like we do for the matzah and maror. The *Rashbam*, though, has two problems with this custom. First, picking up the entire *Ke'arah* with the *zero'a* on it so that the children will be stimulated to ask is not the same as picking up the *ze'roa* when talking about the *korban pesach*. For in the latter case, where we announce the mitzvah of the *korban pesach*, we do not want to intimate that the meat on our *Ke'arah* has the sanctity of a *korban*. But now, in the beginning of the Seder, there is no such concern. Secondly, why will the children be stimulated to ask anything just because we picked up the *Ke'arah*? He therefore concludes that the proper practice is to completely remove the *Ke'arah* off the table as if we were finished eating, as he stated in the beginning.

Tosafos cite a *piyut* that mentions the custom to remove the two dishes of meat before lifting the *Ke'arah*.² But he, too, dismisses the need to remove the meat. However, unlike the *Rashbam*, he does not seem to dismiss the idea of picking up the *Ke'arah* rather than removing it. The *Rosh*, too, in a *teshuvah* (14:5) writes that one should lift the *Ke'arah* before *Ha Lachma Anya* and hold it until *Mah Nishtanah*.³ Based on this, the *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* both rule that one should lift the *Ke'arah* that has the matzos and say *Ha Lachma Anya*.

² This *piyut* is cited in the *Maharil*, which concludes that the *Maharil* was accustomed to remove the cooked meat from the *Ke'arah* when lifting it. *Nitei Gavriel* (Ch. 85 note 5) cites others who have the custom of removing the *zero'a* and the *beitzah*.

³ This, though, seems to contradict what he writes on the Gemara, cited above.

Let us pause to consider why there should be a custom at all to pick up the *Ke'arah*. We understand how removing the *Ke'arah* could take the place of the Gemara's directive to remove the table. Since our tables are too heavy, we remove just the *Ke'arah* instead to stimulate the children to ask. But what does picking up the *Ke'arah* do? The *Rashbam* seems correct in dismissing this custom as serving no purpose.

I think that the custom of picking up the *Ke'arah* before *Ha Lachma Anya* goes together with the custom of removing it before *Mah Nishtanah*. That is, when we pick up the *Ke'arah* and invite anyone who is hungry to come join us for the meal, we are pointing out to the children that this *Ke'arah* is the meal. Then, when we remove it before *Mah Nishtanah*, they will ask why we are removing the meal before we eat. This was not necessary in the times of the Gemara when they removed the entire table. Then, the children would naturally ask what's going on. But when the custom switched to removing the *Ke'arah*, this extra act was needed to stimulate the children to ask. This explains why the *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* mention both acts: they are both needed to stimulate the children.⁴

Now, if truth be told, most people do not remove the *Ke'arah* anymore before *Mah Nishtanah*. This is based on the *Magen Avraham* (473:25), who writes that nowadays nothing is accomplished by removing the *Ke'arah* because it will not prompt the children to ask any questions. Since they know that the items on the *Ke'arah* are mainly symbolic – the mitzvos we will perform during the Seder – they are not the fare of an average meal, and the children will therefore not be so troubled about its removal; this practice was relevant only in the times of the Gemara when the entire table could be removed. And perhaps we can

⁴ Perhaps we can add to this that there is no need to lift the *Ke'arah* even when it will later be completely removed from the table, as the *Rashbam* is talking about. But when the custom came to just push it to end of the table, which is what the *Shulchan Aruch* says, there is more reason to also lift it beforehand to amplify the strange behavior.

add that when the custom first started to remove the *Ke'arah* in place of the table, the *Ke'arah* held more substantial portions of food than the relatively small symbolic pieces we place nowadays. At that time, it might have been appropriate to pick up the *Ke'arah* to accompany the future act of removing it. But with our *Ke'arah*, nothing is accomplished by lifting it.⁵

In fact, this custom is omitted by the *Chayei Adam* and the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*;⁶ and even though the *Mishnah Berurah* seems to agree with the *Elyah Rabbah's* objection to the *Magen Avraham*,⁷ the *Mishnah Berurah's* grandson, R' Hillel Zaks, testifies that the Chofetz Chaim himself did not remove the *Ke'arah* at his Seder.⁸ Instead, the *Aruch HaShulchan* (473:21) writes that nowadays covering the matzah takes the place of removing the *Ke'arah* because the children will ask why we are covering the matzos that will be part of the meal.⁹

Based on this, there is apparently no longer any reason to pick up the *Ke'arah* before *Ha Lachma Anya*. As explained above, it was done in order to accompany the custom of later removing the *Ke'arah*. But since we do not remove the *Ke'arah* before *Mah Nishtanah*, there is no reason to pick it up before *Ha Lachma Anya*.

However, some Poskim note that the *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* added that the *Ke'arah* that “has the matzos” is lifted before *Ha Lachma*

⁵ I think this is reasonable because otherwise the *Magen Avraham* would be dismissing the Rishonim and *Shulchan Aruch* as completely mistaken. I'd rather think that he was talking about his times.

⁶ See also *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* (473:38), who defends the *Magen Avraham* from the *Elyah Rabbah's* objection.

⁷ See *Shaar HaTziyun* §78

⁸ See *HaSeder HaAruch* (Ch. 67 note 32).

⁹ R' Shmuel Kamenetsky, too, says that this is the current custom (*Piskei Halachos* Ch. 26, note 38). Of course, after *Mah Nishtanah* the matzos have to be uncovered again because of the explanation that *lechem oni* means the bread over which we are *onim*, speaking the words of the Haggadah.

Anya. Based on this, some hold that there could be grounds to pick up just the matzos. For example, the *Aruch HaShulchan* (473:20) writes clearly that “one should pick up the *Ke’arah* that has the matzos *or just the matzos*. HaRav Shmuel Kaminetzky, *shlit”a*, adds that it is sufficient to pick up one matzah, and not necessarily the broken one.¹⁰ And he says further that it is not even necessary to pick it up a full *tefach*; a token lift is sufficient.¹¹

As we have developed this practice, we can understand that this act accompanies the beginning of our recital of *Ha Lachma Anya*, where we are saying “This is the poor bread that our forefathers ate in Mitzrayim.” We give the matzah a lift to show everyone the “poor bread.” And by doing this, when we later cover the matzah before the *Mah Nishtanah*, the children will be readily prepared to ask what’s going on. We just made a point of displaying the matzah, and now we’re covering it!

Getting back to my father’s *minhag*. Yes, we do not pick up the *Ke’arah* at *Ha Lachma Anya*, nor do we remove it completely before *Mah Nishtanah*. However, perhaps as a vestige of the old custom of picking up the *Ke’arah* at *Ha Lachma Anya*, we remove the small plates of the *zero’ah* and *beitzah* in accordance with the Rishonim who disagree with the *Rashbam* and *Tosafos* and hold that they must be removed when picking up the *Ke’arah*.¹² ❧

¹⁰ However, *Kaf HaChaim* (473:126), quoting the *Arizal*, does say to pick up the broken matzah, which represents the “poor bread” of Mitzrayim.

¹¹ See *Piskei Halachos* (ibid. note 36). Moreover, *Piskei Teshuvos* (473:29) cites a custom to merely uncover the matzos and place one’s fingers on them.

¹² At this conclusion I would like to add that this exercise has nothing to do with prompting the children to ask why it’s being removed. However, my children, who were excellently prepared for the Seder at school, would make sure to ask me why I was removing these items from the *Ke’arah*.

ChatGPT and the Four Sons

Yehoshua Dixler

The world was abuzz when the artificial intelligence (AI) engine ChatGPT was released to the public in late 2022, garnering over one million users in just five days. The business community has found the platform useful not only as an accurate research engine, but also to answer customer service inquiries. Rabbonim have also addressed the phenomenon of ChatGPT's ability to write a well-written speech. One Baltimore-based Orthodox Rabbi went so far as to actually deliver, and comment on, an essay created by ChatGPT. On the other hand, the Skverer Rebbe has banned the use of ChatGPT-like AI without exception.

Given the early deadline for this year's journal, I thought to take a shortcut by asking ChatGPT to write a speech for me about the four sons of Haggadah fame. Its response is at once amazing, but also a cautionary example of the pitfalls, and even danger, of blindly using this technology for Torah research.

I instructed ChatGPT: "As an Orthodox, Jewish rabbi, write a speech about the four sons mentioned in the Haggadah." Its response went on for eight well-written, on-topic, and informative paragraphs. But was the response truly aligned with Torah-based, Orthodox thought? Let's find out by analyzing selections from its response compared to a selection of traditional sources.

The first son is the wise son. He asks, "What are the testimonies, statutes, and laws that the Lord our God has commanded you?" This son's question reveals a thirst for knowledge and a deep connection to our tradition. He seeks to understand the laws and customs that have guided our people for generations. He reminds us of the importance of study and intellectual curiosity within our faith. As Jews, we are

encouraged to embrace the pursuit of wisdom, to engage in lifelong learning, and to pass down our heritage from one generation to the next.

At first glance, ChatGPT's interpretation of the wise son's – "thirst for knowledge... understand laws." – appears to be aligned with the traditional understanding. However, the statement "reminds us of the importance of study" is flawed. At this point the Haggadah is teaching us how to respond to the varied intellectual needs of the children, not teaching us a lesson about the general "importance of study." The Haggadah instructs us to not only tell the wise son about the Exodus, as required for all sons, but to also teach him all the detailed Passover laws.

ChatGPT's interpretation of the wicked son goes further astray.

The second son is the wicked son. He asks, "What does this service mean to you?" This son's question may seem provocative, but it opens the door to an important conversation. The wicked son challenges the status quo, questioning the relevance and meaning of our rituals. While his approach may seem confrontational, we must remember that questioning and dissent have played a crucial role in our Jewish history. The wicked son reminds us that our faith is not a monolith but a dynamic and evolving tapestry. It is through dialogue and engagement with different perspectives that we strengthen our collective understanding of Judaism.

In this interpretation, the flaws are more obvious and of religious significance. While it is accurate to say this son is "challenging the relevance" by asking "What is this service *to you*," he is in fact expressing that the rituals are not meaningful to him and should not be to others. Furthermore, describing his behavior as part of a historical pattern – "questioning and dissent have played a crucial role in our Jewish history" – is inaccurate. Yes, debate and disagreement are part

of Torah; however, the wicked son is indulging not in healthy debate but in negation and cynicism.

The next sentence – “The wicked son reminds us that our faith is not a monolith but a dynamic and *evolving* tapestry” – in insolation could be understood to describe the healthy evolution of *minhag* in the face of changing times and historical challenges. However, to attribute this to the wicked son is misleading. Instead of the debates of Shammai and Hillel, which *Pirkei Avos* (5:17) describes as being “for the sake of Heaven” with lasting endurance, the wicked son is instead like Korach, challenging the very essence of the ritual, asking, in effect, “does it have meaning at all?” While Rabbis have always risen to the occasion in the face of such historical challenges, as we see with Moshe against Korach, R’ Saadya Gaon against the Karaites, and more recently Rav Hirsh against the German reformers, only the *response* has been enduring, not the challenge. The wicked son does not contribute to the evolution of Judaism, *chas v’shalom*, in any way.

The last sentence is the worst. “It is through dialogue and engagement with different perspectives that we strengthen our collective *understanding of Judaism.*” This is just plain false. This son does not add one iota to our “understanding of Judaism.” His question is negating, not engaging, and cannot result in anything constructive. Additionally, a “collective” understanding implies he is part of that collective, when in fact he has intentionally excluded himself.

A summary of three traditional sources will show the opposition to ChatGPT’s normative acceptance of the wicked son’s challenge.

Abarbanel in *Zevach Pesach*: Because we clung to mitzvos, exemplified by the *korban pesach*, we escaped Egypt. Due to his disobedience of Hashem’s will, the wicked son would have died during the plague of darkness among the many others who did not want to leave Egypt.

Shibolei HaLeket: Failing to mention Hashem in his critique shows the wicked son doesn't believe the mitzvos of the night have any value. He even questions why we bother with it. He would have been left behind as Hashem redeems only those who believe in redemption.

Rabbi Marcus Lehman Haggadah: While agreeing with mitzvos that promote peace and justice, the wicked son questions the legitimacy of others. Why would Hashem, who does not need our mitzvos for Himself, command activities which have no discernable benefit to mankind? Consequently, he scoffs at others who show obedience to Hashem by fulfilling His will. Resisting observance, he would not have been redeemed.

All three commentators understand the Haggadah's instruction to "blunt his teeth" as encouraging a blunt, forceful response. Instead of expressing sympathy or understanding for the wicked son, the father is expected to clearly demonstrate how such an attitude is not only wrong but expresses such sentiments as to exclude himself from the community of believers. Hashem would not have redeemed him, just as He did not redeem so many others of his ilk.

Properly used, technology, is a valuable tool, making our jobs easier and lives more pleasant. Indeed, who wants to return to the days of hand-washing our clothing or riding a horse to work?! However, AI as expressed in ChatGPT, is of a different nature. While it can be a great aid for certain types of work or research, its ability to accurately represent a proper Torah point of view is greatly suspect. Consequently, when it comes to any "Torah" written by this AI, while admiring the attempt, we must be circumspect of the content. ^א

Five Easy Pieces¹

Chaim Sugar

I) The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 39b) relates how the *malachim* wanted to sing *shirah* at *Kerias Yam Suf*. Hashem said “My handiwork is drowning, and you want to sing?”

The *Chanukas HaTorah* has two questions on this Gemara. First, it was still night when the *malachim* wanted to sing, but, as *Rashi* explains, the Mitzrim died near daybreak. If so, how could the Ribono Shel Olam use an expression of “drowning” which means “already drowning.” And secondly, the *pasuk* in *Mishlei* (11:10) says that the time when *rashaim* die is a time for singing. If so, why feel bad about the *rashaim*, the Mitzrim?

Because of these questions, the *Chanukas HaTorah* provides a different understanding of the conversation between the *malachim* and Hashem. Another Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 95b) relates that the people of Ashur died when Hashem opened their ears and they heard the *shirah* of the *malachim*. So, too, at the *Yam Suf* the *malachim* wanted to kill the Mitzrim with their singing. Hashem tells them that they cannot do that. Hashem tells the *malachim* that the Mitzrim had drowned His handiwork in the water—the Jewish children that they had drowned in the Nile. And when Hashem punishes, it is *middah keneged middah*; the Mitzrim must die by drowning, not by the singing of the *malachim*.

II) A well-known question is why *Klal Yisroel* waited until *Kerias Yam Suf* to sing *shirah*. Why did they not sing *shirah* when Hashem took them out of Mitzrayim? That in itself was an incredible *ness*.

¹ The following short *vertlach* are from the *Chanukas HaTorah Al HaTorah*; as translated by Rabbi Mordechai Koster.

The *Chanukas HaTorah* supplies an incredible answer. The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 16b) tells us that if a slave runs away from his master before his time is up, before the six years have ended, the slave must make up for the missing time. However, if the slaveowner dies, the slave has no obligation. *Klal Yisrael* left Mitzrayim early, after only 210 years, and they were worried that they owed the time that they were supposed to be in Mitzrayim. It was only after *Kerias Yam Suf*, when they saw that the Mitzrim were dead, that they knew they were truly free.

And this is what the *pesukim* in *Shemos* (15:30-31) are saying. They were saved on **THAT** day, on the day that they saw the Mitzrim had died. Only then did they know they were completely free and were able to sing *shirah*.

III) The Midrash teaches that the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 12:42), which states that it was a “watched night,” shows that the night was as bright as a summer’s day. How do you see this from the *pasuk*?

The *Chanukas HaTorah* explains how. The *pasuk* in *Bereishis* (3:8) says that Hashem called the light “day” and the darkness He called night. The Midrash asks why in regard to the light the *pasuk* says Hashem called it day, but in regard to darkness it just said the darkness “was called.” The *pasuk* does not say that Hashem called it night. The Midrash explains that since night is considered “bad” (it is a time of *din*), Hashem did not want to put His name next to something that is bad.

The *pasuk* we are talking about says that it was “a guarded night to Hashem.” But how could the *pasuk* put the name of Hashem next to the word “night”? It must be that this night was lit up like day.

IV) The Midrash tells us that when Hashem told the *malachim* that he was going to bring the *makkah* of *choshech*, the *malachim* all agreed

with Hashem's decision. The Midrash then lists two reasons for this *makkah*. One reason was to allow *Klal Yisrael* to sneak into the Mitzrim's homes and find out where the valuables were kept. A second reason was to provide the cover of darkness for the *Bnei Yisrael* who had to die prior to *Klal Yisrael* being able to leave Mitzrayim.


It would seem this Midrash is out of order. First it should have listed the reasons for the *makkah* and then noted that all the *malachim* agreed.

The *Chanukas HaTorah* explains why the Midrash had to be written in this order. The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 17a) tells us if the whole Beis Din agrees that someone is guilty, the person is exonerated. If the Beis Din all agree on the guilt but for different reasons, the verdict will be guilty. This explains the order of the Midrash. Once it mentions that all the *malachim* agreed, it needed to point out that the verdict stands because they had different reasons why the Mitzrim were punished with the *choshech*.

V) The *Ha Lachma Anya* that we say at the start of the Seder contains the words "This year we are here, next year we should be in *Eretz Yisrael*; this year we are slaves, next year we should be free." Many ask that this statement seems redundant. We are repeating our hope that Mashiach should come by next year.

The *Chanukas HaTorah* provides a fascinating answer. There is a *machlokes* in the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 11a) in regard to when Mashiach will come. R' Yehoshua holds that Mashiach will come in Nissan, and R' Eliezer holds that Mashiach will come in Tishrei. In Mitzrayim the slavery stopped six months before they left. We can assume that similarly at the time of Mashiach, the foreign domination will cease six months prior.

According to R' Yehoshua, Mashiach will come in Nissan. We therefore *daven* that next year at this time, Nissan, we should be in *Eretz Yisrael*. And the foreign domination will end in the coming Tishrei, six months before Mashiach.

But according to Eliezer, Mashiach is going to come in Tishrei. If he will be coming this Tishrei, as we are sitting at the Seder, six months before, we should be free and we see we are not, which means Mashiach will not be coming until the Tishrei after this one. And next Nissan we will still be sitting at a Seder not in *Eretz Yisrael*. So, we cannot *daven* that next year we should be in *Eretz Yisrael*. We can *daven* that next year, at our next seder, we should be free. ^א 

The Sea Saw

Roman Kimelfeld

The *pasuk* in *Tehillim* (114:3), which is a part of Hallel, says *the sea saw and ran away*. According to *Bereishis Rabbah* (87:8) the sea “ran away” (*va’yanos*) in the merit of Yosef because Yosef ran away (*va’yanas*) from *ishes Potifar* (*Bereishis* 39:13). While we understand that running away from *ishes Potifar* was a truly heroic act, why was this event so significant that it made the sea split?

*Parashas Derachim*¹ explains the connection between the two events. Yosef’s decision to run away from *ishes Potifar* was based on his understanding that he had the status of a *Yisrael*, and not of a *Ben Noach*. Yosef’s commitment to conduct himself as a *Yisrael* prompted Hashem to split the sea for the Jews. Below is the summary of the explanation in *Parashas Derachim*.

Yosef’s original halachic position

Prior to being sold, Yosef had an argument with his brothers about whether they had the status of *Bnei Noach* or *Yisrael*. As *Parashas Derachim* describes in the first *derush*, Yosef originally maintained that prior to *Matan Torah*, the sons of Yaakov were not yet full-fledged Jews. Rather, they were *Bnei Noach*, who kept all *mitzvos* of Torah as an added stringency. So, according to Yosef, they were required to keep both all of the stringencies of *Bnei Noach*, and also all of *mitzvos* of *Bnei Yisrael*.

Based on this halachic position, Yosef accused his brothers of eating *ever min hachai* (i.e., eating a limb from an animal that is still alive).² The halachah is that *Bnei Noach* are not allowed to eat from a

¹ By the author of *Mishneh LaMelech* on the *Rambam*.

² See *Rashi* to *Bereishis* 37:2.

slaughtered animal until the animal fully stops moving, even if the animal had *shechitah*.³ On the other hand, Jews are allowed to eat from the animal as soon as it had *shechitah*, even if it is still moving (see *Kesef Mishnah* there). Yosef's brothers, who held that they were full-fledged Jews, would eat from the animal as soon as it had *shechitah*, since this is permissible for Jews. Yosef maintained that they were required to *shecht* the animal as required for *Yisrael*, and *also* to refrain from eating from it until it stopped moving, as required for *Bnei Noach*. Thus, Yosef maintained that the sons of Yaakov had the stringencies of both *Yisrael* and *Bnei Noach*. Since his brothers did not observe the aforementioned stringency for *Bnei Noach*, he accused them of eating *ever min hachai*.

The Argument of the *Sar shel Esav*

Later, as *Parashas Derachim* brings from a Midrash, when Jews approached the Yam Suf, the *Sar shel Esav* presented to Hashem essentially the same argument as that which Yosef presented to his brothers. According to the *Sar shel Esav*'s argument, the Jews should be held accountable to the stringencies of both *Yisrael* and *Bnei Noach*. The *Sar shel Esav* claimed that the sea should not be split for the Jews because they worshipped *avodah zarah* in Mitzrayim. Now, the Jews who worshipped *avodah zarah* in Mitzrayim had both the status of *oness* (because they were forced to do it) and *shogeig* (because they did not know about the extent of this prohibition). However, the halachah is that *Bnei Noach* are not exempt for *shogeig*,⁴ and *Bnei Yisrael* are not fully exempt for *oness*.⁵ According to the *Sar shel Esav*, both stringencies applied to the Jews; it therefore argued that the sea should not be split for them. Hashem, though, rejected this argument.

³ *Rambam (Hil. Melachim 9:12)*.

⁴ *See Rashi to Makkos (9a)*.

⁵ *See Rambam (Hil. Yesodei HaTorah 5:4)*.

Yosef's dilemma

To reiterate, prior to being sold, Yosef held that he had to keep the stringencies of both *Yisrael* and *Bnei Noach*. However, now, as *eishes Potifar* threatened Yosef, he had the following dilemma. If Yosef refused to engage in *gilui arayos*, then *eishes Potifar* would likely get him killed. As a *Yisrael*, Yosef would be required to sacrifice his life under such circumstances because for a *Yisrael*, the halachah regarding *gilui arayos* is *yehareig v'al yaavor*.⁶ On the other hand, for a *Ben Noach* the halachah is exactly the opposite! A *Ben Noach* is not allowed to sacrifice his life in order to avoid *gilui arayos*.⁷ Thus, since keeping both the stringencies of *Yisrael* and *Bnei Noach* was not feasible in this situation, Yosef had to decide whether he was a *Yisrael* or a *Ben Noach*.

Yosef learns from Avraham that he has the status of Yisrael

Bereishis Rabbah that we quoted earlier teaches us that Yosef went outside, away from *eishes Potifar* (*Va'yetze hachutzah*⁸), because Hashem took Avraham outside (*Va'yotzei oso hachutzah*⁹).

Avraham had a dilemma similar to Yosef's when he was ready to sacrifice his life in Ur Kasdim. Just like we described regarding *gilui arayos*, so too, for *avodah zarah*, a *Yisrael* is obligated to be *moser nefesh* in order to avoid worshipping *avodah zarah*, but the halachah is the exact opposite for a *Ben Noach*. Avraham opted to be *moser nefesh*, as a *Yisrael* is required to do; however, he was not sure whether he did a mitzvah (in the event that he had the status of *Yisrael*) or an *aveirah* (in the event he had the status of a *Ben Noach*). The Gemara (*Shabbos* 166a) explains that when the *pasuk* states "*Va'yotzei oso hachutzah*," Hashem was signaling to Avraham that he does not need

⁶ Rambam (*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* 5:2).

⁷ Rambam (*Hilchos Melachim* 10:2, and see also the very end of *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* 5:1)

⁸ *Bereishis* 39:12.

⁹ *Bereishis* 15:5.

to worry about the astrological prediction that he will not have a son, because there is no *mazal* for *Yisrael*, so Hashem was taking Avraham outside (*hachutzah*) of the powers of astrology. Thus, Hashem confirmed that Avraham was indeed a *Yisrael*. Since Avraham was a *Yisrael*, this means that he performed a great *Kiddush Hashem* at Ur Kasdim, and therefore Hashem promised him great reward for this mitzvah.¹⁰

Based on Hashem's approval of Avraham's *mesiras nefesh* in Ur Kasdim, Yosef *paskened* that he had the *din* of a *Yisrael* (just like Avraham), and therefore he decided to sacrifice his life in order to avoid *gilui arayos*. Later, when he became the leader of the Jews in Mitzrayim, it became the *shitah* of the entire *Klal Yisrael* that they were no longer *Bnei Noach*; rather, they were full-fledged *Yisraelim*.

Based on Yosef's psak, Hashem split the Yam Suf

Since Yosef *paskened* that Jews had the status of *Yisrael* and acted accordingly when he ran away from *eishes Potifar*, at the Yam Suf, Hashem applied to the Jews the *din* of *Yisrael*. Since they worshipped *avodah zarah b'shogeig*, as *Yisraelim*, they were fully exempt from penalty. Accordingly, they deserved the splitting of the sea.

Thus, since Yosef conducted himself as a *Yisrael* when he ran away from *eishes Potifar*, Hashem applied to all of the Jews at the Yam Suf the *din* of *Yisrael*; consequently, they were not liable for serving *avodah zarah b'shogeig*, and hence the sea ran away. ^א

¹⁰ *Bereishis* 15:7.

Miracles

Ari Weiss

During Hallel, we recite the paragraph of *Betzeis Yisrael Mi'Mitzrayim*. The Rebbe of Strikov explained that when the miraculous occurs, it is not enough to marvel at the miracle and then move on. A person has to contemplate what happened and why it happened.

R' Elimelech Biderman shared the following story in his newly released Haggadah: R' Yitzchak Brudiansky, the mashgiach in Yeshivas Kol Torah, was once chatting with a secular Israeli taxi driver. The driver recalled how, as a young man, he and a group of friends had gone camping in the desert. One night, they awoke to the startled cries of one of their friends. A snake had appeared and wrapped itself around this young man, coiled around his body from head to toe.

There was terror in the eyes of the victim as the snake hissed, and everyone backed off as they tried to figure out their next move. The group leader drew his pistol and approached. It was clear that he had no choice but to shoot the snake, with the potential to also put his friend's life in danger. He raised the gun and pointed it at the head of the snake.

The others in the group were numb in fright, but one of them, realizing that their friend might be taking his last breaths, called out, "Say *Shema Yisrael!*" He approached and helped his friend say the words of the *pasuk*.

Lying there, with the snake coiled around him, the young man managed to repeat each of the words, realizing that they would likely be his final words. *Shema, Yisrael, Hashem, Elokeinu, Hashem,*

Echad... As he reached the end of the *pasuk*, the word “*echad*,” the snake began to unravel itself from his body, slithering away into the night and disappearing from view.

This was the remarkable story the taxi driver told R’ Brudiansky.

“Where is your friend now?” the mashgiach asked.

The driver replied that he became a *Baal Teshuvah* after the incident, enrolling in Yeshivas Ohr Hachaim, where he still learned.

“But what about you?” the mashgiach asked. “You also witnessed this open miracle. How is it that you did not draw the same conclusion as your friend?”

“*Kvod HaRav*,” the taxi driver answered politely, “*harei hanachash lo hayah alai*, the snake was not on me!”

A person can witness the most extraordinary things, but if he does not contemplate what he has seen and why he saw it, then he has not seen anything at all.

This explains why during *Kerias Yam Suf*, Hashem made even the water that was held in a container split. This would seem to be a minor thing compared to the entire sea splitting, allowing the Jewish people to pass through while the Egyptians were drowned. However, a person easily forgets a miracle unless it occurred to him. When the water split in the pitchers in everyone’s home, this would have a bigger impact than hearing about the sea splitting.¹

¹ Based on a *derashah* of the *Mara D’Asra*.

We should be *zocheh* to not only witness miracles, but to truly understand them and internalize them, thus allowing us to increase our levels of *emunah* and *bitachon* in Hashem. ^א
א

We Put Away our Pesach Dishes But We Don't Put Away Our *Emunah*

Moshe Rock

We all know that the spiritual high we feel during every one of our Yomim Tovim is a feeling that we should be able to carry with us even after the *chag* has ended. Each *chag* has its own strength and purpose that we are supposed to draw upon. Whether it be for *teshuvah*, or affirming Hashem's Oneness, or even just to be as happy as we can be. Pesach is a special Yom Tov where we should focus on *emunah*. How can we not when we got to see firsthand all the *nissim v'niflaos* that Hashem performed for us?

The following is a transcript from Rabbi Aryeh Cohen that tells how we should be carrying on those special thoughts and feelings of *emunah* throughout all of Sefiras HaOmer:¹

We are right now holding in the very *heilige* special days of Sefiras Haomer. The *koach* of these days, these very special days of growth, these days of excitement and anticipation for receiving the Torah – the *koach* of these days is surely built off Pesach, the holiday of *emunah*. All of the closeness to Hashem that we achieved and instilled into our hearts during Pesach we still feel and we are still building off as we prepare for Shavuot. What was the lingering taste of Pesach? What was the final revelation of the *Shechinah* when we saw Hashem so clearly? It was definitely *Kerias Yam Suf*.

None of us could imagine what it was to be walking through a sea, water on both sides, as *Chazal* teach us even a שפחה, even a maidservant had prophecies on the highest of levels.

¹ Daily *Emunah* is brought to you by Yeshiva Ateres Shimon of Far Rockaway, NY. Permission was given to include this in our *Kuntress*.

As we look in *Az Yashir* we see a very deep lesson in *emunah*. In *Az Yashir* we sing and we speak about how the Mitzrim were drowning in the waters. But we symbolize that in three different ways. At one point we say it was כמו אבן, *like stone*, in another place כעופרת, *like lead*, and in another place כקש *like straw*.

Rashi famously tells us (*Shemos* 15:5) that the symbolism of the Mitzrim was dependent on how they acted towards us. Basically, the Mitzrim that were the best of the worst were still bad to us and deserved to die but they were somewhat nicer than the other Mitzrim. They had a very very quick death and they sank quickly like lead. Those who were a little worse still better than the worst of the worst, the *beinonim*, were like stone, a quick death but not as quick. The worst Mitzrim suffered greatly and their drowning was כקש, *like straw*, a very slow, painful death. What's the significance of this *Rashi*?

I once learned from Reb Simcha Zissel Broyde, the Rosh Yeshiva of Chevron, such a beautiful idea. He said when Klal Yisroel came through the *Yam Suf* and they looked back, they saw the Mitzrim, and they saw certain Mitzrim who were drowning very quickly, a painless death, and those who were having a very painful, suffering death. They realized which Mitzrim were which, and they were able to recognize at that point that Hashem was paying the Mitzrim back *middah keneged middah* and therefore clearly was by their side the entire time. The entire time when the *yidden* were suffering through the *avdus* in Mitzrayim, Hashem was there watching, taking count, and paying back those Mitzrim now. That was the biggest *chizuk* in *emunah*. It was not just that Hashem was by their side now as they went through the redemption in the best of times. It was the recognition that Hashem was by their side even at the more difficult times, even at the worst of times. Hashem was there then as well, and this is what they were able to realize through the recognition of the Mitzrim and how they were put to death. And that was the שירה חדשה, this new song, שבו גאולים that they were singing. It was a song of *emunah*. Showing that Hashem

is not just with us at טוב ומיטיב ברוך but Hashem is with us also by ברוך דיין האמת, and Hashem is always by our side. Sometimes we just do not see why Hashem is orchestrating what's going on, but we have to believe and know that Hashem knows what is best for us always and that He is orchestrating everything going on in the world. He is by our side always.

Yesterday morning I had, unfortunately, to be at a *levayah*, where a close *talmid* of mine lost his father. Mr. Yitzchak Khaimov was *niftar* after a very difficult battle, very difficult, four years long from pancreatic cancer. Serious *tzaros*, physical suffering. He had told his children that he thanked Hashem for giving him cancer. The children asked, how could you say such a thing? As I was by this *levayah* I expected the answer to be something to the extent of "What do you mean? It brought the family so much closer, and it brought me so much closer to my children and to priorities." I thought he was going to explain this silver lining, which itself would be a high level. But that's not what he answered. He said thank You Hashem for bringing me cancer because Hashem gave this to me and if Hashem gave it to me, He knows what is best and we have to say thank You Hashem for everything in our lives. Can you imagine such a *yid* with this level of *emunah*? *Halevai* we should all be *zoche* to have such *emunah* in Hashem, not to need the *tzaros* to have such *emunah* but to have such *emunah* to know that Hashem is by our side every moment. Hashem is by our side at the best of times, and He is by our side at what we perceive as difficult times. IM"YH it will all lead to *geulah* and to know כל מה דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד, that everything Hashem does is for good. We will sing that שירה חדשה knowing that everything that happens in our lives is from Hashem. Say thank You Hashem for always being by my side. א

The Camp Around Har Sinai: It Would Have Been Enough¹

Jeffrey Silverberg

There are many traditional songs associated with the Seder. Perhaps the most popular and beloved is “*Dayenu*.” The tune is undeniably catchy and always brings to mind warm memories of past Passovers, including those shared with family members who are no longer physically present. But more significantly, the verses describe the love of Hashem for his people as He redeemed us from the bitter *galus* of Mitzrayim, led us through the splitting of the Yam Suf, revealed Himself at Har Sinai, gave us the Torah, took care of our needs in the forty-year sojourn through the wilderness, and ultimately brought us into Eretz Yisrael and the glory of the Beis HaMikdash.

The word “*dayenu*” is usually translated as “it would have been enough.” Each and every one of these wonderful favors that Hashem did for us would have been enough to celebrate, to be thankful for, to cherish as a demonstration of our closeness to our Creator. My favorite is the couplet that recites that had Hashem split the Sea for us, but not led us through on dry land, it would have been enough. *Chazal* describe for us the many miracles *Am Yisrael* experienced while in the Sea. There were water fountains and fruit trees for refreshment and the waves became solid walls simply for the sake of beauty. But more fundamentally, the seabed became dry land. It certainly would have been enough for Hashem to perform the great miracle of splitting the Sea to save the Jews being pursued by Egyptian war chariots. But He cared enough, *kaviyachol*, that our feet should not become muddy, that our path be smooth! How much does Hashem love us!

¹ Based on *Dorash Dovid on Mo'adim* by Rabbi Dovid Hofstedter.

Still, there is one verse of *Dayenu* that is difficult to understand on a simple level. “Had Hashem gathered us at Mount Sinai, but not given us the Torah, it would have been enough.” Was not the purpose of the convocation at Mount Sinai to witness Hashem’s revelation and to receive the Torah? Did Hashem not tell Moshe at the burning bush that a year later the people would worship there? Was the receiving of the Torah not the culmination of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and in fact its ultimate goal? How then would the gathering at Mount Sinai been enough without the giving of the Torah?

I recently heard a *derashah* from R’ Schuchatowitz, *shlita*, which explored this issue. The balance of this essay is based on that inspiring talk.

Rabbi Chaim Friedlander *z”l* in his sefer *Sifsei Chaim (Moadim, Chelek 3)* offers an approach. He cites the phrase *v’keiravtanu l’shimcha hagadol*, that Hashem has brought us near to His (Your) Great Name. contained in the *berachah* of *Ahavah Rabbah*. The *Ari z”l* in his *siddur Ishei Yisrael* instructs us to identify this phrase with *maamad Har Sinai*. At first glance, one might assume that that this closeness is due to our acceptance of the Torah and its attendant commandments. But is this so? With all the unimaginable glory of the Revelation of Hashem at Har Sinai, only a few of the mitzvos were actually given (and could be accepted) at that time. Fundamental as they are, the *Aseres HaDibros* contain only a handful of mitzvos. Most were taught by Hashem to Moshe in the Tent of Meeting during the ensuing sojourn in the wilderness, and subsequently reviewed in the plains of Moav.

The answer would seem to be obvious. *Naaseh v’nishma*. This acceptance of *ol malchus shamayim*, the Yoke of Heaven, is perhaps the most seminal statement in Jewish history. Nevertheless, R’ Friedlander notes, it is a one-sided commitment. The Jewish people unequivocally accepted the Torah. But closeness requires

participation by both parties. It required that Hashem also do something to consummate this very special relationship.

Accordingly then, what happened to make the gathering around Har Sinai to be “enough”?

Rabbi Freidlander explains. Our goal as Hashem’s chosen people is to cleave to Hashem, to achieve as much of a closeness and connection with Him as is humanly possible. The mitzvos are the means to achieve this goal, but the goal remains the *kiruv* itself.

The *Ramchal* in *Daas Tevunos* reveals the groundbreaking change that occurred at *Har Sinai*. The Jewish people had prepared themselves for a life of *avodas* Hashem. But prior to Matan Torah they were limited to trying to improve themselves by endeavoring to emulate the *middos* of Hashem. Any mitzvos they performed to that point were voluntary. As they surrounded the mountain, they became *mitzveh*, obligated, to follow the commands of Hashem. And that made all the difference.

The *Ramchal* continues that the power of a person who is commanded and does a mitzvah is exponentially stronger than that of one who does the mitzvah without being commanded to do so. By fulfilling Hashem’s command, a Jew has the real ability to change the entire creation by infusing more spiritually into it. As a natural result, his material situation will also improve.

He gives an example. A Kohen who does the *avodah* in the Beis HaMikdash can repair the world. A non-kohen who performs exactly the same actions is desecrating the Name of Hashem and is subject to the death penalty. If the kohen himself performs the *avodah* without wearing the requisite priestly vestments he also is subject to punishment and his actions are an abomination. Everything depends on the commandment of Hashem. The same actions that bring an uplifting to the world cause damage if not done by one who is

commanded and performs the action in compliance with the details of the commandment.

This incredible power of humanity was alluded to from the beginnings of creation. The snake in his enticement of Chavah tells her that Hashem's reason for not wanting Adam and Chavah to eat from the Tree is Knowledge is to prevent human beings from being like Hashem. *Rashi* explains that to be like Hashem is to be able to create worlds. Contained in the lies and deceit of the snake was this bit of truth. A person does have the ability to create worlds through his diligent observance of the commandments of his Creator.

The *Ramchal* continues that although the whole Torah was indeed not given at Har Sinai, something of tremendous importance was transmitted. The Jewish people received the spiritual potential inherent in observing the mitzvos, all of the mitzvos, including those not given until some time after. They were given crowns and came to some understanding of the advantages that are part of doing the will of Hashem. They were shown that observance of the mitzvos was the path to achieving their complete potential, and they felt the love of Hashem who brought all of us close to Him at that time as the Jews surrounded the mountain. They were given the realization that they were empowered to repair the world and bring it to its completion. They were told by their Creator that they were a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. At that point in history Hashem separated the Jewish people forever from all of the other nations.

Chazal tell us that a Jew is obligated to remember the assembly around Har Sinai every day. We must be grateful for the *chesed* of Hashem who gave us at that time the power and possibility to observe the mitzvos and to thereby cause great and profound spiritual improvement to the world with each and every mitzvah that we perform. Indeed, a Jew can create new and valuable spiritual worlds by fulfilling the commandments of Hashem.

With this we can understand the uniqueness of *Maamad* Har Sinai. Hashem brought us close to him and revealed to us what it means to be a Jew, commanded by Hashem to fulfill His will and thereby constantly change the world for the better and bring it closer to its repair and completion.

Dayenu, indeed. It certainly would have been enough. אֱלֹהֵינוּ

Ribbis in the Partnership context ¹

Rabbi Yitzchok Strauss

I would like to give you a little background on how the mortgage and loan industry works in America.

There are various markets for stocks and bonds. The bonds and stocks go up and down on a daily basis or even by the minute. The mortgage industry is based on the bond market. This means that if you want to get a mortgage on your house, the rates are pegged to the bond market.

When I first started working for a local CPA firm, the accountant had started a mortgage company and had me placed with a local mortgage broker servicing customers who wanted to buy a house or refinance their existing home loan. The company would advertise on the radio and when homeowners called in, we would offer them mortgages at a rate set by the mortgage warehouse who would take the packaged loans from us. The bond market would dictate what they could charge, leaving the mortgage warehouse with a profit.

There were a few mortgage warehouses we could place the mortgage with. The rate we were provided had a sliding commission scale. The higher the interest rate I could convince the homeowner to take, the higher the percentage rate (points) the bank would pay us. So let us say the mortgage rate I told the homeowner was 5%, and at that rate the mortgage warehouse would pay us a 2% commission. If the loan was for \$100,000, the mortgage warehouse would give me \$2,000 for placing the mortgage with their company. Let us say a homeowner improved their credit score and wanted to refinance their 10% mortgage and we could get him down to 7%. Assuming the warehouse

¹ One of the mitzvos given at Sinai was the prohibition against *ribbis*. We therefore present this article written by our local expert on these *halachos*.

decided they were a valid credit risk, they may give us a higher commission (3% or 4% instead of the usual 2%) and my company (and I) would make a higher profit. Another factor, obviously, was the size of the loan—the larger the amount borrowed, the bigger the commission.

The people who worked with me were young guys looking to make a quick dollar, with a make-it-rich-quick attitude. When I was working there for a few months, the interest rates were constantly going down. So they would lock in a client with one warehouse and then back out and switch to another one for a lower rate — or worse, for the same rate but a much higher commission. They knew how to manipulate the system to maximize the profit for themselves, whether it was good for the company or not. When the warehouse got upset because they were buying bonds to back up their loan commitments, they threatened and sometimes blacklisted the brokerage from using their facility. One way a loan officer avoided this was to tell the client they locked them in to a rate, when in reality they had not. If rates went up, they would just not return the borrower's calls or tell them that an error occurred. If rates went down, they would lock in at the same rate and get larger commissions. Another “trick of the trade” was to play with the lock-in periods. It normally took two months to go through the paperwork to refinance or purchase. But if they waited and took a 30-day lock or even a 7-day lock commitment, the commission was also higher. The shorter period allowed for less fluctuation in bond pricing and therefore dictated a higher profit and higher commission.

Shulchan Aruch (סימן קע) discusses the *dinim* of an *areiv* (a guarantor). In some circumstances a Jew can be a guarantor for another Jew who is paying *ribbis* to an *akum*, and sometimes not. The basis for this is really ש"ע סימן קסט סעיף א which discusses the case where one Jew has a loan from an *akum* and wants to return the money. His friend tells him: “Please do not return the money because I need it. Give me the money and I will take over the payments to the *akum*.” The *Shulchan Aruch* says this is prohibited. Why is this prohibited? The second Jew

is paying the *akum* the *ribbis*. He is not paying a Jew. What is the problem?

Tosafos (בבא מציעא דף עא: ד"ה מצאון) are bothered by this and answer that the source of the *issur* is *areivus*. The Gemara (קדושין ז) says that if a man wants to marry a woman, and she says, "I will accept the proposal if you pay someone else a sum of money," she is married even though she did not receive any money. Since her fiancé is paying the money per her direction, she is getting a benefit. So, too, in our case where the second borrower is paying the *ribbis* for which the first Jew is ultimately responsible, it is as if he is paying the first Jew the *ribbis*, and this is forbidden.

Coming back to our *Shulchan Aruch* (סימן קע). The *siman* describes three potential relationships between the guarantor and the *akum* lender: (1) *Shaluf dutz*: the lender has the exclusive right to go after the guarantor and he can no longer collect from the original borrower; the guarantor is paying the lender the principal and interest for his fellow Jew; everyone agrees that this is forbidden; (2) the *akum* has the right to collect from the guarantor before the borrower if he wants; (3) the lender must make every effort to collect from the borrower first, and only if he cannot he goes to the guarantor.

The *Taz* brings the dispute between *Rashi* and *Rashba* where *Rashi* is more lenient permitting a situation as in case (2) above where the lender can go after anyone he wants and the *Rashba* only permits a case where the lender must go after the borrower first as in case (3). The *Taz* explains the crux of the dispute is whether "one side" in *ribbis* is לאורייתא or דרבנן. This means that it is not for sure the guarantor will be paying *ribbis*. Only if the borrower does not pay, he will end up paying, but this case is beyond the scope of our discussion.

At this point I would like to focus on partnerships as they pertain to repaying loans. The *Taz* in *se'if* 3 discusses partnerships in this

context. The first case is where one partner gets the financing, and he is the only one liable to the *akum*. He then contributes the loan proceeds to the partnership. The partnership then pays the interest and principal to the *akum*. The *Taz* says this is prohibited and it would only be good if both partners are on the loan document, so that they are both liable. Alternatively, if the partner procured a loan from a Jew with a *heter iska*, then the *Taz* says that it is presumed that the partner has given the proceeds to the partnership under the same terms of the *heter iska*, and that also would be permitted.

The *Taz* adds a qualification that if the investing partner borrows the money from the *akum* and contributes it to a partnership where both partners are working equally, then the loan proceeds are part of the cost of the *iska* and the interest is just a business expense, and it would be permitted to pay from joint assets. Otherwise, if the borrower is a silent partner and does not work in the business, it would be prohibited to pay interest from partnership assets.

Now let us discuss an actual case. Two partners in an LLC (Limited Liability Company) borrowed money from a corporation to buy a vacation rental property. The lender required that not only the Managing Member of the LLC sign the loan documents on behalf of the LLC, but that both partners individually sign on the loan documents (this is common as the bank wants to keep everyone on the hook). This would have worked, except there was a misunderstanding as to the terms of the partnership. One partner understood that if they needed to contribute additional funds into the LLC, it would be done equally, while the other thought (because he found the property) he would not need to contribute more funds.

This created significant friction and ultimately another person was brought in to buy out the other partner. The new partner agreed to reimburse all the expenses already paid by the first partner as well as a \$25,000 payment for his share of the entity. The new partner stated

at closing that the *iska* would be considered null and void if there was an issue of *ribbis*—famous last words in this case! Since the first partner had signed personally and had presumably been vetted as a suitable borrower, the bank would not willingly replace a borrower for a different, unvetted person. Not only will they not let him off, but it is probable that there is a clause in the loan documents that if any transfers were made, the loan would be in default and become immediately due. Therefore, the first partner required the LLC to either refinance to remove the original partner as a guarantor or sell the property as soon as possible. Furthermore, the buyer and the other original partner would indemnify the first partner for any losses and keep the loan in good standing.

Let us now look back at the *Shulchan Aruch* (קטט סעיף א) which forbids a Jew from assuming another Jew's loan to an *akum*.

What do we think is the case here? My simple reading is that the new partner is paying the *ribbis* of the old partner and has basically guaranteed the mortgage payment. This, the *Shulchan Aruch* says, is forbidden. The *Shulchan Aruch* says that the Jew gave the loan funds over to the other Jew. Did the first partner give any loan proceeds to the new partner? Did not the old partner take over the loan? That is how business works today. People do not walk around with suitcases of cash. One possibility is the *Shulchan Aruch* only prohibits the payments if the first borrower physically gave the debt proceeds to the second partner.

Another possible solution is actually referenced in the second *Taz* of the *siman* making reference to *Shulchan Aruch* (קטט, ז) which states that if I ask a Jew to borrow money from an *akum* for me and I will pay him back, and he gives the interest to the *akum*, this is forbidden because the *akum* only knows the Jew to whom he lent the money. But if there is collateral and the *akum* is happy that the collateral will satisfy his loan, then it is not a problem. The *akum* is not looking at

the original Jew to pay the debt. Perhaps we can say here that the valuable property is the ultimate recourse for the bank to collect the loan, and that it could be acceptable. One problem with this is that the bank did get everyone to sign, and typically they sue everyone when they try to collect. However, that is usually not the case when it comes to residential mortgages, where the bank does not usually go after the owners for any shortfall (it could be due to regulations). So here, since it is a residential rental, maybe the banks do not go after the parties and rely on the underlying collateral.

Another possibility is looking at *Shulchan Aruch* (קע"ו, ו) where a future father-in-law can cut a deal with his son-in-law to promise him sort of a set amount of money but agrees to pay him a *ribbis* component over time and pay him the principal at the end of the period that it is permitted. So, he is promising to pay him more later if he waits to get paid. But this is only permitted if it is part of the initial deal and if he promises him a sum certain and then renegotiates interest payments over time then it is prohibited. So, too, here by the sale if he agrees up front that the purchase price of the partner's share of the vacation rental is a stream of payments and it is all principal, then it would be permissible. Why should a gift be different than a sale?

The source of the *Rama* is the *Beis Yosef* (בית יוסף אחרון סימן קס"א שמביא) (תש הריב"ש) that permits this arrangement of making the stream of payments part of the agreement as principal. However, if you look there at the end of the *Rivash* he says this is all fine, but when you write up the contract, make sure to term the payments as a stream of payments and not as principal and interest because the *beis din* will not enforce it since it looks like *ribbis*. So here the contract between partner A and new partner is to pay the mortgage payments of the original lender, which *beis din* may not enforce because it certainly states *ribbis*. Also, the *Rama* states this case and characterizes it as a gift. Why not bring a case of a sale? Is there any reason to differentiate between a gift and a sale?

If you say after all these possible *heterim* there is still a problem of *ribbis*, there is still a way to fix this. There is a *Ben Ish Chai* in *Parashas Va'eschanan* that says after the fact we can call all the payments made to date principal payments and reconstitute the loan so that all future payments have the *ribbis* and not the prior ones. This is done by redoing the amortization schedule. There are programs that permit manipulation of the loan values and recalculation of the loan. In our case we assumed all payments were made as principal prior to the *heter iska* resulting in a smaller principal amount owed. We enter the principal amount and we enter the set monthly payment and number of remaining payments. We then request the program to calculate the required interest rate so that we end up in the same place. In this way the loan and *heter iska* have the same result by manipulating the interest rate and the payments prior to the *heter iska*, which is now all principal. The only issue here is that we are selling or refinancing the loan. This fix will only work if you are keeping the loan through the life of the loan.

This entire time we have been focusing on the new partner. Have any of you thought about the original partner? The new partner was not an active partner, which we said originally in the *Taz* is a problem. At this point the old partner is not an active partner here either; and so although we have many solutions for the new partner when the old partner is paying his share of the loan, to the extent it is paying the old partner's portion of the loan it is *ribbis*. He definitely needs a new *heter iska* and none of these solutions will help him. ^א

Give Me Some Fire!

Michael Steinberg

Prayer is one of the most misunderstood elements of our faith. In truth, prayer is the way a Jew gets things done in this world. But sometimes we take prayer lightly, we underestimate it, and we short-change ourselves. That's not exactly a new problem, but it's a problem nonetheless. So let us try to shine some light on this business of praying.

The Rizhiner Rebbe, Rabbi Yisroel Friedman, a 19th Century chasid who lived in Russia and Ukraine, told about a chance meeting in the forest between two people – Alexander the Great and a wandering gypsy.¹ Let's listen to their words, and see what we can learn from their conversation.

Alexander the Great was once wandering through the forest, and he got lost. He couldn't find his way back. And he met a gypsy traveling in the forest.

The gypsy was smoking a pipe. And Alexander the Great also wanted to smoke his own pipe. (I don't know what they smoked in those days, maybe some kind of incense or snuff.) He asks the gypsy, could he give him some fire, could he give him a light. So the gypsy just looks at him, and he says, "No."

Alexander the Great says, "Look here," and he reaches into his pocket and takes out a few coins, and he hands them to the gypsy and says,

¹ As told by Rabbi Ephraim Wachsmann *shlit"a* on "Unwrapping the Gift of Tefillah," an audio recording released by the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation.

“Now, give me some fire.” The fellow says, “No, I’m not going to give you any.”

Alexander the Great says, “Look, you don’t know who I am, but I’m Alexander the Great; I’m the most powerful emperor in the world, and if you help me out, I’ll be very grateful to you. I’ll give you bags and bags of gold and silver.” And once again, he says, “No.”

Now Alexander the Great is getting desperate; he needs to smoke his pipe. And he says, “Look, I’ll make you the governor of an entire city,” and now he’s promising him still more things, he even offers him half of the *malchus*, half of his entire empire! And the gypsy just says, “No, I refuse.”

The Rizhiner Rebbe says, “Think about this story – this story is insanity!”

“Who’s asking?” Alexander the Great – the most powerful ruler in the world.

“Who’s he asking from?” From a roaming gypsy, who doesn’t have a roof over his head, who’s living in the forest.

“What’s he asking for?” Just a little bit of fire.

“And what’s he promising?” He’s promising everything in the world, all the riches in the world – and the fellow just says “no”; he laughs in his face.

Says the Rizhiner Rebbe: Aren’t we really the same way when it comes to praying?


“Who’s asking?” The Almighty Himself, the *Melech Elyon*, the King of Kings of Kings.

“Who’s he asking from?” A person, a frail creature of flesh and blood.

“What’s he asking for?” Just a little *fire*, a little bit of warmth in our prayers.

“And what does he promise?” Everything! Hashem is telling us, “Ask me for what you need, my children, I’m ready to give it to you!”

And we... just... say... “NO!”

Where is our sense? 

The *Keil Malei* Prayer

Rabbi Abba Zvi Naiman

This year, the *yahrzeit* of my namesake great-grandfather, Abba Zvi ben Kasriel Friedberg, *a"h*, fell on Shabbos, 3 Shevat, the Shabbos before the 8 Shevat *yahrzeit* of my father, Yaakov Eliyahu ben Dovid, *a"h*. I was prepared to have the *keil malei* said for both at Minchah, but unexpectedly a *chassan* was there. It was his second marriage, but during the first three days, *tachanun* is not said, from which follows that *Tzikkascha Tzedek* and *keil malei* would also not be said. This question of missed opportunities for *keil malei* comes up pretty frequently, so I thought I would take a look at the origin of this prayer and share it with you.

Before I begin, we have to be careful not to confuse the two prayers that are said for the deceased, the *keil malei* and *yizkor*. They are both referred to as *hazkaras neshamos*, recalling the memory of the souls; but the *keil malei* is recited by the *shaliach tzibbur* (or *gabbai*) whereas *yizkor* is said by the congregation. This is based on the *nusach* of each. *Yizkor* is recited in first person, by each person in the *tzibbur*. The *keil malei* is said in third person because the *shaliach tzibbur* (or the *gabbai*) is reciting it for the one making the *keil malei*.¹

We will now examine the three times of year that the Rishonim mention as appropriate for *hazkaras neshamos*.²

Yom Kippur

¹ See *Gesher HaChaim* (31:1 and 31:2:4). This is why someone with parents walks out of the shul during when the *tzibbur* is saying *yizkor* on Yom Tov, but not by a *keil malei* that is said on a Shabbos for a *yahrzeit*, where only the *shaliach tzibur* is saying it for whoever needs it. See below.

² Although there are many Rishonim who discuss these issues, we will limit ourselves to those cited by the *Beis Yosef* and *Rama* wherever possible.

The *Beis Yosef* (*Orach Chaim*, end of §621) cites the *Mordechai* (*Yoma* §727), who writes that people are accustomed to pledge *tzedakah* on Yom Kippur for the sake of the deceased, based on a *Sifra* which learns from a *pasuk* about the *eglah arufah* that the deceased need atonement just like the living. The *Darkei Moshe* (§8) adds to this that the *Mahari Veil* said that the day is called *Yom HaKippurim* in the plural because there is *kaparah* for both the living and the deceased.

The *Beis Yosef* then cites the *Rokei'ach* (§217) who writes that Hashem examines the hearts of the living and deceased and determines whether if the deceased person were alive he would have given the *tzedakah*. The *Rokei'ach* further gives examples of how deceased people can be helped by the living.

The *Shulchan Aruch* (621:1) writes simply that people have the custom to pledge *tzedakah* on Yom Kippur for the sake of the deceased.

Note that there is no mention yet of *hazkaras neshamos* on Yom Kippur. However, the *Darkei Moshe* (*ibid.*) cites the *Kol Bo* (§70) who writes that we are accustomed to mention the deceased because it serves to humble the heart of the person (i.e., aiding his *teshuvah*).³ However, the *Rama* to the *Shulchan Aruch* gives a different reason, writing that we do *hazkaras neshamos* because the deceased also have atonement on Yom Kippur.⁴ And in *Hil. Tzedakah* (*Yoreh Deah* 249:16) he follows the *Rokei'ach* in saying that there is an ancient

³ The *Kol Bo* (not cited by the *Darkei Moshe*) continues that this is why we read *Acharei Mos*, so that the listeners will take it to heart how much care they should take in order not to sin. For even Aharon, who loved everyone and brought them closer to Torah (*Avos* 1:12) was not protected from his merits to avoid disturbing his joy with the death of his two great sons. See there further.

⁴ The citation in the *Shulchan Aruch* is the *Mordechai*, but the *Mordechai* used this reason for giving *tzedakah*, not for saying *hazkaras neshamos*.

custom to pledge *tzedakah* during *hazkaras neshamos* because it helps their *neshamos*.⁵

Yom Tov

The *Machzor Vitri* (*Tefillas Yom Tov Sheni U'Megillas Rus*) writes that since on the last day of the *Shalosh Regalim* we read in the *Kerias HaTorah* of *Kol HaBechor* (*Devarim* 16:17) everyone according to what he can give, there is a custom to pledge *tzedakah* as a merit only for the living; but we should not do it as a merit for the deceased so that we will not be in sorrow about them on the day when we are supposed to be happy. He concludes that in Germany the custom is to pledge *tzedakah* for the deceased only on Yom Kippur.⁶

However, the *Levush* (§490) writes that because of the *Kerias HaTorah* of *Kol HaBechor* there is a custom to pledge *tzedakah* for the deceased on the last day of Pesach for *hazkaras haneshamos*, that Hashem should remember them, and then He should remember us for good together with them through their merit. And we therefore do it on all of the *regalim* when we have this *laining*. He concludes that on Yom Kippur we do it for a different reason; i.e., because it is a day of judgment.

There is another reason given for reciting *yizkor* during the Yomim Tovim that would apply also to Eretz Yisrael, where *Kol HaBechor* is not *lained* since there is no *Yom Tov Sheni* there. The *Kav HaYashar* (§86) writes that he saw a reason why there is *hazkaras neshamos* on the last days of the Yomim Tovim in Poland. We know that one of the ten miracles that occurred in the *Beis HaMikdash* was that on the

⁵ I do not know why he waits until *Yoreh Deah* to mention this *Rokei'ach* that the *Beis Yosef* had cited in *Orach Chaim*.

⁶ The *Sefer Siach Tefillah* (p.462) explains that the old custom was that after *Kerias HaTorah* the *gabbai* would go around the shul holding the *Sefer Torah* to all the people *davening* there and give them a *berachah* for the *tzedakah* each would give based on his ability.

Shalosh Regalim, when the entire nation came there to be *oleh regel*, they would stand crowded together but bow with plenty of room. This was because the *neshamos* of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, together with the *neshamos* of the *tzaddikim*, would enter the celestial *Beis HaMikdash*, which would cause it to come to Earth and replace the terrestrial *Beis HaMikdash*. And since the celestial *Beis HaMikdash* was totally spiritual, it could hold all of the Jewish people. Therefore, now that our transgressions have destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*, we must mention the *neshamos* of our holy forefathers every Yom Tov, so that their merit will still protect us.

I did not find the custom for reciting *yizkor* on Yom Tov in the *Mishnah Berurah*, but the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (133:22) quotes this *Levush*. And the *Shaarei Ephraim* (10:31) also cites this custom.⁷

Shabbos

The first reference to *hazkaras neshamos* on Shabbos is by the *Shibalei HaLeket* (§81, cited by the *Beis Yosef, Orach Chaim*, end of §284), who mentions prayers that are recited after *Kerias HaTorah* on Shabbos. He says that we are accustomed *lehazkir neshamos*, and to bless those who are involved in communal work (our *Yekum Purkan*). And he quotes his brother *R' Binyamin*, who says that since Shabbos is a day of *menuchah*, similar to the future era, and it is a day that even the deceased are resting and not being judged, it is appropriate to mention them for *menuchah* and *berachah*, and to pray for them. The *Shibalei HaLeket* then writes that *R' Sheneur* found a proof from a *Midrash* that we can help the deceased by *hazkaras neshamos* and pledging *tzedakah* for their merit.

⁷ However, I'm not clear on the exact formula of *yizkor* and *keil malei* he is writing about.

Based on this, the *Rama* (284:7) writes that there is a custom after *Kerias HaTorah*⁸ *lehazkir neshamos* and bless those who are involved in communal affairs, each place like its custom.⁹ The *Rama*, though does not mention the part about pledging *tzedakah* as he does for Yom Kippur and as he writes in *Hil. Tzedakah (Yoreh Deah 249:16)* in reference to *hazkaras neshamos* in general.

At this point, we see that there was a custom to have *hazkaras neshamos* every Shabbos after *Kerias HaTorah*, not just when there was a *yahrzeit* the coming week. The *Shaarei Ephraim* writes (10:33) that this was done for the people who were *niftar* that year.

It is unclear, though, whether this *hazkarah* was *yizkor* or the *keil malei*.

The *Gesher HaChaim* (31:1) begins his discussion by stating that there is a custom to say the *keil malei* prayer by the *Shaliach Tzibbur* like the *Shibalei HaLeket* and the *Rama* write regarding Shabbos.¹⁰ And the custom is for the *kahal* to recite *yizkor* on Yom Kippur, as the *Rama* states there. From this it appears that the weekly Shabbos custom was to say just the *keil malei*.¹¹

⁸ The *Kaf HaChaim* (284:38) points out that this implies that it is not proper to recite the *Keil Malei* in between *aliyos*.

⁹ The *Beur HaGra* there writes that this is done on Shabbos because everyone is at shul, and it is good for the people to think about it. [The *Shibalei Leket* (followed by the *Beis Yosef*) mentions this regarding the prayer for those involved in community needs. The *Gra* seems to be adapting this to the *keil malei*. But the *Beur Halachah* quotes the *Beur HaGra*, but attributes it to the “*Beis Yosef* cited by the *Gra*.”]

¹⁰ He also adds Monday and Thursday in the parenthesis with Shabbos. See below.

¹¹ This is also the view of the *Ketzos HaShulchan* cited below because he says instead of reciting *hazkaras neshamos* every Shabbos for those who were *niftar* that year, a *hazkarah* is made on the Shabbos before the *yahrzeit* every year. Since the annual *hazkarah* refers to the *keil malei*, the old custom must also have been to recite the *keil malei*.

However, from the *Shaarei Ephraim* it seems that the custom on Shabbos was that first everyone would say *yizkor* and afterwards the *shaliach tzibur* would say the *keil malei*. For he writes (10:32) that even though it is not proper to be involved for too long in *hazkaras neshamos* on Shabbos and Yom Tov, the *shaliach tzibur* should still not say a mumbled *keil malei*. This seems to mean that both were said.¹²

And before we move on, we should note that the *Shaarei Ephraim* (10:27) writes that the custom was to recite *hazkaras neshamos* every Monday and Thursday, in addition to Shabbos, unless it is a day when *tachanun* is not recited because of a Yom Tov or because there is a *bris* or a *chassan* in the *shul*.¹³

The current custom

As we have learned, there used to be a custom to recite *hazkaras neshamos* every Shabbos after *Kerias HaTorah* for the people who were *niftar* that year.

However, the *Gesher HaChaim* himself (end of 31:2) suggests that the custom of reciting *hazkaras neshamos* every Shabbos originated from it being recited on Yom Kippur. But on Yom Kippur, *Yizkor* is also said.

¹² The *Shaarei Ephraim* writes further that someone whose parents are alive should leave the *shul* when they are saying the *keil malei* on Yomim Tovim and Yomim Noraim. But he explains in *Pischei Shearim* there that it would not be proper for them to be silent while everyone else is saying *yizkor*; and there is further a possible issue of *ayin hara*. Since he mentions *yizkor* and *keil malei* interchangeably, the term *hazkaras neshamos* presumably refers to both. But here again it is unclear the exact formula he is talking about.

¹³ The *Pischei Shearim* (to 10:32) asks why it should be recited on Mondays and Thursdays since we do not have the reasoning of it being a day when the *neshamos* are at rest. He answers that since Monday and Thursdays are days of *ratzon*, it is proper to pray for the *neshamos* then. On Shabbos, on the other hand, when we do not pray for needs, the reason we are *mazkir neshamos* is because it is a day of *menuchah* for the *neshamos*, so we can wish that they should have their proper *menuchah*. See also above, note 10, how the *Gesher HaChaim* mentions Mondays and Thursdays, as well.

The *Ketzos HaShulchan* (*Badei HaShulchan* 83, note 12) writes that we no longer see the custom of reciting *hazkaras neshamos* every Shabbos for those who were *niftar* that year. Rather, a *hazkarah* is made on the Shabbos before the *yahrzeit*. This, then, is a description of the prevailing custom in our shuls.¹⁴

I have a feeling that, like many other customs, this change originated from the words of the *Mekubalim*. There are *Poskim* who write that the *Ari z"l* would make fun of people who would say the *keil malei* because instead of helping the *niftar*, it might hurt him. The *Teshuvos Rav Pe'alim* (Vol. 4 §35) explains that since we pray that the *neshamah* should rise to the highest realms, it is possible that the deeds of that person will be examined to determine whether he deserves that level. And by doing so, it might be determined that he was at too high of a level to begin with.¹⁵ The *Orchos Chaim* (Spinka 621:11) therefore writes that it is preferable just to pledge *tzedakah* for the *aliyah* of the *neshamah*.

Perhaps this is why we no longer have *hazkaras neshamos* every week. But since there is a special *aliyah* for a *niftar* on the Shabbos before the *yahrzeit*,¹⁶ we do not have the concern that our *hazkarah* will cause harm.

¹⁴ However, it the *hazkaras neshamos* on Yom Kippur and Yomim Tovim has remained intact, except for the fact that the individuals reciting *yizkor* say their own *keil malei* at the end, instead of the *chazzan* saying it. One should therefore change the third-person *nusach* found in the *machzorim* ("because he pledged *tzedakah*") to first person ("because I pledged *tzedakah*").

¹⁵ However, the *Rav Pe'alim* concludes that the custom is to say these prayers. For even though the *Ari z"l* laughed at the custom, he did not prohibit it. He further writes that the custom began before the times of the *Ari z"l* and continues to this day.

¹⁶ Some even have the *minhag* to say *kaddish* on the Shabbos before the *yahrzeit* because that is when the *neshamah* has an *aliyah* (*Mishmeres Shalom, Chaim U'Vrachah*, p. 42, citing the *Zohar HaKadosh*).

Concluding the current-day customs, the *Nitei Gavriel* (78:2) writes that in many places the custom is to recite the *keil malei* at the Shabbos Minchah before the *yahrzeit*.¹⁷

And although based on what we have learned from the Rishonim that the primary day to say the *keil malei* is the Shabbos of the *yahrzeit*¹⁸ or the Shabbos before a *yahrzeit* that falls during the following week,¹⁹ we have seen that there a view to recite a *keil malei* even on Monday and Thursday.²⁰

Pledging *tzedakah*

We would think that it would not be beneficial for a *niftar* to have *tzedakah* pledged for him since he presumably already was judged. However, the Rishonim find a source in the Midrash that *tzedakah* always adds to the atonement of the *niftar*.

The *Midrash Tanchuma* (*Haazinu* §1) says that there is a custom to pledge *tzedakah* during *hazkaras neshamos* because it lifts any souls that are in Gehinnom like an arrow shot out of the bow.

¹⁷ It is interesting that I did not find anyone earlier say what I think is the prevalent custom nowadays. I heard from someone that this was an innovation of the American Rabbis to entice people to come back to shul for Minchah on Shabbos afternoons. [Perhaps we can add that this is why some shuls have a *keil malei* on Mondays and Thursdays.]

¹⁸ This is the prevailing *minhag*, but *Teshuvos Betzeil HaChochmah* (Vol. 2 §6) has a long *teshuvah* regarding whether it should be done the Shabbos before the Shabbos *yahrzeit*.

¹⁹ The *Kol Bo Al Aveilus* (p. 399) writes that this is true even if the *yahrzeit* falls in the middle of the week; the *keil malei* is still recited the Shabbos before.

²⁰ To avoid *tircha detzibura* (since the mainstream custom is to recite the *keil malei* only on Shabbos), in our Bais Medrash we do not say a *keil malei* after *kerias haTorah*, but rather we allow someone on Monday and Thursday after the conclusion of Shacharis to open the Aron HaKodesh and say the *keil malei*. See below that the Sefer should not be taken out of the Aron for this purpose.

Rabbeinu Bechaya (end of *Parashas Shoftim*) also writes that the dead can be atoned through the *tzedakah* that one gives on their behalf. And it is especially beneficial when a son pledges for his father because of the principle (*Sanhedrin* 104a) that a son gives merit to his father.²¹

The *Rama* (*Yoreh Deah* 249:16) writes that it is an ancient custom to pledge *tzedakah* during *hazkaras neshamos*, and it is beneficial for their souls. The *Gesher HaChaim* (31:1) writes that the main benefit of *hazkaras neshamos* is the *tzedakah* that is pledged; and it is especially beneficial for the son to do so, as the aforementioned *Rabbeinu Bechaya* says. The *Ketzos HaShulchan* goes so far as to say that if one does not pledge money, there is no purpose in the *hazkaras neshamos*.

However, one must be careful to fulfill his pledge. The *Kav HaYashar* (*ibid.*) writes that if someone delays giving the *tzedakah*, the *neshamah* for which he pledged it will become a *mekatreig* (prosecutor) to him. The *Shaarei Chaim* (to the *Shaarei Ephraim* note 38) writes that the *Terumas HaDeshen* would not eat on the day after Yom Tov until he had given the *tzedakah* he had pledged. And the *Munkatcher Rebbe* (*Darkei Chaim VeShalom* §506) was careful to put the *yizkor* money in a *pushke* immediately after Yom Tov.²²

A few more details

As mentioned in the beginning, we can see from the *nusach* that the *keil malei* was instituted for the *Shaliach Tzibbur* to say it. However, the *Teshuvos Binyan Olam* (§62, by R' Yitzchak Isak Chaver) writes

²¹ See also *Sefer Chasidim* (§170), who explains why pledging *tzedakah* for a *niftar* is like the *kaparah* of the *eglah arufah*.

²² I also saw that some give the *tzedakah* beforehand, and in the *keil malei* they say that it was already given. But to me that seems to miss the advantage of the special *aliyas neshamah* that occurs on Shabbos through the pledging the *tzedakah* that day. For if the *tzedakah* was already given, all that's left is the *tefillah* part, which is just secondary to the *tzedakah*. However, this would certainly be better than pledging the *tzedakah* and not giving it.

that it is possibly better for the son to say the *keil malei* because of the principle that the son gives merit to the father. However, I think the *minhag* is for the *gabbai* to make the *keil malei* so as not to embarrass those who are unable (similar to our having a *baal korei* for all of the *aliyos*). And as for giving *zechus*, the son is pledging *tzedakah* for the merit of the *neshamah*, as explained in the previous section.

The primary recital of both the *keil malei* and *yizkor* is to be with a *tzibbur*. However, since it is not *davar shebekedushah* that requires ten men for it to be said, someone *davening* by his or herself may recite *yizkor* at home. And similarly, the *keil malei* may be recited alone, for example, if there is no *minyán* at the cemetery.²³

The custom for the *gabbai* to hold the Sefer Torah during *hazkaras neshamos* is found in the *Pri Megadim* (*Mishbetzos* 141:4), cited by the *Mishnah Berurah* (*Shaar Tziyum* 146:18).²⁴ However, *Piskei Teshuvos* (§284 note 119) proves that the Sefer should not be taken out of the Aron HaKodesh for this purpose.

In conclusion

I was unable to say the *keil malei* for my father *a"h* and namesake great-grandfather *a"h* this year. But I did have in mind to give *tzedakah* for their *aliyas neshamah*, and I Zelled the donation to the shul on Motza'ei Shabbos.²⁵

According to a *teshuvah* cited by the *Nishmas Yisrael* (*Aveilus* §34), one is allowed to say the *keil malei* by himself when it will not be said


²³ *Gesher HaChaim* (31:6). See also *Halichos Shlomo* (*Tefillah* Ch. 16 note 9).

²⁴ This actually comes up peripherally in the *Pri Megadim*'s discussion about standing up for a Sefer Torah. He says there is no need to stand when the *chazan* is holding the Torah for *hazkaras neshamos*. It is interesting, though, that there is no clear directive for doing so.

²⁵ Just as good as putting money in a *pushke*.

by the *tzibbur* because *tachanun* is not said that day. Accordingly, I could have said the *keil malei* on my own, but I thought it would be sufficient to say it at the respective *kevarim*, my father *a"h* on his *yahrzeit*, and my great-grandfather the day after (since the *yahrzeit* was on Shabbos).²⁶

I further hope that the everyday Torah that I learn and the mitzvos that I perform will give an *aliyah* to my father *a"h* and all of my ancestors. As I have said many times, the biggest way a person can give a *zechus* to his parents, even when they are alive, is to act properly. This certainly carries far more weight in *Shamayim* than a particular *tefillah* someone happens to recite.

So if for some reason you cannot come to shul to have the *keil malei* said on the Shabbos before the *yahrzeit*, please do not get unhung. We have seen that this custom is not mentioned anywhere in the *Mishnah Berurah*, *Aruch HaShulchan*, or *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*. The primary merit to the *niftarim* is to pledge *zedakah* on their behalf, and you can do that wherever you are. And we also saw that you can even say the *keil malei* yourself in the comfort of your home. And, most importantly, the best thing you can do for a parent's *neshamah* is to act properly the entire year with your *avodas Hashem*. 

²⁶ The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh Deah* 348:20) mentions the custom of saying a *hazkarah* when visiting the *kever* at the end of twelve months.

Bowing for an *Aliyah*

Rabbi Abba Zvi Naiman

I recently noticed recently that some people who have received an *aliyah* bow down when beginning with *Borchu* like a *shaliach tzibbur* does when he recites *Borchu* after *Yishtabach* or before Maariv. I was wondering why no one ever taught me to do so and, by the same token, whether there is a source for it. But before tackling this topic, we should first investigate the source for bowing at *Borchu* after *Yishtabach* and before Maariv.

***Borchu* after *Yishtabach* and before Maariv**

We begin with the Gemara (*Berachos* 34a) that says we are supposed to bow at the beginning and end of the first *berachah* of *Shemoneh Esrei* and the beginning and of *Modim*. The Gemara continues that if someone wants to bow for more *berachos*, we teach him not to do so. The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 113:1) records this ruling as well.

The question is whether this rule applies to bowing for passages other than the *berachos* of *Shemoneh Esrei*.

The *Kol Bo* (*Din Borchu* §8) writes that after the *kaddish* following *Yishtabach*, the *chazan* kneels at “*borchu*” and straightens himself at “*Hashem*.” The *Machzor Vitri* (p.78) says the same regarding the *Borchu* at Maariv. And the Siddur of the *Rokei'ach* (p. 249), explaining the deeper meaning of the *tefillah*, writes that the *kahal* bends when the *chazan* says *borchu* after *Yishtabach*;¹ and they then respond with *Baruch Hashem HaMeborach*. This seems to answer the question.

¹ This means that even though are not saying anything, the *tzibbur* bows with the *chazan*. And he does not say that the *tzibbur* bows when saying their response.

However, the *Maharsham* (in *Daas Torah* 56:1 and on *Orchos Chaim* [Spinka] §57) writes that the *Kol Bo* is the only one who says such a thing, and his source is unknown.² The *Chavos Ya'ir* (*Mekor Chaim* 57:1) also wonders about the custom where the *chazan* bows at *Borchu* because it seems like adding on to the *takanah* of *Chazal* to bow only during the specified places in *Shemoneh Esrei*.

The *Kamarna Rebbe* writes (*Shulchan HaTahor* 57:1) that one should not bow at *Borchu*, and he gives as a *siman* the *pasuk* (*Esther* 3:2), *Mordechai would neither kneel nor bow*. He then writes further in *Zer Zahav* (§1) that he did see any source for it, and it probably began when people saw the *chazan* bow at the end of *kaddish* and continued into *Borchu*. There is a further problem that people will remain bowed when mentioning Hashem's name. He therefore concludes that this custom should be abolished.

The *Magen Gibborim* (*Elef HaMagen* 113:6), too, writes that people have a custom to bow at *Borchu*, but he did not find a support for this custom.³

The *Beur Halachah* (to 113:3) cites the *Magen Gibborim*, but then writes that there actually is a support for this custom from a *pasuk* in *I Divrei HaYamim* 29:20,⁴ and he concludes that *Minhag Yisrael*

² It is true that there are the other Rishonim cited above who also mention this custom or the similar. It is possible that they were not available to the *Maharsham*. Either way, the point is that this custom is not mentioned by the *Tur* or *Beis Yosef*, which are the sources for our customs.

³ However, he later (113:8) gives a “small support” for the custom because the *Maharshal* writes that we bend our knees at *baruch* because it is related to *וכל ברך לך תכרע*, *every knee shall bend to you*, that we say in *Nishmas*. [I do not know why he didn't cite *כי לך תכרע כל ברך* in *Aleinu*, which comes from *Yeshayah* 45:23.]

⁴ [Note that he calls the chapter in the Latin “*Kapitle* 29”, and not in the Hebrew “*Perek* 29,” as is customary for citing *pesukim* in *Tanach*, since the chapters are not from Jewish origin.]

Torah, the custom of the Jewish people is considered *Torah*. And we should add that the *pasuk* he cites indicates that everyone bowed down.⁵

The *Aruch HaShulchan* (57:1), as well, writes that people are accustomed to bend a little when saying *borchu*, but not as much as during *Shemoneh Esrei*; it is proper and the prevailing custom. Apparently, he holds that since the bowing is different than that of *Shemoneh Esrei*, we are in compliance with the Gemara that limits bowing to those *berachos* of *Shemoneh Esrei*.

In conclusion, even though there is not much precedent for the *chazan* bowing at *borchu* and the *tzibbur* at *baruch*, the *Mishnah Berurah* concludes that *Minhag Yisrael Torah*. The *Aruch HaShulchan*, as well, agrees that there is nothing wrong with the little bows that we do at this point of *davening*.⁶

Bowing at an *Aliyah*

We now turn to the *Borchu* at an *aliyah*.

The *Lechem Chamudos* (*Berachos* 5:65) writes that those who bow during the *berachos* for the Torah are making a mistake because one should not bow at the beginning or end of any *berachos* other than the two *berachos* of *Shemoneh Esrei*.

⁵ This is what the *pasuk* says: *David then said to the entire congregation, 'Now bless Hashem our God!' And all the congregation blessed Hashem, the God of their forefathers, and they bowed down... to Hashem and to the king.*

⁶ Although this is the conclusion, *Piskei Teshuvos* (§57 note 11) writes that those who do not bend have the *Gra z"l*, cited by many Acharonim, to rely upon because he holds that this too would violate the law of adding to the obligated bowings of *Shemoneh Esrei*. However, he concludes that if the custom of the shul is to bow, one should not act differently.

The *Magen Avraham* cites the *Lechem Chamudos* in *Hil. Kerias HaTorah* (139:6). But he then cites the *Shach*,⁷ who writes that from the *Rokei'ach* it appears that it is an old *minhag* to bow for the *berachos* of the Torah. This *Rokei'ach* is found in *Taamei VeDinei Berachos* (§319) where he discusses the *pasuk* we say when returning the Sefer Torah after *laining*. He writes that the custom was to bow when saying *Rommemu Hashem Elokeinu VeNishtachaveh*, “and we also bow during the *berachos* on the Torah for *kavod HaTorah*.” The *Shach* infers from this *Rokei'ach* that there was an old custom to bow when getting an *aliyah*.⁸

As for the argument of the *Lechem Chamudos*, the *Magen Avraham* writes that we are not bowing because of the *berachah*, but rather because of *kavod haTorah*, which is exactly what the *Rokei'ach* says. Therefore, this does not violate the prohibition of bowing for other *berachos*.

At this point, we should notice that no one said a word about the *Borchu* before the *aliyah*. They are talking about the *berachos*. In fact, the *Elya Rabbah* (139:7) writes that one should not bow *also* at the end of the *berachah* because then it will seem like you are adding on to the *berachos* the *Chachamim* said to bow for in *Shemoneh Esrei* in *Shulchan Aruch* §113. He seems to be saying that they would bow at the beginning of the *berachah*; and by not bowing at the end as well, we would not be violating the *Shulchan Aruch*'s limiting bowing to two *berachos*. He is clearly not talking about bowing at *Borchu*.

⁷ [There is a large (over 700 pages) *sefer* called *Kara Ravatz* available on Otzar HaChochmah that discusses everything you can imagine regarding when and when not to bow. He asked R' Chaim Kanievsky z"l where this *Shach* is (he thought maybe it was the *Shirayei Kenesses HaGedolah*), and R' Chaim answered that the *Magen Avraham* had a manuscript of *Hagahos HaShach*, which he often quotes.]

⁸ The *Magen Avraham* also cites the *Mateh Moshe* (§256), who makes the same inference from the *Rokei'ach*. [In old standard versions of the *Shulchan Aruch*, this citation is misprinted as מ"ע קנ"ו, when it should be מ"מ רנ"ו.]

The *Shaarei Ephraim* (4:4) also writes that some have the custom to bend and bow when they are saying the *berachah*; but they should have intention that they are bowing for *kavod haTorah*, and not for the *berachah*.⁹ And therefore, one should not bow at the end of the *berachah*, but rather in the middle of it. Again, no mention of *Borchu*.

Moving to our later *Poskim*, the *Mishnah Berurah* (139:19) cites the *minhag* from the *Magen Avraham* of some who bow when they say the *berachah* for *kavod haTorah*, and he then cites the aforementioned *Elyah Rabbah*, who writes that one should not bow also at the end of the *berachah*.

The *Aruch HaShulchan* (139:14) cites the aforementioned views of the *Lechem Chamudos* and *Rokei'ach* and concludes that nevertheless our custom is not to bow when getting an *aliyah*. He mentions this again when discussing the *Borchu* after *Yishtabach*. He writes there (57:1, cited above) that there is a custom to bow slightly at this *Borchu*, not like the bowing of *Shemoneh Esrei*. And he adds that even though for *Kerias HaTorah* it is not proper to bow (as stated in §139), for *davening* it is permitted, and this is the normal custom. The *Aruch HaShulchan* is therefore saying that one should not bow even slightly at the *Borchu* of *Kerias HaTorah*.

So, what we have is that according to the *Mishnah Berurah* there could be justification in bowing at the beginning of the *berachah*, as long as you do not bow a second time at the end. And according to the *Aruch HaShulchan*, one should not bow at all for the *berachos* of the Torah. I have not found any source for bowing at *Borchu* unless we extend the *Mishnah Berurah's pasuk* in *Divrei HaYamim* and *sevara* of *Minhag Yisrael Torah* to this *Borchu* – although the *Mishnah Berurah* does not mention it. However, there is a custom mentioned by the

⁹ This is also why we make this *berachah* even though we already made the same *berachah* in the morning as part of *birchos haTorah* before studying Torah. This *berachah* serves the different function of *kavod haTorah*.

Mekubalim to bow when opening the Sefer Torah before the *berachah*.¹⁰ It could therefore be that people saw *Mekubalim* do this, and then thought that this would make sense to do it at *Borchu* before the actual *berachah*.

I cannot say definitively that it is a wrong thing to do, since there are people who do it. But I would say that if you do not have a definite *mesorah* from your father or your Rebbi, you should not start a new practice of bowing at *Borchu* when you get an *aliyah*. However, if you do a slight bow at the beginning of the actual *berachah* the *Mishnah Berurah* would not mind, but the *Aruch HaShulchan* would frown upon it. אָ

A Postscript: After this article was published, a *chashuve* member of our Shul pointed out to me that the ArtScroll Siddur says to bow at בָּרְכוּ and straighten at ה'. It is very possible that this influenced many people to adopt this practice. However, it should be noted that the Hebrew ArtScroll Yitzchak Yair Siddur says to bend *before* בָּרְכוּ and then say בָּרְכוּ. This would fit with the custom of the *Mekubalim* to give *kavod* to the Torah before making the *berachah*.

¹⁰ See *Teshuvos Torah Lishmah* (§48), *Shulchan HaTahor* (139:8), *Likutei Mahariach* (Vol. I 95b), quoting *Siddur HaAri z"l, Shl"u HaKadosh*, quoting the *Maharshal*. According to this reason there would be no purpose for the rest of the tzibbur to bow since they are not near the Sefer Torah.

Anim Zemiros

Rabbi Abba Zvi Naiman

In the various shuls I have davened at over the years, I have found various customs regarding the recital of *Anim Zemiros* at the end of davening. Some shuls do not recite it at all; some recite it every Shabbos; some recite it only on Yom Tov; and some have a child go up and sing it. I always wondered where these customs come from, and I will share my findings with you.

When it is recited

We will begin with the *Bach* (*Orach Chaim* §132), who writes that the *Kadmonim* instituted to recite the *Shir HaKavod*, which is *Anim Zemiros*¹ every day after *U'va LeTziyon*.

However, the *Levush* (end of §133) objects strongly to this custom because since it is such an enormous praise of Hashem, it is not proper to recite it every day. Rather, it seems to be contradicting the Gemara (*Shabbos* 118b), which says that anyone who recites Hallel every day is belittling and cursing. It is not proper etiquette to mention the praises of even a human king because it becomes a mere rote exercise and results in cynicism among the people. The impact is much greater when the praise is mentioned only periodically. He therefore writes that *Anim Zemiros* should be recited only on Shabbos and Yom Tov. He supports his position from the *Rambam*,² who explains that the Kohen Gadol may enter the *Kodesh HaKodashim* only once a year in order to intensify this service. The same should therefore be done for *Anim Zemiros*.

¹ We will be alternating between calling it *Anim Zemiros* and *Shir HaKavod*, based on how it is referred to in the various sources we will be citing.

² The footnote there cites *Moreh Nevuchim* (3:45).

The *Levush* then suggests an interesting compromise. If a certain minyan insists on reciting *Anim Zemiros* every day, they should at least not open the *Aron HaKodesh* daily. This is because opening the *Aron HaKodesh* takes the place of going into the *Kodesh HaKodashim* of the *Beis HaMikdash*.³ We should take the example of *Aleinu*, for which we open the *Aron HaKodesh* only on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the days of judgment, so that people will recognize the extreme importance of this prayer and take it more seriously during the rest of the year. The same should be done for *Anim Zemiros*.

The *Elyah Rabbah* there summarizes the *Levush* by using the *Aleinu* example to conclude that *Anim Zemiros* should not be recited every day. And the *Aruch HaShulchan* (286:6) too writes that it is a sacred, beautiful song, appropriate to be recited on Shabbos and Yom Tov, which are imbued with the sanctity of the day.

The *Gra z"l* (*Maaseh Rav* §53) writes, without giving a reason, that the *Shir HaKavod* should be recited only on Yom Tov. And later (§170) he adds that the *Shir HaYichud* and *Shir HaKavod* should be recited on Yom Tov only if there is time.⁴ The *Raavad* (R' Moshe Shternbuch *shlit"a*, *Teshuvos VeHanhagos* Vol. II §81), too, writes that his custom, like in many places, is to recite *Anim Zemiros* only on Yom Tov, and not on Shabbos, because on Shabbos people are more pressured than on Yom Tov and not ready for song. This is also why outside Eretz Yisrael they *duchan* only on Yom Tov, and not on

³ Presumably because the *Aron HaKodesh* the *Sefer Torah* was kept in there. R' Shimon Schwab, *z"l*, said that according to German custom opening the *Aron* for *Anim Zemiros* was a very important *kibud*. In fact, when R' Elchanan Wasserman *z"l* was visiting a German shul in America, they honored him with opening the *Aron* for *Anim Zemiros* (*Minhagei Maharitz HaLevi* p. 320). The *Levush*, too, mentions that this honor would be sold, with proceeds going to *tzedakah*.

⁴ The *Hagahos U'Beurim* to the new edition suggests that this means to finish before midday.

Shabbos. He therefore says that we should reject any request for it be recited every Shabbos.

We now have a second reason for not reciting *Anim Zemiros* every day. In addition to losing its impact, as the *Levush* stated, there is the concern that it will not be given the respect it deserves, i.e., to be recited without the pressure to finish it quickly.

The *Liktuei Mahariach (Seder Tefillas Musaf)* says this reason explicitly for why *Anim Zemiros* should be recited only on Shabbos and Yom Tov. That is, it has to be recited with patience, meaning that the *chazan* has to wait until the *tzibbur* finishes its line, and the *tzibbur* has to wait until the Chazan finishes his line. If it is not recited this way, the *Kitzur Shl"á (Chullin)*⁵ writes that there is no reward for this type of recitation; to the contrary, one will be punished for it. Therefore, it should not be recited during the week when people are in a rush to go to work.⁶

The *Likutei Mahariach* then takes this one step further. Since there is concern that it will not be recited properly, there are places that do not recite *Anim Zemiros* at all – even on Shabbos and Yom Tov.

How it should be recited

We have just seen how the *Kitzur Shl"á* describes that *Anim Zemiros* has to be recited with patience, meaning that the *chazan* has to wait until the *tzibbur* finishes its line, and the *tzibbur* has to wait until the Chazan finishes his line.

⁵ I could not find this in the regular *Shl"á*, and I saw talk about whether there are things in the *Kitzur* not found in the *Shl"á* itself.

⁶ See there why this does not contradict their custom to recite *Pitum HaKetores*, which according to the *Rama* should not be recited during the week for the same reason.

The *Raavad* (ibid.) elaborates. He writes that the *chazan* says the first *pasuk* with pleasant song, while the *tzibbur* listens quietly. The *tzibbur* then says the next *pasuk* with pleasant song, and the *chazan* listens quietly. It emerges that between the *chazan* and the *tzibbur* the entire *Shir* is sung. This is similar to Hallel, which according to the Gemara, the *tzibbur* says only *Hodu*, but not *Yomar Na* that the *chazan* says.⁷ Therefore, he writes, both the *chazan* and the *tzibbur* have to wait until each other has completed the line.

The *Gra z"l* (*Maaseh Rav* §170) also writes that the *Shir HaYichud* and *Shir HaKavod* should be said with patience and with a *nigun*, line by line. But he adds that neither the *shaliach tzibbur* nor the *tzibbur* should skip any lines. That is, the *shaliach tzibbur* begins with one line, the *tzibbur* repeats the line and adds another together with the *shaliach tzibbur*. The *shaliach tzibbur* then says the next *pasuk* out loud, etc., until the end.

R' Yaakov Emden (*Siddur Beis Yaakov*), as well, writes that *Anim Zemiros* should be sung with patience, and not through *havlaah* (i.e., overlapping each other's line). This is why it is called a *shir* – because it has to be recited as a song.⁸

The Leader

The *Teshuvos Kinyan Torah BeHalachah* (Vol. I 131) writes that since the *Levush* explains that *Anim Zemiros* should not be recited every day because of its importance, and it is also supposed to be read responsively between the *shaliach tzibbur* and the *tzibbur*, how can it enter one's mind that a child should lead it with the *tzibbur* answering

⁷ The *Mishnah Berurah* (422:20) writes that even though the *tzibbur* can be *yotzei* by hearing these lines from the *shaliach tzibbur*, it is preferable for them to say themselves quietly because they might not have proper *kavanah*. See the new *Piskei Teshuvos* there for more discussion about this.

⁸ Based on the above, it seems to me that this applies only to a song like *Shir HaKavod*. But the *pizmonim* during *Selichos* could perhaps be said where the *chazan* begins his line before the *tzibbur* has finished theirs.

after him? He concludes by explaining that this is unlike the custom in some places for a child to read *maftir*. For in that case, it is clear that the *maftir* is not the same as the other *aliyos* since there is a *kaddish* in between. This serves as a marker that the child may not be called up for the other *aliyos*. But for a child to lead *Anim Zemiros*, it is appropriate to stop such a custom.⁹

The *Raavad* too writes that since the *shaliach tzibbur* has to be *motzi* the *tzibbur* with his lines, it is not respectful to have a child do this task. And there is further the reason of its great sanctity.

It would seem that it is obviously wrong to have a child get up to sing the *Anim Zemiros*. However, the *Raavad* concludes (without giving a reason) that this is not the custom, and a child, in fact, does become the *shaliach tzibbur* to lead. Furthermore, the *Sefer Ishei Yisrael* (Ch. 36 note 196) writes that both *R' Shlomo Zalman Aurebach z"l* and *R' Chaim Kanievsky z"l* hold that it possible to let a child lead.¹⁰ They too do not give a reason,¹¹ but since these *Poskim* seem to permit it, it is difficult to protest a shul that allows a child to lead *Anim Zemiros*, although it certainly does not seem to be *lechatchila*.

⁹ The *Bobover Rebbe* reports that his grandfather, the *Sanzer Rebbe*, the *Divrei Chaim*, would not even allow the *Shaliach Tzibbur* to lead *Anim Zemiros* because he was concerned that he would say it too quickly for the *tzibbur* to say the *Shaliach Tzibbur's* line and vice versa. He would therefore go up himself to recite it. And if he was not there, it would not be recited that day (*Taamei HaMinhagim* §364 in the note).

¹⁰ These are reports of what these *Gedolim* held, not their actually *teshuvos*. One wonders if there was any specific circumstance to which they were responding.


¹¹ An *Adam Gadol* told me that the reason a child is allowed is to show that *Anim Zemiros* is not part of the regular davening. That reason seems strange to me, though, because we still have the dual problems of him being *motzi* the *tzibbur* his lines, and the apparent disrespect of such a holy prayer. Perhaps he meant that by having a child lead it, it demonstrates that we do expect our recitation of *Anim Zemiros* to be the sacred *Anim Zemiros* that would require great diligence in everyone either reciting every word carefully or the combination of reciting and hearing every word.

A Postscript

When writing not to recite the *Shir HaKavod* during weekdays, the *Gra z"l* (ibid. §53) adds that one should not repeat *kaddishim* for no need. The *Aruch HaShulchan* (ibid.) makes the same comment.

There is actually a much earlier mention of this by the *Knesses HaGedolah*, cited by the *Be'er Heitev* (55:1), who says that just as we should not make an unnecessary *berachah*, we should also not recite an unnecessary *kaddish*. This ruling is accepted by the *Mishnah Berurah* there, as well.

The *Sefer Menuchah U'Kedushah*, by a *talmid* of R' Chaim Volozhener (*Shaar HaTefillah* §22), explains this further. We know if someone wants to eat many types of fruit, he should make only one *berachah* for all of them. And if he decides to make a separate *berachah* on each one, he violates either a Biblical or Rabbinic prohibition of a *berachah levatalah*. Similarly, if it is possible to say only one *kaddish* after *Aleinu* and the *Shir Shel Yom*, it is prohibited to say a separate *kaddish* for each. The only exception would be if there are two *chiyuvim* at the *minyán*, and they will each say a *kaddish* alone.¹²

While on the topic of *kaddish*, please look at the next page for a letter I sent out this year. 

¹² We can learn from this that nothing is gained by a *chiyuv* repeating endless *kaddishim*, thinking he is helping the *neshamah* at each recital. If that were the case, these *Poskim* would not limit the *kaddish* at the end of davening to a single one per *chiyuv*.

This *sefer* also says that one should not recite a *kaddish* after learning unless there were ten people there at the time of the learning. If some of them came after the learning to fill in the *minyán*, *kaddish* may not be recited. This is also the ruling of the *Mishnah Berurah* (234:5), which we follow in our Bais Medrash. If we began *Ashrei* at *Minchah* without a *minyán*, we save the last three *pesukim* to recite when the tenth man walks in. And if there was no *minyán* during *korbanos*, and a tenth man walked in after they were finished, *kaddish* is not recited.

Section VIII: Bar Mitzvah *Dvar Torah*

Abba Zvi Naiman
6616 Chelwood Rd
Baltimore, MD 21209
410-602-1169

אבא צבי ניימאן
מרא דאתרא
ק"ק בית המדרש דרענטשלי
באלטימאר, מערילנד

To Our Members,

I would like to share with everyone one of the subjects I have been talking about in shul on Shabbos that you might not have heard about: i.e., the importance of proper respect for *kaddish*, including the last one of the *tefillah*.

These are not *chumros*; they are mainstream *halachos* in the *Mishnah Berurah*:

- Those who fold the *tallis* and *tefillin* and put them in their bag during *kaddish* are not acting properly. And *kaddish* is certainly not less important than other *berachos*, during which it is forbidden to do even a light activity (25:56). [R' Chaim Kanievsky says that this applies to the entire *kaddish* (*Doleh U'Mashkeh* p. 40).]
- It is even forbidden to *think* about words of Torah when the *chazan* is saying *Kaddish* because one must have great concentration when answering the *Kaddish* (56:1; see also 125:1).
- Certainly, a person has to be very, very careful not to converse in the middle of *kaddish* or *kedushah* (56:1).

Therefore:

- One should not put away his *tallis* and *tefillin* during *Kaddish* after Shacharis, as the *Mishnah Berurah* says explicitly. However, if someone has to leave immediately after davening, it should be permitted, just as it is permitted to leave before *Kaddish* is even begun if there is a compelling need.
- There should usually be no need for a *baal tefillah* at Minchah or Maariv to fold the *tallis* while someone is saying the *Kaddish* after *Aleinu* (unless, again, there is some emergency at home you have to run out for). [It is also proper for the *baal tefillah* to remain at the *amud* until the end of *kaddish*.]
- Regarding which light activities should be avoided during *kaddish*, consider what you would do while you are making a *berachah* like *hamotzi* or some other such *berachah*. For example, we obviously should not be taking off the tablecloths on Motza'ei Shabbos.
- If we are not allowed to even think in learning during *Kaddish*, we certainly should not be making motions to one another even without talking. For example, we should give a *yasher koach* to someone who has gotten an *aliyah*; but if it was the last *aliyah* before the *kaddish*, we should not even shake his hand until after *kaddish*. [And I mentioned at the Shabbos Shuvah Shiur that according to the *Mishnah Berurah*, it is proper to stand at the *bimah* until after the person with the next *aliyah* has completed his *berachah*.]
- This does not mean we should be unfriendly to the other *mispallelim*, especially guests. We should greet them with a *shalom aleichem* handshake, but not during *kaddish*; the same handshake is just as effective after *kaddish*, when you can even say the words.

With wishes for *besuros tovos*,
Abba Zvi Naiman

Tefillin on Chol HaMoed

Yaakov Moshe Kimelfeld

I would like to speak about wearing tefillin on Chol HaMoed. There are many different *shitos* regarding this topic, but I will discuss the *psak* that my father received from Rav Yaakov Moshe Kulefsky, *zichrono l'berachah*.

My father did not have a definite *mesorah* regarding wearing tefillin on Chol HaMoed, so he asked Rav Kulefsky what he should do. Rav Kulefsky *paskened* that he should put the tefillin on without a *berachah*, and he should make a *tenai* that if the mitzvah of tefillin does not apply on Chol HaMoed, then he is not intending to fulfill the mitzvah of tefillin; but if the mitzvah of tefillin does apply, then he intends to fulfill the mitzvah.

I would like to discuss some factors involved in the *psak* that Rav Kulefsky gave my father.

The Gemara in *Eruvin* (96a) says: R' Akiva said, I would have thought that a person should put on tefillin on Shabbos and Yom Tov – but the *pasuk* says (regarding tefillin) “*ve'hayu lecha **L'os** al yadecha*” – it should be an *os* (a sign) for you – implying that it applies only on days that need an *os* – excluding days that are themselves an *os* (like Shabbos and Yom Tov). We see from this Gemara that regular weekdays require tefillin, while Shabbos and Yomim Tovim do not.

The very first *Tosafos* on this *daf* discuss whether tefillin should be worn on Chol HaMoed. First, *Tosafos* suggest in the name of the *Baal Halachos Gedolos*, that tefillin should not be worn on Chol HaMoed because Chol HaMoed is itself an “*os*” for the following two reasons:

1. Many types of *melachah* are forbidden on Chol HaMoed
2. On Chol HaMoed Succos there is an “*os*” of Succah, and on Chol HaMoed Pesach there is an “*os*” of prohibition of chametz.

However, then *Tosafos* say that it appears from a *Yerushalmi* in *Moed Katan* (3:4) that one *should* wear tefillin on Chol HaMoed. The *Yerushalmi* says: “A certain person who lost his tefillin came in front of the *sofer* R’ Chananel on Chol HaMoed to ask if he would write him a new pair. The *sofer* sent the question to Rav, and Rav allowed the *sofer* to write tefillin for this man on Chol HaMoed.” Then, the *Yerushalmi* asks whether Rav’s *psak* contradicts the Mishnah, which says that a person may only write tefillin for himself on Chol HaMoed, but not for others. The *Yerushalmi* then answers that Rav interprets this Mishnah as prohibiting for a *sofer* to write tefillin on Chol HaMoed for others for a future use; however, it is always permitted to write tefillin on Chol HaMoed when someone needs it immediately. Since the *Yerushalmi* mentions that sometimes a person might need tefillin immediately on Chol HaMoed, according to the *Tosafos*, this is a proof that one wears tefillin on Chol HaMoed.

So, we see from this *Tosafos* that there are reasons to wear tefillin on Chol HaMoed, and there are also reasons not to wear them. The *Shulchan Aruch* (§31) *paskens* like the first part of the *Tosafos* above, that one does not wear tefillin on Chol HaMoed. On the other hand, the *Rama paskens* like the end of that *Tosafos*, that one should wear tefillin on Chol HaMoed and even makes a *berachah* on them, although quietly.

Now, if in reality the mitzvah of tefillin does not apply on Chol HaMoed, then wearing tefillin on Chol HaMoed could potentially lead to the following three problems:

1. *Berachah levatalah*, i.e. the prohibition of making *berachah* in vain.
2. *Bal toseif*, the prohibition to add more mitzvos.
3. *Mezalzel b'chosem haMelech*,” which means, “using the signet ring of the king without permission. *The Beis Yosef* there brings from the *Medrash HaNe'elam* that a person who puts on tefillin on Chol HaMoed is *mezalzel b'chosem haMelech*.


However, based on the *Magen Avraham* (31:2), if one puts on tefillin without a *berachah*, and with the *tenai* that he is wearing tefillin only in case this mitzvah applies on Chol HaMoed, then all of these problems are solved. According to the *Magen Avraham*, what helps to eliminate the appearance of *bal toseif* is the fact that the person is not making a *berachah* on tefillin on Chol HaMoed, which is so different from his usual practice on regular weekdays. By not making the *berachah*, the person demonstrates that he is merely performing the mitzvah out of doubt, which eliminates any possibility of *bal toseif*.

The *Magen Avraham* learns this concept from the *Mordechai* in *Maseches Succah* (47a). The Gemara there says that on Shemini Atzeres in *Chutz LaAretz*, when we are in doubt whether this is Shemini Atzeres or still the seventh day of Succos, we sit (i.e. eat) in the succah but we do not make *Leishev BaSuccah*. The *Mordechai* says that even if today is really Shemini Atzeres, it will still not even look like *bal toseif* if we sit in the succah because since we do not make the *berachah* after making it all week, this shows clearly that today we are sitting in the succah merely out of doubt, and we are trying to fulfil the mitzvah of succah only in case it applies.

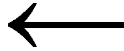
The *Magen Avraham* also references his comments to *Siman* §668, that just like there is no *bal toseif* on Shemini Atzeres when one eats in the succah without a *berachah* (as the *Mordechai* states), so too there is no *bal toseif* on Chol HaMoed, when one puts on tefillin

without a *berachah*. Again, when one does not make the usual *berachah* on the mitzvah, it shows that he is performing the mitzva merely out of doubt, and therefore there is no *bal toseif*.

Just like the *bal toseif* does not apply when the tefillin are worn merely out of doubt and without a *berachah*, so too the *mezalzel b'chosem haMelech* also does not apply, as *Magen Avraham* implies where he references his comment to *Siman 29*.

In conclusion, we see that the *psak* that Rav Kulefsky told my father to follow avoids all potential problems according to the *Magen Avraham*, such as *beracha levatala*, *bal toseif* and *mezalzel bechosem haMelech*. 

English Sections



מדור

לשון הקודש



לגבי אם יבוא על האדם צרה שבאה מתוך מערכת הטבע ההשתדלות הנכון הוא להתפלל שהרי תפילה ג'כ הוה אופן של השתדלות וע' בשערים בתפילה (עמ' צג) שמבאר עפ"ז למה מפסיקים מלימוד התורה כדי להתפלל בעבור החולה וביאר שיש צורה של תפילה שהוא ממש כמו שאר אופני השתדלות שודאי מפסיקים ללמוד כדי לקרוא את הרופא וכדו'. אבל כשהצרה באה מתוך מערכת למעלה מן הטבע אז צריכים לחזק האמונה ותוקף הבטחון ובוזה יש ג'כ אופן מעשית של השתדלות והוא מסירות נפש על קדושת השם.

וזהו מה שאמר הקב"ה למרע"ה 'דבר אל בני'י ויסעו' שאין עכשיו הזמן לעשות השתדלות של תפילה כיון שאין הצרה הזה באה מתוך מערכת הטבע אלא צריך לחזק האמונה והטחון וע"ז הק' מרע"ה 'אבל מה צריך לעשות' וע"ז ענה 'דבר אל בני'י ויסעו' שצריך לעשות מעשה של מסירות נפש ורק עי"ז ניצל מן הצרה ודו"ק היטב בכל זה.

פירוש אחר מאת הנפש החיים

אמנם בעיקר מש"כ רש"י הנ"ל יש מהלך אחרת מאת הגר"ח מוולז'ין בנפש החיים (א/ט) שכ' בזה"ל ולכן בעת קריאת ים סוף אמר הוא ית' למשה מה תצעק אליו דבר אל בניי ויסעו ר"ל דבדידהו תליא מילתא שאם המה יהיו בתוקף האמונה והבטחון ויסעו הלוך ונסוע אל הים, סמוך לבם לא יירא, מעוצם בטחונם שודאי יקרע לפניהם אז יגרמו עייז התעוררות למעלה שיעשה להם הנס ויקרע לפניהם עכ"ד הקדושים.

ומבואר מד' ביאור אחר בענין זה דלעולם היתה טענת הקב"ה על מרע"ה טענה אחרת לגמרי וביאור ד' הוא כדיתד'.

ידוע ומפורסם שיש ב' הנהגות שהקב"ה מנהיג את עולמו והם הנהגת המשפט והנהגת היחוד¹ ואכמ"ל אבל בקיצור י"ל שהענין של משפט הוא מדת הדין והוא שייך להנהגת עולם הטבע משא"כ הנהגת היחוד שהוא באמת שייך לעה"ב שאז יתגלה שהכל בא מן הקב"ה וזהו בחינת מדת הרחמים.

אבל צריך תמיד לדעת שאין הכוונה בזה שבעוה"ז פועלת הנהגת המשפט ורק לע"ל פועלת הנהגת היחוד דלא כן הוא אלא שניהם פועלים בבת אחת בעוה"ז אלא שרק הנהגת המשפט גלוי לפנינו עכשיו ורק לע"ל יתגלה במהרה איך שכל מאי דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד והראכתי בזה במק"א.

וא"כ כמו שיש ב' הנהגות שהקב"ה מנהיג את עולמו כמו"כ כנגדם יש ב' מיני השתדלות שצריכים אנו לעשות כשצרה באה עלינו ונתחלף לפי הנושאים דאם הצרה באה בתוך מערכת הטבע אז תפילה הוא ההשתדלות הראוי לעשות, אבל אם הצרה באה מתוך מערכת הנהגת למעלה מן הטבע אז אין התפילה מספיק ואז צריכים רק תוקף האמונה והבטחון בד'.

¹ ע' בדעת תבונות שכל הספר מבוסס על ב' הנהגות הללו ע"ש.

וממשיך בזה"ל והנה לכא' בשלמא בתלמיד שהיה מאריך מצא ר"א מעלה בדבר שהרי כך מצינו אצל תפילת מרע"ה ומובן הדבר שיש מעלה להאריך בתפילה וגם שהיא סוג תפילה לעצמה ונתבאר שהיא ל' עיתור מל' התפילה ואמרו חז"ל כל המאריך בתפילה לסוף נענה אבל זה שקיצר מה מעלה מצא בו ר"א ומה ראי' הביא מתפילתו של מרע"ה.

אבל באמת יש בזה יסוד נפלא והוא דגם הקיצור היא תפילה מיוחדת מאד מאד והיא תפילה של קריאה ונ' שהענין מרומז בפ' 'אשר לקחתי מיד האמורי בחרבי ובקשתי' ותרגומו בצלותי ובעותי, דון מיני' דהחרב והקשת דמי שיודע אומנות ירי הקשת על בורי' אינו צריך ליותר מחץ א' בכדי לפגוע במטרה ואם תראה שזורק חיצים הרבה סימן הוא שאינו יודע לכוון למטרה וכן בענין חרב וכמו שאמרו חז"ל כת' 'ויכהו אבנר באחרי החנית אל החמש' ואמר ריו"ח בדופן חמישית במקום שמרה וכבד תלוין בו שיותר ממכה א' אינו צריך מי שבקי בכך אבל גבי קין אמרו שעשה בו פצעים הרבה שלא היה יודע מהיכן הנשמה יוצאת, וכן בתפילה היודע את הכתובת בברור יורה תפילה א' ישרה וחדה וחוחכת וקורא להקב"ה כביכול ואינו צריך לקרוא פעמיים וכו' עכ"ל וע"ש בהמשך מה שביאר ביסוד הזה.

ונתבאר מזה החשיבות של הענין של תפילה קצרה ואע"פ שיש ג"כ מעלה לתפילה ארוכה וכדהנ"ל אבל עכ"פ יש חשיבות גדולה לתפילה קצרה ג"כ ודו"ק.

ועוד דבר חשוב בענין תפילה קצרה ראיתי בס' חיי עולם (פ' כח) שכ' בזה"ל ואמר ר"ח אמר ר"ח כל המאריך בתפילתו אין תפלתו חוזרת ויקם ונ' דה"ה המתפלל תפלה קצרה מאד אלא שהוא מבקש ע"ז זמן רב בכל יום שהיא בכלל המאריך בתפילתו עכ"ל ומבואר מזה שהגדר בתפילה ארוך כולל ג"כ תפילה קצרה אלא שהוא חזר עליו כמה פעמים ולתפילה הזאת יש המעלה של תפילה ארוכה ודו"ק.

באופן שעיקר השקפתינו בענין יסורים ושאר דברים שהקב"ה מביא עלינו צ"ל שהם באים רק בשביל שהקב"ה רוצה לשמוע תפילתנו וצעקתינו וכהנ"ל דעיקר יסוד בתפילה הוא שאין התפילה בא בשביל היסורים אלא שהיסורים באים בשביל התפילה.

וא"כ כיון שזהו כל המכוון בענין תפילה שפיר באה הטענה על מרע"ה 'למה אתה מאריך בתפילה' כיון שאין הקב"ה עונה אלא אחר גמר התפילה כיון שאינו רוצה להפסיק את התפילה מאחר דזהו כל התכלית וא"כ רק אחר שכבר גמר תפילתו רוצה לענות אותו.

וזהו ביאור ד' המהר"ל הנ"ל שבאמצע תפילה אינו נענה כיון שזהו כל התכלית של תפילה בכלל וממילא לא ניחא לי' להקב"ה להפסיק תפילתו כדי למלא בקשתו.

וע"ז מסיים הפח"י שמכאן יש התעוררות גדולה להמעלה של תפילה קצרה כיון שכל ענין התפילה הוא רק הקריאה אל ד' והצרות אינן באות אלא בשביל התפילה ממילא כל מה שמאריך בתפילה באמת מרחיק מעליו ענית ד' ית' לתפילתו.

דברים נוספים בענין תפילה קצרה

ובאמת, בענין מעלת תפילה קצרה, ע' בשערים בתפילה (עמ' פד) שהאריך לבאר ענין זה וכ' שם בזה"ל ברכות (לד) ת"ר מעשה בתלמיד א' שירד לפני התיבה בפני ר"א והיה מאריך יותר מדאי, אמרו לו תלמידיו ר' כמה ארכן הוא זה אמר להם כלום מאריך יותר ממרע"ה דכ' בי' את ארבעים היום ואת ארבעים הלילה וגו', שוב מעשה בתלמיד א' שירד לפני התיבה בפני ר"א והיה מקצר יותר מדאי, אמרו לו תלמידיו כמה קצרן הוא זה אמר להם כלום מקצר יותר ממרע"ה דכ' אל נא רפא נא לה עכ"ל הגמ'.

להאריך שישראל נתונים בצרה דאל"כ ק' יאריך בתפילה שהרי א"א להם ליסע כיון שהים לפניהם אלא שאין נענה עד סוף תפילתו עכ"ל.

ובביאור ד' הקדושים ע' בפחד יצחק (פסח יד) שכ' דכאן טמון יסוד גדול בענין של תפילה וכדיתבאר.

הרי כ' בתהלים 'אהבתי כי ישמע השם את קולי תחנוני כי הטה אזנו לי' (קטז) והק' הפח"י דלכא' הסדר בכאן צ"ל הפוך דבפשטות הו"א דהטיית האוזן קודמת ל'אהבתי כי ישמע ד" שבתחילה צ"ל שהטה הקב"ה את אזנו לי ואח"כ שמע לקול תחנוני ורק אח"כ אהבתי לו בשביל זה וצ"ע.

וביאר הפח"י שעי"ק היסוד בענין תפילה הוא שאין התפילה באה בשביל הצרה אלא שהצרה באה בשביל התפילה. ביאור ד' דלעולם אין הקב"ה מביא יסורים על האדם אלא רק בשביל שהוא יצעק אליו וזהו באמת הענין של 'הקב"ה מתאוה לתפילתן של צדיקים' שמשום שרוצה הוא ית' שיתפללו לו ממילא מביא עליהם צרות שעי"כ יתפללו לו ית'.

באפ"א יש לבאר דלעולם אין הקב"ה רוצה שבניו יהיו בצער אלא שהוא רוצה בעצם הקשר וממילא הביא צרות עלינו רק כדי שעי"כ יכולים אנו להבין שאין לנו מי להישען אלא על אבינו שבשמים. ומצדינו ג"כ כל מה שאנו צריכים לבקש הוא רק את עצם הקשר בינינו לבינו ית'.

ולפ"ז א"ש פשר הקרא הנ"ל דבאמת כל התכלית הוא ההטיית אוזן של הקב"ה אלינו וזה כל בקשתנו ורק דאין לנו ראי' שאכן הטה אזנו לי אלא ע"י שמילא את בקשתי ועי"כ נתגלה למפרע ששמע לתפילתי אבל לעולם עיקר התכלית הוא ההטיית אזנו ית' וזהו דקאמר 'אהבתי את ד' כי ישמע לקול תחנוני' שרק עי"כ יש ראי' שהטה אזנו לי שזהו התכלית ומש"ה הוא בא אחרון בהפסוק.

בענין מעלת תפילה קצרה

הרב אברהם צין

בדרך שבעולם שכשוראים א' שמאריך בתפילה נראה שיש לו כוונות נשגבות וזהו תפילה הראוי משא"כ במי שמקצר בתפילה שנראה שהוא אומר המלים בלא כוונה וכמעט נ' שהוא מזלזל בתפילה. ובאתי כאן רק ללמד זכות על אלו אנשים שמקצרים בתפילה שלא רק שאינ"ז בדיעבד אלא שיש גם מעלה נשגבה לתפילה כזה וכדית' בע"ה.

ד' רש"י והק' המפורסמת

בפ' בשלח כתוב 'ויאמר ד' אל משה מה תצעק אלי דבר אל בני ישראל ויסעו' (יד, טו) וע"ש ברש"י שהביא מחז"ל שאמר לו הקב"ה למשה לא עת אתה להאריך בתפילה שישראל נתונים בצרה ובהמשך ביאר בזה"ל דבר אל בני" ויסעו [פ'] אין להם אלא ליסע שאין הים עומד בפניהם, כדאי זכות אבותיכם והאמונה שהאמינו בי ויצאו לקרוע להם הים עכ"ל.

ומקור לזה הוא מהגמ' בסוטה (לו) דאיתא שם בזה"ל באותה שעה היה משה מאריך בתפילה אמר לו הקב"ה ידידי' טובעים ביים ואתה מאריך בתפילה לפני אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם ומה בידי לעשות אמר לו דבר אל בני" ויסעו ואתה הרם את מטך ונטה את ירך וגו' עכ"ל הגמ'.

והק' המפורסמת בזה הוא דאדרבה איפכא מסתברא שאם כ"י נתונים בצרה כ"ש שצריך להרבות בתפילה וצ"ע.

ד' הגור ארי' וביאורו מאת הפחד יצחק

וע' בגור ארי' שת' בזה"ל נ' שכל זמן שהוא עומד ומתפלל לא נענה עד סוף תפילתו מה שהוא מתפלל ולפיכך היה אומר לו הקב"ה עתה לא עת

והנה מהשתא נראה לפרש שהדין הנ"ל שיש חיוב על הגבאי צדקה לתת לעניים את מה שצריך עבור הד' כוסות זה אינו הלכה שנאמר כדי לאפשר שגם העני היחיד יכול לקיים את מצות פרסום הנס וזכירת יציאת מצרים שלו, אלא אדרבה זה לטובת הציבור כדי שהם יוכלו לקיים את חיובם לזכור את יציאת מצרים בשלמותה, דזה יכול להעשות רק אם כולם מקיימים את המצוה באופן שזה דוגמת מה שהיה בשעת יציאת מצרים. וממילא מוטל על הגבאים שהם שלוחי הציבור לתת לעניים מה שצריכים לד' כוסות. ולפ"ז מיושב שפיר אמאי דין זה אינו נכלל בהכ"ש של המגיד משנה מד' כוסות לנ"ח כי כפי שהסברנו עסקינן בדין מיוחד למצות זכירת יציאת מצרים ואינו דין כללי לגבי פרסומי ניסא. וגם מאוד מדויק מה שהביא הרמ"א המנהג קמחא דפסחא הנ"ל דוקא בהלכות פסח ולא בהלכות צדקה כמו שהערנו לעיל.

ונ' להוסיף עוד הסבר דעיי"ש בשו"ע (סי' תעב) שהביאו המג"א (סק"ב) ומשנ"ב (סק"ו) מנהג המהרי"ל דכשהיו בידו משכונות של נכרים היה מנהגו לשים אותם על שלחן מיוחד, לשמוח בראייתם בליל פסח. ולכאורה מנהג זה מאוד קשה להבין וכי מה ענין רכושם של גוים למצוות ליל הסדר. אמנם לפי דברינו דלעיל דבליל פסח אנו זוכרים לא רק את העצם יציאה אלא גם את הרכוש גדול שלקחנו מהם, שפיר מובן הענין לראות הרכוש של גוים שיש לנו ברשותנו.

ליתן לזה". ולכאורה נראה שמדויק מכך שהרמ"א מביא מנהג זה דוקא בהלכות פסח באו"ח ולא בהלכות צדקה ביו"ד שזה מנהג שנובע מדיני פסח ולא מדיני צדקה וזה טעון יותר הסבר.

ונראה לפרש בהקדם מש"כ השו"ע גם בהלכות פסח (סי' תעב סע' ב) וז"ל יסדר שלחנו יפה בכלים נאים כפי כוחו ויכין מקום מושבו שישב בהסבה דרך חירות עכ"ל. ובביאור הגר"א שם מבאר וז"ל שזה בכלל דרך חירות כמ"ש עבדא דמפיק וכו' עכ"ל. ונ' כוונתו לציין המקור להלכה זו הגמ' פסחים (קטז). דגר' שם "אמר ליה ר' נחמן לדרו עבדיה עבדא דמפיק ליה מריה לחירות ויהיב ליה כספא ודהבא מאי בעי למימר ליה אמר ליה בעי לאודויי ולשבוחי א"ל פטרתי מלומר מה נשתנה פתח ואמר עבדים היינו" עכ"ל הגמ'. ונל"פ שהבין הגר"א מדאמר ר' נחמן שצריך להודות לה' על שנתנו לנו כספא ודהבא בשעת יציאת מצרים אנו רואים שמצות הלילה אינה מוגבלת רק לזכור את עצם הגאולה מעבודות לחירות אלא עלינו לזכור גם שהוא נתן לו כספא ודהבא, היינו הרכוש גדול שם, ולצורך זה כתב השלחן ערוך שיסדר שלחנו יפה בכלים נאים.

הרי בענין הרכוש גדול של יציאת מצרים אי' בהגמ' ברכות (ט:) על הקרא "וינצלו את מצרים" (שמות יב, לו) "א"ר אמי מלמד שעשאוה כמצודה שאין בה דגן ור"ל אמר עשאוה כמצולה שאין בה דגים". עוד אי' במס' בכורות (ה:) "שאין לך כל אחד ואחד מישראל שלא היו עמו תשעים חמורים לובים טעונים מכספה וזהבה של מצרים". הנה ברור שהעושר הרב שזכו לו בשעת יציאת מצרים היה שוה לכל העם ולא היה שום עניי ביניהם. ולכאורה נראה שכדי לזכור כראוי את הרכוש גדול של אותה תקופה אין די בכך שכל א' יציג את העושר האישי שלו אלא צריך להיות שלכל ישראל יש את היכולת לקיים את מצוות הלילה בלי להיות במצב של חוסר, ואז מה שאנחנו עושים יהיה זכרון מושלם של יציאת מצרים כפי שקרה.

בענין הרכוש גדול של יציאת מצרים

הרב רפאל שעפטיל הלוי נויברגר

אי' בהרמב"ם בהל' חנוכה (פ"ד הל' יב) וז"ל "נר חנוכה חביבה היא עד מאוד וצריך אדם להזהר בה כדי להודיע הנס... אפילו אין לו מה יאכל אלא מן הצדקה שואל או מוכר כסותו ולוקח שמן ונרות ומדליק" עכ"ל. וכ' שם המגיד משנה במקור דברי הר"מ שלמדו ממה שנתבאר בהל' חמץ ומצה (פ"ז ה"ז) שאפילו עני שבישראל לא יפחות מד' כוסות בליל פסח משום פרסומי ניסא וכ"ש בנ"ח יש חיוב על העני לעשות כל מה שביכלתו לקיים המצוה.

והנה כבר הרבו האחרונים¹ לפרש כוונת הרב המגיד בלימוד זה מד' כוסות לנ"ח אבל סו"ס זה ברור דלגבי הענין פרסומי ניסא יש כ"ש מד' כוסות לנ"ח, וא"כ שום דין שנאמר בענין פרסומי ניסא לגבי ד' כוסות ע"כ צריך להיות בנר חנוכה ג"כ. ולפ"ז נראה להק' דהרי פסק הר"מ בהל' חו"מ הנ"ל מה דאי' בהמשנה ריש ערבי פסחים (צט): דיש חיוב מוטלת על הגבאי צדקה להבטיח שכל עני יקבל את מה שהוא צריך לקיים מצות ד' כוסות ואילו בנ"ח לא מצינו דין כזה כלל, מוזכר דיש חיוב על הגבאי צדקה ליתן נרות ושמן לעניים הזקוקים להם.

אמנם באמת הביאור הלכה בהל' חנוכה (סי' תרעא סע' א) מביא מהמטה משה דכן יש מחיבים הגבאים ליתן לעני נרות להדליק דילפינן מד' כוסות כמש"כ הרב המגיד, אבל לפי הפשטות נראה, מזה שהשמיטו הר"מ ושו"ע דין זה אצל נ"ח דאינו אלא בד' כוסות. וצ"ב הבנת הענין לאור הכ"ש של הה"מ.

ומעין ענין זה נראה להעיר על מש"כ הרמ"א ריש הל' פסח (סי' תכט) "ומנהג לקנות חטים לחלקן לעניים לצורך פסח וכל מי שדר בעיר י"ב חודש צריך

¹ עיי"ש בלח"מ, וע"ע שו"ת אבנ"ז או"ח תקא ועוד.

תוכן הענינים

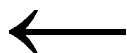
מושבע ועומד מהר סיני

הרב רפאל שעפטיל הלוי נויברגר א.....

בענין מעלת תפילה קצרה

ר' אברהם צין ד.....

מדור לשון הקודש



Dedications



לעילוי נשמת

יעקב אליהו בן דוד ע"ה ניימאן

י ליד באלטימאר מעורב עם הבריה
ע וד בנערותו שימש גדולים בתורה
ק יים מצות בשדה מלחמה
ב אשת נעוריו שמח נ"א שנה

א ח נאמן עד דשבק חיים
ל אחר שנעשה ע"ז בשנים
י סורים סבל בסבר פנים
ה ניח אחריו בנים ובני בנים
ו כולם עוסקים בתורה וחסדים

נפטר בשם טוב ח' שבט תשס"ה לפ"ק

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

In Honor of our Dear Mother,

Deborah Naiman

Thank you for all that you have
done and continue to do for us.

Love,

Irvin and Family

In Honor
of
the Rav
and the
entire Kehillah

by

The Singmans

In Appreciation of
Rabbi and Rebbetzin Naiman
for
their kind-hearted welcome
to the community.

by

The Lamms

In Honor of the Rav, *Shlit"á*,
For His Tireless Efforts
In Making the *Kuntress*
Possible

by

Mr. And Mrs. Jeffrey Silverberg

In Honor of
the Rav and Rebbetzin
by
**Dani and Ora Zuckerbrod
and Family**

In Honor of
Eli Friedman
For all that he does
For the Bais Medrash

לזכר נשמת

יעקב בן דוד הלוי, ע"ה

Wiesel

תנצב"ה

לזכרון עולם בהיכל ה'

לעילוי נשמת

ר' שמואל ב"ר יצחק צבי הכהן ע"ה

Mr. Stanley Cohen, *a"h*

by

The Kimelfeld Family

In Memory of

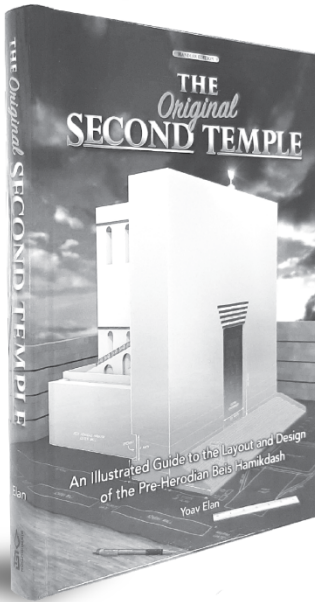
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Author Yoav Elan is the translator and illustrator of ArtScroll's *Maseches Middos* for the *Schottenstein Talmud, Yad Avraham Mishnah Series, and The Mishnah Elucidated*. He lives in Baltimore where he is a member of *Kollel Avodas Levi* at the *Ner Israel Rabbinical College*.

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