

# Hakhmei Lev

THE TORAH JOURNAL OF  
BETH AVRAHAM YOSEPH OF TORONTO CONGREGATION

VOLUME 4 • NISSAN 5783





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## Editors

Chuck English  
Molly Morris  
Dr. Gerard Klein  
Rabbi Ken Stollon  
Rabbi Shmuel Leshner  
Rabbi Jonathan Hames

## Publisher

Rabbi Daniel Korobkin

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The Torah Journal of Beth Avraham Yoseph  
of Toronto Congregation

Volume 4 · Nisan 5783

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*The Torah Journal of Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

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This volume of our journal  
is dedicated in memory of

**Solly Berman ז"ל**

שלמה בן יצחק ז"ל

on the occasion of his first yahrzeit

May the journal be a blessing  
for his neshamah

David and Sally Berman  
and family





This volume of our journal  
is dedicated in memory of

**Arlene Lesley Berman ז"ל**

העניא לאה בת שלמה ז"ל

on the occasion of her 16<sup>th</sup> yahrzeit

May the journal be a blessing  
for her neshamah

David and Sally Berman  
and family



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# Editors' Foreword

**ONCE AGAIN, OUR** *Hakhmei Lev* Torah journal has gathered a diverse collection of essays from community Rabbaim and BAYT members, covering subject matter from Tanakh to halakhah, Torah Li-Shmah, Jewish history, Mahshavah and, of course, Pesah. In this volume, *Hakhmei Lev* debuts a section of essays *b'Ivrit*.

*Hakhmei Lev* – wise-hearted, is the language with which G-d, Himself, describes those who made the *bigdei kehunah* – the priestly garments for the Mishkan. As Rabbi Korobkin pointed out in his Foreword to the first volume of this journal, this group of contributors needed to rely on their own intuition and creativity, to a greater degree than that required for the rest of the Mishkan-building, in order to fulfill G-d's command.

Our BAYT is replete with wise-hearted members, who bring their talent, passion, creativity and dedication to any number of critical shul roles, mostly as volunteers. Some lend their professional skills and others bring their natural abilities. But all, like the *hakhmei lev* of the Mishkan, bring their desire to serve our community and G-d.

The breadth and depth of content in this journal reflects the talent within our BAYT family. For this fourth volume of *Hakhmei Lev*, some new authors have come forward to join authors who have contributed to previous volumes as well. We know that we have only scratched the surface of our talent pool. Please consider sharing your skills, natural talent, and wise heart, by contributing to future volumes of *Hakhmei Lev*.

We wish you and your families a *hag kasher v'sameah*!

**The Editors**





# Publisher's Preface

**PESAH IS THE** time when we reflect upon the quite humble and unremarkable origins of our people. We were a slave class in ancient Egypt, and, as the Hagaddah clearly states, had G-d not miraculously redeemed us, then “we, our children, and our children’s children, would still be slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.” This humbling statement helps keep us in check when we are brimming with pride – perhaps overly so – because of our being the Chosen People. We were chosen, but not because there was anything particularly remarkable within us that made us deserving of being “chosen.” The danger of this reminder is that when one leans too far in the direction of thinking that they are unremarkable, it becomes very difficult to be an inventor and an innovator. What can I possibly contribute if there’s nothing special about me? The Elon Musks and Steve Jobs of the world are remarkable, but what can I do? That is why our Sages teach us (in Mishnah Pesahim 10:4) that we must begin the Hagaddah story with humility, but finish it with a sense of pride (“*mathil b’genut umesayem b’shevah*”). We finish the Maggid section with a recital of Hallel and additional songs. This represents that although we didn’t always have a voice of our own, we’ve managed to join together with Hashem and co-create the great song of our salvation and formation as a great people.

This same dichotomy of humility vs. pride exists when studying Torah. On the one hand, our Sages teach us (TY Pe’ah 2:4):

*Every word of scripture, Mishnah, Talmud, and Agaddah, and even that which a distinguished disciple will innovate before his teacher, all these were already revealed to Moshe at Mount Sinai.*

The Talmud bases its claim on the words of King Solomon in Kohelet, who stated repeatedly that there is “nothing new under the sun,” and that even those things which seem to be new, “have already been in existence for all eternity” (Eccl. 1:10).

It might be depressing to hear that no matter how much I feel an idea of mine is innovative and truly creative, it’s really nothing new, since Moshe had known of it.

Yet our Sages seem to contradict themselves. They also state that “it is impossible to find a Beit Midrash without innovation (Heb. *hiddush*)” (TB Hagigah 3a). In one dramatic episode (TB Hullin 6b-7a), Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi gave an innovative *p’sak halakhah* (legal ruling) that at first glance was shocking to his colleagues. They challenged him: How can you rule in a way that your ancestors would have never accepted? He responded to them by saying that sometimes, even one’s own ancestors leave room open for a future descendant to innovate a new Torah idea. That is, no matter how far down the chain I may be in the Masoretic

process, there's always an opportunity for me to create a new Torah idea that had never been stated before.

How do we reconcile these two Talmudic statements? Is there really nothing new, or is it possible to always innovate? Some of the commentaries see no contradiction. In reality, if one's *hiddushei Torah* are correct and true, then Moshe, who was the greatest knower of the Torah, possessed knowledge of that *hiddush*. But that doesn't negate the fact that so much of what Moshe knew was not transmitted effectively down through the generations. So many ideas have been forgotten through the ages, such that when one presents a *hiddush*, one may be restoring that which had been forgotten in prior generations.

Creativity is thus a necessary mandate of every *beit Midrash* if the Torah will continue to be alive and vital for all future generations. It is in this spirit that we are very honored to be part of this process with our new volume of the *Hakhmei Lev* journal. You will find many *hiddushei Torah*, some of which you may already be familiar with, and some of which you will find to be new. Either way, this is part of the restorative process of making the Torah vital and new to every single generation.

A hearty *yishar koah* to all our authors, and especially to our editors: Rabbi Shmuel Leshner, Chuck English, Dr. Gerard Klein, Molly Morris, Rabbi Jonathan Hames and Rabbi Ken Stollon. Thank you as well to Daniel Safran, who continues to beautifully typeset our journal from his new home in Israel. Thank you also to Isaac Salama of Restless Styles for an excellent printing job. We appreciate this amazing team effort that has enabled us to present you, our readership, with a quality journal of Torah literature.

We offer our heartfelt thanks to David and Sally Berman and family for sponsoring this volume of *Hakhmei Lev*. Their sponsorship is dedicated to the memory of David's beloved father, Solly Berman, whose first *yahrzeit* was recently commemorated, and to the memory of David's beloved sister, Arlene Berman, whose *yahrzeit* comes out right before Pesach. May their *neshamos* have an *Aliyah*, and may these words of Torah in the *Hakhmei Lev* journal aid in their souls' ascent.

Wishing you all a *hag kasher v'sameah*.

**Rabbi Daniel Korobkin**

# A Word About the Cover

**THE BIRDS' HEAD** *Haggadah* is the oldest surviving illuminated Ashkenazi Haggadah, and the first illustrated Haggadah known to be produced to stand alone, outside of a prayer book. It originates from the Upper Rhine region of Southern Germany in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century – a period in which bird- and animal-headed figures were typical of Ashkenazi illumination (for reasons not yet understood).

*The Birds' Head Haggadah* is on permanent display at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

(Sources: Wikipedia; The Israel Museum)



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## A Note To The Reader

The views expressed in this journal are those of the contributors alone. They do not necessarily represent the views of the editors or the rabbinic leadership of the BAYT.

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**Pesah**



# A Pesah Guide for Those With Food Allergies and Sensitivities

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RABBI SHMUEL LESHER

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## The Challenge of the Orthodox Diet

IN 2011, RABBI Reuven Spolter wrote a powerful piece in which he called upon the Orthodox Jewish community to take physical health and physical well-being more seriously.

In his words:

*Our community rightly protects the value of life. We'll fight for the right to cling to every last second of life, devoted to the notion that every moment is precious and holy. And yet, at the very same time, under the banner of frumkeit, we've adopted a lifestyle that's literally going to cut years and perhaps decades from our lives.<sup>1</sup>*

## The Importance of Health

The Torah states, "Take utmost care and watch yourselves scrupulously" (*Devarim* 4:9) and "Be very careful with your lives" (*Devarim* 4:15). These two verses are interpreted by the Gemara (*Berakhos* 32b) as admonishments to take care of physical well-being.

Another example of the emphasis on physical well-being can be seen in the Talmudic concept referred to as "*Hamirah sakanta mi-Isurah*," physical danger is treated more seriously in halakhah than ritual prohibition (*Hullin* 10a).

One of the strongest statements advocating health in the literature is that of the Rambam:

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1. Rabbi Reuven Spolter, "Is Orthodoxy Unhealthy?" *Jewish Action* (Spring 2011).

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*Since maintaining a healthy and sound body is among the ways of G-d – for one cannot understand or have any knowledge of the Creator, if he is ill – therefore, he must avoid that which harms the body and accustom himself to that which is healthful and helps the body become stronger.<sup>2</sup>*

## Conflicting Values

All things being equal, I think most people would agree that physical well-being is important. The more challenging issue is what if the value of health comes into conflict with another central value of Judaism – such as mitzvah observance?

For example, what if one is doing a mitzvah which causes physically negative results? Can one argue that G-d will protect that person from harm? Some of us may have heard someone say (or say ourselves), “I can eat unhealthily. It’s oneg Shabbos (enjoyment on Shabbos)!” Or “Isn’t it a mitzvah to eat matzah on Pesah? My health can’t stand in the way of an explicit commandment in the Torah.” These arguments might even be supported by a verse in *Koheles* (8:5), “One who observes *mitzvos* will not suffer from a dangerous situation.” We can never be harmed by a mitzvah, so why the concern?

In response to this kind of argumentation, Dovid Lichtenstein, author and host of the well-known podcast, “Halacha Headlines,” cites a passage by Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Halperin that supports the halakhic imperative of maintaining physical health even when performing a mitzvah.<sup>3</sup> In the case of a circumcision being done on Shabbos, Rashi comments that even though, in general, a circumcision in its proper time is performed on Shabbos, if there is an established *hazakah* that the child would be put at risk of death after being circumcised, we do not perform the circumcision on Shabbos.<sup>4</sup> Based on this Rashi, R. Halperin argues that whenever one is absolved of a mitzvah due to the risk posed to one’s health, there is no value whatsoever in performing the mitzvah. In fact, that person actually violates halakhah by exposing himself/herself unnecessarily to danger.<sup>5</sup>

Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch argues along similar lines. In response to a case of a person whose doctors forbade him from eating matzah or maror on Pesah because of the risk of certain danger to his health, he argues that there is no fulfillment of the mitzvah, even if he were to eat the matzah or *maror*.<sup>6</sup> According to R. Sternbuch, even if the risk is only a possibility, it is forbidden to eat the matzah or *maror*.<sup>7</sup>

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2. De’os 4:1. Translation adapted from Rabbi Eliyahu Touger’s *Mishneh Torah* (Moznaim).

3. Dovid Lichtenstein, *Headlines*, Vol. 2 (Orthodox Union Press, 2017), 264-265.

4. Rashi, *Yevamos* 64b, s.v. “Issura Vi-Sakanta.”

5. *Shu”t Oneg Yom Tov* 41.

6. R. Moshe Sternbuch, *Teshuvos Vi-Hangahos* 2:241.

7. *Ibid.* R. Sternbuch does note that some highly righteous individuals have placed themselves in a low level of danger to fulfill *mitzvos*. To account for this, he argues for a distinction to be made between minimal risk and high risk.

## The Challenge of the Pesah Diet

Notwithstanding the above sources, maintaining physical health and a balanced and wholesome diet can be difficult. Three weekly Shabbos meals, *Kiddushim*, and the occasional *Shalom Zakhor* are a constant challenge to a healthy relationship with food all year round. Perhaps, even more foreboding for many with food allergies or sensitivities, is Pesah. On this holiday, more than any other time on the Jewish calendar, our relationship with food can really get out of hand. Even for those who do not have a restrictive diet per se, on Pesah, many people abandon their normal approach to food. An absurd amount of matzah, potato starch, and the staple that no good Kosher-for-Pesah item can go without – cottonseed oil – are consumed. But this does not need to remain the status quo.

My father, who is a wonderful cook on Pesah as well as during the rest of the year, offered sound advice for Pesah consumers who are concerned (and rightly so) about their diet. He has a very simple approach to the Pesah menu, “If we wouldn’t eat it the rest of the year, we shouldn’t eat it on Pesah.”

Keeping with the “Leshar approach” to the Pesah diet, in this article, I will endeavour to provide a clear guide for those with food allergies and sensitivities who are attempting to create a balanced diet while at the same time fulfill all the *mitzvos* of Pesah in the most ideal way. Even those without specific food restrictions may be surprised at what the actual halakhic requirements are and would gain much from more healthy moderation.

## Limitations of this Guide

A disclaimer must be made at the outset:

The purpose of this guide is not to be used as a replacement for asking questions to your local rabbi or Morah D’asra. Its purpose is to summarize the halakhic literature and allow those with allergies and food-sensitivities to ask their Rav more informed questions. Seeking personal halakhic guidance from a Rav who understands the particulars of the situation is a critical part of the halakhic decision-making process. Often, a single differentiating factor can change the halakhah considerably.

## Matzah: How Much?

According to normative halakhah, there are three times one should eat matzah during the seder: *Motzi Matzah*, *Korekh* and *Tzafun (Afikomen)*. Ideally, to fulfill all of one’s obligations according to all opinions, one should eat two *kezeisim* (olive-sized amount) for *Motzi Matzah*, one *kezayis* for *Korekh*, and two more *kezeisim* for Afikomen, which makes for a total of five *kezeisim*.

The reason for this is that the Shulhan Arukh writes that for *Motzi Matzah* one should eat one *kezayis* from the broken matzah and one *kezayis* from the whole matzah.<sup>8</sup> The Mishnah

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8. *Orah Hayim* 475:1.

Berurah rules that one *kezayis* is enough for *Korekh*.<sup>9</sup> For *Afikomen*, although the Shulhan Arukh is of the opinion that one can eat one *kezayis*,<sup>10</sup> the Rama rules that it is preferable to have two *kezeisim*.<sup>11</sup> This brings us to a total of five *kezeisim*.

## Can One Eat Less?

If one has difficulty eating five *kezeisim* is there any room for leniency? First of all, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and others rule that for *Motzi Matzah*, if the *matzos* of the head of the house don't total two *kezeisim* for each person, one fulfills one's mitzvah by eating a bit from the whole matzah and one other *kezayis*.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, one can have only one *kezayis* for *Afikomen* and rely on the Shulhan Arukh. This would be a total of about three *kezeisim*.

What if that is still too much for a person to handle? What is the bare minimum? The *Magen Avraham* writes that if one is ill, and cannot eat more than one *kezayis*, one should eat one's meal without saying *hamotzi*, and then afterwards make *hamotzi* and *al achilas matzah* and then eat the one *kezayis* of matzah. This way, one fulfills *motzi matzah* and *Afikomen*.<sup>13</sup> Rabbi Asher Weiss, responding to a query from someone with celiac disease, rules that if one cannot have more than one *kezayis* of matzah, one should follow this *Magen Avraham*.<sup>14</sup>

## How Much is a *Kezayis*?

How much is an olive-sized amount of matzah?<sup>15</sup> Below are some of the most commonly cited views regarding the *shiur* (halakhically required amount) of a *kezayis* in the contemporary *poskim*. Hazon Ish is cited as holding a *kezayis* is 33.3 cubic centimetres (henceforth: cc),<sup>16</sup> whereas R. Avraham Hayim Noe holds it is 27 cc.<sup>17</sup> Rabbi Moshe Feinstein is cited as holding

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9. *Orah Hayim* 475:16.

10. *Orah Hayim* 477:1.

11. *Darkei Moshe* 477:1 citing the *Maharil*. *Magen Avraham* (477:1) explains that one is in commemoration of the Korban Pesah and one is for the matzah eaten with it.

12. *Halikhos Shlomo* 9:40. See [https://halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Required\\_Amount\\_of\\_Matzah\\_and\\_Wine\\_for\\_the\\_Seder](https://halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Required_Amount_of_Matzah_and_Wine_for_the_Seder) footnote 23.

13. *Orah Hayim* 482:1.

14. *Shu"t Minhas Asher* 3:43:3.

15. For more on the history and halakhos of the *kezayis* see Rabbi Hayim P. Beinisch, *Middos V'Shiurei Torah* (Bnei Brak, 2000) 521-532; Rabbi Yisrael Pinchas Bodner, *Halachos of K'zayis* (Feldheim, 2001); Rabbi Natan Slifkin, "The Evolution of the Olive: The Halachic History of the Expanding *Kezayis*," *Zootorah.com* (2010).

16. Rabbi Hadar Yehuda Margolin, "Birur Shitas ha-Hazon Ish Bi-shiur *Kezayis*," *Moriah* 219-220 (19:3-4, 5753), p. 99-103 who cites some charts that list Hazon Ish's opinion requiring 33cc for a *kezayis*, whereas other charts list his opinion is 50cc. Among other considerations, Hazon Ish's opinion is based on the opinion of Rabbi Yehezkel Landau, who argues that our eggs are half the size of the eggs that existed in Talmudic times that were used to determine the size of the *kezayis*. See R. Yehezkel Landau, *Tzelah, Pesachim* 116b and Hazon Ish, *Kuntres Shiurim*, *Orah Hayim* 39:6. However, R. Margolin argues convincingly that Hazon Ish holds a *kezayis* is fundamentally no more than 17cc. The other amounts cited in the name of Hazon Ish are stringencies.

17. In *Shiurei Torah* 3:11, p. 191 (5707) he ruled 28.8cc, however in his later work *Shiurei Tzion*, p. 70, (5709) he wrote 27. Also see Rabbi Alexander Aryeh Mandelbaum, *VeZos HaBerakhah*, *Birur Halakhah* 1, p. 221.

that a *kezayis* is 31 cc.<sup>18</sup> Rabbi Mordechai Willig is more lenient. He rules that a *kezayis* is 22.5 cc. For machine matzah that it is less than  $\frac{2}{5}$  of a matzah and for hand matzah is about less than  $\frac{1}{5}$  of an average hand matzah.<sup>19</sup>

R. Willig writes:

*In cases of illness, one may consider eating only a smaller shiur, either one third of an egg in its shell (about 17 cubic centimetres) or the size of today's olives (no more than 7.5 cubic centimetres).*<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, in this same responsum cited above, R. Asher Weiss states:

עוד יש לו לדעת שמעיקר הדין יכול הוא להקל בשיעור כזית דאף השיעורים הקטנים של הגר"נ  
נאה יש בהם חומרא ובשעה"ד כבני"ד יכול לסמוך דשיעור כזית הוא בינוני בזמנינו.

*The person in question [with celiac disease] should also be aware that as a matter of strict law, one can be lenient regarding the size of a kezayis, as even the measurements of R. Hayim Noe are somewhat stringent. [Because] in a difficult situation such as this, one can rely on the size of an olive being medium in our times.*<sup>21</sup>

Although he doesn't give an exact amount, R. Weiss apparently holds that one who suffers from celiac disease can rely on a *shiur* even smaller than R. Noe's 27 cc.<sup>22</sup>

As noted above, between four and five *kezeisim* is the ideal amount required to be eaten at the Seder with the minimum being one *kezayis*. So according to R. Willig and R. Weiss, the ideal amount to eat is about two machine-made matzos and the minimal amount is  $\frac{2}{5}$  of a matzah. For hand-made matzah, the ideal amount is about one matzah, and the minimal amount is  $\frac{1}{5}$  of a matzah.<sup>23</sup>

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18. R. Mandelbaum 221 citing Rabbi Dovid Feinstein, *Haggadas Kol Dodi*. In the revised edition of "Do it Right on Pesach Night: What? When? How Much?" published by Beth Medrash L'Torah V'Horoah (the Kollel located at Mesivta Tifereth Jerusalem (MTJ) 145 East Broadway New York, NY) reprinted from Olomeinu – Our World (Torah Umesorah, 1974) it cites R. Moshe Feinstein's position as a piece of matzah measuring at least 7 inches by 6 1/4 inches. I thank Rabbi Neil Cohen for this document.

19. Rabbi Mordechai Willig, "How Much Matza Do You Need to Eat?" YU Pesach To-Go 5771, p. 58-61 and Rabbi Mordechai Willig, "The Shiurim of Seder Night," YUTorah.org (April 6, 2008) (audio recording, min. 1-10). I recall my family's Rav, Rabbi Ron Yitzchok Eisenman, the Rav of Congregation Ahavas Israel of Passaic, New Jersey, giving the size of a credit card as the example of how much a *kezayis* of matzah is required to be eaten Seder night.

20. R. Willig, "How Much Matza?" Using a typical olive as a *kezayis* is a view held by some of the *Geonim*. See R. Beinsh, *Middos V'Shiurei Torah* 522-523. More recently, it is also a view cited in the name of Rabbi Hayim Volozhin. See R. Margolin 100, no. 6 and *Ma'aseh Rav*, p. 218, 337-338 citing *Kehillos Yaakov Pesachim* 43.

21. *Shu"t Minhas Asher* 3:43:3. Translation is my own.

22. R. Weiss' view seems to align with the opinion of R. Hayim Volozhin cited above that one can rely on the size of the average modern olive. Since R. Weiss does not give an exact amount, for simplicity's sake, I will group R. Willig and R. Weiss together as one opinion as they both require less than R. Hayim Noe.

23. According to R. Bodner, to fulfill one's obligation according to R. Moshe Feinstein, one must eat minimally  $\frac{2}{5}$  of a standard machine matzah. For hand matzah, he differentiates between thickness. For the thickest hand matzah, a third would suffice, whereas the thinnest kind would require more than half a matzah. See R. Bodner, p. 91-93.



## Summary of Opinions regarding the size of a *Kezayis*

OPINION	KEZAYIS IN CUBIC CENTIMETRES (CC)	MATZAH EQUIVALENT PER KEZAYIS (APPROX.) FOR MACHINE-MADE MATZAH AND FOR HAND-MADE MATZAH
R. Mordechai Willig/ R. Asher Weiss	22.5 (7.5 in cases of illness)	Machine: $\frac{2}{5}$ of a matzah Hand: $\frac{1}{5}$ of a matzah (In cases of illness: Machine: $\frac{1}{4}$ of a matzah Hand: $\frac{1}{8}$ of a matzah)
R. Hayim Noe	27	Machine: $\frac{1}{2}$ of a matzah <sup>24</sup> Hand: slightly more than $\frac{1}{5}$ of a matzah <sup>25</sup>
R. Moshe Feinstein	31	Machine: more than $\frac{1}{2}$ a matzah Hand: more than $\frac{2}{5}$ of a matzah <sup>26</sup>
Hazon Ish	33.3 (fundamentally 17)	Machine: $\frac{4}{5}$ of a matzah <sup>27</sup> Hand: $\frac{1}{3}$ of a matzah <sup>28</sup>

R. Willig adds that if one eats more matzah than is required, one continues to fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzah.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, all things being equal, a healthy person should eat much more matzah than the minimum shiur, and need not be so exacting about the amount.

## Gluten-Free Matzah<sup>30</sup>

If one is allergic to wheat or spelt and cannot eat even one *kezayis* of regular matzah, what are one's options? About 30 years ago, Rabbi Ephraim Kestenbaum of London began developing gluten-free oat matzah, so that those suffering from celiac disease and other allergies to wheat could fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzah on Seder night.<sup>31</sup> Today, gluten-free oat

24. Rabbi Yaakov Hirschman, "*Shiurei Matzah U-Maror vi-Arba Kosos*," published by Kollel Toronto Institute For Advanced Judaic Studies and approved by Rabbi Shlomo Miller. I thank Rabbi Neil Cohen for this source.

25. Ibid. R. Hirschman records  $\frac{1}{5}$  of a hand-made matzah for R. Hayim Noe's opinion. But based on the cubic centimeter amounts and average volume of hand-made matzos, I estimated 27 cc to be slightly more than  $\frac{1}{5}$  of a hand-made matzah.

26. As noted above, "Do it Right on Pesach Night" states the *shiur* is 7 inches by 6 1/4 inches.

27. "*Shiurei Matzah U-Maror vi-Arba Kosos*."

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid. According to some, this is actually a biblical mitzvah.

30. My thanks to my friend Rabbi Noach Goldstein, Rosh Beit Midrash of the YU Torah MiTzion Kollel of Chicago, who provided me with many of the sources on gluten-free matzah.

31. Rabbi Dovid Cohen, "Celiac: A Guide to Mitzvah Observance," *The Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society*, Vol. LIX, (Spring 2010), 20.

matzah can be found in many Kosher-For Pesah stores. Can someone who is celiac use these matzos? What about someone who is gluten sensitive but not acutely allergic?

## Are Oats One of the Five Grains?

In order for a grain to be used for matzah it must be one of the five grains listed in the Mishna in *Pesahim* (2:5). Are oats one of the five grains?

The Mishna lists the grains with which one may fulfill one's obligation to eat matzah on Pesah: *hitim* (wheat), *siorim* (barley), *kusmin* (spelt), *shifon* (rye), and *shiboles shual*.

The definition of *shiboles shual* is the subject of debate. Rashi<sup>32</sup> as well as Rabbeinu Gershom<sup>33</sup> hold *shiboles shual* is oats. However, the Rambam<sup>34</sup> and Rabbi Nosson Av Ha-Yeshiva<sup>35</sup> hold it is actually a different species of barley, known as wild barley or two-rowed barley. The Arukh quotes one opinion that *shiboles shual* is rye.<sup>36</sup>

Traditionally, most *poskim* seemed to have assumed, like the school of Rashi, that *shiboles shual* is oats. However, more recently, Professor Yehuda Feliks, an Israeli botanist, argued that this is incorrect. Oats did not grow in Eretz Yisrael at the time of the Mishna. Furthermore, he cited other indications that oats could not possibly be one of the five grains discussed in the Mishna. According to Dr. Feliks, oats cannot be used for matzah, and the other halakhs of the five grains (*hallah*, *berakhos*, *hametz*) do not apply to them.<sup>37</sup> Rabbi Dovid Cohen notes that Dr. Feliks' position was widely rejected by most contemporary *poskim*, based on the age-old tradition that *shiboles shual* is oats.<sup>38</sup> However, R. Hershel Schachter<sup>39</sup> and R. Mordechai Willig are concerned about relying on gluten-free oat matzah.<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, if one cannot have even 7.5 cc of wheat, according to most *poskim*, using gluten-free oat matzah

32. *Pesahim* 35a s.v. *shiboles shual*.

33. *Menahos* 70b, s.v. *shiboles shual*.

34. Rambam, Commentary on the Misha, *Kilayim* 1:1

35. Rabbi Nosson Av Ha-Yeshiva, Commentary on the Misha, *Kilayim* 1:1.

36. *ha-Arukh Al Talmud Yerushalmi, Kelayim, halakhah* 1. According to this view, *shifon* must be a different kind of grain.

37. Yehuda Feliks, *Hotzmeah Vi-ha-Hai Bi-Mishna*, p. 155.

38. R. Cohen, "Celiac: A Guide," 7n5. However, R. Cohen does concede that "his position, that oats, which are relatively gluten-free, are not one of the five grains, would seem to dovetail with those who suggest that the presence of significant amounts of gluten is what differentiates the five grains from rice, corn, and other 'grains.'"

39. R. Hershel Schachter, "Laws and Customs of Pesach (April 7, 2011)," *YUTorah.org* (audio recording, min. 68-71).

40. R. Mordechai Willig, "Shiur and Question and Answer Session (April 11, 2019). Rabbi Yitzhak Abadi (*Ohr Yitzhak* 1:60) is also of the opinion that oats are not one of the five grains. Interestingly, Rabbi Yosef Ephrati, "*Zohi Shiboles Shual*," *Mesorah* 13 (Orthodox Union, 1997), 70-71 reports that he took part in a number of experiments that determined that oats can become *hametz* (as the five grains are supposed to, see *Pesahim* 35a) and do not become rancid (as other grains are supposed to). R. Willig (April 11, 2019) addressing R. Efrati findings that seem to contradict Dr. Feliks' position, argued that oats naturally do have some wheat in their stock because of cross pollination. Therefore, he holds that oats have been classified as one of the five grains historically. Therefore, typical oats can ferment because of their wheat content. However, R. Willig was unsure if one can fulfill their obligation of matzah with 100% pure oats, devoid of any cross-pollination. He did concede that "in a pinch" one can follow *poskim* who allow pure non-gluten oat matzah to be used. For more see Rabbi Asher Bush, "Gluten Intolerance, Wheat Allergies and Mitzvos, I and II," *TorahMusings.com* (February 6 and 10, 2014) and "Motzei Matzah, footnote 20," *Halachipedia.com*.

is recommended. According to R. Schachter and R. Willig, if one needs to use oat matzah, one should listen to someone's else's *berakhos* on wheat matzah and answer amen.<sup>41</sup>

## Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

Even if one is not suffering from celiac disease or a different acute dietary illness, Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a common issue for many and can pose a formidable challenge for the Pesah diet. Tamar Feldman, a registered functional dietitian, recommends whole wheat matzah for the additional fibre.<sup>42</sup> To counteract some of matzah's impact on the gut, she also suggests that those suffering from IBS drink twice their usual amount of water over the first few days of Pesah.<sup>43</sup> In addition to this advice, ask your Rav if you can utilize the smaller *shiurim* listed above to alleviate some of the indigestion that can occur from excess matzah consumption.

## The Four Cups of Wine

The Gemara in *Pesachim* (99b) notes the requirement to drink four cups of wine on Seder night. The Gemara (108b) also notes the requirement on Pesah to express "*heirus*," freedom, in connection with the drinking of the four cups of wine. The Rashbam explains that the beverage should be "*hashuv*," a significant or dignified drink.<sup>44</sup> Because of this, halakhically, wine is generally the optimal choice for the four cups.

## Is Wine Required?

What if someone has a sulfite allergy or has issues drinking alcoholic beverages? Can one use grape juice for the four cups?

The Gemara in *Nedarim* (49b) states that Rabbi Yehuda said about himself, "[After drinking the four cups of wine at the Seder] I must bind my temples from Pesah until *Shavuot* [to alleviate my headache]."

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41. R. Hershel Schachter, "Laws and Customs of Pesach" and personal conversation with R. Mordechai Willig (April 2019).

42. It should be noted that although the Rama writes in his gloss to Shulhan Arukh (*Orah Hayim* 453:1) that the custom is to use wheat, the other 4 grains (as well as whole wheat) are certainly kosher to be used for matzah at the Pesah Seder. See Mishna Berurah (ad loc.).

43. Shira Isenberg, "Of Food and Freedom: Navigating Pesach with Food-Related Conditions," (OUKosher.com). For those suffering from IBS, many nutritionists recommend a diet low in FODMAP foods, or foods which are short-chain carbohydrates (sugars) that the small intestine absorbs poorly. Recommended foods include: eggs, meat, certain cheeses such as brie, Camembert, cheddar and feta, grains like rice (for Pesah if of sephardic descent), quinoa and oats, vegetables like eggplant, potatoes, tomatoes, cucumbers and zucchini, and fruits such as grapes, oranges, strawberries, blueberries and pineapple. See Hazel Galon Veloso, M.D., "FODMAP Diet: What You Need to Know," [hopkinsmedicine.org](http://hopkinsmedicine.org).

44. Rashbam, *Pesachim* 108b, s.v. *yedei cheirus*.

Accordingly, the Shulhan Arukh rules that if wine gives one a headache or is harmful to one's health, one should nonetheless still use wine.<sup>45</sup> However, the *Mishna Berurah* rules that this only applies if it gives one a headache, but not if it makes one sick in bed.<sup>46</sup>

## Can One Use Grape Juice?

Some *poskim* rule that grape juice is not suitable for the four cups.<sup>47</sup> However, many others sanction the use of grape juice.<sup>48</sup> In fact, according to R. Soloveitchik, even if one merely prefers grape juice over wine, one *should* use grape juice.<sup>49</sup>

## Hamar Medinah

If one cannot drink wine or grape juice, one should use *hamar medinah*, a respectable beverage of one's country.<sup>50</sup> This category normally includes beer<sup>51</sup> or cognac but not soda, lemonade, or water. The Shulhan Arukh holds that coffee, tea, or orange juice cannot be used as *hamar medinah*. However, according to the *Rama* and *Mishna Berurah*, they could be used, whereas milk or oil may not be used.<sup>52</sup> R. Morechai Willig rules that if wine or grape juice makes a person so sick that he becomes bedridden – and that person cannot have *hamar medinah* either – he is exempt from drinking the four cups.<sup>53</sup>

## How Much Does One Need To Drink?

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 108b) states that one needs to drink a *revi'is* of wine for each cup. This is codified by the Shulhan Arukh.<sup>54</sup> If this is difficult, one can fulfill one's obligation by drinking the majority of a *revi'is* for each cup. Some rule that one must drink the majority of the cup, even if that means consuming much more than one *revi'is*.<sup>55</sup> However, the *Mishna Berurah* states that the halakhah follows the other view and only a *revi'is* is required.<sup>56</sup>

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45. *Orah Hayim* 472:10.

46. 472:35.

47. Rabbi Shimon D. Eider in the name of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein writes that one does not fulfill their obligation of *hirus* (expressing freedom) with grape juice. However, R. Eider himself concludes that if one is unable to have wine, one should have grape juice. See his *Halachos of Pesach* (Feldheim, 1998), 222. Also see Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank, *Mikraei Kodesh*, *Pesah* 2:35, p. 152 who argues grape juice is certainly not ideal for the Pesah Seder. However, Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch (*Teshuvos Vi-hanhagos* 2:243) writes that the Hazon Ish, Brisker Rav, and other *gedolim* used grape juice at the end of their lives when they were unable to drink wine.

48. R. Hershel Schachter, *Nefesh HaRav*, p. 185.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Orah Hayim* 483:1.

51. Although beer is considered *hamar medinah*, it cannot be used on Pesah because it is *hametz*.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Personal conversation in April 2019.

54. *Orah Hayim* 472:9.

55. Ramban quoted by *Orhos Hayim*, *Leil Pesah*, no. 6, cited by the *Beis Yosef*, *Orah Hayim* 472:9.

56. *Mishna Berurah* 472:33. The *Mishna Berurah* does add that if one does not intend on drinking a lot, ideally they should use a smaller cup in order to follow the more stringent view and be able to drink the majority of the cup.

## How Much is a *Revi'is*?

Below are some of the most commonly cited views regarding *shiurim* (halakhically required amounts) in the contemporary *poskim*. R. Avraham Hayim Noe rules that a *revi'is* is about 2.9 ounces (86 cc).<sup>57</sup> The Hafetz Hayim holds 3.8 oz.<sup>58</sup> R. Moshe Feinstein holds 3.3 fl oz (98cc).<sup>59</sup> The Hazon Ish rules the amount is 5.1 (150 cc).<sup>60</sup> R. Willig holds 2.5 oz. suffices. Moreover, according to R. Willig, minimally, all you need is the majority of 2.5 ounces which is 1.26 ounces or about 1 ⅓ ounces.<sup>61</sup>

## Summary of Opinions Regarding the Amount of a *Revi'is*

OPINION	REVI'IS IN OUNCES (OZ.)
R. Mordechai Willig	2.5 oz.
R. Hayim Noe	2.9 oz.
R. Moshe Feinstein	3.3 oz.
Hafetz Hayim (As calculated by R. Moshe Heinemann)	3.8 oz.
Hazon Ish	5.1 oz.

## Can One Water Down the Wine or Grape Juice?

R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was particularly concerned about adding water to grape juice.<sup>62</sup> However, R. Willig<sup>63</sup> and R. Moshe Heinemann are lenient and allow for dilution.<sup>64</sup> R. Heinemann holds that one may dilute wine with grape juice or water down to the point where

57. R. Avraham Hayim Noe writes in *Shiurei Torah* 3:6, p. 176-177 and in *Shiruei Tziyon*, p. 69 no. 6 that a *revi'is* is 86 grams (cc) which is about 2.9 fluid ounces.

58. See *Biur Halakhah, Orah Hayim* 271:13 s.v. *rovo shel revi'is* who writes one should use the volume of two eggs. See Star-K Staff, "Pesach Shiurim for Matzah and Wine - For Healthy Individuals and for Diabetic / Those With Food Allergies," adapted from Nechama Cohen, "Passover/Pesach Guide for Jewish Diabetes" *Jewish Diabetes Association* (updated April 2022), Star-K.org and Rabbi Dovid Heber, "The Guide to Halachic Food Measurements," Star-K.org (Updated April 2022) who rule that this equals 3.8 oz. This amount is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Moshe Heinemann.

59. Rabbi Dovid Feinstein, *Kol Dodi Haggadah*, 5730, p. 4. However, "Do it Right on Pesach Night" cites R. Moshe Feinstein's position as 2.9 oz.

60. Rabbi Yaakov Kanievsky, *Shiurim Shel Torah* p. 65 and R. Shimon Eider, *Halachos of Pesach* 229.

61. Rabbi Mordechai Willig, "The Shiurim of Seder Night" (audio recording, min. 1 – 15) and personal conversation (April 2019). In R. Willig's words, "You need G.M.G – *Gornisht mit Gornisht* (less than nothing)."

62. *Shu"t Minhas Shlomo* no. 4.

63. Personal Conversation (April 2019).

64. Star-K Staff, "Pesach Shiurim for Matzah and Wine."

the wine will be 4% alcohol.<sup>65</sup> You can dilute wine with up to  $\frac{2}{3}$  water and  $\frac{1}{3}$  wine as long as you still have 4% alcohol.<sup>66</sup>

The diluted beverage should contain at least 4% alcohol to fulfill the obligation of drinking wine at the Seder. If necessary, one may make a mixture of  $\frac{2}{3}$  water and  $\frac{1}{3}$  wine (66% water and 34% wine) as long as the diluted amount still contains 4% alcohol. Otherwise, there is a chance that it may no longer be considered wine for the Seder.<sup>67</sup>

*The following chart illustrates how much wine to drink according to the Star-K and R. Willig:*

CUP	AMOUNT YOU DRINK	AMOUNT OF WINE AFTER DILUTION
Each cup	Star-K: 1.9 oz. R. Willig: 1.25 oz.	Star-K: 0.7 oz. R. Willig: 0.4 oz.
Total for four cups	Star-K: 7.6 oz. R. Willig: 5 oz.	Star-K: 2.8 oz. R. Willig: 1.6 oz.

According to the Star-K, if one is unable to drink pure grape juice due to medical reasons (and cannot drink any percentage of wine), one may dilute regular grape juice. When mixing grape juice with water, it is best to make at least 51% of the mixture regular grape juice (i.e., the other 49% is water). Star-K further states that “light grape juice” may not be diluted by the consumer (if there is a necessity, check with the certifying agency of the product).

### Preparing for the Seder

The Star-K emphasizes the need for those with allergies and dietary restrictions to properly prepare for the Seder. Failing to prepare is preparing to fail. Having everything ready ahead of time makes it much less likely for dietary issues to arise.<sup>68</sup>

Below is a useful checklist I have adapted from the Star-K guide:

- Discuss with your rabbi and doctor the amount of matzah, wine, etc. necessary to fulfill the mitzvah given your specific medical condition or dietary challenge.
- Prepare these measurements before Yom Tov with a separate labelled bottle for your mixture.
- Select the wine of your choice and check the carb and alcohol content.
- Prepare the right size cup (often it can be smaller than you think).
- Try to arrive at an accurate measurement for matzah before Yom Tov (i.e., on or before Erev Pesah).
- Prepare your choice of glucose for treating hypoglycemia.
- Review your chart and details with your health care team.
- Prepare all medical supplies, medications, and equipment for Yom Tov and Shabbos.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

It is my belief that those with restrictive diets and/or those with allergies need not suffer through their Pesah Seder. Using the above guidelines with proper planning and forethought, having a healthy, as well as halakhically ideal, Pesah Seder is certainly attainable. This applies to the rest of Yom Tov as well. Even for healthy individuals, the Pesah diet does not have to be restricted to matzah, meat, potato starch and lots of eggs.<sup>69</sup> If you wouldn't eat something the rest of the year, why is it acceptable to eat it on Pesah? Both the body and the soul are needed in the service of Hashem. We must take care of both of them. The Rambam wrote, "we cannot truly know Hashem if we are sick." If our wellness and physical needs are not met, we cannot even begin to have the mental and emotional bandwidth to enjoy ourselves at the Seder.

May we all merit to be healthy, both physically and spiritual, and to truly know and experience Hashem and His *mitzvos* – on Pesah and all year round.

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69. The Jewish Diabetes Association has published a cookbook entitled, *EnLITened Kosher Cooking* See [jewish-diabetes.org](http://jewish-diabetes.org).

# Karpas, Yoseph and the Final Redemption

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DANNY BERGER

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## Relationship Between *Karpas* and Yoseph<sup>1</sup>

**ON PESAH SEDER** night, we perform *karpas* immediately after Kiddush in an effort to tweak the children's curiosity about the Seder being different from our standard Shabbos and Yom Tov meals. The intention is to trigger the children to ask questions, allowing us to fulfill the mitzvah of *sippur yetzias Mitzrayim* – the biblical obligation to relate the story of the Jewish nation's exodus from Egypt. The question to ask is, why specifically *karpas* to achieve this objective?

Rabeinu Ma'noach in his commentary on the Rambam tells us:<sup>2</sup>

*The karpas segment of the Pesah Seder is a zekher (remembrance) to the k'sones ha'passim (fine woolen coat) that Yaakov Avinu made for Yoseph which eventually lead to the descent of our forefathers to Egypt.*

There seems to be a relationship between the word *karpas* and the phrase *k'sones passim*. The Talmud<sup>3</sup> tells us *karpas* is a compound of the words “*kar*” and “*pas*” commonly translated as “cushions of fine wool.” Additionally, Rashi in *Parshas Vayeshev*<sup>4</sup> actually links the phrase

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1. Inspired by *Daf Ha'Yomi* shiurim given by Rabbi Sruly Bornstein.

2. *Sefer Ha'Menuchah* on *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Chometz U'Matzah* 8:2.

3. *Megillah* 12a.

4. *Bereishis* 37:3.

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*k'sones passim* with the word *karpas* through the words “*karpas u'teches*” as stated in *Megillas Esther*<sup>5</sup> and translated as “white cotton and blue wool.”

Given the etymological connection between the word *karpas* and the phrase *k'sones passim*, what emerges is a linkage between the story surrounding Yoseph's coat and the story of the Egyptian exile. The Talmud offers a lesson from Chazal<sup>6</sup> which solidifies this connection very clearly:

*A person should never treat one son differently than his other sons. For on account of two selaim's weight of fine wool that Yaakov gave to Yoseph in excess of what he gave to his other sons, in making him the special coat, his brothers became jealous of him and the matter evolved until Yoseph was sold by his brothers and our forefathers descended to Egypt.*

So we see *karpas* is linked to this special coat on a couple of levels, and we are told the story of Yaakov favouring Yoseph through the special coat is what ultimately lead to our forefathers' descent to Egypt. The coat caused jealousy, the brothers throwing Yoseph into a pit, Yoseph being sold several times, ending up in Egypt, and after numerous turns of events, becoming second in command of Egypt, which was the great superpower at that time. According to the very familiar and lengthy Torah narrative, eventually all of Yaakov Avinu's children end up in Egypt, leading to their bitter enslavement under the evil Pharaoh. This long sequence of events begins with the *k'sones passim* – Yoseph's infamous coat. It is for this reason, we start the Seder night specifically with the *karpas* ceremony in order to commemorate the event that precipitated the entire story of the Egyptian exile.<sup>7</sup>

This raises a question. If Yoseph's special coat was the source of much pain and suffering for our forefathers, why do we reference it at the start of our seder? It seems to shift our focus away from the brutal Egyptian enemy and towards the enslavement being somewhat our own fault in the first place. Why invoke this memory and connection to the seder story at this time?

To support the question further while at the same time leading us to a possible answer, consider the following special *Yehi Ratzon* prayer that many say at the conclusion of *birkas kohanim* on Yom Tov. It is a beautiful prayer in which we seek Hashem's blessing for *parnasah*, favour and kindness. Curiously, however, Yoseph's *k'sones passim* is mentioned in this special plea:

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5. *Megilas Esther* 1:6 (incidentally, this is the only place in Tanach where the word *karpas* appears).

6. *Shabbos* 10b.

7. The “dipping” of the *karpas* is also symbolic of the brothers dipping Yoseph's coat into the blood. According to The Mordechai (Mordecai ben Hillel HaCohen, Germany, 13<sup>th</sup> Century) on *Pesachim* 114a that *karpas* was dipped into vinegar or wine. Given both are red, this, too, could be symbolic of the blood in which the brothers dipped Yoseph's coat to make it appear that he was killed. The Rambam in *Hilchos Chometz U'Matzah* 8:2 codifies that *karpas* is to be dipped in *charoses* which contained red wine and presumably also symbolic of the blood as well. In our times, the more prevalent custom is to dip *karpas* in salt water, symbolizing *B'nei Yisrael's* tears from the excruciating pain and suffering.

...[A]nd may You bestow upon me and upon all the souls of my household, our food and our sustenance - generously and not sparsely, honestly and not in forbidden fashion, pleasurably and not in pain - from beneath your generous hand, just as You gave a portion of bread to eat and clothing to wear to our father Yaakov who is called a wholesome man. And may You grant that we find love, favour, kindness and mercy in Your eyes and in the eyes of all who behold us; and that my words in Your service be heard just as You granted Yoseph, Your righteous one - at the time that his father garbed him in a fine woolen tunic - that he find favour, kindness and mercy in Your eyes and in the eyes of all who beheld him. (*ArtScroll Siddur translation*)

Many ask what is meant to accomplish by mentioning this event, given the ugliness of the Yoseph story. Why invoke the memory of the brothers' jealousy that caused tremendous pain and suffering to Yaakov and Yoseph which ultimately lead to many years of Jewish suffering and torturous servitude in Egypt? Why should we mention our own failure at a time when we are asking G-d to mercifully provide for our well-being?

Perhaps the memory of this episode is meant to speak directly to us and offer some sense of meaning to both our personal lives and to our Jewish national experience in general.

For reasons beyond our intellectual ability to comprehend, life in this world was not designed to be easy and straightforward. Life is often filled with obstacles and challenges that bring sadness, pain and suffering. Embedded within this prayer asking G-d for lives filled with blessing and salvation, we do so with the understanding that we may not receive what we ask for or not necessarily at the precise time we expect it. G-d often operates mysteriously and in ways that are hidden from our human comprehension. Perhaps the Yoseph story is invoked in this prayer after *Birkas Kohanim* in order for us to set realistic expectations and avoid disappointment in life by reminding us that G-d has His master plan for individuals and for the nation. While we are not privy to His plan, we must believe all is ultimately for the good and the larger picture is good, even if we cannot see it in the moment.

We see this clearly from the Yoseph story. The *k'sones passim* and Yoseph represented the beginning of many troubles, leading to tremendous pain and suffering. However, it played out in real time exactly the way it needed to according to G-d's plan. As the Yoseph story was taking place with all its sub-plots, twists and turns, the redemption story was also unfolding simultaneously. We are told G-d ultimately redeemed His people from Egypt ahead of the schedule he foretold to Avraham Avinu, but only after He intensified the suffering. After arriving on the scene to lobby Pharaoh on behalf of the Jewish people, Moshe Rabeinu questions G-d on the purpose of his involvement after seeing the servitude not improving but actually deteriorating. While G-d reduced the original Egyptian Exile timeline from 400 to 210 years,<sup>8</sup> He was able to be true to His original word by spreading the same misery and suffering over a shorter period.<sup>9</sup> For unknown reasons, the remaining painful experiences

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8. Rashi to *Shemos* 12:40.

9. An idea attributed to the Brisker Rov (R. Yitzchok Zev Halevi Soloveitchik), Valozhyn and Israel, 1886-1959.

had to play themselves out, albeit over a shortened timeline, in order for G-d to bring our redemption to fruition.

*Karpas* is meant to invoke the Yoseph story and in turn to enlighten us with the notion that not everything in life transpires when we expect it or how we desire it.

## The Egyptian and Final Redemption

We are told the current exile and the coming final redemption is directly paralleled to the Egyptian exile and subsequent redemption more than three millennia ago.<sup>10</sup> Many view this linkage to be apparent and relevant in recent history, when in the 19<sup>th</sup> century our people began a formal return to *Eretz Yisrael* for the first time in almost 2,000 years. The time leading up to the establishment of *Medinat Yisrael* in 1948 was one filled with much pain and suffering that continues, in different forms, until today. Perhaps all the pain and suffering endured in the current exile is also a hidden requirement for us to reach the End of Days and the coming of *Mashiach*. For reasons unbeknownst to us, every pogrom, gas chamber, death march and terrorist act against Jews was precisely what G-d ordained in order for our final redemption to play itself out. While excruciatingly painful and for reasons we cannot begin to comprehend, this seems to be mimicking the Yoseph story and is ultimately part of G-d's master plan to bring us closer to the time and place our nation longs for.

## Yoseph's Exceptional Character

Given this notion of the Egyptian exile and redemption being a prototype for our current exile and coming redemption, perhaps there is an additional lesson to extract from the Yoseph story to help us expedite the Final Redemption.

Upon the death of Yaakov Avinu, the brothers become fearful that Yoseph would take revenge on them after holding back all this time only out of respect for their father. The brothers fabricate a story that Yaakov made a request on his deathbed to instruct Yoseph to forgive the brothers and not take revenge after his death.

Upon receiving this fictitious instruction, the Torah tells us: "Yoseph wept when they spoke to him,"<sup>11</sup> and he then proceeds to re-assure the brothers they are forgiven. What was Yoseph feeling at that moment? Was this a cry representing sentimental emotion and an expression of relief upon finally reconciling with his brothers? I would like to suggest it was something different.

It must be recognized that the brothers never actually apologized to Yoseph in any direct or formal fashion for their atrocity. The only expression of regret was after Yoseph recognizes them, accuses them of being spies, and requests they bring their younger brother to prove their story is true. It is at that time, the Torah tells us, the brothers talked amongst

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10. We know the final redemption will mimic the Egyptian redemption from G-d's response to the prophet Michah: "As in the days when you left Egypt I will show it wonders" (*Michah* 7:15).

11. *Bereishis* 50:17.

themselves, not knowing Yoseph's true identity or that he understood their language. They said: "We are indeed being punished on account of our brother because we looked on at his heartfelt anguish as he pleaded with us, yet we did not listen; that is why this distress has come upon us."<sup>12</sup> Even this statement itself does not contain the declaration "we were wrong and should not have done it"; rather, it was self-centred and an expression of a possible reason why they were suffering at that moment. Regardless, even if we say Yoseph witnessed some expression of regret at the moment he cries, it was not communicated to him directly or in any formal fashion. Not only did they fabricate the instruction from Yaakov, but according to Rashi,<sup>13</sup> they sent this message to Yoseph through an emissary, not dealing with their misdeeds in an upfront and direct fashion.

I would like to suggest, therefore, that Yoseph's cry is one of extreme sadness, frustration and even anger over the complete inability of his brothers to directly express remorse and apologize. Furthermore, Yoseph must have realized this instruction from his father was fictitious, since he had spent much time with Yaakov in those final days and this instruction was never mentioned to him directly.

However, let us now consider Yoseph's reaction to the brothers' continued stubbornness, their inability to properly apologize and apparent egotistical conduct. In this instance, Yoseph clearly would have been justified to lash out at them in rebuke, but he surprisingly does not. He could have said, "Why have you not apologized properly all this time, why do you continue to fabricate lies over this painful episode, why do you still not trust me after all I have said and done for you?" Rather, Yoseph courageously takes the moral high-road requiring very strong personal character<sup>14</sup> to achieve a final reconciliation over this tense episode. Instead of escalating matters further at this late stage in their lives, consider what Yoseph tells them.

Yoseph immediately says, clearly and categorically, "Do not fear"<sup>15</sup> and repeats it a second time later in his response. This alone could be deemed sufficient to move forward. However, recognizing that they may still be filled with feelings of disbelief and paranoia, Yoseph provides proof that his forgiveness is genuine and not merely words. While saying "do not fear" twice, Yoseph says: "Although you intended me harm, G-d intended your misdeeds for good in order to save our entire family from famine!"<sup>16</sup> Not only does Yoseph hold back from using justifiable words of rebuke, he goes above and beyond by helping the brothers help themselves, giving them the rationale to believe him. Not only does Yoseph tell them to no longer be fearful, he lets them in on how he justifies the forgiveness in his own mind and should therefore be believed once and for all. Yoseph proceeds to take this even one step

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12. Ibid. 42:21.

13. See Rashi on *Bereishis* 50:16.

14. The Talmud, *Rosh Hashanah* 17a conceptually refer to this conduct as one who is "*ma'avir ul midosov*" literally translated as "one who leaves his measures" – meaning one who purposely does not respond to his attacker in a way justified and deserved. As Rashi describes it: "he tolerantly drops the entire matter and goes on his way."

15. *Bereishis* 50:19-20.

16. Ibid. 50:20.

further to assure them this state of forgiveness is not temporary but will apply to future generations. He says: “So now, fear not - I will sustain you and your children.”<sup>17</sup> As if to say, this sentiment will never change and my forgiveness is everlasting. Ironically, Yoseph spends more time and energy forgiving the brothers than the brothers spend apologizing. Thereafter, we are told, “thus he comforted them and spoke to their heart” and in turn finally buries the animosity forever. So at a time when Yoseph would have been justified to express very different feelings, he instead consciously takes a different path to unilaterally diffuse the tension and create everlasting unity between himself and his siblings.

Incidentally, we are immediately offered a description of Yoseph’s final days – a description very rare and not found by any of the great individuals we learn about in this first book of the Torah. We are told that Yoseph saw grandchildren and great-grandchildren; they were “raised on Yoseph’s knee.”<sup>18</sup> We are not told the same about the brothers. This concluding statement contains imagery of Yoseph’s inner peace, tranquility and a *nachus ruach* as he lives out his final years. This teaches us that taking this particular interpersonal approach not only diffuses tension, but provides one with an inner high level of happiness. Perhaps due to his tremendous strength of character, Yoseph goes down in history as “Yoseph Ha’tzadik” – a title not bestowed upon anyone else. By example, Yoseph displays what is required of a person in this world: namely, to tap deep inner strength and be in constant pursuit to improve one’s individual G-d-given character.

## Conclusion

Through *karpas*, its linkage to the *k’sones passim* and to Yoseph’s exceptional character, we have precisely what we require to set the framework for the story of redemption we tell over on Seder night.

The holy Pesah Seder begins with *karpas* to give us a humbling yet important perspective that G-d runs the world and history unfolds in mysterious ways, but ultimately it is for a purpose and for good. While we cannot understand G-d’s inner workings behind an evolving redemptive process, one thing is for certain: While our nation’s Egyptian experience was long and ugly, it all started when Yoseph put on that magical coat to eventually become our king and saviour. When looking through the rearview mirror of time, this lead to the launch of our nation.

Additionally, we must be reminded that due to baseless hatred amongst our people, G-d allowed the second *Bais Hamikdash* to be destroyed. It should therefore be obvious that in order to arrive at our ultimate redemption, we must strive to correct this negative characteristic on both a personal and national level. The concluding confrontation between Yoseph and his brothers, highlights an attribute of Yoseph that should be most inspiring to us in our times. The Torah is not merely a storybook; we must learn from the great characters we

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17. Ibid 50:21.

18. Ibid 50:23.

read about in Scripture to internalize and integrate their traits and life experience within our own lives. This idea is described eloquently by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks:

*The Torah portrays the patriarchs and matriarchs in all their human complexity so that we can identify with them and take strength from their stories rather than seeing them as impossibly remote from all we know and are.*<sup>19</sup>

There is hardly a better way to remove baseless hatred than to aspire to be like Yoseph, to strive towards re-programming ourselves to ignore differences and to fill ourselves with tolerance. This must be achieved even when we are perhaps justified to act otherwise. If we are to be worthy of *Moshiach*, we must strive to mimic Yoseph's exceptional character in an effort to rid ourselves of hatred towards our fellow Jew, which will ultimately advance the Final Redemption to fruition.

By allowing *karpas* to trigger the Yoseph story, may we benefit from a deeper understanding of our current exile and what action is required to bring the redemption closer. May we enjoy a meaningful Pesah Seder and merit the final redemption in an easy and clear fashion, speedily in our days.

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19. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Genesis: The Book of Beginnings* (Jerusalem: Maggid Books, 2009), 229-233.

# Who Performed the Plague of Blood?

## *The Two Accounts of the Plague of Blood*

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JOEY FOX

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### ***Shemot 7<sup>1</sup>***

14. Hashem said to Moshe: Pharaoh's heart is heavy, he refused to send the nation.

15. Go to Pharaoh in the morning, behold, he goes out to the water, and you shall stand facing him on the bank of the Nile and the staff which transformed into a serpent (*nahash*), take in your hand.

16. You shall say to him: Hashem, the G-d of the Hebrews, sent me to you saying: Send my people, and they will serve me in the wilderness, and behold you have not heeded me until now.

17. So says Hashem: With this you shall know that I am Hashem: Behold, I will strike with the staff that is in my hand on the water that is in the Nile, and it will be transformed into blood.

18. And the fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will reek, and Egypt will be unable to drink water from the Nile.

19. Hashem said to Moshe: Say to Aharon: Take your staff and extend your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their canals, over their lakes, over all their pools of water, and they will become blood and there will be blood in the entire land of Egypt, in the wood and in the stones.

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1. This translation is based on the translation of the Steinzaltz Koren Humash with minor modifications.

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20. Moshe and Aharon did as Hashem had commanded, and he raised the staff, and he struck the water in the Nile before the eyes of Pharaoh and before the eyes of his servants, and all the water in the Nile transformed into blood.

21. The fish that were in the Nile died, and the Nile reeked, and the Egyptians were unable to drink water from the Nile. There was blood in the entire land of Egypt.

22. The magicians of Egypt did so with their artifices and Pharaoh's heart hardened, and he did not heed them, as Hashem had spoken.

23. Pharaoh turned and came to his house, and he did not pay attention to this either.

24. All of Egypt dug around the Nile for water to drink, as they were unable to drink the water of the Nile.

25. Seven days were completed after Hashem struck the Nile.

## A. Difficulties in the Story

Many difficulties arise when reading the story of the plague of blood:

1. It appears from some of the verses that the plague only affected the Nile. The warning (17-18) only references the Nile. The description of what occurred copies this almost verbatim (20, 21 except the last clause). The final verse (25) indicates that the plague was unique to the Nile. However, in other verses, it references the plague affecting all the waters of Egypt (19, end of 21).
2. There are two separate, contradictory commands of how the plague will be performed. First, Hashem tells Moshe that he should take into his hand the staff which transformed into a serpent and use it to strike the Nile (14-18). Then Hashem tells Moshe to tell Aharon to take his staff and cause all the water in Egypt to turn into blood (19).<sup>2</sup>
3. If all the waters in Egypt had transformed into blood (21) and the plague lasted for seven days (25), how were the magicians able to turn the water into blood when all the water had already been turned into blood?
4. If all the waters in Egypt had transformed into blood, how would digging around the Nile to find water help (24)?<sup>3</sup>

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2. It is commonly accepted that this plague was only performed by Aharon because the Nile saved Moshe, so Moshe showed gratitude for this and could not afflict it (see Rashi 7:19). This is difficult to accept for two reasons: the text clearly states here that Moshe alone was commanded to strike the Nile, and not Aharon. Furthermore, although similar reasons were given for Aharon's participation in frogs and lice (Rashi 8:12), Aharon was the one who turned the staff into a *tanin* and not Moshe (*Shemot* 7:9-10). Aharon also participated in the plague of boils by collecting the soot (*Shemot* 9:10). There is no hint of Moshe being unable to perform these due to gratitude. Therefore, it is difficult to attribute Aharon's participation in these events due to Moshe's inability to participate.

3. The *Midrash, Shemot Rabba* 9:11, highlights this issue and resolves it by interpreting that the Egyptians did not find water there either and had to purchase water from the Israelites, however the plain meaning of the text is that the Egyptians did in fact find water by digging around the Nile.



Rabbi Mordechai Breuer developed a method, known as *shitat ha-behinot* (aspect methodology), to address many stories throughout the Torah with similar issues. He posited that just as there are two accounts of creation with *middat ha-din* and *middat ha-rahamim*,<sup>4</sup> many stories throughout the Torah occur through both *middat ha-din* and *middat ha-rahamim*. Many of these stories are not written separately, but are intertwined, as we shall see here.<sup>5</sup>

All these issues raised can be readily resolved if we assume that there is not a single account here of the plague of blood, but rather two accounts – one plague of the Nile initiated by Moshe and one plague of the waters of Egypt initiated by Aharon.<sup>6</sup> We must first determine which verses in the story apply to the different accounts. Later, we will determine which accounts are connected to the various *middot*.

## B. Dividing the Verses

To begin dividing the verses, we can first identify the commands from Hashem for the two plagues, which define their nature:

In the plague initiated by Moshe, the command is “Hashem said to Moshe... You shall say to him... Behold, I will strike with the staff that is in my hand on the water that is in the Nile, and it will be transformed into blood” (14-18).

In the plague initiated by Aharon, the command is: “Take your staff and extend your hand over the waters of Egypt...there will be blood in the entire land of Egypt...” (19).

Phrases throughout the plague of blood that are directly related to the Nile will be associated with the plague initiated by Moshe. Phrases that are related to all the waters of Egypt will be associated with the plague initiated by Aharon.

The initial command given to Aharon is very similar to the command given in the previous story of the *tanin*: “Say to Aharon: Take your staff and cast it before Pharaoh, and it will become a serpent (*tanin*)” (7:9). Both of these commands involve Moshe commanding Aharon, telling him to take his staff and use it to make one thing become another. As evidenced by these parallels, the plague initiated by Aharon should be seen as a continuation of the story of the *tanin*. Throughout the story of the plague of blood, there are other phrases that are repeated from the *tanin*, including the phrase “they did as Hashem commanded” (10,20) and the phrase “Pharaoh’s heart hardened, and he did not heed them, as Hashem had spoken.”<sup>7</sup> (13,22). This indicates that these phrases are associated with the plague initiated by Aharon.

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4. See R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Lonely Man of Faith* (Random House, 2006).

5. For a more thorough introduction to R. Breuer’s methodology, see my article “How Did the Sea Split?” *Hakhmei Lev*, Vol. 2 (BAYT, 2022), 65-74.

6. This analysis is based primarily on Rabbi Mordechai Breuer’s *Pirkei Moadot* (1986) Chapter 11, the Ten Plagues, pages 193-232. His analysis includes three separate accounts of the plague of blood. However, two of the accounts are almost identical, and I shall combine them here for brevity. R. Amnon Bazak also has an analysis of this plague as two separate accounts in his *To This Very Day*, 99-103 (Maggid, 2020). Providing proof or an analysis of all three accounts, as analyzed by R. Breuer, is beyond the scope of this essay. You can email joeyfox85@gmail.com for a full translation of this chapter.

7. Throughout the story of the ten plagues, in one account, Pharaoh’s heart is referred to as being heavy (7:14). In the other account, it is referred to as being hardened (7:22).

After Moshe is commanded to transform the Nile into blood (14-18) and Aharon is commanded to make all the waters of Egypt become blood (19), the beginning of verse 20 states that “Moshe and Aharon did as Hashem had commanded.” This language mirrors the story of the *tanin*, and is therefore associated with the plague that Aharon initiated.

After the Torah records that “Moshe and Aharon did as Hashem commanded,” the next phrase in verse 20 is: “he raised (*vayarem*) the staff, and he struck the water in the Nile.” The second action of striking the water in the Nile is clearly related to the plague initiated by Moshe. The text is ambiguous about who raises the staff. The resolution to this may be determined by the only other place in the Torah where it uses the word *vayarem*: “Moshe raised (*vayarem*) his hand and he struck the rock with his staff...” (*Bamidbar* 20:11). Just as Moshe was the one who first raised and then struck with his staff, it can be argued that the act of raising here is attributable to Moshe as well.

The final phrase of verse 20, “all the water in the Nile transformed into blood,” and the beginning of verse 21 is related specifically to the plague initiated by Moshe as it only references the Nile and corresponds to the warning in verses 17 and 18.

The end of verse 21 references all the waters in the land of Egypt, which was the plague initiated by Aharon. As previously discussed, the language in verse 22 also mirrors the story of the *tanin*, so it is also connected to the plague initiated by Aharon.

It is not immediately obvious which plague is associated with verse 23: Pharaoh returning to his home and not paying attention. R. Bazak argues that this verse refers to the plague initiated by Aharon.<sup>8</sup> There are two pieces of evidence for this. As we shall see later, the plague initiated by Aharon was temporary and did not last. The description of Pharaoh not paying attention is logical, as the plague had ended. The phrase “to this either” is referring to a previous event. The most logical event this is referring to would have been the *tanin* which was performed by Aharon, which is Rashi’s interpretation.<sup>9</sup>

R. Breuer attributes verse 23 to the plague initiated by Moshe.<sup>10</sup> There are four pieces of evidence for this:

1. The story of the *tanin* ends with the same phrase from verse 22: “Pharaoh’s heart hardened and he did not heed them, as Hashem had spoken.” This is the closing verse for both stories.
2. Pharaoh’s reaction has a possible redundancy. First it states that Pharaoh did not heed them (22) and then it states he did not pay attention to this (23). It would be fitting if this verse was part of the plague initiated by Moshe, so the Torah would record Pharaoh’s reaction to the plague initiated by Moshe. Thus, for the plague initiated by Aharon, Pharaoh did not heed them and for the plague initiated by Moshe, Pharaoh did not pay attention.
3. The opening command to Moshe references that Pharaoh has refused to send the nation (14). This refers to a previous encounter between Moshe, Aharon and Pharaoh in *Shemot*

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8. Bazak, *To this Very Day*, 103.

9. Rashi *Shemot* 7:23.

10. R. Breuer, *Pirkei Moadot*, 218.

5:2 when Pharaoh states: “I will not send Israel.” “To this either” is a reference to that opening verse, noting that his decision has not changed even after the plague of blood.

4. The beginning of the account of the plague initiated by Moshe identifies that Pharaoh went out to the water (15). Returning to his house after the plague (23) is the conclusion of that.

This creates a chiasmic structure of Pharaoh’s participation in this account:

A1. Pharaoh’s heart is heavy, he refused to send the nation. (14)

B1. Behold, he goes out to the water (15)

C. He struck the water in the Nile before the eyes of Pharaoh (20)

B2. Pharaoh turned and came to his house

A2. And he did not pay attention to this either. (23)

Taking all of this evidence into account, I have decided to adopt R. Breuer’s approach and attribute this verse to the plague initiated by Moshe.

The final two verses specifically reference the Nile, so it is logical that it is connected to the narrative about the plague initiated by Moshe.

## C. The Division of the Verses

According to this view, there are two accounts of the plague of blood being discussed in these verses. The plague initiated by Moshe is in normal font. The plague initiated by Aharon is in bold.

14. Hashem said to Moshe: Pharaoh’s heart is heavy, he refused to send the nation.

15. Go to Pharaoh in the morning, behold, he goes out to the water and you shall stand facing him on the bank of the Nile and the staff which transformed into a serpent (*nahash*), take in your hand.

16. You shall say to him: Hashem, the G-d of the Hebrews, sent me to you saying: send my people and they will serve me in the wilderness and behold you have not heeded me until now.

17. So says Hashem: With this you shall know that I am Hashem: Behold, I will strike with the staff that is in my hand on the water that is in the Nile, and it will be transformed into blood.

18. And the fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will reek, and Egypt will be unable to drink water from the Nile.

**19. Hashem said to Moshe: Say to Aharon: Take your staff and extend your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their canals, over their lakes, over all their pools of water and they will become blood and there will be blood in the entire land of Egypt, in the wood and in the stones.**

**20. Moshe and Aharon did as Hashem had commanded**, and he raised the staff and he struck the water in the Nile before the eyes of Pharaoh and before the eyes of his servants, and all the water in the Nile transformed into blood.

21. The fish that were in the Nile died, and the Nile reeked, and the Egyptians were unable to drink water from the Nile. **There was blood in the entire land of Egypt.**
- 22. The magicians of Egypt did so with their artifices and Pharaoh's heart hardened and he did not heed them, as Hashem had spoken.**
23. Pharaoh turned and came to his house, and he did not pay attention to this either.
24. All of Egypt dug around the Nile for water to drink, as they were unable to drink the water of the Nile.
25. Seven days were completed after Hashem struck the Nile.

## D. Two Accounts with all the Difficulties Resolved

We can now clearly discern what had happened in the two separate accounts. In the plague initiated by Moshe, Hashem commanded him to warn Pharaoh about the waters of the Nile and strike the water to turn the Nile into blood. Moshe did this, and the Nile did in fact turn into blood. Pharaoh returned home and this did not change his mind. Since only the water in the Nile turned to blood and not the rest of the water in Egypt, the Egyptians had to dig around the Nile to find water. The plague lasted for seven days.

In the plague initiated by Aharon, Aharon extended his hand over the waters of Egypt and “there was blood in the entire land of Egypt.” The seven-day plague only references the Nile. Just as the *tanin* was not a sign that lasted, this plague, too, did not last. The waters which turned to blood then returned to water. Then the magicians were able to perform the same feat of turning water into blood. Just as the story of the *tanin* concluded with Pharaoh's heart being hardened and not heeding them, this account ends in an identical manner.

With this understanding, the contradictions and logical inconsistencies throughout the story can now be attributed to two different accounts of the plague. All the previously mentioned difficulties with the story are resolved.

## E. Combining the Verses into One Story

Although there are two accounts of the plague initiated by two people described in the Torah, the Torah should still be understood as it is written before us. By understanding the two individual components, they can be combined into a single story and understood based on the literal meaning of the verses.

In the combined reading of the verses, both of these accounts happened together. Hashem gave two commands for two plagues to occur: a plague initiated by Moshe on the Nile and the plague initiated by Aharon on all the waters of Egypt.

First, Aharon took his staff and extended his hand over the waters of Egypt “as Hashem commanded.” Then Moshe took the staff and struck the Nile. Once the Nile transformed to blood in the plague initiated by Moshe, all the waters in Egypt then also transformed to blood in the plague initiated by Aharon.

While the plague on the Nile continued, the other waters transformed back so that the magicians were able to perform the sign as well. Pharaoh then refused to be persuaded by the plague over the waters in Egypt, since his magicians were able to perform the feat. Although the plague on the Nile continued, Pharaoh nevertheless refused to change his mind. The plague of the Nile then lasted seven days.

## F. Serpents and the Attributes of Hashem

The significance of this plague is hidden within a passing reference at the beginning of the warning. Hashem commands Moshe to take “the staff which transformed into a serpent (*nahash*),” but it is not immediately obvious why this reference is required. Seemingly, it might connect this to the previous story where the staff turned into a serpent, but there it was referred to as a *tanin*. The reference to Moshe’s staff turning into a *nahash* originates from the burning bush, where Hashem commands Moshe to cast the staff onto the ground and it becomes a *nahash* (4:3). This sign was then performed before Israel (4:30). Why does the Torah refer to the serpent as a *tanin* when performed by Aharon before Pharaoh and a *nahash* when performed by Moshe before Israel?

The prophet Yeshayahu references both of these together as symbols of evil: “On that day, Hashem will reckon with His harsh, great and powerful sword against leviathan the *nahash bariah* and leviathan the *nahash akalton* and He will kill the *tanin* that is in the sea (Yeshayahu 27:1). Yeshayahu prophesizes about the day of judgement, where Hashem kills the symbols of evil: the *nahash* and the *tanin*.”

Both of these symbols of evil originate in the two accounts of creation. In the first account of creation, where the world was created through *middat ha-din*, the *tanin* is the symbol of evil. It is the first living creature created and is the only one which the Torah says Hashem “created” aside from human beings (*Bereshit* 1:21).

In the second account of creation, where the world was created through *middat ha-rahamim*, the *nahash* is the symbol of evil. The text emphasizes that it is “more cunning than any beast of the field” and that it was “made by Hashem” (3:1).

The reason for the emphasis on the creation of evil in both accounts of creation is to clearly state that whether through *middat ha-din* or *middat ha-rahamim*, Hashem is the One “who forms the light and creates the darkness, makes peace and creates evil” (*Yeshayahu* 45:7). Evil is not an independent entity but was created and is controlled by Hashem.

This symbol of evil was then used against Egypt through the ten plagues with both *middat ha-din* and *middat ha-rahamim*. With *middat ha-din*, first the staff was turned into a *tanin* by Aharon before Pharaoh and then was extended over the waters of Egypt, which were all transformed into blood. With *middat ha-rahamim*, first the staff was turned into a *nahash* by Moshe at the burning bush and before Israel. It had yet to have a connection with Pharaoh, which is why before the plague of blood, Hashem identified the staff as the one which turned into a *nahash*.

The plague of blood was the initial plague and the one that affected the centre of Egyptian civilization. With this plague, the primordial symbols of evil are used as Hashem begins to stretch out His hand upon Egypt through both *middot*. This is why first Aharon performs the *tanin* before Pharaoh and then Hashem references the *nahash* to Moshe before performing the plague of blood.

Through the use of *shitat ha-behinot* we have shown how the plague of blood occurred through both *middat ha-din* and *middat ha-rahamim* and how both of these are recorded in the Torah together.

# Putting the Seder in Order

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DR. MARC HERMAN

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**THE HAGGADAH HAS** a justifiable reputation for being structured: the night is known as *Leil HaSeder* – the night of order – and throughout the text there are repeated four-fold configurations, which suggest inherent structure and order. Yet, at the beginning of the Haggadah there is a seeming problem with the design. Immediately following the *Ma Nish-tanah*, the Haggadah turns to the Jewish enslavement: *Avadim Hayinu*, we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. The Haggadah then mentions how the *Tannaim* celebrated Passover, then the idolatrous past of our forefathers, before finally returning to the Exodus. The apparent disorganization is bewildering.

This problem might be addressed with reference to the well-known debate about where the Haggadah actually starts (*Pesachim* 116a). The Mishnah instructs that the Haggadah “begin with disgrace and conclude with praise.” Most interpreters agree that the praise at the end of the Haggadah is the recitation of Hallel, but the *Amoraim* disagree about the identification of the disgrace: is it the Jewish people’s idolatrous past or is it their enslavement in Egypt? In the standard Vilna edition of this passage, Rav takes the former interpretation, and Shmuel the latter. Many commentators claim that the halakhah follows the view that the Haggadah begins with the phrase “*Avadim Hayinu*,” and we therefore adopt the position that the “disgrace” discussed in the Mishnah is Israel’s slavery. This explanation, however, suffers from all problems mentioned above.

Looking again at the relevant Gemara, many *Rishonim* transmit a different version of this debate. Instead of a dispute between Rav and Shmuel, they record that the two opinions are offered in the name of Rav and Rava.<sup>1</sup> According to Ri ben Yakar, Ritva, and Abudraham, the halakhah follows Rava (as he is the later Sage) and the Haggadah opens with *Avadim*

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1. See *Haggadah shel Pesah im Perush HaRishonim*, 30-31, and *Dikdukei Sofrim* VI:181a.

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*Hayinu*. One may suggest, however, that Rava is only supplementing Rav's interpretation by focusing the story on the later disgrace of the Israelites as well.

Following this interpretation, the halakhah may in fact not be forced to decide between these two readings of the Mishnah. If so, we can suggest that the Haggadah itself (that is, the retelling of the Exodus proper) does not formally commence after the Four Questions. According to this read, following Kiddush, the evening moves to *Ha Lahma Anya* and the pouring of the second cup of wine, to which the youngest child expresses his or her bewilderment through the Four Questions. *Avadim Hayinu*, then, is only the beginning of the answer to the Four Questions, not the formal *Sippur* itself. The Haggadah continues with the story of the Sages in Bnei Brak to illustrate the importance of the retelling, the Four Sons to show how the retelling should be performed, and the passage "It could be done from *Rosh Hodesh*" to discuss when the Exodus should be remembered. The actual fulfillment of the obligation to recount the tale of the Exodus, which must begin with "disgrace," only starts with "originally our forefathers were idolaters."<sup>2</sup> Within this view, anything before this line serves as an introduction and frames the *mitzvah* of retelling the Exodus. The enslavement is then fully integrated into the Haggadah's interpretation of *Arami Oved Avi*. This reading of the Haggadah's structure answers all the challenges outlined above: the first section of the Haggadah is arranged logically, and the chronological order is not disturbed.

Indeed, this may be a better read of the Mishnah's instructions regarding the Haggadah. After the Four Questions, the Mishnah instructs that "according to the intelligence and the ability of the son, his father teaches him about the Exodus," which in line with the above analysis, is recalled with mention of the Four Sons. Only after that does the Mishnah say "begin with disgrace and conclude with praise": the disgrace is not *Avadim Hayinu* but the section that appears where the Mishnah dictates: originally our forefathers were idolaters.

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and has been revised for this publication.*

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2. See the commentary of *Orhot Hayyim* on the Haggadah at this passage, who writes, "Here begins the Haggadah."



# A Question About Questions

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RABBI MORDECHAI TORCZYNER

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**NOBEL PRIZE-WINNING PHYSICIST** Dr. Isidor I. Rabi and his parents emigrated from Poland to the United States at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and settled in Brooklyn. Many of young Isidor's peers pursued law, medicine and entrepreneurship. When asked why he made the unusual choice of a career in science, Rabi explained, "My mother made me a scientist without ever intending it. Every other Jewish mother in Brooklyn would ask her child after school: 'So? Did you learn anything today?' But not my mother. She always asked me a different question. 'Izzy,' she would say, 'did you ask a good question today?' That difference - asking good questions - made me become a scientist!"<sup>1</sup>

Our Haggadah highlights questions. The liturgy itself, since the time of the Beit HaMikdash, has included prepared questions for children to ask their parents: Why do we eat only matzah tonight? Why do we eat marror tonight? Why do we dip twice tonight? And so forth.<sup>2</sup> Even in the time of the Mishnah two thousand years ago, the Haggadah showcased the questions of Four Children, modeled on four biblical verses<sup>3</sup> which describe Jewish parents teaching their children about the events of Pesah night and our exodus from Egypt.<sup>4</sup>

The Seder itself is designed to inspire questions. The Talmud instructs parents to distribute toys to keep children involved and curious at the Seder (*Pesachim* 108b-109a), and it describes the practices of dipping twice (*ibid.* 114b) and of "grabbing" the *afikoman* (*ibid.* 109a) as

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1. Letter to the New York Times, Jan. 12 1988, <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/01/19/opinion/1-izzy-did-you-ask-a-good-question-today-712388.html>.
  2. Mishnah Pesachim 10:4.
  3. Shemot 12:26, Shemot 13:8, Shemot 13:14, Devarim 6:20.
  4. *Ibid.*

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customs implemented in order to inspire children's' questions. The Shulhan Arukh<sup>5</sup> adds the practices of removing and returning the *ke'arah* (Seder Plate), and drinking a second cup of wine before our meal, as further catalysts for curiosity. According to Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein,<sup>6</sup> we wash for *karpas* in order to trigger questions.

This emphasis on questions is actually a legal requirement of the Seder. The Talmud instructs, "If one's child is wise, the child asks him. If the child is not wise then one's spouse asks him. If not, he asks himself. Even two Torah scholars who know the laws of Passover ask each other." (Pesachim 116a)

Along these lines, Rabbi Meshulam Dovid Soloveitchik ruled that when a non-Israeli father is holding his second Seder and his Israeli children are available, they should attend the Seder in order to ask him questions. Even though their questions do not fulfill a mitzvah for them, they are needed for the father's Seder.<sup>7</sup>

Why are these questions necessary? We may offer four answers.

## 1. The Question Expresses Curiosity

One explanation for our Seder format is that questions express curiosity, and so lead to good pedagogy. As the Maggid of Dubno wrote,<sup>8</sup> "Just as food will not be sweet without prior hunger, so an answer will not be sweet unless it follows a great question."

Further, responding to questions is a good way to convey complicated information. Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Shapira of Dinov observed,<sup>9</sup> "That which comes in response to questions can convey many ideas in a manner that is orderly and sweet for the palate, and it will be more established in the soul. You see that many authors, who wished to write of a broad subject and feared that their words might not be accepted by the ear and the mind because of the limitations of the listener as well as the depth, length and breadth of the subject, dealt with this by writing of the subject in the form of question and response."

## 2. The Question Expresses Skepticism

A second approach to our Seder questions is that these inquiries are meant to re-enact and correct the questions which marked our time in Egypt.

When G-d told Avraham that he would receive the Land of Israel, Avraham responded by asking how he could know that this would come to pass. According to one Talmudic view, this skeptical question is the reason we were sent to Egypt. (Nedarim 32a) The questions continued with Moshe's repeated challenges to the Divine decision to send him to rescue the Jews, and then with the questions asked by the Jews with every obstacle they encountered in the wilderness.

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5. Shulhan Arukh Orach Chaim 473:6-7.

6. Arukh haShulhan Orach Chaim 473:18.

7. R. Meshulam Dovid Soloveitchik, Haggadah shel Pesach Shai laTorah Brisk, pp. 98-99.

8. Sefer haMidot, Chapter 6.

9. Derech Pikudecha 21: Helek haMaaseh 3.

At our Seder, we re-live the Exodus,<sup>10</sup> and we put a positive spin on our history of questions: again, we ask, but as a means of building our faith.

### 3. The Question Expresses Freedom

In a third approach, Rabbi Yitzchak Mirsky contends that the very act of questioning demonstrates freedom. As he wrote, “Where you find edicts and slavery, there are no questions, for questions are only where there is freedom. A slave who is bound to his master – his mouth is sealed from asking questions.”<sup>11</sup> Like leaning and drinking wine, we ask in order to show that we are free.

### 4. The Question Expresses Connection

Finally, questions are a robust means of connecting two individuals; indeed, telephone marketing experts advise their proteges to begin a solicitation by asking a question, in order to create that connection.<sup>12</sup> So it is that we often refer to questioning as *interrogation*, from the Latin *inter* and *rogare* – “asking between”.

The very first biblical questions were of this interrogative model. When the serpent wished to enter into conversation with Havah, he asked, “Has G-d indeed said that you may not eat of any tree in the garden?” (Bereishit 3:1) As Rashi explains, the serpent knew that only one tree was prohibited, but he wished to draw Havah into dialogue. The next biblical question occurred when Adam ate of the prohibited fruit and then sought to hide from G-d. G-d asked, “Where are you?” (ibid. 3:9) G-d knew Adam’s whereabouts, but He wished to initiate a connection. The link between the one who asks and the one who responds is embedded in the start of Judaism’s most fundamental text.

Perhaps it is this desire for connection that drives the Seder’s model. A child who asks a question of the previous generation makes a connection with the history of our nation, recognizing herself as part of the chain of Jewish history and a family whose collective numbers, across the millennia, are more than the grains of sand at the sea. With these questions, the Torah tells us that we are not simply to aim words at our children in reporting the events of our exodus. We are to use this night of communication to create a link, inspiring our children to see themselves as part of our people, and so extending a bridge to the future.

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10. Mishnah Pesachim 10:5; Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Hametz uMatzah 7:6.

11. Haggadat Hegyonei Halachah, pg. 22.

12. For example, see *The Best Technique In Sales Leads Telemarketing? Start A Conversation* <http://www.business2community.com/sales-management/best-technique-sales-leads-telemarketing-start-conversation-0628335>.





**Halakhah**



# Halakhic Issues with Civil Marriage in Israel

## *Why Should Israelis Have to Go to Cyprus?*

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RABBI DR. LAZER FRIEDMAN

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### Introduction

The traditional concept of marriage between a man and a woman has undergone many changes in recent years. The Torah (*Bereishis* 2:24), defines marriage as the union of man and woman in marriage. Early in Biblical times, we already note the emergence of an alternative to the traditional model of marriage in the role of the Pilegish or concubine.<sup>1</sup> The Rabbis of the Talmud subsequently derived and laid out the many *halakhos* of *kiddushin*, Jewish marriage law, which forms the corpus of laws and intricacies of Jewish marriage. The traditional marriage arrangement, incorporating the herem (ban) of Rabbeinu Gershom, forbade polygamy and restricted a man to a single wife.<sup>2</sup> This traditional marriage model thus remained the status quo for centuries.

In recent years, Jews, for a variety of reasons, have sought alternative arrangements, such as simply living together, or entering common law marriages. This is especially true in Israel, where many secular and even traditional Jews do not wish to marry under the laws of the Rabbanut and Orthodox Judaism, and instead, travel to Cyprus where common

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1. Rashi, *Bereishis* 25:6.

2. Ritva, *Yevamos* 44a.

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law marriages are legal. This article will explore this modern phenomenon and their implications through the prism of halakhah.

## Traditional Marriage

The traditional marriage in Judaism is between a man and a woman. The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 2a) describes the three mechanisms whereby a man establishes a marriage through the concept of *kiddushin*. In order to create the *kiddushin*, a man can betroth a woman using *kese* (money), *shtar* (a document), or *bi'ah* (sexual relations).

The validity of using sexual relations as a means of establishing *kiddushin* is cited in the Gemara (*Gittin* 81a), which discusses the case of a divorced couple, whereby two witnesses testify that the couple were secluded in a hotel. Beis Hillel rules that their mere seclusion together (*yihud*) functions as a renewed *kiddushin* and the couple are considered remarried, with the ramifications that another *get* (divorce document) is required if they do not wish to live together. The reason they are considered remarried is because, although there were no witnesses to the sexual relations, the witnesses who saw them engaged in *yihud* (seclusion) are halakhically sufficient to assume they had relations for the purpose of marriage. Beis Hillel believes that the couple is remarried by virtue of the cohabitation. After all, Beis Hillel opines that “*Ein adam oseh be'ilas zenus*”, which means people do not squander their sexual relations, but rather reserve them only for the purposes of establishing *kiddushin* in monogamous relationships. Thus, according to Beis Hillel, the use of sexual relations effects a valid *kiddushin*.

The Gemara in *Kiddushin* (12b), relates that Rav was also of the opinion that sexual relations can effect a valid *kiddushin*; however, he would curse individuals who would use this method as a means of betrothal. Although the Rabbis strongly discouraged the use of sexual relations as a means of betrothing a woman, it is important to recognize that it was a valid mechanism of effecting a valid *kiddushin*. The Rabbis subsequently endorsed the use of money as the preferred method of marriage, and in contemporary times, Jewish marriages exclusively use the method of money for the purpose of *kiddushin*, most commonly used with the gifting of a ring.

## Living Together - The Pilegish

A *pilegish* is usually translated as a concubine. In halakhic terms, it is an arrangement whereby a man and woman live together without *kiddushin* and a *kesubah*. The exact nature of this arrangement is disputed by the Rishonim. The Rambam requires proper *kiddushin* and does not allow the use of sexual relations as a means of betrothal. A woman who avails herself to sexual relations as a means of betrothal is defined as a *zonah*, and the act of *zenus* (illicit relations) is punishable by lashing for transgressing the prohibition of prostitution (*Devarim* 23:18).

Moreover, the Rambam writes that the previously mentioned principle of “*Ein adam oseh be’ilas zenus*” applies only to individuals who are considered “kosher” (proper) among the people of Israel.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, he argues that we do not assume that one who secludes with an unmarried woman does so with the intent of marriage. Therefore, individuals living together would not be considered a valid marriage.

The Raavad disagrees with the Rambam. The Raavad defines a *zonah* (prostitute), in a much more limited manner and argues that a *zonah* is a woman who makes herself available and has intimate relations with multiple men. The Raavad argues that a woman who is in a monogamous relationship, even in the absence of *kiddushin* is considered a *pilegish*, and not a *zonah* and this relationship does not transgress the prohibition of prostitution, and therefore not subject to *malkos* (lashes).

The Shulhan Arukh follows the opinion of the Rambam and sanctions only rabbinically-approved *kiddushin* in order to allow a couple to live together. Moreover, the Shulhan Arukh rules that even if it is a monogamous relationship, the man should dissolve the arrangement.<sup>4</sup>

The Rama cites both opinions. He writes, “[S]ome (Raavad) say that this is permitted and that this is the *pilegish* mentioned in the Torah, and some (Rambam) say that this is prohibited and he receives lashes.”<sup>5</sup>

The commentaries on the Shulhan Arukh also address this issue and arrive at opposing conclusions. The Beis Shmuel is supportive of the Raavad and writes that according to the Rosh, living with a *pilegish* does not constitute a prohibition. On the other hand, the Helkas Mehokek rules that even according to the Raavad’s approach it is prohibited to live with an unmarried woman without *nissuin*, because of the prohibition of *yihud*.

## Civil Marriage & Common Law

Many Jews today, living together, wish to formalize their relationships, but for various personal reasons, are not interested in any religious ceremonies. Rather, they opt for civil marriages or common law arrangements. From a halakhic perspective, we need to explore whether these arrangements, although definitely not preferred or ideal under Jewish law, meet the minimum criteria for a valid halakhic marriage. The impact of this discussion has very significant ramifications in many areas of daily life, including, but not limited to, the halakhic status of the arrangement, the status of the children, and the need for a divorce upon dissolution of the arrangement. More specifically, after the couple no longer remains committed to the civil marriage, is a *get* (halakhic divorce document) required? If the woman were to remarry without a *get*, would the new children in the relationship be classified as *mamzeirim* (children who are the result of a halakhically non-sanctioned union), as the first marriage was never halakhically dissolved? Finally, may the woman marry a kohen (a kohen may not marry a divorcee)?

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3. *Isurei Biah* 1:4.

4. *Even Ha-Ezer* 26:1.

5. *Even Ha-Ezer* 26:1.

At its fundamental core, the validity of a civil marriage or common law arrangement hinges on whether we accept the following two halakhic principles. The first is “*Hein hein eidei yihud hein hein eidei bi’ah*. (the witnesses testifying on the seclusion affect the testimony of the sexual relations. A civil marriage, without *kiddushin*, involves the seclusion of a man and woman. Due to the intimate nature of sexual relations, we do not require witnesses for the sexual relations itself, but witnesses testify regarding the seclusion of a man and woman, and this is sufficient for the Rabbinical court to assume sexual relations were consummated. This principle is referred to as “*Hein hein eidei yihud hein hein eidei bi’ah*.” The second principle is known as *Ein adam oseh be’ilas zenus* (people do not squander their sexual relations). As discussed above, if people do squander their relations, then we can assume the relations were committed with intent of consummating a marriage.

Can these two principles be applied to a civil marriage? If they apply, then the couple, despite not having sought a religious ceremony, would be considered halakhically married. If these principles do not apply to a civil marriage, then effectively the couple does not meet the halakhic definition of being married.

The earliest source that deals with this question is the Rivash.<sup>6</sup> During the Spanish Inquisition, many Jews fled Spain and outwardly converted to Christianity, but privately remained faithful to Judaism and became known as Marranos. It was in this context that the Rivash was asked to adjudicate the case of a woman who married another Marrano and the wedding was officiated by a priest. After living together for several months, she became pregnant and subsequently had a child. Her husband disappeared, and securing a *get* was not possible: so the question asked to the Rivash was, could this woman remarry?

The Rivash allowed the woman to remarry on the basis of several reasons. Firstly, he felt that the wedding ceremony performed by the priest had no validity and did not affect a valid halakhic marriage. As for the fact that they were living together, the Rivash ruled that the *kiddushei bi’ah* (sexual relations), did not constitute a valid form of betrothal. Third, since the couple was married by a priest, by definition it cannot be considered a valid wedding which requires some adherence to the principle of *kedas Moshe ve-Yisroel* (marriage according to the law of Moshe and Yisrael). Finally, the Rivash explains that since the woman did not observe and follow the laws of *niddah* (laws of family purity), as *mikvaos* were not readily available, we cannot apply the principle of *ein adam oseh be’ilaso be’ilas zenus*.

The Terumas Ha-Deshen, also dealt with a very similar case. A priest married an apostate Jewish man and a Jewish woman who converted to Christianity. The couple lived together for several years, but the woman subsequently returned to being Jewish, and then married another Jewish man. The Terumas Ha-Deshen was asked about the validity of the subsequent marriage.<sup>7</sup>

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6. Shu”t Rivash no. 6.

7. Terumas Ha-Deshen no. 209.

He permitted the marriage on the basis that by having a priest officiate the ceremony, the couple likely never intended that their relationship, as non-Jews, was for the sake of *ke-das Moshe ve-Yisrael*. In addition, he felt this arrangement did not fulfill the requirement of *ein adam oseh be'ilaso be'ilas zenus* (one does not engage in illicit sexual relations) that would result in a halakhically valid *kiddushin*. Therefore, the Terumas Ha-Deshen concluded the original wedding was halakhically invalid, and the woman may remarry without the need of a *get* (divorce).

The Radbaz also invalidates all non-rabbinic wedding ceremonies. Firstly, because the decision of the couple to wed in a non-Jewish court proves their willingness to circumvent rabbinic authority and invalidates their ceremony from a halakhic perspective. Secondly, a couple that does not adhere to the laws of *niddah*, indicates they had no intention to be halakhically married.<sup>8</sup>

The Shulhan Arukh follows the opinion of the Rivash and rules that in a case where a man and woman were forcibly converted and later married with a gentile ceremony, even though everyone sees them entering their home alone, no *kiddushin* exists between this man and woman.<sup>9</sup> The Rama references his previous ruling, which supports the ruling of the Shulhan Arukh.<sup>10</sup>

## Contemporary Poskim

The status of the validity of civil marriages in halakhah was discussed by the great *poskim* of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At stake is the essence of identifying and preserving the true *yihus* or authentic Jewish genealogy. The positions of this debate have enormous ramifications, whose impact is felt in subsequent generations. It is important to recognize that the “lenient” and “stringent” opinions have implications in both directions, so a lenient position also brings with it significant stringencies. For example, taking the lenient position that a civil marriage should be recognized halakhically, carries with it the stringency of requiring the need to obtain a *get* (divorce), and if the husband is not available, the woman potentially is an *agunah* (chained woman, unable to marry). Conversely, the stringent position that invalidates a civil marriage is actually a lenient position regarding the lack of need for a divorce.

Rabbi Yosef Eliyahu Henkin, one of the leading *poskim* in North America in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, strongly felt that civil marriages were valid expressions of *kiddushin*.<sup>11</sup> He argued that the opinion of the Rivash had limited applicability to current civil marriages, and was a ruling specifically for the case of a Marrano couple, who explicitly left the Jewish religion under a state of religious persecution. However, in the case of civil marriages, as long as the couple intends to be “married”, their marriage ought to be considered valid.

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8. Radbaz 1:351.

9. *Even Ha-Ezer* 149:5.

10. *Even Ha-Ezer* 26:1.

11. *Ha-Pardes* 37:7 and *Perushei Ibra*, pp. 87–117.

R. Henkin based his opinion on the previously quoted principal *ein adam oseh be'ilaso be'ilas zenus* (a person does not squander his sexual relations). He strongly objected to those who did not recognize secular marriages as halakhically binding and who did not require those who seek to divorce to receive a *get*.

R. Henkin held the requirement to marry *kedas Moshe ve-Yisroel*, which is too restrictive. He concludes by saying, if a Jewish man tells a Jewish woman “you are mine” in front of witnesses, then she becomes his wife. If there are no witnesses at the ceremony, the fact that they live together as a married couple for many years is considered acceptable testimony.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein was the leading opponent of R. Henkin and strongly rejected the halakhic validity of civil marriages.<sup>12</sup> He explicitly argues with R. Henkin based on the ruling of the Rivash, but also suggests that if the couple married with a civil marriage were halakhically observant, the couple would require divorce based on the principal of *ein adam oseh be'ilaso be'ilas zenus* (a person does not squander his sexual relations). In reality, most couples seeking civil marriages are not likely observant of halakhah, so this point becomes moot. However, R. Moshe concludes, where it is possible, one should try to obtain a *get* even for those couples who are not halakhically observant. In the case where obtaining a *get* is not possible, R. Moshe relies on the opinion of the Rivash and a *get* is not required, thus preventing the woman from becoming an *agunah*.

Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg concluded that applying a stringent ruling in these matters, and ascribing halakhic validity to civil marriages, carries with it the consequences of the children of the remarried couple being classified as *mamzeirim* (out of wedlock). His ruling was that a woman who was in a civil marriage need not procure a *get* prior to getting remarried. He also rules that she may even marry a Kohen.<sup>13</sup>

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef also feels that a couple who seek a civil marriage, do not meet the halakhic definition of marriage, and therefore a *get* is not required.<sup>14</sup>

Rabbi Meshulam Roth feels that based on the opinion of the majority of poskim, a woman who got married in a civil service performed in a secular court, does not require a *get* (divorce).<sup>15</sup>

Other contemporary *poskim* who have written on this issue include Rabbi Hayim Ozer Grodzinski,<sup>16</sup> Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Hoffman,<sup>17</sup> Rabbi Yehiel Yaakov Weinberg,<sup>18</sup> Rabbi Yitzhak Isaac Herzog,<sup>19</sup> Rabbi Mordechai Yaakov Breish,<sup>20</sup> Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach<sup>21</sup> and Dayan

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12. *Igros Moshe, Even Ha-Ezer* 1:74–6.

13. *Tzitz Eliezer* 2:19, 20:1, 22:67.

14. *Yabi'a Omer, Even Ha-Ezer* 8:12.

15. *Kol Mevasser* 22.

16. *Shu"t Ahiezer* 4:50.

17. *Shu"t Melameid LeHo'il* 3:20.

18. *Shu"t Seridei Eish* 3:22.

19. *Teshuvos Heikhal Yitzhak, Even Ha-Ezer* 2:30–31.

20. *Teshuvos Helkas Yaakov* 1:1.

21. *Minhas Shlomo* 3:100.

Yitzhak Yaakov Weisz,<sup>22</sup> and have concluded that civil marriages are not halakhically binding.

What emerges from this discussion is that the overwhelming consensus of the contemporary *poskim* follow the opinion of the Rivash, and reject the dissenting opinion of R. Henkin. In practice, the local Beis Din follows the opinion of R. Moshe such that, wherever possible, it is preferable to obtain a *get* (divorce), but in the absence of a husband who can provide a *get*, a woman who was married civilly may remarry and even to a kohen.

## Reform Weddings

What would be the status of a couple marrying under the auspices of a reform rabbi? Does a reform wedding confer any more halakhic validity to the marriage, or do we treat it halakhically as a civil marriage?

R. Henkin argues that a reform wedding is no different from a civil marriage. In fact, he raises his astonishment at the *poskim* who recognize a reform wedding, but not a civil marriage. After all, he assumes they are the same.<sup>23</sup>

R. Moshe Feinstein argues that a reform wedding has even less validity than a civil marriage. He argues that even those authorities who believe that a couple married civilly is considered married by halakhah, would agree that a couple joined only by a reform rabbi is not considered married according to halakhah.<sup>24</sup>

R. Moshe argues that the Reform ceremony is invalid, and one may not rely on the sexual relations as a means of consummating the marriage. Halakhah requires the presence of two qualified witnesses in order for a wedding ceremony to have halakhic validity. The invalidity of a reform wedding stems from the lack of two qualified witnesses.

Rabbi Hayim Soloveitchik explains the different function of witnesses for commercial purposes compared to a wedding. For the former, the witnesses serve to corroborate the events. On the other hand, the purpose of the presence of witnesses at a *kiddushin* is in order for the action to be binding. Thus, the role of the witnesses is to be a part of a valid ceremony.<sup>25</sup>

The Shulhan Arukh discusses the qualifications for witnesses, and a person who violates negative Torah prohibitions is disqualified of being a valid witness.<sup>26</sup>

A reform wedding lacks the required qualified witnesses, and therefore according to R. Moshe, the entire ceremony is not valid.

## Civil Marriage in Israel

Israel is constantly struggling and trying to balance the principles of a democracy with those of a religious state. The broader discussion of balancing the status of Church and State in

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22. *Teshuvos Minhas Yitzhak* 3:125.

23. *Ha-Pardes* 8:6–8.

24. *Igros Moshe Even Ha-Ezer* 1:76.

25. *Hiddushei Rabbeinu Hayim Halevi, Hilkhos Halitzah* 4:16.

26. *Hoshen Mishpat* 34.

Israel is beyond the scope of this article, but from our discussion, it is important to define the parameters of civil marriage, from a halakhic perspective.

The institution of marriage has faced significant challenges over the centuries, and many modifications and options have been introduced and embraced by many segments of Jews. Traditional marriages under a *huppah* between a man and woman under the auspices of an Orthodox Rabbi, whilst the traditional gold standard, is not shared by a significant number of Jews living in Israel.

Although the debate of the halakhic status of civil marriages is a universal dilemma, this issue is most challenging in Israel. Whilst Israel is a democracy and offers its citizens freedom of religion, under the influence of Ottoman Law, civil marriage is prohibited in Israel for all of its citizens, not just Jews. The authority to administer marriages in Israel was given exclusively to the leadership of each of the religious sects within Israel. Muslims, Christians and Druzes living in Israel must conform to the very same law, and as a result, they must be married by their own religious authorities and may not have a civil marriage. Consequently, Jews may only be married by the Rabbanut (the Israeli government sanctioned rabbinate), as they are by law the authority presiding over matters that deal with Jewish marriage and divorce. The State of Israel recognizes a civil marriage only if it is performed outside of Israel.

The Rabbanut currently has complete authority over the administration of marriages, however, these rules are felt by many to be too restrictive for many Israelis. The Rabbanut, ostensibly, has exerted this control for a variety of well-intentioned motives.

Firstly, the Rabbanut wishes to preserve the definition of a Jew according to halakhah. From a halakhic perspective, only a matrilineal relationship is recognized as the definition of a Jew. The secular law in Israel extends the definition of a Jew quite significantly. Israel's Law of Return was designed to mirror the Nazi law, which recognized a person as being Jewish even if they only have a single Jewish grandparent. Thus, if one grandparent was sufficient to meet the criteria for extermination, the Law of Return granted Israeli citizenship to any person meeting the very same criterion. The dilemma is that the Law of Return has brought a huge influx of people from the former Soviet Union, many of which do not meet the halakhic criteria of being Jewish. For those immigrants who do not have a Jewish mother, marriage under the auspices of the Rabbanut is impossible. By controlling the registered marriages, the Rabbanut envisions the ability to ensure the preservation of the Jewish people by using the halakhic definition of a Jew.

Secondly, the Rabbanut, hopes to avoid the issue of *mamzerus* by controlling the directory of married persons. The concern is, if a couple were to live together with a civil marriage, and subsequently part ways and seek new partners, the children of the second relationship would be considered *mamzeirim* unless a proper *get* was given. As this is unlikely to occur, the argument is that civil marriages increase the potential of *mamzeirim* within the State of Israel. This problem is particularly acute, as the individuals themselves may have no knowledge of their halakhic status. When they grow up and begin to seek a partner, the



status of their parents' initial civil marriage may not be known to the individual, leading to unintended marriages involving possible *mamzeirim*.

At this juncture, one must raise some serious questions: Has the Rabbanut succeeded in their objectives? How do these punitive restrictions further advance the goal of preserving the definition of being Jewish? Is there any benefit in the State of Israel prohibiting civil marriages? This question is especially important in light of the fact that many Israelis choose to celebrate their relationship with some sort of civil ceremony and simply circumvent the Rabbanut by having their wedding ceremonies in Cyprus. Today, Cyprus has become the leading destination wedding site for Israelis.

The objection of the Rabbanut to recognize civil marriages needs to be re-examined in light of the halakhic discussion presented above. Essentially, both concerns of the Rabbanut do not apply to civil marriages. Regarding the definition of a Jew, allowing civil marriages in Israel would not affect this issue at all. The individual not meeting matrilineal criteria of being Jewish would still not become Jewish by permitting civil marriages. The couple married civilly would be recognized by the State of Israel from a secular and legal perspective and would enjoy civil, legal, and financial benefits afforded by the State as any other married couple. Individuals concerned with the *yihus* of their potential spouse when dating would still need to carefully screen and investigate the genealogy of potential mates.

With regard to the concern that civil marriages increase the number of *mamzeirim*, the consensus of halakhic authorities examined in this study have ruled that civil marriages do not meet criteria for a halakhic marriage. As such, from a halakhic perspective, a civil marriage carries no legal status and thus has no impact on the creation of *mamzeirim*. A halakhic *mamzer* is a child born as a result of a halakhic marriage. A civil marriage, even if followed by a proper halakhic marriage still does not constitute a situation of wedlock, and therefore, no *mamzer* is created.

In the Diaspora, many unaffiliated Jews choose non-orthodox weddings as well as civil marriages. Although civil marriages are not recognized by the orthodox community, there is a "live and let live" attitude which fosters tolerance and co-existence between the various factions in the Diaspora. This allows Jews of all denominations to function together on broader issues such as antisemitism, security, Israel advocacy, and community building. The "live and let live" policy does not eliminate the need for orthodox couples to investigate the background and genealogical history of their potential mates.

To this observer, the restrictive and punitive approach of the Rabbanut, does not only not advance any halakhic matters, it ferments intolerance and resentment between secular and observant Israelis and introduces a very serious wedge between the communities without good purpose. Allowing civil marriages in Israel would not jeopardize the genealogical status of the Jewish people, nor would it create *mamzeirim*. The Rabbanut in Israel can learn from the experience in the Diaspora.

Perhaps the time has come to re-evaluate the policy of the Rabbanut in this area. There are many areas where the Rabbanut can and should continue to exercise its authority.



When it comes to civil marriage, it may be appropriate, without compromising an iota of halakhah, to accept the *psak* of R. Moshe Feinstein in order to establish trust and camaraderie amongst the different sects of Jews. In the big picture, a more united Jewry will go a long way to greeting the coming of *Moshiah*.

# Eating Chicken After Hard Cheese and the Limitations of the Zohar on Halakhic Stringencies

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CEMACH GREEN

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**IN THE EPILOGUE** of his book, *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic*, R.J. Zwi Werblowsky writes:

*The formal dissociation of Halakhah and Kabbalah was maintained not only by Karo, but also by men like Taytazak and Berab. Kabbalah might inspire the mind and provide it with motive power and enthusiasm, but no mystical inroads were allowed on the absolute autonomy of the exoteric, halakhic universe of discourse.*<sup>1</sup>

A paragraph later, we find the following:

*This, as we have seen, was his kabbalistic or 'nocturnal' personality, for the daylight scholar and canonist was kept strictly out of bounds to all mystical messengers.*<sup>2</sup>

The thesis of Werblowsky is clear: Karo was careful to keep the worlds of Kabbalah and Halakhah distinct and separate. Despite living in both worlds, Karo would not allow one to intersect with the other and there would be no room for Kabbalah in his *Magnum opus*, the Shulhan Arukh. As Werblowsky so eloquently put it, “for more than forty years, the activity of Karo’s mind was divided between dry rabbinical learning and the fantastic ideas of the Kabbalah.”<sup>3</sup>

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1. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic* (The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1980) p. 292.

2. Ibid., p. 292.

3. Ibid., p. 3.

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This brings us to the seemingly innocuous Halakhic question of eating chicken after cheese – cited by Joseph Davis in *Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller: Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Rabbi* on page 61:

*Joseph Karo wrote in his Beit Yosef...that there are some who are stringent with themselves and do not eat meat after cheese in a single meal because of what is written in the Zohar...and that is correct and proper that we be stringent and not eat even chicken after cheese ...but in my humble opinion ...we should not leave aside any saying...that is explicit...in our Gemara (Babylonian Talmud) on account of the Zohar (even when it comes to accepting a stringency on ourselves), just as we do not follow any saying in (rabbinic texts such as) Tosefta or Torat Kohanim (Sifra) or Sifrei if the Gemara does not agree with it...and Rav Simeon bar Yohai of the Zohar is no greater ("Lo adifa") than those Rabbis that argue with Rabbi Akiva."*<sup>4</sup>

Upon further reflection, there are two possibilities in this Beis Yosef;

1. The Beis Yosef held that since the Gemara was not explicit<sup>5</sup> regarding eating chicken after hard cheese, he accepted the stringency based on the Zohar, which would leave him fundamentally in agreement with Heller, who held not to rely on the Zohar for halakhic stringencies when contrary to an explicit Gemara; and thus the only disagreement with Heller would simply be if the Gemara dealing with eating chicken after cheese was explicit or not.
2. The Beis Yosef held that one can accept halakhic stringencies even if it goes contrary to the Gemara, for after all it is only a "stringency", while to follow the Zohar for a "leniency", Karo would not follow the Zohar. Clearly this is how Heller understood the view of the Beis Yosef.

For purposes of this article, we will go according to the second possibility.

Davis argues that Heller refused to accord the Zohar a position superior to that of other ancient Midrashic collections, including the Tosefta, Sifra, or Sifrei, and as such, Heller disagrees with Karo on accepting kabbalistic stringencies contrary to the plain reading of the Talmud.<sup>6</sup>

The issue not addressed, however, is Karo's view on the matter. In fact, Karo could not have responded to the position taken by Heller, who was born over a century later than Karo.<sup>7</sup>

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4. Heller's Divrei Hamudot, Hullin, p. 371 n. 23: this extra line from Heller regarding Rav Shimon bar Yohai in the same note was not included in the excerpt translated by Davis, the translation is mine.

5. Bet Yosef (Orah Haim 31:2) Karo held not to put on Tefilin on Hol-Hamoed ..."Since in our Talmud this issue is not explicitly determined, who would dare to transgress actively what Simeon bar Yohai has so emphatically proscribed". **Clearly, Karo would not follow the Zohar in cases such as not putting on Tefillin on Hol Hamoed if the Gemara explicitly ruled against the Zohar.** The question remains if Karo would accept a "stringency" based on a Zohar (such as not eating chicken after hard cheese) if it ran contrary to an explicit Gemara that says otherwise.

6. Joseph M. Davis, *Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller – Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Rabbi* p. 61.

7. Karo (1488-1575); Heller (1579-1654).

One would have thought that Karo would agree with Heller on the issue of rejecting halakhic stringencies based on the Zohar that conflict with the Talmud, remaining consistent with the above-noted excerpt of Werblowsky describing Karo's belief that "no mystical inroads were allowed on the absolute autonomy of the exoteric, halakhic universe of discourse."<sup>8</sup>

In my view, however, a different perspective from Werblowsky may be offered. The wording of Heller clearly elucidates how he feels one is to view the Zohar in the context of its application to Halakhah. Heller equates the Zohar to other ancient Midrashic sources like the Tosefta, Sifra, and Sifrei, and equates Simeon bar Yohai to the contemporaries of his age. The same view, however, arguably may not be attributed to Karo. Notwithstanding that the above texts, which emerged from the same period, can be classified under the same rubric of "ancient Midrashic collections", to Karo, there may be a nuanced difference between those texts and the Zohar, considering his social milieu in Safed, his intense studies of Kabbalah, and his spiritual, mystic personality.

Karo – the master kabbalist – grew up in the mystical community of Safed, and scholars have claimed that he was frequently visited by a celestial mentor (i.e., a Maggid), who revealed to him the mysteries of kabbalah.<sup>9</sup> The mystical side of Karo's personality would not allow himself to treat the Zohar as just another 'ancient Midrashic work' and would not allow himself to view Shimon Bar Yohai as just another ancient Rabbi; both the Zohar and Shimon bar Yohai were unique and special, and deserved to be placed on a special pedestal of their own. Karo did not want to keep these two domains separate, and Karo purposely quoted and referenced the Zohar in his halakhic masterpiece to signify that these two entities compliment, and enhance each other and are not meant to remain separate and distinct.

While academics may speculate as to the authorship of the Zohar,<sup>10</sup> there remains room within our Mesorah for a possible disagreement between two preeminent halakhic authorities, the Beis Yosef (Karo) and Tosfos Yom Tov (Heller) on the limitations of the Zohar regarding halakhic stringencies. In fact, both views are legitimate and acceptable options as *elu v'elu divrey elokim hayim* (both are the words of the Living God). At the end of the day, the issue between Karo and Heller is how each views the Zohar and Shimon bar Yohai, based on their own real life experiences.

Karo, due to his strong affinity to Kabbalah, likely regarded the Zohar as a unique spiritual work, and on a higher level than other Midrashic works of its time, and considered the author Shimon bar Yohai,<sup>11</sup> a once in a millennia sage, incomparable to any other contemporary sage of his time. Heller, was a kehilah rabbi, opposed the popularization of kabbalah,

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8. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic* p. 292.

9. Joseph M. Davis, *Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller – Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Rabbi* p. 61.

10. Yaacob Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah: Leon Modena, Jewish Mysticism, Early Modern Venice* (Princeton University Press 2011) p. 67.

11. Bet Yosef (Orah Haim 31:2) "Since in our Talmud this issue is not explicitly determined, who would dare to transgress actively what Simeon bar Yohai has so emphatically proscribed". Clearly, Karo held Simeon bar Yohai in a unique category, as evidenced by his flowery language in describing Simeon bar Yohai's ruling.

promoted the study of Jewish philosophy, and was part and parcel of the rabbinical elite.<sup>12</sup> To Heller, the Zohar, at least when it came to applying halakhic stringencies was on the same level of the Tosefta, Sifra and Sifrei. Two very different men, with two very different upbringings, resulting in two different viewpoints.

## **Conclusion**

This essay began with exploring the notion that Karo intended for his Shulhan Arukh to be disassociated from kabbalah, as postulated by Weblowsky. Yet, after examining Heller's emphatic comments regarding the Zohar on an obscure ruling of Karo, it would seem the choice is not binary, either Halakhah or Kabbalah, but rather more nuanced, Kabbalah and Halakhah - each can intercept and compliment the other. Only after taking Karo's kabbalistic background and mystical personality into account, can one truly discern a departure of Karo from Heller's view on the Zohar and Rav Shimon bar Yohai, and understand Karo's position on the uniqueness of both, which resulted in Karo's liberal application of the Zohar to halakhic stringencies.

Considering his Kabbalistic background, I suggest that Karo deliberately cited the Zohar in his halakhic masterpiece to signify that these two entities enhance one another. Although Weblowsky postulates that Karo strived to omit kabbalistic and Zoharic references in his Shulhan Arukh, perhaps it proved difficult for Karo to keep those two domains separate.

The Safed of Karo in the 1500s was a very different place than the Prague of Heller in the 1600s, and Karo the mystic, was a very different man than Heller the Rabbinic aristocrat. While Heller opposed the polarization of Kabbalah, Karo promoted it. As such, it is little surprise that Heller's inclination was to limit the impact of the Zohar and Kabbalah on Halakhah while Karo had no inclination to do so. In the final analysis, social environment and upbringing impact people's views, judgements, and ideas, and Karo and Heller were no exception.

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12. Joseph M. Davis, *Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller - Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Rabbi* p. 5.





# **Mahshavah**





# Supernatural or Technological?

## *Dramatic Changes in the Messianic Age*

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RABBI N. DANIEL KOROBKIN

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**OUR WORLD IS** changing at a frightening pace. While there is much reason for optimism over all this new technology – in areas such as artificial intelligence, robotics, genetic engineering, drones, weapons, medicine, etc. – there is also great concern that mankind may be creating Frankenstein monsters over which he can easily lose control.<sup>1</sup> Isaac Asimov authored the “Three Laws of Robotics” as a way of protecting mankind from the potentially disastrous “Terminator”-style effects that robotic technology could wreak upon the world.<sup>2</sup> The real concern, however, is that we do not even know if our Silicon Valley creators have anticipated all the potential dystopian disasters waiting to happen with the advent of these new technologies.

Our tradition, from both the written Tanakh and rabbinic literature, is that a utopian future awaits not only the Jewish people, but the entire world. There are so many signs that we are evolving toward that glorious future. It would seem only logical that new technologies are contributing to a new quality of life that will be part of the Messianic Age. Because of this tradition, we have every reason to lean more on the side of optimism than pessimism when thinking about what the future will look like. While we certainly should be circumspect over whether this Messianic evolution toward utopia is linear in its upward trajectory, or whether there will be dips and bumps in the road, it is a laudable endeavour to envision ourselves living within a generation that is progressing closer to that Messianic Age. In this spirit, we present some ideas that may be worth thinking about at our Seders and beyond, when we consider not only our past redemption, but future redemptions as well.

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1. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/as-frankenstein-turns-200-can-we-control-our-modern-monsters/>.
  2. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three\\_Laws\\_of\\_Robotics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Laws_of_Robotics).

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## Backward and Forward Vision at the Seder

While we tend to think that there's only one historical event that should be our focus on the night of the Seder, namely, the Exodus from Egypt, in reality there are two. Abarbanel<sup>3</sup> and others observe that the reason we divide Hallel – our song of thanks – into two parts, one before the meal and one after the meal, is because we are thanking G-d for two separate things. The section of Hallel before the meal is thanking Hashem for the Egyptian Exodus. The section of Hallel after the meal focuses on the future. We acknowledge at the Seder that our redemption was only partial, and that there is a future Redemption which we anticipate with longing. Thus, Hallel ends with the words, “*Li-Shanah haba'ah Birushalayim Habenuyah*” – “Next year, may we be in the rebuilt Jerusalem!”

The *mitzvot* that we perform on the night of the Seder are supposed to help us relive the experience of Exodus. As the Haggadah states, “Each person is obliged to view himself as if he personally left Egypt.” That is why there is so much vivid imagery at our Pesah Seder. Pesah, matzah and maror are on the table, to act as living props to help us relive the experience.

Where are the Messianic props? The prophet Isaiah declared that our future Redemption will be unlike our past Redemption (52:12): *You shall not leave in haste, nor travel hurriedly. For Hashem will walk before you, and the L-rd of Israel will gather you in.* Accordingly, perhaps matzah, which represents leaving in haste, should not be the proper symbol for our future Redemption. What, then, is on our Seder table that represents the redemption of the future?

At first glance, it would seem that the reason we don't have props for Messianic times is because we haven't experienced them yet, and we don't really know what those experiences will be like. There's simply no way we can use physical items to represent a completely new world order, which is still largely invisible and mysterious to us.

Nonetheless, envisioning the Messianic Age is something that is supposed to be an outgrowth of envisioning our historical Exodus. That is, when recalling how Hashem has redeemed us in the past with miracles, we can now have greater faith that the same will happen in the future. If so, there should be something at the Seder that can assist us in this visionary exercise.

At the end of the Maggid portion of the Haggadah, right before we prepare to eat, we recite a prayer that expresses our hopes to celebrate future redemptions and holy days. We pray to sing a future “שיר חדש,” a “new song,” where the word “song” is in the masculine form. According to the Zohar and commentaries,<sup>4</sup> the difference between a “שירה חדשה,” a “new song” conjugated in the feminine, which appears in the previous paragraph, and a “שיר חדש” written in the masculine, is that the masculine “song” represents the praises of the final redemption of Mashiah, whereas the feminine “song” represents a pre-Messianic redemption song.

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3. See Abarbanel's *Zevah Pesah* commentary to the Haggadah (Lemberg, 1872), 29a-b, s.v., “*K'var zakharti bashe'arim.*”

4. See Zohar Beshalah 54b, and *Tzror Ha-Hayim* by Rabbi Haim ben Shmuel of Todela (14th cent.), *Derekh 9* (Pesah), ch. 6.

What are the words of this “*Shir Hadash*,” this song for the future Redemption? This is our objective: Let us begin to conceptualize the words, to begin to envision the future redemption. This exercise is of value, since it will help concretize the concept of Redemption. It has its occupational hazards as well, which we will touch on below.

## How Will the Messiah Come?

When we think about the Messianic Age and beyond, we think about overt miracles and supernatural phenomena. The traditional way of thinking is that within our rabbinic tradition, there are two separate views: One, that of Rabbi Yohanan, who believed there will be widespread supernatural events that will bring about the Messianic Age, and the other, that of Shmuel, who feels that the Messianic process will be a natural one:

*R. Hiya bar Abba said in the name of R. Yohanan: All prophets [who describe a miraculous future world] were only referring to the Messianic Age. The World to Come, by contrast, “has been seen by no eye other than yours, L-rd” (Is. 64:3). This disagrees with Shmuel, who said: There is no difference between this world and the Messianic Age except that in the Messianic Age man will no longer suffer under governmental subjugation, as it says [regarding the pre-Messianic Age] (Deut. 15:11), “There will be no cessation of poverty from your land” (TB Berakhot 34b).*

While it appears as if the Talmud is creating a dichotomy between the two views, let us consider as a possibility that there really is no contradiction. What if all the new technological and scientific advancements of the Messianic Age are what the Nevi'im were referring to? Arthur C. Clarke, the futurist and science fiction writer, once stated, “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.”<sup>5</sup> The magic of the past is the science of today, and the magic of today is the science of the future.

This was also the theme of the novel, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century American writer Mark Twain.<sup>6</sup> Twain imagined an American engineer transported back in time to 6<sup>th</sup> century England. Using his knowledge of astronomy and the modern technological advents of gunpowder, lightning rods, and fireworks, the engineer was able to convince the masses that he was a great magician whose power exceeded those of the mighty Merlin. Just imagine, for example, showing your iPhone to someone from the Middle Ages. They would consider it either a divine miracle or witchcraft.

The Shla”h Hakadosh (Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz, 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> cent.), in analyzing these two opinions of R. Yohanan and Shmuel, also opined that “*Mar amar hada, u-Mar amar hada, v'lo peligei*” – “each rabbi stated his opinion [in his own language], but they are not disagreeing.” In the Shla”h's view, the two sages were referring to two different periods of the eschatological future. Shmuel was referring to the immediate Messianic Age, before the Resurrection of the

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5. Arthur C. Clarke, *Profiles of the Future: An Inquiry into the Limits of the Possible* (Popular Library, 1973) (cited in: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clarke's\\_three\\_laws](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clarke's_three_laws)).

6. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Connecticut\\_Yankee\\_in\\_King\\_Arthur's\\_Court](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Connecticut_Yankee_in_King_Arthur's_Court).

Dead, when the world will operate according to nature, whereas R. Yochanan was referring to a later stage of the Redemption age, which will occur after the Resurrection, when the world's natural state will be altered.<sup>7</sup>

In the spirit of the Shla"ḥ, we might suggest that the two sages are not even disagreeing about different stages of the Messianic future; they simply disagree on perspective. Shmuel is stating the perspective of the people of *that Messianic generation*. They will perceive that the natural order hasn't changed, since even before the Messiah's arrival, mankind will have all the technological and scientific amenities that will exist when he arrives. But R. Yochanan is referring to how people of *his own generation* would perceive the Messianic Age, in that things will be so different from the times in which he was living that everything will appear to be magically transformed.

## Light Bulbs in the Third Temple?

The discussion of how things will change in the future based on technology was a subject undertaken by Rabbi Yoseph Mashash (1892-1974), the former chief rabbi of Haifa and prolific author of halakhic responsa. In an earlier essay, R. Mashash had suggested that in the Third Temple, there would be electric lights instead of candles. His questioner challenged him. What about the principle that the Torah and its *mitzvot* are immutable? If the Torah says to light the Temple with pure olive oil, how can we suggest a different source of illumination?<sup>8</sup>

In a lengthy responsum, R. Mashash sets his interlocutor straight.<sup>9</sup> For one thing, there are so many changes that were made from Moses' Tabernacle of the desert to Solomon's Temple, from Solomon's Temple to the Second Temple, and from the Second Temple to Ezekiel's vision of the Third Temple. As long as the new accoutrements of the Third Temple don't directly contradict the general specifications of the Tabernacle and its components, we will be able to add whatever we like to beautify and ameliorate the future Temple experience.

More fundamentally, R. Mashash points out that the questioner's assumptions are incorrect. It is true that a fundamental foundation of our faith is that G-d will never forsake the Jewish people or alter the Jewish faith. However, the principle of the *mitzvot* being unalterable applies only in *Olam Hazeḥ*, our pre-Messianic existence. *In our Messianic existence, even the mitzvot themselves will be subject to change.*

## Changing Mitzvot in the Messianic Age

This is a very touchy subject, one which has triggered great concern among many great thinkers over the centuries, lest the subject be misunderstood. This is particularly true in light of various iterations of false Messiahs throughout Jewish history. It therefore behooves us to spend a moment clarifying this issue.

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7. *Shenei Luhot HaBerit, Toldot Adam Beit David*, 261-264.

8. *Sefer Otzar HaMikhtavim l'Harav Yoseph Mashash*, 1305.

9. *Ibid.*

Our great *Rishonim*, the rabbis of the medieval period who dealt extensively with theological issues, emphasized the idea that the *mitzvot* are immutable and unchanging. In his Mishnah commentary, Maimonides wrote:

*The ninth principle [of faith] is that of replacement. That is, this Torah of Moses will never be replaced. There will be no new Torah from G-d other than the current one. The current Torah will never be added to or detracted from, neither in its text nor in its meaning.*<sup>10</sup>

Why is this concept so important to Maimonides and other *Rishonim*? Firstly, contrary to the Talmud's approach of focusing on mitzvah observance over theology, many *Rishonim* believed that the Torah possesses necessary dogma which every Jew must subscribe to in order to be considered within the fold of our religious nationhood. Some *Rishonim*, like the Rambam, compiled lists of such dogma.

Moreover, in reference to this specific dogmatic principle, medieval rabbis were often combatting the other two major Abrahamic faiths, whose theologians had claimed this precise point: G-d abrogated certain *mitzvot*. Islam claimed that the Jewish Bible was corrupted, and Christianity claimed that G-d absolved mankind from sacrificial and other laws because of the ultimate "sacrifice" of their lord.

An example of this polemic can be found in *Teshuvot HaRashb"a* (responsa of Rabbi Shlomo ibn Aderet), wherein the Rashb"a specifies that he is debating a Christian disputant. In the course of his arguments, he states:

*We, the community of Israel, affirm that the commandments are exactly as they are presented, and are not merely allegories or proverbs. Furthermore, we affirm that they apply for all times, for as long as heaven is upon earth, except for when the Torah itself limits the applicability of the commandment to specific places, times, or delineated circumstances. By specific places we mean certain commandments that only apply in Israel, Jerusalem, or in the Temple. By specific times we mean commandments like "b'sar ta'avah" [non-sacrificial meat, which the Torah prohibited only to the generation travelling in the desert], since Scripture explicitly states that [it no longer applies] "when the place [of the Temple] is far away from you (Deut. 12:21).]" By specific delineated circumstances, we mean commandments like the priestly service in the Temple, which is limited to only Kohanim, and only when they are donning the priestly vestments and using particular instruments.*<sup>11</sup>

In the course of this debate, the Rashb"a is forced to acknowledge that there are a number of citations in Rabbinic literature which indicate that in the eschatology of the Jewish people, mitzvah performance will change or disappear entirely! After acknowledging these sources, the Rashb"a feels compelled to explain them differently from their standard understanding.

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10. This is popularly known as Maimonides' ninth principle of faith, or the 9th "Ani Ma'amin." See also *Mishneh Torah*, *Yesodei HaTorah* 9:1, and *Moreh Nevukhim* 2:39.

11. *Teshuvot HaRashba HaHadashot* (by R. Shlomo b. Aderet (d. 1310)), *siman* 368. All translations are mine, except where otherwise noted.

He argues these statements are either: (a) not to be taken literally but rather metaphorically, or (b) that they refer to a period after death, when humans will be completely disembodied and incorporeal, and will therefore no longer be able to perform bodily *mitzvot*.

Rabbi Don Isaac Abarbanel (d. 1508) is another *Rishon* who involved himself in this endeavour. He wrote an anti-Christian polemic, *Yeshuot Meshiho*, wherein he recorded his disputation with a Christian cleric. He quoted the Midrash that states that in the future, all sacrifices will be nullified except for the *Korban Todah* (the Thanksgiving Sacrifice, recorded in Lev. Ch. 7):

*The heretic further tried to prove his point based on the Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 9:7), which states that “in the future, all sacrifices will be annulled except for the Korban Todah, as it says (Ps. 50:23), ‘He who offers a Todah shall honor Me [in the future].’” He tried to prove from this Midrash that the commandment to bring sacrifices will be annulled in the future. He also brought support from the prophet Isaiah, who said (1:11): “Why do I need all your sacrifices?” says G-d,” etc.*

*However, our rabbis have already amply responded to his arguments. These texts do not mean that any commandment of the Torah will be nullified; rather, they imply that in the future, the Evil Inclination and man’s “heart of stone” will be eradicated. The prophet Joel states (2:20): “I shall distance the northerner [Heb.: tzeponi] from you.” Our sages explain that the word “tzeponi” is a reference to the Evil Inclination which is hidden [Heb.: tzafun] in man’s heart. This is the real reason why certain sacrifices that are brought for sinful acts will be annulled in the future [because man will no longer sin]. The only sacrifice that will remain will be the kind brought as an expression of thanks.*

*When the prophet [Isaiah] proclaimed, “Why do I need all your sacrifices?” he was only criticizing the people of his generation, who would commit premeditated sins with the rationale that they could always atone for them afterwards by bringing a sacrifice. The prophet Malachi also commented on this practice (1:10): “If only there were some among you who would close the doors [of the Temple] and refrain from igniting My altar for nought. I have no desire for you, says G-d, and I will not accept an offering from your hands.” These prophets were speaking about people of their own generation, and not about what will happen in the Messianic Age.<sup>12</sup>*

Taken at face value, the writings of the Rashb”a and Abarbanel emphatically argue that no commandments will ever be abrogated. However, these responsa were not written in a vacuum. It is important to note the reason why Rashb”a and Abarbanel were so insistent that claims of *mitzvot* being annulled found in rabbinic literature had to be reinterpreted. In both cases, these rabbis’ disputants were Christian clerics, who argued that if the *mitzvot* will be annulled at some time in the future, they can also be annulled now through some kind of milestone in world history that triggers antinomianism (the doctrine according to which Christians are freed from the necessity of obeying the Mosaic Law).

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12. *Yeshuot Meshiho*, part 2, analysis 4, ch. 1.

As Rashb”a writes after citing his examples of these antinomian claims found in rabbinic literature:

*My disputant claims that the above proves that the Sages of Israel admit that the commandments are not eternal and that they will eventually be annulled. This being the case, there is room for a disputant to argue that they have already been nullified even today. Once we are discussing commandments whose span is finite, the only difference between them and us is whether that span of time is long or short.*<sup>13</sup>

## Rabbinic Sources for Future Antinomianism

It is clear from context that both Rashb”a and Abarbanel are writing polemically, to deflect the faith claims of Christianity that the *mitzvot* are no longer necessary. This being the case, it would be appropriate to go back to these Talmudic sources and look at them with an objective eye at trying to understand what Hazal actually meant. Putting the arguments of Christianity aside for a moment, let us examine rabbinic texts that claim that in the Messianic Age, certain *mitzvot* will be abolished.

First, a Mishnah and Gemara that should sound familiar, because a portion of it is echoed in the Pesah Hagaddah:

**Mishnah:** *We make mention of the Exodus at night [i.e., when we recite the Shema at night, we should recite the third paragraph of Shema as well, since this contains mention of the Exodus]. R. Elazar b. Azarya said: I am like a 70-year-old man, yet I never understood why the Exodus should be mentioned at night, until Ben Zoma explained it. It says (Deut. 16:3), “So that you may remember the day you left Egypt all the days of your life.” “The days of your life” indicates that the Exodus should be recalled during the day; “ALL the days of your life” indicates that the Exodus should be recalled at night. But the Rabbis disagree and say: “The days of your life” indicates that the Exodus should be recalled in this world; “ALL the days of your life” indicates that the Exodus should be recalled in the Messianic Age.*

**Gemara:** *It was stated in a Beraita: Ben Zoma argued to the Rabbis: Should we indeed recall the Exodus in the Messianic Age? Does it not say (Jer. 23:7-8), “Behold, days are coming, says G-d. People will no longer say, ‘By the life of G-d, who took Bnei Israel from Egypt,’ but rather, ‘By the life of G-d who took out and brought the seed of the house of Israel from the northern land and from all the lands where I scattered them.’” The Rabbis responded: This does not mean that mention of the Exodus will be completely uprooted, but rather that in the Messianic Age, our recollection of our subjugation in the Diaspora will be primary, and our recollection of the Exodus will be ancillary. This is similar to Yaakov being renamed Yisrael; even though Scripture implies that*

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13. Ibid.



*his name Yaakov would be eliminated, it does not mean completely eliminated, but rather that his name Yaakov would be ancillary to his name Yisrael.*<sup>14</sup>

What will our Pesah Seder look like in the Messianic Age? According to both opinions in the Talmud, there will be changes, at least in the *Maggid* section of the Hagaddah. According to the Rabbis, we will add to the current text the story of our thousands-year long sojourn in the Diaspora, and our subsequent Messianic redemption. According to Ben Zoma, the entire *Maggid* of our current *Haggadot* will be excised, *replaced* by the story of our Messianic redemption! Rashb"i concedes this point, but argues that at least, we will still be eating matzah and maror. Nonetheless, this is a blatant example of how *mitzvah* observance will be altered in the Messianic Age.

Here is a jarring statement in the Talmud that explicitly states that *mitzvot* will no longer apply in the future:

*Our Sages taught: If a garment has Sha'atnez [a forbidden mixture of wool and linen] woven into it, and we cannot identify the section that contains it, such a garment may not be sold to a non-Jew, nor should it be made into a saddle for a donkey [since these items may make their way back to a Jew's possession]. However, it may be used for burial shrouds. R. Yoseph said, "We may adduce from this, that mitzvot will be annulled in the future." Abaye... challenged this: "Does not R. Mani say that we may only eulogize the deceased in Sha'atnez shrouds, but we may not bury him in them?" R. Yoseph responded, "R. Yohanan disagreed, and allowed us to even bury him in the Sha'atnez shrouds." R. Yohanan is consistent, in that he had stated, "What does Scripture mean by (Ps. 88:6), 'The dead are free'? This means that once a person has died, he is exempt from all mitzvot."*<sup>15</sup>

This passage indicates that upon Resurrection, a person will arise together with his *Sha'atnez* shrouds with complete impunity, since the prohibition of mixing wool and linen will no longer apply!

At face value, these passages do imply a change in *mitzvot*, even an exemption of certain *mitzvot*, in the Messianic Age. This is how the Maharal of Prague, who wished to explain the simple import of these passages, explained it:

*When the sages taught that the commandments will be nullified at the time of Resurrection, this does not mean that the Torah itself will be entirely annulled. If that were the case, the Talmud should have stated, "We learn from this that the TORAH will be annulled in the future." The Talmud only states that "MITZVOT will be annulled." This means that they will not manifest in the way that they do presently. The Torah represents a framework for all of existence in its current form, known as Olam HaZeh [the present world]. At the time of Resurrection, we will enter Olam HaBa [the World to Come], which will have an entirely different world order. That is why the commandments*

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14. TB Berakhot 12b.

15. TB Niddah 61b.

*will be annulled at that time, to conform to the new world order. However, this is not considered an annulment of the Torah, since the Torah encompasses all of existence, including Olam Haba. Indeed, this is even alluded to in Scripture...*<sup>16</sup>

For the Maharal, the Christian argument of antinomianism is a nonstarter. Since the world order has not fundamentally changed since the giving of the Torah, any claims that the *mitzvot* no longer apply in our current state of *Olam HaZeh* must be false. But there's no danger of falling prey to Christian theology if we accept that as the world's nature changes, so will the *mitzvot*. For example, if certain *mitzvot* were instituted to combat man's evil inclination, and in the Messianic Age, man's evil inclination will have been subdued, the observance of those very *mitzvot* may no longer be required.

## The Change to Korbanot

Using this approach, we may enter into a specific discussion of the offering of sacrifices (*korbanot*). One of the major difficulties that many religious people have today is the idea that when the Messiah comes, we will return to the offering of animal sacrifices. How do we reconcile that with our modern sensitivities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How many of us can appreciate the value of bringing a sheep to the Temple, watching it being slaughtered and dismembered, and then being inspired by seeing its entrails burning on an altar?

Granted, there may be some who are not bothered by this. I have heard the argument, "True, I do not appreciate *korbanot* at present, in this murky pre-Messianic world. But I'm certain that once the Messiah comes, all of mankind will have an enhanced appreciation for all of G-d's *mitzvot*, and then we will all appreciate *korbanot*."

This is a perfectly valid approach to reconciling the cognitive dissonance that so many people feel toward certain *mitzvot* that were practised in the ancient world. However, if one feels dissatisfied by this approach, it is helpful to know that one is not alone. Maimonides had difficulty understanding the spiritual value of *korbanot*. In his *Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides acknowledged that sacrifices were a concession to the rampant idolatry within the ancient world:

*The custom which was common in those days among all people, and the general mode of worship in which the Israelites were brought up, consisted in sacrificing animals in those temples which contained certain images, to bow down to those images, and to burn incense before them. Religious and ascetic persons were in those days the people who were devoted to the service in the temples erected to the stars, as we have already explained. It was in accordance with the wisdom and plan of G-d, as displayed in the whole Creation, that He did not command us to give up and to discontinue all these manners of service. For to obey such a commandment it would have been contrary to the nature of man, who generally cleaves to that to which he is used...*

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16. Maharal, *Tiferet Yisrael*, ch. 52.

*For this reason G-d allowed these kinds of service to continue; He transferred to His service that which had formerly served as a worship of created beings, and of things imaginary and unreal, and commanded us to serve Him in the same manner; viz., to build Him a temple... to have the altar erected to His name... to offer the sacrifices to Him... to bow down to Him, and to burn incense before Him.<sup>17</sup>*

It would seem from Maimonides that once society is no longer engaged in sacrificial cult practices, there is no longer any reason for *Klal Yisrael* to offer *korbanot*, or at least not in the same way they were offered in the ancient world. Indeed, we will note that some later commentaries (including R. Mashash) used this citation to argue this very point, that *korbanot* will not be brought in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Temple in the same way they were brought in the past.

This is problematic, however, in that the very same Maimonides rules in his *Mishneh Torah* that there will be a return to animal sacrifices in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Temple:

*The King Messiah will restore the Davidic monarchical dynasty to its original prestige. He will build the Temple, and gather in the exiled Jews. All of the laws will be restored in his time, just as they were originally. We will offer sacrifices and practice the Shemittah and Jubilee laws just as they were originally commanded in the Torah.<sup>18</sup>*

According to Maimonides, what is the benefit of animal sacrifices in the modern world? Let us look at Rav Kook's writings for some clues.

## Rav Kook and the Korbanot

Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook (d. 1935) wrote extensively on the subject of societal evolution and the role this plays in the practice of Judaism and the halakhic process. We again caution the reader that it would be a mistake to use R. Kook's theology as a license to indiscriminately write off the commandments. One should not extrapolate beyond what R. Kook actually stated.

One of Rav Kook's premier students, Rabbi Dovid Cohen, also known as "The Nazir," wrote a pamphlet in 5720 (1960) after the untimely passing of R. Kook's grandson, who himself was a vegetarian. It includes essays that R. Kook had written in 5663-4 (1904). The title of the Hebrew pamphlet was "*HaTzimhonut v'HaShalom MeBehinah Toranit*," or "Vegetarianism and Peace from a Torah Perspective," and discussed how all of creation was in the process of elevation as we get closer to the Messianic Age.

In this work, R. Kook observed that it is only natural for man to feel compassion for animals, and that it is a suppression of the human condition to be dispassionate and to spill animals' blood mercilessly.<sup>19</sup> R. Kook pointed to the story of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi from the

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17. *Guide for the Perplexed* 3:32. We have utilized the Friedlander translation with some slight alterations.

18. *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Melakhim* 11:1.

19. Ch. 1.

Talmud. The Gemara reveals that Rebbe, as he was known for short, suffered greatly from intestinal disease. In an attempt to explain his suffering, the Talmud offers:

*A calf was being brought to the slaughter, but wandered toward Rebbe, and began to wail. Rebbe said to the calf, "Go, for this is why you were created." It was pronounced [in heaven]: "Since Rebbe has spoken mercilessly, he should be punished with suffering." A subsequent event caused Rebbe's pain to subside. One day, Rebbe's maid was sweeping his house. There were young weasels lying about, and she was in the process of sweeping them out. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi said to her, "Let them be, as it is written (Ps. 145:9): "The L-rd's mercies are over all His works." They said in heaven: Since he was compassionate, we shall be compassionate to him [and he was relieved of his suffering]."*<sup>20</sup>

According to R. Kook, as man continues to evolve toward the Messianic Age, he will revert to his loftier spiritual level that he possessed before the Flood. According to the Talmud,<sup>21</sup> before Noah saved all the animals on the Ark, G-d had not given mankind permission to consume animals for food, and all people were vegetarian:

*R. Yehuda said in the name of Rav: Adam was not permitted to eat meat. It was only after Noah that G-d permitted meat to his descendants, as it says (Gen. 9:3), "[Now, after the Flood, animals shall be for you] like the grass; I have given them all to you."*

Since the goal of the Messianic Age is to restore mankind to its pristine state of being like Adam before his sin in the Garden, it is expected that as man evolves towards that state, he will eventually eschew the eating of meat.

R. Kook further noted that concomitant to man's spiritual evolution, there will also be a gradual elevation of the animal kingdom. Just as man evolves into a more peaceful and sophisticated creature, so will all animals become more peaceful and sophisticated. This is based on the verses in Isaiah (11:6-8) which prophesy that in the future, even predatory members of the animal kingdom who had previously preyed on other species will coexist with their prey peacefully: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard lie down with the kid; the calf, the beast of prey, and the fatling together," etc.

Finally, (in ch. 32), R. Kook predicts that as part of this evolution, man will succeed in eradicating the social ills that plague human societies. Once these social ills are cured, virtuous people will shift their focus from human concerns to animals' concerns. "Saving the whales" and other movements that address the welfare of endangered species and the harming of animals in scientific experimentation fit into this category.

Years ago, word began to circulate that R. Kook believed that in the Messianic age, man will no longer use animals as sacrifices, based on this very same ideology. Some expressed skepticism that R. Kook subscribed to this, because, up until recently, this idea could only

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20. TB Bava Metzia 85a.

21. TB Sanhedrin 59b.

be found in a terse paragraph contained in R. Kook's commentary to the Siddur. A verse in *Malakhi* states (3:4) "וְעֶרְבָה לִיקֹנֶק מִנַּחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וְכָשָׁנִים קִדְמָיִוֹת" This means that in the Messianic Age, the "Minhah," usually translated as the flour offering of the Temple, will be pleasing to G-d once again as it was in days of old. This verse also appears in the prayer book, as one of the additional supplicatory prayers at the end of one's personal Amidah prayer. Commenting on this, R. Kook wrote:

*Animals are rectified through becoming a sacrifice to G-d on the altar. The reason for this is that animals do not possess sufficient intelligence to elevate themselves, and thus require human intervention to elevate them via offering their blood and entrails – which are the main repositories for their souls – on the altar. This is unlike man, who has the ability to conjoin with G-d intellectually, by merely thinking about the act of sacrifices. In the future world, however, the overflow of knowledge will affect even the animal kingdom, as Scripture states (Is. 11:9), "[The animals] will no longer act maliciously or destructively in My entire mount of holiness; for the Land will be filled with a knowledge of G-d, just as water fills the sea." Sacrifices will then revert to the Minhah flour offering, which is part of the vegetation kingdom. It will be as pleasing to G-d [as animal sacrifices were] in days of old.<sup>22</sup>*

This comment of R. Kook may sound somewhat jarring, in that he is suggesting that all future sacrifices will be from vegetation instead of animals. But when one contextualizes the idea that when the world changes, *mitzvot* will also change, R. Kook's teaching does not seem so far-fetched.

In earlier years, critics of this position tried to argue that R. Kook was waxing philosophical and did not mean to be taken literally that animal sacrifices will cease in the Third Temple. One might have been able to argue that R. Kook was not speaking literally or halakhically. But one could only make this argument until 2006. That is the year when a series of *kitvei yad*, handwritten manuscripts by R. Kook, were published.

In the published compendium, "*Kevatzim MiKetav Yad Kodsho*,"<sup>23</sup> R. Kook states that there will come a time in history when killing of animals for food will diminish severely, if not disappear entirely. We do not know if animal sacrifices will still be in vogue. It is possible, he states, that we will still offer animal sacrifices, because animals themselves will wish to contribute to the elevation of human beings, and will willingly offer themselves for that purpose. It is also possible that animal sacrifices will help to prevent man from backsliding to his old self from before the Messianic Age.

22. *Olat Re-iyah* (Rav Kook's Siddur commentary), vol. 1, p. 292.

23. Originally published in 3 volumes in Jerusalem by *Makhon L'Hotaza'at Ginzei HaRe-iyah*, 2006-2008. This work is now available on WikiTexts, here: [https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/קבצים\\_מכתב\\_יד\\_קדשו](https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/קבצים_מכתב_יד_קדשו). The opinion of R. Kook on sacrifices was also published, almost simultaneously, by Yeshivat Merkaz Harav, in a work entitled *Pinkesei ha-Re-iyah* (Jerusalem, 2008). Professor Marc B. Shapiro has written about R. Kook's position in his work, *The Limits of Orthodox Theology* (Oxford and Portland, 2004), 129-130. Prof. Shapiro also wrote some follow-up pieces for the *Seforim Blog*. One example, from 2010, can be found here: <https://seforimblog.com/2010/04/marc-shapiro-r-kook-on-sacrifices-other/>.

R. Kook then wrote something truly astonishing:

*It is also possible that the Sanhedrin of the time will deem it appropriate – based on the power vested in them to passively uproot even biblical positive commandments<sup>24</sup> – to exempt man from offering obligatory sacrifices that are of animal origin. They may deem this appropriate since, at that time, mankind will have already eschewed the killing of animals for personal use. Scripture actually supports this possibility: The Torah calls a korban “lehem,” bread, as in (Num. 28:2), “My sacrifice, my bread, for my fire.” The following verse states that the sacrifice in question is a sheep. Why does Scripture call a sheep “bread?” It is to teach that so long as animals are used for personal consumption [like bread], one may use them for Divine consumption on the altar. But when animals will no longer be used for personal consumption, one should instead use bread for the sacrifices. Our Sages allude to this in their statement, “All sacrifices will be annulled, except for the Korban Todah (Thanksgiving offering).” This is because this particular sacrifice contains bread. This is also the import of the verse (Malakhi 3:4), “The Minhah flour offering will be pleasing to G-d once again as it was in days of old.” The sacrifice remaining after man’s ultimate rectification should come from flour.<sup>25</sup>*

In the course of this discussion, R. Kook then suggested that it is possible that another alteration to the sacrificial order will be that the *bekhorot*, the first-born males of every family, will be called to resume Temple service in addition to the *Kohanim*. Before the sin of the Golden Calf, the original intent was for the first-born of each family to be the priests in the Temple.<sup>26</sup> Just as animal sacrifices were only meant to be brought when man is in a pre-Messianic degenerate state, so, too, were the *Kohanim* assigned as the sole Temple priests as a way of signifying that a separate family of the Jewish people, one untainted by the Golden Calf, needed to manage the rest of the Jewish people’s flawed state. Once the Messiah arrives, however, man will have reached his rectified state, allowing the first-born of every family to return to Temple service.

After suggesting that only the *Minhah* offering will remain, R. Kook qualified his statement, perhaps out of concern for the antinomian fears of his rabbinic forebears:

*This vision [of a changed sacrificial order] is not to take place for a very long time. It is possible that even the rectification of the world at the time of the Resurrection of the Dead will precede this change. Many things will change because of the changes of the time. Only the wicked eat the unripe fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and do not appreciate the true value of realizing everything in its proper time.*

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24. Here R. Kook refers to a Talmudic principle which appears in several places throughout the Talmud: “*Yesh ko’ah b’yad Hakhamim la’akor davar min haTorah b’Shev v’al ta’aseh.*” See *Talmudic Encyclopedia*, vol. 25, entry “*Yesh ko’ah,*” etc.

25. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 15.

26. See *Midrash Bamidbar Rabbah* (Vilna), 3:5.

## The Wicked Son at the Seder

R. Kook was quite aware that not only had Christians used the argument of antinomianism as a way of pulling Jews away from Judaism. This was also a common argument of different Messianic movements in more recent Jewish history, most notably the Sabbatai Zevi Messianic movement of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the Frankist Messianic movement of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These two movements caused great upheaval within European Jewry, espousing a doctrine that upon the arrival of the Messiah, many, if not most, commandments will no longer apply. This produced much destructive and immoral behaviour within previously devout Jewish communities.<sup>27</sup> This is yet another reason to tread carefully on the topic of the abrogation of *mitzvot* in the Messianic Age.

One way of interpreting the evil of the Rasha son at the Seder is to look at his rhetorical question in this light. The Rasha son asks: “*Mah ha-avodah ha-zot lakhem?*” – “What is the purpose of this service for you?” The Rasha son does not entirely discount the rationale for a nation to have commandments that they fulfill in order to bridle and confine themselves to a more refined and moral mode of behaviour. However, the Rasha son looks at his more contemporary and advanced era, and feels that as a society, we have “outgrown” the commandments. Due to our greater sophistication and advancement, we no longer need to perform these rites that were deemed important for our more primate ancestors. R. Kook seems to have anticipated this kind of distortion that might ensue as a result of his thesis about *mitzvot* changing once the Messiah came, which is why he was careful to detail that this new world order will not come about “for a very long time.”

R. Kook also hedged his bets, in that he conceded that there still might be animal sacrifices in the Messianic Age. He even suggested a mystical benefit to animal sacrifices, even after the world is perfected. He stated that perhaps animal sacrifices will continue even after all living creatures have been perfected, as a means of rectifying those human souls that were reincarnated into animals.

While R. Kook was somewhat equivocal, the general gist from his writing is that it is altogether possible that certain *mitzvot* – including the *mitzvah* of animal sacrifices – will be altered and/or nullified in the future.

## How to Reconcile Our Liturgy

What remains difficult, however, is some thorny traditional liturgy that persists in emphasizing how animal sacrifices, replete with the sprinkling of blood and the burning of entrails, will resume once the Temple is rebuilt in the Messianic Age. For example, how would R. Kook read the following concluding paragraph of the *Maggid* section of the Haggadah, which talks about our desire to offer the animal sacrifices called “*pesachim*” and “*zevachim*?”:

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27. For more on the Sabbatean and Frankist movements, see Binyamin S. Hamburger's *Meshihei Hasheker U-Mit-nagdeihem* (Bnei Brak, 2009), beginning on p. 280.



*Blessed are you, G-d, L-rd of the universe, who has redeemed us and redeemed our ancestors from Egypt, and has brought us to this night so that we might eat matzah and maror. So may it be, our L-rd, and L-rd of our ancestors, that you bring us to other festivals and pilgrimage holidays, may they greet us in peace. May we be happy in the building of Your city [Jerusalem], and rejoice in Your service. There may we eat of the zevahim and the pesachim, whose blood will touch the wall of Your altar and be accepted by You...*

This may have been anticipated by R. Kook himself in another essay entitled “Afikim BaNegev.”<sup>28</sup> R. Kook obscurely refers to a commentary of Rashi on the verse (Lev. 1:3) that states that when an “Adam,” a human being, wishes to offer a burnt-offering, it must be “לְרִצּוֹנוֹ” - “according to his desire” before G-d. What does this word mean? R. Kook infers from Rashi’s verbiage – although this is not necessarily implicit in the language – that human beings go through different stages of development. When humans are on the level of fallen “Adam,” that is, in an unperfected state, human beings “desire” to offer animal sacrifices, in that it is only through the offering of an animal that such flawed human beings can achieve the desired benefit of atonement.

However, when man transcends the level of “Adam,” and is instead on the level of “nefesh,” that is, divested of the dross of the unperfected physical body, then flour offerings will be more appropriate. This is why the word “Adam” is utilized in Scripture for a person who wishes to bring an animal burnt-offering, whereas the word “nefesh” is utilized to describe someone who wishes to bring a *Minhah* (flour) offering (in Lev. 2:1).

Accordingly, whenever we pray for a restoration of the animal sacrifices, it is because we acknowledge that in our current, pre-Messianic state, we will only be able to rectify our imperfections through the animal sacrifice process. However, once the Messiah comes and the Temple is actually rebuilt, we may undergo only a very short period of time – if at all – when animal sacrifices will be necessary, since mankind will have reached a very high level of perfection during the advent of the Messiah. This may also explain why Maimonides, cited above, wrote in his *Mishneh Torah* that animal sacrifices will be restored in the Third Temple. He meant to say that this will be the very beginning stage of the Messianic process, but would not last for any significant duration.

## Hi-Tech Temple

I believe that we can strengthen our faith if we try to imagine in our mind’s eye how the Temple will look in the future. We began this essay with expressing how many new technologies may be implemented in the Temple of the future. A responsum written in the 1970s envisioned the technology of light bulbs being utilized in the Temple. So much has advanced since then. We are living in pre-Messianic days, when we seem so close to realizing a complete ingathering of the Exiles and worldwide peace. It behooves us to try and envision how these new technologies can be put to good use for when the Messiah finally does arrive.

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28. From *Otzarot HaRe-Iyah*, vol. 2, p. 113.



Let us imagine the Messiah has come. It is difficult to envision how every single tribe and camp within Judaism will accept this one individual as their Messiah, and that may be the greatest challenge of all, far greater than the challenge of building a Temple and the kind of sacrifices we will or won't offer. Even if we cannot envision how it will happen, let us at least try to imagine it.

Jews from all over the world have now come back to Israel, and the economy and high-tech are thriving. It is now the *shalosh regalim*, one of the three pilgrimage holidays. All of *Bnei Israel* will be making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Where will everyone lodge over Yom Tov? There will be an Airbnb app that will help us find lodging. Then, when it comes time for everyone to bring a *korban*, Jews will ascend the Temple Mount, where they will see the glorious Third Temple, which has been built over the Dome of the Rock. When you first enter, there will be electronic scrolling screens on the periphery reminding you to verify that you are ritually pure before accessing the Temple Mount. Perhaps in the future, there will be special sensors that will be able to detect a person's purification status. There may even be a section off the Temple Mount where drones are sprinkling the ashes of the *parah adumah* (the red heifer) on people who require such purification.

Once you reach the entrance to the Temple, you will encounter thousands of kiosks with touchscreens, where you will enter what kind of *korban* you would like to bring. If you are not sure, you will have an option to input what particular transgression you've committed, or, you will be able to input your desire to bring a voluntary sacrifice that is not for sin-atonement. The database will come back and tell you what you have to bring. Based on the readout, you'll order the materials for the *korban*. If it's a *korban minhah*, as R. Kook says, you'll be asked to pay with PayPal, Apple Pay, or Venmo for your flour order. Your order, which has been prepared by robots, will then be transported by drone into the Temple courtyard, with a scan code that has all your information.

## Animal Sacrifices Without Animals?

There may be another alternative to R. Kook's views. In the event that Hashem still wants animal sacrifice, perhaps we will be able to produce that meat in a lab, a new technology whereby meat is produced from an algae base combined with animal stem cells in the laboratory. Israel has become a world leader in producing lab-grown meat, with companies like Aleph Farms and SuperMeat.<sup>29</sup> You won't be able to slaughter it, but you might be able to take a mass of meat protein that looks like the dismembered portions of a sheep or bull, and have the *Kohen* place those portions on the Altar as a way of inspiring you to repent and strengthen your connection with G-d.

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29. Aryn Baker, "How Israel Became the Global Center For Alternative Meat Tech," TIME (<https://time.com/6237414/israel-lab-grown-meat/>).

## Having AI Solve the Problem

In trying to envision how new technologies could impact the experience of the Third Temple, I went to the new open artificial intelligence engine, ChatGPT,<sup>30</sup> and asked it the following question:

*“Imagine that the Temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It will contain all the new technologies of AI and robots. How would you envision the Temple functioning?”*

This is the answer that ChatGPT came back with:

*If a third temple were to be built in Jerusalem in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and incorporate AI and robots, it's likely that it would function in a highly advanced and efficient manner. Some possibilities for how the temple might function with AI and robots include:*

- *Automated systems for performing traditional religious rituals, such as sacrifices or prayer recitations, which could be performed by robots or controlled by AI.*
- *Use of AI-powered chatbots or virtual assistants to answer questions and provide guidance to visitors.*
- *Use of facial recognition or other biometric technologies to identify and authenticate worshippers.*
- *Use of VR/AR technology to allow remote visitors to experience the temple and its rituals in a more immersive way.*
- *Use of AI-powered systems for managing and tracking donations, offerings, and other financial transactions.*
- *Use of AI-powered systems for security and surveillance, such as monitoring for potential threats or suspicious behavior.*
- *Use of AI-powered systems for translation and language interpretation, allowing visitors from different countries and cultures to understand and participate in the temple's rituals and ceremonies.*

*It is important to note that the use of technology in religious practices is a controversial topic and opinions will vary among different religious groups and individuals.*

I then asked the AI engine to imagine how lab-grown meat could be used in the context of the Third Temple. This was the response:

*Utilizing lab-grown meat as a replacement for traditional animal sacrifices in the Third Temple would be one way to address the ethical concerns surrounding the slaughter of animals. Lab-grown meat, also known as cell-based meat or cultured meat, is meat that is produced by growing animal cells in a laboratory rather than raising and slaughtering animals.*

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30. <https://chat.openai.com/chat>.

*Here are a few possible ways in which lab-grown meat could be used in the context of the Third Temple:*

- 1. Using lab-grown meat as an alternative to traditional animal sacrifices. This would eliminate the need for the slaughter of animals and still fulfill the religious requirement of offering a sacrifice.*
- 2. Using lab-grown meat as a way to provide kosher or halal meat to those who observe those dietary laws, which can be challenging when using traditional meat.*
- 3. Incorporating lab-grown meat as a way to address concerns of sustainability and animal welfare, which align with some religious teachings.*
- 4. Using lab-grown meat to commemorate the past tradition of sacrifices while also honoring the advancements of science and technology.*

*It is important to note that lab-grown meat is a new and developing technology, and its use in religious contexts would likely be subject to debate and discussion among religious leaders and scholars.*

If even AI is capable of envisioning a Third Temple, then it is the very least that we can do. May we truly feel the words at the Seder of “*L’Shanah Ha-ba’ah B’Yerushalayim Ha-benuyah!*” – “Next year, may we be in the rebuilt Jerusalem!” I hope to see you there, either as a *Kohen* or a worshipper, assuming that my biometric reader authenticates me.

# OpenAI: An Aid to Learning

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CHAIM OLIVER AND CHAT.OPENAI.COM

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## Introduction

**THIS ARTICLE WILL** address the opportunities for the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)<sup>1</sup> as an aid to Torah learning. First, a brief overview of the much-discussed ChatGPT (Generative Pre-Trained Transformer)<sup>2</sup> and machine learning<sup>3</sup> will be given. Then, practical use cases

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1. AI technology is a form of computer science that enables machines to think and react like humans. It is based on the concept of making computers smarter over time by using algorithms, machine learning, and deep learning processes. AI utilizes data-driven models to learn from past experiences and make decisions without human intervention. This type of artificial intelligence is used in various industries such as healthcare, finance, manufacturing, transportation, etc., where it can offer enhanced features such as natural language processing (NLP), image recognition, predictive analytics, and more. AI also offers improved customer service through automated chatbots and virtual assistant technologies. Ultimately, AI helps businesses become more efficient and effective by automating mundane tasks so that employees can focus their efforts on higher value activities.
  2. ChatGPT is a natural language generation model. The model is trained on data from multiple sources, including social media sites, customer service conversations and other conversation-based datasets. With this technology, users are able to generate conversations based on their own datasets. This makes it possible for businesses to provide more personalized experiences with customer service agents and automated responses, as well as providing meaningful interactions with chatbots. The model also supports transfer learning, which can be used to customize responses to customer requests according to their individual needs. ChatGPT provides state-of-the-art performance in conversational AI by combining deep learning models such as BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers) and GPT-2 (Generative Pre-trained Transformer 2).
  3. Machine learning is an application of artificial intelligence (AI) that provides systems the ability to automatically learn and improve from experience without being explicitly programmed.

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and actual examples will be presented. Finally, some of the ethical issues concerning the use of AI will be discussed.

New tools for Torah learning are sometimes controversial. The ArtScroll Talmud raised eyebrows in its time. Those volumes, which made *Daf Yomi* accessible to many, resulted from advancing technology. In the late 1980s desktop publishing became available, replacing conventional typesetting, which was much more expensive. The study aid format of the ArtScroll Talmud would not have been possible before that advance. *Ein hadash taḥat hashemesh* – there is nothing new under the sun. As desktop publishing and other technological innovations had a huge positive impact on Torah learning, so too will AI and related technologies.

This piece will not attempt to answer halakhic issues concerning AI. Instead, the intent is to provide a context for discussion and perhaps some experimentation with the tool. We maintain that AI is just another study guide, similar to what students of Torah have always used.

## Openai.com

This article was partially created using the tools developed by OpenAI,<sup>4</sup> a company partly funded by Elon Musk and the creator of ChatGPT. ChatGPT<sup>5</sup> is a natural language processing (NLP)<sup>6</sup> tool that allows people to have human-like conversations with an AI chatbot. ChatGPT was created to hold a conversation with the user. For more information, visit [beta.openai.com](https://beta.openai.com).<sup>7</sup>

## Increased Efficiency and Accessibility of Learning Materials

Artificial intelligence can serve as a user-friendly aid to Torah study and as a complement to dictionaries, guides, databases, lecture notes, and other reference materials. Overall, the use of AI as an aid to Torah learning has the potential to make the process of studying texts more efficient, accessible, and illuminating, thereby significantly enhancing our understanding and appreciation of the texts.

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The process of learning begins with observations or data, such as examples, online content, collections of material such as Sefaria, direct experience, or instruction, to look for patterns in data and make better decisions in the future based on the examples that we provide.

Machine learning is becoming increasingly popular in content creation, as its applications can help optimize online content strategies and produce more relevant content that appeals to users. As technology continues to evolve, we can expect even further advances in this field that will further revolutionize how we consume, write, draw and more.

4. <https://openai.com>.

5. For further explanation, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ChatGPT>.

6. Natural language processing (NLP) is an area of computer science and artificial intelligence concerned with the interactions between computers and human languages. It enables machines to understand and interpret human language, allowing them to interact with user input in a meaningful way. NLP uses algorithms, artificial intelligence (AI), and deep learning technologies to process and interpret natural language input. The goal of NLP is to help computers understand, interpret and generate human language to automate tasks that previously required manual input.

7. <https://beta.openai.com/docs/quickstart>.

AI can help translate the Torah into different languages, making it more accessible to those who do not speak Hebrew. This tool could provide explanations and clarifications for complex concepts, offer suggestions for further reading and research, and track the learner's progress to give feedback and encouragement. Additionally, AI can create interactive learning tools and resources, such as virtual tutors or personalized study plans, which could make the learning process more efficient and effective. Machine learning algorithms can also be used to analyze the Torah texts and potentially uncover new insights and interpretations that may not have been discovered through traditional study methods.

AI can be used to create virtual tutors or study assistants that can provide personalized guidance and support for learners. AI could also create interactive learning materials, such as quizzes, games, and simulations, which could make the learning process more engaging and fun. By using AI to develop interactive learning tools and resources, it is possible to make Torah study more efficient, effective, and enjoyable for students of all levels and backgrounds.

One of the main benefits of using AI in Torah study is the increased efficiency and accessibility of learning materials. AI can be used to create learning tools and resources tailored to an individual learner's needs and abilities, providing a more personalized and practical learning experience. For example, AI-powered virtual tutors could provide explanations and guidance when a learner needs it, helping to clarify complex concepts and ideas. AI could also be used to create summaries and overviews of the texts, making it easier for learners to understand the main points and themes. Overall, the use of AI in Torah study has the potential to make the learning process more efficient and effective for a wide variety of students.

## **Potential to Uncover New Layers of Meaning in Traditional Texts**

One of the most exciting potential benefits of using AI in Torah study is the possibility of uncovering new layers of meaning in traditional texts. AI can analyze and understand texts in ways that are not possible for humans, and it could be used to identify patterns and connections within the Torah that have not been previously recognized. For example, AI could be used to identify connections between passages or themes that span across multiple books of the Torah, helping to reveal new insights and interpretations. Additionally, AI could be used to analyze the language and style of the texts, helping to identify the unique characteristics and contributions of different commentators and periods. Using AI to uncover new layers of meaning in traditional texts makes it possible to deepen our understanding and appreciation of the Torah.

What did Poskim say about previous technological advances, and how can we apply that to AI? For example, we found an article<sup>8</sup> about rabbinic reactions to the printing press. A more recent discussion<sup>9</sup> cites a psak of R. Moshe:

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8. <https://etzion.org.il/en/halakha/invention-printing-press-i-1440>.

9. <https://blogs.yu.edu/news/when-technology-meets-theology/>.

*R. Moshe Feinstein (Introduction, Dibrot Moshe, Bava Kamma) writes that the mitzvah of teaching Torah obligates Torah scholars to publish their research and insights for two reasons: to spread their knowledge to the widest possible audience and to prevent their research from becoming lost or forgotten. It follows that a Torah scholar who does not make his work available via electronic media diminishes his fulfillment of the commandment to teach Torah.*

It follows that an AI assimilating Torah content is acceptable and is common practice now.

## Applications for Different Types of Learners

### For University, Post-High School, Yeshivah, and Seminary Students

As a language model, OpenAI cannot engage in activities such as Torah learning. However, AI and machine learning techniques have the potential to assist with various tasks related to Torah study and scholarship. For example, AI tools could be used to analyze and interpret large amounts of text, facilitate translation, or assist with organizing and categorizing Torah commentaries and sources.

However, it is essential to note that the use of AI in Torah study would need to be approached with caution, as humans are ultimately responsible for interpreting and understanding the Torah. AI tools can assist with specific tasks, but cannot replace the insight and understanding that comes from careful study and contemplation.

Advanced study partners can use OpenAI Chat to access text to facilitate discussion and debate about complex texts and concepts, helping to deepen understanding and provide new perspectives. Collaborating with a study partner using AI can help break up the monotony of solitary study and make learning more enjoyable.

Visit [Overview – OpenAI API<sup>10</sup>](https://openai.com/api) and [Examples – OpenAI API](https://openai.com/api) to explore creating language models that understand and generate text for content generation, summarization, classification, categorization, sentiment analysis, data extraction, and translation. AI can be directed to undertake a particular analysis that an individual could conceive of but would be too onerous to undertake.

### Teaching Aids for Adult Educators

There are a variety of teaching aids that OpenAI can generate to help adult educators facilitate learning and engagement in their congregations and schools. Some examples include:

- **Visual aids:** These can include elements for slideshows – including lists, statistical mappings, translations, images, text comparisons, diagrams, and maps – to help illustrate or explain concepts.
- **Handouts:** Providing written materials – such as articles, transcriptions, summaries, notes, or quizzes – can help reinforce learning and provide a resource for later reference.

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10. <https://openai.com/api>.

Ultimately, the most effective teaching aids will depend on the specific needs and preferences of the congregation or schools and the educator's teaching style. Experimenting with different approaches and gathering feedback to determine what works best can be helpful.

Example: Ask OpenAI ChatGPT to create content on topics of interest. Consider accessing Dicta.Org.<sup>11</sup> Dicta applies cutting edge machine learning and natural language processing tools to the analysis of Hebrew texts, allowing focus on the deeper questions. For resources to discuss AI and Torah, Sefaria has articles specific to AI and Torah.<sup>12</sup> The Lehrhaus<sup>13</sup> site has a comprehensive article worth reading. Other references can be searched online.

### Bringing More In-Depth *Parashah* Study to the Shabbat Table

Ultimately, the key to bringing more in-depth *parashah* study to the Shabbat table is to create a welcoming and engaging environment that encourages learning and discussion. There are a few ways in which OpenAI can facilitate in-depth *parashah* study for the Shabbat table:

- Use the system to create talking points on a concept from the *parashah*, Jewish law, or philosophy.
- Create a list of questions family members or guests can respond to and interact with.
- Use visual aids: Diagrams, maps, or other visual materials can help to illustrate or explain complex concepts.
- Using OpenAI is fun. Pursue questioning lines and discover new ideas, approaches, and ways of engaging family and friends. Involve your kids, who undoubtedly will want to participate in this new way of learning. Example: Ask OpenAI Chat to list ten things that make Shabbat special.

## Samples of AI Projects

### An AI-Created Summary of the First Ten Verses of the Torah

*The first ten verses of the Torah, also known as the Five Books of Moses or the Pentateuch, describe G-d's creation of the world. The first verse states, "In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth." The following verses describe the design of light, the separation of the waters, the creation of land and vegetation, the creation of the sun, moon, and stars, and the creation of fish and birds. The ninth and tenth verses describe the design of land animals and humans, respectively. These verses establish the belief in a single, all-powerful G-d who created the world and everything in it. They also establish the concept of the separation of light and darkness, day and night, and the cycles of the natural world.*

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11. <https://dicta.org.il>.

12. <https://www.sefaria.org/topics/artificial-intelligence?tab=sources>.

13. <https://thelehrhaus.com/commentary/torah-study-and-the-digital-revolution-a-glimpse-of-the-future>.



## Chatbots to Answer Common Halakhic Questions

We have all done it. Asked “Rabbi Google” an everyday halakhic question. AI technology will replace Google search with an interactive Chatbot. A Chatbot is a computer program that simulates human conversations, enabling humans to interact with computer systems naturally. We will increasingly interact with AI-driven Chatbots for customer service, online shopping assistance and more. Can a Rabbi Chatbot, created by YU or the OU be far off?

## An AI-Created Summary of the First Chapter of *Mishnah Sukkot*

*The first chapter of Mishnah Sukkot, also known as the “Mishnah of Sukkot,” deals with the laws and practices related to the Jewish festival of Sukkot, or the “Feast of Tabernacles.” This chapter begins by discussing the various types of sukkah, or temporary dwellings, used during the festival and the requirements for their construction. It also discusses the laws of lulav (palm branch) and etrog (citron), two of the Four Species used in the observance of Sukkot. The chapter also covers the rules of hoshanot (processions) during the festival and the associated customs and prayers. Finally, the chapter discusses the laws of the intermediate days of Sukkot, known as Chol Hamo’ed, and the restrictions on work and commerce during this time.*

## An AI-Created Summary of Five Things that Make Shabbat a Mystical Experience

1. *The lighting of candles: The lighting of candles on Friday evening is a symbol of the separation of the sacred and the secular, and marks the beginning of the Sabbath.*
2. *The Kiddush: A blessing over wine or grape juice, recited before the evening meal, which sanctifies the day and marks it as a special and holy time.*
3. *The Shabbat meals: The meals on the Sabbath are an important part of the day, and are often shared with friends and family. They are also a time to reflect on the spiritual aspects of the day.*
4. *The reading of the Torah: The weekly portion of the Torah is read in synagogues on the Sabbath, providing an opportunity to study and reflect on the teachings of the Torah.*
5. *The sense of peace and rest: The Sabbath is a day of rest, both physically and spiritually. It is a time to disconnect from the hustle and bustle of daily life, and to focus on the spiritual aspects of the day. The sense of peace and rest that comes from observing the Sabbath can be a truly mystical experience.*

## A Prayer, Created in the Style of the Book of Psalms, on the Plight of *Agunot* in the Voice of a Suffering *Agunah*

*Oh L-rd, hear my cry*

*For I am an agunah, trapped and denied*

*My husband has left me, forsaken me to die  
But I trust in your mercy, oh L-rd, and lift my eyes to the sky  
I am a bird without a nest, a ship without a sail,  
A voice without a song, a heart without a trail  
But I will not despair, for I know you are always near  
You are my rock, my fortress, my shield, and my fear  
Deliver me from this bondage, oh G-d of Abraham  
Show me your loving kindness, and take me by the hand  
Lead me to the chuppah, and let my joy be complete  
Let me sing and dance with my beloved, and be a worthy mate  
I pray for all the agunot who suffer in silence and shame  
May your light shine upon them, and bring them to your flame  
Grant them strength and courage to face their trials with grace  
And let them find their peace in your holy embrace  
Hear my prayer, oh L-rd, and answer my plea  
Restore my dignity, and set me free  
I trust in your promise to never forsake me  
And with your help, I know I will be an agunah no more, but a bride and a partner, forever to be.  
Amen.*

## **Concerns and Ethical Considerations**

### **The Role of Human Interpretation and Understanding in the Study of Torah**

Human interpretation and understanding is an essential aspect of Torah study, and it is important to recognize the limitations of AI in this regard. While AI can analyze and understand texts in ways that are not possible for humans, it does not have the same capacity for insight, intuition, and empathy inherent to human understanding. Therefore, it is important to use AI in Torah study in a way that complements and enhances, rather than replaces, human understanding. This may involve using AI to identify patterns and connections within the texts, and then relying on human interpretation and understanding to provide context and meaning to those discoveries. Additionally, it is important to ensure that the use of AI in Torah study is guided by ethical considerations, such as respecting the traditions and teachings of Judaism and avoiding the use of AI in a way that could diminish the role of human understanding and interpretation.

## Ensuring the Accuracy and Authenticity of AI-Assisted Torah Study

It is essential to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of AI-assisted Torah study to maintain the integrity of the texts and the teachings of Judaism. One way to do this is by carefully designing and training the machine learning algorithms used to analyze the texts. This may involve using a large and diverse dataset of Torah texts to ensure that the algorithms can accurately recognize patterns and connections within the texts. It may also be helpful to have human experts review and verify the results of the AI analysis to ensure that the insights and interpretations are accurate and authentic. Additionally, it is important to be transparent about the methods and limitations of AI-assisted Torah study.

## The Potential Impact on Traditional Methods of Torah Study and Jewish Education

The use of AI in Torah study has the potential to impact traditional methods of Torah study and Jewish education. On the one hand, AI can provide new insights and interpretations and by making learning materials more efficient and accessible. On the other hand, there is a risk that the use of AI could diminish the role of human interpretation and understanding, potentially disrupting traditional study and education methods. Therefore, it is important to consider these potential impacts carefully and to use AI in a way that complements and enhances, rather than replaces, traditional methods of study and education. It may also be helpful to engage in dialogue and debate about the appropriate role of AI in Torah study and Jewish education, and to ensure that ethical considerations and the teachings of Judaism guide the use of AI.

## Conclusion

The use of AI in Torah study has the potential to be an exciting and transformative development for the field of Jewish education. By leveraging the powerful capabilities of artificial intelligence, it is possible to enhance and enrich the way we study and understand the Torah. OpenAI has the potential to make learning materials more efficient and accessible, uncover new insights and interpretations of texts, and deepen our understanding and appreciation of the Torah. While there are also ethical considerations and challenges to be addressed in the use of OpenAI in Torah study, the potential benefits are significant and worth exploring. Overall, the use of OpenAI in Torah study has the potential to be a powerful and transformative development that can enhance and enrich our understanding of the texts and the teachings of Judaism.

What is coming in the future? There are two opinions. One seeing AI “taking over the world,” and the other recognizes the unique creative and spiritual nature of man. Leading AI scientists understand that the human brain is not just a number of algorithms that can be examined and used to program other subjects. Moreover, they state that even if AI could

be adjusted to the abilities of the human brain, it still would not provide consciousness.<sup>14</sup> AI consciousness and self-awareness is science fiction.

AI will remain as one more useful tool for Torah study for the foreseeable future.

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14. <https://www.aitimejournal.com/will-ai-become-sentient>.



**Tanakh**



# Currency: Weights and Coins in Tanakh

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ARCHIE CRANDELL

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## Introduction

**WHEN WE READ** Tanakh we come across transactions that are carried out using silver *shekels*. For example, Jeremiah buys a field from Hanamel for 17 silver *shekels* (Jer. 32:9). King Solomon imports chariots and horses from Egypt for 600 and 150 silver *shekels* (2 Chr. 1:17). Generally speaking, when silver *shekels* are mentioned, we naturally think of coins. This idea is further cemented into our minds since we can actually make transactions using modern Israeli *shekel* coins. However, from historical evidence, the first coins were minted in about the 6<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE,<sup>1</sup> after the destruction of the First Temple. If coins were not invented until the very end of Tanakh's historic period, what does the word *shekel* mean when used as a form of currency? This article will discuss the currency used in Tanakh before and after the minting of coins.

## Trade in the Times of Tanakh

It is difficult for us to imagine a time when there was no such thing as coins or other currency. In ancient times, the transfer of goods from one person to another was done by the barter of commodities, and property was defined by one's livestock and grain reserves. A labourer would be paid in wheat or barley to be used to feed himself and his family or to trade for other commodities. We also have the concept that livestock is synonymous

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1. First Mint: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mint\\_\(facility\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mint_(facility)).

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with property. The word *mikneh* (מקנה) which is usually translated as livestock<sup>2</sup> can also be translated as property<sup>3</sup> or possessions. For example, when Jacob instructs his sons to bury him, he requests that he should be buried in “the property<sup>4</sup> (*mikneh*) of the field and cave that is in it, [acquired] from the Hittites” (Gen. 49:32). When Joseph tells his family what he will say to Pharaoh the verse states, “And the men are shepherds, for they are men of property (*mikneh*), and they brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have” (Gen. 46:32). The Ramban, in his commentary<sup>5</sup> on this verse states that Joseph is trying to describe the family’s wealth, and by translating *mikneh* as property, gives an interpretation that is in line with his commentary.

Wealth could also be amassed by holding silver and gold; we have several examples of this in Tanakh. “Now Abram was very wealthy in livestock, silver, and gold” (Gen. 13:2), and again when Eliezer describes Avraham’s wealth: “The L-rd has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys” (Gen. 24:35). Trade was also carried out by the bartering of gold and silver.

## Weighing of Silver Used for Trade

Since coins were not invented yet, trade was conducted by weighing pieces or lumps of silver. This is documented in many places in Tanakh. When Jeremiah buys a field from Hanamel (Jer. 32:9-10) the transaction is detailed for us. “I weighed out the silver for him, seventeen *shekels* of silver ... I called witnesses, and weighed the silver on the balance scales.” Thus, we see that the silver is weighed out twice on a balance scale in front of witnesses so that everything was above board. When a balance scale is used, a total of 17 *shekel* weighing stones are placed on one side of the scale and the silver pieces are placed on the other side. When the scale is in balance, 17 *shekels* of silver has been weighed out. If coins were used, there would be no need for weighing.

## Weighing Stones in Tanakh

Seven types of weighing stones are mentioned in Tanakh. They are: talent, *mina*, *shekel*, *kesitah*, *pim*, *beka*, and *gerah*. Except for the *shekel*, which will be discussed in the body of the text, the others are detailed in the Appendix. Hundreds of weighing stones<sup>6</sup> have been found in

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2. Some translations of Tanakh translate *mikneh* as cattle, not realizing that the modern definition only applies to bovine animals, not all livestock as in the older definition. The word cattle has its source in the Middle English word *cate* meaning property or livestock. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cattle>.
  3. Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT), L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner.
  4. The word *mikneh* “property” should not be confused with the word *miknah* “to purchase” when translating this verse.
  5. [https://www.sefaria.org/Ramban\\_on\\_Genesis.46.32?ven=Commentary\\_on\\_the\\_Torah\\_by\\_Ramban\\_\(Nachmanides\)\\_Translated\\_and\\_annotated\\_by\\_Charles\\_B.\\_Chavel\\_New\\_York\\_Shilo\\_Pub\\_House\\_1971-1976&vhe=On\\_Your\\_Way&lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Ramban_on_Genesis.46.32?ven=Commentary_on_the_Torah_by_Ramban_(Nachmanides)_Translated_and_annotated_by_Charles_B._Chavel_New_York_Shilo_Pub_House_1971-1976&vhe=On_Your_Way&lang=bi).
  6. Weights and measures: [https://www.academia.edu/19048148/2009d\\_Weights\\_and\\_Measures](https://www.academia.edu/19048148/2009d_Weights_and_Measures).

archaeological digs dating from around the time of the First Temple.<sup>7</sup> They were found in multiples and fractions of the weighing stones so that they could be used for conducting trade. They are usually round and made of limestone with flattened bases, so they would not roll off the scale pan. Their surface is sometimes inscribed with their weight. The inscriptions are in Paleo-Hebrew with the numbers in Egyptian hieratic script since there are no numbers in written Hebrew. Paleo-Hebrew is the old form of Hebrew writing, and Egyptian hieratic script<sup>8</sup> is a simpler cursive form of Egyptian hieroglyphs. Some examples are illustrated in Figure 1. There are examples of weighing stones being used in Tanakh as we are told that Absalom's hair is weighed with the "weighing stones of the King" (2 Sam. 14:36), and that we may not have "a bag of deceptive weighing stones" (Mic. 6:11).

## Archaeological Finds of Silver

In Israel, archaeologists have found more than thirty hoards of silver that contained broken pieces of jewellery along with hacked up pieces of silver.<sup>9</sup> These broken pieces of silver are known as hacksilver (from the German) since they were hacked from larger pieces of silver. Some of these hoards were originally stored in linen bundles, and due to metal corrosion, the cloth has fused with the corrosion and is still visible today. In the Song of Deborah (Jdg. 5:19), it states that the Kings of Canaan fought against Israel without any *betza kesef* (בִּצְעַ כֶּסֶף). The usual translation for *betza kesef* is, "they took no plunder of silver". However, the word *betza* can also be translated as to break or sever.<sup>10</sup> The verse can thus be more correctly translated as "they took no hacksilver" or they fought without payment. In addition, when Joseph's brothers return home with their grain from Egypt, they find "every man's bundle of silver was in his sack" (Gen. 41:35). Thus, we can see that archaeological evidence agrees with the information given in Tanakh in that hacksilver was used, and it was stored in bundles.

## Purity of Silver Used for Trade

Another issue with pieces of silver is that there is no control on the purity. Less expensive copper could be added during the melting process. The addition of copper does not affect the colour of the silver, but it affects its value and strength. An experienced merchant could differentiate between silver-copper mixtures and pure silver by the resistance against a chisel, by lightly hitting it with a chisel or actually chopping it to test its strength. There was clearly an awareness in Tanakh of the existence of inferior quality metals, as we see from the instructions King David gives the future King Solomon and B'nai Yisrael for building the Temple. He instructs Solomon to use "refined silver and refined gold" (1 Chr. 29:4; 1 Chr. 28:18). King Solomon follows these instructions when he builds the First Temple, as

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7. Bible Money: <https://www.bible.ca/coins/bible-coins-history-money-weight-system.htm>.

8. Encyclopedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures, 2008. Edition, Weights and Measures of the Hebrews, Lionel Holland, pg 4474.

9. Hacksilver: <https://www.thetorah.com/article/how-silver-was-used-for-payment>.

10. Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT), L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner.

it states, he uses *zahav sagor* (זָהָב סָגוּר) “closed gold” (1 Kgs. 6:20) to build the First Temple. Closed gold refers to an ancient purification process of removing silver from gold by using salt and burnt clay in a “closed” and sealed container. Today, this process is called salt cementation.<sup>11</sup> With these words, King Solomon is attesting to the purity of the gold that he used to build his Temple.

## Purchases on Credit

When Avraham asks about purchasing the Makhpelah cave, he offers to purchase it with *keseḥ ma'le* (כֶּסֶף מֵאֵלָה) (Gen. 23:9). Most translations interpret this expression as paying the full asking price for the field. However, there is evidence from Assyrian texts<sup>12</sup> that this idiomatic expression means he offered to pay the full amount up front without any payment plan or mortgage. When David offers to buy the threshing floor from Ornan (1 Chr. 21:22, 24) for the Temple Mount, he twice offers to pay *keseḥ ma'le*. They both paid cash up front, without any form of payment plan or mortgage that could cloud the validity of their purchases.

## Different *Shekel* Weights Mentioned in Tanakh

There appear to be four different types of *shekels* mentioned in Tanakh.

1. The first is the “weight of the merchant”, which is used when Avraham purchases the Makhpelah cave and its field near Hebron for 400 *shekels* from Ephron the Hittite. He weighs out the silver in front of Ephron and the people of the land “according to the weight of the merchant” (Gen. 23:16).
2. The second type is the “*shekel* of the sanctuary”, which is mentioned about twenty-five times throughout Tanakh. The half *shekel* for the census had to be contributed “according to the *shekel* of the sanctuary” (Ex. 30:13).
3. The third type of *shekel* is the “king’s *shekel*”. Absalom cut his hair every year, and it weighed “two hundred *shekels* by the king’s stone weight” (2 Sam.14:26).
4. The fourth is the regular *shekel*. This *shekel* applies when no specific type of *shekel* is mentioned. This *shekel* occurs most of the time in Tanakh.

Assyrian texts of that period use a similar idiomatic phrase to what was used to purchase the Makhpelah cave. They state “measured with the weight of the merchant” which is generally taken to mean weighed out on the spot by the merchant at hand.<sup>13</sup> This is most likely what occurs with Avraham when he buys the cave of Makhpelah. Typically, during a transaction, both parties to the transaction would not trust each other to have true weights or pure silver. The purchaser wants to pay as little as possible, and the seller wants to receive as much as possible. To resolve these problems for the purchase of the Makhpelah cave, an independent merchant who is at hand weighs and checks the quality of the silver. The

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11. Gold Parting: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold\\_parting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold_parting).

12. Biblical Currencies: [https://www.academia.edu/44171851/Biblical\\_Currencies\\_in\\_Context](https://www.academia.edu/44171851/Biblical_Currencies_in_Context).

13. Biblical Currencies: [https://www.academia.edu/44171851/Biblical\\_Currencies\\_in\\_Context](https://www.academia.edu/44171851/Biblical_Currencies_in_Context).

transaction is also done in the “presence of the Hittites, before all who went in at the gate of his city” (Gen. 23:18). There could be no dispute about the transaction, as everything is monitored.

The same applies to the *shekel* of the sanctuary. All contributions to the Temple must be weighed and the quality of the silver verified at the Temple so that each person’s contribution is above-board and beyond reproach. This also applies to the king’s *shekel*. Samuel is telling us that the weight of Absalom’s hair was not an exaggeration, but weighed and verified by the king’s *shekel*. The regular *shekel* does not specify who weighed and checked the quality of the silver. It is most likely whoever was available and acceptable to both parties.

The Torah also tells us that there could not be different *shekel* weights, since “You shall not have in your bag two kinds of weights, a large and a small.” (Deut. 25:13) and “You shall have just balances, just weights” (Lev. 19:36). In addition, there is archaeological evidence<sup>14</sup> of both unmarked *shekel* weighing stones and the kings’ weighing stones inscribed “to the king” weighing exactly the same. Thus, these four types of *shekels* are not different weights, but are indicative of who verified the transaction.

## The Shekel Weight

The *shekel*<sup>15</sup> (שקל) is the most commonly used weight in Tanakh. It is mentioned about 40 times and implied many times as the default weight when no weight is given.<sup>16</sup> The very first time a payment is recorded in Tanakh, the word *shekel* is omitted. When Avimelech gives Avraham a “thousand silver” (Gen. 20:16), there is no mention of a *shekel* weight, so it must be implied. Also, when Joseph is sold to the Ishmaelite traders for “twenty of silver” (Gen. 37:28) the *shekel* weight is missing and must also be implied.<sup>17</sup>

In biblical Hebrew, the *shekel* weight is derived from the verb root *sh·k·l* (ש·ק·ל), to weigh. The *shekel* is also used to weigh commodities like gold (Jos. 7:21), jewellery (Gen 24:22) copper/bronze armour (1 Sam. 15:5), iron spearhead (1 Sam. 15:7), hair (2 Sam. 14:26) and food (Ezek. 4:10). There is First Temple archaeological evidence that the average *shekel* weight is approximately 11.33 grams.<sup>18</sup> The *shekel* weights are identified by a symbol that looks like a Hebrew cursive *ayin* to symbolize a *shekel* (Fig. 1). There is debate as to how this symbol represents a *shekel*. It may be a symbol for a tied money purse,<sup>19</sup> or it may be a hieroglyph character for the symbol of a rope loop which has a “sh” sound representing a *shekel*.<sup>20</sup>

In the book of Ruth, Boaz “measures out six [measures] of barley and places them in her shawl” (Ruth 3:15). There is no weight given in the verse. Rashi comments that it was six

14. Weights and measures: [https://www.academia.edu/19048148/2009d\\_Weights\\_and\\_Measures](https://www.academia.edu/19048148/2009d_Weights_and_Measures)

15. *Shekel*: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shekel>.

16. Biblical Currencies: [https://www.academia.edu/44171851/Biblical\\_Currencies\\_in\\_Context](https://www.academia.edu/44171851/Biblical_Currencies_in_Context).

17. This article assumes that the weight of the *shekel* has been normalized in Tanakh and does not vary with time or place.

18. Weights and measures: [https://www.academia.edu/19048148/2009d\\_Weights\\_and\\_Measures](https://www.academia.edu/19048148/2009d_Weights_and_Measures).

19. R. Yoel Elitzur, *Places in the Parasha*, (Maggid Press), p. 615 n9.

20. List of Hieroglyphs (Symbol V6): [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Egyptian\\_hieroglyphs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Egyptian_hieroglyphs).

barley grains and the Malbim comments it was a sixth of a *se'ah*<sup>21</sup> which is about 1.5 litres of barley. But from our discussion above, we know that the *shekel* was the default weight when no weight is given and that the *shekel* was used to measure all types of commodities, including food. Maybe Boaz gave Ruth six *shekel* weights of barley that he put into her shawl. This would weigh about 68 grams and be equal to slightly less than half a cup of barley. Today, a package of instant oatmeal weighs 28 grams: so we could conclude that Boaz gave Ruth enough for one meal each for Naomi and herself. The Malbim's interpretation of this gesture is that by the time the meal was finished, Ruth would be redeemed and would not have to worry about her next meal.

## Coins in Tanakh

With the invention of coins, the weighing of pieces of silver or gold, and determining the purity of the metal was no longer needed. Coins issued by governments of the time were produced to a uniform standard weight and of high purity.

The only coins mentioned in Tanakh are during the rebuilding of the Second Temple. The gold *darkimon* (דרכמון) is mentioned four times (Ezr. 2:69; Neh. 7:69, 70, 71) and the gold *adarkon* (אדרכון) is mentioned twice (1 Chr. 29:7; Ezr. 8:27). If one looks in various Tanakh translations, there is no consistency as to the translations used. Many translators use drachma for *darkimon* and darics for *adarkon*. Others translate both words as a daric. Some just transliterate the Hebrew into English without translating it.

Both *adarkon* and *darkimon* are very similar sounding words, but there is an extra M in *darkimon*. Translators not being experts in ancient coins, and not knowing if these coins are different coins or the same coin, just picked names of coins that sounded similar to the Hebrew. The only problem is that drachma<sup>22</sup> is a Greek silver coin, not a gold coin as mentioned in Tanakh. The daric<sup>23</sup> is a better match for both coins, since it is a Persian gold coin that was minted slightly before the exiles returned to Judea to rebuild the Temple.

Although these coins appear to they have different names in Tanakh, they can still be the same coin. There are many examples in Tanakh where names are spelled differently. A classic example is the name Nebukhadnezzar which is spelled three different ways in Tanakh. It is spelled Nebukhadnezzar seven times (2 Kgs. 25:22), Nebukhadrezzar with extra "R" thirty times (Jer. 21:2) and as Nebukhadnezzor with a change to the last vowel fourteen times (Ezr. 2:1). The exiles most probably brought darics with them from Persia to Judea, since King Cyrus donated items for the rebuilding of the Temple (Ezr. 1:9-10). Thus, the translators who use daric for both *adarkon* and *darkimon* are correct in their translation since they are really the same coin.

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21. *Se'ah*: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seah\\_\(unit\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seah_(unit)).

22. Drachma: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek\\_drachma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_drachma).

23. Darics: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian\\_daric](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian_daric).

## Conclusions

This article should give you a bit of understanding about how goods and property were transacted and how currency changed hands between buyers and sellers. When you read Tanakh, you now realize when it says *kesav* in Hebrew or money in English, it is referring to pieces of hacksilver that are being verified for purity and weighed. When you hear of a *shekel* in Tanakh you now know that it is a weight, not a coin, and if no weight is given, the *shekel* is the default weight.



Figure 1. Scale Weights Found at Archaeological Sites<sup>24</sup>

## Appendix of Additional Biblical Weights

In addition to the *shekel*, the talent, *mina*, *kesitah*, *pim*, *beka* and *gerah* are mentioned in Tanakh, along with *netzef* which is not mentioned but was discovered at archaeological sites. These weights were also used for trade and were weighed, and their purity was verified, during transactions. These weights are listed in size order.

### The Talent Weight

The talent or *kikkar*<sup>25</sup> (כִּכָּר) is the heaviest weight used in Tanakh, and it is used about forty times as a weight for silver and gold. The same word is also used in relation to other round and oval items, such as a *kikkar* of bread or a loaf of bread (Jer. 37:21), *kikkar* of the Jordan or the Jordan rift valley (Gen. 13:10) and *kikkar* of lead or a lead-covered disc (Zec. 5:7). Talent weights were found at archaeological sites and are large hollow stone cylinders, which explains why *kikkar* describes round items. The value of the talent is given in Exodus 38:25-26, when each member of B'nai Yisrael was counted using a half *shekel* head tax. There were 603,550 people, and if each person gave half a *shekel*, they would have collected 301,775

24. Illustration modified from <https://www.bible.ca/coins/bible-coins-history-money-weight-system.htm>.

25. Talent: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talent\\_\(measurement\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talent_(measurement)).

*shekels*. The verse states that the silver collected was 100 talents and 1,775 *shekels*. Thus, each talent was composed of 3,000 *shekels* which weighed 33.9 kg.

## The Mina Weight

Another heavy weight mentioned in Tanakh is the *mina*<sup>26</sup> or *maneh* (מנה) in Hebrew. The mina is the second-largest weight in the Tanakh. It is used five times in Tanakh mostly in the latter books of Tanakh (1 Kgs. 10:17; Ezk. 45:12; Ezr. 2:69; Neh. 7:70, 71). The value of the *mina* is given in Ezekiel 45:12 as 60 *shekels*, which is 678 grams. The word *mina* may be derived from the word *manah* meaning portion, thus a portion of silver.

## The Kesitah Weight

A weight that is mentioned in Tanakh, but its weight is not known, is the *kesitah*<sup>27</sup> (קשיטה). It is mentioned three times in Tanakh (Gen. 33:19; Jos. 24:32; Job 42:11). Jacob bought a piece of land in Shekhem from the sons of Hamor for 100 *kesitahs*, and later Joseph was buried there. There are no *kesitah* weights found at any archaeological site. Early Greek translations translated *kesitah* as “lamb”. Thus, it may be equal to the value of a lamb or a gold piece shaped like a lamb.<sup>28</sup> In any case, its weight or value is not known.

## The Netzef Weight

The *netzef* (נצף) weight is not mentioned in Tanakh, but it has been found at archaeological sites with its name *n·tz·f* inscribed on it in Paleo-Hebrew (Fig. 1). Its weight is five sixths of a *shekel* or 9.06 grams. It may be a conversion weight equivalent to an Egyptian 9 gram,<sup>29</sup> *qedet*, which may have been used for trade with Egypt.

## The Pim Weight

Two thirds of a *shekel* weight is called a *pim*<sup>30</sup> (פִּים). The word *pim* is only used a single time in Tanakh (1 Sam. 13:21). The verses state “There was no blacksmith in all of Israel ... and all of Israel went down to the Philistines to sharpen their tools ... *pitzerah pim* (פִּצִּירָה פִּים) for their plowshares.” These two words are only used once in Tanakh and their translation was obscure. They were translated as “a file” or “multi-grooved file” which was used to sharpen their tools. In the early 1900s, an actual *pim* weight stone was found at an archaeological site with the word *p·i·m* inscribed on it in Paleo-Hebrew (Fig. 1). The weight of a *pim* is 7.6 grams, or about two thirds of a *shekel*. This weight may be a conversion weight that was

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26. *Mina*: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mina\\_\(unit\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mina_(unit)).

27. *Kesitah*: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kesitah>.

28. Sheep weight: <https://factsanddetails.com/world/cat56/sub404/entry-6155.html>.

29. Weights and measures: [https://www.academia.edu/19048148/2009d\\_Weights\\_and\\_Measures](https://www.academia.edu/19048148/2009d_Weights_and_Measures).

30. *Pim*: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pim\\_weight](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pim_weight).



equivalent to the standard 7.5 gram weight used by the Philistines. The word *pim* may also be a short form of the Hebrew word *Pilishtim*.

This archaeological find clarified the meaning of the biblical verse and resulted in Tanakh translators revising their translation of this verse as “they charged a *pim* (or two thirds of a *shekel*) for sharpening their plowshares.”

## The Beka Weight

The half *shekel* weight is called either a *mahatzis hashekel* (מחצית השקל) or a *beka* (בקע) in Tanakh. It is referred to as the *mahatzis hashekel* three times in Tanakh (Ex. 30:13, Ex. 30:15, Ex. 38:26) and as a *beka* two times (Gen. 24:22; Ex. 38:26). The name *beka* is derived from the root *b·q·‘* (ב·ק·ע) to cleave, to break, i.e., to break a *shekel*. This weight is used to count B’nai Yisrael during the census and is the source of the custom of giving half a *shekel* at Purim time. Archaeologists have found this weight with its name *b·q·‘* inscribed on it in Paleo-Hebrew (Fig. 1).

## Fractional Shekel Weights

There are also fractional *shekel* weights mentioned in Tanakh without a specific name associated with them. There is a third of a *shekel* or *shiloshet* (שלשית) and a quarter of a *shekel* or *reva* (רבע) mentioned in Tanakh (Neh. 10:33, 1 Sam. 9:8). These fractional *shekel* weights have also been found at archaeological sites.

## The Gerah Weight

The smallest weight in Tanakh is the *gerah*<sup>31</sup> (גרה). Twenty *gerah* equals one *shekel*. This is mentioned five times in Tanakh (Ex. 30:13; Lev. 27:25; Num. 3:47; Num. 18:16; Ezek. 45:12). A *gerah* is based on the Akkadian word *gir*<sup>32</sup> which means carob seed. From archaeological evidence, the *gerah* weighs about 0.568 grams, which is estimated to be the weight of 3 carob seeds.<sup>33</sup> *Gerah* weights found at archaeological sites are small and only have hieratic numerals on them. They are found in multiples up to 20 *gerah*.<sup>34</sup>

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31. *Gerah*: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerah>.

32. Weights in the bible: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/weights-measures-and-coins-of-the-biblical-and-talmudic-periods>.

33. *Gerah* Weight: <https://judaism.stackexchange.com/questions/68503/what-is-gerah-and-how-much-is-it>.

34. Weights and measures: [https://www.academia.edu/19048148/2009d\\_Weights\\_and\\_Measures](https://www.academia.edu/19048148/2009d_Weights_and_Measures).



# Ta'amei Hamikra: in Defense of the Continuous Dichotomy

DANIEL LEVENSTEIN

## Introduction

*The people of Jericho did six things: they were rebuked for three of them, and for three of them they were not rebuked. “And these are three for which they were not rebuked ... and they were korkhin al shema.”*

The above is an excerpt from the Mishnah in *Masekhet Pesahim* (55a)<sup>1</sup> which states that there were three practices that the *Anshei Yeriho* had for which they weren't rebuked; that is, although the practices were problematic, they didn't warrant rebuke. One of the practices was that they were “*korkhin al shema*”. One possible interpretation of this unusual expression offered by the *Gemara*<sup>1</sup> is that they didn't pause between “*hayom*” and “*al-levavekha*” at the end of the third *pasuk* of *Shema*.<sup>2</sup>

וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אַנְכִי מְצַוְנֶךָ הַיּוֹם עַל-לִבְבְּךָ

The implication of their rushed reading is that “these words” shall be on your heart today, but not tomorrow. The natural question that follows is what do the *te'amim* have to say about the correct reading of the verse: i.e., when we have a *Tevir*, *Tipha*, *Sof Pasuk* sequence,

1. *Massekhet Pesahim* (56a).

2. *Devarim* 6:6.

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as is the case with this *pasuk*, which one of the *Tevir* and *Tipha* dominates as the pause.<sup>3</sup> The natural tendency seems to be to ascribe dominance to the *Tevir*, (i.e., it is quite common to put a longer pause on the *Tevir* in these cases) but this results in a reading that, although isn't deserving of rebuke, is not praiseworthy either.

This article will provide a brief overview of the laws governing the *Ta'amei Hamikrah* based on Rav Mordechai Breuer's book on the subject.<sup>4</sup> From these rules, it will be clear how the *te'amim* punctuate the verse in question.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, we will bring some empirical evidence that supports the model espoused by Rav Breuer,<sup>6</sup> and we will show how the model can be used to predict the possible existence of a very rare *trop* combination.

## Overview of the *Te'amim*

We start with a somewhat abstract description of the *te'amim*. It may be helpful to the reader to consult Appendix A for a more concrete example of how the *te'amim* are used to divide (or punctuate) a verse.

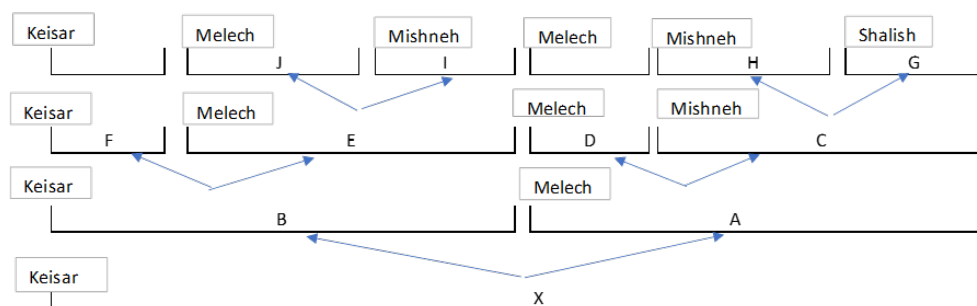
1. The *te'amim* can be divided into two groups: disjunctives and conjunctives. The disjunctives represent a pause. The conjunctives have no punctuational value and connect words to each other.
2. The disjunctives can be further divided into four groups based on their punctuational value.<sup>7</sup> These are, in descending order of "rank", as follows: *Keisarim*, *Melakhim*, *Mishnim* and *Shalishim*.
3. The disjunctives divide *pesukim* into units using the principle of "continuous dichotomy" as follows: Each *pasuk* is divided into two parts (units) by a disjunctive. Each of the two resulting parts is then further subdivided into two parts (units). This continues until we are left with units that have only one or two words.
4. A unit that ends with a disjunctive of a given rank is subdivided into two parts by a disjunctive whose rank is one lower. That is, a unit that ends with a *Melekh* is divided into two parts by a *Mishneh*. A unit that ends with a *Mishneh* is divided into two parts by a *Shalish*. These are the disjunctives by rank:

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3. In this *pasuk*, *metzavekha* has a *Tevir*, *hayom* has a *Tipha* and *al-levavekha* has a *Sof pasuk*.
  4. This paper doesn't discuss *Ta'amei Emet* (the *te'amim* of *Iyov*, *Mishlei* and *Tehilim*). These books have a different system of *te'amim* which in some ways is similar to the *te'amim* of the 21 books, but in some ways the system of *Ta'amei Emet* is quite different. See Appendix B for a description of some of the differences between the two systems.
  5. All references to the book *Ta'amei Hamikrah* are with respect to Rav Breuer's work on the subject. There are other books with similar names, as can be seen in the bibliography at the end of this paper.
  6. As Rav Breuer points out, many of the laws governing the *Te'amim* are contained in the works of William Wickes (see bibliography at the end of this paper).
  7. "Punctuational Value" is what Rav Breuer refers to as "*koah pisuk*." *Sof pasuk* has the highest punctuational value, followed by *Etnahta* (both of which are *Keisarim*) as they represent the largest stops. The other categories are also stops, but they diminish in their stop value as they descend in rank. As shown in the paper, there are other factors that determine the punctuational value of a given *ta'am*.

Table 1<sup>8</sup>

KEISARIM	MELAKHIM	MISHNIM	SHALISHIM
<i>Siluk (Sof Pasuk)</i>	<i>Segol</i>	<i>Pashta</i>	<i>Pazer</i>
<i>Etnahta</i>	<i>Shalsholet</i>	<i>Yetiv</i>	<i>Karnei Pharah</i>
	<i>Zakeph Gadol</i>	<i>Tevir</i>	<i>Telisha Gedola</i>
	<i>Zakeph Katon</i>	<i>Zarka</i>	<i>Garshayim</i>
	<i>Tipha</i>	<i>Revi'a</i> <sup>9</sup>	<i>Geresh (Azlah)</i> <sup>10</sup>
			<i>Munah l'garmeih</i>

The chart below, followed by a detailed description, illustrates how the *te'amim* are used to divide a verse:



We start at the bottom and work our way up. In the above, x represents a segment that ends with a *Keisar*. That is, it represents either the first part of a *pasuk* that ends in an *Etnahta* or the second half of the *pasuk* from immediately after the *Etnahta* until the *Sof Pasuk* (or, it could represent a whole *pasuk* that has no *Etnahta*).

Assuming x has at least 3 words, it is divided into two parts, A and B, by a *Melekh* (i.e., a *ta'am* of 1 rank lower than a *Keisar*). We further assume in this example that A and B both have at least 3 words and are therefore subject to division. “A” ends with a *Melekh* and is divided by a *ta'am* of 1 rank lower, i.e., a *Mishneh*, into D and C. “B” ends with a *Keisar* and is divided by another *Melekh* into E and F.

8. Those unfamiliar with the *trop* symbols should refer to Appendix C (only disjunctives are included, since they are the focus of this paper).

9. This note is commonly called *Revi'i*, but the more correct name is *Revi'a*.

10. When a *Geresh* follows a *Kadma*, it is generally referred to as an *Azlah* (as in *Kadma Ve'Azlah*). In this paper, the terms *Geresh* and *Azlah* are therefore used somewhat interchangeably. Hopefully, this won't cause any confusion.

Assuming E and C both have at least 3 words, C, which ends with a *Mishneh* is divided by a *Shalish* into H and G. E, which ends with a *Melekh*, is divided by a *Mishneh* into J and I. We now assume that all the units such created have no more than two words each.

The following is an example of a *pasuk* with the above structure:<sup>11</sup>



Note that the slash symbol “/” is used in this paper to denote the major division of a unit. It is not to be confused with the *Pasek*, “|” which is part of the overall system of *Ta’amei Hamikra*.<sup>12</sup> Also, hyphenated words count as one word unit for the purpose of assigning *te’amim*.<sup>13</sup>

This is the general approach to dividing a *pasuk*: each *pasuk* is divided into two parts, each of which is potentially divided into two parts, with the process continuing until all the units have only one or two words (such units are called “simple units”).

In the case where a unit ending with a *Shalish* requires division, it is subdivided by another *Shalish* (*tafel*), or, in some instances, the would-be *Shalish* (*tafel*) is replaced with a conjunctive. In these cases, where a *Shalish* (*tafel*) is replaced with a conjunctive, we could end up with a series of conjunctives, notwithstanding the general approach of dividing units until only simple units remain.

Also useful is the concept of “domain.” Each disjunctive governs a unit that is under its domain (to be sure, the unit may contain only one word). The domain of a given *ta’am* extends to the right of the given *ta’am* (necessarily a disjunctive)<sup>14</sup> until we encounter a *ta’am* of equal or higher rank. In the above example, all of x is under the domain of the *Keisar*. “A” is under the direct domain of the first *Melekh* (and the indirect domain of the *Keisar*) and “C” is under the domain of the first *Mishneh*, etc.

Note that *Sof Pasuk* and *Etnahta* have the same rank. This may be surprising, given that the *Etnahta* divides the entire *pasuk* into two parts (in the same way that a *Melekh* divides the domain of a *Keisar*). The main reason for grouping them in the same category is that the *te’amim* in their respective domains behave almost identically. The half of the *pasuk* that ends with a *Sof Pasuk* is divided by *Melakhim/Mishnim/Shalishim* in basically the same way that the half of the *pasuk* that ends with an *Etnahta* is divided by *Melakhim/Mishnim/Shalishim*.<sup>15</sup>

11. *Shemot* 24:3. The reader may wish to refer to Appendix A which explains the parsing of this verse in more detail.

12. See chapter 6 of *Ta’amei Hamikra* for a discussion of the *Pasek*.

13. See chapter 7 of *Ta’amei Hamikra* for the rules governing the *Makeif* (hyphen).

14. Or in some cases, the disjunctive may have transformed into a conjunctive. This is discussed later in this paper.

15. Two small differences between their respective domains are: (1) the disjunctive before *Sof Pasuk* is *Merkha* whereas the disjunctive before *Etnahta* is *Munach* and (2) A *Segol* will not appear in the *Sof Pasuk*’s domain (if the *pasuk* doesn’t contain an *Etnahta*, then this could happen, but it is very rare).

So once we've determined where the *Etnahta* goes, the two units thus created are under the domain of their respective *Keisarim* and are then divided independently of each other.

How do we determine where to place the divisions? This really depends on the type of *pasuk* in question. Rav Breuer uses the concept of complements (or *Mashlimim*).<sup>16</sup> Unit *x* is divided into A and B such that unit B complements, or, in a sense, completes, the idea that is expressed in A. Similarly D complements C, F complements E, H complements G and J complements I. The above chart uses arrows to depict these relationships. This approach is applicable to many *pesukim*, but may not fit all types of *pesukim* that appear in Tanakh.

Note that *x* has two *Melakhim* in its domain. The first *Melekh* divides *x* in its entirety whereas the second *Melekh* divides the unit to the left of the first *Melekh*. We can therefore say that the punctuational value, that is, the impact it has, of the first *Melekh* is greater than that of the one to its left. In general, the above model implies that where there are multiple *Melakhim* under the domain of a given *Keisar*, their punctuational value declines as we move from right to left. The same can be said where there are multiple *Mishnim* in the domain of a given *Melekh*. Multiple *Shalishim* that occur in the domain of a given *Mishneh* are ambiguous in terms of punctuational value.<sup>17</sup>

Example of 3 *Melakhim* (two *Zakeph* notes and one *Tipha*), with the first one dominating (as indicated by the slash):<sup>18</sup>

וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֶחָיו / הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ אִם־מִשּׁוֹל תִּמְשָׁל בָּנוּ

Example of 3 *Mishnim* (one *Revi'a* followed by two *Pashtas*), with the first one dominating (as indicated by the slash):<sup>19</sup>

וְאֵת גְּבִיעִי גְבִיעֵי הַזָּכָר / תָּשִׂים בְּפִי אֶמְתַּחַת הַקֶּטֶן

## Empirical Evidence

One immediate result of the continuous dichotomy is that where multiple *Melakhim* are found in the domain of a given *Keisar*, their punctuational value decreases as we move from right to left. There are scholars that disagree, contending that the punctuational value of

16. For a more complete discussion, see chapter 15 of Rav Breuer's *Ta'amei Hamikra*. There he distinguishes, among other things, between the following cases: (1) The predicate precedes its complements, (2) The predicate follows its complements, and (3) where the predicate is in the middle of its complements. He discusses compound sentences, complex sentences, subordinate clauses and how the *te'amim* deal with them. He also talks about cases where the division doesn't follow the syntactical structure, but rather reflects what he refers to as "*Derekh HaKeriah*". This is discussed briefly towards the end of this paper. Note: this paper is by no means an exhaustive treatment of the subject.

17. When there are two *Shalishim* in the domain of a *Mishneh*, it is unclear if the first *Shalish* is the main stop of the unit ending with the *Mishneh* and the second *Shalish* divides the unit to the left of the first *Shalish*, or, perhaps the second *Shalish* is the main stop of the unit and the first *Shalish* divides the domain to the right of the second *Shalish* (in which case the first *Shalish* is subordinate, or "*tafel*" to the second *Shalish*).

18. *Bereishit* 37:8.

19. *Bereishit* 44:2.

multiple *Melakhim* is independent of their position relative to each other. Indeed, it is not obvious, absent the proposed model, that it should be the case that a first *Melekh* represents a larger pause than a second *Melekh*.<sup>20</sup>

## Pausal Forms

In biblical Hebrew, quite often a special form is used for words that are in a pause position. The pausal form of interest to us is “*lakh*”, i.e., *lekha*<sup>21</sup> is the regular masculine form and *lakh* is the pausal masculine form. As expected, the pausal form is used whenever the word appears with a *Keisar* as its *ta’am*. On the other hand, the pausal form is rarely used for *te’amim* which have a rank that is of *Mishneh* or lower. Now the word in question appears 100 times in Tanakh with *Zakeph* as its *ta’am*.<sup>22</sup> It occurs with *Zakeph* in the pausal form 56 times, and 44 times it takes on the non-pausal form (“context”). So we see that the pausal form of *lekha* is used just over half of the time when *Zakeph* is the *ta’am*. Now if the continuous dichotomy is a reasonable model and the punctuational value of each successive *Melekh* decreases, we would expect, all else being equal, that it would be more likely to see the pausal forms used in conjunction with a first *Zakeph*. This is in fact the case.

Table 2 below shows that of the 56 times the pausal form is used with *Zakeph*, 55 occurrences are on a first *Melekh* and only in one instance is the pausal form with *Zakeph* when it is not the first *Melekh*.<sup>23</sup> Having said that, we also see the non-pausal form is used when *Zakeph* is the first *Melekh* 20 times. These 20 occurrences imply that we cannot infer a causal relationship.

Table 2

ZAKEPH KATON OCCURRENCES	FIRST MELEKH	LATER MELEKH	TOTAL
PAUSAL	55	1	56
NON-PAUSAL	20	24	44
TOTAL	75	25	100

However, it appears from the above table, that being a first *Melekh* is practically a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for *lekha* to be in pausal form when it appears with a *Zakeph*. Therefore, it is somewhat obvious that the form (pausal vs non-pausal) and position

20. See for example: James D. Price, Temple Baptist Seminary, The Syntax of Masoretic Accents in the Hebrew, page 35, the paragraph “Unnatural Binary Restraint” (available online).

21. I.e., “to you”, but the *Lamed* preposition can also mean “for” or “about”.

22. Excluded from the 100 are cases where the word appears as the feminine.

23. I used the www.BaseHaSefer.com search engine to obtain these results. Even with the search engine, there was some mechanical effort on my end. Although I did my best to ensure the results are accurate, they could be, in theory, off a bit. However, even if that were to be the case, it’s extremely unlikely to change the conclusion.

(first *Melekh* vs later *Melekh*) are not independent, as would be predicted by the continuous dichotomy model. However, we will nonetheless perform a statistical test in order to drive the point home, and, to this end, we will use the 2x2 Chi Squared test.<sup>24</sup> For the purpose of this test, we start with the assumption that form and position are independent (the null hypothesis). If that were the case, we would expect the distribution of occurrences to be in line with the “expected” results below (Table 3). Under the assumption of independence, how likely is it for us to observe at least the amount of deviation from the expected results that we actually observed? If the likelihood is sufficiently small, we reject the assumption of independence.

Now, if the form and position were independent, we would expect our results to look something like this:

Table 3

EXPECTED IF INDEPENDENT	FIRST MELEKH	LATER MELEKH	TOTAL
PAUSAL	42	14	56
NON-PAUSAL	33	11	44
TOTAL	75	25	100

The probability of seeing at least the amount of deviation that we actually observed is approximately one in 680 million (the Chi squared statistic is 36.58). The implication is that models which suggest the punctuational value of successive *Zakephs* are equal, and that accordingly there should be no relation between pausal forms and the position of *Zakephs* (i.e., first *Melekh* vs. later *Melekh*), are probably not capturing something that ought to be captured.

The above results beg the question as to why we see 20 occurrences of a *Zakeph* as a first *Melekh* in non-pausal form. Recall our description of the continuous dichotomy: every unit that has three or more words is divided into two parts. This creates a level of granularity that’s very atypical of most punctuational systems. It results in many cases where there is a disjunctive accent even though the text is continuous and doesn’t really necessitate any type of pause. The 20 occurrences generally occur in those types of situations, where there is relatively little or no pause. Furthermore, the punctuational value of the *Zakeph* (or any disjunctive) is relative and depends on the context (the length of the unit that it divides,

24. Most of us are familiar with the well-known Normal Distribution (aka the bell curve). If  $x$  is a random variable with a normal distribution, then  $x$  squared will have what’s known as a Chi Squared Distribution (this isn’t a precise definition, but conveys the basic idea). The 2x2 test uses the Chi squared distribution to determine the probability of seeing at least the amount of deviation from the mean (i.e., expected results) that we have observed. If the probability is sufficiently small, we reject the hypothesis that the two factors are independent. In other words, if our observed results are very unlikely to occur under the assumption that the two factors are independent, then we reject the hypothesis that they are in fact independent.

how many words are to its left, how many to its right, etc.),<sup>25</sup> and is not absolute. The use of the pausal form is ultimately driven by the underlying meaning and whether or not there should be a significant pause. However, if the continuous dichotomy model is valid, we would expect a first *Zakeph* to be more likely, statistically, to have words in pausal form, which, according to our Chi squared test, is indeed the case.

## Cases Where *Tipha* is Dominant

Sometime, a relatively large unit that ends with a *Keisar* is divided into two parts by a *Tipha*. This implies the major division of the unit's domain is relatively close to the end of the unit. Often these are examples of a *pasuk shelo kesidro* (i.e., out of order *pesukim*) where the final *Mashlim* (Complement) relates back to an earlier part of the *pasuk*.

An example of a *pasuk shelo kesidro* is as follows:<sup>26</sup>

אֵלֶיכָהּ נָא וְאַשְׁלֵם אֶת־נִדְרִי אֲשֶׁר־נִדְרְתִּי לָהּ / בְּחֶבְרוֹן

In the above example, the *Tipha* is the only *Melekh* in the unit shown and establishes the unit's major division.<sup>27</sup> Does “*BeHevron*” relate back to “*asher nadarti*” and describe where the *neder* was made, or, does it relate back to the first part of the segment in its entirety and describe where Avshalom is going to supposedly fulfill his vow. The above division implies that Avshalom is claiming to go to Hevron to fulfill his *neder* (i.e., “I shall go to Hevron to fulfill the vow I made (somewhere else). If “*va’ashaleim*” and/or “*et-nidri*” had a *Melekh*, then the implication would be that he made his vow in Hevron, and he is going somewhere else to fulfill it.

Here is an example of a similar division where the final *Mashlim* relates back to the rest of the unit in its entirety:<sup>28</sup>

הוּא יִתְחַטֵּא־בּוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי / יִטְהַר

The meaning of the above *pasuk* is that sprinkling (i.e., purification) is required on both the third and seventh day. If the word “*shelishi*” had a *Melekh*, that would imply that the sprinkling of ashes occurs on the third day and the person becomes purified, without further sprinkling, on the seventh day. The early editions of the Stone Humash had a translation that was consistent with the latter (i.e., the person becomes *tahor* on the seventh day without

25. See Rachel Mashiah, Parallel Realizations of Dichotomy Patterns in Biblical Accentuation, Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress of the international Organization for Masoretic Studies, 1995.

26. *Shmuel* II 15:7.

27. The domain of the *Keisar* in this example actually has two *Melakhim* (shown here is the unit to the left of the first *Melekh*). The point of the example is to illustrate a *pasuk shelo kesidro* and to show how these cases are handled by the *te'amim*. This *pasuk* is discussed in *Massekhet Temurah* (14b, see *Tosafot* there as well) and in *Massekhet Nazir* (4b).

28. *Bamidbar* 19:12.



further action). The current editions correctly translate that purification/sprinkling is required on the two days, i.e., on both days, the third and the seventh.<sup>29</sup>

## The Yeriho Problem

Now that we are somewhat comfortable with the model, we see that the People of Yeriho were not reading in accordance with the *te'amim*.

וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם / עַל-לִבְבְּךָ

This *pasuk*<sup>30</sup> is divided into two parts by a *Melekh* which in this case is a *Tipha*. This means that “*al-levavekha*” is indeed separate from “*hayom*” and relates back to the first part of the *pasuk* in its entirety: “These words that I command you today, should be on your heart.”

In these situations, it’s quite common for the *Ba'al Keriah* to not really stop after the *Tipha*. The reason for this tendency has to do with the musical nature of the *te'amim*. We see in Table 1 above that there are five *Melakhim*. Each of the *Melakhim* has a different function: The *Tipha* is the final *Melekh* that appears in the domains of a *Keisar*, the *Zakeph* is the default non-final *Melekh* (which can also appear as *Zakeph gadol* or *Zakeph* with *metigah* (not shown in the table)<sup>31</sup> depending on the syllable structure of the word and the number of words in its domain). In some cases, *Segol* serves as the first *Melekh* (depending on the distance from the first *Melekh* to the *Keisar*) and in cases where a *Segol* would be appropriate, but the word in question is the first word of the *pasuk*, *Shalshelet* is used. *Tipha* is used as the final *Melekh* since, musically, it leads into the *Sof Pasuk*. Hence, even though it is a disjunctive, and a *Melekh* at that, to a certain extent its tune naturally flows and connects to the *Keisar*. This is so much so that if there is only one other note in the domain of a *Keisar*, by necessity, it will be a *Tipha*.<sup>32</sup>

## Transformations

Since the *te'amim* are essentially musical notes, there are many cases where disjunctives transform into conjunctives and vice versa, as a result of musical considerations. We see from these transformations that when there is tension between musical and syntactical considerations, musical considerations often prevail. Below we discuss several, but not all, types of transformations, as an exhaustive treatment is beyond the scope of this paper.

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29. I’m not sure in which edition/printing this was first corrected, but it was corrected quite a while ago.

30. *Devarim* 6:6.

31. This refers to those situations where there appears to be a *Kadma* and *Zakeph katon* on a given word.

32. There is a fairly rare conjunctive (*Me-aylah*), that looks like a *Tipha*, that could also appear in some of these situations.

## Conjunctives Instead of Disjunctives

*Geresh*<sup>33</sup> (aka *Azlah*) is the typical final *Shalish* and is used in the domain of *Pashta*, *Zarka*, *Tevir* and *Revi'a*.<sup>34</sup> The problem, though, is that it doesn't flow nicely when used with the first three of these *mishnim* unless there is an intervening word with a conjunctive *ta'am*. For example, there is no problem with having a *Geresh* followed by a *Mahpakh-Pashta* combination. However, it is less likely to have a *Geresh* followed immediately by *Pashta* without an intervening *Mahpakh*. In these cases, the *Geresh* transforms into the appropriate conjunctive. So, in the case where we would have a *Kadma ve'Azlah* (aka *Geresh*) *Pashta* sequence, the *Azlah* (aka *Geresh*) transforms into *Mahpakh* (or *Merkha*) and results in *Kadma-Mahpakh-Pashta*.<sup>35</sup>

והניף הכהן | אתם על לֶחֶם הבָּכָרִים / תְּנוּפָה

Somewhat surprisingly, the main stop in the above unit is on the word *bikkurim* which has a conjunctive. As mentioned above, the *Geresh* (aka *Azlah*) transforms into *Mahpakh*, since musically *Geresh* and *Pashta* do not flow nicely. Note that the *ta'am* on *Lehem* is a *Kadma* and not a *Pashta* and there should be essentially no stop between *Lehem* and *bikkurim* (except to distinguish the words). Note that the *Geresh* would have been the dominant stop in this unit and would have dominated the *Pazer*. In its place, however, we have a conjunctive (the *Mahpakh*). Also note that the *Pazer* is what Rav Breuer refers to as a *Shalish Tafel*, in that it divides the domain of a *Shalish* (which in this case transformed into *Mahpakh*). Should the *Ba'al Keriah* pause slightly between *bikkurim* and *tenufah* to recognize the fact that the *Mahpakh* has replaced a disjunctive? I don't know.

## Disjunctives Instead of Conjunctives

On occasion, a conjunctive will transform into a disjunctive. One example of this phenomenon is when a conjunctive, immediately preceding a *Keisar*, transforms into a *Tipha*. In these cases, the *Tipha*, a *Melekh*, has no punctuational value. This tends to happen when one of the words in question is relatively "long" (e.g., contains 3 or more syllables or meets the other criteria for a "long word" as per the definition on page 16 of *Ta'amei Hamikra*).

צִלְלוּ בְּעוֹפֹת / בָּמִים אֲדִירִים

33. Or its *temurah*, *Garshayim*. Certain notes (*Segol/Shalshelet*, *Zakeph Katon* (with or without *Metiga*)/*Zakeph Gadol*, *Pashta/Yetiv*, *Geresh/Garsahyim*, *Pazer/Karnei Pharah*) are *temorot* (they interchange). These pairs contain notes that basically have equivalent functions, and their appearance depends on the size of the domain in question and/or the syllable structure of the word in question (*Ta'amei Hammikra*, chapter 5).

34. The rules relating *Shalishim* are somewhat involved (See chapter 2 of *Ta'amei Hammikra* for a comprehensive discussion). I will add two comments: (1) sometimes the final *Shalish* in the domain of a *Pashta*, *Zarka* or *Tevir* is a *Telisha Gedolah* (*Ta'amei Hamikra*, page 63) and (2) the *Munach LeGarmeh* is often the final *Shalish* in the domain of the *Revi'a*, if the unit being divided is comprised of three (and sometimes four) words.

35. In some situations the transformation doesn't occur (e.g., if there are sufficient syllables on the word with the *Pashta*, *Tevir* or *Zarka*).

In the above example, the *te'amim* could have been *Merkha Tipha Merkha Sof Pasuk*. However, the would-be *Merkha* on *be'mayim* transformed to a *Tipha*. This in turn resulted in *Ka'offeret* taking a *Zakeph* (i.e., a non-final *Melekh*). Finally, because of the length of *Ka'offeret*, the would-be conjunctive (a *munah*) transformed to a *Pashta*. In the above example, the *Pashta* and *Tipha* have no punctuational value, as they have replaced conjunctives. The translation of the *pasuk*, according to the *te'amim*, is that “they sank like lead in mighty waters.” There are commentators who hold that the translation is “the mighty sank like lead in water.” This is a valid interpretation (as there are seventy *panim laTorah*), but it is not the one suggested by the *te'amim* since *Ka'offeret* has a *Melekh* and not a *Mishneh*. It is interesting to note that the ArtScroll siddur, presumably based on the *Mishnah Berurah* (51:17), puts the comma after “*be'mayim*” even though the *Zakeph* dominates.<sup>36</sup>

## Other Transformations

The *Revi'a* is the standard non-final *Mishneh*. Recall, *Mishnim* are used to divide the domain of a *Melekh*. The final *Mishnim* in the domains of *Tipha*, *Zakeph* and *Segol* are *Tevir*, *Pashta* and *Zarka*, respectively. The non-final *Mishneh* is *Revi'a*. However, in those cases where we would have two *Revi'a* notes in close proximity (three or fewer words) without an intervening note of equal rank, the *Revi'a* transforms into *Pashta*. If this would result in a *Pashta* that is close to a *Tevir*, then the would-be *Pashta* (which replaced the *Revi'a*) is transformed into *Tevir*. The same applies to the *Zarka* (i.e., if we would have, post-transformation, a *Pashta* followed by *Zarka*, the *Pashta* transforms into *Zarka*.)

## Unusual Combinations

The *Yetiv* and *Mahpakh* share the same symbol. This usually doesn't cause any confusion as it is usually safe to assume that when the *Yetiv/Mahpakh* symbol is followed by a *Pashta*, that we are dealing with a *Mahpakh*, and otherwise it's a *Yetiv*. However, there are two cases in the *Chumash* where we have a *Yetiv-Pashta* combination that the *Ba'al Keriah* should be aware of (See *Vayikra* 5:2 and *Devarim* 1:4). The *Yetiv* can be identified because it is placed at the very beginning of the word (even a bit in front of it).

Two other notes that share the same symbol are *Pashta* and *Kadma*. Above we saw an example of where we have a *Kadma-Mahpakh-Pashta* combination. We also sometimes have a *Pashta-Mahpakh-Pashta* combination. Therefore, one should take care to make sure the correct note is being reflected in the reading of these combinations. The *Pashta* is identifiable because it always appears at the end of the word. In those cases where the stress is not

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36. See the article by Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein, <https://outorah.org/p/122445>, which quotes the *Mishnah Berurah* in the name of the Pri Megadim. In particular, note (22), “...it is noteworthy that the Pri Megadim is recommending to read these words in accordance with the *drash*'s relationship to the *ta'amim*, not that of *pshat*”. The author also brings Rashi on *Menahot* 53a as a source for the *derash* interpretation. See also, Rav Heschel Shachter, *Lesser Known Laws of Torah Reading*, point 68, where he also states that one should pause after “*bemayim*” (also available online).

on the last syllable, the *Pashta* is doubled up. As a general rule, the sequence in question is indeed a *Kadma-Mahpakh-Pashta*. However, those cases where the word immediately preceding the *Kadma/Pashta* has a *Revi'a* could go either way; in many instances it is a *Kadma*, but sometimes it is actually a *Pashta* that was transformed from a *Revi'a*. That is, the word calls for a non-final *Mishneh* (usually played by a *Revi'a*) but since we do not want two consecutive *Revi'a* notes, the would-be second *Revi'a* transforms into *Pashta*.

Here is an example where we have *Kadma-Mahpakh-Pashta* following a *Revi'a* (see the word *olah*):<sup>37</sup>

וַיִּקְטֹר מִנְשָׁה אֶת־כָּל־הָאֵל הַמְזַבְּחָה עֹלָה הוּא לְרִיח־נִיחֹחַ

And here we have *Pashta-Mahpakh-Pashta*, also following a *Revi'a* (see the word *vayomer*)

וַיִּמָּאֵן אָבִיו // וַיֹּאמֶר / יִדְעֹתִי בְנִי יִדְעֹתִי

In the above verse, the word *vayomer* takes a *Mishneh*. The default non-final *Mishneh* is *Revi'a*. However, since the preceding word has a *Revi'a*, and two consecutive *Revi'a* notes are not permitted, the would-be *Revi'a* on *vayomer* transforms into *Pashta*. Hence, even though *Pashta* is generally a final *Mishneh* in the domain of a given *Zakeph*, in this example, it also serves as a non-final *Mishneh* to avoid two consecutive *Revi'as*.

Thus, the note in question (*Kadma* or *Pashta*), when following a *Revi'a* could indeed go either way (i.e., it could potentially be either a *Kadma* or *Pashta*).

Given that *Pashta* and *Kadma* look alike, are there any *Pashta ve'Azlah* (aka *Geresh*) combinations that we need to be aware of? Can we always assume that the notes in question are indeed *Kadma ve'Azlah* or could the “*Kadma*” actually be a *Pashta*?

Our model doesn't predict the occurrence of such a combination necessarily happens, but it does predict that its occurrence is possible, and the model can be used to derive the necessary conditions under which such a combination could occur.

The following analysis shows the circumstances where such a combination could occur: Assume we have *Pashta* followed by *Geresh* (*Azlah*).

- Then the *Geresh*, a *Shalish*, is dividing a unit that's governed by some other *Mishneh* to its left (i.e., to the left of the *Geresh*).
  - This would imply that the assumed *Pashta* is followed by some other *Mishneh*.
  - This means that the *Pashta* in question is a non-final *Mishneh*.
- But *Pashta* acts as non-final *Mishneh* when it replaces a *Revi'a* that has transformed to *Pashta* because it is in close proximity to a *Revi'a* to its right. This implies there is a third *Mishneh*, namely a *Revi'a* to the right of the *Pashta* in question.
- Hence, the unit under consideration (that is governed by a *Melekh*) has at least 3 *Mishnim*.
- Furthermore, the domain of the *Geresh* contains only one word in this case, since it is immediately preceded by a *Pashta* (a note of higher rank).

37. Vayikrah 8:21.

- In these cases, *Geresh* appears only when the word in question is *Mil'el*<sup>38</sup> (if the word is not *Mil'el*, a *Garshayim* would appear).

So it follows, the unusual combination of *Pashta* followed by *Geresh* could occur when we have (at least) three *mishnim* in the domain of a *Melekh* and the word with the *Geresh* is *mil'el*.

Having hypothesized the existence of such a combination (some 15 years ago), I consulted the section of Rav Breuer's *Ta'amei Hamikra* where he gives examples of *pesukim* with multiple *mishnim* in the domain of a *Melekh* hoping to find such a combination. Unfortunately, there were some close calls, but there were no cases where all the criteria were met.<sup>39</sup>

However, there appear to be 3 cases in where we have *Pashta* followed by *Geresh*:

וּתְבַקֵּעַ הָעִיר וְכָל-אֲנָשֵׁי הַמְּלָחָמָה הַלְּיָלָה דָּרָד שְׁעָר | בֵּין הַחֲמֹתִים אֲשֶׁר עַל-גֵּן הַמֶּלֶךְ  
בַּיּוֹם רָדְתָּ שְׂאוֹלָה הָאֲבִלְתִּי בְּסִתִּי עָלִיו אֶת-תְּהוֹם...

In these two examples,<sup>40,41</sup> it is clear that we have a *Pashta* since it is doubled up. However, in the Koren edition, it is interesting that we don't find that the *Pashtas* are doubled up (they show what should be the first of the two *Pashtas*) and they actually look like *Kadma ve'Azlah* combinations.<sup>42</sup>

וְאֶעֱיֶדָה בָּהֶם וְאֶמְרָה אֲלֵיהֶם מִדּוּעַ אַתֶּם לֵנִים נֶגֶד הַחוֹמָה

In this example,<sup>43</sup> the word with the *Pashta* has the stress on the last syllable so the *Pashta* is not doubled up and could possibly be confused with a *Kadma* (although a *Kadma* would appear on top of the "heh" and would not be preceded by a *Mahpakh*). In this example, Koren correctly places the ta'am at the end of the word.

## Derekh Hakeriah

One issue that this paper has only slightly alluded to is how to divide a *pasuk*. Once we've determined how the *pasuk* is to be divided, the placing of the *te'amim* becomes a fairly mechanical exercise. The big question is where to divide the *pasuk* to begin with. It would be nice if the *te'amim* always followed the syntax of the *pasuk*, but this is not always the case. Rather, there is a certain tension between assigning divisions based on syntax vs. considerations based on the flow of the reading. The latter would result in divisions that are generally more balanced (i.e., of equal length) whereas the former leads to divisions that could be very uneven.

38. If a multi-syllable word is not accented on the last syllable, then it is generally referred to as *Mil'el*.

39. Which is understandable given how rare this combination actually is.

40. *Melakhim* II 25:4.

41. *Yehezkel* 31:15.

42. These first two examples, and the mistake in the Koren edition, were brought to my attention by Ari Brodsky. I did a search in the [www.BaseHaSefer.com](http://www.BaseHaSefer.com) database and confirmed these are the only examples. When I first investigated this, I didn't have access to a search engine that could search *te'amim*.

43. *Nehemiah* 13:21.

Rav Breuer refers to divisions that aren't based on syntax as "*derekh hakeriah*" and modern academics refer to such an approach as a prosodic basis.<sup>44</sup>

One very common use of *derekh hakeriah* relates to introductory phrases. If divisions were based on syntactical considerations alone, the main pause would typically be found after the introductory phrase (and would be akin to a colon). However, in order to deemphasize the introduction, it (the introduction) is ignored, to a certain degree when determining the principal division and is subordinated to one of the units, almost like an afterthought.<sup>45</sup>

For example, in the verse below,<sup>46</sup> syntactical considerations would put the main stop after the third word "*eilai*."

Instead, the *te'amim* divide the quote without regard to the introductory words and then essentially append the introduction to the first part of the quote. Wickes and Rav Breuer talk about this at length.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵלַי רַב-לֵךְ / אֶל-תּוֹסֵף דִּבֶּר אֵלַי עוֹד בְּדִבְרֵי הַזֶּה

There are many other cases where the *te'amim* seem to be governed by prosodic considerations and not semantic/syntactic considerations. In an interesting paper by Matthew Phillip Monger,<sup>47</sup> which was submitted as his Master's thesis, he proposes that in cases where the meaning of a verse is otherwise clear, it may be subject to division based on prosodic considerations. But in those cases where the meaning is ambiguous (as in the case concerning *Anshei Yeriho* and the other examples given earlier with similar structures), the *te'amim* are placed in a way to ensure proper understanding of the verse in question. I think his proposal has merit.

## Recursion

I would be remiss if I didn't mention how the concept of recursion manifests itself on two different levels with respect to the *Te'amim*. First, we saw the process for assigning the *Maphsikim* is recursive: a unit that ends with a disjunctive is divided by a disjunctive of one rank lower. This creates two units, which are then subject to the same process. This is the essence of recursion, whereby a problem is continually simplified into essentially a simpler version of the same problem<sup>48</sup> until we arrive at a base case which is so simple, essentially nothing further needs to be done. The other way recursion is manifested is in how a given *pasuk* is divided to begin with into units (this precedes the assigning of actual *te'amim*). For example, a very common structure involves a *pasuk* that begins with its predicate and is followed by a series of, say *n*, *Mashlimim* (complements). Where do we put the main division?

44. See B. Elan Dresher, *The Prosodic Basis of Tiberian Hebrew System of Accents*, Language 70, 1-52, 1994.

45. The same idea occurs on a regular basis with the word "*leimor*".

46. *Devarim* 3:26.

47. Matthew Phillip Monger, *Accents, Punctuation or Cantillation Marks? A Study of the Linguistic Basis of the Te'amim*, June 2012, Master's Thesis, University of Oslo.

48. See Godel *Escher and Bach* (chapter V).

Typically, it would be before the final *Mashlim*. This leaves us with a unit that now begins with a predicate and is followed by n-1 *Mashlimim*. Where do we put the main division of this unit? This is the same problem but instead of n *Mashlimim* we now have n-1 *Mashlimim* and this unit is again divided before its final *Mashlim*. This again is a recursive process.

## Conclusion

We see that the continuous dichotomy model, espoused by William Wickes and later by Rav Mordechai Breuer, has predictive value. Furthermore, the *te'amim* are a useful tool in understanding the simple meaning of many verses.

## Bibliography

This paper relies mainly on Rav Mordechai Breuer's book:

- *Ta'amei Hamikra BeKhaf-Alef Sefarim Uvesifrei Emet*, Horev Publishing, printed in 1989.

Other works which may have influenced this paper are:

- *Ta'amei Kaf Aleph Sefarim*, by William Wickes, New York 1970 (available online)
- *Mavo LaMasoret HaTavranit*, Israel Yeivin, Jerusalem 1972 (*tav shin lamed beit*)
- *Ta'amei Hamikra*, J. Weinfeld, Jerusalem (*tav shin lamed beit*)
- *Chanting the Hebrew Bible*, Student Edition, Joshua R. Jacobson, Philadelphia, 2005<sup>49</sup>
- *The Syntax of Masoretic Accents in the Hebrew Bible* (1990), James D. Price, Temple Baptist Seminary

## Appendix A

This appendix illustrates the continuous dichotomy process with a specific example.

The quote below<sup>50</sup> ends with a *Keisar*. Note this is the second half of a *pasuk* that was divided by an *Etnahta*. For the purpose of this example, we are only concerned with this half of the *pasuk*. We need to determine two things: (i) where is the main stop within this unit, and (ii) which *ta'am* to use to divide it into two parts. Intuitively, it makes sense to put the major stop on the word *vayomeru*, in order to separate the introductory phrase (The whole nation answered in one voice and said) from the quote (all the words that *Hashem* spoke, we shall do).<sup>51</sup> Now since this unit ends with a *Keisar*, it appoints a disjunctive of one rank lower, (i.e. a *Melekh*) to divide it into two parts. The *Melekh* in this case is a *Zakeph katon* which appears on the word *vayomeru*.

וַיַּעַן כָּל־הָעָם קוֹל אֶחָד וַיֹּאמְרוּ / כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה

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49. See also: *Chanting the Hebrew Bible: The Complete Guide to the Art of Cantillation* by the same author.

50. *Shemot* 24:3.

51. As discussed in the section on *Derekh Hakeriah* in this paper, it is not always the case that the main stop is placed after the introductory phrase.



This creates two sub-units:

Unit A:

וַיֵּעַן כָּל־הָעָם קוֹל אֶחָד וַיֹּאמְרוּ

and Unit B:

כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה

In general, Rav Breuer explains that units are divided such that one unit answers a question raised by the other unit. In this case, unit A on its own, raises the question as to what did the people answer in one voice? Unit B provides the answer, namely, that they would do all the Hashem says. In this sense, B is the complement of A.

Each of the subunits shown above can be further subdivided into two parts. We'll start with unit A:

וַיֵּעַן כָּל־הָעָם קוֹל אֶחָד וַיֹּאמְרוּ

Since the unit above ends with a *Melekh*, it is subdivided with a *ta'am* of one rank lower, i.e., a *Mishneh*.

The two possible places to divide the above unit are either: The people answered – in one voice and said, or, The people answered in one voice – and said.

It is quite clear that the second option reads better. That being the case, the *Zakeph katon* (a *Melekh*) appoints a *Mishneh* (in this case a *Pashta*) and it is placed on the word *ehad*:

וַיֵּעַן כָּל־הָעָם קוֹל אֶחָד / וַיֹּאמְרוּ

This again creates two units:

Unit C:

וַיֵּעַן כָּל־הָעָם קוֹל אֶחָד

and Unit D:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ

Unit D has only one word and cannot be further divided.

Unit C ends with a *Mishneh*, and appoints a *Shalish* to divide the unit as shown below:

וַיֵּעַן כָּל־הָעָם / קוֹל אֶחָד

We are now done with the unit that we labelled as A.



Now we'll go back to the part of the *pasuk* that we labelled unit B:

כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר ה' / נַעֲשֶׂה

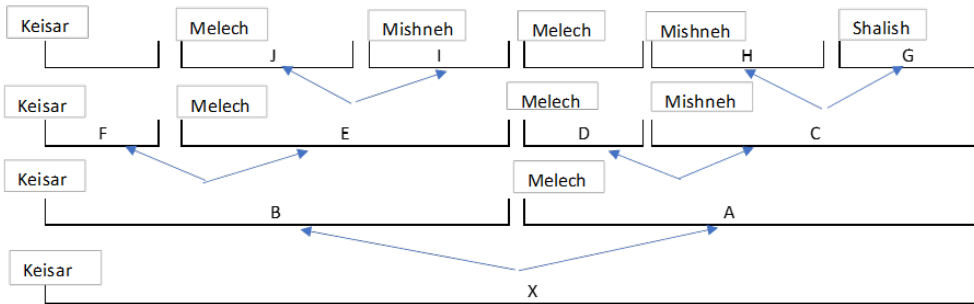
Since the above unit ends with a *Keisar*, it is divided into two parts with a *Melekh* (the *Tipha*).

Now we are left with the right part of the above unit. The unit ends with a *Melekh* and therefore appoints a *Mishneh*, in this case *Tevir*, as its divider.

כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים / אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר ה'

Note that hyphenated words count as one word unit for the purpose of this exercise. That being the case, the verse has now been divided into “simple” units, which contain either one or two words (albeit some words are hyphenated).

The chart in the paper is reproduced below to illustrate the above process:



## Appendix B: *Ta'amei Emet* (*Iyov*, *Mishlei* and *Tehilim*)

The following are some of the differences between *Ta'amei Emet* and *Ta'amei Kaf Aleph Sefarim*.

- The *Ta'amei Emet* system has only one *Keisar*, namely the *Siluk*.
- The *Etnahta* is an ordinary *Melekh*, and the *Oleh Veyored* is a *Melekh* that has greater punctuational value than the *Etnahta*.
- In addition to the *Keisarim*, *Melakhim*, *Mishnim* and *Shalishim* categories, there is another category of *te'amim* that have no rank and are known as “*te'amim* that appear in the domain to the left of the *Etnahta*”.
- Some notes in *Ta'amei Emet* have multiple roles. For example, *Pazer* functions at times as a *Shalish* and at other times as a *Melekh*. The same *Revi'a* symbol represents the *Revi'a Gadol*, *Revi'a Katan* (both are *Mishnim*), and *Revi'a* (a *Melekh*). There are other examples of this type of behaviour, which makes the *Ta'amei Emet* somewhat more challenging to interpret.

Appendix C: The Disjunctives, by Rank

SHALISHIM	MISHNIM	MELAKHIM	KEISARIM
תְּלִישָׁא גְדוּלָה	רְבִיעַ	סְגוּלָה	סוּף פְּסוּק
גְּרִישׁ	פְּשֻטָא	שְׁלִשְׁלַת	אַתְנַחְתָּא
גְּרִישִׁים	יְתִיב	זְקוּף-גְּדוּל	
פְּזִיר	זְרְקָא	זְקוּף-קִטּוֹן	
קֶרְנֵי פְּרָה	תְּבִיר	טְפִחָא	
מִנַּח <sup>52</sup>			

52. This is actually a *Munah Legarmeih*.

# Iyov's Search for Understanding

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MOLLY MORRIS

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**THE BOOKS OF** Torah and *Nevi'im* tell the story of the Jewish people, our relationship with G-d and with the world. Much of *Ketuvim* does the same, but the book of *Iyov* deviates dramatically. This book is about one person only, but delves into the universal search for understanding the dynamics of suffering and justice. Through a dialogue between Iyov, his friends, and G-d, Iyov struggles to reconcile what he thinks to be true with what he's experiencing. His ability to finally make peace with his limited understanding and deepen his relationship with G-d, is a lesson for all time, for all of humanity.<sup>1</sup>

## Who is Iyov?

The book of *Iyov* is distinct from all other books in Tanakh. The entire book is a three-way dialogue: between Iyov and his friends, Iyov and G-d, and G-d and Iyov's friends. But what differentiates it most from other books, is what we do not know about the book or its protagonist.

We don't know if the book is a narrative of events or a *mashal*. Malbim suggests, in his commentary on *Bava Bathra 14b*, that the book was written by Moshe Rabbeinu as a consolation to the slaves under the suppression of the Mitzrim. In that case, it acts as a parable to provide some context to the suffering of good people.

We also don't know if, in fact, Iyov was a real person, who exactly he was. When did he live? Was he Jewish or Egyptian? Rambam posits that ultimately those details are unimportant:

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1. This essay is a revised compilation of a series of posts originally published on <https://www.929.org.il/lang/en/author/46656>.

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the point of the book of Iyov is to provide a metaphor for some fundamental aspects of our faith, most specifically our understanding of good and evil and how they are or aren't respectively rewarded or punished.

Ultimately, our understanding of Iyov has significant gaps. And perhaps that, too, is the point of the book, as we learn of Iyov's struggle to synthesize faith with knowledge.

For my exposition on Iyov's search for understanding, I have relied heavily on the ArtScroll translation of the text, and the commentary of Rabbi Shimon Schwab,<sup>2</sup> as adapted by his son, Rabbi Moshe Schwab.

## Iyov vs. Dovid haMelekh

In the first of Iyov's debates with his friends, Eliphaz puts forward the argument that all humans have some level of sin attributed to them and deserve whatever punishment is meted out. It's not evident that Iyov is on board with this idea of him being guilty of some sin, but even if he is, he supposes it must be a sin of very little significance since he himself is not even aware of it. As is often the case with the internalization of tragedy or loss, Iyov's response to his friend in this episode is to shift from a state of despair to the exclusion of all else, to despair mixed with anger.

In Iyov 7:11, Iyov makes it clear that he's not going down without a fight. "On my part, I will not speak with restraint; I will give voice to the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul", he says. Iyov then goes on to question the proportionality of his suffering to some negligible sin: "What is man that You exalt him, that You turn your thoughts toward him?" Iyov is expressing his opinion that since there is no parity between humans and G-d, it is inexplicable that G-d is overly concerned about the matters of humans.

The language used by Iyov in these passages is similar to the language used by Dovid haMelekh: "What is the [frail] man that You should remember him, and the mortal man that You should be mindful of him (*Tehillim* 8:5)?" Dovid answers his own question by expressing his awe at the fact that G-d made man just "a little less than divine and adorned him with glory" and acknowledged man's role in the world as "master over Your handiwork." For Dovid, there is something close to parity that makes man innately worthy of G-d's constant attention. But while Dovid, who in his own right has endured tremendous suffering, sees G-d's continued involvement as a blessing, Iyov sees it as a curse.

R. Schwab comments on the uniqueness of man's relationship with G-d saying "Man is unique; he has been given greatness by G-d, the likes of which He did not give to any other creature. He has the freedom of will to oppose G-d (Schwab, p. 87)." The irony in Iyov's challenge to G-d is that his expressions of anger and confusion actually serve to demonstrate the G-d-given "close to divine" trait that separates humanity from all other creations - the ability to leverage free will to question and argue with G-d.

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2. Schwab, Shimon, and Moshe Schwab. *Rav Schwab on Iyov: The Teachings of Rabbi Shimon Schwab, Zatsal, on The Book of Job*. Mesorah, 2005. (Author's note: subsequent citations from this book appear in text, including relevant page numbers.)

## **The Metaphor of Reeds**

In Chapter 8, Bildad, Iyov's friend who has come to comfort Iyov after he loses his family, health and wealth, begins to discuss the issues of sin and judgment with Iyov by chastising him for his "avalanche of words" against G-d (8:2). He then gets to the heart of the matter. While previously, Iyov's friend Eliphaz spoke of the general sinfulness of man collectively, Bildad points to Iyov's personal sin: failing to educate his children properly.

At Iyov's zenith of wealth and good fortune, his children lived a life of material excess and entitlement. So concerned was Iyov about his children's life of decadence and the risk that it would lead them to sin, that every day he would give a sin-offering on behalf of each of them (1:5). Iyov was worried about divine judgment for his children, but rather than correct their ways, he continuously excused them and, instead, acted on some misguided belief that he could buy their clemency with offerings. In the end, however, G-d euphemistically "sent them (Iyov's children) away" (8:4).

Bildad explains Iyov's sin with an analogy about the application of natural law to reeds growing in a marsh (8:11-12). As long as the plant remains in water, it appears that it will thrive indefinitely. But remove a reed from water, and it will shrivel and die very quickly. According to Malbim on this verse, the water is a metaphor for the hedonistic ways of Iyov's children. That was their only source of life, to the exclusion of any spirituality or connection to G-d. Once Iyov's wealth was gone, there was nothing left to sustain his children, and so they were euphemistically "sent away". Their demise, according to this explanation, was not so much a punishment of the children as the acting out of G-d's natural law – there was simply not enough in their lifestyle to sustain them, but Iyov excusing their lifestyle warranted direct punishment.

To help Iyov find answers to his burning questions about divine judgment, Bildad implores him to look at earlier generations (8:8). In fact, Bildad draws from Iyov's own rebuttal to Eliphaz concerning the fleeting and insignificant life of man. "We are but yesterday's creatures, unable to comprehend; our lives are a shadow upon the earth," says Bildad (8:9). Our lives are so fleeting that all we see is the flourishing reed and never see the withered, dried-up plant.

Ramban comments on Bildad's idea and explains that, although in our own short lives we may see evildoers flourishing, we don't see the long-term consequences of their actions. But if we internalize the experiences of our ancestors collectively, we can begin to see the evidence of judgment and understand that the apparent well-being of the wicked will eventually come to an end, much as a reed dies with nothing substantive to sustain it.

## **Head and Heart**

When Iyov declares his intention to make himself heard before G-d and pleads for the opportunity to make his case, he does so with the full disclaimer that his challenge is not made with the intention of denigrating G-d but rather within the context of his trust in G-d and need to understand.

“Were He to kill me, I would still yearn for him, but I will justify my ways to His face...for no hypocrite will come before him”, declares Iyov (13:15-16). Rashi comments that Iyov is counting on G-d viewing his apparent belligerence in arguing his case within that context of unconditional devotion. And if that is the case, then to not press for a deeper understanding of G-d’s ways would be tantamount to hypocrisy for Iyov.

R. Schwab comments on Iyov’s need for understanding, suggesting that in Iyov’s mind, G-d gave man a brain in order to understand Him to the extent humanly possible. At the same time that G-d has sent such severe suffering Iyov’s way, so too did He give Iyov the brains to understand why he is suffering. It is now incumbent on Iyov to do everything in his power to reach that understanding. For Iyov, argues R. Schwab, “the service of G-d, and contact with Him, could be practised on the highest level only with the mind” (Schwab, p. 170).

R. Schwab continues his commentary on Chapter 13 by contrasting Iyov’s methodology of service with that of Avraham, who was confronted with a commandment from G-d to sacrifice his son Yitzhak: a commandment that was diametrically opposed to what Avraham already knew to be true (Schwab, p. 170). G-d had promised Avraham that the future Jewish nation would come from Yitzhak (Genesis 21:12), so to now wholeheartedly follow the word of G-d in the sacrifice of his son could only be accomplished by employing a faith so strong that it would temporarily subjugate Avraham’s knowledge.

Iyov’s service of G-d, according to R. Schwab, was knowledge-based, and therefore limited. That is not to say that knowledge isn’t vital in how we conduct ourselves. We value knowledge and learning so much that we learn the same texts, over and over again, in our endeavour to continually deepen our understanding of G-d. But what Avraham had, that Iyov did not, was the ability to allow his faith to take over when his knowledge-based understanding was exhausted. Avraham understood that G-d’s granting of a mind to understand Him as much as humanly possible has a human limit, but when that limit is reached, we can pivot to our limitless capacity for trusting G-d.

## **Stop the Rush to Judgement**

By Chapter 21, Iyov’s friends have each spoken twice, and it’s evident that Iyov is frustrated with his friends’ expositions on evil. Each, in their own way, has spoken about the inevitable punishment and suffering of the wicked, and their belief that Iyov is likewise being punished for some unknown evil.

We have already learned that Iyov is a knowledge-seeker, wanting to understand the world and G-d’s ways, with his mind, not his heart. Perhaps the arguments made by Iyov’s friends bear out their attempt to speak to his mind, but Iyov is not comforted by their approach. Despite their best efforts, Iyov has become frustrated by the hollowness of their arguments. If you really want to comfort me, says Iyov, stop talking altogether and start listening (21:2), for I have every right to be losing my patience.

The first thing that Iyov has lost patience with is his friends’ rush to judgement and their apparent assumption that all Iyov wants is an answer to his own suffering. So, Iyov implores

them to step back from their simplistic answers about the wicked always getting their just punishment, including Iyov himself, and really listen to what he has to say.

This is not about himself, argues Iyov. There is a much bigger philosophical question.

Iyov finds no comfort in the idea that ultimately the wicked are always punished. It is objectively evident to him that most often the wicked live very comfortable lives, growing old, powerful, wealthy, and seeing their children and grandchildren flourish. How, wonders Iyov, can justice be served if there are no witnesses to the punishment of evil? Where is the justice for those who have been wronged? And the fact that he can find little evidence of evil being punished and righteousness rewarded, leaves Iyov far more than merely frustrated. It moves him to “fearful trembling” (21:6). For what is particularly frightening to Iyov, suggests Rabbi Moshe Eisemann,<sup>3</sup> is the notion that without evidence of justice in this world, “everyone’s fortune is in the grip of blind happenstance, which robs him (Iyov) of his equanimity.” And that possibility, far more than the question of his personal suffering, is what Iyov needs G-d’s answer to.

What has been absent in the friends’ speeches, so far, is any trace of empathy for Iyov. The generally accepted approach to comforting a friend in emotional and/or physical pain with acknowledgement of the pain and empathy for the sufferer has been lost on these friends. In their rush to judgment and collective need to proselytize Iyov, they have failed to provide comfort; so Iyov quite pointedly reminds them to listen first and judge later (if at all).

## Bildad’s Reconsidered Position

In chapter 25, Iyov’s friend, Bildad, returns for his third and final speech. In only six verses, we understand that Bildad is retreating from his previous intransigent and perhaps somewhat self-righteous position about the predictability of the world. Where previously Bildad was entrenched in the position that the wicked are punished and the righteous rewarded, and suffering is indicative of the presence of sin, he now seems willing to concede that G-d’s hand of justice is not so black-and-white. “Dominion and terror are with Him,” acknowledges Bildad (25:2), with dominion being evident in the orderliness of G-d’s rule but impacted by the terror generated by seemingly (at least to man) random occurrences of suffering.

Bildad then speaks words that have been forever imprinted in the hearts of Jews, and are recited throughout our liturgy, embedded in the Amidah prayer. “*Oseh shalom bimromav* – He makes peace in His heights” (25:2). R. Schwab understands the “*oseh shalom*” statement to reflect Bildad’s reconciling of dominion and terror (Schwab, p. 279). We may not understand how two conflicting forces of wickedness and righteousness coexist, nor do we comprehend the sometimes seemingly disorderly application of justice; but G-d rules over all, and only He knows how it all fits together.

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3. R. Moshe Eisemann, *Iyov: The Book of Job: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources*. Mesorah Publications, 1994, p. 203.

The prophet Isaiah made a similar statement: “I (G-d) form light and create darkness, make peace and create evil – *Oseh shalom u’voreh ra* (Isaiah 45:7).” Isaiah was a contemporary of Zoroaster, a 6<sup>th</sup>-century Persian religious leader (and founder of Zoroastrianism) who posited that the world is comprised of two forces, a good god – a god of light; and a bad god – a god of darkness. R. Schwab comments that Isaiah’s pronouncement was effectively a rebuke of Zoroaster, affirming that, although two gods were better than the hundreds of gods that many worshipped at the time, he still hadn’t got it quite right. In fact, says Isaiah, there is only one G-d, who created and rules over light and darkness, good and bad, pleasure and suffering. Our one G-d has made all of these conflicting forces co-exist in the world (R. Schwab, p. 280).

When we recite “*Oseh shalom bimromov*,” we acknowledge that G-d has made peace integral in the natural world and ask, “*Hu ya’aseh shalom* – may He also make peace, *aleinu v’al kol Yisrael* – among His people.” Concludes R. Schwab, “When logical and intelligent people among us, who sincerely seek the truth, argue with each other and come to completely different conclusions – and sometimes both are right – we pray that G-d makes peace among us so that we may live in peace and harmony, despite our differences” (Schwab, p. 280).

Bildad, in his final speech, has made peace with a disorderly world, which has enabled him to make peace with Iyov’s viewpoint.

## Looking through Rose-Tinted Glasses

Memory is a tricky thing. Our minds hold a combination of strong, concrete memories, fleeting memories, and sometimes false memories. Often our current circumstances colour our memories of the past. As the story of Iyov enters its conclusion in Chapter 29, Iyov recounts his previous life with five distinct claims.

Iyov remembers a life characterized by ease and success. First, he speaks of his spiritual success, remembering a time when G-d watched over him and shone His light upon him; when G-d’s mysteries permeated his bones. Then, Iyov reflects on his past physical comfort, when he metaphorically “bathed in cream and the rocks gushed oil” (29:6) for his benefit. Third, Iyov recounts the extreme honour bestowed on him, remembering how everyone showered him with respect and was silenced by the power of his words. From there, Iyov moves on to recollect his position as an icon of social justice, tending to all the needy and clothing himself in righteousness. And finally, Iyov describes how he believed himself infallible and that his success would go on forever.

Was Iyov being pompous in his self-assessment, or was he merely romanticizing his own past, which was decidedly rosier than his present reality? We know, from the beginning of this story, that not everything was perfect in Iyov’s life, and he worried deeply about his own children’s activities, bringing daily sacrifices to atone for their behaviour. So, he must have felt some vulnerability even while in his zenith.

Whether or not Iyov was exaggerating his own greatness, psychology teaches that there is a reason and purpose for romanticized memories. Referred to as “rosy retrospection” and



“mood repair”.<sup>4</sup> In a 2021 New York Times article,<sup>3</sup> Dr. Felipe Brigard, a professor of psychology and neuroscience at Duke University, is quoted as saying, “Memory isn’t just there to help us remember where the car is parked. It also plays other roles, and one of them is to help us feel better.” According to Dr. Daniel Schacter of Harvard University (as quoted in the same article), “Subconsciously embellishing our memories or leaving out the bits we’d rather not dwell on is an adaptive way to regulate emotion in the present and enhance optimism about the future.”

During Iyov’s soliloquy, he is in great pain. He follows these recollections with another speech comparing his current situation to how he saw himself previously. The mysteries of memory may well serve as the mood-repair tool Iyov needs to move forward with hope for a rosy resolution of his story.

## Elihu’s Remonstrations

With the first three of Iyov’s friends having exited the debate about G-d’s justice, Elihu, who seems to have been waiting patiently in the wings, now comes forward with his arguments. Elihu has grown impatient with Iyov’s line of reasoning and effectively tells him to get off his high horse.

“Were you to have transgressed, how would you have affected G-d? Were you to have been righteous, how would you have benefited Him?” (35:6-7), asks Elihu. And then he gets to his main point: “Your wickedness can only affect another human being, your righteousness another man” (35:8). Elihu’s point is not that G-d isn’t paying attention or listening to the prayers from this world. In fact, as Elihu continues laying out his thesis, he says exactly the opposite: “Surely it is false that G-d does not listen” (35:13). But there’s one qualification – G-d only answers those deserving of His ear (which is not to say that our unanswered prayers necessarily point to flaws in our own character – there may well have been an answer that we ourselves didn’t hear).

R. Schwab and other commentators point out that throughout Iyov’s arguments, he focuses solely on his complaint about his personal situation and the apparent absence of justice. He talks only of himself and his right to justice. What’s been lacking in Iyov’s approach is an actual plea to G-d to help him be deserving of an answered prayer. So convinced was Iyov that he had done nothing wrong, says R. Schwab, that for Iyov, asking for help was tantamount to an admission of guilt (Schwab, p. 368). Prayer presumes a necessary level of humility on the part of the petitioner, and that is a trait that has been patently missing from any of Iyov’s speeches.

Regarding the issue of man’s behaviour impacting G-d, the Ramban offered some commentary on Deuteronomy 22:6, in which he specifically referred to this chapter of Iyov. G-d gave us commandments to follow, not because He benefits from our actions, but solely because

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4. Charlotte Lieberman, “Why We Romanticize the Past.” *The New York Times*, 2 Apr. 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/02/smarter-living/why-we-romanticize-the-past.html>.

the performance of commandments serves to elevate mankind. And if humankind work against that purpose without redressing their wrongs, then no amount of prayer will help. Not because we've offended G-d in some way, but because we have frustrated our very purpose for being.

R. Schwab, in his commentary on Chapter 35, brings an idea reminiscent of the butterfly effect. G-d created the world to be self-sustaining, not only in nature but also in morality and holiness. When one behaves badly, it adds to the sum total of wickedness in the world and, conversely, when one performs an act of righteousness, it increases the balance of holiness in the world (Schwab, p. 364).

## Iyov Finds Peace

After Iyov's friends have concluded their arguments about Iyov's suffering being a response to his wrongdoing, G-d finally reveals Himself to Iyov, answering the request for a dialogue that Iyov has been pleading for throughout this book. In the final chapter of this story, Iyov voices his new revelations about G-d's justice and is rewarded with the return of his material wealth and comfort. What changed in the interval between G-d taking everything away from Iyov and now reinstating it?

Iyov begins his response to G-d by stating that he never doubted G-d's providence – that his challenging of G-d was for the purpose of gaining an intellectual understanding of what his heart already knew. Now Iyov declares, "I can understand nothing. It is beyond me. I shall never know." (42:3) Iyov is not wrong to seek out a knowledge-based relationship with G-d. There is no hypocrisy in Iyov wanting more than an emotional attachment. In fact, given his nature, it might well have been hypocritical for him to deny himself the search for answers. What has changed for Iyov is that he can now acknowledge and accept that an absence of answers does not invalidate what he knows emotionally. He has come to a level of spirituality in which, as Rabbi Moshe Eisemann puts it, he could "enter into a relationship with G-d in which loving, unquestioning acceptance is a viable option."<sup>5</sup>

The final verses of this book also reveal one more significant change in Iyov and illustrate a crucial aspect of how we understand G-d's management of our world. G-d addresses Iyov's friend Eliphaz, as a representative of the delegation of friends who engaged in this debate, and rebukes him. G-d's criticism is that these friends took it upon themselves to try to explain G-d's orders of justice, and, in doing so, maligned Iyov's character. G-d's remedy for this is not to deal directly with the friends, but instead to direct them to ask Iyov to petition on their behalf. There is a double purpose to this approach. The friends need to repair their relationship with Iyov, and in order for Iyov to pray for their forgiveness he, in turn, needs to forgive his friends.

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5. R. Eisemann, *Iyov: The Book of Job: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources*. Mesorah Publications, 1994, p. 364.

Once these three critical things have occurred – Iyov making peace with less than total understanding, human-to-human forgiveness, and Iyov moving from egocentricity to altruism – Iyov's test is evidently completed and Iyov can go on to live out his life comfortably, and with the knowledge that his relationship with G-d is based on understanding some things, not understanding everything, and always trusting his heart.





# **Torah Li-Shmah**



# Three, You and Because: A Threefold Cord Is Not Readily Broken!<sup>1</sup>

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RABBI MARTIN BERMAN

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## Introduction

**THE RAMBAM WRITES** in the beginning of the Laws of Prayer that while it is a positive commandment to pray daily:

*The number of prayers is not prescribed in the Torah, nor does it prescribe a specific formula for prayer. However, as a result of the Babylonian exile, children were born to them in these foreign countries and those children's language was confused. The speech of each and every one was a concoction of many tongues. No one was able to express himself coherently in any one language, but rather in a mixture [of languages], as [Nehemiah 13:24] states: "And their children spoke half in Ashdodit and did not know how to speak the Jewish language. Rather, [they would speak] according to the language of various other peoples."*

*Consequently, when someone would pray, he would be limited in his ability to request his needs or to praise the Holy One, blessed be He, in Hebrew, unless other languages were mixed in with it. When Ezra and his court saw this, they established eighteen blessings in sequence. The first three [blessings] are praises of G-d and the last three are thanksgiving. The intermediate [blessings]*

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1. Ecclesiastes 4:12.

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contain requests for all those things that serve as general categories for the desires of each and every person and the needs of the whole community.

Thus, the prayers could be set in the mouths of everyone. They could learn them quickly and the prayers of those unable to express themselves would be as complete as the prayers of the most eloquent. It was because of this matter that they established all the blessings and prayers so that they would be ordered in the mouths of all Israel, so that each blessing would be set in the mouth of each person unable to express himself.<sup>2</sup>

We see from the words of the Rambam that while the Torah prescribes daily prayer, the language of that prayer was originally up to every individual. But, as a result of the loss of Hebrew (the preferred language of prayer), it became necessary to create a structured liturgy – words of prayer. This task was fulfilled by Ezra and his court. Since prayer was not written down but remained in an oral, memorized form, it was incumbent to compose the liturgy in a manner that would make that memorization easier. In this article I propose to demonstrate how Ezra and his court used several devices in composing the tefillot to organize them and make them easier to memorize – use of the number three, key words and structural formatting.

The number three serves an important function in Rabbinic literature as a mnemonic device. It is easier to remember a series of items when introduced by a number, especially three. Thus, in Pirkei Avot, the members of the Great Assembly “said three things...” Shimon HaTzaddik “said the world stands upon three things.” Even if the number isn’t noted, the sayings are often in a series of three: “Jose ben Yoezer says, (1) ‘Let your house be a house of assembly for the wise’; (2) ‘and sit in the dust of their feet’; and (3) ‘and drink with thirst their words.’” (*Avot* 1:1, 2 and 4). In the Talmud as well, there are often statements made in the name of a sage that come in a series of three.<sup>3</sup> For example, “Rabbi Hiya bar Yosef said...; and Rabbi Hiya bar Yosef said...; Rabbi Hiya bar Yosef said...” (*Ketubot* 110a) and “Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said...; and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said...; and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said...” (*Sota* 38b).

This use of the number three also serves as the basic structure of the Amidah. Every recitation of the Amidah begins with the same three blessings and concludes with the same three blessings. Between these two sets of three blessings in the weekday Amidah we find there were originally twelve blessings or  $4 \times 3$  blessings. (An extra blessing against sectarians was later added to give us our current thirteen.)<sup>4</sup>

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2. *Hilkhot Tefillah* 1:4. Translation of the Rambam is from Sefaria.

3. For example, “Rabbi Hiya bar Yosef said...; and Rabbi Hiya bar Yosef said...; Rabbi Hiya bar Yosef said...” (*Ketubot* 110a) and “Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said...; and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said...; and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said...” (*Sota* 38b).

4. Some modern scholars suggest that the prayer against sectarians was originally part of the 18 and in Babylonia the prayer for restoration of Jerusalem and the Davidic King was originally one that they made into two. See also: *Mareh Hapanim Berakhot* Chapter 2 halakhah 4: *D'lefi minhag hakadmonim K'amar sh'hayu nohagim al pi hatosefta l'kallu l'david im boneh yerushalayim b'hada b'rakhah*.

The first blessing of the Amidah begins with the opening formula of a blessing *Barukh ata Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha-olam*, and then ends with the concluding formula of *Barukh ata Hashem Magen Avraham*. When there is a series of blessings that are joined together in one unit, only the opening blessing begins with the formula of *Barukh ata Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha-olam*. Since the Amidah is a series of blessings, none of the following blessings begin with the opening formula. Blessings 2 and 3 open with *Ata - You*.

Let's look at the first of the middle blessings:

## The First Blessing

You grace humanity with knowledge,	Description ( <i>Atah</i> )	<i>Atah honein l'adam da-at</i>	1
and teach humanity understanding.	Description	<i>um'lameid le-enosh binah</i>	2
Grant us from You knowledge, understanding and discernment.	Request	<i>Honeinu meit'kha dei-ah, binah v'haskeil</i>	3
Source of blessing <sup>5</sup> are You, L-rd, who graciously grants knowledge.	Conclusion/ description	<i>Barukh<sup>4</sup> atah Hashem, honein hada-at</i>	4

The first of the middle blessings begins with the word *atah - You*. It is the only weekday blessing that opens with *atah - You*. Not only do we find that weekday Amidah begins the first of the middle blessings with *atah - You*, but that this is the general pattern for the Amidot. Friday night – *atah kidashtah*, Shabbat minhah – *atah ehad*, Yom tov, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur – *atah v'hartanu*, Shabbat musaf/Rosh Hodesh – *atah yatzartah*. The exceptions being the Amidah of the Shabbat morning service, the Shabbat musaf, and Rosh Hodesh musaf for the weekday, which do not open with *atah - You*. I do not know why that difference exists, but the opening with *atah - You*, serves as a means of connecting the middle blessings with the previous two blessings of the Amidah which open with *atah - You*.

The opening of the middle section begins with two descriptions of G-d, it then turns to a request and ends with a concluding description of G-d. Note the penultimate line of a blessing (in the Amidah line 3) is a summation of the entire blessing.

5. One of the most difficult words to translate is *Barukh*. We can't bless G-d as He is the source of blessing. "Praised are You..." loses the idea of blessing. If the source of *Barukh* is the same as that of a *b'reikha* pool of water, then perhaps a wellspring or source of blessing fits the bill. Abudraham wrote: *Barukh* is not a passive verb but rather it is like *rahum* – merciful, and *hanun*, gracious, for He, Himself is the source of the blessings, and He does not receive blessings from others.

## The Second Blessing

Return us, our Father, to Your Torah.	Request	<i>Hashiveinu avinu l'toratekha</i>	1
Bring us near, our King, to Your service.	Request	<i>v'kar'veinu malkeinu la-avodatekha</i>	2
Lead us back to You in complete repentance.	Request	<i>v'hahazireinu bitshuvah sh'leimah l'fanekha</i>	3
Source of blessing are You, L-rd, who desires repentance.	Conclusion/ description	<i>Barukh atah Hashem, harotzeh bitshuvah</i>	4

The second blessing follows a pattern of three requests and then again concludes with a description of G-d.

## The Third Blessing

Forgive us, our Father, <i>ki</i> – because we have sinned.	Request	<i>S'lakh lanu, avinu, ki hatanu</i>	1
Pardon us, our Sovereign, <i>ki</i> – because we have acted negligently –	Request	<i>m'khal lanu, malkeinu, ki fasha'nu</i>	2
<i>ki</i> – because You are forgiving and pardoning.	Why? Because	<i>ki mokheil v'solei-akh atah</i>	3
Source of blessing are You, L-rd, who is gracious and repeats to forgive.	Conclusion/ description	<i>Barukh atah Hashem, hanun hamarbeh lisloakh.</i>	4

The third blessing uses the word *ki* – because, three times. The first two times to explain why we need to ask for forgiveness – *ki* – because we have sinned and why we need to ask for pardon *ki* – because we have acted negligently. The third use of *ki* – because, explains why we can ask for forgiveness because He is forgiving and pardoning. The third blessing – three times use of – *ki* – because, once again demonstrates the use of the number three.

## The Fourth Blessing

Behold our afflictions and argue for our quarrel.	Request	<i>R'eih v'on'yeinu, v'rivah riveinu</i>	1
Redeem us quickly for Your Name's sake.	Request	<i>ug'aleinu m'heirah l'ma-an sh'mekha</i>	2
Ki – because You are a strong Redeemer.	Why? Because	<i>ki goeil hazak atah</i>	3
Source of blessing are You, L-rd, Redeemer of Israel.	Conclusion/ description	<i>Barukh atah Hashem, goeil yisra-eil</i>	4

The fourth blessing continues with the pattern of using – ki – because, but only as why G-d should heed our request.

## The Fifth Blessing

<i>Heal us O L-rd and we shall be healed.</i>	Request	<i>R'fa-einu, Hashem, v'neirafei</i>	1
<i>Save us and we shall be saved.</i>	Request	<i>hoshi-einu v'nivashei-ah,</i>	2
Ki – because You are our praise.	Why? Because	<i>ki t'hilateinu atah</i>	3
And raise up a complete recovery for all our ailments.	Request	(1) <i>v'ha-aleih r'fuah sh'leimah l'chol makoteinu</i>	4
<i>(The following prayer for a sick person may be said here)<sup>6</sup></i>	Request	(2) <i>(Yehi ratzon...)</i>	5
Ki – because You O G-d, King are a faithful and merciful Physician.	Why? Because	(3) <i>Ki eil melekh rofei ne-eman v'rahaman atah.</i>	6
Source of blessing are You, L-rd, Healer of the sick of His people.	Conclusion/ description	(4) <i>Barukh atah Hashem, rofei holei amo yisra-eil.</i>	7

The fifth blessing seems to follow a different pattern of organization, with a total of seven lines. The word ki – because as a statement why G-d should answer our request is found

6. Wording of the Koren Siddur page 130 – May it be Your will, O L-rd my G-d and G-d of my ancestors, that You speedily send a complete recovery from heaven...to the patient (name) son/daughter of (mother's name) among the other afflicted of Israel.

twice – lines 3 and 6. It almost feels like a combination. Were two prayers brought together? I don't think this is the explanation. The difference here is that there is a practice to add optional wording to the prayer, to ask not for all Israel, but to make a request for a specific individual. Line 4 refers to all of Israel, but then in line 5 the davener can ask for healing of one of the members of Israel specifically. When the davener uses this option we have again the pattern of request, request and *ki* – because.<sup>7</sup>

## The Sixth Blessing

Bless for us, O L-rd our G-d this year and all of its produce for good,	Request	<i>Bareikh aleinu, Hashem elokeinu, et hashanah hazot v'et kol minei t'vuatah l'tovah</i>	1
And grant blessing ([or] and place dew and rain for a blessing) over the face of the earth and satisfy us with Your goodness.	Request	<i>V'tein b'rakhah (during the winter, say: V'tein tal umatar livrakhah) al p'nei ha-adamah v'sab'einu mituvekha</i>	2
And bless our year like the good years (of the past).	Request	<i>uvareikh sh'nateinu kashanim hatovot.</i>	3
Source of blessing are You, L-rd, Who blesses the years.	Conclusion/ description	<i>Barukh atah Hashem, m'vareikh hashanim.</i>	4

## The Seventh Blessing

Sound the great shofar for our freedom,	Request	<i>T'ka b'shofar gadol l'heiruteinu</i>	1
And raise a banner to gather our exiles,	Request	<i>v'sa neis l'kabeitz galuyoteinu</i>	2
And bring us together from the four quarters of the earth.	Request	<i>v'kab'tzeinu yahad mei-arba kanfot ha-aretz</i>	3
Source of blessing are You, L-rd, Who gathers the dispersed of His people Israel.	Conclusion/ description	<i>Barukh atah Hashem, m'kabeitz nidhei amo yisra-eil.</i>	4

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7. While it is permissible to add our own prayers for personal requests in the appropriate themed blessing, because of the emotions that exist when someone is deathly ill it is most likely to create a need for a personalized request.

## The Eighth Blessing

Return our Judges as they were at first and our advisors as at the beginning,	Request	<i>Hashivah shof'teinu k'varishonah v'yoatzeinu k'vat'hilah</i>	1
And remove from us sorrow and sighing,	Request	<i>v'haseir mimenu yagon va-anakhah</i>	2
And reign over us, You, O' L-rd alone, in grace, and mercy and find us righteous in justice.	Request	<i>um'lokh aleinu atah, Hashem, l'vad'kha b'heseid uv'rahamim, v'tzad'keinu bamishpat.</i>	3
Source of blessing are You, L-rd, Who loves righteousness and justice.	Conclusion/ description	<i>Barukh atah, Hashem melekh oheiv tz'dakah umishpat</i>	4

The sixth through the eighth blessings return to the pattern established in the second blessing: three requests, and then again concludes with a description of G-d.

The ninth blessing was censored by the Church authorities. While the Koren Siddur calls it, in English, "Against Informers" it calls it, in Hebrew, *Birkat haMinim*, or blessing against heretics. ArtScroll identifies it in both Hebrew and English as the blessing against heretics.

## The Ninth Blessing (Version 1)

And for slanderers there should be no hope and may all wickedness swiftly vanish.	Request/ object	<i>V'lamalshinim al t'hi tikvah, v'khol harishah k'rega toveid</i>	1
And may all Your enemies be speedily cut off,	Request/ object	<i>v'khol oy'vecha m'heirah yikareitu</i>	2
And may the arrogant swiftly be uprooted, crushed, cast down and humbled soon in our time.	Request/ object	<i>v'hazeidim m'heirah t'akeir ut'shabeir ut'mageir v'tahni-a bimheirah v'yameinu</i>	3
Source of blessing are You, L-rd, Who crushes enemies and humbles the arrogant.	Conclusion/ description	<i>Barukh atah Hashem, shoveir oy'vim umahni-a zeidim</i>	4

There is a different, pre-censored version found in the Cairo Genizah which reads:

## The Ninth Blessing (Version 2)

For the heretics there should be no hope and may the arrogant kingdom <sup>8</sup> swiftly be uprooted.	Request/ object	<i>Lameshuma al tehi tikvah umalkhut zadon m'hera t'aker b'yamenu</i>	1
And may the Christians and sectarians swiftly vanish	Request/ object	<i>v'hanotzrim v'haminim k'rega yovaidu</i>	2
Erase them from the Book of Life and do not inscribe them with the righteous.	Request/ object	<i>Yimkhu mi-sefer hahayim v'im tzadikkim al yikhtavu</i>	3
Source of blessing are You, L-rd, Who humbles the arrogant.	Conclusion/ description	<i>Barukh atah Hashem, makhni-a zeidim</i>	4

In both of these versions there is a slight change in the request. It is not for the Jewish people in general but has a specific object – *heretics, ...arrogant kingdom, ...Christians and sectarians, ...Erase them*. This is paralleled in the next blessing as well where the objects of the request are also identified – *righteous, pious, leaders et al*.

We should also note the contrasting requests. As to the wicked, the request is *to erase them from the Book of Life and do not inscribe them with the righteous*. In the prayer for the righteous et al., the *davener* is asking to be in the same place as the righteous (in contrast to the wicked).

## The Tenth Blessing

For the righteous, the pious, the leaders of Your people the House of Israel, the remnant of their scholars, the righteous proselytes, and us - may Your compassion be aroused, L-rd our G-d.	Request/ object	<i>Al hatzadikim v'al hahasidim v'al ziknei am'kha beit yisra-eil, v'al p'leitav sof'reihem, v'al geirei hatzedek v'aleinu yehemu na rahamekha Hashem elokeinu</i>	1
And grant a good reward to all those who faithfully trust in Your name.	Request/ object	<i>v'tein sahar tov l'khol habot'khim b'shimha be-emet</i>	2
And grant that our place be with them for eternity and that we should never be ashamed that we trusted in You.	Request/ object	<i>v'sim helkeinu imahem l'olam, v'lo neivosh ki v'kha batakh'nu</i>	3

8. One can clearly see what the medieval church found problematic in these words. The arrogant kingdom was Rome and the later Christian Rome.

Source of blessing are You, L-rd, support and trust of the righteous.	Conclusion/ description	<i>Barukh atah Hashem, mishan umivtakh latzadikim.</i>	4
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The next blessing again has a direct object of request, the city of Jerusalem and the Davidic kingship. The following blessing 12 is then directed toward the Davidic line.

### The Eleventh Blessing

And return in mercy to Jerusalem, Your city, and dwell therein as You have spoken,	Request/ object	<i>V'lirushalayim ir'kha b'rahamim tashuv, v'tishkon b'tokhah ka-asher dibarta</i>	1
And rebuild it soon, in our days, as an everlasting structure.	Request/ object	<i>uv'nei otah b'karov b'yameinu binyan olam</i>	2
And may You speedily establish the throne of David therein.	Request/ object	<i>v'khisei david m'heirah l'tokhah takhin</i>	3
Source of blessing are You, L-rd, Builder of Jerusalem.	Conclusion/ description	<i>Barukh atah Hashem, boneih y'rushalayim</i>	4

### The Twelfth Blessing

Speedily cause the sprout of David, Your servant, to flourish.	Request/ object	<i>Et tzemakh david avd'kha m'heirah tatzmi-akh</i>	1
And exalt his power with Your deliverance.	Request/ object	<i>v'karno tarum bishuatekha</i>	2
We hope all day for Your deliverance.	Request/ object	<i>ki lishuat'kha kivinu kol hayom</i>	3
Source of blessing are You, L-rd, Who causes the power of salvation to sprout.	Conclusion/ description	<i>Barukh atah Hashem, matzmi-akh keren y'shuah</i>	4

### The Thirteenth Blessing

Hear our voice, L-rd, our G-d,	Request	<i>Sh'ma koleinu, Hashem elokeynu,</i>	1
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Spare us and have compassion on us, and accept our prayers compassionately and willingly,	Request	<i>hus v'raheim aleinu, v'kabeil b'rahamim uv'ratzon et t'filateinu</i>	2
Ki – Because You are Almighty Who hears prayers and supplications,	Why? Ki – Because	<i>ki eil shomei-a t'filot v'tahanunim atah</i>	3
And do not turn us away empty-handed from Your Presence, our King.	Request	(1) <i>umil'fanekha, malkeinu, reikam al t'shiveinu</i>	4
(Here a private/special prayer may be inserted.)	Request	(2) (Yehi ratzon...)	5
Ki – Because You hear the prayers of Your people, Israel, with compassion	Why? Ki – Because	(3) <i>Ki atah shomei-a t'filat am'kha yisra-eil b'rahamim</i>	6
Source of blessing are You, L-rd, Who hears prayers.	Conclusion/ description	(4) <i>Barukh atah Hashem, shomei-a t'filah</i>	7

The last of the middle blessings, number 13 begins with a more generalized request “Hear our voice.” It uses the line beginning with *Ki – Because* twice, as did the prayer for healing. Just as in the earlier prayer, this pattern is applied in order to allow for an additional request. On a fast day at *minhah* the individual recites here *Anainu*, the fast day prayer. In Israel, when there is a drought, a special prayer for rain is added here.

In the Talmud Yerushalmi (*Berakhot* 5:2) we read “Rebbi Zeira in the name of Rebbi Huna: If he did not ask in the benediction “for years” he says it in “He Who hears prayer.” The Shulkhan Arukh writes: “If one did not ask for rain and remembered prior to (the blessing of) “*Shomeya Tefilla*” (“Who hears prayers,” the last of the middle, petitionary, blessings) we do not make (that person) go back, and one may (instead) ask in “*Shomeya Tefilla*.”<sup>9</sup> So the structure of the last of the middle blessings creates a site for these possibilities.

To summarize, we find that the formation of the Amidah has a clear and understandable structure. It is built upon three lines, followed with a blessing that describes G-d in such a way that it serves as both a conclusion and acknowledgement that all blessings flow from *HaKadosh Barukh Hu*. Even the two exceptions to this pattern can be analyzed to follow that basic structure.

I hope that this analysis can help us better understand our prayers so that we can have greater *kavannah* as we seek blessings from the true Source of Blessing.

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9. *Orah Hayim* 117. Translation is from Sefaria.

# Entering the Land of Israel: A Promise Versus the Reality

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RABBI SHLOMO GEMARA

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**THE ENTRY OF** Bnei Israel into the Land of Israel was accompanied by bloody wars. According to the Talmud “The days of the Tent of Meeting that were in Gilgal were fourteen years: Seven years during which the Jews conquered the land and seven years during which they divided the land among the tribes” (*Zevachim* 118b).

The conquest of the land raises two questions. The first one is the morality of these wars. Many people wonder how the Torah, whose ways are pleasant and all its paths are peaceful, could tell Bnei Israel to kill the people who lived there without mercy, which seems like genocide.

In this article, I will not touch on this question. I hope that, with Hashem’s help, I will be able to discuss it in one of the following issues of *Hakhmei Lev*. This is a profound question that requires a resounding answer. Instead, I want to address a second question; an interpretive problem with what seems to be a contradiction within the Torah itself. If you carefully examine the Torah, you will discover that it contains numerous instructions which seem to contradict each other as to how the land is going to be conquered. This article attempts to identify these apparent contradictions in the text of the Torah, and then to explain why the Torah’s different instructions contradict one another.

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## Part 1: *Arba Lishonot Shel Hashmadah*: Four Languages of Annihilation

You Shall Not Allow Any Soul To Live  
Deuteronomy 20:16

רק מערי העמים האלה אשר ה' אלקיך נתן לך נחלה לא תחיה כל נשמה:

*However, of these peoples' cities, which the L-rd, your G-d, gives you as an inheritance, you shall not allow any soul to live.*

As far as we can tell from reading the book of Joshua, the Torah's command was carried out precisely as the Torah had instructed. The following verses are from Joshua 10, but numerous other passages in Joshua speak of cities being destroyed and their inhabitants being killed.

Joshua 10:32-33

ויתן ה' את-לכיש ביד ישראל וילכדה ביום השני ויכה לפי-חרב ואת-כל-הנפש אשר-בה ככל אשר-עשה ללבנה:

*And the L-rd delivered Lakhish into the hand of Israel; and he took it on the second day and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls in it, according to all that he had done to Libnah.*

אז עלה הורם מלך גזר לעזר את-לכיש ויבהו יהושע ואת-עמו עד-בלתי השאיר-לו שריד:

*Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lakhish; and Joshua smote him and his people until he left him none remaining.*

### I Am Sending a Messenger Before You

Although it appears from the above that Hashem's intentions were for the Jewish people to carry out genocide upon the inhabitants of the land of Israel, when we follow the actual commandments and promises regarding the Israelites' entry into the Land of Israel, beginning with the verses in Exodus and concluding with the verses in Deuteronomy, this does not appear to be the case at all.

While the preceding verses imply that the Israelites are commanded to fight with the inhabitants of the land and leave no one alive, Exodus reveals that the plan is for the Israelites not to fight with the inhabitants of the land at all:

Exodus 23

(כ) הנה אנכי שלח מלאך לפניך לשמרך בדרכך ולהביאך אל המקום אשר הכנתי:

*(20) I am sending a messenger before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have made ready.*

(כג) כִּי יֵלֶךְ מִלְאָכִי לִפְנֵיךָ וְהִבִּיאָךְ אֶל הָאֱמֹרִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהַפְּרִזִּי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי הַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי וְהַכְּחָדִיתִיו:  
(23) *When My messenger goes before you and brings you to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I annihilate them,*

(כח) וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי אֶת הַצָּרָעָה לִפְנֵיךָ וְגִרְשָׁה אֶת הַחִוִּי אֶת הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְאֶת הַחִתִּי מִלְפָּנֶיךָ:  
(28) *I will send a plague ahead of you, and it shall drive out before you the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites.*

(לא) וְשִׁתִּי אֶת גְּבֻלְךָ מִיַּם סוּף וְעַד יָם פְּלִשְׁתִּים וּמִמֶּדְבָּר עַד הַנָּהָר כִּי אֶתֶּן בְּיָדְכֶם אֶת יִשְׁבֵּי הָאָרֶץ וְגִרְשְׁתֶּמוּ מִפְּנֵיךָ:  
(31) *I will set your borders from the Sea of Reeds to the Sea of Philistia, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hands, and you will drive them out before you.*

From these verses, it is clear that Hashem will fight the inhabitants of the land, and he will send his angel and the hornet ahead of them to deliver the inhabitants into their hands, after which they will expel them from the land.

### Beware of Making a Covenant with the Inhabitants of the Land

The third source is very similar to the preceding verses in Exodus 20; however, it adds a prohibition against entering into a covenant with the natives of the land:.

#### Exodus 34:11-12

שָׁמַר לָךְ אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֶנְכִּי מְצַוֶּה הַיּוֹם הַנֶּנִּי גִרְשׁ מִפְּנֵיךָ אֶת הָאֱמֹרִי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהַפְּרִזִּי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי:

*Mark well what I command you this day. I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.*

הַשָּׁמַר לָךְ כֹּן תִּכְרֹת בְּרִית לְיוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֵתָּה בָּא עָלֶיךָ כֹּן יִהְיֶה לְמוֹקֵשׁ בְּקִרְבְּךָ:

*Beware of making a covenant with the inhabitants of the land against which you are advancing, lest they be a snare in your midst.*

Again, G-d is the one who expels the inhabitants of the land: “I will expel the Amorites, the Canaanites, etc.” Not a single word in this commandment refers to the Bnei Israel executing each and every person.

You shall dispossess all the inhabitants of the land The abrupt shift in responsibility for “taking care” of the inhabitants of the land from G-d to the people of Israel is recorded in Numbers 33:

## Numbers 33:52

וְהוֹרַשְׁתֶּם אֶת כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ מִפְּנֵיכֶם וְאַבְדֹתֶם אֶת כָּל מַשְׁכֵּיתָם וְאֶת כָּל צִלְמֵי מַסַּכְתָּם תִּאַבְדּוּ  
וְאֶת כָּל בָּמֹתָם תִּשְׁמִידוּ:

*You shall dispossess all the inhabitants of the land; you shall destroy all their figures; you shall destroy all their molten images, and you shall demolish all their cult places.*

## Numbers 33:55-56

וְאִם לֹא תוֹרִישׁוּ אֶת יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ מִפְּנֵיכֶם וְהָיָה אֲשֶׁר תֹּותִירוּ מֵהֶם לְשָׂכִים בְּעֵינֵיכֶם וּלְצִנִּינִים  
בְּצִדֵּיכֶם וְצָרְרוּ אֶתְכֶם עַל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם יֹשְׁבִים בָּהּ:

*But if you do not dispossess the inhabitants of the land, those whom you allow to remain shall be stings in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land in which you live;*

וְהָיָה כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּמְיִיתִי לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהֶם אֲעֲשֶׂה לָכֶם:

*So that I will do to you what I planned to do to them.*

The imperative is utterly clear here. The Israelites are instructed to destroy the inhabitants of the land, with no mention of G-d doing so on their behalf. According to these verses, Hashem will only punish Bnei Israel and expel them from the land if they fail to expel the land's current inhabitants.

As we saw at the outset of this article, the harshest commandment regarding Israel's entry into the Land of Israel is found in Deuteronomy 20. Not only a general commandment to "get rid" of the inhabitants of the land, but an explicit commandment to kill each and every one of them, "You shall not allow any soul to live" (Deuteronomy 20:16).

Why does the Torah promise in the book of Exodus that G-d's angel will fight and expel the inhabitants of the land, yet prior to entering the land of Israel, the Israelites are commanded to kill the inhabitants?

## Part 2: The L-rd is Righteous, for I have Rebelled Against His Word

Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook provides us with an approach. He argues the change lies not in G-d changing His mind *has vi-Shalom*, but in Bnei Israel's failings between the time of the first promise and prior to their entry into the land forty years later.

During his time in Europe during the First World War, R. Kook penned a pamphlet titled "Lights from Wars." R. Kook wanted to infuse religious significance into the bloody and messy topic of the Jewish people's wars, so he wrote the following in the third chapter of this tiny book:

לולא חטא העגל היו האומות יושבות ארץ ישראל משלימות עם ישראל ומודות להם, כי שם ד' הנקרא עליהם היה מעורר בהן יראת הרוממות, ולא היתה שום שיטת מלחמה נוהגת, וההשפעה היתה הולכת בדרכי שלום כבימות המשיח. רק החטא גרם ונתאחר הדבר אלפי שנים.

*If not for the sin of the golden calf, the inhabitants of Israel's land would have made peace with the Israelites and acknowledged that the land belonged to them. Israel, called by the name of G-d, would inspire in them reverence for the exalted, there would be no place for war, and Israel's influence on the world would be peaceful, just as it will be in the days of the Messiah. Only the sins of Israel delayed this by thousands of years.<sup>1</sup>*

R. Kook provides fresh insight and a profound understanding of how Hashem's promises are actually fulfilled. Between the time of the promise's making and the time it was fulfilled, Bnei Israel's spiritual level fell, which is the cause of this gap. After the golden calf incident, Hashem's initial promises that Bnei Israel would conquer the land of Israel with heavenly assistance, avoiding bloodshed and bitter war, had to be modified. Bnei Israel no longer deserved such divine assistance. The promises were not changed; rather, Am Israel's state underwent a detrimental change.

It is reasonable to assume that R. Kook did not only speak about the golden calf. The sins that the Israelites later committed in the desert, especially the sin of the spies, disqualified Bnei Israel from receiving assistance from Hashem's angel and from participating in a miraculous war in which neither Bnei Israel nor their enemies would be required to shed blood. This type of encounter is exemplified by Yaakov's meeting with Esav, which, according to our Sages, was not only peaceful but also in which Esav admitted that the blessing of Yitzhak belonged to Yaakov. Esav said, "Be thine that which is thine (Genesis 33:9). Rashi comments that "In these words, he admitted his right to the blessings."<sup>2</sup>

After Israel's sins and the forty years in the desert, the instructions for entering the promised land had to be revised. The original entry was supposed to be in a way expressed in the following verse:

וַיְהִי בִּנְסֹעַ הָאָרֶץ וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה קוֹמָה ה' וַיִּפְצוּ אֹיְבָיִךָ וַיִּנָּסוּ מִשְׁנֹאֶיִךָ מִפְּנֶיִךָ:

*When the Ark was to set out, Moses would say: Advance, O Hashem! May Your enemies be scattered, And may Your foes flee before You!*

Or as Hashem promised us in Deuteronomy (28:10):

וְרָאוּ כָּל-עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי שֵׁם ה' נִקְרָא עָלֶיךָ וַיִּרְאוּ מִמֶּךָ:

*And all the peoples of the earth shall see that Hashem's name is proclaimed over you, and they shall stand in fear of you.*

1. Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook, *Orot Ha-Milhamah*, ch. 3. Translation is my own.

2. Rashi, *Ibid*.

The colossal spiritual decline of Bnei Israel as a result of the sin of the golden calf and the sin of the spies (and possibly also with the daughters of Moab, which occurred close to entering the land) meant that Israel was unworthy of entering the land peacefully and with reverence for the name of Hashem. The vision before Bnei Israel's sins had to be changed from an angel of G-d entering the land and driving out Israel's enemies to "you shall not allow any soul to live."

We find a similar idea in Rabbi Meir Simhah of Dvinsk's work the *Meshekh Hokhmah* on *Parashat Ki Tisa*. The *Meshekh Hokhmah* asks why in *Parshat Mishpatim*, regarding the mitzvah of *aliya laregel* (pilgrimage to the Temple during Pesah, Shavuot and Sukkot), the Torah does not promise none of their enemies will covet their land as they leave for Jerusalem. In contrast, the Torah promises in *Parshat Ki Tisa* that "no one will covet your land when you ascend to appear before the L-rd" (Exodus 34:24).

The *Meshekh Hokhmah* suggests, similar to R. Kook, that prior to the sin of the golden calf, the Bnei Israel were fearless and did not require a promise because the nations of the world naturally feared them. After the sin of the calf, however, the Israelites fell from their high level of spirituality, and the other nations of the world were unable to perceive their holiness; consequently, they needed an explicit promise that their enemies would not covet their land.

There appears to be an important principle here that is still relevant today. G-d grants us a single opportunity. If we take advantage of this opportunity, He will supernaturally assist us, and no one will stand in our way. However, if, for various reasons, we do not take advantage of Hashem's gifts and promises to us, if we are hesitant and demonstrate a lack of faith, then Hashem does not provide us with a second supernatural opportunity. Instead of "When all the peoples of the earth will see that the name of the L-rd is called upon you, and they will fear you," (Deuteronomy 28:11) we must rely on arduous military or political processes that sometimes result in the loss of human life and attrition.

I don't want to turn a Torah article into a political statement. However, when we see what is being discussed and debated regarding Har HaBayit and Yehuda VeShomron, I am reminded that the international diplomatic regression since the "Six-Day War" is very similar to what occurred four millennia ago the first time Bnei Israel entered the promised land. This is not surprising because "אין חדש תחת השמש" – "There is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

May it be G-d's will that we pray and act in accordance with what the Torah commands:

*The L-rd will establish you as His holy people, as He swore to you, if you observe the commandments of the L-rd, your G-d, and walk in His ways. Then all the peoples of the earth will see that the name of the L-rd is called upon you, and they will fear you. (Deuteronomy 28 10-11).*

# G-d's Bread

KARYN GOLDBERGER

**UPON CONSIDERATION OF** the title, one might assume that the content of this essay would encompass various aspects of the sustaining “*mann*” that the Children of Israel consumed on their desert journeys. However, it is not the bread that G-d *gives* that will be considered here, but the bread which G-d *takes*.

At this juncture, you may be scratching your head quizzically and reflecting: Is it not axiomatic that G-d is incorporeal and has no need for any type of physical sustenance? For that matter, He has no needs whatsoever.<sup>1</sup> And if so, why would the Torah even allude to this concept? Yet, in a number of verses in *Parshat Emor* it does so unequivocally.<sup>2</sup> In one instance, referring to the *Kohanim*, it states:

קִדְּשִׁים יִהְיוּ לֵאלֹהֵיהֶם וְלֹא יִחַלְלוּ  
שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵיהֶם כִּי אֹת־אֲשִׁי ה' לֶחֶם  
אֱלֹהֵיהֶם הֵם מִקְרִיְבִים וְהִיוּ קִדְּשׁ.

They shall be holy to their G-d, and not profane the name of their G-d; for they offer the offerings of Hashem made by fire, **the bread of their G-d**. Therefore they shall be holy.<sup>3</sup>

It is certainly true that the *Kohanim* bring G-d's offerings – those directed towards G-d. However, it seems just a tad sacrilegious – even pagan almost – to refer to them as any type of “food” for G-d. Why might the Torah be opening up this potentially contentious issue? In

1. *Mishneh Torah, Yesodei HaTorah* 1:3.

2. In fact, the expression “*Lehem Elokim*” can only be found in chapters 21 and 22 of the book of *Vayikra* and nowhere else in the entire Bible.

3. *Vayikra* 21:6 (all translations from Alhatorah.org).

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attempting to address this conundrum, it may assist us to view the issue through a wider lens and consider the *parsha* as a whole.

In *Parshat Emor* – encompassing four *perakim* – we find a number of interesting threads that wend their way through most of the *parsha*. To provide an overview, let us utilize the analogy of an actual thread. Imagine, if you will, three large tapestries – the kind you would find in some of the great castles of Europe. In the *parsha*, each major topic is represented by one of these tapestries. On the first “tapestry,” we have a discussion of purity laws for *Kohanim* – who can and cannot bring *korbanot* (sacrifices), who can and cannot eat of those *korbanot*, how a *Kohen* might purify himself, and a variety of other priestly details. Imagine this canvas is woven in rich blues and greens.<sup>4</sup> The next canvas portrays the *Moadim* – the holidays. It illuminates the details pertaining to each: how one must rest from creative work, *melakhah*, what offerings must be brought and the specifics of what constitutes celebrating each individual holiday. This canvas, by contrast, is woven in warm yellows and oranges. After reflecting on our first tapestry, that of *Kohanim*, and on our second one, *Moadim*, we find that our final tapestry relates to the *Mishkan*, and describes two of its vessels – the *menorah* and the showbread table. This canvas delights us with reds and purples. Each individually coloured canvas appears distinct in its topic. However, wending their way through these tapestries are a number of unique threads. Let us imagine them as metallic in nature. Golds and silvers. And just like in the words of the text, these threads are present in all of the sections of our tableau and weave their way through the components of each tapestry, unifying the seemingly disparate elements.

The first, the gold thread, is the idea of *Kedusha*, Holiness. In these three sections of *Parshat Emor*, we find a form of this root occurring no less than 53 times. And that would be fine. Except, it is simply odd, especially since our previous *parsha*, *Parshat Kedoshim*, which should ostensibly highlight this attribute of *Kedusha*, incorporates a form of this word only 8 times. Thus, the theme of holiness certainly continues to be emphasized in this *parsha*. We find that, of our three tapestries, the term “holy” is most prevalent in the context of the *Kohanim*, occurs regularly as we reference *mikra'ei kodesh* to describe each holiday in its turn and finally, regarding the showbread table, the text designates it as *kodesh kadashim* (most holy).

Our second thread, the silver one, although found in greater abundance than we would expect, stands out more for its unique usage within the text than for its sheer numerical heft. It is the term we have already highlighted – the term for bread: *Lehem*. Of course, we would expect this concept to apply to the showbread table in the *Mishkan* – in the third of our tapestries. And even in the second, with respect to many of the holidays, bread plays an important role. It is represented by its absence at Pesah and by its significant presence in the offerings of *Shavuot*. During *Yom Kippur*, we are forbidden from eating all food, which, of course, includes the paradigmatic food – bread. But most perplexing, as we have noted, are the references to bread in the first section – that of the *Kohanim*. This “bread of G-d” is

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4. All colours are arbitrary; there is no significance to them other than as an aide to visualization.

curious wording on many levels. First, it is interesting to note that it serves as a further descriptor to the term “*Ishei Hashem*,” referring to the sacrifices. And if this is the case, it is therefore redundant. Unless, of course, it appears in order to suggest something else to us. And secondly, there is the previously noted philosophical question: surely G-d does not actually NEED the bread. It does not constitute His sustenance, for He certainly does not require any. So why then include this strange wording?

Moreover, quite frequently, the two threads of Holiness and bread intertwine, where both are mentioned in the same verse. Similar to the previous verse, we see here as well, when referring to a *Cohen*:

וְקִדְשְׁתוּ-כִי-אֶת-לֶחֶם א-ף, הוּא מְקַרֵּיב;  
קֹדֶשׁ, יִהְיֶה-לָּךְ-כִּי קֹדֶשׁ, אֲנִי ה' מְקִדְשָׁכֶם.

You shall **sanctify** him therefore; for he offers **the bread of your G-d**. He shall be **holy** to you, for I Hashem, **who sanctify you, am holy**.<sup>5</sup>

In order to find the key to unlock the complex intertwining of these ideas, we might wish to consider a location within the Torah where these concepts converge. At first glance, this may not be readily apparent. So, rather, let us first examine the notion of “bread” and then subsequently comport this concept with the idea of *Kedusha*.

We need to begin our journey where bread is mentioned for the very first time in the Torah – with Adam. After Adam sinned, G-d tells him:

בְּזֵיעַת אֶפְיךָ תֹאכַל לֶחֶם עַד שׁוֹבֶךָ  
אֶל-הָאֲדָמָה כִּי מִמֶּנָּה לָקַחְתָּ כִּי-עָפָר  
אַתָּה וְאֶל-עָפָר תֵּשׁוּב.

By the sweat of your brow you will eat bread until you return to the ground, because from it you were taken. For you are dust and to dust you will return.<sup>6</sup>

What does obtaining bread have to do with the sin Adam committed? Recall that when G-d gave him the command in the previous chapter, it was clear as to what the punishment would be:

וַיֹּצֵא ה' אֱלֹהֵי-הָאָדָם לְאֹמֹר  
מִכָּל עֵץ-הָגֶן אָכַל תֹּאכַל  
וּמִעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ  
כִּי בַיּוֹם אֲכָלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת

Hashem, G-d, commanded the man, saying, “From all the trees of the garden you may freely eat but, from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil you may not eat, because on the day that you eat from it, you will surely die.”<sup>7</sup>

G-d promised death in response to disobedience. But instead, He sentences Adam to... becoming a baker! Seemingly, this is a very lenient verdict. Yet, within it, we find that

5. Vayikra 21:8.

6. Bereishit 3:19.

7. Bereishit 2:16-17.

there is definitely a reference to death – in that human beings will be doing this “sweaty baking” until the day of their death. But it just doesn’t seem like punishment enough after repudiating G-d’s dictate. Or is it?

To find out how it might make sense, let us backtrack a little. Up until now, the text outlines a few different directives given to Adam. In addition to the one we just cited from *Bereishit* Chapter 2, we find the following in Chapter 1:

וַיֹּאמֶר א' הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת-כָּל-עֵשֶׂב  
זֶרַע זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ  
וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ פֵּרִי-עֵץ זֶרַע  
זֶרַע לָכֶם יְהִיָּה לְאֹכְלָהּ.

G-d said, “Behold, I have given you every herb which yields seed that is on the face of the earth, and every tree which has fruit and yields seed; these will be yours for eating.”<sup>8</sup>

From this verse we can understand that until the sin, G-d commanded Adam to sustain himself by walking around the garden, picking fruits from trees and grasses or seeds from the ground. This cannot be characterized as back-breaking work, but it is work nonetheless. As G-d himself outlines Adam’s tasks in the Garden:

וַיִּקַּח ה' א' אֶת-הָאָדָם וַיִּנְחֵהוּ  
בְּגֶן-עֵדֶן לְעֹבְדָהּ וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ.

Hashem, G-d, took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden **to work** and watch it.<sup>9</sup>

Note the word that is used here: *avodah*.

But then Adam sins. Although complex in nature, in its essence Adam’s sin was that he did not listen to G-d’s statute. And in doing so, Adam created a distancing of himself from G-d. We hear resonances of this remoteness in G-d’s words to Adam afterwards:

וַיִּקְרָא ה' א' אֶל-הָאָדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ  
אֵיכָה.

Hashem, G-d, called to the man and said to him,  
“Where are you?”<sup>10</sup>

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg,<sup>11</sup> author of *HaKtav VeHaKabbalah*, notes that G-d, in using the word “*Ayekah*” (Where are you?), as opposed to the more normative term “*Eiphoh*,” was not asking for Adam’s physical location, but instead was asking: “Why are you not in your regular place?” Ostensibly, in this context, this could mean: why are you hiding and not here with me, as you are supposed to be? Moreover, the *Midrash* compares this word “*Ayekah*” to a word of the same spelling in Lamentations: “*Eikhah*.”<sup>12</sup> The meaning attributed to this concurrence is that, with respect to each usage, there is an associated eviction of a group

8. *Bereishit* 1:29.

9. *Bereishit* 2:15.

10. *Bereishit* 3:9.

11. 19th Century German Torah scholar.

12. *Bereishit Rabbah* 19:9.

of G-d's beloved people from a habitat that he had bestowed upon them as a gift: Adam and Eve from the Garden and the Jewish nation from the land of Israel. In both instances, the expulsion resulted from the lack of adherence to G-d's law/s. And in both instances, the Midrash implies, G-d did so while lamenting this necessary consequence.

In the situation under discussion here, after Adam sins, instead of killing him instantly, which would have been counterproductive to G-d's long-term goals, G-d instead finds a way to perpetually teach him the lesson he missed, UNTIL his death.

But the lesson must, of necessity, be a bigger picture than just "toiling the ground" for "bread" - the *avodah* kind of work. That is the ancient equivalent of having someone write 100 times on the blackboard "I must not eat of the fruit from the forbidden tree." Punishment for the sake of punishment and not for the sake of "lesson learning."

Had that been the goal, G-d could have simply stated, "By the sweat of your brow you will eat." Why does the verse specify, instead, the eating of "bread"?<sup>13</sup> I submit that the concept of bread indicates a qualitative difference in the work, not just a quantitative one. For, with the making of bread, and not simply the gathering of grasses and seeds, there is a concomitant need for creativity. Essentially, with this decree, humankind's task has moved from the realm of *avodah* to that of *melakhah*. From pure physical labour to the concept of "mind" applied to work. Tools will need to be created, not only for the working of the ground, but for the milling and processing of the raw materials into the final product of bread.

And bread will forever be the most ubiquitous and universal symbol of this *melakhah*.<sup>14</sup> As, in the production of bread, we find G-d's generosity in giving us rain for the wheat to grow, combining with our own use of technology (mind) in harvesting, processing and baking that wheat into the final product. Thus, in this most essential of activities, we are truly partners with our Creator. For, even if we do not actually perform the act of baking the bread, when we hold that loaf of bread in our hands, as we often do on a daily basis, we, who are sensitive to the message of the Torah, will understand its deep significance. We will see in the bread a symbol of the partnership between human beings and G-d. Moreover, in blessing that commodity before consuming it, or having it brought by the *Kohen*, or having it appear on the showbread table, as in *Parshat Emor*, we are re-establishing our desire for a relationship with the Divine. We are, essentially, repudiating, and therefore atoning for, the sin of Adam.

But let us set this idea aside for a moment and consider our gold thread...that of *Kedusha*. How is that woven into our tapestry with the silver thread of "Bread"? To answer this question, you would have to know one key fact: the sin of Adam and the expulsion from

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13. As an added support to the assertion expounded here, there is an opinion that the "fruit" of which Adam partook was wheat - the prime constituent of bread. How fitting then that the "punishment" was related to this substance. *Middah k'neged middah*. See: *Bereishit Rabbah* 15:7, *Berakhot* 40a, *Sanhedrin* 70b.

14. Eleven of the 39 *Avot Melakhot* of *Shabbat* concern the making of bread. Although garment/fabric making comprises a larger number of *melakhot* - it is not something that one must concern oneself with on a daily basis, and so, it would seem that the creation of bread is the more paradigmatic activity representing *melakhah*.

the garden all occurred just prior to the onset of *Shabbat*.<sup>15</sup> Could there be a connection? As we begin to assess this possibility, let us take a look at the beginning of Chapter Two in *Bereishit* to see how the “creation” of *Shabbat* occurs:

וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה	On the seventh day, G-d completed His work that He had done
וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה.	and on the seventh day, He ceased from all His work that He had done. <sup>16</sup>

Notice that the verse is reiterating the concept of completion. G-d completed the work, and He rested (ceased) from the work. Are those ideas not essentially interchangeable? Why the repetition? So, to obtain further possible clues to the difference, let us engage the very next verse:

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי	G-d blessed the seventh day
וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת.	and made it holy, because on it He ceased from all His work that G-d had created and made. <sup>17</sup>

If we now line up each of the first halves, and each of the second halves, we can extrapolate that “finishing” (*vayechal*) work merits a “blessing” and “resting” (*vayishbot*) from that work merits it becoming “holy,” as is illustrated in the following chart:

וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה.	וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת.	וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת.

Further evidence could be brought forth to prove this case from the first chapter of *Bereishit*, where both the animals and the first couple were given blessings upon their technical completion. However, only resting from “ALL” the work, and not the *avodah* kind of work, but the *melakhah* kind of work, as we see from the wording of the text... only this kind of resting deserves to be made holy. Evidence for this can be found in the latter verse by seeing that a reason (*ki*) for designating holiness is given – cessation of *melakhah*; whereas no reason is given for the conferring of blessing.

But still, our original question remains: is it not all just semantics? Completing an activity and resting from it – is it not the same thing? The Torah tells us that it really is not. I can “finish” doing the “work” of the task, but when I “rest,” I have actively chosen to declare

15. *Sanhedrin* 38b.

16. *Bereishit* 2:2.

17. *Bereishit* 2:3.

the process of creating at an end, allowing for the conscious and deliberate cessation of all further production.<sup>18</sup> Just like *melakhah* is a conscious melding of mind and physical work, *shvitah* is a conscious use of the mind to cease creating. Hence, *melakhah* and *shvitah* can be considered to be on opposite ends of a “work” scale.

With these two ideas of bread as the embodiment of the quintessential *melakhah* – as expressed through conscious creativity (and symbolizing our partnership with G-d) and *shvitah* or conscious resting as an “activity” that brings about *Kedusha*, we need to consider what message is being conveyed to us through the intertwining of the themes of bread and *Kedusha* in our *Parsha (Emor)*.

If Adam’s sin resulted in a diminution of the quality of the relationship between human-kind and G-d, then the logical consequence was for G-d to create a system to show human beings how to enhance that relationship once again. The best way to do that was to introduce this idea of *melakhah*, through the use of something which is required daily: bread. In the production of bread, a person uses his G-d-like faculty of mindful creativity, while simultaneously being aware that he has a partnership with G-d who creates and provides the raw materials for his sustenance.

G-d reminds us with prominent displays of bread throughout all aspects of our tradition (as he does in our *Parsha*): in holy places (the showbread in the *Mishkan*), throughout holy times (the *Moadim*) and when referencing holy people (the *Kohanim*). Thus, the connection is made numerous times between bread and holiness.

I might suggest yet another linkage between bread and holiness. If we look at our timeline: Adam was sentenced to hard (creative) labour just prior to *Shabbat*. G-d could have stopped there. He could have declared that every moment of our lives be spent in the labour that causes us to recognize and form a relationship with our Creator. But I would like to advance another theory: there were actually TWO consequences to the sin, and the two happened moments apart. As G-d is a kind and benevolent Creator, He wanted His relationship with His creations, human beings, not to be informed solely by this punishment of “bread-making.” Therefore, soon after this consequence was decreed to Adam, G-d added a second element – that of declaring the Sabbath day holy, a day of conscious resting and relationship building, where NONE of that *melakhah* – that first punishment – was to be done. So, in essence, we were given two ways to get closer to G-d and to atone for Adam’s sin: through the *melakhah* of making bread (during the six labour days) and through the holiness of rest (on the *Shabbat*).

Armed with this understanding, it behooves us to return to the final issue – that of the offering of “the bread of thy G-d,” for which He has no practical need. In this context, then, the term “the bread of their G-d” does not actually mean that He needs your offering for sustenance, as we ourselves would physically need the bread. But rather, if we symbolically think of the terms of the punishment of Adam as a *brit* – a covenant between two parties –

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18. An idea gleaned from the *shiurim* of Rabbi David Fohrman.

then we can think of bread as the symbol or the *ot* of that *brit*.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, when we bring an offering to our Creator, as “the bread of your G-d,” it is as if we are mirroring His role in our daily receiving of bread from Him. He gives to us and we, in turn, give to Him. Not because He needs it, but because, by doing so, we are confirming our desire to have a relationship with Him – to be His partner in this world, and by doing so, in some small way, we are repudiating the sin of Adam.

## Addendum

A further substantiation for the assertion that there is a linkage between the idea of the giving of bread to G-d with our desire to repudiate the sin of Adam could be brought from the wording of the showbread text. There, after the first few verses describe how the showbread is to be made and placed upon the table, the text then adds:<sup>20</sup>

בְּרִית עוֹלָם:	מֵאֵת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל	בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת יַעֲרֹכֶנּוּ לִפְנֵי ה' תָּמִיד
an everlasting covenant. (3)	It is on the behalf of the children of Israel (2)	Every Sabbath day he shall arrange it before Hashem continually. (1)
תָּק-עוֹלָם:	כִּי קֹדֶשׁ קִדְּשִׁים הוּא לֹא מֵאֲשִׁי ה'	וְהִיְתָה לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו וְאָכְלָהּ בְּמִקְוֹם קֹדֶשׁ
a perpetual statute. (6)	for it is most holy to him of the offerings of Hashem made by fire, (5)	It shall be for Aaron and his sons; and they shall eat it in a holy place, (4)

In section (1), we see that this bread (that, in our offering it to G-d is the repudiation of Adam's sin) should be set before Him always (*tamid*), as we continually need to try to repair our broken relationship. Moreover, that it should be replaced every *Shabbat* is a hint that there is a way other than through the *melakhah*/bread dynamic to rebuild our relationship with G-d: through the holiness and the resting/relationship-building that happens on *Shabbat*.

In (2), the placement of the bread on behalf of *Bnei Israel* indicates that we are the exemplars of the way forward in forming a deeper connection with our creator.

The indication of an eternal covenant (*brit*) in (3) is clearly referring to the showbread. However, if we read the showbread as a metaphorical substitute for the bread we bring in response to Adam's punishment of “bread making,” then it is our eternal duty to fulfill this “covenant” that was made between G-d and Adam just after the sin.

19. As supported by the wording of the text with respect to the showbread: *me'eyt b'nai Yisrael brit olam* (Vayikra 24:8). For further discussion, please see the Addendum.

20. Vayikra 24:8–9.

Section (4) tells us that the *Kohanim* (the holy ones) eat the *ot* of that *brit* (bread) in a holy place.

Regarding the idea of *hu lo* (it is to him) in section (5), the *mefarshim* say that the “him” being referred to is Aharon.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, although many sacred items relating to the service in the *Mishkan* have the designation of *kodesh kadashim* (most holy), I would suggest that each holds a particular significance with respect to the relationship between *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* and His nation. Hence, the *hu lo* could ostensibly be referring to G-d Himself – this showbread is most holy, not to Aharon, but to G-d. I humbly suggest that the reason behind this showbread being most holy (to G-d) is because it represents our desire to re-establish the close relationship we once had with Him in the Garden.

And finally, we find, in section (6), the seemingly superfluous idea of *hok olam*.<sup>22</sup> Recalling that the dictate to Adam not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge was itself a *hok*, it is fitting that the reparation for this sin, in the perpetual giving back of what was taken – bread – be designated as a *hok* as well.

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21. See Malbim, *Torah Temimah*, *Aderet Eliyahu* on *Vayikra* 24:8.

22. A statute, which, by any standard, does not seem to be governed by discernible logic. See *TB Yoma* 67b, *Moreh Nevukhim* 3:26.



# The *Keruvim*

## *Their Perplexity, Their Call*

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DR. ERIC LAWEE

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**AMONG THE VARIOUS** vessels in the Mishkan, those that have invited the greatest interest, scrutiny, and perplexity are the *keruvim* (cherubim), the golden statues with spread wings that Moshe Rabbenu was commanded to place over the cover of the ark of testimony (Exod. 25:18–20; 37:7–9). Among other things, the *keruvim* rivet attention on the question of the place of images (including, but not limited to, graven images) in Judaism and then on the role of visual experience in Jewish life more generally – a broad topic that is of special interest in our visually oriented age that must be left in abeyance here.

At a basic level, the *keruvim* raised a vexing question, inasmuch as they seemingly contravened the Torah's prohibition on the fabrication of graven images. More confounding still was the requirement to place these images atop the holy ark. This conundrum and related ones led commentators and thinkers to diverse justifications for, and explanations of, the *keruvim* and their meaning. The need to explain the *keruvim* was especially acute among writers who sought to respond to various claims about them emanating from one or another Christian milieu. Following are a few small samples that illustrate the sorts of explorations that such issues could generate, concluding with an especially uplifting account of *keruvim* of Rabbi Yitzhak Abarbanel – proof that while the *keruvim* could certainly confound, they could also inspire.

One commentator who tackled the question of the permissibility of the *keruvim* in light of the ban on graven images was Rabbi Hizqiyah ben Manoah, who wrote: “Though it states

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'You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image' (Exod. 20:4), here it was permitted to fashion the form of the *keruvim* since they were not being fashioned in order to bow [to them]."<sup>1</sup> Put otherwise, the "second commandment" proscribes forbidden worship. Since nobody was going to worship the *keruvim*, they presented no problem.

A similar distinction is drawn by Rabbi Jacob ben Reuben, whose *Milhamot Hashem* (Wars of the Lord), written in 1170, stands out as one of the first Jewish anti-Christian polemics written in Christian Europe. R. Jacob discusses the issue in a fictional dialogue that he creates between a Jew and a Christian. The latter, whom he calls "the denier," highlights the seemingly flagrant discrepancy between the interdiction in the *aseret ha-dibberot* on fabrication of graven images (not to speak of worship of such images) and the subsequent command to Moshe to raise a snake on a pole so that those afflicted by serpent bites could gaze on it and live (Num. 21:9). Christians over the ages, East and West, used arguments based in the Tanakh to validate the cult of images found in their worship.

In this case, the Jewish spokesperson parries the Christian thrust by observing that "our blessed Creator never forbade the fabrication of statues and images, but prohibited them only with respect to bowing down and worship." It followed that images put in the service of beautification of an artifact or a building (think: the beautiful BAYT) are permitted. This is what we find, continues the Jewish spokesperson, in the case of the temple built by King Shlomo. It is also what happened in the case of "Moshe our master himself, who fashioned two gold cherubs when constructing the tabernacle."<sup>2</sup> In the view of R. Jacob, then, not only does Judaism not lack for an aesthetic sense, but the *keruvim* reflect an effort to beautify the most sacred part of the Mishkan.

A surprising interpretation of the *keruvim* appears in a later anti-Christian work, *The Book of Polemic*, of Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann Mühlhausen (Bohemia, turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> century). In it, the rabbi argues that the message of the *keruvim* standing above the ark and the prohibitions inscribed on the tablets housed in the ark are wholly coordinate, but directed at distinct audiences. The tablets communicate a prohibition on illicit representation to the literate. The *keruvim* announce visually precisely the same idea to an unlearned populace: "Look! This is what I have instructed *not* be made."<sup>3</sup> On this understanding, there is no contradiction between the message of the *keruvim* above the ark and the prohibition on graven images inscribed on the tablets found in the ark. Both proclaim the same thing – to two distinct audiences. Given evidence of this author's occasional willingness to make tongue-in-cheek arguments in the context of interreligious disputation, one wonders how seriously he took this decidedly creative account.

Let us give the last word on the *keruvim* (for now) to R. Yitzhak Abarbanel, famous leader of Spanish Jewry at the time of its 1492 expulsion, who found in the *keruvim* far more than

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1. Hizkiyah ben Manoah, *Perushei ha-Torah le-Rabbenu Hizqiyah be-Rabbi Manoah*, ed. C.D. Chavel (Jerusalem, 1981), 290.

2. Yaakov ben Reuven, *Sefer Milhamot Hashem*, ed. Judah Rosenthal (Jerusalem, 1963), 55.

3. Yom Tov Lipmann Mühlhausen, *Sefer ha-Nissahon*, reprint of the Theodor Hackspan edition (Altdorf-Nuremberg, 1644), introduction by Frank Talmage (Jerusalem, 1984), 44 (emphasis added).

an embellishment meant to enhance the Mishkan's beauty or a way to reinforce, for those unable to read, the prohibition on graven images. Rather, the *keruvim* called out to every Jew to soar higher both in service of G-d and in love of others, all the while guided by the Torah as represented by the *luhot* in the ark. When the Torah tells us that *keruvim* "shall spread out their wings above" (Exod. 25:20), it means to teach that:

*it is fitting that, first, Jews should have their wings and thought spread above, meaning to worship their Creator in matters between a person and G-d (devarim she-beno la-makom). At the same time, their faces "shall be one to another" (Exod. 25:20), meaning in brotherly love in matters between one person and another (be-ahavat ha-re'im be-mah she-beno la-havero). Then it repeats "the faces of the keruvim being turned toward the cover [of the ark]" to impart that when it comes to both these matters, that is commandments between a person and G-d and interpersonal commandments, in all of them one ought to conduct oneself according to the Torah in the ark.<sup>4</sup>*

Such beautiful and resounding words require neither elaboration nor another's seconding voice.

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4. Yitzhak Abarbanel, *Perush al ha-Torah*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1964), 2:252.

# The Yosef-Potifar Affair

RABBI CHAIM METZGER

**THE FIRST TIME** I publicly taught this theory, the shul I presented it at mistakenly thought I meant the scandal between Yosef and Potifar's wife, and publicized the wrong title. But I am here to reveal a more complex relationship between Yosef and his slave master, Potifar.

We are all familiar with Potifar's wife's scheme to frame Yosef after he refuses to lie with her, and Yosef's subsequent time in jail.<sup>1</sup> If this is the case, why would Yosef agree to marry Potifar's daughter Osnat? Why would Potifar agree to give his daughter to someone who allegedly tried to rape his wife?

First, we need to define the default morals of Egypt at the time.

When Pharaoh returns Sarah to Avraham,<sup>2</sup> Pharaoh tells Avraham not to remain in Egypt, but to leave the country. Rashi explains:

קח ולך. לא כַּאֲבִימֶלֶךְ שֶׁאָמַר לוֹ הִנֵּה אֶרֶצִי לְפָנֶיךָ, אֲלֵא אָמַר לוֹ לֵךְ וְאַל תַּעֲמֹד, שֶׁהַמִּצְרִים שְׂטוּפִי זְמָה הֵם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְזִרְמַת סוּסִים זִרְמָתָם: (יחזקאל כ"ג):

*TAKE HER AND GO AWAY. Not as Abimelekh who said to him (Genesis 20:15) "Behold, my land is before thee; dwell wherever it seemeth proper to thee": but he (Pharaoh) said to him, "Go and do not stay here," for the Egyptians are greatly addicted to lewd-living, as it is said. (Ezekiel 23:20). "And whose issue is like the issue of horses" (Midrash Tanhuma, Lekh Lekha 5). (The passage deals with the immoral practices of the Egyptians). (Pentateuch with Rashi's commentary by M. Rosenbaum and A.M. Silbermann, 1929-1934)*

1. Bereishit Chapter 39.

2. Avraham and Sarah are only given their full names after the *brit bein habetarim*.

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## How Bad Could the Egyptians Have Been?

Just a few generations later we see one example quoted by Rashi on *Bereishit* 41:45 where regarding the name Potifera the Priest of On, Rashi says:

פּוֹטִיפֶרֶע. הוּא פּוֹטִיפָר, וְנִקְרָא פּוֹטִיפֶרֶע עַל שְׁנִסְתָּרִים מֵאֵלָיו, לְפִי שֶׁחָמַד אֶת יוֹסֵף לְמִשְׁכָּב זָכָר  
:(סוּטָה י"ג):

*Poti Phera. He is Potiphar and is now called Poti Phera as a result of becoming castrated, because he had lusted after Yosef for homosexual relations.*

The full version of this can be found in the *Gemara Sotah*:

"וַיִּקְנֶהוּ פּוֹטִיפָר סָרִיס פְּרָעָה" אָמַר רַב שְׁקֵנְאוֹ לְעַצְמוֹ. בָּא (גְּבֻרִיאֵל) [מִיכָאֵל] וְסִירְסוּ בָּא גְּבֻרִיאֵל  
וּפְיָרְעוּ מַעֲיָקְרָא כְּתִיב פּוֹטִיפָר וּלְבִסּוֹף פּוֹטִיפֶרֶע:

The continuation of that verse states:

*And Potiphar, an officer [seris] of Pharaoh's, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the hand of the Ishmaelites, who had brought him down there" (Genesis 39:1). Rav says: He purchased the handsome Joseph for himself, for the intended purpose of homosexual intercourse, but was unable to fulfill his desires, as the angel Gabriel came and castrated Potiphar [seireso]. Then Gabriel came again and further mutilated him [fero] in the same part of his body. This is alluded to in the verses that write Potiphar's name differently: Initially, it is written "Potiphar" (Genesis 39:1) and in the end it is written "Poti-phera" (Genesis 41:45). The change in his name indicates that a part of himself was mutilated. (William Davidson Translation)*

Based on this *Gemara*, one might conjecture that Yosef is not only a victim of the slave trade, but also of sex trafficking.

Potifar's perspective of the events could be interpreted as follows:

Potifar spends his every day as an executioner, simply killing whoever he is ordered to kill. However, this all changes when Ishmaelite/Midianite traders arrive on the scene, and he witnesses the most handsome man he has ever seen. He knows he must buy him right then and there, because of his sheer beauty.

Indeed, Potifar wants to have relations with Yosef, but is castrated by Angelic and divine means, so he doesn't get the chance to consummate his desire.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, he still owns a beautiful and talented slave. So Potifar makes the most of the situation and puts Yosef to work.

Yosef manages to maintain his amazingly beautiful looks while dutifully working for Potifar.<sup>4</sup> Everything seems to be progressing well, his household is thriving, and he has the most loyal, capable, and best-looking slave in charge of his house.

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3. Rashi *Bereishit* 41:6 s.v. "Poti phera."

4. *Bereishit* 39:6, and Rashi s.v. "vaYehi Yosef Yefei Toar" castigates Yosef for doing so, and says this is the cause of Potifar's wife making sexual advances towards Yosef.

But now an issue arises: Potifar is sterile, and his wife would like to have a family. He also wants to continue his line and have children, but can't due to the fact that he is physically incapable of doing so.

Potifar is in need of a sperm donor, and one who won't try to kill him or blackmail him. Then Potifar remembers that he has a beautiful, smart, loyal, and capable slave who would make an excellent surrogate father. Potifar considers asking Yosef if he'd do him the favour of being his sperm donor. Yosef, like any good friend, or in this case loyal servant, would normally say "of course" if asked. From Potifar's perspective, one doesn't simply relinquish control over one's whole household unless there is trust. Potifar reasons: what's the harm in asking Yosef to be the father of his children?

Before Potifar gets the chance to ask Yosef, however, he notices that his wife has the same idea: that she is independently interested in having sexual relations with Yosef. Potifar decides to simply let things take their natural course. Potifar isn't naive or oblivious; of course he notices his wife's dalliances. Perhaps Potifar initially thinks to intervene in regard to his wife's attraction to Yosef, but then reconsiders because he really wants to have an heir, and the resulting affair between his wife and Yosef would lead to the ideal offspring. Potifar has no moral compunctions about the process because, as Rashi pointed out earlier, the sexual mores of Egypt were extremely low and are compared to that of horses and horse breeding. Just like with the breeding of horses, the most important factor in having a capable brood is making sure the stud and mare are of the best possible stock, and so too when breeding an heir. Hence, Potifar's main thought at this juncture is wishing for a fruitful outcome between his wife and Yosef, and he therefore turns a blind eye to his wife's infidelity.<sup>5</sup>

Or, another interpretation is that Potifar pretends not to notice his wife trying to have relations with Yosef because he'd rather avoid the uncomfortable question of asking Yosef to impregnate his wife.

Potifar's wife doesn't quite realize what her husband's intentions are; her decision to sexually assault Yosef is based on her own lustful and carnal desire. Considering the social mores of the times, she could not resist someone who is "beautiful in form and figure."<sup>6</sup> Yosef's beauty is overpowering to the point that women all over Egypt climb fences simply to get a glimpse of him,<sup>7</sup> similar to the way celebrities are looked upon nowadays.

Unfortunately for Potifar and his wife, Yosef comes from different stock: despite being sold off into slavery by his brothers, he is still a descendant of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov.<sup>8</sup> Potifar's wife can't take no for an answer, nor can she do a good job of being subtle about her desire. When she orchestrates the opportunity for her and Yosef to be alone, she forces herself on him, and Yosef runs away, leaving his coat in her hands. Potifar's wife's pride

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5. Rashi *Bereishit* 39:6 s.v. "*Ki Im haLehem*" states expressly that Potifar did not allow Yosef to have access to his wife, against my theory.

6. *Bereishit* 39:6.

7. Rashi *Bereishit* 49:22 s.v. "*Banot Tzaada Alei Shor*."

8. According to *Talmud Sotah* 36b as well as Rashi, Yosef almost succumbed to Potifar's wife's temptations if not for the image of his father appearing before him, allowing him to resist temptation.

is hurt by Yosef's refusal. She panics, assuming that Yosef will tell her husband; she fears that in his capacity as Chief Executioner, her husband will kill her on the spot. Her plan is to head off Yosef telling her husband: before telling Potifar herself, she starts a rumour amongst the servants that Yosef tried to rape her.

She subsequently tells her husband Potifar, picking an intimate moment to do so, that Yosef tried to rape her and ran away.<sup>9</sup> Potifar then rages and screams at his wife. But why does he get upset?

It is possible that he is angry at Yosef for making an attempt at his wife, but as we saw earlier that is unlikely. Rather, he curses her for being unable to seduce Yosef and ruining the best opportunity for a genetically superior heir. He blames his wife for not realizing what the plan was. Potifar believes that Yosef would have given in eventually, but because of his wife's hasty action in spreading rumours, now they're stuck without an ideal sperm donor.

In no small part thanks to having a competent head of household, Potifar, shortly before this incident, was promoted from his executioner job, *Sar haTabachim*, and was now in charge of the jail, *Sar Beit haSohar*. Because of his wife's ill-advised and over-hasty actions, he now needs to do damage control to his reputation as well as protect Yosef from the death penalty. So he decides to make a show of arresting Yosef, knowing all the while that Yosef is innocent.

Once Yosef is in jail, Yosef quickly rises through the ranks, getting promoted to the second in command of the jail, the highest and most trusted post in the prison. This is just below Potifar. Potifar subsequently assigns Yosef the important and relatively cushy job of serving Pharaoh's arrested officers the Chief Baker, *Sar haOfim*, and the Chief Butler, *Sar haMashkim*. Yosef ultimately interprets their dreams. Potifar takes note of Yosef's dream interpretations. Then Potifar sees the dreams actually come true as Pharaoh executes the Chief Baker and restores the Chief Butler to his post. Potifar's hands are tied, and he can't do anything more to help Yosef when he's in jail because the incompetent and ungrateful butler never remembers to tell Pharaoh about Yosef, the ingenious dream interpreter.

Two years later,<sup>10</sup> Pharaoh has an unsolvable dream. The butler finally remembers Yosef's excellent and uncanny predictions and tells Pharaoh. Pharaoh calls for Yosef, who expertly interprets his dreams and plans for the impending famine. Pharaoh is impressed and decides to appoint Yosef to the position of vizier, placing him in charge of the entire country.

Potifar doesn't go unrewarded for raising Yosef to be the intelligent, loyal, and incorruptible servant he becomes for Pharaoh. Pharaoh raises Potifar to be the Kohen On, the Priest of the city of On.<sup>11</sup>

Once Yosef is firmly installed as Pharaoh's vizier, Potifar offers Yosef his daughter, Osnat. Yosef happily obliges because he knows how much Potifar has done for him and can't think

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9. Rashi *Bereishit* 39:19 s.v. "Vayihi."

10. *Bereishit* 41.

11. This may even be a play on words because On is not only a city but means pain/suffering, a fitting rise for the former executioner. Binyamin is initially called Ben-Oni by Rachel, which means son of my suffering (*Bereishit* 36:18).

of a better father-in-law. Potifar similarly is happy with the arrangement because of all that Yosef has done on his behalf, being instrumental in his becoming part of the coveted priestly class.<sup>12</sup>

But, one may ask, where did Osnat come from if Potifar is castrated?

The simplest answer is that Osnat was born before Potifar was castrated, but if that is the case, then Potifar's desire for an heir is a little harder to understand. While it is possible Potifar was simply in search of a male heir to carry on his name, there is another far more controversial option.

If Potifar had no children prior to Yosef becoming his slave, and roughly a year later Potifar has a daughter, things get far more complicated. The average Egyptian now assumes that Yosef succeeded in his role as sperm donor, that the rumours were true, and now Yosef is marrying his own daughter, who is conveniently the exact right age, twelve years old, at the time of his release from prison.<sup>13</sup> This assumption would be the worst possible scenario for Potifar and Yosef.

One palatable possibility is that Potifar found another stand-in to be his child's father. Another option is that just as women were unable to give birth in the house of Avimelekh when he took Sarah,<sup>14</sup> Potifar was only castrated because G-d was angry at him for keeping Yosef in his household with ill intent. But when Potifar protected Yosef during Yosef's jail sentence, G-d reversed the castration – the inability to have children – just as he had done for Avimelekh.

To allay the suspicions that Osnat is Yosef's daughter, Pharaoh, the chief moral and religious figure in Egypt, quashes that rumour by officially marrying them.

Potifar is more than happy to offer Yosef his daughter's hand in marriage, because he wouldn't have had a child, nor be in the position of priest without the help of Yosef. Yosef also is well aware of how Potifar orchestrated his survival behind the scenes. The comradery and unflinching support between Potifar and Yosef, despite the rumour mill at the time, eventually leads to all of Egypt and the entire surrounding area being able to survive the famine.<sup>15</sup> The progeny of this union of houses are Ephraim and Menashe. These brothers are the first pair who show no animosity to one another despite the complications of life. This is unsurprising, though, considering the role models of their father and grandfather.

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12. This class is so well off and revered that they get their allotted amount of bread even during times of famine, (*Bereishit* 47:22).

13. Yosef was sold into slavery at age seventeen (*Bereishit* 37:2) and stood before Pharaoh at age thirty. (*Bereishit* 41:46).

14. *Bereishit* 20:17-18.

15. Yosef is always able to see the overarching arc of G-d's plans, no matter the initial intent. See Yosef's reaction to his brothers selling him after his father passed away in *Bereishit* 50:20.



# When Fear is Love

## *Seeing G-d's Great Hand to Moshe and Bnei Yisrael*

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RABBI DR. MOSHE J. YERES

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**THE SEVENTH DAY** of Pesah commemorates *Kri'at Yam Suf* – the Splitting of the Red Sea, when the Children of Israel most clearly recognized the *Yad Hashem* – G-d's power (*Hand*). The verse that most directly sums this up is Exodus 14:31: “*Vayar Yisrael et hayad hagedolah asher asah Hashem b'Mitzrayim; vayir'u ha'am et Hashem; vaya'aminu Ba'shem uveMoshe avdo*” (Israel saw the great hand which the L-rd did upon Egypt, and the people feared the L-rd with awe; and they believed in the L-rd, and in His servant Moses).

The Slonimer Rebbe in *Netivot Shalom*<sup>1</sup> raises a number of questions about the unique phraseology of this verse.

Why do the Israelites refer to seeing Hashem's great hand specifically at the Sea; surely it would be more appropriate to refer to the *yad hagedolah* when seeing the *gevurot* (strong power) of Hashem bringing the Ten Plagues on the Egyptians in Egypt.

Why is *emunah* (faith)<sup>2</sup> in Hashem (“*vaya'aminu*”) stressed as the feeling of the Israelites at seeing the Splitting of the Sea? *Emunah* is more related to believing in Hashem when the power of G-d is not visible. This was a moment of total clarity, seeing the wonders of G-d.

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1. *Netivot Shalom*, Vol. Exodus, p. 111 ff.

2. *Emunah* is variously translated as – faith, belief and trust. In our context, it is probably a combination of all three. For ease, I have translated it in the body of the article as “faith.”

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It surely took more *emunah* to believe and trust in Hashem in Egypt when they did not see G-d as clearly, yet they still believed and trusted in Him.

Why does the Bible at *Kri'at Yam Suf* refer to *yir'ah* (fear and awe) of Hashem, when in fact what the Israelites faced was more appropriately defined as love of G-d (*Ahavat Hashem*) and not fear and awe? They saw and experienced Hashem's love for Bnei Yisrael, when He split the sea and brought them through, but then immediately drowned the Egyptians.

Indeed, *Netivot Shalom* quotes R. Yitzchak Yungerleib of Radvil,<sup>3</sup> that the Israelites are referred to consistently by G-d throughout the *Kri'at Yam Suf* experience as *banim* – sons, a term of endearment and affection.<sup>4</sup> We were not just saved from the clutches of the Egyptian army; rather, Hashem also provided for us with many acts of *hesed* and kindness, especially as detailed by the *midrashim*.<sup>5</sup> We were treated not as *avadim* – slaves, but lovingly with care as *banim* – children. If so, why does the verse say “*vayir'u ha'am 'et Hashem*,” it would have been more appropriate to say something along the lines of *vaye'ehavu ha'am et Hashem* – that they loved Hashem, or that we were loved by Hashem.

Why did the Torah conflate the *emunah* (faith) in Hashem and the *emunah* (faith) in Moshe into one combined statement – *vaya'aminu Ba'shem uveMoshe avdo*? Surely the *emunah*, belief and trust in Hashem stood far above and separate from the *emunah*, belief and trust in Moshe, His servant.

In response to these questions, *Netivot Shalom* quotes from *Medrash Shemot Rabbah*: “From the day that Hakadosh Barukh Hu created the world until that moment when the Israelites stood at the Sea, no one ever recited “*shirah*” (song and praise) to Him except *Bnei Yisrael*; not *Adam Harishon* when he was created, not Avraham when he was saved from the fiery furnace, not Yitzchak when he stepped down from the *Akeidah*, not Yaakov when he was saved from his brother Esav and the fight with the angel.”<sup>6</sup>

But why was that so? What uniquely occurred at this moment that brought *Bnei Yisrael* to conclude that they must sing *shirah* to Hashem?

The idea of singing *shirah* to Hashem, writes *Netivot Shalom*, represents reaching a unique level when we suddenly see and understand that everything in the world done by G-d was really done only for our benefit. What we thought had been difficulties, turned out, in the end, to have been done by Hashem purely for our benefit and good. This was the moment at the Sea where *Bnei Yisrael* suddenly realized that everything that they had experienced from Egypt until that moment was worthy of praise and thoughtful song to G-d.

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3. The Founder of Radvil Hassidut, b. 1751, d. 1835. (Heb. Wikipedia, listings Yitzhak Yungerleib, and Chassidut Radvil).

4. See for example in the *Arvit* liturgy, e.g. “*hama'avir banav bein gizrei yam suf*,” who brought His children through the split parts of the Sea and “*malchutcha ra'u vanecha*” your children beheld your majesty. (trans. based on ArtScroll Siddur).

5. A few examples will suffice: Each tribe travelled their own separate road in the sea; fresh water spurted forth from the seawalls of standing water to quench their thirst. The *midrashim* provide various other examples.

6. *Shemot Rabbah* 23:4.

To use an old Israeli expression – “*nafal ha’asimon*” (the penny finally dropped). Every moment *Bnei Yisrael* had experienced, now made sense. It was now blatantly clear that it had been all part of the Divine plan to save the Jewish people.

In a similar vein, we can understand the opening line of Psalm 126 – “*Shir hama’alot b’shuv Hashem ‘et shivat Tzion hayinu keholmim*” (when we returned to Zion we were like dreamers). This is interpreted to mean we were like Joseph the master dreamer, who at the end of his adventures saw and recognized that the dreams were carried out by G-d for the benefit of Joseph, his family and the Israelites and were done only for their good.

Along the same lines, *Bnei Yisrael* were now able and required to sing *shirah* to Hashem at the Splitting of the Sea. The *Gilui Shekhina*<sup>7</sup> of Hashem at the Sea was clear, and now they understood that the entire story of their Egyptian sojourn was done for their benefit. It was their level of understanding of G-d’s plan that *Bnei Yisrael* experienced at the Splitting of the Sea, and this is why they now sang *shirah* to Hashem.

What does this have to do with *emunah*? There are two levels of *emunah*, argues *Netivot Shalom*: the first level of *emunah* is to believe that Hashem is the only G-d and that He is the *Boreh Umanhig* (Creator and Guide) for everything in this world. But there is a second and greater level of *emunah*; which is that all that Hashem does is done solely for our good.

While *Bnei Yisrael* were in Egypt and believed in Hashem “*vaya’amen ha’am*” (the people believed, Exodus 4:31), this was only at the first level. *Bnei Yisrael* still questioned why certain events were taking place. Indeed, they questioned Moshe in Egypt about the increase in their burdens (Exodus 5:21). They believed in G-d; yet they still remained with questions. However, at *Kri’at Yam Suf*, when they saw the *Yad Hagedolah* and the full *gilui* of “*ze keili ve’anvehu*,” (this is my G-d and I will praise Him) they understood Divine Providence, that G-d did everything for their good. And they believed it fully and completely as it states “*vayaminu*.” And thus, they needed to sing *shirah* to Hashem for this sudden recognition and clarity.<sup>8</sup>

*Netivot Shalom* takes this one step further in explaining why the verse conflates the belief in Hashem and in Moshe. Moshe, the righteous leader, had this special level of *emunah* in Hashem all along; and the people now realized that a *Tzadik* can sense the completeness of Hashem even when most others cannot. *Netivot Shalom* quotes from *Divrei Shmuel* who reads Exodus 2:25-3:1 in a non-literal combination: “*Vayar Elokim et Bnei Yisrael vayeida Elokim uMoshe*” (And G-d saw the Children of Israel, and G-d took cognizance of them and Moses) – meaning that Hashem saw and understood *Bnei Yisrael*’s distress, as indeed did Moshe.<sup>9</sup>

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7. *Gilui Shekhina*: Probably best translated here as the discovery or uncovering of the Almighty’s Divine Presence and its workings in this world.

8. This is similar, says *Netivot Shalom*, to the phrases in Psalm 92 - *Mizmor shir leyom haShabbat* (A psalm for the Shabbat day), which contains only complete positive praise e.g. “*tov lehodot Lashem ulezamer leshimhah elyon* – it is good to thank Hashem and to sing praises to Your name,” “*ma gadlu ma’aseha Hashem* – how great are your deeds Hashem’ etc. We get greater clarity of Hashem on Shabbat. So we are able to sing special praise to Him on Shabbat.

9. This is of course not the simple meaning of the two verses, which refer to two separate events. G-d took cognizance of *Bnei Yisrael* (Ex. 2:25). And Moshe was shepherding Yitro’s flock (Ex. 3:1).

A true *Tzadik* senses the trouble of his people and their travails, and yet understands that all done by Hashem is done for their good.

At the Red Sea the people saw what Moshe had understood this all along; therefore, the verse combines them together – “*vaya'aminu Ba'shem uveMoshe*” As well, the people saw that all that the *Tzadik* Moshe had done for them in Egypt was for their good. Thus, the belief in Hashem and Moshe were combined together.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, writes *Netivot Shalom*, the *yir'ah* (awe) of the people to G-d mentioned here at the Sea, may actually refer to a much higher level of *ahavah* (love). There is a level of *ahavah*, love, that includes fear – fear that the bond of this special love may break and become lost. Though couched in terms of *yir'ah*, it is really a form of love, whose connection is so strong that the partners fear what may happen if their love would come apart. It was this high level of love of Hashem, expressed as “*yir'at ha'ahavah*,” that is referred to in the verse of “*vaya'aminu*.”

This is the message of *Kri'at Yam Suf* – that we have the ability to understand the *emunah* that all that Hashem does for us is ultimately for our benefit and good. That is a heavenly gift to *Bnei Yisrael* for all time.

The midrash states: “*Bizekhut emunah nig'alu mi'mitzrayim, uvezekhut emunah atidim lehiga'el*” (Through the merit of faith we were redeemed from Egypt, and through the merit of faith we will be redeemed in the future.)<sup>11</sup> The mitzvah of Recalling the Exodus includes recalling these moments at *Yam Suf* and applying these levels of *emunah* to our own lives.

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10. According to R. Elimelekh of Lizensk (*Sefer Noam Elimelekh*), *tzadikim* can sense the grandeur of Hashem on dry land as much as *Bnei Yisrael* did at the Splitting of the Sea. That is one of the special abilities of a *tzadik*.

11. *Yalkut Shimoni* (Nach 519) and other locations.



# **Jewish History**



# A Third Under-Utilized Way To Study the Talmud<sup>1</sup>

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DR. B. BARRY LEVY

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**THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD** (*Berakhot* 26b) discusses, at some length, the origins of the three daily prayers. It offers two central opinions: the services were either instituted by the patriarchs, or the rabbis (unidentified in the passage, but likely the *Anshei Keneset Ha-Gedolah*, the Men of the Great Assembly who lived during the first part of the Second Temple period), originated the three services on the model of the Temple sacrifices.

The presentation in this passage is clear, well-constructed, and generally taken at face value by subsequent readers. It links the origin of *Shaharit* to Abraham's having woken up early in the morning to nearly sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 12); *Minhah* was derived from Isaac's having gone out to meditate in the field at the end of the day (Gen. 24:63). Jacob's nighttime dream of a ladder stretching to heaven (Gen. 28:12) provided the basis for the evening service.

This talmudic text is well known, often cited, and taught publicly as historical fact by contemporary rabbis without further development. Unfortunately, these attributions are less than convincing, but no one seems to have noticed or cared. The passage is a model of clarity, is neatly structured, and also is unencumbered by Aramaic glosses and additions,

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1. This essay is in honor of my grandson, Noam Shlomo, whose Bar Mitzvah was celebrated this past year. Thanks to David Woolf and Jonathan Levy for their insights. The first and second under-utilized approaches appear in the first issue of this journal.

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which endears it to novices. Despite the accuracy of my superficial compliments, the text may mean something quite different.

The talmudic descriptions say the patriarchs “*tiknu*” (lit., “instituted”) the three services. However, nothing in the proof texts of any, much less all three cases, supports that conclusion. If the relevant biblical accounts are to be believed, the patriarchs did not “institute” anything. Rather, Abraham and Jacob clearly engaged in spontaneous, personal prayer or devotional worship of some sort. Isaac’s participation is a bit more difficult to categorize, but could easily fall under the same rubric. How can these acts be described as a deliberate act of instituting prayer for future generations, that is, “*tiknu*”? Indeed, I would say that this borders on the impossible. A fair description of these events would be that the patriarchs engaged in spontaneous, personal prayer, but in nothing that could be described as a formal *takanah*, or institution for future generations of a fixed prayer service.

According to the related statement in the Palestinian Talmud<sup>2</sup> (and parallels between the two *talmudim* often exhibit such variations) the options under present consideration were that the daily prayers were, in accord with the Bavli, based on the patriarchs or on the sacrifices. Unlike the Babylonian version, however, the Palestinian one says, “*tefillot me-avot lamdum*,” “they (presumably the same rabbis as above) *learned* the prayers from the patriarchs.” According to this language change in the Yerushalmi, there is no historical improbability or conflict. There was no formal “*takanah*,” or edict, made by the patriarchs. Rather, the rabbis took their cue from the personal offerings of the patriarchs and instituted the prayer service centuries after the patriarchs lived.

The question still remains: why do these two sources – eastern (Bavli) and western (Yerushalmi) – disagree? In particular, why does the Bavli insist that the patriarchs actually “instituted” the formal prayers, when this is clearly unlikely?

Many possible reasons for this difference can be advanced, all of which enter the realm of speculation. For the moment, I will consider only one which resembles a modern scholarly treatment of the story of Hannukah, but is not dependent on it.

Six ancient sources describe the events surrounding the holiday we call Hannukah. The five Western, Palestinian ones (1 and 2 Maccabees, Josephus, *Pesikta Rabbati* and even the popular *Al ha-Nissim* prayer) describe the events as non-miraculous occurrences, with space for some divine influence. Only the Bavli, the sole eastern rabbinic source, speaks of the eight-day miracle of the oil. Some modern scholars have seen this as an attempt by eastern rabbis to draw attention away from the military success of the *Hashmonaim*. Creating a less militaristic account served both Jewish and pagan needs: It impressed the Jewish community toward the need for greater religious devotion, resulting in greater loyalty to the bearers of

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2. The newest and best edition of the Yerushalmi is *Synapse zum Talmud Yerushalmi herausgegeben von Peter Schaefer und Hans-Juergen Becker* (Tuebingen). *Berakhot* is in vol. 1 (1991). The relevant passage is on pages 105-106. For additional discussion of the Yerushalmi, see Yakov Z. Meyer, *Defus Rishon: Mahadurat Ha-Talmud Ha-Yerushalmi Venizia 1523 Ve-Reishit Ha-Defus Ha-Ivri* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2022).

that religious tradition, the rabbis. It provided reassurance to the Jews' pagan captors that they remained a peaceful people.

If one examines the Gospel of Matthew (likely the New Testament book with the greatest amount of Jewish content), one finds the following in chapter 6. Before what has come to be known as "The Lord's Prayer," i.e., Jesus' prayer, the reader is told not to pray like the Jews, whose prayers are filled with "vain repetitions,"<sup>3</sup> but to instead pray privately, using the accompanying text..."Our Father who art in heaven..." This passage is clearly polemical, but if we examine all the sources, including Jesus' statement, we see that the Jews had their own prayers – probably originating from the rabbis or their predecessors before Jesus – and Jesus challenged them.

As a response to this Christian polemical attack, some Babylonian rabbis predated the three daily prayers to the patriarchs, arguing that the patriarchs had actually "*tiknu*," or instituted the thrice-daily prayer service. This is not because the formal prayers were actually that old, but because this claim gave them greater authority. Should Christians argue that the rabbis had incorrectly formalized the prayer service, the rabbis, in response, could point to the fact that the Jewish prayer service predated the Christian one by centuries, going all the way back to the times of the patriarchs.

The most accurate account is still in the Yerushalmi. The lives of the patriarchs inspired the rabbis to compile rich prayers which mimicked their religious devotion at different times of the day and night.

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3. They are not identified as "Jews," by name, but rather as "hypocrites," "pagans" or "heathens," depending upon which translation one uses. It is clear, however, that the reference is to the Jews, since it states that these prayers are held in the "synagogue."

# Is it Really 5783 AM/2023 CE?

PETER SOMERS

**THIS ARTICLE IS** being written just after we marked the transition from 2022 to 2023 and will be published after we have celebrated the holiday of Purim. The article will ask questions, and hopefully provide satisfying answers to the question, “Where did 5783 come from?” and “Did the Jewish world always use this year dating method? If not, what did the Jewish people use and why did they change?” You will see how the holiday of Purim is especially significant in answering these questions later in the article.

## Is It Now 2023 CE?

The whole world acknowledges that the secular year number is 2023. Most of the world uses the “BC” (Before Christ) and “AD” (Anno Domini – the Year of Our Lord) to indicate which side of zero the year is. Non-Christians use the designation “CE” – “Common Era” or “BCE” – “Before the Common Era” to pinpoint precisely which year we are referring to. This numbering system is a universally accurate method of labelling any year in any era by starting at a fixed point in history and counting forward, or by taking that fixed point in history and counting backwards. Whether there was a Year Zero is a whole other discussion. (If there was NO Year Zero, then the next year after 1 BCE was 1 CE.) Orthodox Jews are uncomfortable in using the “Common Era” year numbers because the Year Zero is the year that Jesus was originally thought to have been born (Most authorities now believe that this year was actually 4 BCE). When Jewish people wish to determine when something happened in relation to the rest of human history, we must use the year numbering system used by the rest of the world.

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## The Jewish Year Numbering System

The Jewish Year numbering system is called AM (Anno Mundi in Latin or The Year of the World). The premise is that we use the years given to us in Humash and Tanakh to count the “year” from “The Beginning.” Rabbi Simon Schwab wrote an excellent article titled “*Comparative Jewish Chronology*”<sup>1</sup> in 1962, and I will be quoting from him extensively in this article.

The first question raised by this numbering system is, “When was Year Zero?” This calendar system is accepted as starting with the creation of Adam – not the first five days of creation, which Orthodox scientists refer to as “G-d’s numbering system.” This, in turn, allows them to reconcile between the secular theories about prehistoric events like dinosaurs or the “origin of the universe” and the narrative of Sefer Bereishis. Rabbi Schwab explains this as follows:

*Accordingly, the accepted traditional Jewish calendar which is commonly used at the present time, is based on a method of reckoning as follows:*

- *The first Five Days of Creation are called Year 1;*
- *The Sixth Day of Creation (when Adam was created) initiates Year 2;*
- *The first day of Tishrei, the Second Rosh Hashanah (when Adam became one year old) opens the year 3.*

When we write the Jewish year number in Hebrew, we use the system that allocates a number to every letter of the Hebrew aleph-beis. The problem is that this allocates 1–9, 10–90, and 100–400 to individual letters, but when we need to show anything above 499, then we need two letters for the hundreds: תק for 500, תר for 600, תש for 700, תח for 800, and as we have now run out of letters again תתק for 900.

5783 is commonly written in Hebrew as תשפ”ג which is really 783 – the “5” for 5 thousand is understood. Incidentally, the earliest tombstone I have seen is the Maharal’s in Prague – as he died in 1609/5369 – this didn’t present a problem for which millennial year to use. But it does imply that although tombstones may be expected to be permanent markers, the missing millennium number could cause confusion for gravestones older than 1,000 years. One final point on our current Hebrew year numbering is that if the four-letter year spells something offensive or improper, then we mix up the letters. For example, this occurs for any tombstone or document you see for 5744 for which תשד”מ is commonly used.

The Kabbalistic view of history is that the world is designed to exist for seven thousand years. The last thousand years are designated as Yemei HaMoshiah (the Days of Moshiah) and are treated separately from the preceding six thousand years. Rabbi Pinchas Winston – a Toronto-born Rabbi who now lives in Israel – has translated major Kabbalistic works and has lectured extensively about Kabbalistic themes and their relevance to our everyday lives. One point he brings out is that the end of Jewish history is going to parallel the beginning

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1. *Ateret Tzvi Jubilee Volume* in honor of Rabbi Joseph Breuer (Feldheim, 1962).

of Jewish history – which started with the Egyptian slavery and ended with the Exodus. Traditionally, this took 210 years (from the arrival in Egypt). He claims that the End of Jewish History will begin with Tehias HaMeisim (the Resurrection of the Dead) which, just like the beginning of the Egyptian chapter, will begin 210 years BEFORE the year 6000 (which is the start of the final 1,000 years). 6,000 minus 210 years brings us to the year 5790 – seven years from now!

## **How Accurate Is the AM Year Numbering System?**

The world's secular year numbering system has been documented extensively for the last 2,000 years at least, and to quote Rabbi Schwab:

*There can be no doubt as the objective historical truth of marking the secular year 70 CE as the year of the destruction of the Second Temple. The circumstances surrounding the Churban are illuminated by the clear evidence of Roman history. No serious scholar will therefore doubt the correctness of the chronological equation whereby the Jewish year 3830 AM corresponds to the year 70 CE and, consequently, our present Jewish year 5722 AM to the secular year 1962 CE.*

Rabbi Schwab is able to create a chart documenting the “Common Era” and Jewish year, corresponding years from:

- “Year of Creation 1 AM = 3760 BCE”
- “First Temple destroyed 3340 AM = 421 BCE”
- “Second Temple consecrated 3410 AM = 351 BCE”
- “Second Temple destroyed 3380 AM = 70 CE.”

He then presents what he describes as a “vexing problem for the Torah-true historian.” When we review ancient history of the Babylonian and Persian Empires (the period during which Purim occurred) and we compare it to the Torah-true narrative, we find that according to Ezra 6:15, the Second Temple was completed in the sixth year of Darius I. If we research the secular chronology then this must have been 517 BCE. But our Torah-based dating puts this date as 351 BCE. As long as we cannot doubt the date given for the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE), we are compelled to admit that the Second Temple must have existed for no less than 586 years instead of the 420 years given by tradition. This amounts to a discrepancy of 165 years. Rabbi Schwab presents, in great detail, the attempts by trustworthy Orthodox scholars to reconcile the problem (see below for a synopsis of this explanation). He describes the dilemma as though a modern, recognized historian had published a textbook on medieval history that ignored all records of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

It just is not credible to pour scorn on secular scholarship, nor is it reasonable for a Torah-observant Jew to ignore the depth of Jewish scholarship stretching back to the times of the Talmud.

## Dating Documents in Jewish History

Avodah Zara 10a clearly states, “Said Rav Nahman: ‘In the Diaspora, it is not permissible to count except only by the kings of the Grecians.’”

### Yovel

We must presume that the Torah-given instruction to count Yovel (Jubilee) years was the first and most authentic Jewish way to specify a particular date. For example, a contract would state that it began in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Yovel cycle. We know from Humash that various laws were activated on the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the cycle (for instance freeing of Jewish slaves, return of ancestral property, cancellation of loans). But we have no documented evidence in either the Tanakh or the Talmud of an event being dated this way. Tradition states that the fifteenth year after entering the land of Canaan was the first year of the first Yovel cycle. And we know that tradition says that the Babylonian exile lasted 70 years as a punishment for missing 70 Yovels. But we have no specific event that tells us when this method of counting ended.

### Heshbon HaYevonim (Seleucid Era)

The Jews of the post-Biblical era adopted the Seleucid Era dating system. Documentary evidence shows this system being used from Seleucus I Nicanor’s re-conquest of Babylon in 312 BCE after his exile in Ptolemaic Egypt.<sup>2</sup> The Book of Maccabees uses this system of dating. It is possible that after the victory of the Maccabees, years were numbered according to Maccabean rule. For instance several coins of Simon were found which are dated “the year of the salvation of Israel.”

### Anno Mundi (The Year since the Foundation of the World)

This system of numbering years was first seen about 250 CE, but the Seleucid system continued to be used (sometimes in parallel) up to its abrogation in 1511 CE by David ibn Abi Zimrah when he served as Chief Rabbi of Egypt. The Rambam used both systems in his writings. According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, Yemenite Jews still use the Seleucid dating system today. If this numbering system began about 250 CE, there is conjecture that its start was the beginning of the fifth (Jewish) millennium (i.e., 4000 AM = 240 CE).

## How Do We Make Sense of the Missing 165 Years?

Rabbi Schwab proposes that there is only one avenue of approach to the problem of missing years. Our Sages must have “covered up” a certain historic period and, “purposely eliminated and suppressed all records and other material pertaining thereto” Why would they have done that? Nothing short of a Divine command could have prompted our Hazal – our “men of truth” – to leave out 165 years of history. Do we have any evidence of such a Divine command?

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2. Denis C. Feeney, *Caesar’s Calendar* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 2007), 139.

Daniel was instructed to “seal the words and close the book” at the end of a long prophecy (11:1 to 12:4). It must be assumed that our Sages obeyed this command, removing discussion of certain events and eliminated them from all chronological lists about this time period.

In Pesachim (62b) we hear of a “Book of Genealogies” which according to Rashi was a Mishnaic commentary on the Book of Chronicles. This should have contained an enormous wealth of chronological and historical material up to the time of Ezra. The Talmud informs us that this important book was hidden. No reasons are given. Rav is quoted as saying that “since the Book of Genealogies was hidden, the strength of the wise had been weakened and the light of their eyes dimmed.”<sup>3</sup> In Sanhedrin 97b, we find a strict warning about conjecturing the messianic date from the last chapter of Daniel. So we have good grounds to think that the suppression of the chronology was bound up with the suppression of conjecture about the timing of the messianic time period.

It seems coincidental that soon after Ezra and Nehemiah began their work in re-establishing the Second Temple, a new method of counting years was introduced by our Sages – a method that was retained for well over 1,200 years by our people. This refers to the Heshbon HaYevonim.

We are left with a “reconstructed” Jewish Chronology as detailed in this table copied from Rabbi Simon Schwab’s article:

3339	587–86 BCE	First year of Babylonian exile
3386	540–39 BCE	Cyrus conquers Persia
3387	539–38 BCE	Proclamation of Cyrus; Return under Zerubabel
3390	536–35 BCE	Cyrus assumes title of Artahshashta (Emperor); His son Cambys (= Ahashverosh) co-regent; Temple constructions stopped
3391	525–24 BCE	Banquet in Shushan
3395	531–30 BCE	Cyrus dies; Cambys (Ahashverosh) sole ruler; Esther queen
3400	526–25 BCE	Haman’s fall
3401	525–24 BCE	Purim
3403	523–22 BCE	Darius I, the Great
3404	522–21 BCE	Haggai, Zekhariah; Temple building resumed by Zerubabel
3408	518–7 BCE	70 <sup>th</sup> year of Babylonian Exile

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3. *Pesachim* 62b.

3409	517–6 BCE	Dedication of (small) Temple, 18 years after stoppage
	488–87 BCE	Darius I dies
	487–86 BCE	Xerxes King
	484–83 BCE	Greek revolt; war preparations against Persia
	481–80 BCE	Persian navy defeated at Salamis
	480–79 BCE	Battle of Plataea, Persians expelled
	479–78 BCE	End of Persian rule in Europe, one thousand years after Exodus; culturally the “Greek era” begins
	466–65 BCE	Artaxerxes I
	425–24 BCE	Darius II
	405–04 BCE	Artaxerxes II
	384–83 BCE	Nehemiah rebuilds walls of Jerusalem
	373–72 BCE	Nehemiah returns to Shushan
	359–58 BCE	Artaxerxes III (“King of Ashur”) Restoration of Temple begun
	355–54 BCE	Pesah celebration marks end of Restoration (Barukh, Ezra’s teacher, dies in Babel)
	354–53 BCE	Ezra and second gathering of immigrants arrive
	353–52 BCE	Nehemiah returns, Sanctification of Eretz Israel, Counting of Sh’mitta begins
3410	352–3 BCE	Consecration of Walls by Ezra and Nehemiah Beginning of the Second Commonwealth
3427	335–34 BCE	Alexander begins World Conquest
3450	312–11 BCE	Seleucid Era – Minyan Sh’taroth for dating
3830	69–70 CE	Second Temple Destroyed
5783	2023 CE	Present Day





מאתגרת של בדידות חברתית ודיפרסיה. על ידי עיון במשבר המנהיגותי של משה רבינו, ובכך שהתורה מפרטת את בדידותו של משה, ניתן להציע שקיים עוד נדבך של בדידות – בדידות רוחנית. הבדידות הרוחנית יכולה להיות מנותקת מבדידות חברתית, אך לא בהכרח. בדידות הרוחנית של משה נבעה במובן מסוים מבדידותו האנושית, והתגברה עליו. רבות נכתב, ודובר, על כך שעל האדם המאמין לחוש יראה ואהבה כלפי בוראו, ולנסות להתחקות אחר דרכיו ולדבוק בו כמה שאפשר. אך לא רבות דובר על המקרה ההפוך, בו האדם רוצה את דבוקתו וקרבתו של ה' יתברך, אך מרגיש שדווקא הקב"ה הוא זה שמתבודד ממנו.<sup>12</sup> אם הסתר פנים אישי שכזה, שנע בין מחוזות הפסיכולוגיה והרוחניות, מתבטא במשבר חמור אצל המנהיג הגדול ביותר שקם לעם היהודי, הרי שמשבר זה יכול לנחות על כל אחד ואחת מאיתנו.

על כן ניתנת האפשרות כי גם הפתרון אותו הציע הקב"ה למשה, אותו ריפוי כפול פנים – תיקון הבדידות האנושית ועל ידי כך תיקון הבדידות הרוחנית, הוא הפתרון גם למשבר הבדידות בדורנו. בקשת פני ה' על ידי האדם שמולך, חיבור האנושי והרוחני, עטיפת האדם הבודד בחברה שתסובב אותו היא התנאי הראשוני לריפוי. כאשר אנו רואים ומתקשרים אל פניו של האחר, אנו מפיגים מאיתנו שכבת בדידות מסוימת, ובכך פותחים צהר לפגישת פניו של הקב"ה בפניו של האחר. זוהי הבדידות כפולת הפנים של משה רבינו, משבר שטומן בחובו הזדמנות לריפוי גדול.

לָךְ אָמַר לְבִי בִקְשׁוּ פָנַי אֶת פָּנֶיךָ ה' אֲבַקֵּשׁ.  
(תהילים כ"ז, ח)

12. "האדם המאמין, אשר חוויתו הדתית עמוסה מאבקים פנימיים וסתירות, המתלבט בין התלהבות ודביקות באלוקים לבין הרהורי ייאוש שעה שמרגיש כאילו נעזב על ידו, תפקידו קשה מאז ימי אברהם ומשה. תהיה זו יומרה בלתי נסלחת אם אנסה להפוך את חוויית האמונה המלאה סבל בחוויה רוויית הרמוניה וסיפוק." (הגרי"ד סולובייצק, פתיחה, איש האמונה הבודד)

מבקש מהקב"ה שיחליץ אותו מהבדידות וימנה לו עוזרים. ואכן, פס' י"ז סוגר לנו את המעגל, והקב"ה מצווה את משה למנות שבעים זקנים שיהיו יד ימינו של משה אל מול העם:

(טז) ויאמר ה' אל-משה אספה-לי שבעים איש מזקני ישראל אשר ידעת כי-הם זקני העם ושטריו ולקחת אתם אל-אהל מועד והתיצבו שם עמך. (יז) וירדתי ודברתי עמך שם ואצלתי מן-הרוח אשר עליך ושמתי עליהם ונשאו איתך במשא העם ולא-תשא אתה לבדך.

בפסוק ט"ז הקב"ה מחלק את הצייווי לאיסוף שבעים הזקנים בינו לבין משה – האיסוף הוא "לי" – לה' יתברך, בעוד שעל משה לבחור את האנשים עצמם ("אשר ידעת... ולקחת... והתיצבו שם עמך"). הצייווי לאיסוף הזקנים מבטא תהליך ריפוי כפול פנים: האחד, תהליך בו משה אינו מוביל לבדו את העם, השני, תהליך הגיוס עצמו מהווה חיבור מחדש של משה אל העם שתהגודד מולו. איסוף הזקנים כפי ראות עיניו של משה דורש הכרות מעמיקה עם המועמדים הפוטנציאליים, ועל ידי כך משה יצא מבדידותו האנושית-הנהגתית.

אך מה בנוגע לבדידותו העמוקה והרוחנית? הקב"ה לא רק ממנה עוזרים בשר ודם למשה, אלא מחדש איתו את הברית. בפסוק י"ז מתואר שהקב"ה יירד אל משה וידבר איתו. זהו מאזכר לנאמר במעמד הר סיני (שמות י"ט כ):

וַיֵּרֶד ה' עַל-הָרַ סִינַי אֶל-רֹאשׁ הָהָר וַיִּקְרָא ה' לְמֹשֶׁה אֶל-רֹאשׁ הָהָר וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה:

ישנה הקבלה בין כל שלושת חלקי הפסוק: ירידה, דיבור, עלייה. הקב"ה ירד מכסא כבודו גם בפרשיה שלנו וגם במעמד הר סיני. בנוגע לחלק האחרון, לעליה, אנו רואים את השינוי – אם במעמד הר סיני עלה משה לבדו אל ההר, הרי שכאן הזקנים נושאים<sup>10</sup> את העול ביחד עם משה, במידה מסוימת עולים איתו ביחד. ייחודו של משה רבינו עדיין נשמר בשיח האינטימי שלו עם הקב"ה,<sup>11</sup> ובכך למעשה מתרפא משה מבדידותו כפולת הפנים – הן אל מול העם והן אל מול הקב"ה. זהו האקורד הראשון של תחילת פתרון המשבר הרוחני של משה.

## סיכום

במאמר זה התחקנו אחר סיפור חטא המתאווים, בדגש על משברו הרוחני של משה רבינו והתיקון שהציע לכך הקב"ה. ראינו כי בדידותו כפולת הפנים של משה רבינו (מבודד מהעם ומבודד מהקב"ה) נפתרה על ידי מינוי 70 הזקנים (פותר את הבדידות מהעם) ומחידוש הברית האינטימית בינו לבין הקב"ה כפי שהיה במעמד הר סיני (פותר את הבדידות מהקב"ה). נשאר לנו לענות על השאלה שאיתה פתחנו – מה לנו, לומדי ולומדות התנ"ך לקחת מסיפור זה? מדוע התורה בחרה לשתף את לומדי התנ"ך בסיפור משבר ההנהגה החמור זה, ומהו מוסר ההשכל שעלינו למצות מבין שבריו?

המושג בדידות הוא מושג מאתגר בעולם הנפש האנושית. לעתים אנו מדמיינים את האדם הבודד כאדם שהחברה מבודדת אותו, כאחד שלא בחר בכך, כאחד שנכפתה עליו מציאות

10. שורש נ.ש.א משמש גם בתור התנשאות, התעלות.

11. ראו משנה תורה, הלכות יסודי התורה, פרק ז הלכה ו'. ישנו גם מודל הפוך, כפי שמתואר בתהלים קל"ט, ז-ח: אָנָּה אֵלֶּךָ מְרוֹחֶךָ וְאַנְהָ מִפְּנֵיךָ אֲבָרַח? אִם-אֶסֶק שְׁמִיָּם שָׁם אֶתָּה וְאֶצִּיעָה שְׂאוֹל הָנֶף.

והן מבודד מה' יתברך (בכך שאינו רואה עם הקב"ה עין בעין). משה רבינו נותר לבדו במערכה, ועל רקע זה ייתכן ויובן לנו למה דווקא עכשיו הוא עובר את המשבר הקשה בתולדותיו.

### למה לא מצאתי חן בעיניך

החל בפרשית הסנה הבוער (שמות ג'), דרך פרשיות מי מריבה (שמות יז ובמדבר כ') ועד פרשיות שניים וחצי השבטים (במדבר לב), מהלך חייו של משה רבינו רצופים במשברים ביחסו אל העם והעם אליו, וכן ביחסו לקב"ה ולשליחות שהטיל עליו. אך נדמה כי אין אירוע שמשתווה בחומרתו ובעוצמתו למשבר שחווה משה רבינו בפרשיה שלנו, פרשיית המתאווים. התורה מתארת על פני כ-5 פסוקים את טענותיו הקשות של משה רבינו כלפי הקב"ה לאחר תלוונות העם:

(א) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־ה' לָמָּה הִרְעֵתָ לְעַבְדְּךָ וְלָמָּה לֹא־מָצֵיתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְשׁוֹם אֶת־מִשְׁאֵל כָּל־הָעָם הַזֶּה עָלַי: (ב) הָאֲנֹכִי הִרִיתִי אֶת כָּל־הָעָם הַזֶּה אִם־אֲנֹכִי יִלְדֹתִיהוּ כִּי־תֹאמַר אֵלַי שְׂאֵהוּ בְּחִיקָךְ כְּאִשּׁוֹר יִשָּׂא הָאָמֶן אֶת־הַיֶּנֶק עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְתָּיו: (ג) מֵאֵין לִי בָשָׂר לִתֵּת לְכָל־הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּי־יִבְכוּ עָלַי לֵאמֹר תִּנְהַלְנוּ בָשָׂר וְנֹאכְלָה: (ד) לֹא־אוּכַל אֲנֹכִי לִבְדִּי לְשַׂאת אֶת־כָּל־הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּי כָבֵד מִמֶּנִּי: (ה) וְאִם־כָּכָה אֶת־עֲשֵׂה לִי הֲרֹגִנִי נָא הֲרֹג אֶם־מִצָּאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְאֶל־אַרְאָה בְּרַעְתִּי:

משה מצטרף לאווירה השוררת בעם וגם הוא פונה בתלוונות כלפי הקב"ה. תלוונותיו של משה אף יותר חריפות משל העם. בזמן שהעם מתחרט על יציאתו ממצרים, משה מתחרט גם על עצם השליחות וגם על עצם קיומו. עלינו להדגיש שלמעשה נשברה כאן המשוואה. הרי עד כה רגילים היינו למשוואה בה כאשר ישנה התנגשות בין העם לבין שדרת ההנהגה, העם עומד מצד אחד ומשה עומד עם הקב"ה מהצד השני,<sup>7</sup> או שלפחות משה משמש כמתווך בין העם לבין הקב"ה (כפי שראינו בפרשיית המתאוננים). הרי שהנה שובר השוויון שגורם למשה והקב"ה לא לנכוח באותה הפוזיציה. ברצוני להציע שעל רקע משבר זה, מובנת גם תלוונותו של משה על הנהגת היחיד שלו: "לא אוכל אנכי לבדי לשאת את כל העם הזה". הוא מבין שהוא בודד במערכה ונמצא בפוזיציה הנהגתית בעייתית – הן מול העם, והן מול הקב"ה. הוא לבדו לא יכול להתמודד מול כוח העם המאוחד למשפחותיו, ובטח שלא מול כעסו הרב של הקב"ה.<sup>8</sup> החזקוני מוסיף שמשבר הבדידות של משה מגיע גם בעקבות מות הקצינים של העם בעקבות חטא המתאוננים.<sup>9</sup> ייתכן ומשה תלה תקוותיו בכך שלפחות הקצינים של העם יהיו עזרה ויד נוספת בהנהגת העם, אך הקב"ה מנע ממנו גם את זה.

אם כן, ניתן לסכם ולומר כי בדידותו של משה רבינו הבאה לידי ביטוי במשבר האישי וההנהגתי שלו לאחר חטא המתאווים היא ביטוי לבדידות עמוקה יותר, רוחנית. הוא אינו רואה "עין בעין" את הסיטואציה עם הקב"ה מצד אחד, ועם העם מצד שני. בפעם הראשונה משה עומד לבד במתסר, ומנסה לנווט ללא הצלחה בין הכוחות האימתניים הדוחפים אותו. רגע לפני יאוש הוא

7. ראו לדוגמה בחטא המרגלים (במדבר יד) בו משה רבינו מייעץ לקב"ה כיצד לפעול עם העם.  
8. משה מדמה את עצמו להורה: "האנכי היריתי את כל־העם הזה אם־אנכי ילדתיהו". ניתן לראות כאן הקבלה ספרותית לתיאור הכתוב על אחדות העם "למשפחותם". אל מול האחדות של המשפחתית של העם, משה עומד לבד, כהורה של העם שאינו הרה את העם. ומנסה להתמודד לבדו עם הסיטואציה.  
9. ויהי העם כמתאננים רע באזני ה' וישמע ה' ויחר אפו ותבער־בם אש ה' ותאכל בקצה המחנה" (במדבר י"א, א) אחד הפי' רושים של "בקצה המחנה" אלו הקצינים של העם (רש"י שם).

הקודמת,<sup>6</sup> התורה מציינת גם את תגובתו של משה רבינו: "ובעיני משה רע." מהו הדבר שרע בעיני משה? לכאורה, מפשט הפסוק מובן שכשם שבקשת העם שלילית בעיני הקב"ה כך היא שלילית בעיני משה. אך קשה, אם באמת כך, לשם מה מובאת תגובתו של משה לבקשה? הלא היה מספיק אם הכתוב היה מתאר את תגובתו של הקב"ה בלבד, ולא מוסיף את תגובתו של משה רבינו (כשם שלא הוסיף בפרשיית המתאוננים). ועוד, אם אכן נאמר שהתיאור הוא בכך שתגובתו של משה היא שבקשת העם לבשר היא שלילית, מדוע הכתוב משנה את צורת תיאורה של תגובת משה לעומת תיאורה של תגובת הקב"ה? בזמן ש"ויחר אף ה' מאוד" – "בעיני משה רע." משה רואה בעיניו שמשוהו רע, אך מהו הדבר אשר רע למשה? על כך אומר ר' חיים בן עטר בפירושו אור החיים (ד"ה ובעיני):

עוד ירצה על זה הדרך שרע בעיני משה מה שחרה ה' אפו מאד כל כך, וכמאמרם ז"ל (ספרי ח"א צ"ה) שהראה ה' למשה פורענות שעתיד להביא ואמר לפניו רבונו של עולם וכי הגון הוא שתתן להם בשר ותהרגם?

על פי קריאתו של אור החיים, המבוססת על מדרש המובא בספרי, תגובתו של משה אינה מגיעה כהקבלה לתגובתו של הקב"ה, ואינה מופנת כלל כלפי תלונות העם. דרשתו המפתיעה מלמדת כי כאשר התורה מתארת שבעיני משה רע, היא מכוונת לכך שבעיני משה הבעיה נמצאת בתגובתו של הקב"ה לבקשת העם, ולא בבקשת העם עצמה. על פי קריאה רדיקלית זו, התגובה של הקב"ה אינה פרופורציונאלית בעיני משה רבינו – "וכי הגון שתתן להם בשר ותהרגם?" קריאה זו מזכירה לנו את טענתו של אברהם אבינו כלפי הקב"ה, כאשר רצה הקב"ה להשמיד את סדום ועמורה עם כל הצדיקים שבעיר (בראשית י"ח כ"ה):

חָלָלָה לָךְ מַעֲשֵׂת כַּדְּבָר הַזֶּה לְהַמִּית צְדִיק עִם־רָשָׁע וְהִיא כְּצִדִּיק כְּרָשָׁע חָלָלָה לָךְ הַשֹּׁפֵט כָּל־הָאָרֶץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט:

כשם שאברהם אבינו נעמד אל מול תגובת הקב"ה וטען שאינה מוסרית, כך עומד משה רבינו ומראה לקב"ה שאין הוא מרוצה מתגובתו החריפה כנגד חטא העם. על תפילה מלחמתית זו, שבו האדם אינו עומד אל מול ה' אלא כנגד ה', כותב הרב אליהו דסלר (מכתב מאליהו ח"ב, מלחמת הצדיקים בתפילתם, עמ' 184):

שטוען הצדיק שסובל מהנהגת שמים שיש בה הסתר לחסדי ה', כי הכרתו בחסדיו יתברך מופרעת ע"י זה, ורואה בזה כעין חילול ה' בתוך עצמו, ומרגיש שעבודתו סובלת מזה. ועל כן מחלה את פני ה' לשנות את ההנהגה, כי זולת זה אינו יכול להמשיך בעבודתו על סהרתה... וזו היא בחינת תפילה של מלחמה, כי זוכה הוא בדין, בזכות עצמו.

כתיבת תגובתו של משה חשובה כאן. הצבתה באותו הפסוק עם תגובתו של הקב"ה מבטאת את הניגוד שבין שניהם, שמשה והקב"ה "לא רואים עין בעין" את המקרה. אם כן, ניתן לומר שלמעשה משה רבינו מוצא את עצמו מבודד הן מהעם (שהתקבץ משפחות משפחות כנגדו)

6. מעניין לחשוב על תפקידה של הוספת מילת תואר הפועל "מאוד" בהקשר של תגובת הקב"ה בפרשת המתאוננים. תיאור זה לא מופיע בתגובת הקב"ה בפרשת המתאוננים.

לעומת זאת, פרשנים אחרים עמדו דווקא על עקרון המשפחתיות שבתלונות העם, כפי שמתבטא בביטוי הייחודי "בוכה למשפחותיו". רש"י (ד"ה בכה) מסביר: "משפחות משפחות נאספים ובוכים לפרסם תרעמתן בגלוי". על פי קריאתו של רש"י, העם נאסף משפחות משפחות – מעין הפגנת כח משפחתית כנגד הקב"ה ומשה. אכן עזרא (ד"ה בכה) אף לוקח צעד אחד קדימה, ומדמה את התאבלות המשפחות על האוכל שבמצרים להתאבלות משפחה על מת קרוב: "שהתחברו המשפחות לבכות כאשר יעשו בבכותם על מת". על פי קריאה זו, התלונות והקושי גורמות לעם ישראל להתחבר אחד לשני. המשפחות מתלכדות, אנשים יוצאים מבדידותם ומוצאים תמיכה אחד בשני למען מטרה משותפת שחשובה להם – התאוה לבשר.

ישנו הבדל משמעותי בין קריאת הגמרא, שמעמידה את התלונות על עסקי עריות<sup>4</sup> לבין קריאתם של רוב הפרשנים<sup>5</sup> על כך שמדובר במן התקבצות של העם בתלונה נגד משה והקב"ה. על פי הקריאה הראשונה, העם מתלונן על עצם ההגבלות ההלכתיות שהוטלו עליו, אך תלונות אלו אינן מופנות במישרין כנגד שדרת ההנהגה של העם. בעוד שעל פי הקריאה השנייה, ישנה מעין התגודדות, כמעט מרד, של העם במשה רבינו ובקב"ה. נקודה זו מתחדדת לאור תיאור תגובתו של משה רבינו לתלונה, כפי שנראה להלן.

### ובעיני משה רע

על פי סמיכות המקראות, התורה הצמידה את פרשיית המתאווים אל פרשיית תלונה אחרת, פרשיית המתאוננים (פס' א-ג):

(א) וַיְהִי הָעָם כְּמִתְאַנְנִים רַע בְּאָזְנֵי ה' וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' וַיַּחַר אַפּוֹ וַתִּבְעַר-בָּם אֵשׁ ה' וַתֹּאכַל בְּקֶצֶה הַמַּחֲנֶה: (ב) וַיִּצְעַק הָעָם אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל מֹשֶׁה אֶל ה' וַתִּשְׁקַע הָאֵשׁ: (ג) וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם-הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא תִבְעָרָה כִּי-בָעָרָה בָּם אֵשׁ ה':

על אף קצרותה של פרשיה זו, שאלות רבות עולות ממנה בשל סתמיותה. אין ברצוני להכנס לשאלות אלו במאמר זה, אלא להתמקד בניתוח ספרותי קצר על פרשיה קצרה זו. שמו של הקב"ה מופיע 3 פעמים בפסוק הראשון, ובסך הכל כ-5 פעמים על פני שלושת הפסוקים. לעומת זאת, שמו של משה רבינו מופיע פעמיים, ורק בפסוק ב'. בנוסף, פעמיים אלו הן צמודות, כאשר רק המילה "ויתפלל" מפרידה ביניהן. ניתוח מעין זה יעלה מספר מסקנות:

1. מושא התלונה של עם ישראל אינו משה רבינו אלא הקב"ה.
2. משה רבינו משמש ככלי מתפלל, מעין מתווך, בין צעקת עם ישראל לבין רחמי הקב"ה.
3. חוץ מתפקיד תיווכי זה, אין התורה מגלה לנו מהי תגובתו של משה לתלונה (ומהי בכלל התלונה?)

סמיכות פרשיות אלו אומר דרשני, לאור ההבדלים המהותיים שבתאור תפקידו של משה בכל אחד מהפרשיות. בניגוד לפרשיית המתאוננים, בה משה משמש כמתווך בלבד, כמעט פסיבי, בפרשיית המתאווים התורה לא חוסכת בתיאור תגובתו של משה רבינו לתלונה. לאחר שהתורה מתארת את תגובת ה': "ויחר אף ה' מאוד", תגובה שהיא בסך הכל דומה לתגובתו שבפרשיה

4. דעה מובאת גם היא כפירוש שני ברש"י הנ"ל; כך גם מפרש הכלי יקר.

5. בכיוון פרשני זה הולכים גם הבכור שור, העמק דבר ועוד.

בכדי לפתוח פתח למענה על שאלות אלה, אבקש להתמקד במאמר זה באחד מסיפורי הבדידות המתאגרים בתנ"ך – סיפור בדידותו של משה רבינו כפי שעולה מתגובתו לפרשיית חטא המתאווים שמופיעה בפרשת בהעלותך, ספר במדבר פרק י"א. הרקע לסיפור זה הוא מיאוסם של עם ישראל במן הנסי שהוריד להם הקב"ה במדבר, אל מול הרצון העז שלהם ("התאוה", כלשון התורה), לאכול דווקא בשר.

אבקש להאיר, על ידי קריאה טקסטואלית ופרשנית, צד אחר בתגובתו של משה רבינו לחטא המתאווים (קברות התאוה). צד שנותן ביטוי הן לצורת הסיפור כפי שמספרת אותו התורה, והן לעצם תוכן התגובה של הקב"ה לזעקתו של משה רבינו.

### בכה למשפחותיו

בספר במדבר פרק י"א, מסופר על תלונותיו של עמ"י כלפי משה רבינו:

והאספסף אשר בקרבו התאוה וישבו ויבכו גם בני ישראל ויאמרו מי יאכלנו בשר. וזכרנו את־הדגה אשר־נאכל במצרים חנם את הקשאים ואת האבטחים ואת־החציר ואת־הבצלים ואת־השומים. ועתה נפשנו יבשה אין כל בלתי אל־המן עינינו... וישמע משה את־העם בוכה למשפחותיו איש לפתח אהלו ויחראף ה' מאד ובעיני משה רע. (במדבר י"א, ד'-י')

עם ישראל רוצה בשר. המן השמימי, הנסי, לא מספיק לו. לעם ישראל נמאס לאכול מהמן שעליו אומרת התורה "וְהָמָן כְּזָרַע־גֹּד הוּא וְעֵינֵינוּ כְּעֵין הַבְּדֵלָח" (פס' ו). הרוח האנושית, כך מסתבר, לא מספיק חזקה מול תאוות החומר הגופני – הבשר יותר חזק מהמזון השמימי, שעל אף הנס שבו אינו משביע את תאוות היצר. בפסוק י' מובאות שתי תגובות אחת על יד השניה. הראשונה של הקב"ה ("ויחראף ה' מאד") והשניה של משה רבינו ("ובעיני משה רע"). פסוק זה מעלה מספר שאלות פרשניות וערכיות. ברצוני להתמקד בשתי שאלות מהותיות בעצם תיאור צמד התגובות של משה ושל הקב"ה זה לצד זה: האם תגובתם של הקב"ה ושל משה שוות? ולשם מה מוזכרת תגובתו של משה בסיפור כלל? בכדי להבין את פשר תגובתו של משה, יש לעמוד על המשמעות של תחילת פסוק י': "וישמע משה את העם בוכה למשפחותיו איש לפתח אהלו". הפרשנים דנים במשמעות הביטוי "בוכה למשפחותיו". הגמרא (יומא ע"ה ע"א) מעמידה את משמעות המילה "למשפחותיו" שבפסוק דווקא בהקשר של דיני עריות:

בשלמא למאן דאמר [נניח לשיטת מי שאומר] שהכוונה לעריות – היינו דכתיב [זהו שנאמר]: "וישמע משה את העם בכה למשפחותיו" (במדבר יא, י) וכוונתו: על עסקי משפחותיו, שנאסרו להם לשכב אצלם. אלא למאן דאמר [לשיטת מי שאומר] שהכוונה לדגים, מאי [מה פירוש] "בוכה למשפחותיו", מה ענין משפחות לכאן? ומשיבים: הא והא הואי [זה וזה היה] שבכו גם על דיני עריות, וגם על המן כפשוטו.<sup>3</sup>

מסקנת הגמרא היא שעם ישראל התלונן הן על חוסר הגיוון שבאכילת המן, והן על איסורי העריות שנצטוו בהם לאחר שיצאו ממצרים. עם ישראל אינו בוכה רק על הרצון לאכול בשר, אלא אף על דיני ואיסורי עריות, "על עסקי משפחות" כפי שמכנה זאת הגמרא ביומא.

3. פירוש הרב עדין אבן ישראל (שטיינזלץ), זמין באתר ספריא.

# בין בדידות אנושית לבדידות רוחנית: קריאה בפרשיית חטא המתאווים

רב עידן רקובסקי

## פתיחה

בעידן ההוליוודי בו אנו חיים, המנהיג האידיאלי נתפס לא פעם כגיבור על כל יכול, קרוב לשלמות, חסר מנוח ונטול תשישות. אל מול דוגמה זו, מפתיע לראות כי דווקא התנ"ך, ספר הספרים, מציג תשובה אחרת לשאלה "מיהו המנהיג האידיאלי?" הרי לא מעט מגיבורי התנ"ך מוצגים לכתחילה כלא מושלמים, כבעלי לקות מסוימת. ממשה רבינו כבד הפה והלשון, דרך דוד הצעיר מבין אחיו גיבורי החיל, וכלה בירמיהו הנביא חסר הייחוס, גיבורי התנ"ך אינם גיבורי העל ההוליוודים, ודווקא עובדה זו מעמידה את התנ"ך כמגדלור.<sup>1</sup> אורו מאיר לנו את הצד הפחות מוכר, כנה, ואנושי של הגיבור. צד זה בא לידי ביטוי לא רק בהיות המנהיג בעל פגמים, אלא בכך שאותו המנהיג, גדול ככל שיהיה, לעתים נשבר ולעתים מתייאש. על האנטי גיבור המקראי, הגיבור בעל הלקויות האנושיות, מסופר פעמים לא מעטות בתנ"ך כי נופל הוא למשבר.<sup>2</sup> לרוב, החידוש שבסיפורים אלו לא יהיה בנפילה עצמה, גם לא בהכרח בנסיבות שגרמו לנפילה זו. ברצוני למצוא את החידוש דווקא בעצם הגילוי של משבר זה ללומדי התנ"ך, ולשאל – מה עלינו, לומדי ולומדות התנ"ך, להבין ולהפנים לחיינו אנו מתוך משברים אלה?

1. נקודה זו נכונה הן לצד המנהיגותי והן לצד הרוחני, כדברי המדרש: אמר רבי יהושע הכהן בר נחמיה: בשעה שנגלה הקדוש ברוך הוא אל משה, טירון היה משה לנבואה (שמות רבה, ג, א).

2. ראו לדוגמא בראשית ב' י"ח, מלכים א' י"ט, יונה ד'.

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וגם זה רק בדברי תורה, אבל במילי דעלמא לא מצינו כלל שיש הנהגה לשאול את החכמים בדברים גשמיים, וכמו שכתב התניא באגרת הקודש (פרק כב), וז"ל, אהוביי אחיי ורעיי מאהבה מסותרת תוכחת מגולה, לכו נא ונוכחה זכור ימות עולם בינו שנות דור ודור ההיתה כזאת מימות עולם ואיה איפה מצאתם מנהג זה באחד מכל ספרי חכמי ישראל הראשונים והאחרונים להיות מנהג ותיקין לשאול בעצה גשמיות כדת מה לעשות בעניני העולם הגשמי אף לגדולי חכמי ישראל הראשונים כתנאים ואמוראים אשר כל רז לא אנס להו ונהירין להון שבילין דרקי, כי אם לנביאים ממש אשר היו לפנים בישראל כשמואל הרואה אשר הלך אליו שאול לדרוש ה' על דבר האתונות שנאבדו לאביו כו', ע"כ.

ובאמת צריך הגדרה ברורה מה נכלל בכלל 'דעת תורה' ומה לא. דודאי הדבר פשוט שמי ששקוע בעיון התורה יהיה לו דעה צלולה על פי התורה כדת מה לעשות גם בעניני העולם, וכמ"ש הרב יוסף דוב סולובייצ'יק בהספדו על הרב חיים עוזר גרודזנסקי זצ"ל, שאותו כהן מורה שדעתו שקוע בקדושת תורתו של רבי עקיבא ורבי אלעזר, של אביו ורבא, של הרמב"ם והראב"ד, הב"י והרמ"א, היה גם יכול להבחין ברוח קדשו לידע העצה הישרה לכל עניני העולם המשתנים לפי העתים והזמנים (ע' "נושא הציץ והחושן" בספר דברי הגות והערכה מאת הרב סולובייצ'יק, עמ' 192).

אבל גם דברים אלו משתנים לפי המצב והענין ולפי האדם. וכבר כתב הג"ר אברהם יצחק בלוך מטעלז שמאד קשה ליתן תשובה ברורה על פי ההלכה בדברים של השקפה וכדו' הקשורים לחלק האגדה של התורה. ואי אפשר ליתן בזה הוראה אחת הקובעת לכל אחד, כיון שדברים כאלו תלויים במידה גדולה לפי טבעו ומצבו הפרטי של כל יחיד ויחיד בפרט, וגם תלויים בתנאי הזמן והמקום ועוד. וז"ל הג"ר יצחק הוטנר זצ"ל (פחד יצחק, אגרות וכתבים) באגרת למי ששאל ממנו עצה, ...ועל כן אי אפשר בשום אופן בזמנינו ליעץ ולהורות בהליכות עולמו של אדם צעיר מאנשי שלומינו על יסוד השוואות ודימויים, ולדרוש סמוכים מנפש אחת לחברתה. ועל כן מכיון שאינני מכיר אותך, יש כאן חשש של עצה שאינה הוגנת, וחלילה לי להורות וליעץ בכגון זה. אבל אחת אני יכול להבטיח אותך, כי אם תשתמשי כהוגן בכשרונותיך ובכוחותיך (כפי שנגלו לפני בכתבתך), כי אז יתהפכו כל הפגמים והליקויים של חינוךך בעבר (שאתה קובלת עליהם כל כך) למכשיר רב ברכה של השפעה על הזולת בכיוון הרצוי לאנשי שלומינו, עכ"ל.

ונסיים נא בדברי אליהו ואלישע (מלכים ב' ב, ט), ויהי כעברם ואליהו אמר אל אלישע שאל מה אעשה לך בטרם אלקח מעמך ויאמר אלישע ויהי נא פי שנים ברוחך אלי. ופי' המלבי"ם וז"ל, ביקש שרוח אליהו תנוח עליו כמ"ש נחה רוח אליהו על אלישע, ושכלל זה תשאר לו גם ההשגה הקודמת שהיה לו עד עתה, בזה יהיה לו פי שנים, רוח עצמו, ורוח אליהו המצטרף עמו, וזה שאמר ויהי נא פי שנים ע"י שרוחך נצטרף אלי, עכ"ל.

ענין הסדר וקיום והגדת לבנך ודאי הוא שהבנים ישאלו, אבל התכלית וסוף דבר הוא שהם עצמם ידעו התשובה וישיבו בעצמם על השאלות. החינוך האמיתי הוא לחנך את הבנים לשאול, ולהורותם דרכי התשובה, עד שמעצמם יוכלו להשיב על שאלתם. וכל זה נרמז בהעדרו של משה רבינו ע"ה מהגדה של פסח, שאנו הוצרכנו לו למשה כל כך עד שלימד אותנו שלא נצטרך לו, והוא נעלם מההגדה ללמדינו ולזרזינו ללמוד בעצמינו ולעורר את נקודת ה'משה רבינו' שבכל דור ודור, שהוא בכלל ישראל בכלל, ותוך כל אחד ואחד בפרט.

ה.

ובפרשת שופטים (יז, ח-יג) נאמר, "כי יפלא ממך דבר למשפט וגו' וקמת ועלית אל המקום אשר יבחר ה' אלקיך בו. ובאת אל הכהנים הלויים ואל השופט אשר יהיה בימים ההם ודרשת והגידו לך את דבר המשפט. ועשית על פי הדבר אשר יגידו לך מן המקום ההוא אשר אמר ה' ושמרת לעשות ככל אשר יורוך. על פי התורה אשר יורוך ועל המשפט אשר יאמרו לך תעשה לא תסור מן הדבר אשר יגידו לך ימין ושמאל. והאיש אשר יעשה בזדון לבלתי שמע אל הכהן העומד לשרת שם את ה' אלקיך או אל השופט ומת האיש ההוא ובערת הרע מישראל. וכל ישראל ישמעו ויראו ולא יזידון עוד." וכתב הרמב"ם (ריש הל' ממרים), "בית דין הגדול שבירושלים הם עיקר תורה שבעל פה והם עמודי ההוראה ומהם חק ומשפט יוצא לכל ישראל ועליהן הבטיח התורה שנאמר על פי התורה אשר יורוך זו מצות עשה, וכל המאמין במשה רבינו ובתורתו חייב לסמוך מעשה הדת עליהן ולישען עליהן." עכ"ל.

הרי שהחמירה תורה מאד שיהיה בית דין אחד לכל ישראל ושהכל יעשו חוקה אחת ומשפט אחד על פיהם. ועד כדי כך הדברים מגיעים, עד שחייבה תורה מיתה לזקן ממרא את פיהם וחולק עליהם. וז"ל השו"ע בהלכות כבוד רבו ות"ח (יו"ד סי' רמ"ב ס"ב-ס"ג), כל החולק על רבו כחולק על השכינה, וכל העושה מריבה עם רבו כעושה עם השכינה, וכל המתנערם עליו כאילו מתנערם על השכינה, וכל המהרהר אחר רבו כמהרהר אחר השכינה, ע"כ.

אולם מבואר שזה רק בבית הדין הגדול שבירושלים, אבל משנתבטל ב"ד הגדול, אין הדבר כן, אלא כל בית דין וכל חכם שיעמוד מותר לו, והוא גם חייב, לפסוק הדין על פי הבנתו בתורה. וזה מבואר בדברי הרמב"ם בהקדמתו לספר היד החזקה וז"ל, ואחר בית דין של רב אשי שחיבר הגמרא נתפזרו ישראל בכל הארצות פיזור יתר והגיעו לקצוות ואיים הרחוקים.. אלא מתקבצים יחידים השרידים אשר ה' קורא בכל עיר ועיר ובכל מדינה ומדינה ועוסקין בתורה ומבינים בחיבורי החכמים כולם ויודעים מהם דרך המשפט היאך הוא. וכל בית דין שעמד אחר הגמרא בכל מדינה ומדינה וגזר או התקין או הנהיג לבני מדינתו או לבני מדינות רבות, לא פשטו מעשיו בכל ישראל מפני רחוק מושבותיהם ושיבוש הדרכים, והיות בית דין של אותה מדינה יחידים ובית דין הגדול של שבעים ואחד בטל מכמה שנים קודם חיבור הגמרא. לפיכך אין כופין אנשי מדינה זו לנהוג כמנהג מדינה האחרת, ואין אומרים לבית דין זה לגזור גזירה שגזרה בית דין אחר במדינתו. וכן אם למד אחד מהגאונים שדרך המשפט כך הוא ונתבאר לבית דין אחר שעמד אחריו שאין זה דרך המשפט הכתוב בגמרא, אין שומעין לראשון אלא למי שהדעת נוטה לדבריו בין ראשון בין אחרון, עכ"ל.

ודוגמא לזה מצינו בשו"ת קול מבשר להג"ר משולם ראטה (ח"א סי' יג) שנשאל על מה שהציעו אחרי המלחמה להכריז חרם לדרוך על אדמת גרמניה, וכתב שאנו אין כוחינו יפה בדור זה להכריז על חרם ולגזור איסור חדש על כל יהודי בכל העולם. והביא סמוכין לזה מדברי הרמב"ם הנ"ל. וכתב עוד, דיש שרצו ללמוד ממה שיש חרם שלא לדור בספרד, והשיב על זה, חדא, שלא מצא מקור לזה כלל, ועוד, שאפילו אם יש חרם כזה, היינו רק שגזרו הם על עצמם ועל בני מדינתם, אבל לגזור גזירה חדשה על כל ישראל, זה לא מצינו.

מ"מ גם תלמיד שלומד מרבו אין לו לקבל כל דברי רבו בלי לחקור בהן ולשאול שאלות, אלא אדרבה צריך לשאול כל דבר ודבר על מנת לבררו הדק היטב עד שיבין הדברים מעצמו ויעמוד על דעת רבו, ועד שיעשה הוא עצמו ל'רב'. וכל זה מבואר בדברי הרמב"ם בהל' תלמוד תורה (פרק ד' הלכה ו-ח) שהביא כל דיני שאלת תלמיד לרב, והזכיר שם לשון 'שאלה' יותר מעשר פעמים, שהרי זה כל יסוד אופן לימוד הרב לתלמיד, שצריך לעוררו ולעודדו בשאלותיו, ולהשיב עליהן.

ורמז לזה מצינו לגבי משה רבינו ע"ה בעצמו. שבאמת תחילת הכרתינו את משה רבינו, והפעם הראשונה שהוזכר בתורה, הוא ע"י שאלה, והוא מש"כ (שמות ב, יג) "ויצא ביום השני והנה שני אנשים עברים נצים ויאמר לרשע למה תכה רעך." הרי תחילת דבריו של משה רבינו בעצמו היה בשאלת 'למה', וכל זה לעורר את האדם לחשוב, להתבונן, להתעמק, עד שישאל את רבו, וישאל את עצמו, וע"י דרך זו של 'שאלה ותשובה' יבוא להשיג סוף הדבר ועומקו.

ד.

והנה עם בני ישראל, באי הארץ אחרי מות משה עבד ה', היו יכולים לחשוב שאי אפשר לחיות הלאה בלי משה רבינו, והלא הוא הוא שהוציאנו ממצרים, וקרע לנו את הים, והוריד לנו את המן, וכן שאר כל הנסים אשר שלחו ה' לעשות. הוא הוא שקיבל תורה מסיני ומסרה לנו, ולימד לכל ישראל את "זאת התורה אשר שם משה לפני בני ישראל." ואיך נוכל להמשיך בלעדו, ומי יורה דעה ומי יבין שמועה? ובאמת שגם משה רבינו בעצמו ביקש וחזר וביקש שתינתן לו רשות ליכנס לארץ, וכמש"כ (דברים ג, כה) "אעברה נא ואראה את הארץ הטובה אשר בעבר הירדן," עד שאמר לו הקב"ה שלא יוכל ליכנס, וכמ"ש (דברים לד, ד) "ויאמר ה' אליו זאת הארץ אשר נשבעתי לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב לאמר לזרעך אתננה הראיתיך בעיניך ושמה לא תעבור."

אלא שבאמת כך היה צריך להיות, שאחר ארבעים שנה שכבר זכו ישראל לעמוד על דעת רבם, עבודתם היתה לחיות חיי התורה בלי משה רבינו. וכדברים האלה מצינו בפרשת בהעלותך, כשאמר יהושע "אדני משה כלאם" (במדבר יא, כח), אמר לו משה (שם פסוק כט) "ומי יתן כל עם ה' נביאים כי יתן ה' את רוחו עליהם." וביאר הג"ר שמשון רפאל הירש זצ"ל, שזה לימוד לכל מנהיגי ישראל בכל הדורות, שעיקר התועלת והתוחלת ממעשיהם הוא שלא יהיה צורך בהם. והיינו, שהם צריכים להביא את כלל ישראל בכללו למצב ומדרגה מאד נעלה עד שלא יצטרכו לרב ומורה, וכמ"ש (ישעיה ס, כא) "ועמך כולם צדיקים, והוא מ"ש בפרקי אבות (פ"א מ"א) "והעמידו תלמידים הרבה."

וכע"ז מצינו בדברי המשך חכמה בפרשת שלח (יג, ל), וז"ל, "ויהס כלב את העם אל משה ויאמר עלה נעלה." הענין, דהמה היו מפחדים, מפני ששמעו מאלדד ומידד מתנבאים, משה מת ויהושע מכניס לארץ, וראו כי משה לא מיחה בהם ולא גזר עליהם, וא"כ, להיכנס בארץ ולהלחם עם עמלק אשר כבר נכשלו בו, ועם ענקים, בלא משה, הלא יפלו כולם לפי חרב. ולכן השתיק כלב את העם במה שיחסו המופתים אל משה, כי אדרבא, גדולתו תלוי בכם, שכל זמן שהיו נזופים במדבר לא נתייחד הדיבור עם משה. ולכן אמר כלב עלה נעלה בעצמינו, בלא משה, כי אין משה סיבה אצל ה' להנהיגה הניסית, רק האומה הישראלית בעצמה היא ראויה להשגחה האלקית הפרטית, עכ"ל, ועיי"ש עוד.

יוצא מצות קידוש, דאין זכירת יצ"מ מעכב במצות קידוש, רק יש בזה ביטול מצות זכירת יצ"מ כתיקונה, דכל הזכרת יצ"מ בקידוש אינה מדין קידוש כלל אלא מדין זכירת יצ"מ, עכ"ד.

הרי למדנו שיש מושג של זכירת יצ"מ שניתקן להזכירו ביחד עם מצוה אחרת, ואינה הזכרה מדין אותה מצוה אחרת אלא מדין זכירת יצ"מ עצמה. וה"נ בנידון דידן, אף שנאמר שיש דין זכירת יצ"מ שצריכה להאמר ביחד עם סיפור יצ"מ בליל פסח, מ"מ אין זה מדין סיפור אלא מדין זכירה, שזכירת יצ"מ מחייבת להזכיר אותה גם בתוך סיפור יצ"מ של ליל פסח.

ונראה בביאור הדברים, דלמדנו בזה חידוש גדול. שיש זמנים מיוחדים שיש בהם קדושת היום מיוחדת, אבל אי"ז גורע ולא מונע מה שיש בכל יום ויום איזה 'קדושת היום' מצד זכירת יציאת מצרים. ואף גם יום השבת ויום חג המצות אינם יוצאים מן הכלל הזה, וגם בהם יש קדושת היום מצד זכירת יצ"מ לבד קדושת היום שנתחדש בהם במיוחד מצד קדושת השבת או קדושת הפסח, ולכן גם בהם צריך להזכיר זכירת יציאת מצרים.

ונראה דמש"כ הרמב"ם בהל' א' וב' הוא לקיים מצות זכירת יצ"מ, ולכן לא הזכיר שם ענין דרך שאלה ותשובה שהוא דין בסיפור יצ"מ ולא בזכירתה. ומש"כ בהלכה ג' שצריך דרך שאלה ותשובה הוא לקיים מצות סיפור יצ"מ. ולכן בהל' ג' באמת לא הזכיר משה רבינו ע"ה כלל, וכדרכו של בעל הגדה שהשמיט את שמו של משה רבינו מכלל ההגדה וסיפור יצ"מ. אבל בהל' א' שהוא מדין זכירת יצ"מ, שם שפיר הזכיר הנסים שנעשו ע"י משה רבינו, וכמו שמזכירין אותו בכל השנה כולה.

ג.

והנה כל יסוד ליל הסדר הוא לשאול שאלות. והיינו, לא רק לבטל דעתו ולקבל את הכל כדברי ספר החתום וכהלכתא בלא טעמא, אלא לחקור ולדרוש, לבדוק ולחפש, להקשות ולשאול, ורק עי"ז לבוא לתשובה, להבנה האמיתית והעמוקה. ובאמת שזה הוא מידתו של 'גדול'. שהרי הבן ה'קטן' שהזכיר הרמב"ם הוא מוגדר ע"י בעל ההגדה כ'אינו יודע לשאול', ודבר זה אומר דרשיני, שהרי בכל מקום כשמדברים אודות קטן, קורים אותו 'קטן' ותו לא, ולמה כאן הוגדר הקטן כ'אינו יודע לשאול'. אלא שלמדנו כאן חידוש גדול, ש'לשאול' הוא יסוד הגדלות, ו'אינו יודע לשאול' הוא קטנות. ורק ע"י שאלות הוא יכול לבוא לידי גדלות וריבוי הדעת.

ומטעם זה לא הוזכר משה רבינו בהגדה. שעצם הזכרת שמו של משה היה יכול לגרום שהאדם ימנע משאלות אלא יבטל דעתו לגמרי לדברי משה איש האלקים, משה מקבל התורה ונותן התורה, משה שזכה למ"ט שערי בינה, משה שדיבר אתו השי"ת כאשר ידבר איש אל רעהו. והרי זה נוגד לכל ענין ההגדה וכל ה'דרך שאלה ותשובה' של ליל הסדר. דאדרבה צריכים לשאול, לחקור ולדרוש. ולכן אין עצה ואין תבונה אלא להשמיט את משה רבינו מתוך סיפור ההגדה בכלל ולא להזכירו אלא ברמז לבד. וכן הרמב"ם לא הזכיר שמו של משה ע"י בעיקר דין הסיפור, רק בהלכה ב' שיסודו משום זכירת יצ"מ דעלמא ולא משום סיפור יצ"מ של ליל פסח, היה אפשר להביא שמו, ולהזכיר הנסים שנעשו לנו על ידו.

ובאמת דיסוד זה אינו רק בליל הסדר בלבד, אלא בכל זמן שתלמיד לומד מפי רבו. דאף שצריך לכבד את רבו וליירא ממנו, ואסור להרהר אחר רבו והמהרהר אחר רבו כמהרהר אחר השכינה,

ובאמת הדברים מבוארים בפי' הגר"א על הגש"פ, וז"ל, "בכל סיפור יציאת מצרים אין לנו זכרון לזכור ח"ו את משה, כי אסור לנו לשתף שום דבר לכבודו ולעצמו, ואין השבח תלוי במשה רק בה' לבדו. וכל המשתף שם שמים ודבר אחר נעקר מן העולם. ולכן כתיב ויאמינו בה' ובמשה עבדו, כלומר, לא לגדולת משה נאמר זה, אדרבה, לאמונת ישראל בה' וענוות משה, שהאמינו שה' עשה כל זאת, ומשה אינו רק עבדו, ככל הברואים שבעולם שמחוייבין לעשות רצונו כו', ע"כ."

ב.

וז"ל הרמב"ם בפ"ו מהל' חמץ ומצה ה"א, "מ"ע של תורה לספר בנסים ונפלאות שנעשו לאבותינו במצרים בליל חמשה עשר בניסן שנאמר זכור את היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים כמו שנאמר זכור את יום השבת כו'." ובהלכה ב', "מצוה להודיע לבנים ואפילו לא שאלו שנאמר והגדת לבנך. ולפי דעתו של בן אביו מלמדו, כיצד אם היה קטן או טיפש אומר לו בני כולנו היינו עבדים כמו שפחה זו או כמו עבד זה במצרים ובלילה הזה פדה אותנו הקב"ה ויוציאנו לחירות. ואם היה הבן גדול וחכם מודיעו מה שאירע לנו במצרים ונסים שנעשו לנו ע"י משה רבינו, הכל לפי דעתו של בן." ושוב כתב בהל' ג', "וצריך לעשות שינוי בלילה הזה כדי שיראו הבנים וישאלו ויאמרו מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות עד שישב להם ויאמר להם כך וכך אירע כך וכך היה כו'. אין לו בן אשתו שואלתו, אין לו אשה שואלתו זה את זה מה נשתנה הלילה הזה, ואפילו היו כולן חכמים. היה לבדו שואל לעצמו מה נשתנה הלילה הזה, עכ"ל."

ויש להעיר, שאם ענין 'דרך שאלה ותשובה' הוא כ"כ נחוץ ומעכב בדין סיפור, עד שאפילו אם יושב לבדו שואל לעצמו, למה לא התחיל הרמב"ם בדין זה, ולמה התחיל במ"ע 'לספר' וכאילו המצוה בסיפור בעלמא, והיה לו להביא בעצם המצוה שצריך לספר בדרך שאלה ותשובה. עוד יש להעיר בלשון הרמב"ם שהדגיש שצריך להודיע לבן על הנסים שנעשו לנו ע"י משה רבינו, וזה בניגוד לדרכו של בעל ההגדה שהשמיט שמו של משה רבינו מכל וכל. ובאמת גם הרמב"ם לא התחיל בשמו של משה רבינו, אלא תחילה הביא עיקר המצוה 'לספר בנסים ונפלאות שנעשו לאבותינו במצרים', סתם ולא פירש ע"י מי נעשו, ורק אח"כ כשהביא דין של 'לפי דעתו של בן אביו מלמדו' כתב להודיעו הנסים שנעשו לנו ע"י משה רבינו.

והנראה, דכבר מצינו שתי מצוות של יציאת מצרים, א', זכירת יציאת מצרים, ב', סיפור יציאת מצרים. מצות זכירה נוהגת במשך כל השנה, כל יום וכל לילה. אולם מצות סיפור אינה נוהגת אלא בליל ט"ו בניסן, בשעה שיש מצה ומרור מונחים לפניך. אך נראה, דבליל חמשה עשר בניסן יש לא רק מצות סיפור אלא גם מצות זכירה. ואין זכירה זו מדין סיפור, אלא דביחד עם הסיפור צריך שיהיה גם זכירה.

דוגמא לדבר זה מצינו, שידוע קושיית המנ"ח (מצוה לא) על דברי האחרונים שדנו אם יוצא מצות קידוש של ליל שבת בתפלה, דהא בפסחים קיז: מבואר שצריך להזכיר יציאת מצרים בקידוש היום, והרי בנוסח התפלה לא מצינו שום זכר ליציאת מצרים, וא"כ ע"כ לא יצא ידי קידוש בתפלה לחוד. ותירץ הגר"ר יעקב אדלשטיין זצ"ל (ספר בעקבי מנ"ח, פ' יתרו), דהזכרת יציאת מצרים בקידוש היום אינה דין במצות קידוש היום, אלא זה דין בזכירת יום צאתך מארץ מצרים, דמכלל מצות זכירת יציאת מצרים הוא להזכיר יציאת מצרים גם בקידוש היום. ולכן אף שלא הזכיר יציאת מצרים בתפלה מ"מ שפיר

ולא עוד אלא שנראה שבכמה מקומות הושמט בכוונה ובמחשבה תחילה. למשל, בהגדה הובאו שלשה פסוקים שנאמרו ע"י יהושע לבני ישראל (ביהושע כד, ב-ד), והם, "ויאמר יהושע אל כל העם כה אמר ה' אלקי ישראל בעבר הנהר ישבו אבותיכם מעולם תרח אבי אברהם ואבי נחור ויעבדו אלהים אחרים. ואקח את אביכם את אברהם מעבר הנהר ואולך אותו בכל ארץ כנען וארבה את זרעו ואתן לו את יצחק ואתן ליצחק את יעקב ואת עשו ואתן לעשו את הר שעיר לרשת אותו ויעקב ובניו ירדו מצרים." עד כאן הובא בהגדה. אך הלא הנביא שם ממשיך עוד ואומר (שם פסוק ה-ו), "ואשלח את משה ואת אהרן ואגף את מצרים כאשר עשיתי בקרבו ואחר הוצאתי אתכם. ואוציא את אבותיכם ממצרים ותבואו הימה וירדפו מצרים אחרי אבותיכם ברכב ובפרשים ים סוף." מדוע בעלי ההגדה לא הכניסו ב' פסוקים אלו להגדה? נראה כשבהגיגה לשמו של משה ותפקידו ביציאת מצרים מיד הפסיקו ולא רצו להכניסו להגדה, וצ"ע למה.

וכן להלן בהגדה שמביא פסוק על 'ובאותות זה המטה', הביא פסוק (שמות ד, יז) "ואת המטה הזה תקח בידך אשר תעשה בו את האותות" ואף שיש הרבה פסוקים אודות המטה שהוזכרו בהם שמו של משה, לא הביא אף אחד מהם, רק פסוק זה שלא הוזכר בו למי שייכת המטה.

ורק בדרך רמז מצינו שמו של משה, והוא בראשי תיבות, במה שכתוב: "ועברתי בארץ מצרים בלילה הזה, אני ולא מלאך, והכיתי כל בכור בארץ מצרים, אני ולא שרף, ובכל אלהי מצרים אעשה שפטים, אני ולא השליח." מ'לאך, ש'רף, ה'שליח, ר"ת מש"ה. וכאילו לא רצה להזכיר שהוא הוא המוציא את ישראל ממצרים, והזכירו בדרך רמז בלבד. וגם המקום האחד בו הוזכר להדיא, כשהביא פסוק "ויאמינו בה" ובמשה עבדו, אין זה פסוק המזכירו כמנהיג ישראל ומוציאם ממצרים, אלא כעבד ה' לבד, שיד עבד כיד רבו ומה שקנה עבד קנה רבו. [ובאמת גם פסוק זה לא הובא כלל בנוסח ההגדה של הרמב"ם].

ולבד שדבר זה תמוה מצד עצמו, עוד תמוה שהיה לנו להזכירו משום חובת הכרת הטוב. והלא הוא הוא שמסר נפשו עבור כלל ישראל, וסבל הרבה למענם, ומצד זה לבד היה ראוי להזכירו. ובאמת בכל משך השנה מזכירים את שמו הרבה פעמים, ואילו בליל פסח שכל כולו נקבע על יסוד הכרת הטוב, לא מזכירים אותו כלל! ואף שודאי עיקר הכרת הטוב על יציאת מצרים, ועל כל דבר, הוא בלתי לה' לבדו, מ"מ הלא אמרו חז"ל כל הכופר בטובתו של בשר ודם לסוף כופר בטובתו של מקום, ולומדים את זה מפרעה שנאמר עליו תחילה אשר שלא ידע את יוסף, ולסוף אמר לא ידעתי את ה'. הרי שצריך להכיר טובה גם לבשר ודם.

והרב יוסף דוב סולובייצ'יק מבוסטון אמר, שבהיותו ילד קטן נתרגש מזה מאד, ושאל את אביו למה לא הוזכר שמו של משה רבינו בהגדה. ובספר שיעורים לזכר אבא מרי הביא פירושו של אביו זצ"ל במדרש שה"ש רבה (פרשה ג), במה שכתוב (שה"ש ג, א) "על משכבי בלילות בקשתי את שאהבה נפשי בקשתי ולא מצאתיו," דבר אחר, על משכבי בלילות, זה לילה של מצרים, בקשתי את שאהבה נפשי, זה משה, בקשתי ולא מצאתיו. ופירש, 'כלומר, כנסת ישראל המכיר טובה למנהיגה ולאב הנביאים, רוצה לנקב אותו בשמו בסיפור דברי הגדה, ברם, בקשתי את הרועה הנאמן לשוא, איני מוצאת אותו בסיפור יציאת מצרים. הגאולה שייכת כולה להקב"ה, ואין לבשר ודם, אפילו הגדול שבגדולים ואדון הנביאים, חלק בה'.

# דרשת שבת הגדול תשע"ו:

## משה רבינו

### הרב ברוך הכהן טאוב

**ידוע ומפורסם בכל ישראל שבלייל פסח יש ארבע קושיות, והן הד' שאלות שב'מה נשתנה', שעליהן באה שאר ההגדה כתשובה. אולם באמת יש קושיא חמישית שהיא ג"כ שאלה גדולה וחזקה מאד, והיא לא שאלה בהגדה, אלא שאלה על ההגדה. ובאמת שבתשובה לשאלה זו טמון כל סוד עבודת ליל הסדר. ונבאר דברינו:**

א.

בהגדה נאמר 'וכל המרבה לספר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משובח'. ואכן, נהגו כל ישראל לומר נוסח ההגדה המסודרת לנו מקדמונינו, והוא נוסח ארוך מאד, בו הובאו הרבה מקראות המדברים בענין יציאת מצרים, והדרשות שדרשו חז"ל עליהן, ומבואר בו קושי השעבוד, אופן הגאולה באותות ומופתים ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה, עשר מכות, ועוד ועוד. אך יש השמטה אחת מאד בולטת, דבר שלכאורה היינו חושבים שיהיה עיקר בהגדה וסיפור יציאת מצרים, ונעלם כמי שאינו, והוא שמו של משה רבינו ע"ה.

והדברים מתמיהים. הלא משה רבינו הוא הוא מי שנקבע על פי ה' להיות גואלן של ישראל להוציאם ממצרים, וכמו שאמר לו השי"ת בתחילת שליחותו (שמות ג, י) "ועתה לך ואשלחך אל פרעה והוצא את עמי בני ישראל ממצרים". וכן כתיב להלן בפ' וארא (כו, ו) "הוא אהרן ומשה אשר אמר ה' להם הוציאו את בני ישראל מארץ מצרים על צבאותם". הרי שמשה רבינו נקרא המוציא את ישראל ממצרים. וכן האותות והמופתים נקראו על שמו, וכמו שכתוב בסוף התורה (דברים לד, יא-יב) "לכל האותות והמופתים אשר שלחו ה' לעשות בארץ מצרים לפרעה ולכל עבדיו ולכל ארצו, ולכל היד החזקה ולכל המורא הגדול אשר עשה משה לעיני כל ישראל". וא"כ איך יכול להיות שלא הוזכר משה רבינו כלל בסיפור יציאת מצרים ובנוסח הגדה של פסח?





# **חכמי לב**

## **כרך ד • ניסן תשפ"ג**

**דרשת שבת הגדול תשע"ו: משה רבינו**  
**מאת: הרב ברוך הכהן טאוב** ..... ג

**בין בדידות אנושית לבדידות רוחנית:**  
**קריאה בפרשיית חטא המתאווים**  
**מאת: רב עידן רקובסקי** ..... י





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