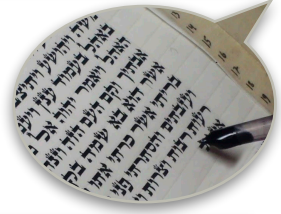




The Collective Conversation

Weekly Torah Essays from the
Young Israel of Scarsdale Community



Sefer Shemot

Parshat Bo

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The Importance of Matzot and Mitzvot

By Carole Daman

Within *Parshat Bo* are the verses (*Shemot* 12:1-20) that we read as the Maftir on Shabbos HaChodesh, the Shabbos before, or on, the first of Nissan. After God gives Moshe and Aaron the mitzvah that establishes the Jewish calendar, He relates the instructions they must give the Israelites both for choosing and sacrificing the Korban Pesach in Egypt and for commemorating the redemption in future generations. One can only imagine how disorienting but also encouraging it must have been to hear about future celebrations of these traumatic times!

Both sections, Pesach Mitzrayim, and Pesach HaDorot, are focused on eating, and the verb *achal*, to eat, appears in each section seven times. However, the food that is eaten or, in the case of Pesach HaDorot eaten or not eaten, switches from the Korban Pesach to leavened or unleavened grain. This is so even though when there was a Beit Hamikdash, the focal point of the holiday's observance was the Korban Pesach. Also, just like the Korban Pesach In Egypt, the matza must be "watched." The commandment to take a lamb on the 10th of Nissan and keep watch over it till the 14th does not apply in future years. Instead, the root of the word *mishmeret* (*Shemot* 12:6), *shamar*, to watch. is applied to the matza (*ushmartem et hamatzot*). This is the source for Shmura Matza.

Another aspect of matza that recalls the Korban Pesach is that it is a reminder that we left Egypt *b'chipazon*, hurriedly. The word *chipazon* occurs in Tanach only three times. It refers to the Korban Pesach here in verse 11 and to matza in *Devarim* 16:3. The third time it appears is in Isaiah 52:12, when Isaiah contrasts the final redemption with this one. In *Devarim* 16:3, Moshe tells the people that "for seven days thereafter you shall eat unleavened bread, *lechem oni*, bread of affliction, for you departed from the land of Egypt hurriedly, *b'chipazon*. The same idea is expressed in the Haggada when

Rabban Gamliel explains why we eat matza. He quotes the verse from *Shemot* 12:39 "And they baked the dough which they brought out of Egypt into matza cakes since it did not rise: because they were expelled from Egypt and could not tarry, neither had they made for themselves provisions."

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Yitro, by performing mitzvot in
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Commentaries disagree as to whether the source of the hurry was the Israelites, the Egyptians, or God. Opinions that focus on the Israelites differ as to whether the rush was an indication of the Israelites' faith in Hashem and a feeling that redemption was imminent or rather a sign of their anxiety. The second alternative is that it is the Egyptians, who, as we see in Exodus 12:33, pressured the Israelites to leave quickly, saying, "We are all dead men."

In verse 11, we see that God actually commands the people to be dressed to leave and to eat the Korban Pesach *b'chipazon*. According to the Maharal, God gave this command in advance to make it clear that it was not the Egyptians who were dictating the terms of the Exodus. Alternatively, the Zohar tells us that the people had to be taken out of Egypt quickly because they had reached the 49th level of *tumah*, *impurity*, and if they had sunk to the 50th level, they would never have escaped.

An even deeper explanation of the chipazon, the hurriedness with which we left Egypt, is given by contemporary thinkers, including Rav Moshe Eisemann z"l, and Rabbi Efreim Goldberg, based on the commentary of the Maharal on Rashi's play on the words matzot/mitzvot in verse 17.

Paraphrasing the Maharal, Rav Eisemann wrote,

The passage of time is a function of the physical. God acts outside the "time" framework. We humans can get to some approximation of that timelessness only by doing things as quickly as we can. On Pesach, where the Ribono shel Olam was Himself involved in the process of redemption, and because of the Ribono shel Olam's involvement the process was timeless, things have to move as quickly as they can. Mitzvot share that characteristic. A delayed mitzvah is a defective mitzvah.

As Rabbi Goldberg stated in his 2018 podcast on Parshat Bo, matza is the symbol of God taking us out of Egypt because in order for us as finite beings to become an eternal, holy people who can transcend the limitations of the universe we were taken out with speed, *b'chipazon*. Our mission is to achieve the spiritual and transcend the physical.

But our mission goes way beyond our own spiritual perfection. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l, points out in an amazing essay on Parshat Yitro, by performing mitzvot in accordance with our covenantal relationship with Hashem, we show the world that God exists even though He cannot be perceived by natural means. Our survival as a nation through the millennia is a signal that there is a divine force beyond history and nature.

Carole and her late husband, Dr. Harlan Daman z"l, moved to the community in 1986. She follows in the footsteps of her children, Gila and Avi, who years ago as teenagers wrote divrei Torah that appeared in the YIS weekly bulletin.

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