

למען תספר

**A Journal of *Divrei Torah*
in honor of Pesach 5781**

Compiled by the Members of the



***Bais Medrash
of Ranchleigh***





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Zichron Yaakov Eliyahu Fund
of the Bais Medrash of Ranchleigh

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It was on Erev Shabbos, Zos Chanukah

when the *Mara D'Asra* offered me the privilege of sponsoring this year's Pesach Kuntress. At that point, Pesach was the furthest thing from my mind. There were still several sufganiyot to eat, latkes to digest, and challah to buy – not exactly very Pesach-like. But, perhaps, upon closer reflection, there indeed, may be a connection between the two.

U'Lemaan Tesapeir b'aznei bincha u'ben bincha. Why does the *pasuk* require us to give the message *davka*, “*b'aznei bincha*,” in the ears of the children?

The Tolner Rebbe, *shlita*, explains that when you give a message into a listener's ear, it means that the message and intent is specifically crafted and delivered for that person. On Seder night, when the transmission of our *mesorah* is in the line, it does not suffice to provide a generic, blanket declaration. Rather, father and grandfather, Rebbi and Morah, are required to craft a message that is fit, appreciated, and understood by the individual listener. Each generation, each era, and each child needs a uniquely developed message that will resonate *b'aznei bincha*.

Since last Pesach, the messages and words we imparted to our children were Corona, quarantine, *bidood*, vaccination, and social distancing. Last year's Seder, unfortunately was a far cry from the Sedorim we are used to and hope for. Families were apart, grandparents alone. Davening at home. No minyanim. Worry.

But along comes Zos Chanukah, the epitome of the *neis* Chanukah, when our Menorah and our *pirumei nissa* are the brightest of all the nights! Our Hallel reaches its peak in song and fervor, even within the darkest, coldest days of Teves. On the eighth day of Chanukah, the *neis* has reached its crescendo, the lights casting its glow all the way to the *Zman Cheiruseinu* in Nissan. We cannot help but recall the connection between the

obligation of *pirsumei nissa* on Chanukah to that of the *arba kosos* of *geulah* at the seder. Perhaps, this is no coincidence.

So, as I write these words on a cold day in Teves, without the aid of a crystal ball nor any proclamation from a *Navi*, I nevertheless feel overjoyed and confident that this Pesach will be different than last year's. This year, the message we craft for our children and grandchildren, will echo a different message designed for us, specifically: *Geulah-Bitachon-Achdus-Yerushalayim-Beis HaMikdash-Mashiach*.

I would like to thank Rabbi Naiman for giving me the *zechus* of sponsoring this Kuntress, and to dedicate the Torah contained within, to him, and his *mishpachah*, for continued *hatzlachah*, *harbatzas haTorah*, and much growth in the community.

Wishing all readers and contributors a Chag Kosher V'Samei'ach!

Moshe and Sara Lea Dear



Preface

You hold in your hands our tenth Pesach *kuntress*, the work of the members of our *chashuveh kehillah*, *bs"d*. Think for a moment what one action of ours can accomplish. It was a little over ten years ago that Dr. Michael Samet visited our shul and inspired us with the *kuntreisim* that were put out by two shuls in New Jersey. This "simple" act has resulted in thousands of pages of *Divrei Torah* and *Zichronos* being read by many hundreds of people over the last decade!

This would normally be a cause for unmitigated celebration, but it is not to be: Since our last edition, our community and *Klal Yisrael* as a whole have suffered many tragedies from the Corona *mageifah*, which is still striking us as of this writing. One personal loss to me was the *petirah* of the Mashgiach of the Mir, HaRav Aharon Chodosh, *z"l*, the last living member of the *hanhalah* from my time learning there. I am happy that R' Shmuel Strauss, a close *talmid* of his, was able to contribute his *zichronos* about the Mashgiach.

In addition, our *kehillah* marked the tragic loss of our good friend, Mr. Josh Lewis, *a"h*, who was instrumental in establishing our Bais Medrash. Besides enthusiastically attending our *shiurim*, he gave us our first tables, and a little later lent us our first *Sefer Torah* to begin *minyanim* on Shabbos. Although we upgraded our tables with our recent expansion, Josh's tables are still being used at our outdoor seating during the *mageifah*. *Yehi zichro baruch*.

This year also marked the *petiros* of Mr. Jacob Schuchman, *a"h*, well-known by our family and the community at large; and the venerable Mr. Manfred Strauss, *a"h*, who often graced our shul. We are honored by a three-part *maamar* that Rabbi Moshe Schuchman contributed in his father's memory, and by fascinating *zichronos* of Mr. Strauss by Rabbi Yitzchak Strauss. And finally, on the first day of Pesach last year, Mrs. Maxine Friedman, *a"h*, mother of our Gabbai, Eli Friedman, who is much more than a Gabbai to our shul, passed away; shortly after that Eli's father-in-law, Dr. Harold Glazer, *a"h*, passed away. All should be comforted *bsoch shaar aveilei Yisrael*.

This *kuntress* is larger than usual, primarily because of a section that we hope never to have to repeat, an addendum about the *mageifah*. Even in the worst of times, we have to find the *ratzon Hashem* in our *avodah*, and fortunately, our Torah leaders have addressed various aspects of this *matzav*. We have received permission to reprint what I think are two very important *maamarim*, one by HaGaon HaRav Yaakov Hillel, *shlit"a*, and the second by HaGaon HaRav Aharon Lopiansky, *shlit"a*. This section is rounded out by words from our own members, along with a *halachah sugya* I wrote about whether there was a requirement to make up for all the *Parshiyos* that were missed when our shuls were closed.

We are honored this year to have my good friend and long-time colleague at the ArtScroll "Kollel," Rabbi Nesanel Kasnett, once again contribute a profound *maamar*. Rabbi Yoav Elan, another ArtScroll colleague of mine, agreed to add new article adapted from his *sefer*, *The Original Second Temple*. Also contributing this year are two old friends from yeshivah days, Rabbi Boruch Leff and Rabbi Avraham Bukspan. And as in the past, we have contributions of members of our Kollel Zichron Yaakov Eliyahu, this year by R' Chaim Soskil and R' Eliezer Shames.

We once again have a section of *Divrei Torah* given by *bachurim* at their Bar Mitzvah (printed in alphabetical order). Even in times of *mageifah*, we are blessed with *simchos*. And we always proud to include articles from our Shul "alumni," this year including Rabbi Yehoshua Silverberg and Yitzchok Raczkowski; and Rabbi Shmuel Chaim Naiman has added another chapter based on his work, *Capital Punishment in Judaism*.

This year's Hebrew section again highlights a *shiur* from *Mori VeRebbi* HaGaon HaRav Nochum Lansky, *shli"ta*, recorded by one of my colleagues in Kollel Avodas Levi, Rabbi Eli Lipsky. Rabbi Lipsky was also gracious enough to allow us to print his *maamar* on Pesach found in his new *sefer*, פתחי אמרים.

I will close heartfelt thanks to the members of the *maareches* who were indispensable in producing this work: R' Chaim Sugar, R' Moshe Rock, and R' Arkady Pogostkin. A very special thank you to someone I respected as a *bachur* in our yeshivah days, Rabbi Moshe Dear, who together with his wife sponsored the *kuntress* again this year; may it be a *zechus* for their entire family. And added thanks to R' Moshe for offering last year to sponsor additional copies that we could ship during the *mageifah*, when people could not leave their homes. Thank you to R' Avi Dear for elevating our product over the years with his beautiful covers. And thank you to those who dedicated honorarium pages.

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

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

Abba Zvi Naiman
Shevat 5781

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So Close, Yet So Far Away

**How a Detail of the Structure of the Beis HaMikdash is
Derived from a Law of *Korban Pesach*¹**

Rabbi Yoav Elan

Mordy was late. There had been that last-minute dithering over whether to purchase a goat or a lamb for his korban pesach, and then a crowd of foreign tourists created a massive backup at the Chuldah Tunnel. Only by detouring to the Kiponos Gate in the west did Mordy stand a chance of joining the third and final shift of people entering the Azarah to offer their korban. He edged sideways through the sea of humanity gathered in the Ezras Nashim but then looked up in dismay to see the massive doors of the Nikanor Gate start to slowly swing closed for the start of the third shift. Throwing his lamb over his shoulders, he broke into a sprint and covered the remaining distance to the Azarah in record time, taking the fifteen round steps on the western side of the Ezras Nashim two at a time. But he didn't make it. The double bronze doors met in front of his nose with a resounding clang, leaving Mordy holding his sides — and a very relieved lamb — just outside the Azarah.

The *korban pesach* is one of only two positive commandments in the entire Torah that carries the penalty of *kareis* for failing to perform it (the other is *bris milah*). Even so, there are valid circumstances that

¹ Editor's note: Rabbi Elan is one of my esteemed colleagues in the ArtScroll "Kollel" and a popular lecturer on Beis HaMikdash themes. This article is adapted from the author's newly released book, *The Original Second Temple* (Feldheim). For more information about the Beis HaMikdash and to order a copy of the book please visit BeisHamikdashTopics.com.

could prevent a person from performing this mitzvah, in which case he would be exempt from the punishment of *kareis* and instead must bring a *pesach sheni* the following month. One of the exemptions stated in the Torah is if a person is too far away from the *Azarah* on the 14th of Nissan at the time that the Pesach offering is being brought. The phrase that the Torah uses in *Bamidbar* 9:10 to describe this is: בדרך רחוקה, *on a distant road*.

Now, the Torah itself does not quantify just how “distant” a person must be. This matter is disputed in a Mishnah (*Pesachim* 9:2) and according to the view of R’ Eliezer a person is exempt even if — like our case of Mordy — he was standing right outside the threshold of the *Azarah*. R’ Eliezer appears to be defining the Torah’s bare minimum [תפסת מרובה לא תפסת] of how “distant” a person could be from the *Azarah* to qualify for the exemption of “a distant road.”

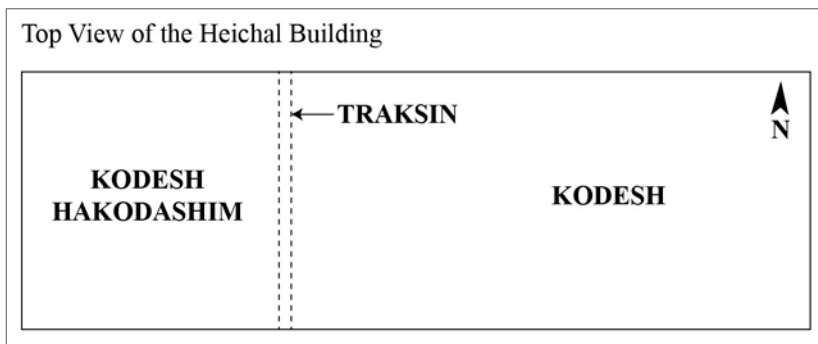
The Mishnah adds that R’ Eliezer’s view is supported by the fact that in the Torah there is a dot over the letter ה in the word רחוקה. It is not immediately obvious how this proves R’ Eliezer’s point. *Baal HaTurim* (to the verse) connects the two ideas by writing that the dot over the ה teaches that we “ignore” that letter and deal with the remaining letters: רחוק. The *gematria* of רחוק (=314) is equivalent to that of the phrase זה מאיסקופה, *this [means] from the threshold [of the Azarah and further]*.

Rav (to the Mishnah) records a tradition that the dot serves to separate the ה from the rest of the word, allowing us to read רחוקה as ה, רחוק, *at a distance of five*. This is to say that a person who is five *amos* away from the threshold of the *Azarah* is exempt from *kareis* and eligible to bring a *pesach sheni*.

But why five *amos*, specifically? The answer emerges from a curious ambiguity in the laws governing the sanctity of the Beis HaMikdash. The Mishnah (*Keilim* 1:8-9) teaches that the various parts of the Beis

HaMikdash possessed increasingly higher levels of sanctity as one progressed inward toward the *Kodesh HaKodashim*. We learn, for example, that the *Har HaBayis* — the large, outer portion of the Beis HaMikdash complex that measured 500×500 *amos* (*Middos* 2:1) — was restricted to certain types of *tahor* people, whereas the Main *Azarah* — an area measuring 135×187 *amos* (*Middos* 5:1) — had an even higher level of sanctity. Although these areas are clearly defined physically in Tractate *Middos* and spiritually in Tractate *Keilim*, we are not told the dimensions or status of the thickness of the walls dividing these areas. Thus, as a person walks from the *Har HaBayis* into the *Azarah* through one of its gates, at what point is he considered to be “in” the *Azarah* — when he crosses the threshold of the gateway at the outer edge of the wall or when he enters the *Azarah* proper?

This ambiguity would take on a very practical significance when the Second Beis HaMikdash was originally built. Inside the *Heichal* Building there was an *amah*-wide section of space called the *Traksin* that divided the *Kodesh* from the *Kodesh HaKodashim*. This word is derived from Greek, connoting a place that is both *inside* and *outside*, since it divided between the inside — the *Kodesh HaKodashim* — and the outer *Kodesh*. See diagram.



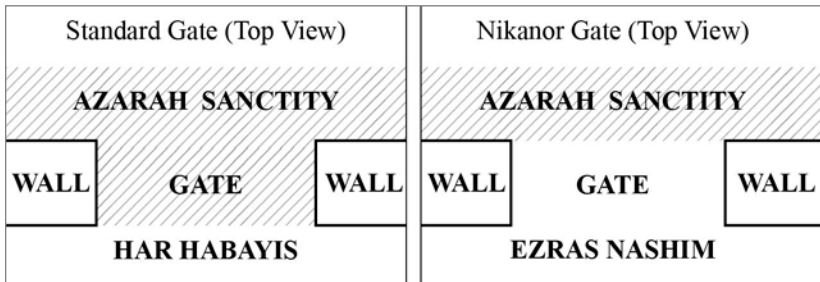
In the First Beis HaMikdash, there was a wall built in this space with a doorway opening to the *Kodesh HaKodashim*. However, in the

Second Beis HaMikdash the ceiling of the *Heichal* was taller than in the First Beis HaMikdash and it was not possible at that time to construct a structurally sound wall of the required height that was only one *amah* thick. They could not make the wall any thicker since that would take away space from either the *Kodesh* or the *Kodesh HaKodashim*, the dimensions of which were not subject to modification. It was decided to separate the two areas using a curtain, as had been done in the Mishkan. However, the Sages did not know whether that one-*amah* space possessed the sanctity of the *Kodesh* (in which case the curtain should be hung at the western edge of the *Traksin*) or the sanctity of the *Kodesh HaKodashim* (in which case the curtain should be hung at the eastern edge). On account of this uncertainty, they hung *two* curtains there, one at the eastern edge of the *Traksin* and one at the western edge, and left that one *amah* as undefined (*Yoma* 51b).

The situation described above took place at the beginning of the Second Beis HaMikdash era, but the underlying ambiguity regarding the sanctity of wall thicknesses was an issue that had to be addressed when the First Beis HaMikdash was built. Since this was not part of the known body of Torah law, the decision was left to the discretion of the Sages. They ruled that the thickness of the wall shall have the sanctity of the *Azarah* itself. As a result of this ruling, the doors of the *Azarah* gates were hung at the outer edge of the wall to ensure that passersby could not inadvertently step into the sanctified area within the thickness of the wall when the doors of the gates were closed (*Ezras Kohanim to Middos* 1:3 s.v. להר הבית).

There was one exception to the above rule. At the main public entrance to the *Azarah* in the east (called the Nikanor Gate in the Second Beis HaMikdash era) the thickness of the wall was decreed to have the lesser sanctity of the *Har HaBayis* (*Pesachim* 85b explains the reason for this).

This meant that a person standing just outside the Nikanor Gate was still some distance away from the sanctified *Azarah* area.² See diagram.



Just how far away would he be? In other words, how thick was the *Azarah* wall?

Rashash (to *Pesachim* 93b) deduces that the answer is five *amos*. The logic of his view seems to be along the lines of the “Mordy” scenario, that the very closest a person would be to the *Azarah* on Pesach eve and yet still not be *in* the *Azarah* is by arriving at the Nikanor Gate just seconds after the doors closed for the beginning of the third shift of offerings. Such a person would be exactly five *amos* from the *Azarah*; hence, we learn that the walls of the *Azarah* were five *amos* thick. ^א

² This assumes that the Nikanor Gate had its doors placed at the outer edge of the thickness of the wall, just like the other *Azarah* gates. Even though this was unnecessary here (since the thickness of the wall was *not* sanctified and thus there was no reason to keep people from standing in this area when the gates were closed), we will see that, according to the explanation given below, this appears to have been the case. [The reason given in the Gemara for why the Nikanor Gate was left unsanctified only applied while the doors of the gate were open and thus should not impact the question of where the doors were placed.] I could not locate any sources that state definitively where the Nikanor doors were placed.

Yishmael's *Bris*

Roman Kimelfeld

Around Pesach, one year before Yitzchak's birth, Avraham, Yishmael and all Avraham's servants had *bris milah*. As we know, the *bris milah* had a tremendous impact on Avraham's *kedushah* and on his connection with Hashem. We will discuss below whether the impact of *bris* was the same for the servants and for Yishmael.

***Bris milah* – Avraham's vs. Eliezer's**

Rav Gifter in his sefer *Pirkei Torah* explains that the nature of Avraham's *bris milah* was far superior to the nature of the *bris* of his servants. He says this in reference to Eliezer making an oath on Avraham's *bris milah* in *Parshah Chayei Sarah* (*Bereishis* 24:2). *Rashi* explains that Eliezer was making this oath on a *chefetz shel mitzvah*, like a Sefer Torah or tefillin. Rav Gifter explains that Avraham's *bris milah* was a *chefetz shel mitzvah* because it was "*os bris*" (*Bereishis* 17:11), which is the term that the Torah only uses to describe the *bris* of Avraham and his descendants, but not the *bris* of his servants (this will be explained more later). Avraham's *bris milah* thus contained intrinsic *kedushah*, like a Sefer Torah or tefillin.

On the other hand, Eliezer's *bris milah* did not contain intrinsic *kedushah*. Rather, it represented a fulfilment of Avraham's mitzvah to circumcise his servants. Once Avraham circumcised his servants, this mitzvah was finished, and the servants did not acquire any intrinsic *kedushah*. Per Rav Gifter, their *bris milah* was comparable to an object that had been used for performance of a mitzvah, such as a lulav, and which itself has no intrinsic *kedushah*. Therefore, Eliezer had to perform the oath on Avraham's *bris milah* and not on his own, since his own *bris milah* was not a *chefetz shel mitzvah*.

Yishmael's *Bris*

The question is whether Yishmael's *bris* was more similar to Avraham's or to Eliezer's. Did Yishmael have the *bris* as the servant of Avraham (like Eliezer), or as his son (like Yitzchak)? In *Bereishis* 17:10, Hashem commands Avraham and his "*zaracha acharecha*" (future descendants) to perform a *bris*. This would not include Yishmael because he was already born at the time of this commandment, so he was not *zaracha acharecha*. In 17:12, Hashem commands Avraham to also circumcise his servants (*yelid bais u'miknas kesef*). This also apparently does not include Yishmael, because he was not a servant, since Sarah released Hagar from servitude prior to giving her to Avraham, as *Targum Yonasan* says in *Bereishis* 16:3. So, where in the Torah does it say that Yishmael was obligated in *bris*?

The *Shaagas Aryeh* (§49) derives the obligation of Yishmael to have a *bris* from the following two *pesukim*. In *Bereishis* 21:12, the *pasuk* says "*ki v'yitzchak yikare lecha zarah*" (i.e., your descendants will come from Yitzchak). This excludes *descendants* of Yishmael from *bris*, per *Sanhedrin* 59b. The very next *pasuk*, however, says about Yishmael "*ki zaracha hu*" ("because he is your offspring"), thus including Yishmael *himself* in the obligation of *bris*. The *Shaagas Aryeh* explains that these two adjacent *pesukim* mean that while Yishmael's descendants are excluded from *bris*, because they are not considered *zarah Avraham*, nevertheless Yishmael himself was obligated in *bris*, as *zarah Avraham*. Thus, based on the *Shaagas Aryeh*, Yishmael himself was obligated in *bris* as the son of Avraham *Avinu*, much like Yitzchak.

This shows that the nature of Yishmael's *bris* was comparable to that of Avraham. In fact, Torah praises Yishmael for willingly undergoing the *bris*. *Rashi* comments on *Bereishis* 16:16 that Torah states Yishmael's age as compared to Avraham's age (in *Bereishis* 16:16 and 17:25) in order to praise Yishmael for willingly undergoing the *bris*.

In the words of *Sifsei Chachamim*, Yishmael underwent the *bris* in order to fulfill Hashem's mitzvah, and not because he was forced to do it by Avraham.

Perhaps, we can also see that Yishmael's *bris* was much like Avraham's based on *Bereishis* 17:10. When *pasuk* 10 says in reference to *bris*: "*beini u'veineichem*" (i.e., "between me and you," with "you" in plural), *Rashi* comments that "*beini u'veineichem*" refers to those participants to the *bris* who were alive at that time. Then, the same *pasuk* mentions "*zaracha acharecha*" (future descendants), who *Rashi* says are those who will be born in the future. Then, *pasuk* 11 says that all those aforementioned people will have "*os bris*", which, as we quoted Rav Gifter earlier, signifies intrinsic *kedushah* of *bris milah* for Avraham and his descendants. Then, *pasuk* 12 speaks about the *bris* of the servants (which I think shows that the preceding *pesukim* 10 and 11 were not referring to servants).

Thus, we see that when *pasuk* 10 says "*beini u'veineichem*" it refers to those participants to the *bris* that were *alive at that time*, and that were *not servants*, and since the *pasuk* addresses these participants in plural, it must refer to not only Avraham, but also to Yishmael, as the people who will receive "*os bris*." (ArtScroll, the Sapirstein Edition, page 163, footnote 8 says that "*beini u'veineichem*" refers to Avraham, Yishmael and Yitzchak, although I would think that Yitzchak was included in "*zaracha acharecha*" and not in "*beini u'veineichem*.")

Perhaps, the following can also suggest that Yishmael's *bris* was similar to Avraham's. In *Bereishis* 17:26 the *pasuk* says that Avraham and Yishmael had a *bris milah*. The very next *pasuk* says that all servants had a *bris milah*. Perhaps the fact that Avraham and Yishmael are mentioned in one *pasuk* and the *bris* of the servants in another further suggests that the *bris* of Yishmael was more like the *bris* of Avraham than that of the servants.

Yishmael propels Yitzchak to undergo the Akeidah

Since Yishmael's *bris* had intrinsic *kedushah*, and he performed it with great *mesiras nefesh*, he had a reasonable claim that he, and not Yitzchak should be considered Avraham's main heir (per *Rashi* on *Bereishis* 22:1). This claim propelled Yitzchak to undergo a far greater *mesiras nefesh* of the *Akeidah* (*Rashi*, *ibid*), which put him and his descendants onto a far greater level than Yishmael would ever be able to achieve.

During the *Akeidah*, while Yitzchak became *olah temimah* (as *Rashi* says on *Bereishis* 26:2), Yishmael was not even able to see the *Shechinah* that descended on *Har HaMoriah* (as described in *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer*, chapter 31). The *Akeidah* thus showed the complete superiority of Yitzchak, and it destroyed Yishmael's claim to be Avraham's main heir.

Perhaps Yitzchak was able to achieve this enormously high level, for himself and for his descendants, as the result of his competition with Yishmael. And perhaps this was the ultimate mission of Yishmael, to create a spiritual competition with Yitzchak in order to propel Yitzchak and all of his descendants to reach their full potential. אֱלֹהִים

How Many Times Must I Say It?

Eliyahu Eliezer Singman

We know that the *zechus* of the *Akeidah*, the binding of Yitzchak on the *mizbei'ach*, protects us in *galus*. In this event, the word “son,” either as “my son,” “your son,” or “his son” is used ten times, some of which are seemingly extraneous. Is there special significance to the fact that the term “son” is used ten times? We will examine similar repetitions in other events before returning to the *Akeidah*.

The book of *II Shmuel* relates that when King David is informed of the violent death of his rebellious son Avshalom, he cries out, “My son Avshalom, my son, my son Avshalom, would that my life had been lost instead of yours, Avshalom my son, my son.” And in verse 5, King David continues, “... my son Avshalom, Avshalom my son.” King David repeats “my son” a total of eight times.

The Gemara in *Sotah* explains why King David repeats “my son” eight times. There are seven successively severe levels of *Gehinnom*, and each time King David cried out, “my son,” he extricated Avshalom from a lower level to a higher one. After the seventh time, Avshalom is released from *Gehinnom*; and with the eighth mention of “my son”, the Gemara says, King David brings Avshalom into the World to Come *or* brings his head, severed during his murder, close to his body; notably it is not clarified as to which of these benefits Avshalom enjoyed.

In *Parshas Toldos*, we see another example of the power of a father’s prayer. Yitzchak tells Eisav to hunt game and bring him meat and thereafter he would receive Yitzchak’s blessing. During the time that Eisav is away, Yaakov poses as Eisav and receives his father’s blessing. When Eisav returns from hunting, he is shocked to learn that his blessing went to Yaakov and proceeds to cry bitterly. In the

ensuing dialogue, Eisav entreats his father for blessings and the word “father” is repeated seven times.

Rashi comments that when Eisav entered Yitzchak’s tent, “there came over Yitzchak a great fear,” because Yitzchak saw that under Eisav were the open gates of *Gehinnom*. According to *Pirkei de’Rabbi Eliezer*, when Eisav saw this, he pleaded seven times to his father to be elevated from the seven levels of *Gehinnom*!

Eisav does not get the eighth elevation that Avshalom received. And with that deficiency, what did Eisav lose? We know that Eisav sold his birthright to Yaakov; indeed, Eisav spurned it. According to the Gemara in *Bava Basra*, Eisav went so far as to deny the existence of *techiyas hameisim* (resurrection of the dead in prelude to *Olam HaBa*). The Gemara in *Sanhedrin* tell us that someone who does that forfeits *Olam HaBa*.

I think it is interesting to note that in the Gemara of *Sotah*, there is a Midrash describing events at Yaakov’s *levayah*. When Yosef and his family were about to place Yaakov’s body into the Cave of Machpelah, Eisav tried to block the process by claiming that he owned the last vacant burial spot. Dan’s deaf son, Chushim, was angered by this injustice because everyone knew that Yaakov had paid Eisav handsomely for this burial site with the wealth he earned while working for Lavan. Chushim therefore struck Eisav so hard that he decapitated him and Eisav’s head rolled into the cave, resting in Yitzchak’s shrouds. Could it be that if Eisav had received an eighth blessing, his head would have stayed close to his body? If that were the case, then one could suggest that the eighth plea of King David effected *both* the elevation of Avshalom’s *neshamah* to *Gan Eden* and the bringing of Avshalom’s head close to his body!

Let us return to the *Akeidah* in *Parshas Vayeira*, where Avraham lovingly uses the term “my son” ten times.

Concerning the number ten, we can find many references to Avraham's strong connection with this number:

1. Avraham underwent ten tests; the *Akeidah* was the last.
2. We read the *Akeidah* on Rosh Hashanah and there is an opinion that the *Akeidah* took place on Rosh Hashanah. But there is also an opinion that the *Akeidah* took place after the Ten Days of Repentance on Yom Kippur!
4. Avraham's ten tests parallel the Ten Utterances Hashem used to create the universe.
5. The ten generations from Noach to Avraham were wicked and were only spared destruction because Avraham influenced so many to recognize Hashem.
6. The ten miracles for the *Bnei Yisroel* in Mitzrayim paralleled Avraham's ten tests.
7. The merit of Avraham's ten tests protected the Hebrews when they tested Hashem ten times.
8. When the first *luchos* with the Ten Commandments were broken because of the *cheit ha'eigel*, the merit of Avraham's ten tests caused Hashem to have mercy on His people.

Of the ten times the word "son" is used in the *Akeidah*, *Me'am Loez* tells us that there are two instances in which this word has special meaning:

1. When Hashem first told Avraham of the test to bring Yitzchak up to *Har HaMoriah*, Hashem said "Please take your son" and what followed was an exchange in which Avraham questioned Hashem multiple times in order to ultimately clarify that Hashem meant Yitzchak, not Yishmael. The purpose of the initially vague statement was a sign of love that Hashem had for Avraham, to build Avraham's desire to do Hashem's will.
2. When Avraham answered Yitzchak's questions as to why they brought firewood and a knife but no lamb for a *korban*, Avraham said

“*Elokim* will see to a lamb for an *olah*, my son.” This further hinted to Yitzchak that the intent was for Yitzchak to be placed on the altar.

What about the other eight times the word “son” is used in the *Akeidah*? Were these just within the context of the story, or is there a deeper meaning to these other instances? *Me’am Loez* writes that when the angel called to Avraham to inform him that he should not harm Yitzchak in any way, Avraham replied that he heard the commandment directly from Hashem and could not accept a change in plans from an angel. At that point, Hashem opened the gates of the seven firmaments for Avraham who then saw the *Shechinah*. This was followed by a lengthy dialogue in which Hashem explained that He wanted Yitzchak brought up as if he were an *olah*, but that there never was a command to actually *shecht* Yitzchak. Applying what we learned above, one could suggest that seven of those “sons” were used to open the seven progressively exalted gates of *Shamayim*.

By the same logic, the eighth time the word “son” is used should correspond to some change in status of incredible magnitude. Notably, *Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer* states that as soon as the knife reached Yitzchak’s neck, his soul departed but returned to his body as soon as the angel said “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad.” Furthermore, the *Zohar* states that “the Holy One, Blessed is He, did not associate His Name with any [living] person except for Yitzchak, [who] was considered as dead.” One could suggest therefore that the eighth use of the word “son” represented *techiyas hameisim*, and by extension a place in *Olam HaBa* for Yitzchak, just as the eighth time King David said “son” elevated Avshalom to *Olam HaBa*.

May it be Hashem’s will that the *zechus* of the *Akeidah* will help bring the final *geulah* very soon. אמן

Please, Mr. Postman

Jeffrey Silverberg

Progress is sometimes in the eye of the beholder.

There is no question that in this day and age of email and texts and Twitter that instant communication is at our fingertips. To be around a young person with a smartphone is to witness a constant exchange of information that is breathtaking. Emojis and all caps abbreviations. LOL. Pictures taken and shared in the blink of an eye. It has its advantages. But for me and, I believe many in my generation, the attraction is very limited. What happened to the personal touch? These young people may never have the pleasure of opening a mailbox and finding a letter.

I have not forgotten the joy of receiving a letter from my precious *kallah* in the summer before our wedding when I was working in my hometown of Charleston, WV, and she was home in Baltimore. I remember how I used to write to my grandparents, *alei hem hashalom*, from college, and the encouraging exchanges that I used to send and receive from teenagers and advisors with whom I was engaged in *kiruv*. Exchanging that closeness and warmth for characters on a screen is a bad deal.

There are famous letters in our Jewish history. There is the letter written to the Jews in the time of Esther and Mordechai authorizing them to defend themselves. There is the letter retrieved by Nevuchadnetzar that had great consequences. And there is one letter that was never written. Yosef never wrote home from Mitzrayim.

Yosef was separated from his father Yaakov for twenty-two years. Yaakov believed that Yosef had been killed and remained in mourning for him, refusing consolation for all those years. The *Shechinah*

departed from Yaakov during those years of mourning. Yosef was a servant for the first part of that time, but subsequently he rose to the position of *Mishneh LaMelech*, Prime Minister, Viceroy, Second to Pharaoh, with the ruler's signet ring. Pharaoh commanded the people of Mitzrayim to follow whatever Yosef instructed them to do. Surely, Yosef had the ability to send a letter to his father in Chevron to let him know that he was alive and well. It would seem that this would end his father's misery and restore his spirit. How could it be that Yosef did not do so?

I will offer in this piece a brief summary of the traditional approaches of Chazal and add a possible lesson for consideration.

There are three main explanations offered by the early commentators. One is that there was a *cherem*, a prohibition under penalty of excommunication, that the brothers entered into on that fateful day when Yosef was seized, stripped of his coat of many colors, thrown into the pit, and then sold to the caravan which took him down to Mitzrayim. The brothers agreed that no one would reveal these events. This required a *minyan*. Nine brothers took part in the attack and sale, as Yosef was the victim, Binyamin was with Yaakov, and Reuven had gone to do *teshuvah*. Some commentators say that Hashem Himself joined in the minyan to be the tenth participant. *Rashi* alludes to this opinion in his observation that Yitzchak knew that Yosef was alive, but did not reveal it to his son, Yaakov, whose pain he shared because he saw that it was not Hashem's will that the matter become known. But others are of the opinion that Yosef himself was the tenth man in this *cherem* and was therefore enjoined from revealing himself to his father.

Another opinion is that Yosef reasoned that he could not speak *lashon hara* about his brothers. Yaakov would surely ask how the change in circumstances had occurred and Yosef *paskened* for himself that it would be forbidden for him to have a part in the shame his brothers

would then suffer. A similar explanation is that Yosef calculated that revealing himself to Yaakov would take away Yaakov's suffering and reestablish their father-son relationship, but at the cost of harming, perhaps irrevocably, Yaakov's relationship with all of his other sons and cause Yaakov even more pain as a result. Yosef was one son. He selflessly resolved to sacrifice himself so that Yaakov's relationship with all of his other sons would remain unharmed.

The *Ramban* has a different emphasis. He first puts the question in stark terms. He emphasizes that Chevron was a mere six-day journey from Mitzrayim and harshly says that even if it were a year's trip it would still have been appropriate for Yosef to make the effort to inform Yaakov of his welfare. How could Yosef let Yaakov remain in mourning, and further, how could he have held Shimon when the other brothers returned from their first trip to buy food, thereby causing his father even more pain? He explains that Yosef took the dreams that he had dreamt many years before very seriously. Whether it was because he believed that the dreams were a directive to allow his brothers to achieve their much-needed atonement, or simply because he believed in the power of dreams as shown by his interaction with the butler and the baker in the Egyptian prison, dreams were important and needed to be fulfilled. He dared not reveal himself until they were.

It must be mentioned that Yaakov was not the only person suffering. Revealing himself to Yaakov and reestablishing his connection with his beloved father would also have alleviated the pain that Yosef had to endure as well. His heroism and self-sacrifice in maintaining his distance are implicit in the names he gave to his children. He called his firstborn "Menashe," reflecting his gratitude to Hashem for allowing him to *forget* his troubles and his father's house. He named his second son "Efraim," expressing his thanks that Hashem had caused him to be *productive* in the land of his oppression.

Are these names not a bit strange? What son thanks Hashem for allowing him to forget his boyhood home, let alone the home of *Yaakov Avinu*? What son does not yearn to return to his family, rather than being grateful for success in a foreign land? Perhaps a son who feels as if he has been distanced from his family and must maintain that separation for a greater good.

I heard recently that R' Eliyahu Meir Bloch, ז"ל, once gave an explanation of Menashe's name. He had come to America on a fundraising trip for his yeshivah in Telshe, and he was suddenly stuck here when war broke out in Europe. He was in this country for the duration of the war as his yeshivah and his city were decimated by the Nazis, *y'mach sh'mam v'zichram*. The glory that was Telshe was no more.

R' Bloch realized that he had a choice. He could sink into despair at the loss that he and the Jewish people had suffered. He could think of the scholars, the students, the supporters that had made Telshe great, of the lost Torah, and the lost generations. He could concentrate on the unimaginable loss. Or he could move on, building a new Yeshiva of Telshe here in America, in Cleveland and Chicago. But to do so he really had to move on, to put behind him the greatness he had known that was now irretrievably lost. This required the *berachah* of "Menashe" and later that of "Efraim," to forget the greatness that was now gone and to build anew in an unfamiliar setting.

To go forward, he had to accept that he could not go back. Perhaps this was a part of Yosef's thought process as well in naming his children. ^A
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“All My Plagues”

Rabbi Nesanel Kasnett ¹

יג: פה אָמר ה' אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים שְׁלַח אֶת עַמִּי וְיַעֲבֹדְנִי. יד: כִּי בַּפֶּעַם הַזֹּאת אֲנִי שֹׁלֵחַ אֶת כָּל מַגְפָּתִי אֶל לִבְךָ וּבַעֲבֹדֶיךָ וּבַעֲמָלְךָ בַּעֲבוּר תַּדַּע כִּי אִין כְּמִנִּי בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ. טו: כִּי עֲתָה שִׁלַּחְתִּי אֶת יָדִי נֹאדָה אוֹתָךְ וְנֹאדָה עֲמָלְךָ בַּדָּבָר וּתִכָּחֵד מִן הָאָרֶץ. טז: וְאוֹלָם בַּעֲבוּר זֹאת הָעֲמָדָתִיךָ בַּעֲבוּר הָרֹאדָה אֶת פָּחִי; וְלִמְעַן סִפֵּר שְׁמִי בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ. יז: עוֹדָךְ מִסְתַּוֵּלֵל בְּעַמִּי לְבִלְתִּי שְׁלָחָם. יח: הִנְנִי מִמְטִיר כְּעַת מָחָר בָּרֶד כָּבֵד מְאֹד אֲשֶׁר לֹא הָיָה כְּמֹהוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם לְמֶן הַיּוֹם הַנֹּסְדָה וְעַד עֲתָה. יט: וְעֲתָה שִׁלַּח הָעַז אֶת מִקְנֶךָ וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לָךְ בַּשָּׂדֶה כָּל הָאָדָם וְהַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר יִמָּצֵא בַּשָּׂדֶה וְלֹא יֵאָסֵף הַבֵּיתָה וְיִרְדּוּ עֲלֵיהֶם הַבָּרָד וְנָתַן.

13. So said HASHEM, the God of the Hebrews: Send out My people that they may serve Me. 14. For this time I shall send all My plagues against your heart, and upon your servants, and your people, so that you shall know that there is none like Me in all the world. 15. For now I could have sent My hand and stricken you and your people with the pestilence and you would have been obliterated from the earth. 16. However, for this have I let you endure, in order to show you My strength and so that My Name may be declared throughout the world. 17. You still tread upon My people, not to send them out. 18. Behold, at this time tomorrow I shall rain a very heavy hail, such as there has never been in Egypt, from the day it was founded until now. 19. And now send, gather in your livestock and everything you have in the field; all the people and animals that are found in the field that are not gathered into the house – the hail shall descend upon them and they shall die. [Shemos 9:13-19]

¹ Editor's note. Rabbi Kasnett is my good friend and ArtScroll colleague. In addition to his contributions to numerous ArtScroll volumes, he has authored his own English *sefarim*, including his latest, *Anointing at the Gichon* (Z. Berman Books).

In the synagogues of ancient Babylonia, the entire Torah was read in one-year cycles [in Eretz Yisrael the public reading was concluded once every three years (see *Megillah* 29b)]. Further, as early as the time of the Gemara – if not before – the Torah was divided into individual weekly portions (*sidras*) [see *ibid.*, 29b-30a, where the Gemara discusses the proper sequence of *laining* the weekly *sidra* along with one or more of the special readings, such as those pertaining to Rosh Chodesh and/or Chanukah]. Hence, the *sidras* were of at least Amoraic origin. (The Gemara there even mentions some by the names we use today – e.g., *Tetzaveh*, *Ki Sisa*, and *Vayakhel*.) Thus, the *sidra* divisions are authoritative, and the Sages presumably intended that each one should be studied as a discrete entity. It follows, then, that one may legitimately question the logic of a particular subject's *sidra* placement – for example, why the command to construct an Incense Altar appears at the end of *Parashas Tetzaveh* (*Exodus* 30:1 ff.), after a lengthy description of the priestly vestments, rather than in *Parashas Terumah* with the other Tabernacle furnishings and components.

In light of the above, two related questions involving the Ten Plagues unavoidably arise: First, why are they divided into two groups that appear in separate, free-standing portions (seven in *Va'eira* and three in *Bo*), when arguably they should have been recorded as one continuous narrative in a single text-entity (*sidra*)? And further, why is the plague of hail (בָּרָד) placed in *Va'eira*, as the seventh and concluding *makkah* of that *sidra*, when seemingly it belongs in *Bo*?

Our second question obviously requires elaboration: *Ramban* (*Exodus* 13:16) famously defines the underlying purpose of the Ten Plagues: viz., to refute the three primary heretical beliefs held by mankind, which by then had subverted the three authentic principles of faith. For from the days of Enosh (a) some people began to deny the existence of a Creator Who had created the world *ex nihilo*, from nothingness; (b) while others, who acknowledged the Creator, nonetheless denied

that He has knowledge of human events, supervises them, and rewards and punishes accordingly; and therefore, (c) in consonance with their refusal to recognize God's absolute control of world affairs, these people denied that He is all-powerful.

Malbim (ibid., 7:14) takes up *Ramban's* approach and explains how and why *ten* (plagues) were deployed to uproot *three* (false beliefs). He first cites the Pesach Haggadah, which after enumerating the ten plagues informs, "Rabbi Yehudah made of them a mnemonic: *D'tzach* (דצ"ך), *Adash* (עד"ש), *B'achav* (באח"ב)." From here we see that *Chazal* themselves divided the plagues into three groups, thus implying that each came to teach one of the true, cardinal principles of faith [and thereby disabuse mankind of its mistaken, corruptive beliefs]. Thus, explains *Malbim*, the first group of plagues (דצ"ך)² demonstrated the existence of a Supreme God – as it says: *Through this* (plague of blood) *you shall know that I am HASHEM* (7:17) – for God strikes and bloodies Egypt's deity, the Nile, and then turns the River against its worshipers by having it spawn an infestation of frogs. [*Malbim* notes that only these first two plagues were instructive, in line with: *according to two witnesses ... shall a matter be confirmed* (Deuteronomy 19:15). The third plague in each group, which comes without a warning to Pharaoh, is a punishment for Egypt's failure to heed the lesson of the "two witnesses."]

The second group (עד"ש)³ then teaches that the Most High God oversees the affairs of even lowly mankind: *So that you will know that I am HASHEM in the midst of the land* (8:18). Thus, He distinguishes between the Egyptians and the Israelites in the fourth and fifth plagues, directing them against the persons of the Egyptians (wild beasts) and even their property (pestilence), but sparing the Israelites in both.

² An acronym for דם (blood), צפרדע (frogs), and כבש (lice).

³ An acronym for ערב (wild beasts), דבר (pestilence), and שחין (boils).

Finally, the third group of plagues (בֹּאֵה"ב)⁴ proclaims that God alone is all-powerful, that He can suspend the laws of nature at will, as He Himself advises prior to sending down the *makkah* of hail: *So that you shall know that there is none like Me in all the world* (9:14). For fire and ice miraculously coexisted in the hail,⁵ and it was an unnatural and unprecedented east wind that carried the locusts all the way from Assyria and Babylonia to Egypt.⁶ [As intimated above, the third plague in the group (darkness) served only as a punishment, and the killing of the firstborn came not to instruct or punish but to force Pharaoh to send out the Jews. Thus, the tenth plague was not integral to the tripartite arrangement of the *makkos*.]

So ... it was with the interpretations of *Ramban* and *Malbim* in mind that we asked above why the plague of hail appears in *Parashas Va'eira*, as the seventh and concluding *makkah* of that *sidra*, and not more appropriately in *Parashas Bo* – by which we meant to ask: why not in *Bo* with the other third-group (בֹּאֵה"ב) plagues?!

At this point the reader is encouraged to review the seven verses quoted at the head of this essay, for several other questions concerning the plague of hail arise from a close study of that text.

In short order they are:

- Why does God call the single plague of hail כָּל מִגְפָּתִי, *all My plagues* (v. 14)?
- Why does He specify when this plague will commence – כָּעֵת מָחָר, *at this time tomorrow* (v. 18), whereupon “[Moshe] made a scratch on the wall for [Pharaoh] (and said to him), ‘Tomorrow,

⁴ An acronym for בֹּרֶד (hail), אֲרֵבָה (locusts), חֹשֶׁךְ (darkness), and כְּבוֹרָה (killing of the firstborn)

⁵ See verse 9:24 with *Rashi*.

⁶ See *Malbim* to 10:13.

when the sun will reach this line, the hail will descend'⁷ – whereas for no other plague is the precise starting time disclosed.⁸

• Why does God warn Egypt to gather in their livestock and workers from the field lest they die in the hail (v. 19), if the plague's purpose is to show you My strength, *בְּעִבוֹר הָרְאֵתִיךָ אֶת כְּחִי* (v. 16)? What, indeed, does “show My strength” mean?

One final question, from a verse found later in the passage: *וְה' נָתַן קֶלֶת וּבָרָד וַתִּהְלֶךְ אֵשׁ אֶרְצָה*, *And HASHEM sent thunder and hail, and fire went earthward* (9:23). Scripture here reveals that the plague of hail consisted of three elements – thunder, hailstones, and lightning ("fire"). It is therefore reasonable to assume that all three had to reach the earth simultaneously (i.e., as one unit), at precisely the moment "the sun reached the scratch on the wall," lest Moshe be proven a liar (see *Malbim* ad loc.). Now, the maximum speed (terminal velocity) achieved by free-falling matter such as hail is 122 mph. Sound (e.g., thunder) travels at 767 mph, and light (lightning) at approximately 670,000,000 mph. Does the reader see the problem here? Under natural law the lightning would have reached the earth instantaneously, followed a few seconds later by the thunder and afterward the hail, thereby discrediting Moshe's prediction. God thus performed a great miracle and sent down the hail and thunder *at the speed of light* (*Malbim*) – so that all three components of the plague arrived simultaneously!

But our question is: Why was such a dramatic miracle necessary? Do thunder and lightning always accompany hail? Certainly not! To achieve the full destructive impact of this plague God could have sent down the hail alone, for indeed Scripture later reports: *The hail struck in the entire land of Egypt, everything that was in the field from man to beast; all the grass in the field the hail struck,*

⁷ *Rashi* ad loc., from *Shemos Rabbah* 12:2.

⁸ Not even for the tenth plague according to the Rabbis (see *Rashi* to *Shemos* 11:4).

and every tree of the field it smashed (9:25). No mention here of damaging lightning or thunder.



The key to answering all these questions is the synthesized interpretation of *Ramban* and *Malbim* discussed above. Recall that they taught that the purpose of the plagues was to debunk the three principal heresies espoused by mankind, with each group of *makkos* refuting one of those beliefs. ך"ד thus proclaimed that the world is not eternally ancient, but that a Supreme Being exists Who created it *ex nihilo*. ש"ע then introduces the concept of Divine Providence, through which this Supreme Being indeed involves Himself in and directs the affairs of the world. Finally, the supernatural plagues of באה"ב teach that God is omnipotent.

My thesis is that the plague of hail uniquely incorporates all three lessons, and with that understanding all our difficulties will be resolved. Permit me to explain.

We mentioned above that when God announced that the plague of hail would commence מָחָר, בָּעֵת, *at this time tomorrow* (9:18), Moshe made a scratch on the wall and told Pharaoh, "Tomorrow, when *the sun* reaches this line, the hail will descend." Now, it is obvious that the progress of a rising sun can be visibly detected only on a sunny, cloudless day. However, thunder, lightning and hail normally originate in a moisture-laden overcast sky!? *Be'er Yosef*⁹ opines, in line with the Midrash, that this *makkah* had a second miraculous dimension, in that it did occur on a sunny day – which for our purposes means that the hail, lightning and thunder were, in effect, created *ex nihilo*, from nothingness! The *makkah* thus affirmed that God exists and He created the entire world *ex*

⁹ To verse 9:18.

nihilo. It thereby corresponded to the ך"צ group of plagues, which had refuted the first heresy – that the world is eternally ancient.

The second false belief was that God does not involve Himself in the affairs of man. To refute that untruth Hashem *specified* when this particular plague [of hail] would commence (*at "this" time tomorrow*), which ipso facto demonstrated His precise providential conduct of world events – as, a matter of fact, did His *warning* to the Egyptians to remove their workers and livestock from the fields lest they die in the hail. Indeed, the warning made abundantly clear that Divine Providence extends to all mankind. [Question 4]

Further, this warning bespoke restraint, which was in fact God's "showing of strength," as in "Who is strong?" (*Avos* 4:1).¹⁰ That is, God showed His strength by smiting the remaining vegetation but not any living creature, and the warning facilitated that show of restraint. Alternatively, the warning itself was a show of restraint. [Q5]

In sum, the plague of hail affirmed that God supervises and directs world events. It therefore corresponded as well to the ש"ע group of plagues, which had debunked the second heretical notion, that of God's non-involvement in such matters.



We can now venture to say that because the hail incorporated the lessons of the first two sets of plagues (ך"צ and ש"ע), it appears together with them in the same Torah portion (*Va'eira*). Indeed, it is precisely to associate hail with those two groupings that the ten

¹⁰ The Mishnah reads: "Who is strong? One who subdues his (evil) inclination, for it is stated: He who is slow to anger is better than a strong man, and a master of his passions is better than a conqueror of a city (*Mishlei* 16:32)."

plagues were split between two *sidras*, for without such division – i.e., if the plagues were recorded one after another all-in-one *sidra* – the only groupings derived would be those of Rabbi Yehudah. [Q1] For the natural grouping of the hail, wherein fire and ice miraculously coexisted,¹¹ is with the third set of plagues (באה"ב), which likewise were inherently supernatural phenomena and thus demonstrated God's absolute power over the natural order. Indeed, to emphasize hail's natural grouping and counterbalance its placement in *Parashas Va'eira*, God magnified the miracle by causing thunder and lightning to accompany the hail so that the hail and thunder would have to be sent down *at the speed of light*. [Q6]

And now, finally, we can understand why God called the single plague of hail כל מגפתי, *all My plagues* – namely, because it encompassed the lessons of all three groups of plagues! [Q3]



And yet we wonder: If each group of plagues indelibly imparted its unique lesson, what purpose was served by the hail modeling all three? In other words, why give hail a special status?

Scripture states: וַיֵּצֵא מֹשֶׁה מֵעַם פְּרָעָה... וַיִּפְרֹשׂ כַּפּוֹי אֵל ה' וַיִּחְדָּלוּ הַקְּלוֹת: *Moshe went out from Pharaoh ... and stretched out his hand to HASHEM, and the thunder and hail ceased and rain did not reach the earth*(9:33).

Moshe's intercession literally stopped the plague in its tracks. The Midrash elaborates:¹²

תלאן ברפיון. ואימתי ירדו? בימי יהושע על האמוריים, שנאמר... והשאר שהיו בשמים, ירדו על גוג ומגוג לימות המשיח.

¹¹ See verse 9:24 with *Rashi*.

¹² *Tanchuma, Va'eira* 16. See also *Shemos Rabbah* 12:7

"[The hailstones] remained suspended in the air. And when did they come down? In the days of Joshua, [when he fought] against the Amorites, for it is stated etc. And the rest [of the hail] that was [suspended] in the sky will descend upon Gog and Magog in the Messianic era."

A remarkable Midrash, but what is the significance of King Gog and his armies of Magog being struck with the selfsame hailstones that God had hurled against the Egyptians? Another Midrash¹³ provides the clue:

כל מכות שהביא הקב"ה על המצריים במצרים הוא עתיד להביא על אדום שנאמר וגו'.

"All the plagues that the Holy One, blessed is He, brought upon the Egyptians in Egypt He will in the future bring upon Edom, for it is stated etc."

The Midrash proceeds to support this amazing prediction of future plagues with verses from the post-Pentateuchal books of *Isaiah*, *Ezekiel* and *Zechariah* – which suggests that those afflictions will merely be replications of the original blood, frogs, et al.

However, the plague of hail will be unique, in that it will consist of the *very same* hailstones that were hurled against Egypt over three millennia before!

The hail thus serves to connect the *makkos* in Egypt to the plagues that will ensure the final, future destruction of Israel's enemies, thereby bringing the history of Klal Yisrael full-cycle: Pharaoh sought to quash the emerging Jewish nation; and Gog, in one final massive effort, will seek to deny Israel its glorious destiny. As they did in the distant past, the Ten Plagues – with their precious and eternal lessons – will once again thwart the enemy's wicked design. אֱלֹהִים

¹³ *Tanchuma, Bo 4.*

Makkas Bechoros: Firstborn Vengeance

R' Chaim Soskil

On the night of the Seder, we sit down to recount and relive the events of the birth of our nation. We recall going down to Mitzrayim as just a family with a promise from Hashem to stay with us; and leaving as a nation bound to Hashem by virtue of the many miracles He performed while freeing us from servitude.

The first night of Pesach is the anniversary of the day on which the Jewish People actually left Mitzrayim. The first night of Pesach, the night of the Seder, is the night of *makkas bechoros*, after which Pharaoh begged Moshe and Aharon to leave, which they did the next day, after having collected enormous wealth from their Egyptian neighbors.

This night was a big night. It was the climax of nearly a year's worth of *makkos* which wreaked havoc on Mitzrayim and its people. However, it seems clear that *makkas bechoros* was not just an ordinary *makkah* that just happened to be the tenth one and thus was the final straw that broke Mitzrayim's will, but rather, it was specifically designated to be the tenth and final *makkah*. There was something especially devastating about this particular *makkah*.

It is clear that from the beginning, it was Hashem's plan that *makkas bechoros* would be the grand finale, because after *Moshe Rabbeinu's* encounter with Hashem at the burning bush, as he begins to return to Mitzrayim, Hashem tells him (*Shemos* 4:21-23), *I know that Pharaoh will not agree to release the Bnei Yisrael, despite the signs that you will show him; so tell him, thus says Hashem, Yisrael is My son, My bechor; if you refuse to send him out, behold I will kill your son, your firstborn.* The fact that this *makkah* was singled out over all the others seems to be because this was the most frightening threat. Obviously,

the placement of *makkas bechoros* as the tenth *makkah* was no coincidence!

Furthermore, we find that several mitzvos commemorate this *makkah*. For example, after Hashem gives the mitzvos of *pidyon haben*, *bechor beheimah*, and *peter chamor*, Moshe Rabbeinu says (Shemos 13:14-15), *If your son will ask you "What is this?" you should tell him, "Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim with a strong hand; and it was when Pharaoh refused to send us, that Hashem killed every firstborn in the land of Mitzrayim, from the firstborn of man to the firstborn of animal; therefore, I bring to Hashem the firstborn males, and I redeem my firstborn sons."* This is not something that we find by the other *makkos*; there isn't a mitzvah commemorating *dam* or *arov*, for example. *Makkas bechoros*, however, seems especially significant.

A final point on this, is that we find in our daily *tefillos* that we mention *makkas bechoros*, but not the other *makkos*. In Shacharis, in the *berachos* after *Shema*, we say מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים פְּדִיתָנוּ, כָּל בְּכוֹרֵיהֶם הָרַגְתָּ, וּבְכוֹרָה גָּאֵלְתָּ. In Maariv we say הַמֶּכָּה בְּעֶבְרָתוֹ כָּל בְּכוֹרֵי מִצְרַיִם. In the *Tehillim* we say in *Pesukei DeZimra* of Shabbos, we praise Hashem, לַמֶּכָּה מִצְרַיִם בְּכוֹרֵיהֶם כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדּוֹ. We see that in our *tefillah* and in *Tehillim*, *makkas bechoros* has a special place as well.

It thus seems clear that *makkas bechoros* was central to the miracles of the Exodus and to the lessons which we are meant to learn from it. What is it that distinguishes it from the rest? Nearly every other *makkah* also involved deaths of Egyptians, probably in more dramatic ways than in this *makkah*. So why was it so devastating?

This emphasis on *makkas bechoros* is really part of a larger theme that runs throughout the Pesach story. With a better understanding of these other aspects, we can come to a better understanding of *makkas bechoros* as well. In the *Haggadah Maaseh Nissim* (written by the *Nesivos*, R' Yaakov of Lisa) on the section of the conversation with

the son who is unable to ask, he sets forth a profound explanation of this theme. He begins by asking a question. Why is it that we often find that when the Chumash speaks of Hashem taking the Jewish People out of Mitzrayim, it specifically points out that it took place in the month of the spring? Why is that noteworthy?

The *Maaseh Nissim* writes, there was an important message that Hashem wanted to relay to the world with the miracles of leaving Mitzrayim. He elaborates and explains that the deity of the Egyptians was embodied by the sheep. This was because the first of the twelve *mazalos* is that of the month of Nissan, *mazal tleh*, the sheep, also known as Aries. They believed that this *mazal*, being the first, was the most powerful, and had control of all things that were first, for instance firstborn people. They believed that no force could overpower it.

Hashem wanted these false beliefs to be undermined before the Jewish People left. He didn't just strike against the Egyptians, but against their gods as well. *Makkas bechoros* was to show with totality that Hashem, and Hashem alone, runs the world. It was for this reason that Hashem chose to strike during the month of Nissan, and on the 15th of the month, when the *mazal tleh*'s supposed power was at its peak; and He struck specifically the firstborn, whose protection should have been the strongest. This is also why the *Bnei Yisrael* were commanded to perform the *korban pesach* with a sheep; the message there as well was that the idol of Egypt was powerless.

Now we can understand why this *makkah* was so devastating to Mitzrayim, and why it alone was foreshadowed before *Moshe Rabbeinu* returned there. This *makkah* was designed to completely crush any ounce of confidence in the power that the Egyptians believed would overpower Hashem, and in which they trusted so fully.

The *Maaseh Nissim* writes, there was another important idea to be found here as well. The fact that Hashem's display of total control over

the world happened in the spring is no coincidence. It was to cause a person to think about Hashem, the One who Created the world from nothing, the One who preceded all else and is the real First in the truest sense. The spring is the time of year when the world revitalizes; the cold and darkness of winter gives way to warmer, longer days; plant and animal life renews and is filled with energy. It is the beginning of a new period of life. An appreciation of this reminds a person of the world and life that Hashem created to begin with, which is mimicked in the “new creations” of the spring. This is another reason why the fact that the Exodus took place in the month of spring, in Nissan, is enumerated many times in the Chumash.

To better understand how to answer our other questions, we need to take this a step further. The *Maaseh Nissim* also writes that the knowledge that Hashem is the true first Being Who created all else makes it fitting to serve Him with things that are first. This is why we have mitzvos involving firstborn sons and firstborn animals; the mitzvah of the first fruits that are designated to be *bikkurim*; and also, *terumos* and *challah* are separated as a first portion before the rest is permitted to its owner. On this note, the *Pele Yo’etz* writes that an intention behind these mitzvos is to show that we are fully dedicated to the service of Hashem. The first of one’s crops is usually what he cares about and is proud of the most, and yet he is willingly giving it up for Hashem’s sake. With these mitzvos we show that everything we have, that we produce, that we use even for our physical needs, are all part of using our lives in His service. To show this, the firsts of so many things are dedicated completely to Hashem. And as the *Maaseh Nissim* wrote, the mitzvos of firsts are also reminders of the message that Hashem is the true First, the Creator and Controller of the world.

This is why *makkas bechoros* has mitzvos attached to it, unlike other *makkos*. Hashem struck the firstborn of Mitzrayim, those that were accorded special care, and He did this for the sake of His nation, the one that He takes special care of, the people that He called “My

bechor.” And now we in turn serve Him with our first things, those that a person would naturally care about more.

It seems likely, as well, that this is why this *makkah* gets special mention in our *tefillos* as well; we are recalling the special care that Hashem took of us as His *bechor*, as expressed in that He struck against the Egyptians firstborn before freeing us from them once and for all.

Now we can have a fuller understanding of the mitzvos we do, and of the *tefillos* we say to the One who preceded all else. Now we can really appreciate the incredible climax of *makkas bechoros* that took place on the night of the Seder; of the blow to Egypt that doubled as an expression of love for the Jewish People. This was a lasting message that Hashem wanted us to understand for Pesach, and during the season of fresh growth, the season of spring. א

Matzah: A Timely Lesson

Ari Weiss

Just imagine we had a bank account where every morning we were granted a gift of \$86,400. Well, we do have such a bank account, and its name is “Time!” Every day, we are credited with 86,400 seconds to make that day great. If we fail to make the best of the day’s deposits, the loss is ours. We must live in the present, on today’s deposits.

When it comes to Pesach, so much of the focus is on the mitzvah of matzah. This mitzvah represents only one aspect of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the fact that they were rushed out of Mitzrayim so quickly that the bread had no time to rise. Why don’t we focus more toward the actual events of the *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, rather than the speed with which it occurred?

An answer is given by the former Mashgiach of the Chevron Yeshiva. During the final days of the exile, the *Bnei Yisrael* sunk to the 49th level of *tumah*. It turns out, the *Bnei Yisrael* rushed out of Mitzrayim “just in time.” Had they stayed just a few hours longer, they would have sunk to the 50th level of *tumah*, and they would have never been redeemed. These crucial moments made the world of a difference. This is the message of the matzah. A few extra moments would also have made the dough rise. However, since the *Bnei Yisrael* hurried out of Mitzrayim, the dough didn’t have a chance to rise and therefore remained matzah. Since the matzah symbolizes this important aspect of the salvation, we spend a great deal of time focusing on it.

Time is a precious commodity that we shouldn’t waste or misuse. We should always be cognizant of the importance of time and we should all be *zocheh* to always use our time in the best way possible. א

Who Were the *Eirev Rav*?

Yehoshua Dixler

During the time we were reading *Parshas Beshalach*, I happened to read a fascinating piece in the *Sefer Be'er Mayim Chayim*, authored by R' Chaim ben Shlomo Tirrer (1760–1817), aka R' Chaim Czernowitzer. While the sefer would be categorized as *chassidish*, mixing *kabbalah* from the *Zohar* and *Arizal* together with traditional sources such as the Talmud and Midrash, his explanation of the genesis of the *eirev rav*, which I have loosely translated below, does not rely on any *kabbalistic* terminology or *Chasidic* thought. Rather, it is a beautiful explanation for the strange phenomenon of the *eirev rav*.

Why were so many strangers allowed to join the Jews during their escape from Mitzrayim? Why accept these people and risk that their impurity would negatively influence the Jews, as did occur? The *Be'er Mayim Chaim* answers these questions and more. I will present his fascinating explanation at length and follow with some thoughts of my own.

וַיְהִי בְשִׁלַּח פְּרָעָה אֶת־הָעָם, *It was when Pharaoh sent out the people.* The *Midrash Rabbah* asks, “Who put fear in the place of happiness to place a language of woe in the happiness of the exodus of Bnei Yisrael from the land of Mitzrayim? And who cried out woe?” It is a well-known statement of *Chazal* (*Bereishis Rabbah* §42): “Any place the *pasuk* writes “*vayehi*,” it means there was a trouble.” The syllable “*vay*” can be translated as “woe.” But here it is the opposite. This is the day that the Jews were happy with their Creator as they left the darkness of Mitzrayim for the great light. The *Midrash* also asks about the language of “Pharaoh sent” – was it Pharaoh who sent them? Doesn’t the *pasuk* state, “Hashem brought them out from Mitzrayim?”

It appears that we can address this based on what is known from the holy writings of our master the *Arizal*. This *eirev rav* (translation: mixed multitudes) that went out with the Jews was added by Moshe himself; Hashem did not tell him to take out a non-Jewish nation. All the prophecies to him only state, “Send out *my people* and they will worship Me” or “My child, my first born is *Israel*.” Hashem did not say that the people leaving Mitzrayim should include the descendants of Cham the father of Canaan. However, Moshe, our master, decided to accept them because he thought that he had the ability to repair and overcome the evil within them and elevate them to the portion of holy goodness. But he was unable to implement this properly. As we see, they joined the Jews in every sin against Hashem. As it says clearly (*Shemos Rabbah* §42), “I didn’t tell you to mix the *eirev rav* with them. You who were humble... and I knew what they would do. They are the ones who made the golden calf... and they caused my people to sin.” See the holy *Shelah* who wonders greatly how Moshe could take out a people, previously unknown to him, without a command from Hashem.

It is possible to say that the *eirev rav* were the guards Pharaoh sent to ensure the Jews return after three days, as *Chazal* say (*Yalkut* §230). And they were a large people so that if the Jews did not want to return, the guards would coerce them and even war with them if necessary. However, they had a change of heart, shortly after leaving Mitzrayim, to mix with the Jews; to go where they go and to cling to them. Only some of them returned to tell Pharaoh (*Shemos* 14:5), “The people ran away.” The word “people” (“*am*” in Hebrew) is specifically used. It is clear in the words of *Chazal* and the *Zohar* (*Beshalach* 45b) that where it says “the people” it is referring to the *eirev rav*. And this is the meaning of “the people fled,” meaning the guards, which are the *eirev rav*, which belong to him (Pharaoh), fled with the Jews.

When Moshe saw that they left willingly and wanted to cling to the Jews, he did not want to dismiss them from the world and push them

away with two hands. He left them mixed and thought it would be possible to bring them under the wings of the *Shechinah*. When the *pasuk* says later on that “the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was changed to the people and they said (*Shemos*, 14:5) ‘What is this that we have done that we sent out the Jews...’.” We need to understand why two different words, “people” and “Jews”, are used here. Also, what does it mean, “What is this that we have done” – did they do this willingly; weren’t they forced to let the Jews leave out of fear for their lives? As they said at the time of the death of the firstborn, “We are all dying.” How could they say many things like this which are known to be untrue?

However, if the Mitzrim allowed the Jews to leave as they wanted and did not send them with orders to go and return after three days, then certainly they would not have sent anyone along with them to force their return. Rather, the Jews would have left alone, as they desired, to the place they wanted. Indeed, Pharaoh did not want this and instead *sent* the Jews. The phrase “sent them” is specific – like a person who sends his friend with instructions. He was compelled to send the *eirev rav* with them in order to return them. But they remained there joining with the Jews. And that is why the *pasuk* says (*Shemos* 14:5) “The heart of Pharaoh and his servants changed to the *people*.” The main point is the changing of heart indicating a great pain and sorrow regarding the people, the *eirev rav*; his people ran away from their master.

And therefore, they said “What is this we have done that we sent the Jews...” meaning: Why did we *send* the Jews with orders? We should have let them just leave and not *sent* them on condition to return which resulted in the loss of a great number of people.

The above is the explanation of the *Be’er Mayim Chaim*. Since we know that over 600,000 armed Jews left Mitzrayim (*Rashi, Shemos*, 13:17), the number of people sent to coerce them to return must have

been similarly large, upsetting Pharaoh greatly when he learned such a large group had left him. Why was Moshe confident he could successfully assimilate so many Egyptians into the Jewish population?

Perhaps Moshe didn't immediately accept them. When Hashem saved the Jews at the Red Sea, *Chazal* say, "A maidservant saw at the sea more than the prophet Yechezkel." We can assume the *eirev rav* experienced this vision as well.¹ After such a powerful experience, it's reasonable to think Moshe would then expect the *eirev rav* to become full believers as the Jews. In addition, Hashem earlier told Moshe the Jews would worship Hashem and receive the Torah at Mount Sinai.² Moshe was convinced the combined spirituality of both events would permanently impact the *eirev rav*.

However, Moshe was mistaken. Upon descending Mount Sinai with the *luchos*, Moshe realized his mistake. He saw that the *eirev rav* were leading the Jews in the service of the golden calf! As descendants of Cham, the *eirev rav* were not changed by the events at the Red Sea or at Mount Sinai. Only the Jews were affected due to the combination of their spiritual heritage, as descendants of the *avos*, and the shared enslavement in Mitzrayim that formed them into a united people.

Hashem well prepared the Jews in Mitzrayim for spiritual transformation, but the *eirev rav* had no such preparation. The story of the *eirev rav* illustrates that even the greatest miracles will have little lasting effect on those who are unprepared. א

¹ See, for example, *Alshich* at the beginning of *Parashas Yisro*.

² See *Rashi* to *Sanhedrin* 82a (ד"ה בת יתרו) that the *eirav rav* became *geirim* at Sinai. But the *Ramban* (*Shemos* 13:2) writes that only the *Bnei Yisrael* were in front of the mountain, with the *eirav rav* behind them. However, even according to his opinion, the *eirav rav* at least witnessed the revelation at Sinai, even if they did not experience it.

Bringing the Flame of Hashem into our Lives

Moshe Rock (Intro inspired By Eitan Rock)

Yetzias Mitzrayim was a time when Hashem openly showed the world some of his power and awesomeness. Every *makkah* was a display of Hashem's greatness. It was a time of revealed miracles that were not hidden behind the veil of nature. One of the many ways that Hashem manifested himself to the Jews was as a protective pillar of fire, that guided us through the Midbar.



Following is an original thought that my son Eitan shared with me.

I was sitting for hours by the Menorah on Chanukah and I was fidgeting with what some people call a candle and it amazed me how the flame was so mesmerizing. I don't know about you, but I could stare at it for hours. In fact, I did.

Isn't it crazy how something so beautiful and mesmerizing can at the same time be so dangerous? I started to think how it is the same thing with Hashem. You can get so close to Hashem that you actually feel His warmth but if you get too close you can burn yourself as well. Like when you get too stuck on trying to understand Hashem from a logical point of view and why He has to let certain things happen without truly understanding that everything is for the best.

In getting close to Hashem there are two ways to handle the fire. You can use it against yourself or channel it and use it for the good. Light up the world, make it a better place. Use your passion to spread Hashem's will to others. That's what we can learn from one little candle. Just channel it and grow like a beautiful fire.



Below is a short compilation of some inspiring and witty thoughts taken from Think Hashem Daily, a project of Yeshiva Ateres Shimon, Far Rockaway NY. *Be's"d* we will be able to set our priorities to bring us closer to Hashem and feel the goodness and the warmth of His flame.

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**Be happy;
not because everything seems good,
but because you can see the good in everything**

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**Don't wait for the perfect moment;
take the moment and make it perfect!**

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**Be yourself,
everyone else is taken.**

=====

**A busy life makes Davening to Hashem harder,
but Davening to Hashem makes a busy life easier.**

=====

**We may not have gone where we intended to go,
but we always end up where we need to be.**

=====

Why should we trust Hashem that everything He does is for our good?

**"There is no one who has more superior knowledge
as to what is best for something, than the one who made it."**

Chovos Halevavos - Shaar HaBitachon 3

=====

**There are TWO things you should never worry about:
something you CAN change
and something you CAN'T change.**

=====

**A person goes through life praying 3 times a day....
but don't forget to also talk to Hashem!**

Rav Shimshon Pincus

=====

**A person who truly trusts in Hashem is truly rich.
But a person who is only reputed to trust in Hashem
is like a person who is only reputed to be rich.**

Rav Yisroel Salanter

=====

**A person whose actions are pleasant
reflects the beauty and splendor
of Hashem onto the world.**

Maharal

=====

"Tracht Goot, S'Vet Zein Goot!"

"Think good and it will be good!"

=====

**Hashem rewards us for having Bitachon
that things will turn out good;
having a positive outlook can actually effect
a positive outcome!**

=====

**Everything that happens is from Hashem,
and has its reason.**

**Our job is to turn what seems like a *mess*,
into His *message*.**

=====

David *Hamelech* already asked Hashem for us:

**הוֹצִיָאָה מִמִּסְגָּר | נַפְשִׁי לְהוֹדוֹת אֶת־שִׁמְךָ
תהילים קמב**

"Hashem - Take me out of confinement

[so that I will be able] to give thanks to Your name! "

=====

על חיינו המסורים בידך

"Keep washing your hands -
but don't forget whose hands we're in"

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HDC-2000 Multiformat Camera System
made by Sony - 2.1 Megapixels
(retail value - \$96,250.00)

Human eye created by Hashem - 576 megapixels
(priceless)

=====

**If your father is rich, you wouldn't worry about Parnassah.
If your father is a doctor, you wouldn't worry about health.
If your father is a matchmaker, you wouldn't worry about a
Shidduch.
If your Father is Hashem, you don't have to worry about
anything!**

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**The happiest people might not have the best of everything
but they make the best of everything they have!**

=====

**When us Yidden experience pain, we cry out OY!
Spelled out Aleph, Vuv, Yud,
'OY' has the same Gematria as the word 'TOV' (17)
Because every OY is really hidden TOV from Hashem!
Rav E.Biderman**

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**When we give from our possessions or our time to others,
we are not giving away.
Hashem puts it on "layaway" for us
so that we can pick it up in the world to come !
From Chofetz Chaim - Loving Kindness
by Rabbi Fishel Schachter**

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**"It's not happiness that makes us grateful;
it's the gratefulness that makes us happy."**

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**"Don't despise small acts. Nothing is small,
because everything you do for Hashem
and for other people, is forever."**

Rav Avigdor Miller

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הודו לה' כי טוב

**In many languages, the word for Hashem
and the word for good are similar
(Dutch and English-God, Yiddish-Gut,
Swedish-Gud, German-Gott)**

Rabbi Akiva Tatz

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**Happy moments praise Hashem
Difficult moments seek Hashem
Quiet moments pray to Hashem
Painful moments trust Hashem
Every moment thank Hashem**

=====

A man came to a Tzaddik -

"My boss fired me - how will I get my *Parnassah*?!?"

The Tzaddik asked him -

"Do you know who your mailman is?"

"No."

"But you get your mail - right?"

**So don't worry who your boss was, is, or will be -
either way you'll get your *Parnassah* - from Hashem!"**

Rav M. Biderman ^{אב}

Wine and Spices

Rabbi Abba Zvi Naiman ¹

A Baraisa (*Kereisos* 6b) teaches us a detail about preparing the *ketores*: הָדַק הַיָּטֵב הַיָּטֵב הָדַק אֹמֵר שׁוֹחֵק כְּשֶׁהוּא שׁוֹחֵק, *As one would grind [the spices], he would say, “Grind thoroughly, thoroughly grind.”*

The Gemara adds: רע כָּשֶׁם שֶׁהַדִּיבוֹר רַע, לְיֵינּוּ כֵּן הַדִּיבוֹר יָפֵה לְבָשָׁמִים, *This supports R' Yochanan, who said that just as speech is harmful for wine, it is beneficial for spices.*

Rashi explains that this is what an appointed person in the Beis HaMikdash would say to the one doing the grinding. *Tosafos* write there that the breath coming from the speech is beneficial to the spices. The *Kol Bo* (§38) adds that these words are guttural, and the air coming to the spices from the throat is especially beneficial for them.

However, the *Rambam* (*Hil. Klei HaMikdash* 2:5) writes that when the person is grinding, *he* should say these words as long as he is mixing the ingredients together. And the *Aruch LaNer* (to *Rashi* there) notes that the *Rambam* is disagreeing with *Rashi* who said that an appointed person says these words to the one doing the grinding.

It is also interesting to note that some commentators held that the correct way to pronounce this line of the Gemara is to say *מִפְנֵי שֶׁהַקוֹל יִפְּה לְבַשְׂמִים*, *because the sound is beneficial for “the one doing the grinding,”* not that it is beneficial for the spices like our version. According to this reason, the one doing the grinding should say these words to prevent the dust from the grinding to enter his throat. These explanations assume that specifically *speech* is beneficial for

¹ This is based on the *Shabbas HaGadol Derashah* that was sent out last year when we could not meet in person, later adapted by our *Kuntres HaKetores*.

spices, which is what our version of the Gemara says. However, there is another Gemara that seems to say that *sound*, not just speech, is beneficial. That Gemara says (*Arachin* 10b), מכתשת היתה במקדש של, נחושת היתה ומימות משה היתה והיתה מפטמת את הבשמים, *A copper mortar was used in the Beis HaMikdash from the times of Moshe. It was used to prepare the spices.* And *Rashi* explains that it would make a clear sound, which would add fragrance to the *ketores*. This indicates that sounds, too, were beneficial for the *ketores*. *Rashi* apparently had a version of the Gemara (as it is found in the *Yerushalmi*, *Yoma* 4:5, and in our siddurim), which read מפני שהקול יפה לבשמים, *because the "sound" is beneficial for spices.*²



We learned from the Baraisa above that speech is beneficial for *ketores* and harmful of wine. Let us try to understand the difference between the *ketores* and the wine.

We will start with some information from the *Chida*. He quotes another Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 70a), which says חֲמָרָא וְרִיחָנִי פְקַחִין, *Wine and fragrant scents made me wise.* Here also we have the combination of wine and spices. The *Chida* (*Pesach Einyaim* there) writes that a wise person knows when to speak (for spices) and when to be silent (for wine). The *Derashos Mahri"i* explains this further. There are times when we are supposed to speak, like when studying Torah and davening. And there are times when we must remain silent, such as when we might be tempted to speak *lashon hara* or to flatter someone. The Gemara is saying that the wise person knows how to navigate these opposing demands of speech.

According to this, wine represents the demand to be silent, while *ketores* represents the time to speak. This makes a lot of sense

² *Tosafos* and the *Kol Bo* would have to say that copper mortar was beneficial for the *ketores* for a reason other than the sound it made.

regarding the *ketores*, because we know the *ketores* offered in the *Beis HaMikdash* atoned for *lashon hara*, using speech in an improper manner (see *Zevachim* 88b). Therefore, speaking properly when grinding the *ketores* is an antidote for inappropriate speech.

Let us take this idea a step further. The *Sfas Emes* (Purim 5649) notes that the sense of smell comes from the *neshamah*. The Gemara (*Berachos* 43b) learns from the last *pasuk* in *Tehillim*, *כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְהַלֵּל יְיָ*, *Let all the neshamos praise Hashem*, that we are supposed to make a *berachah* before enjoying the fragrance of spices. The Gemara knows this because it is the *neshamah* that enjoys the fragrance. Therefore, the *Sfas Emes* says, speech is good for the *neshamah* because the *neshamah* is occupied with Torah and davening. Wine, on the other hand, represents the need to direct one's body to *avodas Hashem*. This act of the body must be done quietly so that it will remain secondary to the *neshamah*, allowing the person to serve Hashem with both body and soul.

As we know from the *Ramchal*, a human is not a *neshamah* in some disposable container. A human is a combination of the spiritual *neshamah* and the physical body. We, as a complete human, have to serve Hashem with body and soul. Therefore, the *Sfas Emes* learns from the spice/wine combination that we have to train our bodies to follow the needs of our *neshamos*, and through that effective combination, we will serve Hashem properly.

This perhaps helps us understand what would otherwise contradict the Gemara's advice not to speak near wine. On Pesach, when we drink four cups of wine, why do we have a mitzvah to talk as much as possible about *Yetzias Mitzrayim*? Why doesn't our talking ruin the wine on the table?

The answer can be based on the famous explanation (see, for example, *Hagadas Simchas HaRegel* of the *Chidah* p. 34, quoting the *Zohar*

HaKadosh and *Sfas Emes*, *Pesach* 5644, among many others) that the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 139:12) וְלַיְלָה כִּיּוֹם יֵאָדָר, *the night will shine like day*, is discussing the night of the Pesach Seder.

We can understand this principle as follows: Normally, we are most able to use our *neshamos* to study Torah and daven during the day. At night, we give our *neshamos* to Hashem from the time we go to sleep until He returns them to us in the morning. We thank Hashem every morning, שָׁשָׁהּ חֲזוֹרָת בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחַמְלָה, *that You have returned my soul within me with compassion*. Night, then, is normally a time of quiet. But on Pesach night, we stay awake connecting with all past generations back to the time of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and transmitting our *mesorah* to the next generation. Our *neshamos* are burning inside us, and the night comes alight from them.

We should also mention the *vort* of the *Gr"a z"l*, which gives us a deeper understanding of the *Ma Nishtanah*. We say מָה נִשְׁתַּנָּה הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה, *Why is this night different?* But the word הַלַּיְלָה is feminine (ending in a *hei*), while יוֹם, *day*, is masculine. The question is, “Why is this night different in that we say the masculine הַיּוֹם that is usually reserved for the day? We should be saying הַלַּיְלָה הַזֹּאת. But based on what we’ve been saying, it is understandable. At our Pesach Seder, the night has turned into day.

Seder night is a *neshamah* event. It is a time when our *neshamah* is able to direct the physical to the service of Hashem. Body and soul together leave the confines of our personal *Mitzrayims*. We can say that the wine on this night poses no danger to our *avodah*. Wine, which is usually a vehicle for the body, is now a catalyst for spirituality. It is used for Kiddush, for the *berachah* for our *Geulah*, for *bentching*, and for Hallel. Over this wine, we can use our power of speech with abandon. אֱלֹהֵינוּ

For All Generations

Irvin Naiman

וְהַגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר, *You shall tell your son on that day (Shemos 13:8).*

וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁאַלְךָ בֶּנְךָ מָחָר לֵאמֹר, *It shall be when your son will ask you in the future (Shemos 13:14).*

Both of the above *pesukim* involve children. The first uses the term בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, *on that day*, implying a more immediate Pesach. The second uses the term מָחָר, which *Rashi* explains to mean *in the future*. *Rashi* adds that another *pasuk* (*Devarim* 6:20) mentions a son asking about the *eidus*, *chukim*, and *mishpatim*. And *Rashi* concludes with what we know from the Haggadah that there are four sons to which the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* must be related. Is there something to be learned from *Rashi's* use of the *pasuk* that uses מָחָר, *in the future*, to teach us the lesson of the Four Sons?

Both of the *pesukim* talk about sons, but perhaps there is a difference between them. The first *pasuk* teaches us the basic mitzvah, giving the responsibility to parents to tell their children about *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. The second *pasuk*, though, that mentions the future, could perhaps be understood to mean that we also have to relate to children of the future. Not just our immediate children, but also their children, and their children's children. This means that grandparents should also be part of teaching the story to their descendants.

Is there a practical side to this? We have Pesach each year, and when it is possible (unlike this past Corona year), families get together to share in the Seder to talk about Mitzrayim and the wonders that Hashem has done for us. We all sit around the table and imagine ourselves as if we are actually in Egypt. With very vivid stories and

images, we see ourselves living through the slavery and then the salvation. It is a time when generations come together to share what Hashem has given us.

But we learn from the *pasuk* that says מָהָר that this is not just a family get-together. The focus is on the future generations. We teach them what it was like and encourage them to ask questions and to learn to understand the depth of what *Yetzias Mitzrayim* was truly about. Both parents and grandparents, etc. can be part of לְהַגִּידָהּ לְבָנֶיךָ; teaching what we were taught or have learned about the miraculous salvation and what we have today with Hashem's help.

I also feel it is incumbent on all of us to teach our children and grandchildren not just about the miracles of leaving Mitzrayim but also *why* the Bnei Yisrael were chosen for this miraculous salvation. It started with Avraham as a promise from Hashem that by staying with tradition he would make the Jewish people into a nation. This is our Mesorah. We learn from the term מָהָר, *in the future*, that this should continue and extend through the generations *l'olam va'ed*, forever and forever. אֲמֵן

Connected to Egypt

Yitzchok Raczkowski

וְאֵלֵינוּ לֹא הוֹצִיאָה הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרָיִם, הֲרֵי אֲנוּ וּבְנֵינוּ וּבְנֵי בְנֵינוּ. *If Hashem had not taken our fathers out of Egypt, we, our sons, and grandsons would still be connected to Egypt.*

The *Ritva* asks a fascinating question on this part of the Haggadah. How could it be that *Klal Yisroel* would still be connected to Egypt? Didn't Hashem make an unconditional promise to *Avraham Avinu* that He would take Jews out of Egypt no matter what, as soon as the proper amount of time had passed? So how could it be that if Hashem had not taken us out of Egypt then that we would still be “stuck” in Egypt?

He answers that obviously we would have been taken out of the land of Egypt. It is just that if we had not been taken out at that moment, we would not have been able to get to the level at which it would have been befitting for us to be taken out of the land of Egypt.

I think many lessons can be learned from this powerful point that the *Ritva* is making. I would like to point out two lessons that spoke to me the most. First, this concept shows the tremendous *chesed* of Hashem that He would never leave us in a place where we would not have the opportunity to redeem ourselves. It seems to follow, just as Hashem would not let us fall to such a level during the time of the exile of Egypt, He certainly would not let us fall to such a level during our generation. So, the next time we feel that we are at particularly low level in our *shmiras hamitzvos* and *yiras Shamayim*, we can think about this *Ritva* and how Hashem would not let us be in a situation that we could not get out of. On the contrary, we can use this moment to show how much strength we have that Hashem knows we can overcome such a challenging obstacle.

The other idea that we see from this *Ritva* is the power of assimilation, and how we must do our best to fight it. The *Ritva* said that as each generation got further and further away from Jewish holiness, the ability to come back to our original level decreased. In our times, as assimilation has increased to levels like never before, it seems only fitting to try to take extra precautions to protect ourselves, our families, and our brothers and sisters all around the world. We have to strive to reignite the fire of the *neshamos* looking and yearning for spiritual growth.

With the help of Hashem, may we be able to overcome this incredible challenge of assimilation that has besieged our generation, and in that *zechus* be *zocheh* to the final *geulah shleimah*, *bimheirah biyameinu*, *Amein.* אָמֵן

Striving for Spirituality

Rabbi Moshe Grossman

To fulfill the obligation of relating the story of the Exodus from Egypt, the Mishnah in *Pesachim* (116a) states that we are required to begin with the shame of our ancestors and to end with their praise, that Hashem took us as His people and redeemed us.

There is a dispute in the Gemara as to what the shame is that is mentioned in the Mishnah. According to Rav, it is the fact that our early ancestors worshiped idols. Therefore, we begin by reciting three *pesukim* from *Sefer Yehoshua* (24:2-4): *And Yehoshua said to all the people, "Thus says Hashem, the G-d of Israel, 'On the other side of the river, your ancestors dwelled from the earliest times... and they served other gods. And I took your father, Avraham, from the other side of the river and brought him into the entire land of Canaan, and I increased his children and I gave him Yitzchak. And I gave to Yitzchak Yaakov and Eisav. And I gave to Eisav Mount Seir to possess it. And Yaakov and his sons went down to Egypt.'"*

Why does Hashem mention Yitzchak as Avraham's son, and not Yishmael? The *Radak* explains that Yishmael is not considered Avraham's progeny since he was the son of a maidservant, and Hashem told Avraham to send both of them away. Furthermore, as the *Ralbag* notes, Hashem told Avraham that only Yitzchak would be considered Avraham's progeny. Thus, Yitzchak's descendants alone would become the Jewish people. In this narrative, Hashem is only recounting the origin of the Jewish people.

Given this conclusion, the next *pasuk* is puzzling. Hashem mentions both Yaakov and Eisav as Yitzchak's children even though only Yaakov was his spiritual heir. Why is Eisav mentioned?

Although Eisav could have joined Yaakov and become part of *Bnei Yisrael*, he chose otherwise. After meeting Yaakov on his return to Canaan, Eisav departed and settled on Mount Seir. The Torah states (*Bereishis* 36:6-8) that Eisav took his family and all his possessions and moved elsewhere “because of Yaakov, his brother.” From basic understanding of the *pesukim*, it would seem that Eisav moved on simply because both he and Yaakov had such large herds that the land near Yaakov could not support both of them. However, *Rashi* cites a Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 82:13) on the phrase that Eisav left “because of Yaakov, his brother.” In the Midrash, R’ Eliezer says that this refers to the decree placed on Avraham’s descendants, that to become Hashem’s people they will be “strangers in a land not theirs and they will serve them and they will afflict them for 400 years.” The commentary, *Yefei Toar*, explains that Eisav did not want this servitude and suffering.

Eisav wanted no part in the servitude that the descendants of Avraham had to experience in order to become Hashem’s nation, even though he certainly knew that Hashem had promised that the servitude would end and the people would be released with great wealth. He saw no value in spiritual achievement. His only desire was for material wealth and comfort.

R’ Shimshon Rafael Hirsch in his commentary on the Torah (*Bereishis* 36:6-7) tells that Eisav distanced himself “from Yaakov, his brother” because he actually feared that he might be influenced by Yaakov’s spiritual and moral greatness. He intentionally rejected such a lifestyle and apparently feared that if he pursued spirituality, it would interfere with his pursuit and enjoyment of the material world to some extent. Eisav could have attained some level of spiritual achievement, although certainly less than that of Yaakov, since he could have had both the *bechorah* and Yitzchak’s blessings, if only he had wanted it.

It is amazing that a son of *Yitzchak Avinu* would have absolutely no desire for any degree of spirituality and could completely reject his father's and grandfather's teachings and influence. It is a lesson that every person has complete *bechirah* to accept or reject Torah no matter who he is or what is his background.

We therefore must say that Yaakov's choice to follow his father's dedication to Hashem was also an exercise of his *bechirah*. According to the *Ramban*, the Torah makes this point in the first *pasuk* in *Parshas Yayeishev* (*Bereishis* 37:1), *And Yaakov dwelled in the land of the sojournings of his father...* The *Ramban* comments that the Torah states this immediately after describing Eisav's acquisition of Mount Seir as his permanent dwelling to tell us that, in contrast, Yaakov chose to "dwell as a stranger in a land not his, as his father did." He and his entire family freely chose this life to fulfill Avraham's prophecy that "your children will be strangers in in land not theirs..." They made this choice even though they were fully aware that it entailed a life of suffering and eventually slavery because they knew that this was the only way to become the people of Hashem, which was their greatest desire.

As we relate and discuss the story of the Exodus at the Seder by beginning with disgrace and ending with praise of the Jewish people, it is definitely appropriate to also take heed of the efforts and toil of the *Avos* to dedicate their lives to Hashem to the greatest degree possible, thus creating the foundation on which to build the Jewish people, the nation of Hashem. As *Tanna Dvei Eliyahu* states (Chapter 25), "Each and every Jew is required to say, 'When will my deeds reach the deeds of my forefathers Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov?' For they acquired this world, the next world, and the days of the son of David only through good deeds and the study of Torah."

We are obligated to emulate their dedication and deeds to the greatest degree possible. In particular, we should treat others with love and

respect. The *Netziv*, in his introduction to *Sefer Bereishis* in *Haamek Davar*, states that the glory of the *Avos* was that, in addition to being righteous, saintly, and lovers of Hashem to the most possible degree, they also treated other people with love and were concerned for their well-being, even the worst of them. We should, therefore, certainly treat other Jews with love and utmost respect. Through such feelings of love, caring, and concern, may we merit the final redemption. א

The Four Sons

Baruch Razckowki

The Haggadah talks about how we address four types of sons. The *Gra z"l* points out that there are four *Parshiyos* in the Torah that instruct us how to tell our children the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. Three of the children are addressed directly: והגדת לבנך, *You shall tell your son*; ואמרת אליו, *You shall say to him*; and ואמרת לבנך, *You shall say to your son*. Only the response to the *rasha* is expressed without a personal address: ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא, *You shall say, "It is a Pesach-offering to Hashem,"* It seems that the Torah does not want us to speak to the *rasha* directly, so we answer him in the third person, אלו היה שם לא היה, *If he had been there, he would not have been redeemed*. We cannot give *chinuch* to the *rasha* who said מה העובדה הזאת לכם, which implies that he is willingly rejecting the mitzvos.

The *Gra* explains further that we are speaking to the other family members when we address the *rasha*. We declare בעבור זה עשה ה' לי, *It is on account of this that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Mitzrayim*. We stress that Hashem redeemed *Klal Yisrael* and not the *rasha*. If the *rasha* would have been there, he would not have been redeemed.

HaRav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik, *z"l*, added this idea from the *Rambam* (*Hilchos Chametz U'Matzah* 7:2), who states that it is a mitzvah to respond to the three sons; but he leaves out the *rasha*. This hints that when we are responding to the *rasha*, we are actually talking to ourselves. In essence, we are reminding ourselves what *not* to be. It is impossible for a person to live in an anti-Torah society and not be affected by it. When living in a community where atheism and immodesty are the norm, it is imperative to remind ourselves of what we need to be.

The *Rambam* writes in *Hilchos Dei'os* (6:1): דרך ברייתו של אדם להיות: *It is human nature to draw one's character and his actions after his friends and companions, and the ways of the people of his country.*

If the society we live in lacks *yiras Shamayim*, the natural tendency is for one to follow its decadent ways. If we are confronted with a society that respects the *rasha*, we must repeat to our children אלו היה שם לא¹. היה נגאל.

Chazal hint to us further how to protect ourselves. This concept is explained by HaRav Matisyahu Solomon, *shlit"l* in his *Matnas Chaim* (p. 292), in a *maamar* given in memory of R' Yitzchok Bernstein, *z"l*, Rosh Yeshivas Knesses Chizkiyahu in Kfar Chasidim. One may question why we *lain* the *sefer Ovadiah* the week of *Parshas Vayishlach*. It is one of the few times that we *lain* a whole *sefer* as a Haftarah. The *Matnas Chaim* brings the Gemara in *Sanhedrin* (39b) that contrasts Ovadiah, who lived among the evil Achav and Izevel, and was nevertheless a *tzaddik*, with Eisav, who lived between the righteous Yitzchak and Rivka and was a *rasha*. Ovadiah surrounded himself with *neviim* and positive influences; it was the *neviim* who Ovadiah befriended, not the king and queen of Yisrael. The positive influences protected him from the effects of the evil Achav and Izevel. This relationship was manifested when he protected one hundred *neviim* from being killed by Achav. Eisav, on the other hand, befriended people who were a bad influence on him. He followed their path to the point that living in the house of Yitzchak and Rivka did not influence him to act in righteous ways. Understanding that Ovadiah was a *ger* from Edom and originated from the same nation as Eisav only deepens the impact of this incredible message.

¹ The above is based on *Rav Schachter On the Haggadah*, p. 112.

The Haggadah is not only teaching us how to talk to our children, but it also teaching a lesson to us. Choosing one's friends and environment can impact the person and "which son" they become. א

Anthropomorphism and *Tikkun HaMiddos*

Aryeh Stein

One of the highlights of the Pesach Seder is the recounting of the Ten Plagues that Hashem visited upon the Egyptian nation. Of these ten *makkos*, *Moshe Rabbeinu* only facilitated the last seven. Before the first *makkah* of blood, Hashem instructed Moshe to tell Aharon to initiate this *makkah* by stretching his (Aharon's) staff over the water of Egypt. *Rashi* explains that, since the Nile River had protected Moshe when he was cast into the water as a baby, [it would be improper for Moshe to "smite" the very water that protected him]. *Rashi* also makes reference to the second *makkah* of *tzefardeia*, which was also started with Aharon's staff stretched out over the Nile.

Similarly, it was Aharon who was instructed to initiate the third plague, lice, by hitting the dust of the land of Egypt. *Rashi* explains that, since the dirt protected Moshe when Moshe killed an Egyptian and hid his body in the soil, the dirt "did not deserve to be stricken by Moshe." From the first three plagues we see how pervasive and far-reaching the concept of *hakaras hatov* – gratitude and appreciation – is. Moshe, who was protected by water and sand, is not permitted to inflict upon them any harm that can be construed as showing a lack of appreciation towards them. Although the earth and water are inanimate and without feeling, we are constrained even in relation to them, in order to sharpen our own sensitivities and feelings towards others and to develop within ourselves this fundamental quality of *hakaras hatov*.

The utilization of anthropomorphism¹ in *yahadus* is not limited to these specific examples or the specific *middah* of *hakaras hatov*, but

¹ Anthropomorphism is defined as the attribution of human characteristics or behavior to non-human entities such as animals or objects. A related concept, personification, is the attribution of human characteristics or behavior to

can be found in a variety of instances, and it can be used to hone several other *middos*.²

Hakaras Hatov

In addition to the examples above, a more contemporary example of showing *hakaras hatov* to inanimate objects was exhibited by R' Yisrael Zev Gustman (1908-1991). When R' Gustman was twenty years old, he became a *dayan* on the *beis din* of R' Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, the head of European Jewry prior to World War II. Prior to the war, R' Gustman was once traveling outside Vilna with R' Chaim Ozer, and R' Chaim Ozer spent a great deal of time pointing out to R' Gustman various plants, explaining which types were good to eat and which were poisonous. This knowledge proved to be life-saving, as during the war years, R' Gustman and his family hid from the Nazis in the forest, and they were dependent for nourishment on whatever wild plants he could gather. After the war, R' Gustman eventually made his way to Yerushalayim where he founded the Netzach Yisrael yeshiva. Till the end of his days, as a mark of gratitude toward the plants to which he owed his life, R' Gustman personally served as gardener of the small garden next to the yeshiva building.

Ve'ahavta Lerei'acha Kamocha

In addition to the *middah* of *hakaras hatov*, the use of anthropomorphism is helpful in our performance of a fundamental *mitzvas asei*: *Ve'ahavta lere'acha kamocha*. This mitzvah obligates us

abstract concepts such as nations, emotions, and natural forces, such as seasons and weather. Perhaps one of the most well-known examples of anthropomorphism is the Torah's description of how Hashem brought us out of Egypt "with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm." (*Devarim* 26:8)

² If I may relate a personal example of anthropomorphism, I have long had the habit of saying "thank you" to the machines that would spit out the tickets needed to enter the New Jersey Turnpike (before the introduction of EZ Pass). When my children would inevitably laugh when I did so, I used this as an opportunity to impart the importance of instilling in ourselves the *middah* of *hakaras hatov*.

to “love our friend as ourselves” and proscribes behavior that we would not want exhibited to us from others. For example, not causing pain to a fellow Jew or being careful to show proper respect to our friends is subsumed under the rubric of *Ve’ahavta lerei’acha kamocha* (aside from the violation of any *mitzvos lo sasei*).

One of the *mitzvos* that is often misunderstood is the *mitzvah* of *shiluach hakan* (the *mitzvah* of sending away the mother bird before taking her young). While one may think that the reason for this *mitzvah* is to demonstrate compassion for the mother bird, the Mishnah in *Megillah* (4:9) states that this is not true. While the Gemara explains various reasons for this *mitzvah*, the *Ramban* states that the Torah wishes us to act compassionately so that we instill this trait in ourselves.

Of course, most of us rarely have the opportunity to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *shiluach hakan*, but we can all learn the importance of treating others with respect on a weekly basis – during *kiddush* on Friday night. Most of us have the *minhag* to have the *challos* on the table during *kiddush*. Normally, *hamotzi* is the first *berachah* to be recited, and bread is the first food eaten at a meal. When *kiddush* is recited, the wine “usurps” the place of the bread, and so to “hide” the “shame” of the *challos*, we cover them. (*Tur* O.C. 271, quoting *Yerushalmi*). Just like the mother bird, the *challos* do not have feelings that might be hurt, but nevertheless, we cover the *challos* to remind us how careful we have to be in our interactions with others.³

In fact, there is an example of anthropomorphism that each of us encounters on a daily basis. Near the end of *Shacharis*, we recite *U’va leTzion*, which begins with the *Kedushah d’Sidra*. *Kedushah d’Sidra*

³ A perfect example of a person who did *not* learn this lesson is recounted in the (apocryphal?) story of the husband who publicly berated his wife at their Shabbos table for the wife’s failure to properly cover the *challos* during *kiddush*.

is comprised of three *pesukim*: “*Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh...*” “*Baruch kevod Hashem mimkomo,*” and “*Hashem yimloch l’olam va’ed.*” The first two *pesukim* are recited aloud, but, according to the *Avudraham*, as cited by the *Shaarei Teshuvah* (132:2), the third *pasuk* of “*Hashem yimloch...*” is recited quietly.⁴ R’ Shlomo Zalman Auerbach explains (*Halichos Shlomo* Vol. 1, page 134) that, in reality, the *pasuk* of “*Hashem yimloch...*” should be recited first, since this *pasuk* is in the Torah (*Shemos* 15:18), while “*Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh...*” and “*Baruch kevod Hashem mimkomo*” are both “only” in *Neviim* (*Yeshayah* 6:3 and *Yechezkel* 3:12, respectively). While R’ Shlomo Zalman does not elaborate further, I posit that it is “below the dignity” of “*Hashem yimloch...*” to be recited only after two *pesukim* of “lesser” prominence, and therefore we strive to minimize the *pasuk*’s “shame” by saying it quietly.⁵

Conclusion

If we must show gratitude and sensitivity towards inanimate things of all kind, how much more so should we show the same *middos tovos* to human beings who help us and treat us with kindness. Anthropomorphism allows us to cultivate a profound awareness of the importance of *middos tovos* and serves to remind us that these *middos* benefit not only the recipient, but the benefactor as well. The more

⁴ The fact that the prevalent practice nowadays is for all three *pesukim* to be read aloud can perhaps be attributable to the popularity of the ArtScroll Siddur, which uses a bold font for “*Hashem yimloch...*” as well as the first two *pesukim*. Growing up in the 1970’s, I believe that the prevalent practice was to recite the third *pasuk* quietly. This practice soon changed once the ArtScroll Siddur was published in 1984.

Editor’s note: There does not seem to be much written about this, but my *Siddur Vilna* cites *Kaf HaChaim* (132:10), who infers from the *Kisvei Arizal* that *Hashem Yimloch* may be said out loud like the other *pesukim*. This, however, does not take anything away from the author’s beautiful explanation of the *Avudraham*.

⁵ Of course, this raises the question as to why this *pasuk* is, in fact, recited last. R’ Shlomo Zalman explains that *Kedusha d’Sidra* was arranged to mirror the *Kedushah* of *Shemoneh Esrei*, which concludes with *malchus*.

opportunities we seize to express our appreciation, whether to fellow human beings or even inanimate objects, the more we foster our sense of *hakaras hatov* to the ultimate benefactor: The Ribono Shel Olam. The greater awareness of all of the good that Hashem bestows upon us will, in turn, grant us a greater awareness of our absolute dependence on Hashem. א

After the Seder

Yehoshua Dixler

What should we do after the Seder? From what I have observed, people go straight to sleep. This is not a shock due to influences of the late hour, the large meal, and four cups of wine. However, included in the chapter of *Shulchan Aruch* aptly titled “Rules for after the Seder” is a halachah that states (481:2), “A person is *required* to learn the laws of Pesach and discuss the Exodus and talk about the miracles... until he is overtaken by sleep.” Do not go to sleep; let sleep come to you.

Source

Near the start of the Haggadah is a well-known story. Five *Tannaim* were in Bnei Brak discussing the Exodus all night until their students told them it was time for the morning *Shema*. The story concludes: “The more one talks [about the Exodus], the more he is praiseworthy.” The *Tur* (481) uses this story and a *Tosefta* as the basis for the aforementioned halachah. According to *Shibolei Haleket* (on Haggadah) this story implies that the *Tannaim* would have continued discussing the Exodus into Pesach day if it were not for the preference to say Shema before sunrise.

Timing

The *Abarbanel* (*Zevach Pesach* on Haggadah) and *Kol Bo* (chapter titled *Peirush* on Haggadah) point out that these *Tannaim* must have been talking only *after* the Seder was over. To ensure the children do not become sleepy and miss it, the Seder itself should not be extended.

A primary mitzvah of Pesach night, described by the Torah as “Tell your children... I took you out of Mitzrayim” is accomplished through the question-and-answer discussion that occurs during the *maggid* portion of the Seder. So that the afikomen can be eaten on time, this

portion ends before *chatzos* (“midnight”). If the Seder has already educated the children about the Exodus by *chatzos*, what is the source to elaborate on the Exodus further into the night when the children are asleep? Haggadah *Shiras Yehudah* (p. 34), based on the description of Pesach as a “*leil shimurim*,” explains that Pesach night has two mitzvos. Although the mitzvah to tell your children ends at *chatzos*, while the “matza and maror are lying before you,” another mitzvah begins, as emphasized by the story of the five *Tannaim*. These sources indicate this mitzvah begins at the conclusion of the Seder and extends until morning.

Meaning

The *Abarbanel* explains how the extended discussion helps fulfill the need to experience the Exodus as if we were there. He writes:

The Jews did not sleep at all the night of the Exodus. The first portion of the night they were busy [with the mitzvos of the night] [and afterward were busy preparing for the mass Exodus] (version corrected by *Me'am Loez* Haggadah)... Since a person must view himself as personally leaving Mitzraim, these holy [*Tannaim*] did as was previously done. At the beginning of the night, they were busy with the mitzvos of matzah, maror, and remembering the *korban* Pesach, as our forefathers did in Mitzrayim; then afterwards they discussed the Exodus all night. With this [re-enactment] they acted as if they themselves left [Mitzrayim].”

Requirement

In a previous *Kuntress* (year 5778), I wrote about the optional fifth cup that some authorities (e.g., *Rama* 481:1) allow with the recitation of *Hallel HaGadol* at the end of the Seder. Rabbeinu Yonah (as quoted by *Tur* §481 and *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* §481) and *Beur HaGra* (brought by *Mishnah Berurah* 481:1) do not allow a fifth cup for fear one will become drunk and unable to fulfill the requirement to talk

about the Exodus through the night. According to these authorities, not only are there good reasons to stay up all night, but there are also halachic precautions put in place to enable us to participate in the activity. To discuss the Exodus at length is essential to completing our obligation to remember and experience the Exodus. Why then is this halachah not more widely observed?

At the end of the Seder, instead of jumping into an extended discussion of the Exodus, we instead sing what appear to be several “silly” songs: one is a numbers game (“Who knows one?”) and another a sequence of unlikely events starting with a young goat (“*Chad gadyah*”). What is the point of these songs? The *ArtScroll* Haggadah (1978 edition, p. 200), quoting from *Vayaged Moshe*, explains the paragraph “*Chasal Siddur Pesach*,” which precedes the songs, as an introduction to this “informal” part of the Seder.

We have completed all the observances, but it is desirable and praiseworthy to continue talking about the Exodus throughout the entire night or at least until sleep overtakes us. We therefore express our hope that this next part of the Seder should also be found worthy and acceptable.

The songs commence the discussion that should ideally last all night. Just as it is good advice to begin a speech with a story, seizing the audience’s attention, these songs serve to “energize a person to try to stay up this entire holy night” (*Jasper Stone* Haggadah, p. 82). They put us into a joyful mood before we continue with the extended discussion which is to follow.

The halachic precautions and the introduction through song set the stage. It is odd that so few participate in this important mitzvah.

The Haggadah *Rabbeinu HaGra* (p. 70-71) learns from the story of the five *Tannaim*, “There is a mitzvah to talk about the Exodus

according to one's mental abilities. They talked all night and would have continued if not for the students telling them it was time for *Shema*." The *Gra z"l* specifically uses the phrase "according to one's mental abilities"; if one is not capable, he is exempt from talking all night. With the plethora of *seforim* on Pesach topics, can we say anyone is "incapable"?

Exemption

Let us address one big problem with staying up all night that will help identify why this mitzvah is not widely observed. Anyone who has stayed awake Shavuot night knows that it can be difficult, even stressful. Because this may negatively affect one's ability to experience *simchas Yom Tov* (enjoyment of Yom Tov), many do not stay up all night on Shavuot. Simchah is a mitzvah for every Yom Tov, so how is someone allowed to stay awake all of Pesach night?

The *Maharal (Gevuros Hashem §53)*, in response to this question, explains the attitude of the five *Tannaim*. "This was not a pain for them. Due to their love of the mitzvah, the time appeared to them as very short... They did not [even] realize daybreak had arrived until their students came." Love for the mitzvah will transform something physically difficult into something spiritually elevating. If not, due to the need to avoid strain which will reduce *simchas Yom Tov*, one would be exempt.

Shulchan Aruch (481:2) describes the length of this mitzvah as "until he is overtaken by sleep." This is an unprecedented description for the measure of a mitzvah; is there any other mitzvah that being too tired is considered the end of the mitzvah? Clearly, it is painful once someone is feeling so exhausted that he cannot keep his eyes open. He is then exempt (*Shiras Yehudah*, p. 36) in order to maintain *simchas Yom Tov*. At that point sleeping in bed would be a bigger mitzvah than continuing to discuss the Exodus all night.

Perhaps this is why some have the custom to recite *Shir Hashirim*. Certainly, the *sefer* is relevant to the Exodus, describing the deep relationship of Hashem and the Jewish nation that was newly established upon leaving Mitzrayim. Also, the recitation of a *sefer*, a physical act, along with the concrete goal of completing a limited number of chapters can serve to motivate one to stay awake just a little longer. This itself would be a fulfillment of the mitzvah.

It is possible that this mitzvah is fulfilled by the Seder itself! When young children are present, it is necessary to conduct the Seder without extended discussions that would cause the children to lose interest or doze. In such circumstances, the Seder will likely complete well before *chatzos*, leaving time and energy for extending the discussion well into the night (with the adults). However, a Seder that lasts until *chatzos*, which is the case with many families today, is already several hours filled with *divrei Torah* concerning the Exodus, significantly more than the minimum needed. If following such a Seder a person is already exhausted, this should nicely fulfill the requirement to “discuss the Exodus until overcome by sleep.”

Conclusion

“The more one talks about the Exodus the more he is praiseworthy.” Although fulfilling this to the utmost demands staying up through the night, most of us are not as capable as those at the legendary Seder in Bnei Brak. Instead, we should stay awake as long as we can, until the influence of the *divrei Torah*, large meal, and four cups of wine wear us down. At that point, the mitzvah ends and resting can begin. א

“Opposite World” of Chametz and Matzah

Moshe Arie Michelsohn

Hebrew is a vividly descriptive language written with the letters of creation itself. The precise intentionality in its meanings and symbolisms is famously reflected, for example, in the opposing contrast between the words in Hebrew for truth and falsehood, *emes* and *sheker*. In Hebrew, the words *emes* and *sheker* are about as far away apart as they could possibly be on the phonological spectrum: The word *emes* – *aleph, mem, saf* – is made up of the first, middle, and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, in their proper order, as if naturally traversing all of creation. By total contrast, the word for falsehood – *sheker* – is made up of the letters *shin, kuf, resh*, all closely scrunched next to each other in the alphabet, as if conspiring together, except that the letter that should have been last according to the natural order of things has seemingly unjustly pushed its way up to the front of the line. The words for truth and falsehood in Hebrew transcend being mere collections of phonemes to become veritable metaphors for the concepts they represent.

Taken in this light, the words *chametz* and *matzah* stand in seemingly stark contrast. One could hardly imagine using two more similar words to describe two such very different concepts. *Chazal* consider chametz as a *remez* to the *yetzer hara* and *gashmiyus*, whereas matzah is a *remez* to the *yetzer hatov* and *ruchniyus*; thus, *chametz* and *matzah* would seem at least as opposite as *emes* and *sheker*. Yet, at their roots, the two words share, in their proper order, two of three Hebrew letters – *mem* and *tzadi*. And the third letter in each of the two words is also very similar: The only difference between a *ches* and a *hei* is a small space near the top left of the *hey*, which leaves its left leg as if suspended in mid-air. And the difference in their pronunciation depends merely on a tiny change in the position of the tongue near the back of the throat, one that in quick, repetitive succession constricts

the throat to form the *ches*, and the other that lets air through to form the *hei* – such a tiny difference that most Americans without upbringing in the Hebrew language, for example, pronounce the two letters in essentially the same way.

The question thus presents itself, why are the two opposite concepts of chametz and matzah represented by such similar words in Hebrew, while the opposite concepts of *emes* and *sheker* are so clearly distinguished from each other?

One clue to solving this puzzle comes from the *Ramban*. The *Ramban* famously explains that before the *cheit* of Adam *HaRishon* in eating from the *etz hadaas*, the difference between *emes* and *sheker* was abundantly clear, but that after eating from the tree, the mind of mankind became clouded and obscured by the *yetzer hara*, such that man could no longer clearly distinguish between truth and falsehood. Instead, man can now be easily swayed on the basis of arbitrary concepts of *tov v'ra* (good and bad) to reject truth and embrace falsehood, contrary to the very purpose of creation, *chas veshalom*. Somehow, the clear world of *emes* and *sheker* prior to the *cheit* of Adam *HaRishon*, gave way to the clouded world of mankind after the *cheit*. So perhaps in the true *olam ha'emes*, the world of *emes* and *sheker*, we might expect *chametz* and *matzah* to be very different words. But the world we live in, after the *cheit*, is a very different world.

Some further light can be shed on the issue from the writings of the *Maor VaShemesh*, R' Klonimus Kalman Epstein. In discussing why we use candlelight (*or haner*) for *bedikas chametz*, R' Epstein first notes the well-known association between chametz and the *yetzer hara* on the one hand, and matzah and the *yetzer hatov* on the other. He then further points out that the difference between the *yetzer hatov* and the *yetzer hara* is like the difference between the *mayim elyonim* and the *mayim tachtonim* – which is as small as a hairsbreadth (*k'malei*

nima). In other words, the *yetzer hara* is subtle and cunning such that we can be easily deceived and fooled by it. We must always be vigilantly on the lookout for the presence of the *yetzer hara* in our midst, in order to walk the proper *derech* and not stray from it. We thus use *or haner* to look for chametz as a *remez* that we need to be extremely discerning in order to be able to find the chametz –*yetzer hara* – that lurks in subtle ways all around us, leading us to *cheit*.

The fact is, we do not (yet) live in the world of *emes* and *sheker*, where everything is clear and what you see is what really is. Our world is not a world in which there cannot be deception because its very presence would be immediately recognizable and thereby vanquished by truth that is clear and apparent to all. We live in an “opposite world” of *chametz* and *matzah*, an *olam hagashmi*, where nothing is necessarily as it seems, and where at every turn we can easily be led astray by *taavah* clouding our clarity of thought. Such is the burden of mankind after the *cheit* of Adam HaRishon.


The words *chametz* and *matzah* are indeed very similar, but they are not exactly the same. It is only in carefully examining the subtleties of their differences that we can tell them clearly apart. And *Chazal* tell us that the subtle difference between the letters *ches* and *hei* indeed renders them worlds apart. From the *ches* one can only fall downward; there is no escape from the *gashmiyus* of *olam hazeh*, and it seems that given enough time, a fall is inevitable. But Hashem, in His eternal kindness, created the world not with a *ches*, but with a *hei* – which has a small opening (indeed, as small as a hairsbreadth) near the top, thus enabling a way back in, as it were. In recognizing that there is an *olam ha’emes*, that is, Hashem’s world, through *teshuvah*, the *hei* provides for a world with hope and purpose. The tiny difference between the closed-off wall of the *ches* and the opening in the *hei* makes all the difference in the world. *Chazal* tell us, *tzaddik v’kam*; a righteous person falls, but then gets up. And this is only possible in such a world where purpose and hope exist.

In our clouded, opposite world of chametz and matzah, purpose and hope – expressed through *emunah* in *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and the observance of His mitzvos – is all we have. We are constantly at our peril in having to battle the *yetzer hara*, which relentlessly challenges us to discern truth from falsehood even in the face of (emotional) desire and temptation bearing down upon us from all sides, clouding our senses and attempting to deceive us into having thoughts and taking actions that bring us down, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Ours is a constant challenge to live in a world of *gashmiyus*, while infusing it with *ruchniyus*. Chametz is the ultimate *remez* for *gashmiyus*. Who doesn't enjoy the taste of a delicious *challah* on *Shabbos*? And indeed, on all other nights (and days!) of the year, except for Pesach, we are allowed to, and even encouraged, to enjoy our challos and other tasty, albeit worldly, things; so long as we are discerning in our employment of that *gashmiyus* for *ruchniyus* purposes, and not just merely gratifying a purposeless and hopeless fancy.

On Pesach, we remind ourselves for one week each year of our true purpose as Hashem's *Am HaNivchar*, to live in this "opposite world" of *gashmiyus* while infusing it with *ruchniyus* as *avdei Hashem*. On *Leil* Pesach we eat *only* matzah, symbolic of the world of *ruchniyus*; and for all of Pesach we refrain from chametz, the ultimate symbol of the world of *gashmiyus*. And at our *Sedarim* each year, when we eat matzah and drink the *arba kosos*, we pray for the ultimate *geulah shleimah*, when we will be able to return to a true *olam ha'emes*, where the difference between truth and falsehood is always clear and unequivocal.

Until then, we fortify ourselves on Pesach with a commitment to be as discerning as possible in our all of our worldly interactions, to try and ensure that our decisions and actions are always as well-informed as possible under the circumstances. In the *olam ha'emes*, truth and falsehood, *emes* and *sheker*, are as distinguishable as day and night.

But in the opposite world of chametz and matzah, where grays of all shades abound, the proverbial devil (*yetzer hara*) is always in the details, and we have to work very hard to make proper decisions and not be deceived. Our responsibility as *Yiddin* is to help bring clarity to our opposite world of *chametz* and *matzah*, through our performance of *mitzvos* that bring *ruchniyus* to the *olam hagashmi*. The fact that the words *chametz* and *matzah* are so similar in Hebrew should thus not come as such a surprise. It is in the very subtlety of their difference that we truly can discern the difference between the *olam ha'emes*, where everything is clear and unequivocal, like the difference between the words *emes* and *sheker*, and our *olam hagashmi*, the clouded, opposite world of *chametz* and *matzah*, in which we currently live.

May we be *zocheh* to the *geulah shleimah bimeheirah biyameinu*. ^א 

Teshuvah at Kerias Yam Suf

Dani Zuckerbrod

יונתי בחגי הסלע בסתר המדרגה, הראיני את מראיך השמיעני את קולך כי קולך ערב
(שה"ש ב' י"ד) ומראך נאווה (*O my dove, in the cranny of the rocks, Hidden by the cliff, Let me see your face, Let me hear your voice; For your voice is sweet And your face is comely. (Shir HaShirim 2:14)*)

In R' Shlomo Brevda's *sefer, Leil Shimurim*, he brings the Vilna Gaon in his *peirush* to *Shir HaShirim*, who explains the above *pasuk* largely based on the Midrashim (*Mechilta Beshalach* Parshasa §2, *Midrash Rabbah Shir HaShirim* 2:30) which say that when the *Bnei Yisrael* left Mitzrayim, they were compared a dove running away from a hawk and trying to land in a cranny of a nearby rock. When the dove landed in the cranny, it found a snake nesting there. The dove was faced with an impossible situation; it couldn't leave the cranny as there was a hawk waiting to attack it outside. It couldn't remain in the cranny where the snake would attack it. What does the dove do? It starts to yell and flap its wings violently with the hope of getting the dovecot owners' attention to come and save it. So too were the *Bnei Yisrael* at the *Yam Suf*.

They were trapped; in front of them the sea was not yet split and was an impassable route, behind them was Pharaoh and his army chasing after them. The *Zohar* adds that there were wild animals to the right of them and snakes and scorpions to the left. The *malach* of Mitzrayim with 600,000 *malachim* was pursuing them from above as well. What did the *Bnei Yisrael* do? They cried out to Hashem and He saved them by splitting the sea.

The Midrashim continue to explain why Hashem put us into this situation. When we were enslaved in Mitzrayim, the *pasuk* says that we cried out to Hashem because of the hard labor and Hashem heard

our cries and took us out with *yad chazaka* and a *zeroa netuya*. Hashem desired to continue to hear our heartfelt *tefillos* to him, but they stopped once we were taken out. What did Hashem do? He hardened Pharaoh's heart to chase after us and trap us at the *Yam*. He placed us, almost literally, between a rock and a hard place so that we would cry out again.

The *Gra z"l* explains that the *Bnei Yisrael* is that dove crying out to its master. *Harini es Mareich*, Hashem had seen us blindly follow Him into the desert out of Mitzrayim and wanted to see that type of action again. This was Nachshon and the *Bnei Yisrael* jumping into the water before *Kriyas Yam Suf*. *Hashmi'ini es koleich*, Hashem had heard our *tefillos* before in Mitzrayim and wanted to hear them again. This was the *tefillah* that the *Bnei Yisrael* said at the *Yam Suf*.

This *tefillah* morphed into a *shirah*. We say in *Az yashir, azi vizimras Kah*, my might and my praise is Hashem. Our *tefillah* started out with requesting salvation and then turned into a song of praise for Hashem.

Hashem desires to see our actions, our *mesiras nefesh* for Him. He desires to hear our *tefillos* to Him. *Ki koleich areiv umareich naveh*, for your voice is sweet and your face is comely; He knows what they look like and what they sound like.

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 21:5) says that the *teshuvah* that *Bnei Yisrael* did at the *Yam Suf* while *davening* was better than one hundred fasts and prayers.

This concept of *teshuvah* at the *Yam* reminded me of another Midrash dealing with *teshuvah* at the *Yam Suf*. Except this one deals with the *teshuvah* of Pharaoh. In *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* (*perek* 43) it says "R' Nechunia ben Hakanah tells us that you can see the power of *teshuvah* from Pharaoh. Pharaoh sinned when saying "*Mi*" Hashem asher *eshma bikolo* (*Shemos* 5:2) and then using the same word during *Az*

yashir he said “*Mi chamocha ba’eilim Hashem*” (*Shemos* 15:11). Hashem heard Pharaoh’s *teshuvah* and rescued him from amongst the dead of Mitzrayim in order to tell over to others the power of Hashem.

The Midrash continues: What did Pharaoh do after the event of *Kerias Yam Suf*? He moved to Nineveh and became the king there. The people there were wicked and did terrible things. Hashem sent Yonah to Nineveh to warn the city of its impending destruction. Pharaoh heard this and immediately got off his throne and tore his clothes and donned sack cloth. He announced a fast day for all of Nineveh and that anyone who would transgress the fast day would be burned in a fire. He lined up the men and women on opposite sides, he lined up the kosher and non-kosher animals on opposite sides. He placed their children in the middle between them. The children were hungry and started to cry to their mothers. The mothers saw their hungry children and also began to cry. With this crying they did *teshuvah* and Nineveh was saved for another forty years before they reverted to previous ways and were destroyed.

From this Midrash, it seems that Pharaoh learned his lesson from the *Yam Suf*. He understood that when Hashem comes to tell you that there is imminent destruction looming, take it seriously and do *teshuvah*. Hashem is all-powerful and can do great things. He also listens to *teshuvah* and allows for us to return to Him even if we have sinned. *Teshuvah* and *tefillah* is what he desires.

Yehi ratzon that we too should not forget this lesson. When Hashem brings destruction, instability and upheaval to this world, He desires our *teshuvah* and *tefillah*. א

A Split for a Split

Rabbi Avraham Bukspan ¹

וַיִּשָּׂם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיַּחְבֹּשׁ אֶת חֲמֹרֹו וַיִּקַּח אֶת שְׁנֵי נְעָרָיו אִתּוֹ וְאֵת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ וַיִּבְקַע עֵצִי עֲלֶיהָ, *And Avraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him, and Yitzchak his son, and split the wood for the burnt offering (Bereishis 22:3).*

It says in the Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 21:8) that years later, when the Jews were leaving Mitzrayim, Hashem said, “*Bizechus Avraham Ani bokea lahem es hayam baavur mah she’asah she’ne’emar, ‘Vayevaka atzei olah,’ ve’omer, ‘Vayibaku hamayim.*” R’ Banya says that it was in the merit of Avraham that Hashem split the sea for the Jews. Before the *Akeidah*, it says that Avraham split the wood for the offering, and at *Krias Yam Suf*, the *pasuk* says that Hashem split the sea — both times with the *shores* of בִּקְעַ, *beka*.

What is the *middah k’neged middah*? The magnitude of Avraham’s merit should not lie in his splitting the wood, but rather in the culmination of the *Akeidah*, where he tied down his son and brought the knife to bear. Chopping the wood seems incidental to the greatness of the act later on, where he showed his willingness to slaughter his own son at the request of Hashem. Is the Midrash merely using the play on the same word to reference the *Akeidah* of Yitzchak as a whole, or is there a correlation between splitting the wood and splitting the sea?

¹ Rabbi Bukspan is an old friend of mine from the Yeshivah. His *sefer, Classics and Beyond*, is available at the distributor, Feldheim.com, and *sefarim* stores. He was kind enough to share this important *vort* from Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank. See also our 5772 edition (p. 90) for further treatment of this *vort*.

HaRav Shmuel Vitzik, ז"ל, of Baltimore told me the following thought, which he heard directly from HaRav Tzvi Pesach Frank, ז"ל. The Gemara writes that it is easier to carry ten *kav* (a dry measure) of gold than ten *kav* of straw. While both weigh the same amount, the gold – with its denser mass – is compact and manageable. The straw, on the other hand, is very bulky; carrying it is both awkward and cumbersome.

If so, why did Avraham chop the wood before embarking on what was to be a three-day trip? The *pasuk* cited above finds Avraham preparing the wood the very morning he and his party left. Schlepping a bag of chopped wood is more unwieldy than taking an intact log. It would have been easier to take a whole log and do the chopping upon arriving at the as-of-yet unknown destination.

What is the problem with that scenario? Avraham would take out his trusty hatchet. As Yitzchak looked on, he would carefully chop up the log and then set up the wood on the altar that he built. As willing as Yitzchak may have been to give his life for Hashem, there would still be an element reminiscent of what is known as *inuy hadin* – prolonging the mental anguish.

In order to be more compassionate toward his son, Avraham chopped the wood before leaving. He was willing to take on the extra hassle of carrying the cut wood, which was bulkier, in order to alleviate the distress his son would experience were Avraham to chop it on-site.

This same compassion was in play when Hashem split the *Yam Suf*. R' Tzvi Pesach brings a Midrash which says that initially Hashem intended to have the water recede as the Yidden walked in. They would walk in the water for the distance of one foot, and the water would recede one foot. They would take another step, and the water would again back up. Says the Midrash, the compassion of Hashem overcame, and He split the water from beginning to end.

Were the water to back up as they progressed, the Yidden would have still been terrified. Although they were witnessing the ongoing miracle of the water receding, they would have faced a mountain of water, and they would always worry if the miracle would continue. There would have been an element of constant dread – *inuy hadin*. By splitting the sea all the way through, Hashem assured them that the path would stay open.

The Midrash says: In the merit of Avraham splitting the wood before his trip, making it more difficult on himself, in order to alleviate the stress of another, Hashem split the water in a way that also alleviated the stress of others. Interestingly, although one Midrash says that Avraham made two cuts of wood, others say that there were twelve cuts. Therefore, the water split into twelve separate paths for the Yidden, as a reward for the twelve pieces that Avraham made.

We see that it was not just the splitting that Hashem did for Avraham's children in the merit of his splitting, but the compassion with which He did the action; this was the reward for Avraham's display of compassion toward his son. ^א

Shevii shel Pesach: The Ultimate Song¹

Daniel Menchel

The *shirah* that Moshe and *Bnei Yisrael* sang after the splitting of the *Yam Suf* has reverberated throughout the generations as the ultimate form of praise of Hashem. The *Zohar* states (*Beshalach*, sec. 54): "Anyone who recites the *Shiras HaYam* every day with *kavanah* will be privileged to recite it in the future." Indeed, this *shirah* has been incorporated into our daily *davening*.

The Torah introduces the *shirah* with the words *vayomru leimor*, literally, "they said to say." The Midrash comments that these words are a message for all generations – that the Jewish people should teach their children in every generation that when miracles occur, they are to praise Hashem "like with this song," i.e., with a song like the *Shiras HaYam*. But this Midrash requires further explanation. Are we to understand that Hashem wishes for us to respond to future miracles by singing about the *Kerias Yam Suf* again? Why should this be so? One would imagine that it would be more appropriate to react to each miracle with a *shirah* that speaks about that particular event.

Even more puzzling is the sixteenth *kinah* recited on Tishah B'Av, which describes the historic self-sacrifice of three shiploads of captured Jewish children who threw themselves into the sea rather than succumb to their captors' demands that they engage in sin. The *kinah* states, "They joined themselves together to fall into the sea; they sang a song and praises as at the sea [i.e., the *Yam Suf*], for we were killed for You in the depths of the sea." This *kinah* clearly makes a connection between the deaths of these children and the *Shiras*

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HaYam, but this is highly perplexing. In what way could the two events possibly be related?

The *Beis Halevi* teaches that when human beings give thanks to Hashem for saving them from peril or distress, their gratitude can take one of two forms. Some people may thank Hashem for extricating them from a distressing situation, but they find only the salvation itself to be a cause for joy. The plight from which they were saved, however, is not something that they view in a positive light, and in fact they feel that they would have been even better off had they never been in that predicament in the first place.

Other people, however, have an entirely different attitude: They thank Hashem both for His miraculous salvation and for the very situation that caused them distress in the first place. These people recognize and appreciate the fact that the troubles that befell them serve as a vehicle for the revelation of Hashem's honor in this world, a revelation that comes about when He saves them from their woes.


The Midrash states that until *Bnei Yisrael* sang the *Shiras HaYam*, there was no one else in the world who sang a *shirah* to Hashem. The *Shem MiShmuel* (*Beshalach* 5673) explains that the Midrash is referring to a specific type of *shirah* – a *shirah* that emanates from a clear perception of the true scope of Hashem's love for *Bnei Yisrael*. At the *Yam Suf*, *Bnei Yisrael* recognized that not only did Hashem care for them enough to redeem them from their troubles and save them from their oppressors, but He expressed an even greater love for them by plunging them into a situation of distress from which a massive *kiddush Hashem* would ultimately emerge. The Jewish people could have been freed from slavery without being pursued by Pharaoh to the shore of the *Yam Suf*; Pharaoh would have buckled under the pressure of the *makkos* long before, but Hashem continued strengthening his resolve so that he would not give up. The ultimate goal of this process was the miracle of *Kerias Yam Suf*, when the Jewish people were

saved from mortal danger by Hashem's openly miraculous intervention, making them the instruments for what may have been the greatest *kiddush Hashem* in history. This was a tremendous privilege, and one that they recognized in the *Shiras HaYam* and accepted with wholehearted joy.

This, the *Shem MiShmuel* explains, is the meaning of the Midrashic injunction to respond to other miracles with a song resembling the *Shiras HaYam*. The ultimate song of thanks is one that incorporates this crucial component—gratitude to Hashem—not only for His salvation, but also for the troubles themselves. These situations of distress can be viewed as opportunities to become a vehicle for *kiddush Hashem*, and a song of thanks, in its ideal form, expresses appreciation for such an opportunity.

This explains the puzzling *kinah* that we recite on Tishah B'Av, which states that the children who sacrificed their lives "sang a song and praises as at the sea." At the core of the *Shiras HaYam* lies the recognition that every situation in which Hashem places the Jewish people, as tragic or distressing as it may seem, is a sign of His great love for them, for *Klal Yisrael's* woes simply pave the way for their future redemption and the ultimate revelation of Hashem's honor. At that historic moment of *mesiras nefesh*, those heroic children attained this recognition and went to their deaths feeling firmly enwrapped in Hashem's love, knowing that they had the privilege of being the means through which a massive *kiddush Hashem* would come about.

It should come as no surprise, then, that *Chazal* ascribe such significance to the *Shiras HaYam*. If we recite the *shirah* every day with a sense of joy and gratitude for our role as the nation that is *mekadesh shem shamayim*, then we will surely be among those who are privileged to continue reciting it in the World to Come as well.

In review: The Song at the Sea (*Az Yashir*, which we recite every day) is a unique song of thanks in which *Bnei Yisrael* expressed their gratitude to Hashem not only for saving them from their woes, but even for placing them in their situation of distress in the first place. We must recognize that both the troubles we endure and the Divine salvation from which we benefit are privileges, for they mean we have been chosen as ambassadors of Hashem and charged with glorifying His Name. ^א 

The Profundity of the *Sefirah* Haircut Ban

Rabbi Boruch Leff¹

We may not be able to easily connect all of the elements that we encounter during the *sefirah* period.

A *rebbe* of mine, Rav Ezra Neuberger, connected “all the dots” with the following wonderful exposition.

We understand clearly from many *sefarim* that the 49 days counted between Pesach and Shavuos were designed for a passionate expression of our dedication to Torah. In addition, we find an amazing insight from the *Ramban* (23:36) in *Parshas Emor*. *Ramban* compares the 49-day counting period to *Chol Hamoed*, the Intermediate Festival Days. Just like Succos and Pesach have holidays on their first and last days, with quasi-festival intermediate days in between, so too, the entire *Sefiras Ha’omer*, from Pesach until Shavuos, is a quasi-festival – a *Chol Hamoed*.

It should be a time of great joy and happiness.

Yet, it is the opposite.

The Gemara in *Yevamos* (62b) describes the *Sefirah* period as a season of mourning and sadness because 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva died during this time. How could this national seasonal transformation have occurred? We don’t wish to minimize the deaths of 24,000 Torah scholars, but how could even *these* horrible and tragic deaths change

¹ Editor’s note: Rabbi Leff is an old friend of mine from yeshivah days. He is a local Baltimore educator and author of many important English *sefarim*, the latest “Are You Connecting?” He can be contacted at sbleff@gmail.com.

the nature of our joyous counting and preparation for the Giving of the Torah?

HaRav Yaakov Weinberg ז"ל explained that we are mourning the Torah itself that was lost with the deaths of R' Akiva's 24,000 students. As the Gemara in *Menachos* (29b) makes clear, R' Akiva was the leading Torah Sage of the Talmudic Age. The future of Torah tradition lay in the hands of R' Akiva's students. That future was lost with their deaths. Had R' Akiva not salvaged five students, as the Gemara in *Yevamos* continues to relate, we would have been bereft from Torah tradition forever. The Torah survived, but not without our losing the additional Torah insights and perspectives of 24,000, never to be regained.

Why did the students die specifically during the time period between Pesach and Shavuos? The *Maharsha* explains that since this is the time of *Sefirah*, we are obligated particularly to show our respect and appreciation for the Torah. As *Chazal* say, R' Akiva's students died because they lacked respect for one another, on some high level. If they failed to show respect for each other as Torah scholars, they apparently lacked a proper appreciation for the Torah itself. This occurred at a time when Hashem expects a heightened awareness of the respect that Torah is owed. Hence, the 24,000 students died specifically between Pesach and Shavuos.

Originally, we were to have expressed our respect and honor for the Torah in a positive vein, by counting excitedly to Shavuos. Now, we still express our appreciation and tribute for the Torah – but in mourning. We grow our hair and beards, and refrain from music and weddings, as mourners do because we show our respect for Torah in feeling the pain of the Torah lost in the deaths of the 24,000.

In a certain sense, we mourn the fact that we, as a nation, could not suffice in showing our connection to Torah through joyous counting.

Hashgachas Hashem deemed it necessary for us to mourn during this time and express reverence for Torah in a sad, depressing fashion. Our glorious, magnificent *Sefirah*, counting period has become a long 49-day season of mourning.

Regarding the *takanah*, the ban, against getting haircuts during this time, there is a fascinating insight that Rav Nosson Maimon related, which opens up a brand new way of thinking and relating to the *Sefirah* period.

The *Arizal* says that the hair on one's head represents pipes or "wires" that transfer the wisdom from the brain to the rest of the person. This is one of the reasons why a *nazir* is forbidden to cut his hair. Refraining from cutting hair during the *Sefirah* period reflects our desire to gather as much Torah wisdom as possible in our preparations for *Shavuos*. We need more hairs to relate and transmit Torah. The words *sei'ar*, hair, *shaar*, gate and *se'ora*, barley, share the same root and are very much related. The hair acts as gates for the wisdom of the head. Barley is the *korban* brought by the *sotah* woman, who secluded herself with another man and is suspected of adultery. Her husband gives her rebuke through the process of the *sotah* procedure, attempting to awaken her from her straying, and trying to and transfer wisdom to her from his gate, *shaar* to hers.

This is what the *se'ora*, barley represents to us as well. Rav Maimon explained that Hashem *Yisborach* is trying to open the gates of wisdom to us in helping us grow to accept the Torah, even though we have previously strayed like the *sotah*. This is why we always refer back to the *omer* daily when we make the *berachah* on the counting, *al sefiras ha'omer*. We are recalling the goal of the counting and our preparations to allow the gates of wisdom to open and enter us. In this regard, the 24,000 students of R' Akiva acted as the "hairs" of their *rebbe*, and they were going to spread and transmit his Torah to the rest of *Klal Yisrael*. R' Akiva is described in *Chazal* as not having hair so

this indicates the very great importance his students played. We mourn them by not cutting our hair, trying to open up our gates to allow Hashem's Torah and Wisdom to come through.²

We conclude with an insight from HaRav Avrohom Schorr. He explains that the first *mitzvos* we received as a nation in Egypt related to blood, *dam*, the *dam pesach* and *dam* of *bris milah*. This is what the *pasuk* refers to in *Yechezkel* (16:6), *bedamayich chayi, bedamayich chayi*. These blood *mitzvos* were designed to counter the great *gashmiyus* impurity we experienced in *Mitzrayim*. Being involved with blood for spirituality transformed the physical *dam* within us to become ready to be Hashem's nation. The process of leaving Egypt was for us to become an *adam hashalem*, to put the *aleph* into the *dam*. This is why the *Sefirah* period begins with an *omer* of barley, animal food, until we reach the food for *adam* on *Shavuos* with the wheat of the *korban shtei halechem*.

The *Sefirah* period is latent with spiritual growth if we take the time to passionately learn and ponder the depth of all that we do. א

² This is based on *Likutei Moharan* (Volume 1 30:3), and *Likutei Halachos* (*Hilchos Gilu'ach* 4:8).

Reading the Asseres *HaDibros* in *Shul*

R' Eliezer Shames¹

There are two traditions in how to recite the Ten Commandments in *shul/Beis HaMidrash* when reading from the Torah. The *taam haelyon* divides the Ten Commandments into ten verses where each commandment is its own verse. The *taam hatachton* uses the regular grammatical division of verses where one commandment may span several verses or one verse contain several commandments (for example, there must be a minimum of three words to form a verse, but the commandment “Do not kill” is only two Hebrew words, therefore that commandment cannot be its own verse).²

R' Chaim Soloveitchik ruled³ that one may not read the Ten Commandments in *taam haelyon* because it violates the law, stated by the Talmud in *Berachos* (12b), that Biblical verses must remain the way Moshe structured them – grammatical division. Since the *taam haelyon* divides the Ten Commandments into ten verses, even when it contradicts the logical make up of a verse (like two words being its own verse), it violates the law of changing Moshe’s structure of the Biblical verses. However, the common practice⁴ is to read the *taam haelyon*, at least on Shavuot.

The *Rambam*⁵ in his responsa states that if one customarily sits down for Torah reading in *shul/Beis HaMidrash*, then one should not stand

¹ Due to the digital locations of some of the sources, I have used the MLA citation format for all sources.

² Kagan, Yisroel Meir. “Seder Tefillos Chag HaShavuot.” *Beur Halachah*, vol. 5, pp. 199–200.

³ Schachter, Hershel. “Inyonei Shavuot.” Daily Shuir/Zoom Video Conference. Shavuot, 28 Dec. 2020, New York, New York. At 29:29

⁴ Kagan, Yisroel Meir. Ibid. *Beur Halachah* loc cit., p. 200.

⁵ Schachter, Hershel. Loc. cit. At 30:05.

up for the reading of the Ten Commandments because it may portray to others that only the Ten Commandments (for which he stands) are part of the Torah, and the rest of the reading (where he sits down) is not. This is based on the Talmud (*Berachos* 12a) that explains that the Ten Commandments were originally incorporated in the daily morning service but were removed because, as Rashi explains, gentiles would claim that only the Ten Commandments are part of the Torah. The *Rambam* maintains that standing up for the Ten Commandments during the reading of the Torah in *shul/Beis HaMidrash* is the same as reciting the Ten Commandments in the morning service. However, the common practice is that the congregation stands up for the reading of the Ten Commandments even though many do sit down for the rest of the Torah reading.⁶

Why is it the common practice on Shavuos to read the Ten Commandments in the *taam haelyon*, with the congregation standing (despite sitting down for the rest of the Torah reading), when it appears to violate rules in the Talmud?

HaRav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (grandson of R' Chaim Soloveitchik) explained⁷ that on Shavuos, the reading of the Ten Commandments is a reenactment of the giving of the Torah at Sinai – not a regular *shul/Beis HaMidrash* Torah reading. Therefore, the Ten Commandments are read in *taam haelyon* akin to how the Ten Commandments were given to us at Sinai – ten distinct commandments and not grammatically divided verses.

Additionally, the custom is to stand for the reading of the Ten Commandments on Shavuos because we are trying to act like the children of Israel who were standing at the foot of Mount Sinai (there is no worry that standing for the Ten Commandments will suggest that

⁶ Feinstien, Moshe. “Amidah Haam Bikriyas Aseres Hadibros.” *Sefer Igros Moshe*, vol. 4, pp. 37–38. *Orach Chaim*.

⁷ Schachter, Hershel. Loc. cit. At 31:16.

only the Ten Commandments are part of the Torah because this is not a regular Torah reading, rather it is a reenactment of the Giving of the Torah).

Similarly, there is a custom⁸ to put flowers in the *shul* and read the Torah from the *bimah* – an elevated podium – to recreate the scene of the giving of the Torah. However, in a *Beis HaMidrash*, where there is learning throughout the whole room, the whole room has the status of the top of Mount Sinai and the grass and sky outside are tantamount to where the children of Israel were standing. Therefore, in some Batei Midrashos, the *bimah* is not elevated and there are no flowers on Shavuos. א

⁸ Schachter, Hershel. *Piskei Corona #40: Shavuos Customs: Flowers, Rus and Akdamos*. YU Torah Online, 21 May 2020.

A Taste of *Zera Shimshon*

Idolatry and Adultery

Elucidated by Rabbi Abba Zvi Naiman¹

❧ YISRO DERUSH XXIII ❧

לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ - לֹא תִנָּאֵף — We have to understand the connection between the commandment (20:3) *there shall not be unto you the gods of others* and the commandment (20:13) *you shall not commit adultery*. How is idolatry related to adultery?

Zera Shimshon analyzes a verse that he will use to connect the two commandments of idolatry and adultery:

אָמַר הַכֹּתוּב "בְּמַעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁבֶּתֶם בָּהּ לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וּבְמַעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְבִיא אֲתֶכֶם שָׁמָּה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וּבְחֻקֵּיהֶם לֹא תִלְכוּ" — The verse states (*Vayikra* 18:3), "*Do not perform*" the practice of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled; and "*do not perform*" the practice of the land of Canaan to which I bring you; and do not follow their traditions. The verse prohibits the practices of the Egyptians, the practices of the Canaanites, and their traditions. קָשָׁה — [The verse] is difficult, דִּלְכַתּב "וּבְחֻקֵּיהֶם לֹא תִלְכוּ" — for it should have written only *do not follow their traditions*, שֶׁהֵם דְּבָרִים קָלִים

¹ As many of you know, I am currently working on the ArtScroll edition of *Zera Shimshon*. By the time you read this, there will be two volumes published. This is adapted from a *derush* I have worked on in which *Zera Shimshon* compares the second commandment on the right side of the *Luchos* with the corresponding commandment on the left side.

— **which are relatively light things.** ומכל שכן מעשה ארץ מצרים
 וכן — We would **then** know that **certainly** the “practices” of the
 land of Egypt and Canaan are forbidden, — שהם דברים חמורים
 because they are serious matters. כמו שפרש רש"י עליו השלום
 This is as *Rashi*, peace upon him, explains there שמעשיהם של
 — that the practices of the — מצרים וכו' וכו' הם מקלקלים מכל האמות
 Egyptians and Canaanites are the most degenerate of all the
 nations. — It is further
 difficult why [the verse] states *Do not perform* two times, ולא
 — rather than combining them and teaching them
 together, “Do not perform the practices of the lands of Egypt or
 Canaan.” — Also, *Rashi*
 himself says about the phrase *and do not follow their traditions*:
 — What did the verse leave over that it did
 not already state? — אלא אלו נימוסות שלהם
 their traditions, — חקים החקוקים להם
 for them in their ways as if they were laws.² — עכ"ל
 Until here is the quote. *Rashi* seems to be explaining why this last directive is
 needed. — But to the contrary! — יש להקשות להפך
 He should have asked the opposite; — יאמר "ובחקתיהם לא תלכו"
 let [the verse] say only *and do not follow their traditions*, ומכל
 — and we would know that **certainly** we should not do
 the things mentioned **first** in the verse! — ועוד איך סלקא דעתא לרש"י

² *Rashi*, based on *Toras Kohanim* (perek 13:9), gives the examples of their theaters and stadiums. And according to another opinion, they are various superstitious practices.

"שלא יאמר" ובהקתייהם לא תלכו" — Furthermore, how could *Rashi* think that [the verse] should not say *and do not follow their traditions*? "והא אי לא הנה" ובהקתייהם — Why, without mentioning *their traditions*, הנה משמע שחס ושלום — it would imply, Heaven forbid, כמעשה ארץ מצרים וכו' שהם מקלקלים מכלם לא יעשו — that [the Jews] may only not perform the practices of the lands of Egypt and Canaan, which are the most degenerate of all; אבל — but they may perform the not-so-degenerate actions of those nations, meaning their traditions. וחלילה לומר כן — Heaven forbid to say this!

Zera Shimshon begins his explanation of the verse:

ולתרץ הכל נשא עינינו לראות מה היו מעשיהם של מצריים וכו' — To answer all of these questions, let us first look to examine the practices of Egypt and Canaan that the verse is forbidding. והנה — Now, the Egyptians were steeped in immorality of adultery and illicit relations, כדכתיב "והזנה סוסים" — as it is stated regarding the Egyptians (*Yechezkel* 13:20), וכו' שפרש רש"י על — the discharge of horses is their discharge. פסוק "הנה אשתך קח ולך" וכו' — We also see this as *Rashi* explains on the verse (*Bereishis* 12:19), Now, here is your wife; take her and go. ועיי"ש — See there that Pharaoh told Avraham to take Sarah out of Egypt without delay because the Egyptians are steeped in immorality and would engage in illicit relations with her. וכו' שטופים — The Canaanites, on the other hand, were steeped in idolatry, כמו שאמרו ז"ל — as the *Chazal* say (*Sifrei, Re'eh* to verse 12:2 there). וכן נראה מזה הזכיר הכתוב (דברים יב ב-ג) "ושבדתם"

'וכו' — **This also appears true since the verse warns the Jews upon entering Eretz Yisrael (*Devarim* 12:3), *You shall break apart their altars...the carved images of their gods shall you cut down;* 'אֲבַד תֵּאֲבִדוּן' וכו' — and (ibid. 12:2) *You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nation that you are driving away worshiped their gods.* Obviously, then, the Canaanites were steeped in idolatry, while the Egyptians were steeped in adultery and illicit relations.**

Zera Shimshon next proves that living in Eretz Yisrael protects someone from both the *yetzer hara* of adultery and the *yetzer hara* of idolatry. He begins with adultery:

וְיָדוּעַ שֶׁיְשִׁיבַת אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל מוֹעִיל לְשִׁמְי עֲבֻרוֹת חֲמוּרוֹת הֵלָלוּ — **It is known that dwelling in Eretz Yisrael is beneficial for counteracting these two serious sins.** כִּי סִגְלַת אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל מַצִּילָה מִן הַזְנוּיָה — **For the**

quality of Eretz Yisrael is that it saves a person from illicit relations, שְׁהָרִי הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְבַטְחֵנוּ — **since Hakadosh**

"כי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ מְבִיאֶךָ אֵל" (Devarim 8:7), אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה" — For Hashem, your God, is bringing you to a "good" Land. וְעַל כִּרְחֻק שְׂמִישׁ לָהּ סִגְלָהּ לְהַצִּיל מִן הַזְנוּיָה — **You have to say**

that this means that it has the quality to save a person from illicit relations, דָּאִי לֹא הָיָה הַיָּתֶה טוֹבָה — **because if this was not so, it could not be called "good."** כְּדָתְנָן הַזְנוּיָה וְהַכְשׁוּפִים כְּלוּ אֶת הַכֹּל —

This is so because we learned in a Mishnah (*Sotah* 48a) that illicit relations and sorcery brought an end to all, meaning that the Land no longer produced proper food. Therefore, if Eretz Yisrael did not protect people from adultery and other illicit relations, it could not be

called a “good” land. — ועוד דבסוף פרק ח' דסנהדרין אמרינן
Furthermore, [the Sages] say at the end of the eighth chapter of
 Tractate *Sanhedrin* (75a), — מיום שחרב בית המקדש — **From the day**
that the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed — נטלה טעם ביאה — **the**
enjoyment of intimacy was taken from married people ונתנה
 — לעוברי עברה — **and given to sinners who engage in illicit relations.**
 — דשמע מינה שקדם החרבן לא היה להם זה הטעם — **We can learn from**
[this Gemara] that before the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash,
[adulterers] would not have this enjoyment. — ואם לא יש הטעם —
And if there would be no enjoyment, — לא היו חוטאים — **they**
would not sin. — שאמרו ז"ל — **For Chazal say (Chagigah 11b),**
 — גזל ונעריות שנפשו של אדם מתאנה להם ומחמדמן — **Theft and forbidden**
unions are [sins] that a person covets and desires. אם כן אינם
 — עושים רק לתאבון — **If so, [adulterers] act only for gratification,**
 — ולא להכעיס — **and not in defiance of the Torah.** — ובמקור לתאבון —
And regarding a renegade who sins for gratification, — קיימא לו
 — דלא שביק התרא ואכיל איסורא — **we have a rule (Chullin 4a) that he**
will not abandon the opportunity to eat that which is permissible and
eat instead that which is forbidden — היכא דהדדי גינהו — **whenever**
they are equal. We learn from this that while the Beis HaMikdash
 was standing, Eretz Yisrael protected people from illicit relations by
 taking away the enjoyment of that sin.

A hint from the Name of Hashem that Eretz Yisrael protects
 against adultery and other illicit relations:

— וכתב המגלה עמקות אפן ל"ח — *Megaleh Amukos* (§38 to his work on
Va'eschanan) writes — ששם י"ה — **that Hashem's Name *Yud Kei***

מַעֲיֵד עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשֵׁהֶם בְּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ — gives testimony about the Jews when they are in the Beis HaMikdash. וְכִמּוֹ שֶׁתּוֹב "כִּי שִׁמְךָ נִקְרָא — We know this because the verse states (*Daniel* 9:19) *For Your Name is proclaimed upon Your city and Your people.* עַל עִירְךָ וְעַל עַמְּךָ" — When is the Name *Yud Kei* proclaimed upon your people? בְּשֵׁהֶם בְּעִירְךָ — When they are in Your city. וְכֵן נִקְרָא בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ הַר הַמּוֹרֶה — Furthermore, the Beis HaMikdash is called Mount Moriah. רְצָה לִזְמַר הַמּוֹרֶה הַ"ה — The word "Moriah" can be understood as a contraction of *Moreh Yud Kei*, meaning that it represents the Name *Yud Kei*.³ עַכ"ל — Until here is the quote from *Megaleh Amukos*. וְשֵׁם הַ"ה מַעֲיֵד עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂאִינָם — Now, we know that the Name *Yud Kei* testifies specifically that the Jews do not sin by engaging in illicit relations. דְּכָתִיב (תהלים קכב ז, ועיין ב"ר עט ז קדושין ע:) "שִׁשָּׁם עָלוּ שְׂבָטִים שְׂבָטֵי יְהוּדָה — For it is stated (*Tehillim* 122:4) *For there the tribes ascended, the tribes of Yud Kei, a testimony for the Jews.*⁴ And the Gemara (*Kiddushin* 70b; see also *Rashi* to *Bamidbar* 26:5) learns from this that the Name of Hashem, *Yud Kei* in this verse, testifies that the Jews are married properly. וְעוֹד אָמְרוּ הַ"ה — Chazal state further (*Sotah* 17a with *Rashi*) אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה שְׂזָכוּ — that when a man and woman are meritorious, שֵׁם הַ"ה בֵּינֵיהֶם — the Name *Yud Kei* is among them, the *Yud* in the word אִישׁ and *Hei* in the word

³ The Hebrew word מוֹרֶה is split to read: הַ"ה.

⁴ *Megaleh Amukos* (ibid.) cites this verse as further proof that the Name *Yud Kei* testifies about the Jews only when they are in Eretz Yisrael. For the verse says that the tribes ascended "there," to Eretz Yisrael.

אֵשָׁה. — וּנְמָצָא שְׁסֻגְלַת אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל הִיא לְהַצִּיל מִהַחֲטָא שֶׁל זָנוּת. **It emerges from all of the above that Eretz Yisrael has the quality to save someone from the sin of illicit relations.**

Zera Shimshon now proves that Eretz Yisrael protects against idolatry:

וְכֵן מִצְּלַת נְמִי מִהַחֲטָא שֶׁל עֲבוּדָה זָרָה — [The Land] similarly protects against the sin of idolatry. — דָּאֲמַרְיִנן בְּפֶרֶק ט' דְּעֶרְכִין דָּף ל"ב. **For**

[the Sages] say in the ninth chapter of Tractate *Arachin* (32b) regarding the verse (*Nechemiah* 8:17) וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי הַגּוֹלָה הַשְּׂבִיִּים מִן

The entire congregation that had returned from the captivity made succos and dwelt in succos; for they had not done so from the days of Yehoshua ben Nun. This verse is apparently difficult because it implies that the

people had not observed the mitzvah of succah from the times of Yehoshua until they returned from Babylonia at the times of Ezra.

Why should they not have performed the mitzvah all of those centuries? The Gemara therefore explains that the word “succos” here does not refer to the mitzvah of succah observed during the festival of Succos, but rather to a shelter. דָּבְעוּ רַחֲמֵי עַל יֵצֵר הָרַע דְּעֲבוּדָה זָרָה

— The verse is saying **that they prayed about the yetzer hara of idolatry and abolished it,** וְאֵגֶן זְכוּתָא עָלֵיהּ כִּי סָכָה — **and their merit protected them like a shelter.** That is, the people returning

from Babylonia prayed that they should be sheltered from idolatry, something that had not been done in the days of Yehoshua. וְהִנְנוּ

— **And that is why the verse is particular about its mention of Yehoshua here.** דְּבָקֵל דּוֹקְתָא כְּתִיב "יְהוֹשֻׁעַ" —

For in every other place his name is written as *Yehoshua*, וְהָכָא

"יְשׁוּעַ" — and here it is written *Yeishua*, missing the *hei*. The verse is telling us that — **בְּשִׁלְמָא מוֹשֶׁה לֹא בָעָא רַחֲמֵי** — it is understandable why Moshe did not pray to have the *yetzer hara* for idolatry abolished; — **דְּלֹא הָוִי לִיָּה זְכוּתָא דְּאַרְצֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** — for he did not have the merit of Eretz Yisrael. — **אַלֹא יְהוֹשֻׁעַ דְּהָוִי לִיָּה זְכוּתָא דְּאַרְצֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** — But as for Yehoshua, who did have the merit of Eretz Yisrael, — **אַמַּאי לֹא בָעִי רַחֲמֵי עַל יִצְרָא דְּעִבּוּדָּה זָרָה וּבִטְלִיָּה** — why did he not pray to have the *yetzer hara* for idolatry abolished? Since Yehoshua failed in this respect, the verse mentions him disparagingly. — **ע"כ** — Until here is the quote. At any rate, we see from this Gemara that Eretz Yisrael also has the ability to protect against the sin of idolatry.

Zera Shimshon returns to the verse with which he began his explanation:

— **וּבִזְוָה יִבְאָר טַעַם הַפְּסוּק הַזֶּה"ל** — With this we can now explain the intent of the aforementioned verse, — **"כְּמַעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁבְּתֶם בָּהּ** — *Do not perform the practice of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled; and do not perform the practice of the land of Canaan to which I bring you; and do not follow their traditions.* — **וְאַל תַּעֲשׂוּ" אֵינֶם צוּרִי** — These words, *do not perform*, are not to be understood as a command and a warning like their usual meaning. — **רַק הַבְּטָחָה** — Rather, they are a promise, understood as “you will not perform.” — **דְּהִינוּ כְּמַעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְבִטִּי אֶתְכֶם שָׁמָּה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ** — That is, Hashem is saying that since you are about to dwell in Eretz Yisrael, “I promise you that you will not perform the promiscuous practice of the land of Egypt — **כִּי זְכוּתָא דְּאַרְצֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תַּצִּיל אֶתְכֶם מִן הַזְנוּת** —

because the merit of Eretz Yisrael will save you from illicit relations. — Furthermore, **וְעוֹד שֶׁהָרִי יִשְׁבְּתֶם בָּהּ וְלֹא נִטְמַאתֶם בְּזִנוּת** — you lived there in Egypt, and you were not defiled with illicit relations there. **כִּמּוֹ שֶׁאָמְרוּ ז"ל (עֵינֵי ב"ר עַט ז פְּסִיקְתָּא דְּרַבִּי כְּהֵנָּא** **בְּשִׁלַּח יֵא, ו, יִלְקוּט שְׁמַעוֹנִי רִמְזוּ תִשְׁעֵג) עַל "הָרְאוּבֵנִי" (בַּמִּדְבָּר כו, ז) "הַשְּׁמַעֲנִי"** — This is as *Chazal* say on the words (*Bamidbar* 26:7) *the Reuvenite* and (26:14) *the Shimonite* with a *hei* before the names of the tribes and a *yud* following the names. Hashem placed His Name around the names of all the families that were in Egypt to testify that the children were all born from their fathers. And this is what the verse means when it says **"שְׁבִטֵי יִהְיֶה עֵדוּת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל"** — *the tribes of Yud Kei, a testimony for the Jews*. Hashem's Name *Yud Kei* is testimony that Jews did not engage in illicit relations. — **וְאֵם כֵּן** — Hashem is telling the Jews in the verse, “now, if it is so that you did not engage in illicit relations in Egypt, **בְּנֻדְאֵי תִהְיֶי בְּטוּחִים שְׁלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ זֶה הַחֵטָא** — you can certainly be assured that you will not do this sin in Eretz Yisrael.” — **וְאֵף כִּמְעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן** — Hashem said further, “And also like the practice of the Land of Canaan, **זֶה דְּהִינוּ עֲבוּדָה זָרָה** — which is idolatry, **לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ** — I promise you that you will not perform. — **כִּי זְכוּתָא דְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל תִּהְיֶי לָכֵן** — For the merit of Eretz Yisrael will help you **לְבַטֵּל יִצְרָא דְּעֲבוּדָה זָרָה** — to abolish the *yetzer hara* of idolatry. — **וּבְשִׁבִּיל כִּךְ אֲנִי מְבִיא אֲתֶכֶם שָׁמָּה** — And this is why I am bringing you there.” — **אֵף מָה שֶׁאֲנִי מְזַהֵר אֲתֶכֶם הוּא** — Hashem concluded, “But what I need to warn you is, **וּבְחֻקֵּימֶיךָ** **שֶׁהֵם עֲבֻרוֹת קְלוֹת שֶׁהָאָדָם** — do not follow their traditions.” — **דֵּשׁ בְּעֻקְבֵּי** — These are the relatively light mitzvot that a person

tramples with his heels,⁵ i.e., he does not take seriously enough. וְזֶהוּ עֵקֶר הַקִּדְּשָׁה — And this is the primary practice of holiness, לֵהֵיוֹת נִבְדָּלִים מִן הָאֲמוֹת בְּנִימוּסֵיהֶם וּבְמִנְהַגֵּיהֶם — to be separated from the habits and customs of the other nations, בְּמֵאֲכָל וּבְמִשְׁתֶּה — in food, drink, and speech. שִׁשְׁנֵי אֲלֹהֵי אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן — For the Jews are (II Shmuel 7:23) *one nation in the land*, meaning that they act differently than other people. Dwelling in Eretz Yisrael will not protect against following traditions of the other nations. It is something that the Jews would need to concentrate upon on their own. וְכִשְׁתִּהְיוּ נֹזְהָרִים מִזֶּה — The verse is saying that **when you are careful with this,** אֲזִי תוֹעִיל לָכֶם זְכוּת אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל — **then the merit of Eretz Yisrael will help you** לְהִתְרַחֵק מִמַּעֲבֵרוֹת הַחַמּוּרוֹת הַנֵּל — **to become distanced from the aforementioned serious sins** of adultery and idolatry. הֲאֵלֶּא אִם לֹא תִהְיוּ נֹזְהָרִים לְהִתְרַחֵק מִמַּעֲבֵרוֹתֵיהֶם — But if you are not careful to distance yourself from their traditions, אֲזִי אֵין — the merit of Eretz Yisrael will not help you, וְתִפְּלוּ בַּחַמּוּרוֹת — and you will fall into those serious sins. שֶׁעֲבָרָה גּוֹרֶרֶת עֲבָרָה — This is so because a sin drags another sin after it (Avos 4:2).

Zera Shimshon has now answered all of his questions about this verse. It repeats the phrase “do not perform” because they are not simple commands. Rather, Hashem is assuring the Jews that because they are entering Eretz Yisrael, they would not be inclined to perform the adulterous practices of Egypt, nor would they be inclined to perform the idolatrous practices of Canaan. Since Eretz Yisrael has a special effect against the *yetzer hara* for each of these serious

⁵ See *Rashi* to *Devarim* 7:12.

transgressions, Hashem gives His assurance for each one separately. However, Hashem has to then warn the Jews not to follow the traditions of those nations because Eretz Yisrael does not combat the *yetzer hara* for those customs. Hashem mentions them in this verse because even though the sin of following such a custom is not so severe, it could eventually lead to the more severe sins of idolatry and adultery mentioned earlier. Even though Eretz Yisrael generally protects against those sins, the effect of sinning through following the traditions of the other nations could bring about the more serious sins.

Zera Shimshon now connects the commandment of *there shall not be unto you the gods of others* and the commandment *you shall not commit adultery*.

ומכל האמור — From all that has been said about this verse, we now see that **נקשרו והיו לאחדים העבודה נרה עם צווי הזנות — the sin of idolatry and the command against adultery and illicit relations are connected and united,**⁶ **שזכות ארץ ישראל מועלת להזהר משניהם — because the merit of Eretz Yisrael helps to protect against both of them.** This is why these two commandments are placed side by side on the two Tablets.

§ To Summarize:

Zera Shimshon connects the commandment against idolatry with the commandment against adultery.

He begins with an analysis of the verse “*Do not perform*” the practice of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled; and “*do not perform*” the practice of the land of Canaan to which I bring you; and do not follow their traditions. The repetition of the term “do not practice” does not seem necessary. And once a warning has been issued against following the degenerate practices of these nations, it

⁶ Stylistic citation of *Yechezkel* 37:17.

does not seem necessary to then warn against following their “traditions.”

To understand this verse, *Zera Shimshon* begins with proving that the “practice” of Egypt was adultery and other illicit relations, whereas the “practice” of Canaan was idolatry. Their “traditions,” on the other hand, were relatively insignificant customs such as their theaters and stadiums. He then proves that living in Eretz Yisrael serves to counteract both the sin of adultery and of idolatry. The verse should thus be understood as a dual assurance from Hashem to the Jews that by entering Eretz Yisrael, “you will not perform” the adultery of Egypt, and “you will not perform” the idolatry of Canaan. Since the practices are different, Hashem gives each promise separately. Hashem, though, continues that the Jews do need to be concerned of refraining from the “traditions” of these two nations. Dwelling in Eretz Yisrael does not protect one from following their traditions. Even though following their traditions is not as serious as practicing idolatry or adultery, they can lead to these more serious sins because one sin drags another sin after it. *Zera Shimshon* thus concludes that the two commandments against idolatry and adultery are related because dwelling in Eretz Yisrael protects against both of these sins. ^א

Torah Isn't Easy... But It's Sure Worth It

Yirmiyahu Lauer

The current generation poses a very real challenge the likes of which we have never seen before. In our fast-paced, technologically advanced world, we are bombarded constantly with the notion that if something is not easy, fun, instantaneous, and pleasurable, it is simply not something we should desire. When trying to explain to someone the beauty of the Torah, this societal expectation presents a huge challenge, especially among our youth. While we desperately want our children to follow our ideals and live a life imbued with the values we hold dear, this societal norm will sometimes be in stark contrast with the do's and don'ts we find throughout Judaism.

The nations of the world were given seven mitzvos that they need to observe in order to have a portion in *Olam HaBa*. These are known as the *sheva mitzvos b'nei Noach*. They are actually categories with subcategories under them so there are considerably more than seven mitzvos. However, they are a far cry from the 613 mitzvos we as Jews are required to observe. The obvious question is why. Did we do something wrong that we are seemingly burdened with so many mitzvos while the other nations of the world only have a fraction of this? According to the *Ibn Ezra*, this is exactly the question the wise son asks in the Haggadah. מָה הַעֲדוֹת וְהַחֲקִים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲתָכֶם. He is asking why Hashem has put this yoke on us. Why are we obligated to fulfill so many commandments? Many of these mitzvos are not easy and some are quite difficult. At first glance it doesn't seem fair at all.

Perhaps we could answer this quandary with the idea that although it isn't easy to follow the Torah's laws, the reward in this world outweighs the hardships involved, and therefore it is worth it. Maybe

by keeping the Torah we will live an idyllic life filled with blessing and good fortune without any worries in the world. Maybe by giving *tzedakah* we will be guaranteed a life of abundant *parnasah*. Maybe if we keep Shabbos we will be guaranteed constant *shalom bayis*. Maybe that's how we should convey the benefits of keeping the Torah? Unfortunately, this is not the case. We know there's no guarantee or shortcut to a blissful life in this world, and although we are the *Am Segulah* (and some think this means a nation of *segulos*, which will guarantee whatever blessing we desire), this is simply not the case.

Therefore, the question is: how can we turn the Torah from a seemingly burdensome yoke into a desirable endeavor that our children will not only not abhor but actually crave? How can we portray the beauty of the Torah and show that in actuality the benefits awaiting those who cling to it are beyond comprehension?

The answer to this question is clearly spelled out in a famous Mishnah we are all familiar with. The Mishnah says: רַבִּי חֲנַנְיָא בֶּן עֲקִשָּׁא אָמַר, רָצָה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְזַכּוֹת אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְפִיכָךְ הִרְבָּה לָהֶם תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת, *Hashem wanted to give merit to Klal Yisroel, so he gave them Torah and Mitzvos*. Torah is not something that should be looked at as a burden or a yoke upon us. It's not just a bunch of laws. It's an opportunity to reach the highest levels and gain eternal rewards. We're not doing Hashem a favor by following His Torah. His Torah is doing us a favor. It's actually Hashem's present to us and, if understood in light of this Mishnah, a huge privilege for us.

One of the hardest times in the history of America for a religious Jew was during the early part of the 20th century. Jewish immigrants came to this country with the dream of the *goldene medina* where gold was going to be found in the streets. Not only was there no gold, there weren't even jobs to be found. And if you actually found a job, you were then struck with another challenge. If you wouldn't work the whole week including Shabbos, you would have to find another job

the following week. This was obviously a huge test for them, but many overcame this challenge. The interesting phenomenon, though, was that for all the dedication we find among the early immigrants to keep Shabbos in those hard times, the vast majority their children did not stay faithful to the Torah. HaRav Moshe Feinstein, z"l, asked an obvious question. Why not? These people dedicated their life to upholding the Torah despite great suffering. So why didn't the offspring of that generation follow suit? What happened? Rav Moshe answered that when the fathers would come home and sit at the Friday night *seudah* after a long week at work, they would moan and groan about how hard it is to be a Jew in America and how hard it is to keep Shabbos. They would complain about what they had to go through and how challenging being a religious Jew is. When the children heard this and realized how difficult a life of Torah is, many eventually decided they wanted no part of it. Why would they want a life filled with hardship and suffering? This is Reb Moshe's explanation for why they abandoned their faith.

But this explanation is a bit hard to understand. Exactly what were the fathers supposed to say? Should they have lied and said how wonderful life is now that they have to worry about finding a job each week? Should they have celebrated the fact that they couldn't put food on the table? They were just telling the truth. Life was hard! There was no denying this, and this is what they expressed. The answer is that instead of the moaning and complaining, they should have acknowledged that despite the challenges and despite the hardships, in the end it's all worth it. They should have said this with a smile and explained how happy they were to fulfill the will of Hashem even in the toughest times because this is what Hashem wants from us, and ultimately it will give us true happiness.

If someone comes to you and asks you if you can do them a favor, inevitably the first reaction and question will be: "what kind of favor?" Since it is possible you will not be able or want to do this favor, first

you will want to know what it is. In contrast, if someone asks if they can give you a present, your only response will be “yes.” You will not ask what it is prior to accepting it. Whatever it is, you'll take it. This is the key to conveying what it is we're given by Hashem and why we should cherish it.

We are told that when Hashem came to the nations of the world to ask them if they want the Torah, they first asked what was in it. The *Bnei Eisav* were told about the prohibition of murder, so they refused to accept it, since they were promised *וְעַל הָרֶבֶךְ תִּחְיֶה*, “you will live by the sword.” Then Hashem asked *Bnei Yishmael* and they also asked what was in it. They were told “you cannot steal,” whereupon they also did not accept it. They said that they were given a promise by a *malach* that *יְדוּ בְּכָל יוֹד כָּל בּוֹ*, which they claimed means they need to steal. Hashem then approached *Klal Yisrael*, who said *naaseh v'nishma*.

There's an interesting question with this story. The nations did not say “no.” They just had an explanation why they thought it wouldn't work. If so, why didn't Hashem clarify the situation and simply explain why they were mistaken? *וְעַל הָרֶבֶךְ תִּחְיֶה* does not mean they will be murderers. It just means they will be warriors and mercenaries. *יְדוּ בְּכָל* does not mean they will need to steal. It means, like the *Targum* explains, that they will need everyone and everyone will need them. We see this today with the Arabs and their oil, which everyone needs. So why didn't Hashem just explain this and then ask them again if they would accept the Torah? The very fact that they had to ask what was in it indicated that they misunderstood the essence of the Torah. It is not a favor we are doing for Hashem but a present Hashem is giving us. It's not for Hashem that we are told to keep a Torah life. Hashem doesn't need us. It's all for us and for our good.

Moshe Rabbeinu says to *Klal Yisroel* *מָה ה' שָׁאֵל מֵעַמְּךָ*, *What does Hashem ask from you?* You would think *Moshe Rabbeinu* would tell us that it's not as bad as we think. Don't worry. Hashem doesn't ask for

much. However, Moshe answers by delineating everything and anything you could think of that Hashem wants you to do. כִּי אִם-לִיְיָ אֵת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְלָקֶת כְּכָל-דְּרָכָיו וּלְאַהֲבָה אוֹתוֹ וְלַעֲבֹד אֵת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ: לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת-מִצְוֹת ה' וְאֶת חֻקָּתָיו אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה הַיּוֹם. How does that make sense? He doesn't ask for much, just everything! The only way to understand this is to go to the very next words: לְטוֹב לָּךְ, *for your good*. What does Hashem need from you? He doesn't need anything! It's all for you and your benefit. That's why Hashem gave us so many commandments. To help us grow, improve ourselves and thereby earn the ultimate goodness.

The main problem stems from the way society has taught us to look at things. We want everything to be as easy as possible. Is Torah going to be easy? Certainly not! Keeping the 613 mitzvos is not easy and takes a lifetime of sacrifice, dedication, and hard work. The Torah is not easy but it's worth it. This is because the Torah gives meaning to life. Even if you have problems throughout life and even if it's not fun. In the end you know that there's a rhyme and reason behind it all. There's an ultimate goal and a greater reality than what we can see in front of us. That's what Torah gives a person and that's what we need to convey to our kids. אֱלֹהִים

Capital Punishment in Judaism

Chapter Three – Love ¹

Rabbi Shmuel Chaim Naiman

Over the past several years, I've been working on a book about Judaism's death penalty. It is an exciting, ongoing, journey, full of surprises and challenges. In the last two years, I have shared abridged drafts of Chapters One and Two in this journal.

At first glance, we would conjure up the Torah court's execution protocol to look much the same as the public executions that still take place in many Muslim countries. In fact, some *hadiths* (traditions attributed to Mohammed) imply that the Islamic punishment of stoning for adultery – hotly debated amongst contemporary Muslims – finds its source in Torah law.

Yet such a superficial outlook is downright mistaken, for Torah law provides a detailed execution protocol radically different – not only in *action*, but even more so in *attitude*. And it's primarily the contrast in attitude that concerns us. After all, people the world over suffer much more intense and prolonged pain every day from a variety of natural causes: severe illness, car accidents, you name it. Sometimes the pain is manmade and still appreciated, such as a life-saving surgery. Although no one wants to suffer, none of these instances deeply agitate our sense of morality; pain and loss are an unavoidable part of the human experience. What's so disturbing about violent religious executions is the *deliberate, calculated* torture and trauma inflicted by one man onto his brother, the tawdry display of reprehensible depravity dressed up as altruistic justice. Therefore, when contemplating the Torah's capital punishments, we must look beyond

¹ Editor's note: This is part of a work that is geared to the wider Jewish public. We have therefore not edited it to conform with our "Kuntress Style Sheet."

the external actions and ponder their message, both to the condemned person and the community at large.

The Beautiful Death

Imagine the following scenario. The executioner has arrived to dispatch you off to kingdom come. In several minutes, all that will remain of your earthly existence will be a stiffening cadaver. He softly inquires, “How would you like for me to kill you?” Although the details will vary, I wager that most people will choose to end their lives in the quickest and least painful way offered. Combining this universal human desire together with a Biblical commandment, the Oral Tradition lays down a far-reaching legal principle.

“Love your fellow as yourself,” (Leviticus 19:18) the Torah famously commanded in what the Talmud has dubbed the Torah’s central principle.ⁱ No exceptions were provided. Since we all wish to die as quickly and painlessly as possible, we must also execute as quickly and painlessly as possible. The details of the relatively quick and painless death didn’t remain open for each court and convict to guess, more or less successfully, but were incorporated into Torah law in great detail.

The Sages taught an aphorism to describe how this verse ought to be applied to capital punishment. It’s quoted in the Talmud no less than five times and is implicitly the source for numerous other statutes.

Rabbi Nachman said in the name of Rabbah the son of Avuah: The verse says, “You shall love your fellow as yourself” – arrange for him a beautiful death.ⁱⁱ

Of course, no matter how lovingly and tenderly applied, stoning is still stoning. We still need to contemplate what pressing need drove the Torah to order such inherently painful and gruesome deaths. But for now, we are only concerned with the facts of its capital punishments,

particularly how God wants *us* to understand and administer them. Regarding these questions the Oral Torah speaks unequivocally: execute the condemned man with *love*, as if you are standing in his shoes. “Arrange for him a *beautiful* death.” Let’s take a close up look at the beautiful death.

Death Row

Anyone condemned to a painful death is undoubtedly filled with dread and tension. To spare its convicts from any more such emotional suffering than absolutely necessary, Torah law requires courts to execute on the same day of the verdict. Any stay on death row constitutes torture and is strictly forbidden. Based on this statute, courts are forbidden to commence capital trials on Friday or the day before a festival: if the suspect will be found guilty on Saturday or holiday, punishment cannot be dispensed until evening (for bloodshed is prohibited on these days), subjecting the convicted felon to a full day of distress.ⁱⁱⁱ

Now, in the United States, condemned criminals wait on death row for years, oftentimes decades, while a painstakingly slow appeals process works its way through the courts. This enormously expensive endeavor – costing many times more than keeping the felon in prison for life – has one clear and noble purpose: liberal democracies value innocent life, so before executing anyone we will patiently scrutinize every nook and cranny of the prosecution’s case. We don’t think twice before we send the convict to cool his heels on death row while his dedicated lawyers fight to save his life, or at least to win another trial.

From this vantage point, the Torah’s apparent rush to kill needs some clarification. Shouldn’t the possibility of clearing an innocent man trump the guilty one’s discomfort?

I believe the answer lies in the intricate web of legal obstacles pertaining to a Torah trial for a capital offense, which blocks the path

towards a guilty verdict, particularly the almost impossibly high burden of proof placed on the prosecution. Listening carefully to my intuitive disapproval of a death-rowless capital punishment system, I hear myself accepting some small measure of uncertainty in every death sentence, an uncertainty we hope will be mitigated by a long delay. On the other hand, in a court system where only the thoroughly vetted account of two eyewitnesses qualifies for testimony, and the felon must accept a detailed threat before committing his crime, the very act of sentencing demonstrates the jurists' complete certainty of the defendant's guilt – well beyond the contemporary legal parlance of “beyond a reasonable doubt.” With anything short of that, we are forbidden to *ever* execute – after any amount of waiting.

Therefore, when Torah capital trials are conducted properly according to the doctrines of discretion and rescue, and still the bench feels confident enough in their findings to end a human life, they will have no need to wait any longer than necessary for the final surge of merit seeking that we discussed earlier.

Confession

As the execution procession approaches the designated site, the condemned man is living his final moments on earth. At this juncture, his primary purpose in life is to achieve atonement for his wrongdoings through a sincere repentance process before it is too late.

They instruct him, “Confess! This is the custom of those being put to death, for all who confess are assured their share in the World to Come.” If he doesn't know how to confess, he is told to simply declare, “My death should serve as an atonement for all of my sins.”^{iv}

Confession, the climax of any repentance process, is not just an available option for the condemned man, but has been carefully incorporated into the very judgment process that has ordered his death.

The Sages set the final rites at a slight distance from the place of execution, ten cubits (approximately 15 feet) to be exact. Why? Once the condemned man has arrived at the site of his death, paralyzing fear may prevent him from properly repenting.^v

This person committed a sin so severe that a well-deserved death lies cubits away. Is this not an unmitigated rejection of man by Creator, a total and final settling of scores? Not at all. Quite the opposite of his complete annihilation, Torah law is now occupied with ensuring the worst sinners eternal oneness with God. During judgment's most crushing moments the even stronger power of atonement is hard at work, limiting punishment to the temporal world alone.

The Intoxicating Brew

After confession, the condemned person's full mental faculties have become a liability. Anxiety and pain lengthen death throes; an inebriated soul will depart from its body much quicker and smoother. So his escorts now cloud his mind with a potent intoxicating beverage. Customarily, the righteous women of Jerusalem would donate the beverage. If no one volunteers, it will be acquired with public funds.^{vi}

While the kind women are doting on the condemned man, the justices who ruled on his death remain in the city. There are no hypnotics for them. They have by now invested at least two consecutive days – and the night in between – on the case, all the while, as we learned in Chapter One, eating minimally and completely abstaining from any inebriating drinks. On the day of the execution, they must they fast the entire day. This is one of several laws that originate from the verse (Leviticus 19:27) “You shall not eat on blood,” read to refer to those whose ruling causes blood to be shed.^{vii}

With all these preparations, a particular atmosphere is being set at the execution site, one of focus, solemnity, and restraint. Even the most depraved felon shall be treated with dignity and kindness.

Stoning

Preparations are complete. We must now get down to brass tacks, unpleasant as they are. We'll begin with death by stoning, classified by the Mishnah as the most severe method of capital punishment.

From the verses, death by stoning seems as simple as it is primitive and barbaric: bombard the hapless sinner until the breath of life is gone. But actually, revealed the Oral Tradition, a much more sophisticated procedure is at hand, laced with elements of compassion and respect. We'll begin by outlining the general process and then proceed to its fine details.

In most Biblical references to this punishment, only pelting with stones is mentioned. But in one passage, concerning the temporary injunction not to climb Mt. Sinai during the period of the Torah's revelation, an additional action was included. "Do not touch the mountain, lest you be stoned *or thrown off [a raised structure]*" (Exodus 19:13). Based on this verse, the Oral Torah taught that the stoning process has two stages: first, one of the prosecuting witnesses pushes the condemned man off of a two-story high edifice, and only *afterwards*, if he's still alive, does the second witness lob a hefty stone on his heart.^{viii}

Thus, strangely enough, punishment is administered in the opposite order of the verse, prioritizing the second half – the one which in most instances isn't even mentioned! I don't mean to suggest that this directly violates the Torah's instruction; the coordinating conjunction is "or," implying that both methods are equally valid. But *why* did the Sages order us to switch the order of the two halves of stoning? Following the love doctrine, the answer is obvious. To force a (literally) half-dead man up a tower, and then back down in a freefall, will greatly exacerbate and prolong his pain. Instead, Torah law requires us to first crash body onto rock, and then, if he's still alive, immediately crash rock onto body.

Let's take a closer look at some more specifics of stoning.

Hands bound, punishment begins with a firm shove off a structure high enough to kill instantaneously, well beyond the minimum height capable of inflicting a mortal wound. Yet he cannot be shoved from too high a precipice, liable to spread his remains over a wide area in an undignified splatter. The beautiful death is a balanced affair, honorable while expedient.^{ix}

Whether already dead or still alive, the initial plummet may leave him lying in a prone position, face in the dirt. Such a posture is degrading, so Torah law requires him to be promptly turned over onto his back.

Punishment ends at the moment of death. Only if he remains alive after the initial fall is a stone flung – in an exact method carefully designed to maximize the lethal impact. The two witnesses raise a large boulder, too heavy for one alone to lift. Then one of them heaves it with all his strength on the dying felon's heart. Why don't they throw the stone together? Since exact coordination is impossible, a joint effort would deliver a somewhat weaker blow.^x

If after the initial fall and stoning the convict remains alive, the obligation to stone, presumably one stone at a time with the above process, is then transferred to the entire Jewish people, as written in the Torah, "The hands of the witnesses should be on him first to kill him, and the hands of the whole nation afterwards" (Deuteronomy 17:7). Yet Talmudic tradition reveals that no such communal stoning ever actually occurred, for the "beautiful death" protocol worked so well that it was never necessary to apply more than a single stone.^{xi}

Torah law has constructed a strict set of guidelines for its death by stoning that stand in stark contrast to modern fundamentalist countries. A close comparison of the stones, and the manner in which they are thrown, proves particularly informative. The Iranian penal

code states, “The size of the stone used in stoning shall not be too large to kill the convict by one or two throws, and at the same time shall not be too small to be called a stone.” As noted in Amnesty International’s 2008 report on stoning in Iran, such a statute “makes it clear that the purpose of stoning is to inflict terrible pain in a process leading to slow death.” On the other hand, Torah law employs a single large boulder, heaved with maximum force directly on the felon’s heart, killing him instantly.

Burning

Each of the three remaining methods come with their own features of love. Burning is practiced neither by ISIS’s ad hoc flaming gasoline, nor by the Spanish Inquisition’s auto-da-fe program. To set aside once and for all any such notion, the Mishnah and Talmud recordea fascinating dialogue between one scholar and his colleagues. This scholar, Rabbi Elazar the son of Tzadok, reported having twice witnessed a Torah court burning someone by the stake, suggesting a legal precedent for such a method. He was stiffly rebuffed by the Sages who went on to dispute the legality of his testimonies. In the first instance, Rabbi Elazar admitted to having been a minor at the time of the alleged story (riding high on his father’s shoulders, no less), and a minor’s testimony is invalid. For the second story, which he witnessed as an adult, they rejected his account with a revealing rejoinder: that court must have been from the heretical Tziduki sect who practice a literal interpretation of the Written Scriptures, denying the authenticity of our accompanying Oral Tradition.^{xii}

Actually, the burning is carried out by pouring molten lead down the subject’s throat, swiftly killing him by consuming all his inner organs. How did the Sages deduce this departure from the verse’s simple meaning? First, a special Sinaic exegetical tool allowed for internal scorching to be legally classified as burning. Once both options are on the table, the love doctrine automatically classified this quicker, less painful method as the only legitimate one.^{xiii}

Beheading

The capital punishment of decapitation was never described in the Torah, but referred to only in general terms as “death by the mouth of a sword” (Deuteronomy 13:16). However, in another, completely unrelated situation we do find a detailed beheading process – *regarding a calf* (see Deuteronomy 21:1-9). Over there, the slaughter starts from the back of the animal’s neck, which means that the life-sustaining jugular cord can be severed only after a painful bone fracture.

Yet regarding the execution of a human being “by the sword,” the love doctrine excludes all methods but the quickest and least painful: decapitation from the front of his neck. Most definitely, don’t employ the sword’s mouth in any more creative manner, such as the dismemberment or quartering commonly practiced up to the modern era by religious and secular judiciaries alike.^{xiv}

Strangling

Lastly, death by strangling. Two ropes are wrapped around the condemned man’s neck – a strong, hard one wrapped inside a soft, weak one – and both ends are pulled in tandem until he is dead.^{xv} The reason for the hard rope is obvious: a soft string may snap. But why the soft one? Rashi and Maimonides explain: the coarse fibers chafing against his neck will cause unwarranted cuts and discomfort, so it must be cushioned by an additional, comfy cord.^{xvi}

Post Mortem

When it’s all over, tells the Mishnah of the prevailing custom whereby the executed person’s family converges on the judges who ordered their loved one’s death and the witnesses who killed him – not to protest nor even to mourn their loss, but to inquire after the peace and well-being of their relative’s executioners. The family members reassure them that they harbor no ill will, for they are confident of the verdict’s justice.^{xvii}

The court then arranges, at their own expense, for the body to be promptly buried, as ordered by an explicit Biblical edict, “When a man committed a capital crime and is executed... you shall bury him that day” (Deuteronomy 21:22).^{xviii} The Torah’s message couldn’t be clearer: Don’t abruptly leave the scene, leaving the unpleasant task of burial to the family. Take full responsibility for your action.

Initially, the body will be interred in a special cemetery designated for capital criminals; his atonement process hasn’t yet been completed, so it’s considered improper for him to be laid to rest amongst upstanding citizens. Yet even this last vestige of judgment won’t last forever. When the body has decomposed, finishing his atonement, the remains will then be transferred to his family plot.^{xix} Later generations visiting their forebearer’s gravesite will find him fully rejoined with his family and community.

The Divine Dilemma

Having learned the all-important details of the Torah’s death penalty, let’s pause to appreciate the delicate balancing act being performed between its two parts, the Written and the Oral.

I picture God pondering to Himself, some 3,330 years ago, how to legislate capital punishments in His upcoming revelation to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai. He feels it necessary for severe violations of the Law to be harshly punished by stoning, burning, decapitation, and strangling. Yet He’s well aware that every Biblical directive includes an implied ethical statement, manifesting another aspect of His revealed character, so He is wary. When read alone, this framework suggests a callous, morally repugnant deity whose deepest wish is to cultivate hordes of culturally destitute followers.

To discredit such misguided impressions, He carefully crafted the three doctrines we’ve learned about thus far, demonstrating in detail how He wishes us to carry out this terrible task, a task deeply disliked

by man and Creator alike. As directed by numerous signposts embedded in the Biblical text, the cavalier attitude shall be replaced with discretion, passion with reluctance, and callousness with love. He then incorporated these statutes into His own explanation of the Written Torah, composed specifically to enable its correct understanding.

Oh, most definitely, I'm still deeply disturbed by the brutality of it all. As I conceded from the outset, no matter how tempered with compassion, stoning is still stoning, painful to endure and uncomfortable to read about. The question begs to be asked: Why would a God so steeped in respect and compassion for every last human life, so desperate to punish in the most loving manner possible, order such harsh and violent penalties to begin with?

But I can now question in a more mature, educated way. I'm now confounded by Torah law *from within the Law itself*. As a searching student, I'm confronted with a bewildering inter-Torah paradox in which the Scriptures' apparent ethical statement seems inconsistent with their own orally transmitted explanation. Why did God bury Himself inside a deep hole in the Written Torah, only to valiantly try climbing right back out in the Oral one? Okay, we're anything but ISIS, but why, pray tell, are we stoning, burning, beheading, and strangling?

I sense tension. On the one hand, for reasons we have yet to fully explore, God feels compelled to teach these harsh disciplinary measures and sprinkle them liberally throughout the Written Torah. Yet at the same time, as demonstrated by His own capital punishment jurisprudence, He strongly abhors the practice of any such violence – just as we do. To that end, in the Oral Torah He painstakingly walked back any mistaken impressions, replacing them with the three doctrines of discretion, rescue, and love.

In fact, God Himself expressed this struggle. The Mishnah interprets a Biblical verse about the death penalty to be describing how God experiences two sorts of pain at the time of execution, the first in His head and the second in His arm.^{xx} Maimonides clarified the subtle intent of this teaching. In Mishnaic times, when a person needed to punish someone beloved to him, so beloved that he himself feels their pain, the customary way for him to express his conflicting emotions was to exclaim, “My head hurts; my arm hurts.” God too strongly dislikes to execute a sinner, destroying a beautiful human life, but to let him avoid accountability would be equally improper.^{xxi}

The Mishnah’s choosing the head and the arm in this allegorical paradigm is sublime. God’s will, represented by His head, desires only wellbeing for all of His creations, no matter what their iniquities may be. Yet the practical duty of governing His realm, symbolized by the actions of His arm, calls for criminals to be punished proportionately to their wrongs. Both of God’s conflicting interests find expression in Torah law, each causing discomfort for the other: when the “head” acquits multitudes of guilty defendants and mitigates the suffering of the few condemned ones, the “arm” feels pain; when the “arm” occasionally metes out harsh punishment, the “head” aches. For God, it’s a lose-lose situation.

It is this inter-Torah stress that we will scrutinize in the rest of this book. We have learned what the Torah’s capital punishment system looks like and tracked its underlying themes. Now we are poised to tackle the deep, gnawing enigma: How can we morally reconcile God’s unforgiving “arm” with the profound morality and compassion of His own “head”-dominated criminal justice system? ^א

ⁱ Talmud Yerushalmi *Nedarim* 9:4.

ⁱⁱ Talmud 52a (twice), 55a, 55b (twice).

ⁱⁱⁱ Talmud 35a, Maimonides 11:4

^{iv} Mishnah 43b

^v Maimonides *PH”M* to Mishnah 43a

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- vi Talmud 43a
 - vii Talmud 63a; Maimonides *M" T* 13:4
 - viii Mishnah and Talmud 45a, Maimonides *M" T* 15:1
 - ix Mishnah and Talmud *ibid*
 - x Mishnah 45a, Talmud 45b, Maimonides *M" T* 15:1
 - xi Mishnah and Talmud *ibid*
 - xii Mishnah 52a, Talmud 52b
 - xiii Mishnah and Talmud 52a
 - xiv Mishnah and Talmud 52b
 - xv Mishnah 52a
 - xvi Rashi and Maimonides to Mishnah *ibid*
 - xvii Mishnah 46a.
 - xviii Mishnah 46a, Maimonides 15:8.
 - xix Mishnah *ibid*, Talmud 47a
 - xx Mishnah *ibid*
 - xxi Maimonides *PH" M* *ibid*

Tefillin of Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam

Rabbi Yehoshua Silverberg ¹

Every day, there is a mitzvah to wear *tefillin*. The *tefillin* contain four *parshiyos*, וְהָיָה כִּי יִבְיָאֵךְ, קֹדֶשׁ לִי, וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמַע and שָׁמַע, as well as the first two *parshiyos* of *Kerias Shema*.

There is a *machlokes Rishonim* in regard to the order in which they should be placed into the *batim* based on the Gemara in *Menachos* (34b). The Gemara says that וְהָיָה כִּי יִבְיָאֵךְ and קֹדֶשׁ לִי should be placed on the right side of the *tefillin* and שָׁמַע and וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמַע on the left. The Gemara asks that we learned in a different *Baraisa* the opposite order, that שָׁמַע and וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמַע should be placed on the right side of the *tefillin* and וְהָיָה כִּי יִבְיָאֵךְ and קֹדֶשׁ לִי on the left. The Gemara answers that one *Baraisa* is starting from the right of the wearer of the *tefillin*, and the other *Baraisa* refers to the קורא, *the reader*, that is, the person facing the wearer. The wearer's right is the reader's left. The Gemara concludes that וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמַע קורא כסדרן, *the reader will read in their order*.

Rashi explains the Gemara to mean that the person facing the *tefillin* will read the *parshiyos* in the order in which they are written in the Torah. That is: first קֹדֶשׁ לִי, then וְהָיָה כִּי יִבְיָאֵךְ, both in *Sefer Shemos*, then שָׁמַע, and finally וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמַע. This is the accepted practice.

וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמַע	שָׁמַע	וְהָיָה כִּי יִבְיָאֵךְ	קֹדֶשׁ לִי	<i>Rashi</i>
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Tosafos cite a question of *Rabbeinu Tam* on this *pshat* in the Gemara. Why does the Gemara group the *parshiyos* in groups of two? It should have designated one as the right, and the other three on the left, or one

¹ Thank you to R' Meir Meisels, *shlit"a*, of Passaic, NJ, for his help with the preparation of this article.

on the left, and the others on the right. The unusual grouping of two and two is difficult.

Rabbeinu Tam therefore explains the Gemara differently. Indeed, קדש and והיה כי יביאך are on the right, but for the other two *parshiyos*, the Gemara is telling us that if you *start* from the left side you will find שמע and והיה אם שמע. The order according to *Rabbeinu Tam* is, starting from the right שמע והיה אם שמע, והיה כי יביאך, קדש, and finally שמע on the far left. This is known as באמצע, because the two *parshiyos* beginning with the word והיה are next to each other in the middle.

שמע	והיה אם שמע	והיה כי יביאך	קדש	<i>Rabbeinu Tam</i>
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There is a *she'eilah* in *Shu"t Divrei Chaim* about whether one should check his *tefillin shel rosh* in a mirror to ensure that it is properly placed. The *Divrei Chaim* responded that this is an “uneducated” (מעשה בורות) thing to do. The Gemara says that there is room on one’s head for more than one pair of *tefillin*. The *Divrei Chaim* explains that this is even along the width of one’s head; therefore, there is no need for a mirror, as one can easily place them correctly without one. However, many *Gedolim* disagree with the *Divrei Chaim* and maintain that there is only room for two pairs of *tefillin* if they are placed one behind the other, and not side-by-side.

[Anecdotally, the Brisker Rav was once visiting the town of Krenitz when a Sanzer chassid saw him checking his *tefillin* with a mirror. The chassid told him that the *Divrei Chaim* (the Sanzer Rebbe) holds that one who checks with a mirror is a *shotah*! The Rav responded that in fact the *Divrei Chaim* did not say he is a *shotah*, just that it is “uneducated” (מעשה בורות). But better I should be called a *shotah* my whole life and not be a *rasha* for even one minute before Hashem. (See *Eduyos* 5:6.)]

The *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* also disagreed with the *Divrei Chaim*, based on how he answers *Tosafos*'s question. *Tosafos* took issue with the Gemara's grouping of the *parshiyos* into sets of two; it should have said this *parshah* is on the right side of the *tefillin*, and the other *parshiyos* are on the left. The *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* explains that the two on the right and two on the left do not refer to the right or left side of the *tefillin*, but to the right and left sides of the head. Besides for the requirement that the *tefillin* should be בין עיניך, *between your eyes*, there is a further requirement for קדש and ויהיה כי יביאך to be on the right side of the head, and שמע and ויהיה אם שמע to be found on the left. This is why the Gemara grouped them in sets. From this we see that there is not possible to place two sets of *tefillin* side-by-side on the head, because then we would not have two *parshiyos* on either side.

May we all be *zocheh* to recall the miracles of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, and see even greater miracles מצרים אראנו נפלאות. שׁ. כימי צאתך מארץ

Semichas Geulah LaTefillah

Rabbi Yitzchak Friedman ¹

The *Rama* (OC 46:9) brings the *Sefer Chasidim* and quotes him, as follows: טוב לומר בשחרית שמע ישראל וגו' ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד, כי לפעמים שוהין אם ק"ש לקרות שלא בזמנה ויוצא בזה.

The *Mishnah Berurah* (46:30-31) explains that if one says *Baruch Shem*, they are indicating their intent to fulfill the mitzvah of *Shema* with the current recitation. If it is not recited, the *pasuk* of *Shema* would be viewed as a mere statement of fact, not a *maaseh hamitzvah*! It would be a statement that praises the Jew who declares the *achdus* Hashem, formulated in the *pasuk Shema Yisrael*, twice daily! The attempt to fulfill *Kerias Shema* early in the *tefillah* stems from the concern that the congregation will say the *Shema* after the required time has passed. Hence, to ensure that the *Shema* is said in a timely fashion, the *Rama* councils us to say it after the *Akeidah* (in the *berachah* of *Kedushas Hashem*).

The *Gra* and *Magen Avraham* (loc cit.) take umbrage with this decision, for two reasons:

- 1) It is better to say the *Kerias Shema*, with which one fulfills the mitzvah, within the framework of the *berachos* of *Shema*.
- 2) One does not fulfill the requirement of *semichas geulah la'tefillah*, without attaching the *Kerias Shema* with which one fulfills the mitzvah.

The *Bach* (§46 החסיד יהודה ורבינו) asks a third question on the *Rama*'s formulation. The *Rama* had said that it is advisable to fulfill

¹ A Shiur in Memory of *Avi Mori*, Dr. Erwin Friedman, ר' צבי ב"ר יוסף משה, ז"ל.

Kerias Shema in *Birchas Kiddush Hashem*. He cites *R' Yehudah HaChasid* as his source. The original source only recommends saying *Shema* early, on those infrequent occasions when *Krovitz* is said. Similarly, the *Magen Avraham* (46:15) suggests refraining from fulfilling *Shema* earlier in the *tefillah*, unless the congregation will be delayed and not get to the *Shema* before *zman Kerias Shema* has ended. *Rama* suggests reciting *Shema* earlier in the *tefillah* as a *lechatchila*.

A small digression: We know that *Krovitz* (an acronym for קול רינה וישועה באהלי צדיקים) is said on Purim during the repetition of the *Shacharis Shemoneh Esrei*. An annual incidence of a late *Shacharis* should not have prompted the *Rama* to change the part of *davening* in which to recite the *Shema*. Secondly, saying *Krovitz* in the repetition of the *Shemoneh Esrei* would not delay the recitation of the *Shema*! However, the Purim *Krovitz* is but one example of *Krovitz*, which is what we currently call “*piyutim*.” *Piyutim* include “*yotzros*,” which are said in the *berachah* of *yotzer ohr*. The recitation of *yotzros* would delay the recitation of the *Shema*. That would happen more than once annually, as the old *minhag* was to say those *yotzros* on holidays as well as on the *Shabbasos* of the Four Parshiyos.²

We return to our topic. The *Beur Halachah* (§58 ד"ה לפעמים) wonders what the *Gra* would hold is the proper course of action when the minyan will not reach *Kerias Shema* before the proper time. Would the *Gra* agree with the *Magen Avraham* (ibid.) to recite *Kerias Shema* during the *Birchas Kiddush Hashem*, or would he recommend *davening beyechidus*? Then he questions the *Gra*'s issues with the suggestion of the *Rama*. Why does it bother the *Gra* that the *Kerias*

² See *Rama* (OC 111:1) that there is no obligation to be *someich geulah la'tefillah* on Shabbos. This might be a *limud zechus* for those who say *Shema* at home in its proper time and then go to a late minyan that says *Shema* after its time.

Shema proximate to the *Shemoneh Esrei*³ not be the one of Biblical import? My understanding of the question is that the *Shema* said with the *berachos* could be Rabbinical in nature if the *Shemoneh Esrei* starts right after *Go'al Yisrael*. That would be reflected in the *Rama* (OC 58:4) and quoted in the *Beur Halachah*. The *Rama* states that if the *Shema* was said properly before *davening* it should be repeated with the *berachos* later in the morning. Seemingly, there is no problem to say the *Shema* and its *berachos*, after the *zman Kerias Shema*?

Therefore, the *Beur Halachah* concludes that the *Gra*'s issue was saying the whole *pasuk* of *Shema* in *Birchas Kiddush Hashem*. His issue was that he might intend to fulfill the mitzvah then even if the *tzibbur* will recite *Shema* before regulation time has elapsed. If he says the *Shema* without its *berachos* earlier in the day, that would not be ideal. If he says *Shema* with its *berachos* now, without reciting the *Shemoneh Esrei*, then he would not be *someich geulah la'tefillah*. The *Beur Halachah* suggests that the *Gra*'s objective is to prevent the *mispallel* from saying the whole verse and saying only the words "*Shema Yisrael*." Preferably, one should follow the *nusach* of the *Re'ah*⁴ and say, אומרם בכל יום, ה' אלוֹקינו, ה' אחד, ⁵

However, the *Beur Halachah*'s understanding of the *Gra* needs *beur*! Is there any precedent to say the *Birchas Kerias Shema* before *pesukei d'zimra*? Why did the *Gra* assume that a person would want to be

³ See *Beur Halachah* §46 ד"ה ויוצא בזה, that one should have in mind to fulfill the mitzvah of *kerias Shema* during the *Birchas Kiddush Hashem* even if the minyan will miss the earlier *zman* of the *Magen Avraham*. However, it is hard to imagine that Rav Moshe would recommend that *chumra* except to יחידי סגולה (see *Igros Moshe*: OC I, §24). He holds that the halachah follows the *psak* of the *Gra* and *Baal HaTanya*, and the later *Shema* time is the accepted one.

⁴ See OC 46, ד"ה ורבינו יהודה החסיד.

⁵ *Siddur Siach Yitzchak*, which uses *nusach HaGra*, omits the *Birchas Kiddush Hashem* totally. In the notes to *Kerias Shema*, he instructs the person *davening* to intend to fulfill the mitzvah of *Shema* at that time.

yotzei at that point in the *tefillah*, when he could say the *Shema* with the *berachos*? Of course, he would not want to be *yotzei* with the earlier *Shema* if saying *Shema* in the context of *Birchas Shema* is the ideal? The fact that the three *Parshiyos* are not regularly said in the *Birchas Kedushas Hashem* would indicate that *Birchas Kedushas Hashem* was not the vehicle intended to contain the *Shema* of obligation. It serves as a testament that Jews declare the *achdus* Hashem, formulated in the *pasuk Shema Yisrael*, twice daily!

The *Beur Halachah* takes for granted that *semichas geulah la'tefillah* could be accomplished without a *Kerias Shema* that fulfills his Biblical mitzvah. He learned from the *Rama* (66:10), who writes: מי שהוא אנוס ודחוק, ואין לו פנאי להתפלל מיד אחרי ק"ש, יקרא ק"ש עד אמת, וימתין לומר שאר ברכות עד שיתפלל, שאז יאמר אמת ויציב ויתפלל, כד' שיסמוך גאולה לתפילה. The *Rama* states that subsequently, one can continue from *Emes V'yatziv* through *Shemoneh Esrei* and still fulfill *semichas geulah la'tefillah*, even if *Shema* was not said! The *Magen Avraham* (66:14) advises to start the *Birchas Kerias Shema* from the beginning, go through *Shema* till *Shemoneh Esrei*, and then be *someich geulah la'tefillah*. The *Gra* (ibid.) concurs with the *Magen Avraham*. The *Beur Halachah* cites this concurrence as further proof that even according to the *Gra*, you do not need a *bona fide* Biblical *Kerias Shema* to be *someich geulah la'tefillah*.

However, one can dismiss this proof by saying that the *Gra* holds that ideally, the *semichas geulah la'tefillah* (SGL) should be accomplished with a *Kerias Shema* of obligation (as in *siman* 46). However, if *Shema* was said before *davening* (as in *siman* 66), then SGL should be accomplished with *Shema* and its *berachos* anyway. This is in opposition to the *Rama*'s suggestion that you do not even need *Kerias Shema*, just the *Go'al Yisrael*.⁶ However, according to the *Gra*, one

⁶ See *Be'er Heiteiv*, (66:17) who understands that at least the *Rama*, in *siman* 46, would agree to the *Magen Avraham*. Perhaps he understood the *Rama* here considering that earlier *Rama*. The reading of the *Rama* would require

should not *lechatchila* try to fulfill *Kerias Shema*, without a *Shema* of obligation.

It was reported⁷ that HaRav Moshe Feinstein would *daven Shacharis* alone rather than with a congregation that said *Shema* after the proper time. According to all other *shitos* (even the *Magen Avraham*), he should have said the *Shema* alone and still *davened* in a minyan. The only *shitah* he could have been following was the *Gra*, according to the way I understood it. Ideally, one should say the *Shema* of obligation with the *berachos* and then say the *Shemoneh Esrei*.

To summarize, the *Rama* and the *Magen Avraham/Gra* are disagreeing about two points:

- 1) Does *semichas geulah la'tefillah* need to be done, ideally, with a *Kerias Shema* of Biblical obligation? The *Magen Avraham* and the *Gra* say that it does, while the *Rama* seems to say that it does not.
- 2) Does SGL need to be done with *Shema* at all? The *Gra* and *Magen Avraham* say that it does, and the *Rama* says that it does not.

What are these disputes based upon? To discover the source of their dispute, let us go back to the sources of SGL.

The *Yerushalmi* (*Berachos* 1:1) learns the *din* from the proximity of two *pesukim*. Chapter 19 of *Tehillim* ends, ה' צורי וגואלי, and Chapter 20 begins יִעֲנֶה ה' בְּיוֹם צָרָה. The prayer in Chapter 20, is proximate to the appellation of Hashem as Redeemer at the end of Chapter 19. We learn from this proximity that our recognition of Hashem as our Redeemer is critical before approaching Him in prayer. The *Yerushalmi*

the repetition of the first two *berachos* and the *Shema* later in the morning. That is not a correct reading of this *Rama*; hence he probably felt this *Rama* was an outlier.

⁷ Rabbi Moshe Kaufman, Headlines, May1, 2020

analogizes this to a King's confidante who knocks on the royal door but disappears before the King arrives to meet him. Seeing that there is no one there, the King goes back to his business.

Rashi (*Berachos* 4b ד"ה סומך) says that the confidante's knock on the door is represented by the petitioner's praise of the Exodus from Egypt. Those praises endear the petitioner to G-d and then it is the perfect time to ask that our needs be met.

The *Rabbeinu Yonah* (*Berachos* 2b ד"ה איזהו) cites two reasons for SGL.

- 1) Through our Exodus from Egypt, we become servants of G-d. As we mention the Exodus, we feel the servitude. The feeling of servitude is what propels us to *tefillah* which is called "service of the heart."
- 2) Mentioning the Exodus fills us with the faith that Hashem is interested in taking care of our needs. This knowledge propels us to approach Hashem and ask Him to meet our needs.

The *Steipler* (*Kehillas Yaakov*, *Berachos* §2) wonders about the nature of SGL: Is it that the Rabbis wanted the prayer to be preceded by mention of the Exodus's miracles or is the mention of the Exodus buttressed by immediately praying? He brings two strong proofs⁸ that the purpose of SGL is to serve as a precursor to our *davening*. If so, SGL really has nothing to do with *Kerias Shema* per se.⁹ However, the *Mishnah Berurah* mentioned earlier that it is better to mention the Exodus during the time that is also appropriate for *Kerias Shema*. What is the source for this *Mishnah Berurah* and the insistence by the

⁸ From the fact that *Tosafos* allows *Yiru eineinu* to be said even though it has no mention of the Exodus. If SGL serves to better the mention of the Exodus why would be allowed to interject other ideas prior to *Shemoneh Esrei*? See the piece inside for another proof from *Rabbeinu Yonah*.

⁹ See *Reshimas Shiurim*, *Berachos*, where R' Soloveitchik says just that; *baruch shekivanti*.

Magen Avraham and the *Gra*, that SGL be accomplished with a *Kerias Shema* of obligation?

The *Rabbeinu Yonah* brings the opinion of *Rav Hai Gaon* that if the shul *davens* an early Maariv, one should only say the *Shema* and proceed to *Shemoneh Esrei*. The *Shema* serves the function of praying מתוך דברי תורה.¹⁰ The *berachos* should not be said at all. However, the accomplishment here would be praying with a minyan. After nightfall, the individual repeats the *Shema* with the *berachos*. *Rav Hai Gaon* concedes that he does not fulfill the law of SGL, but it is proper to sacrifice SGL in favor of *davening* with a minyan. He proves this from *Rav*, who *davened* before *zman Kerias Shema* on Erev Shabbos, and was not in fulfillment of SGL, even though the *Shema* was followed by a *Shemoneh Esrei*. *Rav Hai* clearly felt that you need a *Kerias Shema* of obligation to fulfill SGL.

However, what is the nature of the connection between the *Shema* and *Shemoneh Esrei* that creates SGL? The *Rambam paskens* (*Hil. Kerias Shema* 1:2) that all three Parshiyos of *Shema* are Biblically mandated. He explains that the *Shema* and the first *parshah* constitute accepting Hashem as Master. The second *parshah* is the acceptance of G-d as the obligator of mitzvos. The *parshah* of *Vayomer* also references our acceptance of mitzvos, as the mitzvah of *tzitzis* is as weighty as all the other mitzvos. According to *Rambam*, *Kerias Shema* serves the function of bolstering our acceptance of Hashem and His mitzvos. The faith required to accept Hashem and His mitzvos was forged at the Exodus. It makes sense that *Shema* is followed by the whole *berachah* of *Go'al Yisrael*. The *Go'al Yisrael berachah* discusses Hashem's trustworthiness in the Exodus. Perhaps, with this acceptance of Hashem's sovereignty we are ready to approach Hashem in prayer, requests in hand. This would concur with *Rabbeinu Yonah's* second

¹⁰ See *Rashi, Berachos* 2a, ד"ה עד סוף אמורה ראשונה, in the name of the *Yerushalmi*.

understanding of SGL. This would necessitate a *Shema* of obligation, since the faith demonstrated in the recitation of the *Shema* also is the permission to supplicate Hashem in *Shemoneh Esrei*. An act of asking permission should be done with an ideal vehicle, the obligatory *Shema*.

Obviously, this is in the ideal. However, if you were unable to say *Shema* in its proper time, that should not prevent you from trying to supplicate Hashem with a *Kerias Shema* which is not currently fulfilling an obligation.

The *Rama* seems to feel that *bedieved* one can rely on the standard understanding of SGL. SGL really only involves the *berachah* of *Go'al Yisrael* being proximate to the *Shemoneh Esrei*. *Kerias Shema* precedes *Shemoneh Esrei* incidentally. It is understandable that he may *lichatchila* say *Shema* in the *Birchas Kiddush Hashem*. It is only a *hiddur* to have the *tefillah* preceded by *Shema* and that can be accomplished even if you already fulfilled your *Shema* obligation. The *Rama* (66:10) has no problem if one was taken away from his prayers after *Shema*: he may continue from *Emes V'yatziv* through *Go'al Yisrael* and start *Shemoneh Esrei*. He has fulfilled SGL, as understood by the *Yerushalmi* since he started his supplication after remembering Hashem as the Redeemer.

If this is true, those that follow the *Rama* would be allowed to *daven* after the requisite time for *Kerias Shema* and fulfill the *Shema* obligation in its proper time. Those that follow the *Magen Avraham* and *Gra* should not say the *Shema* earlier. They should plan to *daven* in a minyan that reaches the *Shema* in its proper time. If that is not possible, the *Magen Avraham* recommends saying *Kerias Shema* in the proper time without the *berachos*, and *daven* the *Shema*, its *berachos* and *Shemoneh Esrei* with the shul's minyan. The *Gra* would recommend *davening Shacharis* alone, making sure that the *Shema*

and its *berachos* are recited in the time appropriate to fulfill the mitzvah of *Kerias Shema*.

My father z"l, was saved from the furnace of the Holocaust and went on as a *maamin*. No easy task. It was that *emunah* that he planted in his family, his work, and his beautiful *tefillos* at the *amud*. He was my first Gemara Rebbi. We learned the fourth *perek* of *Berachos*, where *semichas geulah la'tefillah* is discussed. שֶׁ! יְהִי זְכוּר בְּרוּךְ

The Latest Time for Minchah

Rabbi Abba Zvi Naiman

Most of us are used the rulings of the *Mishnah Berurah* (233:14) about the requirement to complete the Minchah *Shemoneh Esrei* before sunset. And consequently, he rules that it is better to daven alone at the correct time than to daven after sunset with a *minyan*. But we see some *chassidische shtieblach* that daven Minchah after sunset. We will explore if there is any justification for this practice. As is often the case, this *sugya* is very large, so we will be giving only an overview of the relevant issues.

We start with the Mishnah (*Berachos* 26a), where the Tanna Kamma holds that Minchah can be recited until *erev*, while R' Yehudah rules that it must be completed by *plag* (one and a quarter hours before *erev*). We all know that the Gemara concludes that we can follow either view, as long as we are consistent about davening Minchah before our chosen endpoint and Maariv after it every day.¹ For argument's sake, we will assume that we are following the view of the Tanna Kamma to daven Minchah up until *erev*.

But what does *erev* mean?

Rashi explains that it means חשיכה, *dark*. This apparently means until *tzeis hakochavim*, when the stars come out; and this is how the *Shaagas Aryeh* (§17) understands *Rashi*.² Other Rishonim (*Orchos*

¹ There is a disagreement among the Poskim whether it is *preferred* to daven Minchah before the *plag*, but all hold that it is certainly permitted to daven until *erev*. So we will focus on defining when *erev* is.

² The *Maharik* (§173) proves this from the *pasuk* “*B’erev*” *tochlu matzos*. The mitzvah of eating matzah is certainly at night, yet the *pasuk* calls it *b’erev*.

Chaim, Manhig §81, among others) write clearly that the time for Minchah does not end until *tzeis*.

However, *Talmidei Rabbeinu Yonah* (to the Mishnah) write forcefully that the Tanna Kamma holds that the Minchah must be completed by *shekiah*. This is so because the Gemara in *Pesachim* (56a) proves that the blood of the afternoon *tamid* must be sprinkled on the *Mizbei'ach* before *shekiah*. Since our Minchah prayer corresponds to the afternoon *tamid*, just as blood of the *tamid* sprinkled after *shekiah* is invalid, so the time for Minchah is only until *shekiah*.³ Other Rishonim (*R' Hai Gaon*, cited by *Mordechai* §90; *Rambam, Hil. Tefillah* 3:4, among others) agree that Minchah must be recited before *shekiah*.

What do the other Rishonim do with this apparently compelling reasoning? There are several possibilities, as follows:

1] The *Magen Avraham* (§232 *hakdamah*) cites the *Yerushalmi* that our Minchah *tefillah* corresponds to the burning of the *ketores*, not to the offering of the *tamid*. Based on this *Maharam Schick* (*Orach Chaim* §91 ד"ה אֶמְנָם) suggests that since the *ketores* is burned after the *zerikah* of the *tamid*, it may be done even during *bein hashemashos*. Therefore, Minchah may also be recited then.⁴

2] The *Taz* (132:2 and 234:2) holds that reading the *Parshah* of the *tamid* corresponds to slaughtering the *tamid* and its *zerikah*. Our

³ I was thinking that since the halachah is that the *korban* is valid if only one *zerikah* was made and the others were not, perhaps it should come out that if someone just began his *Shemoneh Esrei* before *shekiah* it would be valid just like if only one *zerikah* was made before *shekiah*. However, the truth is that the entire *Shemoneh Esrei* corresponds to a valid *zerikah*, whatever makes a *zerikah* valid. Then, the entire *tefillah* would have to be completed before *shekiah*, as the *Mishnah Berurah* rules.

⁴ See our *Kuntres HaKetores* (ch. 17) how this relates to the custom of reciting *Parshas HaKetores* at Minchah.

Shemoneh Esrei, though, corresponds to burning the *tamid* on the *Mizbei'ach*, which was done after burning the *ketores*. Since this can certainly be done after *shekiah*, *Shemoneh Esrei* too should be able to be recited at that time. See also *Aruch HaShulchan* (233:9) for this reasoning.

3] The *Shaagas Aryeh* (ibid.) argues at great length that even if our Minchah *tefillah* corresponds to the *zerikah* of the *tamid*, there are Rishonim who hold that the *zerikah* is valid through *bein hashemashos* until *tzeis*.⁵ There would therefore be no problem in reciting Minchah during this time.

Now that we have that there are possible reasons why our Minchah *tefillah* might not have to be completed by sunset, we have to examine how the Poskim rule on this matter.

We first need to review the famous dispute about the definition of *shekiah*. In the view of the *Geonim* (*Rav Sherira Gaon* and *Rav Hai Gaon*, cited in *Teshuvos Maharam Alashkar* §96, and *Beur HaGra, Orach Chaim* 261:11; see also *Beur Halachah* there ד"ה מתחילת (השקיעה), *shekiah* is the event commonly referred to as sunset, when the ball of the sun disappears from the sky. According to the *Rabbeinu Tam* (cited in *Tosafos, Shabbos* 35a ד"ה תרי and *Pesachim* 94a ד"ה תרי), this refers to a much later time known as the “second *shekiah*,” which is when light disappears from the dome of the sky and is visible only as a reddish glow in the west. The *Rabbeinu Tam* holds that *tzeis hakochavim* is 72 minutes after what we call “sunset,” and *bein hashemashos* is approximately 13½ minutes before this *tzeis*.

This dispute affects when *bein hashemashos*, the time when we are uncertain whether it is day or night, occurs. According to the *Rabbeinu*

⁵ See *Sefer HaZemanim* (by R' Yitzhak Isak Chaver, §5), which disputes the *Shaagas Aryeh* point by point in defense of the *Gra z"l*, who holds that Minchah must be completed before sunset (see below).

Tam, *bein hashemashos* begins at the second *shekiah*, approximately 58½ minutes after what we call sunset, and it lasts for approximately 13½ minutes, when *tzeis ha-kochavim* takes place. The view of the *Geonim* and *Beur HaGra* is that *bein hashemashos* begins immediately after sunset and lasts approximately 13 ½ minutes. The *Gra* writes further that it can last longer depending on location and time of year.


Back to the time for reciting Minchah, the *Tur* (*Orach Chaim* §233) writes that according to the *Tanna Kamma* it may be recited “until night.” The *Shulchan Aruch* (233:1) too rules that the Minchah may be recited “until night.” This seems to concur with the *Rishonim* who said that it may be recited even after *shekiah* until nightfall. However, the *Mishnah Berurah* (233:8) explains that the term “until night” actually means until *bein hashemashos*, since at that time it is already possibly night. Minchah may therefore not be recited during *bein hashemashos*.

The *Rama* (there), though, seems to say clearly that one fulfills his obligation if he recites Minchah “until night, which is *tzeis hakochavim*.”⁶ But here too the *Mishnah Berurah* (233:14) writes that it cannot mean until the actual time when the stars come out because that would be after *bein hashemashos* according to all opinions. Rather, it means up until about a quarter hour before *tzeis*, which according to the *Rama* (like the *Rabbeinu Tam*) is before *bein hashemashos*.

Even with his explanations of the *Shulchan Aruch* and the *Rama*, the *Mishnah Berurah* agrees that they are permitting a person to recite Minchah after sunset, as long as *bein hashemashos* has not begun. For they are following the view of the *Rabbeinu Tam* that *bein*

⁶ We are not getting involved here whether it preferable to recite Minchah at the time of *minchah gedolah* or *minchah ketanah*.

hashemashos occurs after the second *shekiah*, which is long after what we call sunset. They hold that Minchah must be recited before this later *bein hashemashos*, since at that time it might already be night. It is to this ruling that the *Mishnah Berurah* says that many Poskim disagree and hold that Minchah must be recited before sunset,⁷ and that it is better to daven alone before sunset than with a minyan after sunset. And furthermore, the *tefillah* must be *completed* before sunset.⁸

Now that we see that the *Mishnah Berurah* is disputing the *Shulchan Aruch* and *Rama*, we can understand that some groups of *chassidim* might follow earlier Poskim who accept these rulings of the *Shulchan Aruch* and the *Rama*.⁹ But again, someone without such a *mesorah*, would certainly be required to follow the prevailing view of the *Mishnah Berurah*. 

⁷ The *Aruch HaShulchan* (233:9) also concludes that one should take care not to recite Minchah after sunset.

⁸ This is also view of the *Gra z"l*, as stated in *Imrei Noam to Berachos* 29b. The *Chazon Ish* (*Dinim VeHanhagos MiMaran HaChazon Ish*, 9:5), too, held that if one cannot complete his *Shemoneh Esrei* before *shekiah*, he should not begin it. However, regarding the similar issue for the Shacharis *Shemoneh Esrei*, the *Aruch HaShulchan* (110:5) proves that at as long as one may start his *tefillah* at the correct time even though it will stretch beyond the time. For *Tosafos* (*Berachos* 7a) ask how Bilam could have been *mekallel* the Bnei Yisrael in the short window when it would be effective (see the Gemara there). And he answers that as long as Bilam started at the correct moment, he would be able to complete his *kelalah*. (However, it should be noted that this is the second explanation of *Tosafos*; their first explanation, that Bilam could have expressed a one-word *kelalah*, would presumably disagree with this reasoning.)

⁹ There are some opinions that go even beyond the rulings of the *Shulchan Aruch* and *Rama*, reciting Minchah through *bein hashemashos* right up until *tzeis*. The *Munkatcher Rebbe* (*Nimukei Orach Chaim* §131) gives a *Kabbalistic* reason to delay Minchah as long as possible. This is based on the fact that Minchah is recited in order to counteract the harmful influences that arise as the day ends. It is therefore preferable to attack these forces as late as possible to defeat that many more of them.

Political Insights from an Earlier *Geulah*

Jeffrey Silverberg

Pesach is the holiday of *geulas Mitzrayim*, the first of the *shalosh regalim*, and, according to the *Nesivos Shalom* and others, the source of our *emunah* throughout the year. Although Pesach marks the quintessential *geulah*, it is not the only holiday on the Jewish calendar that commemorates a redemption of the Jewish people. One month before Pesach, we celebrate Purim, a time when the Jewish nation was redeemed from an existential threat. *Geulah* is the common thread that halachically ties Purim to Pesach. Chazal ruled that in a leap year the great excitement and joy that is intrinsic to Purim be delayed until the second Adar in order to create *semichas geulah l'geulah* – to connect one redemption to another. This article will offer insights into the holiday of Purim, the harbinger of the holiday of Pesach.

Part I

Many years ago, I was introduced by Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, *shlit"a*, to a new treatment of Purim in a book entitled *The Dawn, Political Teachings of the Book of Esther* by Yoram Hazony.¹ At the time, Mr. Hazony was the president of the Shalem Center in Jerusalem, an institute for Jewish thought focused on politics and the nationhood of the Jewish people. At the outset, Hazony asks why *Megillas Esther* was included in Tanach when it contains no halachic material apart from matters related to Purim. (In contrast, the Book of Maccabees with its Chanukah-related content was not included in Tanach). Starkly, nowhere in the entire Megillah does the name of Hashem appear. Mr. Hazony posits that the *Megillas Esther* is included in Tanach as a primer for how the Jewish people is to conduct

¹ Note: A slightly revised version has since been published under the title *God and Politics in Esther*.

itself in the area of politics in the years, nay centuries, of *galus* that began in Persia and have continued until our times.

He begins by noting the course of action taken by Mordechai. We find him throughout the story in *Shushan HaBirah*, not plain *Shushan*. Hazony suggests that Mordechai was politically active. He did not stay just in the *City* of Shushan, living a domesticated life in the suburbs. Although he was *Mordechai Bilshan*, a religious leader of his generation and a member of the *Anshei Kenesses HaGedolah*, he was a denizen of *Shushan "HaBirah,"* the equivalent of the Capitol Hill of the greatest kingdom in the world. He was connected to powerful people, to the political movers and shakers of his generation. Parenthetically, we find at the end of the Megillah that Mordechai's choice to become politically involved was not universally accepted by his compatriots. Despite the salvation that Hashem chose to bring as a result of Mordechai's governmental manipulations, we are told that he was popular only *l'rov echav*, with the majority of the Jewish people, but not all. Chazal comment that a substantial minority believed he would have been better off had he spent his time in the *Beis Hamidrash*.

Nevertheless, by choosing this path, Mordechai was in the equivalent of the proverbial cloakroom, in a position to be in the know, aware of all the goings-on, the rumors, and, most importantly, of plots. Mordechai learned of the plot by Bigsan and Seresh to overthrow and murder the king. Hazony asks us to step back and examine the three choices Mordechai had at that point. He could inform the royal staff and enable them to quash the coup. Or he could secretly throw his support behind the plotters. After all, if he did and they were successful, he would be in a position of power. Or he could take the safest route and do nothing. Why was it his business? Why should he put himself in danger by choosing sides?

Mordechai did not hesitate. As a loyal subject of Achashverosh, he considered it his duty to reveal the plot and save the king no matter the personal danger that entailed. This illustrates that Mordechai considered Achashverosh a legitimate king, worthy of being protected.

That is, until the beginning of the very next chapter. The king, perhaps having become a bit paranoid after this plot was discovered, downsized his cabinet. Gone were six of the seven advisers who we were introduced to previously. The evil Haman, formerly referred to as Memuchan, was now alone in the Situation Room with the king. The king gave Haman his ring as a symbol of this authority, granting him the power to issue decrees bearing the royal seal. Drunk with his new exclusive power, the vain Haman demanded that the citizens of Shushan show obeisance to him by bowing whenever he walked by. The people of Shushan obeyed, except for Mordechai who did not move a muscle.

But why not? Was not Achashverosh considered a legitimate ruler by Mordechai, as evidenced by his warning about the plot of Bigsan and Seresh? Was he not the same Achashverosh who had now given Haman control so that his commands were the equivalent of those of Achashverosh himself? What happened? Why did Mordechai now choose not to obey the king, demonstrating that he no longer considered him legitimate?

The Gemara and Midrashim explain that Haman either made himself an *avodah zarah* or was wearing an *avodah zarah*; Mordechai refused to bow to him for that reason. But Hazony adds a political insight that rings true, particularly in these ultra-partisan times. At the beginning, there were seven advisers in the Royal Court. It is reasonable to assume that among them were advisers who leaned to a more conservative viewpoint, others who were more liberal, and still others who were moderate or centrist. There were seven different opinions.

Having a wide spectrum of advice, a ruler (or president) is likely to make measured decisions that reflect to a large extent a combination of these views and are not extreme.

These decisions are not always wise. Faced with the recalcitrant queen, Vashti, the king rashly decided to do away with her (and soon regretted that he did). But when the counsel he receives is limited to just one perspective, the king is liable to make far worse decisions. Listening to Haman alone, Achashverosh was easily persuaded, helped along by an outrageous bribe, to authorize the extermination of an entire nation, the genocide of the Jewish people in all of the one-hundred-twenty-seven countries of the civilized world. Mordechai could not abide a government that only considered one viewpoint. He refused to follow the king's order to bow to Haman, despite the likelihood of the danger that indeed followed.

Surely, Mordechai would not have bowed to Haman in violation of the letter or spirit of the Torah laws against idolatry, as *Chazal* tell us. However, it is possible that he would have avoided overt, pointed refusal and would have acted with greater diplomacy if he had granted more legitimacy to Achashverosh and his government.

So it goes throughout *The Dawn* with countless other insights from this political viewpoint, all supported by a close and careful reading of the text.

Part II

HaRav Yochanan Zweig, *shlit"á*, of Miami, is another interesting observer of the events of Purim, and he asks a fundamental question about the Purim story. We know that Haman had the king's ring, symbolizing all the power a politician could ever imagine. He gave the king an unimaginable bribe, demonstrating that he was wealthier than Midas. And he had a very large family and a large estate manor on the hill. Seemingly, he had an ideal, close to perfect life.

So why was he so obsessed with Mordechai? Of what importance to him was this one person, one individual out of all the citizens of Shushan, who adamantly refused to acknowledge him? Why did Haman not just leave him alone and go on with his idyllic life?

R' Zweig gives a magnificent explanation, full of insight into the human condition.

The average human being can easily fall prey to the malady of "entitlement." A person can become convinced that he is someone special, entitled to anything that comes his way. He works during the week, and on Friday he is entitled to his paycheck. He considers himself intelligent and charming, and therefore he is entitled to compliments and companionship. He accumulates assets, and therefore he is entitled to purchase and acquire nice objects. But when he receives that paycheck or receives that honor or looks at that fancy painting in his den or drives his Cadillac, does it make him happy? Only, suggests R' Zweig, if he does not feel that he is entitled to these things. He only appreciates what he has if he does not consider the objects or accolades to be automatically coming to him.

This, R' Zweig offers, is why people gamble. Statistically it is far more prudent to keep the money in your pocket rather than to risk its loss. The odds are never good. But when someone hits a jackpot – or even wins two dollars on a scratch-off ticket – it can make his day. He now has something he is not entitled to, something he did not work for, something he did not earn, something he did not have coming. *That* is what makes him happy.

Haman thought he had all of the power and riches and family coming to him. He thought he deserved it. Therefore, none of these advantages made him happy. But he was beholden to Mordechai as the Midrash tells us, from an agreement dating back to their army days, the details of which were written on Mordechai's shoe. As the wealthy and

powerful holder of the king's ring, he felt entitled to the subservience of all the people *except* for Mordechai. Therefore, their bowing to him did not make him happy. He needed the bowing of Mordechai to be fulfilled.


I learned a personal lesson as a result of hearing this *shiur*. I attended the University of Cincinnati and became observant while there. I still follow their basketball team, the Bearcats. Some years ago, when I first heard this class from R' Zweig, they had the best college basketball team in the country. They lost only one game during the regular season and were top-ranked in all the polls. Two players who went on to be drafted among the first six players in the NBA draft later that spring were on their roster. I enjoyed the season immensely and looked forward eagerly to the NCAA championship tournament in March when the Bearcats would be favored and almost certainly make a long and entertaining run, perhaps ending in a national championship.

A few days before the tournament began, their best player, the finest player in the entire country that season, broke his leg. The Bearcats lost their second game that first weekend. No run, no championship.

I was very disappointed. After all, they really were the best team in the country! I had had such great expectations. I felt that I was entitled to the successful results that I had anticipated.

As *hashgachah* had it, I heard R' Zweig's tape at that time and it was a tremendous *mussar* for me. I thought I was entitled? One should never feel entitled! Entitlement prevents pleasure! If something is just coming to you, it does not make you happy when it arrives. After all, it was coming to you. Only when one truly considers *everything* to be a gift and truly achieves being *samei'ach b'chelko*, can he achieve happiness. Reaching that level *guarantees* happiness, as everything is a bonus, not a paycheck one expects.

I introduced myself to R' Zweig at a wedding in Miami some years later and told him this story. He got a tremendous *geshmak* from it. I have tried to integrate this lesson and make it a part of who I am.

As we enter the month of Nisan and prepare for the holiday of Pesach, with its overtones of *geulah* that echo through the centuries, we should remain cognizant of the lessons of *geulah* that reverberate from the month of Adar. As we incorporate these lessons into our lives, recognizing the blessings we receive every day and rejecting notions of entitlement, may we merit to hear the sounds of the final and complete *geulah*. 

Jars with a History

Rabbi Avraham Bukspan ¹

וַיֵּשְׁבֶּה יַעֲקֹב, *And Yaakov remained* (*Bereishis* 32:25).

Rashi (based on *Chullin* 91a) explains that Yaakov remained because he had forgotten *pachim ketanim*, small jars, and he returned for them.

When discussing the miracle of Chanukah, the Gemara (*Shabbos* 21b) says, *Badku ve'lo matzu ella pach echad shel shemen*, they searched and found only one jar (*pach*) of oil.

Many years ago, I made a small observation that has panned out to be something rather golden. The *Shelah HaKadosh* writes, “There is certainly great symbolism and meaning behind the *pachim ketanim* of Yaakov, and with it we can understand the secret of the *pach shemen* of Chanukah.” I then suggested that the one untouched *pach* that was found – which served as the basis for the miracle of Chanukah – was from one of the *pachim ketanim* that Yaakov Avinu went back to retrieve. The basis for this would seem to be from the shared use, in both the story of Chanukah and the story of Yaakov, of the uncommon word: *pach*, *pachim*.

If we take it as a given that these *pachim ketanim*, the small jars, were the ones that contained oil, let's speculate further on where that oil came from. The dove returned to Noach with an olive leaf in its mouth: *Ve'hinei alei zayis taraf be'fihah*, behold, it had plucked an olive leaf in its mouth (*Bereishis* 8:11). The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 33:6) cites one opinion that this leaf came from Gan Eden. We are suggesting that this leaf – whose provenance is from Gan Eden – was

¹ Rabbi Bukspan is an old friend of mine from Yeshivah. His *sefer*, *Classics and Beyond*, is available at the distributor, Feldheim.com, and *sefarim* stores.

subsequently planted by Noach. From the olives that grew, he extracted oil, which he then used in his offerings to Hashem. After a time, Noach passed this oil on to his son Shem, who was also known as Malkitzedek, the Kohen *Le'Keil Elyon*. It is worth noting that the *Shelah HaKadosh* (*Torah Ohr, Parashas Vayeishev-Mikeitz-Vayigash*) attributes the seal of the Kohen Gadol on the small *pach* to none other than Malkitzedek, the Kohen Le'Keil Elyon, who was a Kohen Gadol.


Malkitzedek, in turn, gave the oil to Avraham Avinu, who gave it to his son and spiritual heir, Yitzchak. And finally, it was given to Yaakov where it was kept in those *pachim ketanim*, which Yaakov went back to retrieve.

In discussing why Yaakov returned for the *pachim ketanim*, *Rashi* says that the money of *tzaddikim* is dearer to them than their bodies, because they do not stretch out their hands at robbery. However, we are suggesting a different reason why Yaakov was willing to risk his life for those jars. They were not mere kitchen utensils; they had Gan Eden oil in them. This was *meyuchas'dika* oil! It was if he were saying, "This oil belonged to my forebears; of course, I'm going to risk my life for this."

And it is with this oil that the miracle of Chanukah occurred.

As I stated above, all this was speculation on my part. When I shared my ideas with HaRav Nachum Lansky, *shlit"a*, of Ner Yisroel, he took me over to a shelf of *sefarim*, removed and opened a *Tikunei Zohar* (*tikkun* 13), and showed me where the *Zohar* states that the first stirrings of the miracle of Chanukah began at the very moment that the dove had the olive leaf in its mouth.

While not proof positive that the oil is actually from the olive leaf, the dots are there for a connection to be made. And there is a meaningful

lesson here! The lesson is that just like by the olive branch, which was found when there was total desolation and destruction, still a renewal was taking place, so to by Chanukah, even though the Greeks had destroyed all that was holy, there was renewal taking place. 

Is *Lomdus* a Fifth Way to Understand Torah?

Yaakov Dixler

The Torah is very different than secular subjects. Every part of Torah has four layers of understanding, commonly called פרד"ס, *Pardess*, standing for *p'shat*, *remez*, *derash*, and *sod*. It would appear that the Torah has an additional level of meaning called *lomdus*, which is commonly used in yeshivah. Where does this fit into *Pardess*? To understand its place, let's talk a little about wrestling as described in *parshas Vayishlach*.

Pshat

First an example of *p'shat*: the simple, or obvious meaning. The *parshah* relates how Yaakov moved his camp across the river in preparation for Eisav's arrival.

וַיִּנָּחֵם יַעֲקֹב לִבּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֶק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלֹת הַשָּׁחַר. וַיֵּרָא כִּי לֹא יָכֹל לוֹ וַיִּגַּע בְּכַף יָרְכּוֹ וַתִּמָּקַע כַּף יֵרֶד יַעֲקֹב בְּהֻאָבְקוֹ עִמּוֹ.

And Yaakov remained alone, and a man wrestled with him until the morning light. When he saw that he could not defeat him, he touched the hollow of his hip, and the hollow of Yaakov's hip became dislocated when he wrestled with him.” (Bereishis 32:25-26)

In the simple understanding, based on *Targum Onkelos*, Yaakov was confronted by an angel, appearing first as a man, who wrestled with Yaakov until they kicked up dust from the ground. While the “man” was unable to beat Yaakov, he was still able to dislocate a sinew of his leg near the hip. Yaakov then did not allow him to leave until he gave a blessing in which he changed Yaakov's name to Yisroel. When the sun rose, Hashem healed Yaakov from the injury. The Torah concludes that this is the reason Jews do not eat the *gid hanasheh*, sciatic nerve, which is near that injured leg area, until today.

Remez

Now going deeper, we present *remez*: the meaning hinted at. The *Baal Haturim* specializes in this area. He says the words אִישׁ עִמּוֹ, which simply means “man [wrestled] with him,” has the same *gematria* (numeric value) as עֵשָׂו אֶדוֹם, *Eisav Edom*: they are both 427. He also explains that the word וַיִּצְבֹּק has the same *gematria* as Hashem’s כִּסֵּא הַכְבוֹד, *throne of glory*. And the words וַיִּצְבֹּק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ end with letters spelling קֶשֶׁו, meaning “his straw,” which hints at how the offspring of Eisav are compared to straw that will be burned by the flame of Yaakov. And finally, the words כַּף יָרֵכוֹ; *on the hollow of his thigh* has the *gematria* of מִן הַכְּהוּנָה, meaning that Eisav wanted to prevent Yaakov’s descendants from being Kohanim by maiming them.

All of these *remazim*, based on just a few words of the Torah, are hinting that this was not just a wrestling match but also a profound event deeply connected to the spiritual realm and concerning the very future of the Jewish people. By overcoming this angel of Eisav, Yaakov secured the elevated spiritual future for his descendants through the Beis HaMikdash service and coming of Mashiach.

Derash

The area of *derash*, which is halachic meaning derived using formal techniques, is best illustrated through the halachos that Chazal extract from the words of the Torah.

The Gemara in *Chullin* (96b) learns from the use of the word “eat” in the phrase לֹא יֹאכְלוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת גִּיד הַנֶּזֶשֶׁה, *The children of Israel will not eat the gid hanasheh*, that a person who eats even one *kezayis* (olive-size piece) of the *gid hanasheh* has committed an *aveirah* even if this portion is not the entire *gid hanasheh*. In addition, if a person eats the entire *gid hanasheh*, even if that piece is smaller than a *kezayis*, he has also transgressed.

The Gemara in *Chullin* (101a) says the words אֵת גִּיד הַנֶּזֶק, *the gid hanashe*, imply that only this part of the animal is forbidden to eat, while the rest is permitted. This excludes animal species that are completely forbidden to eat, for example pigs and camels.

Sod

When people hear the word “*sod*,” which literally means secret, they think of the secrets of kabbalistic symbolism. But there is a lot of *sod* that is not a secret and has in fact become part of our mainstream understanding of Torah.

The *malach* gave a *berachah* saying, “Your name will no longer be Yaakov, instead Yisrael.” Why is it a blessing to change his name? *Rabbeinu Bachaya* on the *pasuk* explains that this *malach*, who represented Eisav, was admitting that Yaakov’s apparently unjust past action was actually proper. As told in *Parshas Toldos*, when Eisav returned home weary from a day in the field, Yaakov purchased the *bechorah* (birthright) from him for the cost of a meal. It appears to be a case of Yaakov taking advantage of Eisav who was very hungry and tired and probably not thinking clearly at the time. This appears to transgress the prohibition of *onaah* (overcharging), in which case the sale should be nullified. The name Yaakov, which means “crooked”, would appear to be fitting. The *malach* now proclaims his name will be Yisrael, which means to be straight, showing he was correct all along. *Rabbeinu Bachaya* ends by writing, “Therefore the attribute of *emes*, truth, was given to him saying that he was true in all his matters and actions, as the *pasuk* states ‘You give truth to Yaakov.’ ” It is a well-known concept that Truth is embodied by Yaakov, Kindness by Avraham, and Strength by Yizchak. In fact, this is commonly expressed during the greeting of the *Ushpizin* each day of Succos. Despite common use, this is actually *sod*, as each attribute not only represents the *Avos*, but also describes how Hashem deals with the world.

We have shown the four types of Torah represented by *Pardess*. Where does *lomdus* fit in? Is it a fifth type of Torah or part of the other four? Let's look at an example and then decide.

Lomdus

The *Rambam* (*Hil. Maacholos Asuros* 7:8) *paskens* that the mitzvah of *gid hanasheh* does not apply to non-kosher species and, because it is like wood without taste, *gid hanasheh* is not forbidden as meat. Thus, one who ate *gid hanasheh* of a non-kosher animal has not sinned! In the next halachah, the *Rambam* says that if a person eats *gid hanasheh* from a kosher species of animal that died on its own, he has committed two sins: one of eating *neveilah* (meat lacking kosher slaughter), and the other of eating *gid hanasheh*. Many ask: since the *Rambam* holds that *gid hanasheh* is like wood with no taste, how can he say that this person has sinned by eating *neveilah* when he is not eating food?

The *Shaar Hamelech*, quoted by the *Minchas Chinuch* (mitzvah 281) resolves this question with *lomdus*. When the Torah uses the language “do not eat” to forbid the *gid hanasheh*, it means that the Torah now considers it food and punishes one for eating it. Once it is considered food, one who eats the *gid hanasheh* from a non-slaughtered animal is also committing the sin of *neveilah*: since for *gid hanasheh* it is called eating food, for *neveilah* it is also considered eating food. In contrast, since the Torah says that *gid hanasheh* does not apply to non-kosher species at all, it is not considered “food,” and he has done the sin of eating non-kosher meat.

This *lomdus* explained the logic behind the halachos of the mitzvah.

We find a similar approach when giving reasons for mitzvos. According to the *Minchas Chinuch* (mitzvah 3), we learn from *gid hanasheh* that when faced with trouble from Eisav in our exile, we

should remember that Hashem will save us just as he saved and healed Yaakov when he was attacked by Eisav's *malach*.

We see that providing the reason for a mitzvah is not an additional approach to Torah; the reason just explains what is there. In a similar way, the use of *lomdus* is not adding a new approach to Torah; rather, it is explaining the reasoning of the Torah law. If the *lomdus* is explaining *derash*, then it would be in the category of *derash*; if explaining *pshat*, then it would be in the category of *pshat*.

Conclusion

The Gemara in *Pesachim* (5a) says, according to the *Maharsha's* explanation, that in the merit of keeping Pesach, by both not working and not eating chametz, we will destroy Eisav at the time of Mashiach. Hashem redeemed us from Mitzrayim, He saved Yaakov from the *malach* of Eisav, and He will redeem us from our current *galus* of Eisav, *bimheira biyomeinu*. א

Our Power of Speech

Benyamin Y. Kaplan

In the beginning of *Parshas Mattos*, Hashem says to Moshe “When a man vows a vow to Hashem or swears an oath to prohibit a prohibition on his soul, he should not break his word; he should do according to everything that comes out of his mouth.” This is an example of Hashem warning us about the power of speech. Speech is unique to humans, as animals do not possess this ability. Furthermore, Jewish people have an extra force associated with their speech. This force makes our speech into “creative action.” Just Like Hashem, Who creates through His speech (as we see in *Bereishis*, where the ten statements of creation actualized into creation itself), we too can create a new reality through our speech.

In *Parshas Mattos* we learn that this new reality is the binding act that we create through a vow or a promise. If not followed through, our *neshamah* is negatively affected. This matter is so serious that Hashem warns us about it to prevent us from doing this terrible *aveirah*. We say *bli neder* before undertaking or agreeing to perform a specific action. If not, after the fact we have to annul our vow in a Beis Din if we know circumstances will prevent us from performing what we have promised. Here, making a vow has created a reality, which if not fulfilled harms the person himself as well as the world, thus creating a necessity of using Beis Din to annul one’s vows and promises.

Another example of our creative speech is in *Parshas Lech Lecha*, where Hashem rebukes Sarah for laughing when she hears about her and Avraham having a child. There is a famous question: Why does Hashem rebuke Sarah only, and not Avraham, since we learn that Avraham also laughed? After Hashem informs Avraham that he and Sarah will be blessed with a child, it says: Avraham fell upon his face

and laughed and said in his heart, “Will a child be born to one who is one hundred years old? And will Sarah who is ninety years old give birth?”

They both laughed! Why did Hashem only rebuke Sarah?! A closer look at how they laughed and what they *said*, or did not say, will reveal the difference. In the case of Avraham, it says he spoke בלבו, which means “in his heart”, or as we would say in English: “he thought to himself.” Avraham did not speak out loud, whereas Sarah laughed at herself, and then she spoke – out loud. Her speaking out loud, even though only to herself, still created a reality: she now cannot have a child. Thus, Hashem responds: Is anything beyond Me? Now Hashem has to break that newly created reality and then allow for Sarah to become pregnant.

We see a similar idea in the *Haftarah* in *Parshas Vayeira*, where Elisha blesses a barren woman to give birth to a child. We read that this woman gives birth, but something happens to this boy when he is a toddler and he tragically dies. The woman leaves the child on his bed and rushes to see the *navi* Elisha. Her husband asks her if everything is okay (not knowing what happened to his son), and she replies that all is well. When she comes to Elisha and meets his servant who asks (more directly) about her son, she again says “all is well”. Even when she gets to Elisha, she never explicitly says that her son died. As we know, this very famous story has a happy ending, Elisha revives the child. The reason why he was able to do that is that no one (especially the mother) ever said out loud that the child died, thus never making it a reality.

Our Sages, especially the *Chafetz Chaim*, teach us about yet another power of our speech – *lashon hara*. When speaking *lashon hara*, one affects his עולם הזה as well as שמים. In *Parshas Behaaloscha*, Miriam spoke negatively about *Moshe Rabbeinu* and was punished for this with *tzaraas*. The *Meraglim* spoke *lashon hara* about Eretz Yisroel

and the whole generation that heard this speech was punished by having to die in the Wilderness. There are numerous examples in Tanach and Midrashim of how *lashon hara* has led to many tragedies afflicting the Jewish people.

David HaMelech warns us in *Tehillim*:

מִי־הָאִישׁ הַקָּפֵץ חַיִּים, אֲהֵב יָמִים לְרֹאוֹת טוֹב, נָצַר לְשׁוֹנֵה מַרְעַ וּשְׁפָתָיו מִדְּבַר מְרָמָה,
סוֹר מַרְעַ וְעֹשֶׂה־טוֹב, בִּקְשׁ שְׁלוֹם וְרִדְפָהּ.

*"Who is the man who desires life, who loves days to see goodness?
Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceitfully."*

What is so special about speech that makes it different from all other actions that we humans can do? The Torah tells us that Hashem, before creating man, said, "Let us create man in our image and form." We are created as a *tzelem Elokim*, in the image of Hashem.

Tzel in Hebrew means "shadow." We are sort of like a shadow of Hashem. Just like our shadow does not truly represent our "form or image," unlike a mirror (it is more of a mimic of us), so too we imitate Hashem (His actions and attributes). Right after this, the Torah continues to say that Hashem "blew into Man's nostrils a soul of life, therefore making it into a living creature," which *Onkelos* translates as "a speaking spirit." This "speaking spirit" is what is meant by being created in a *tzelem Elokim*, and it is *this* "speaking spirit" that separates us from other creatures. We have to understand that speaking is a creative force and thus should be used very cautiously.

Yet another power of our speech is the power of *tefillah*. This is the power that we inherit from our *Avos*. R' Chaim Volozhiner in *Nefesh HaChaim* writes that when the *Anshei Knesses HaGadolah* compiled the *tefillah*, they infused it with *kedushah* and *kavanos*. Unfortunately, while we are aware of the power the sincere *tefillah* has, we sometimes treat it lightly. Like rushing to get to a destination by a certain time,

but stopping at every rest stop or just cruising at 30 miles per hour, one is just not using his full potential.

May we use our power of speech to beseech Hashem with our *tefillos* full of heartfelt *kavanah* to see this pandemic come to an end, and our current *galus* come to an end with the coming of Mashiach and our immediate *geulah!* אֱלֹהֵינוּ

A *Katan* Reading the Megillah

Yaakov Moshe Neuberger

The Mishnah in *Megillah* (19b) says:

הכל כשרין לקרות את המגילה חוץ מחרש שוטה וקטן. רבי יהודה מכשיר בקטן.

From here we see a *machlokes* whether a *katan* can read the Megillah in order to be *motzi* a *gadol* his *chiyuv*.

Tosafos and many *Rishonim* find this *machlokes* difficult to understand. If the *katan* we are discussing in the Mishnah is a *katan shelo higia lechinuch*, why does R' Yehudah hold that he can be *motzi* a *gadol*? And if we are discussing a *katan shehigia lechinuch*, who is *mechuyav* in *mitzvos derabanan*, why wouldn't the *Tanna Kamma* agree to R' Yehudah that he can be *motzi* a *gadol* in the *mitzvah derabanan* of reading the Megillah?

Let us focus on the *teirutz* of the *Ramban* brought in the *Ran*. The *Ramban* explains that we are indeed discussing a *katan shehigia lechinuch*. However, the *Tanna Kamma* holds that the mitzvah of *chinuch* does not create a mitzvah for the *katan* himself to read. Rather, there is a mitzvah for the father to have his son hear the Megillah. Therefore, the *katan* cannot be *motzi* a *gadol* in his *chiyuv*. The *Ramban* explains further that generally R' Yehudah agrees to their principle concerning the mitzvah of *chinuch*. However, the mitzvah of Megillah is different because there is a *sevara* of הנס באותו הנס, meaning that since the *ketanim* were also saved by the *neis* we read about in the Megillah, they too can be *motzi* a *gadol* in his mitzvah of reading the Megillah.

The *Ran* asks the obvious question on the *pshat* of the *Ramban*: The *sevara* of הנס באותו הנס אף הן היו באותו הנס can only work to obligate women, who are really *shayach* to be *chayav* in *all* mitzvos, if not for the *petur* of מצוות

עשה שהזמן גרמא. Then, the *sevara* of **הנך היו באותו הנס** would remove the *petur* and obligate them in mitzvos like lighting the Menorah on Chanukah, Megillah, and the Four Cups on Pesach. However, *ketanim*, who are completely *patur* from all mitzvos, cannot be made obligated to be able to be *motzi a gadol* even with the *sevara* of **הנך היו באותו הנס**. The *Ran blibes shver* on the *Ramban* because of this question and therefore offers a different *pshat*.

Perhaps we can explain the *Ramban* based on a *yesod* of R' Akiva Eiger. We find in *Pesachim* (108b) that *Tosafos* explain that the *sevara* of **הנך היו באותו הנס** to obligate women is only for mitzvos *derabanan* like the Four Cups of wine, but not by mitzvos *de'oraisa* like sitting in a Succah. *Frekt* R' Akiva Eiger, according to the *shitah* of the *Turei Even* that we must treat the mitzvah of Megillah like a *mitzvah d'oraisa* because it was said with *ruach hakodesh* from the *Anshei Kenesses HaGedolah*, as the Gemara proves in *Megillah* (7b), how then can the Gemara earlier (4a) use the *sevara* of **הנך היו באותו הנס** to obligate women in reading the Megillah?

Lechora, we can ask this question on the *Tos. Rid* as well. For we find (19b) that he too says clearly that Megillah is to be treated as a *d'oraisa*.

To answer the *Tosafos* in *Pesachim* according to *Turei Even*, R' Akiva Eiger is *mechadeish* that the words **הנך היו באותו הנס** said regarding the Megillah mean something different than elsewhere in *Shas*. Usually, **הנך היו באותו הנס** is the *sevara* used to obligate women in mitzvos *derabanan* that are *zman gerama*. However, by Megillah, these words are not meant as a *sevara*, but rather as a *hochachah*, a proof to *Chazal* that the *Anshei Kenesses HaGedolah*, who were *mesakein* the mitzvah of Megillah with *ruach hakodesh*, also intended to include women in their original *takanah*. This explains how women can be obligated in Megillah, even if we treat it as a mitzvah *d'oraisa*, like the *Tos. Rid* and *Turei Even* hold.

We can now explain the *pshat* of the *Ramban* in *shitas* R' Yehudah. The *Ramban* does not mean that R' Yehudah uses *הנך* *אף* *הן* *היו* *באותו* *הנס* as a *sevara* to obligate a *katan shehigia lechinuch* from scratch. Rather, there is a *hochachah* to us that the *Anshei Kenesses HaGedolah* meant to include *ketanim* in the original *takanah* because they too were in the *gezeirah* to be killed, and *memeila* in the *neis hatzalah* as well.

This *pshat* seems to be very *meduyak* from the words of *Tosafos* on 24a. For when explaining the view of R' Yehudah as it relates to a *katan* and *Megillah*, they do not use the *lashon* of *הנך* *אף* *הן* *היו* *באותו* *הנס* at all, but rather the *lashon* of the *pasuk* in *Megillas Esther* *שטף ונשים היו* *בספק ד"להרוג ולהשמיד"*. If we say that R' Yehudah's point was to prove the intention of the *Anshei Kenesses HaGedolah* regarding *ketanim* like R' Akiva Eiger says by women, this choice of words is very appropriate.

Perhaps we can bring a proof to this understanding of the *Ramban*. The *Acharonim* ask a *sevara* from the view of R' Yehudah in *Megillah* to the Four Cups in *Pesachim*. Why by *Megillah* does the *Ramban* hold in R' Yehudah that the *sevara* of *הנך* *אף* *הן* *היו* *באותו* *הנס* will equate completely the obligation of *ketanim* to that of *gedolim*, whereas regarding the Four Cups R' Yehudah says in *Pesachim* (108b) that, even though there is a *sevara* of *הנך* *אף* *הן* *היו* *באותו* *הנס*, there is no *inyan* to have *ketanim* drink the Four Cups of wine? However, according to our *pshat* that indeed R' Yehudah does *not* use the regular *sevara* of *הנך* *אף* *הן* *היו* *באותו* *הנס* by *Megillah*, there is no contradiction at all. א

Every Individual Counts

Baruch Benzion (BB) Schuchman

Thank you all for Zooming my Bar Mitzvah.

My family and I spent this past summer traveling and touring Eretz Yisrael. Our trip really began as soon as we boarded the El Al plane with my siblings and started hearing and seeing the Hebrew language throughout the flight. Spending over a month in Israel made me realize how special it was that I had the *zechus* to be walking the same streets that *Avraham Avinu* did, but *Moshe Rabbeinu* was never *zocheh* to.

It also gave me an appreciation of how Israel was built by individuals – each person making a contribution to the State of Israel.

My *Parshah*, *Parshas Bamidbar*, discusses the census of *Bnei Yisrael* conducted by *Moshe Rabbeinu* after the construction of the Mishkan. I thought it would be nice to discuss the subject of taking a census in Israel today. Also, since 2020 marks the 23rd census of the American people, I was curious what the halachah is for Jewish people regarding participation in the U.S. Census.

In *Parshas Ki Sisa* (30:12), Moshe is commanded to count the *Bnei Yisrael* by collecting a $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel from each person “so there be no plague among them when you count them.” The *pasuk* says:

כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְקֹדֵיהֶם וְנָתַנּוּ אִישׁ כֶּפֶר נַפְשׁוֹ לֵה' בַּפֶּקֶד אֹתָם וְלֹא יִהְיֶה בָהֶם נֶגֶף בַּפֶּקֶד אֹתָם.

Reading this *pasuk* now, that there be no plague among them – who would ever have thought of the Covid-19 plague impacting the entire world!

There are three reasons given why Hashem wanted a census of the Jewish people:

Number 1. Out of love for His people: Hashem counted us at important moments in our history. The completion of the משכן in my פרשה was one of these occasions. *Rashi* says: מִתּוֹךְ חֲבֵתוֹן לִפְנֵי מוֹנֶה אוֹתָם כָּל שָׁעָה.

Number 2. To ensure that the Jews had sufficient numbers to merit the Shechinah's presence among them. To quote *Rashi*: כְּשֶׁבֶא לְהִשְׁרוֹת שְׂכִינָתוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם מְנַאֵם.

Number 3. To determine how many soldiers the Jews would have in their upcoming battles to conquer Canaan.

Apparently, the idea of not counting the Jewish people was something so elementary that the Gemara in *Berachos* (62b) says that Hashem told David, "Behold I will make you stumble over a matter which even school children know." Namely, that which is written – "When you take the sum of the *Bnei Yisrael* according to their number they should give, every man, a ransom for his soul unto Hashem that there be no plague among them." The Gemara declares that even school children were aware of the *issur* mentioned in *Ki Sisa*.

The Gemara cites entirely different sources in establishing a prohibition against a census of the Jews. R' Yitzchak declares that it is forbidden to count Jews even for *dvar mitzvah* and derives the *issur* from *I Shmuel*.

Prior to going into battle to defend his nation against *Nachash HaAmoni*, an encounter that clearly constitutes a *milchemes mitzvah*, *Shaul HaMelech* found it necessary to have an accurate counting of the Jewish people. The *Navi* tells us that he counted them בבֶּזֶק, *bevezek*.

The two meanings of *bevezek* are:

Number 1. He counted them *in* the city of *Vezeke*.

Number 2. *Vezeke* means “shards.” He counted them indirectly *through* the use of *shards*.

The *Ramban* explains that rather than counting the people directly, the method of counting was to collect a half-shekel from each person and then count the coins. He bases this upon “*bevezek*,” meaning the counting of shards. This is also based upon the earlier counting in *Shemos*, where each person gave a half-shekel as opposed to being physically counted. The *Navi Hoshea* says, וְהָיָה מִסְפֵּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּחֹל, והיה מספר בני ישראל כחול, *The number of the Bnei Yisrael shall be like the sand of the sea which should neither be measured or counted.*

Does that mean, we will be so great and so large that we will not be able to be counted, *OR* is the *Navi* telling us that the Jewish people should not be counted?

Shaul, as I said before, counted his army by requiring each soldier to submit one shard of pottery, which he then counted.

David HaMelech, on the other hand, forgot this *issur* and counted the Jews directly. This resulted in a plague that killed 70,000 Jews. Some say that David did not forget the *issur*, and he too counted the Jews indirectly. The problem was that he conducted the census to satisfy his own curiosity and not for a specific purpose. Counting Jews without a purpose is forbidden, even if done indirectly.

Moving ahead to the modern-day State of Israel, a question was raised, could a census be undertaken to determine how many people live in the Jewish State?

R' Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg, in his *Seridei Eish*, *paskens* that it is permitted to do so since such a census is conducted by means of a questionnaire which is filled out by individual households. The names are inserted in blank spaces provided on the forms and then organized in order to reach a final count. R' Weinberg *paskens* that the counting of names is an *indirect means of counting in that we are not counting heads*. He further holds that a census in Israel does have a purpose and that economic planning and national security are enough to constitute a purpose. Accordingly, R' Weinberg concludes that based upon the *Ramban*, that it is permitted.

R' Shlomo Goren, who was the former Chief Rabbi of Israel, and the Chaplain who liberated the *Kosel* and *Har HaBayis*, feels that the census could only be used to eliminate danger to life. He expresses reservation with regard to a census being used for economic planning. He does admit that *Moshe Rabbeinu's* census *did not* involve a threat to life. However, R' Goren believes that *Moshe Rabbeinu's* census was allowed because the half-shekel collected served as a ransom. He does agree that the *Ramban*, who formulated the concept of a purpose, never at all mentioned the idea of a life-threatening situation.

Nowadays, when we count individuals for a minyan, we do not do a head count, but rather we say the ten-word *pasuk*, *Hoshia es amecha...* Another method is saying "Not one, not two..." or in Yiddish, "*nish einstz, nish tsvei...*"

Regarding the U.S. Census, in which the government wants to determine how many people live in each household, how many are married, their ages, etc., since Jewish people are not being counted as a separate group, there is no problem in participating.

As I mentioned to you before, my family took a trip to Israel and spent the summer in Yerushalayim. I write this on the day following Yom Yerushalayim, the day Yerushalayim was reunified and the *Kosel* was

liberated by the Israeli army 53 years ago, on the fifth day of the Six Day War. They broke through the walls of the Old City and entered through the Lions' Gate with fierce house-to-house fighting.

And they liberated Yerushalayim and ultimately the *Kosel* and *Har HaBayis*. Israel is forever changed because of that! As R' Goren said when they liberated *Har HaBayis*. הר הבית בידינו! הר הבית בידינו!, *Har HaBayis is in our hands! Har HaBayis is in our hands!*

Without the miracles Hashem produced through the Israeli army, we would have been annihilated! Decimated! The Jews were *mamash* about to send their children to Europe so the Jews wouldn't die out. They were in the middle of digging 11,000 graves! By hand! They legitimately thought it was a suicide mission! And then Israel won! And it didn't take six years, not even six months, but they won in *six days!* And during those six days Israel tripled its size! I am amazed how I, Little BB got to walk the streets of Yerushalayim! Three trips! I am the recipient of Hashem's *neis* that happened more than 50 years ago. Things that my great-grandparents and *Gedolim* and *Tzadikim* couldn't do. And *Moshe Rabbeinu* didn't do; and I did! If Israel had lost the war, it would have been kicked off the map, because of the insufficient number of people.

In conclusion, the message of a census is: *every individual counts!* Every individual was created בצלם אלוקים. The way we treat individuals like our fellow man is the ultimate reflection of how we treat *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. When I look at Hashem as The Best of The Best, I will treat individuals importantly. The importance of a census is to teach us the value of every human being. How we treat every person and how nicely we treat our fellow man may become the ultimate test of how we make a *Kiddush Hashem* in our lives. א

HaRav Kulefsky ז"ל: After Twenty Years

Rabbi Abba Zvi Naiman

With the twentieth *yahrzeit* of HaRav Yaakov Moshe Kulefsky ז"ל being observed this year, ArtScroll released a book aptly called *Rav Kulefsky*, by Rabbi Yechiel Spero, which brilliantly conveys his greatness in Torah and how he inculcated thousands with his *ahavas haTorah*. I would like to add some of my own personal memories, which will perhaps add another dimension to this *Gadol BaTorah*.

Besides Rav Kulefsky's daily shiur to the second year *talmidim*, he gave a shiur on Sunday afternoon to alumni of his shiur. Since everyone assumed that he was repeating his best shiur of the week, it was called "Special K." One of the conditions to attend was that you had to have been in Rav Kulefsky's shiur for two years. His shiur was so special, almost everyone wanted to attend a second year.

After my first year in Yeshivah, I had set up an excellent *chavrusa* to come back the next year. But shortly before the *zman* began, this prospective *chavrusa* was taken by another *talmid*. There was no one left to learn with in the shiur at that time, so I found a *chavrusa* to be able to attend HaRav Weinberg's *blatt* shiur, which he had taken over after the *petirah* of HaRav Dovid Kronglass, ז"ל. Since it wasn't my fault that I couldn't attend the shiur again, I thought I would ask *reshus* to attend Special K with my second seder *chavrusa*.

We went to ask, and Rebbe seemed sympathetic, but he had to ask the others in the shiur if they minded. (Un)fortunately they did mind. But Rebbe in his typical fashion said, "They won't let you in, but I'll tell you what. I'll say the shiur to the two of you first, and then I'll say it to the others!" And so it was. My *chavrusa* and I would go in Sunday afternoon to hear the shiur, and the others would be waiting outside the door for him to finish with us before they could come in. (I might

remember that “for some reason” they finally relented and let us join the shiur.)

While I am on the subject of his connections to *talmidim* outside his regular shiur hours, I also remember fondly what was called his *varmkeit* sessions. Every once in a while, he would call in a set of *chavrusas* to his *blatt* room in the afternoon just to *shmooz*, to see how we were doing in general. And he was very interested in our growth even out of shiur. He made it his business to introduce me to the Rosh HaYeshivah ז”ל, so that I would have a connection with that *Gadol HaDor*.¹

As I have mentioned in the past, I used to be what they nowadays call a “single.” In those days, you were called an *elter bachur*. Rebbi took a great interest in setting up his *bachurim*, and I was no exception. It went so far that even on Tishah B’Av, after the long *kinnos*, he sat me in his car to *redt ah shidduch*. My premonitions about pursuing something that was suggested on such a day proved correct. But it still taught me how important Rebbi thought it was to help an *elter bachur*.

After I was *bs”d* married and learning in Kollel, I had the enviable Work-Study job of cataloging the yeshivah’s *sefarim* onto a computer system. I had a further *zechus* of being given access to a computer in the mailroom to enter the data. It was a *zechus* because Rebbi’s “office” was a desk right behind me. I cannot, of course, relate any of the private conversations he had on the phone while I was there not listening. But there is one *maaseh* that can teach us about *shalom bayis*. Apparently, one day he was supposed to go home early. When his Rebbetzin called to see where he was, he immediately realized who was calling. (They didn’t have caller ID in those days.) He told me to pick up the phone and “tell her I already left!” And he did quickly leave.

¹ You can read my *zichronos* about the Rosh HaYeshivah, the *Avodas Levi*, in our 5778 edition of *Lemaan Tesapeir*.

Another thing I learned there was on Erev Rosh Hashanah when I went down to the mailroom to finish up something at my desk. Rebbi picked up his shofar and asked if I minded if he blew. He said there was a minhag for the *baal tokei'a* to practice the *tekios* on Erev Rosh Hashanah. I, of course, *bl"n*, follow this practice to this day.

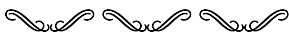
As I wrote in last year's edition of our *Kuntress*, Rav Kulefsky was very close with my father *a"h* from their Yeshiva days in Torah VeDaas. It is worth repeating the story I included there: Our father worked in the kitchen of the Yeshivah, and he would take the yeshiva's van to pick up supplies. With access to this van, he was also able to help his friend, the future Rav Kulefsky, when he was being held in Long Island during the war. Rav Kulefsky would give him a list of sefarim he needed, and our father would go through the yeshiva's library to bring them to him. Our father told us that Rav Kulefsky used to say that he got his best learning done during that period.

R' Ephraim Siff told us a sequel to this story. In his later years, Rebbi was not able to drive, but he still had his habit of smoking. His family, of course, would not buy cigarettes for him, so he had to rely on others for this chore. One time after the Wednesday night shiur at the Adas, he asked our father to pick up a carton for him. Our father obviously didn't want to do this. Rebbi then told him, "You were able to drive all the way to Long Island for me, and now you can't go to Hooks Lane?"

This closeness with my father had its negative side, as well. When I was still a *bachur*, a few of us in-towners went to visit Rebbi on Succos. After the visit, Rebbi said he wanted to speak to me. The others thought he was about to *redt* me a great *shidduch*. Instead, he was *mochi'ach* me that my father had called him to say that I wasn't saying "Good Shabbos" to him at shul after davening. I thought I was, but if there was reason for the phone call, I made sure not to miss a Shabbos from then on.

Rebbi was certainly the *Gadol BaTorah* as described in the biography. But he was also caring and warm, with a great sense of humor and beaming smile.

May he be a *meilitz yosher* for his friend's children and grandchildren.



Rebbi made an impact on many *baalei batim* in town, as well as his *talmidim* in Yeshivah. The following are the words of one of the *chashuva* members of our shul.

In the summer of '99, I attended the *chasunah* of one of my wife's classmates. After the chuppah, I saw Rav Kulefsky surrounded by a circle of *talmidei chachamim* and prominent Rabbanim, engaged in the most animated discussion.

Until then, I have never spoken to Rav Kulefsky directly; however, someone once obtained a *psak* for me from Rav Kulefsky regarding wearing tefillin on Chol HaMoed. I wanted to speak to Rav Kulefsky in person so that I could hear the *psak* from him directly, and also to ensure that he had all of necessary information about my circumstances before issuing his *psak*. However, I was not sure if it was proper to approach Rav Kulefsky then, since he was in the middle of speaking with so many prominent people.

I asked one of Rav Kulefsky's *talmidim* whether it was an appropriate time to approach Rav Kulefsky, and the *talmid* told me that it was a great opportunity. I then asked one of the Rabbanim who was speaking to Rav Kulefsky, Rav Shraga Hershkowitz, if I could speak to Rav Kulefsky; and Rav Hershkowitz brought me to Rav Kulefsky.

Rav Kulefsky turned his entire attention to me. He first quickly stated his *psak* regarding the tefillin on Chol HaMoed.

But then, he took a great interest in getting to know me. He wanted to know exactly what I was learning; who my *chavrusos* were (both past and present) and where I was davening. Any time I would mention to him the name of one of his talmidim, he would raise his hands upwards in an expression of the greatest pleasure. Overall, Rav Kulefsky seemed very happy with what I was telling him. As I was speaking to Rav Kulefsky, we were still surrounded by the most prominent people, who were all waiting to continue the conversation with him. It seemed, though, as if Rav Kulefsky's highest priority at that time was getting to know me.

This conversation made me feel very validated, and it gave me a lot of *chizuk* and *aliyah* for a long time afterwards.



I hope that these vignettes will convey Rav Kulefsky's closeness and warmth to all those who crossed his path over the years.

Yehi zichro baruch. אב

The Mashgiach: HaRav Aharon Chodosh ז"ל¹

R' Shmuel Strauss

The Mashgiach, HaRav Aharon Chodosh was born in Eretz Yisrael in 5689 (1929), immediately after the massacre at Yeshivas Chevron, where his father HaRav Meir Chodosh ז"ל was the Mashgiach. Rav Meir was a very close *talmid* of the Alter of Slabodka, R' Nossan Tzvi Finkel, ז"ל. He told me when he was a baby he went on a trip to Europe where he was *zocheh* to get a *berachah* from the Chafetz Chaim. The Mashgiach married a granddaughter of R' Leizer Yudel Finkel, ז"ל, and then became the Mashgiach of Yeshivas Mir, where he enlightened and built thousands of *talmidim* for the next sixty years until he was *niftar* this year at age 91.

I, like Rabbi Naiman, was one of the many tens of thousands of students of Yeshivas Mir who felt a special relationship with the Mashgiach.

I got to know the Mashgiach during my first Purim in yeshivah. I brought a trumpet to the yeshivah's Megillah *leining*, and made lots of (or too much), noise during Haman. The Mashgiach "gave it to me" and for the next couple months called me "the *feifer*," which in Yiddish means "the blower." Even though he was not happy with what I did, he really appreciated my personality, and from then on used to ask me to start songs, daven for the *amud*, and lead the yeshivah's *kumzitz* on our Shabbos getaways. He always appreciated the input from the *bachurim* to add to the *ruach* of the yeshivah. It is well known

¹ Editor's note: As R' Shmuel mentions in his *zichronos*, I was a recipient of the Mashgiach's warmth. On my periodic trips to Eretz Yisrael, including last winter, I would stop by the Mir to see him, and he would immediately remember me each time, although it had been over four decades since I had learned there. This is certainly one of our real casualties of the *mageifah* from which we have suffered this year.

that one of the special things about the Mir is that the yeshivah is energized by the *bachurim*. The Mashgiach would always make sure that the *bachurim* were the main “players” of the yeshivah. He wanted the *bachurim* to feel like they belonged to the yeshivah, and that the yeshivah was their home.

When I first moved to Eretz Yisrael after my *chasunah*, the Mashgiach had me daven Hallel the first day on the first day of Succos. Even though there was usually a family member of the *hanhalah* who davened, he wanted me to feel welcomed back, so he had me daven. This is just one example of many where the Mashgiach just wanted everybody in the yeshivah to be feel part of “*Mishpachas Mir*.”


The Mashgiach was concerned for everyone’s wellbeing, whether *ruchnius* or *gashmius*. He attended (or sometimes even hosted) many of my *siyumim* and even wrote a letter to me as *chizuk* for the accomplishment of writing some *chidushei Torah*.

He ran the Tomchei Torah of the yeshivah, which helps the financial stability of the *bachurim*, so they can learn without financial worries. He cared so much for every individual. By the *shloshim*, a story went around how he refused a Gadol Hador’s request of asking the Kollel to give to a very important cause. The reason given was because he was worried about the individuals who would be pressured to give money that they didn’t have, which would not be the right thing for them.

The Mashgiach was an extreme believer in Shacharis in yeshivah. He believed that the importance of the yeshivah davening is what makes the *tzurah* of the yeshivah and is the source of a bachur’s *shteiging*. It is known that Rav Yerucham also believed that the *tzurah* of yeshivas Mir is the davening. He also held that having only one yeshivah Shacharis united the yeshivah to be one, despite the growth of the yeshivah.

He was always very blunt and to the point. He didn't waste his time with "beating around the bush." If he felt it was important for someone to hear some mussar, he would tell it to them straight. However, it was clear that he believed in them that they could be better. His approach to mussar was to be *tovei'a* the *bachurim* to be better. I once asked him the difference in approach to mussar between Rav Yerucham Levovitz (Mashgiach of Mir in Europe) and the Alter of Slabodka. He told me that the Alter's focus was *gadlus haadam*, the greatness of a Ben Torah. On the other hand, Rav Yerucham's focus was on being *tovei'a* the *bochurim* and pushing them to achieve more. Part of the beauty of this approach is that by giving them mussar through pushing them to be better, he was really telling them that he believed in them that they could do better. One of the most important things that a *talmid* can get from his Rebbe is to feel that the Rebbe believes in him. I personally felt loved and admired by the Mashgiach, and have a confidence that came from the fact I knew that the Mashgiach really believed in me.

I think that the reason Mashgiach was able to believe in all his *talmidim* was due to his *ayin tovah*. He focused only on the good in everyone, so he saw only their potential. I was fortunate to have Kiddush in his house many Shabbasos after davening, and we used to sing and shmuez, (he enjoyed our jokes and hock), and he would say a short thought on the *Parshah*. I once heard him say at a Kiddush that the job of the Mashgiach is not to be a policeman, but rather to build *talmidim* by focusing on their *maalos* (good qualities). He said from Rav Yerucham, that a Mashgiach should not even *know* the *chesronos* (shortcomings) of his *talmidim*.

Yehi zichro baruch. ^א


The Third Seder: Shlomo Strauss, *a”h*¹

Rabbi Yitzchok Strauss

My father, Shlomo Manfred Strauss *a”h* would ask a young yeshiva bachur at Ner Yisroel if he ever heard of having a third seder. Of course, the bachur would retort, “There is no such thing as a third seder.” My father, with a gleam in his eye, would lean over to the bachur and tell him there certainly was.

My father served in the Korean war. He was in the infantry stationed at the front lines. He spent his time in a foxhole, a ditch dug into the ground to protect him from the enemy gunfire. There were a number of Jews in the Korean war including the father of our Rav, Rabbi Naiman. However not many were actually on the front lines. My father was the only Jew in his group.

My father did not have much in the way of Jewish books in the foxhole. So when the first night of Pesach came, he had pretty much nothing with which to perform the mitzvos of the seder. He did the best he could with what he had. The next day he received a package from New York that was given to the Jewish troops for the second Seder. It included some matzah, salami, a Haggadah, and some other items. My father told me that was one of the most memorable Seders of his life.

¹ Editor’s note: Mr. Strauss, *a”h*, was very special to me. This is what I wrote to our *kehillah* after his *petirah* during our Covid restrictions: We were deeply saddened by the *petirah* of Shlomo ben Shmuel Strauss, *a”h*, on the first day of Succos. He was forever grateful for every simchah of his grandchildren he was able to participate in, always saying “I didn’t deserve this.” When I am finally able to return to my daily seder at the Yeshivah, I will sorely miss his strolling in with his walker to his seat, where he would open up his sefer, highlighting the points he wanted to remember. He was a truly popular address for the *bochurim* and *yungerleit* to hear his thoughts and see his latest works of art.

The next morning the commander of my father's group came over to my father and wanted to give him a three-day pass, saying that this would give him time to go back from the front lines and attend his services for the holiday with the other Jewish soldiers. My father knew the commander meant the Seder. He was in a quandary. It was too late; the first and second Seder had passed. The commander saw his hesitation and reassured my father that things were quiet, and nothing was going to happen. With that my father took the pass figuring anything is better than sitting in the front lines.

It took my father five days to get back to the front lines. The entire infrastructure had been in disarray. The enemy had staged a major attack and successfully overran the front lines. My father was finally able to get back to his unit. He was a little embarrassed that he was not there for his comrades when they needed him. Half his unit had not survived. He was surprised when he heard one of his fellow soldiers exclaim that they were happy that my father had not been there. This soldier said, "You never would have made it."

My father told this story hundreds of times. He wanted to let people know that he knew Hashem loved him. It was the third seder that saved his life, and he recognized it was Hashem's intervention which saved his life.

My father went through Kristallnacht, the Kindertransport, and ultimately to England at the end of the war. His childhood was taken from him in a real way. He retired in Baltimore in his mid-sixties, after having lived in Borough Park, Connecticut, and Los Angeles, Baltimore for him was a new beginning. He took advantage of the wonderful community and the many learning initiatives. He spent many years learning in Yesodei HaTorah under Rabbi Goode.

During the last eighteen years of his life, my father would come to Ner Israel and learn in the "Otzer." He would always stay until noon and

make his way to the lunch room to sit with his grandchildren who attended the Mechina. Then at 1:00 PM, when the yeshivah would eat lunch, my father would tell over his life stories to the bochurim, listen to those who wanted to talk, give fatherly advice, or just give a smile.

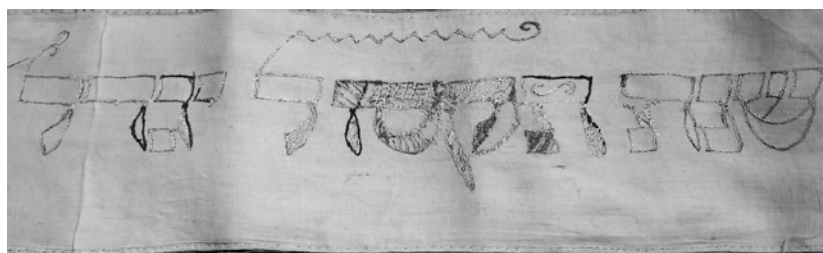
And then there was his mosaic hobby. He was especially proud of the picture he did of the four Roshei Yeshivah. He made photos of the picture to give out to any bachur who wanted it. My children have spotted the same photograph from the yeshivah maintenance truck all the way to Cincinnati and Yerushalayim, and it is hanging near the entrance of our shul.²



² Editor's note: You can't see it in this black and white reproduction, but Mr. Strauss was very happy when he discovered that the *sefarim* he had created behind the image of Rav Moshe ז"ל were the same colors as the *Igros Moshe*.

Although my father lost his childhood, Hashem was kind enough to him to give him a second chance. He loved Baltimore, he loved the yeshivah, and he loved the bochurim. And they loved him as well. I know he will be a *meilitz yosher* for the Baltimore community and for all of Klal Yisroel.

Yehi zichro baruch. אב



The two-hundred year old *vimple* of my father's great-grandfather,
Shmuel bar Shlomo, *a"h*

A 5780 Journey: In Memory of Mr. Jacob Schuchman, a”h ¹ Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Schuchman

Part I – From Sorrow to Joy

The year 5780 was an inflection point for the world, on an even greater scale than 5761 (the year of 9/11). In the previous year, 5779, we already witnessed many aberrations from expected historic norms, that, in retrospect, served as an ominous prelude toward 5780. For instance, after enjoying relative stability in the American *galus* for many decades, Jews were targeted in a string of violent anti-Semitic attacks. The first was on Shabbos *Parshas VaYeira*, 18 Cheshvan 5779 (October 27, ‘18), when eleven people were killed and six injured in a shooting at the Tree of Life in Pittsburgh. The sense of security at shuls across the country was undermined; many shuls that did not have automatic code locks for entry obtained them.

Things heated up in the springtime when, on the fifth of Nissan (April 11, ‘19), Israeli elections failed to create a government, leading to a cycle of not one or two, but three inconclusive elections. Finally, a full year later, in Nissan 5780, an unstable “unity” government was formed based on a thin veneer of fighting the spread of coronavirus. That

¹ Editor’s note: This three-part *maamar* was composed by my good friend and *chavrusa*, R’ Moshe, in memory of his father, *Yaakov Guttman ben Yehoshua, a”h*. I used to see Mr. Schuchman every day for years when he was working in the Mechina High School of Ner Israel. I was always amazed how he always had a smile, even in this trying position. He was very helpful to us when our boys were in the Mechina, and he often reminded me how he remembered by grandparents at the Agudas Achim shul. Although this is larger than our *kuntress* regulation size, its three parts can be read independently. And this special person deserves the extra *kavod* of his son’s Torah thoughts.

flimsy pretense of unity has long collapsed, and Israel is headed to its fourth election in two years, scheduled for 10 Nissan 5781 (March 23, '21).²

Not to be outdone by the Israelis, the American system of government, ostensibly the paragon of representative democracy, has found itself on delicate footing too, albeit in a different way. Over the past few years, political discourse in this country devolved to new lows of polarization and rancor. Four years of turning conventional expectations of Presidential decorum on its head have culminated at the time of this writing in the unprecedented refusal of an outgoing administration to concede to its apparent successor, with potentially destabilizing results. Indeed, the word “unprecedented” has become an apt description for much of the phenomena that have occurred over the past year (5780-81), without exaggeration.

Another curious event happened before Pesach 5779 (on 10 Nissan, April 15th), when Notre-Dame in Paris was engulfed in flames and suffered irreparable damage. This is the site where, in 5002 (1242 C.E.), all volumes of the Talmud in France were gathered and burned, bringing an abrupt end to the illustrious era of the *Baalei Tosafos*. For the first time in our history, on the following *Tishah B'Av* (5779), we read a *kinnah* (שְׁאוֹלֵי שְׁרוּפָה בְּאֵשׁ) describing an event for which we perhaps perceived a degree of Divinely provided closure. (The ArtScroll translation of the Talmud into French is another form of *nekamah* for that devastating episode.)

² In the beginning of summer 5779, news outlets reported a question posed to Rav Yitchak Kaduri ז"ל (1898-2006) near the end of his life, “When will Mashiach come?” His obscure response was, “When there will be elections, but they won’t be able to form a government.” He was also purported to have said that the year 5780 will be a “year of corrections” and “there will not be a government in Israel for an extended period.” These prescient words were publicized four months prior to the second round of elections, which took place in Elul 5779.

Rounding out the month of Nissan 5779, six months after the Pittsburgh tragedy, on Shabbos *Acharon shel Pesach* (April 27, 2019), a gunman murdered one and injured three at the Chabad of Poway in California. American Jewry was dismayed to join its European brethren who have unfortunately experienced such tragedies too many times in recent years.

Summer of 5779 was a difficult time with a spate of water-related tragedies across Torah communities in both Eretz Yisrael and the United States. It started in Tammuz with the drowning of Rabbi Reuven Bauman, who was swept away by the ocean off the coast of Virginia while assisting a student caught in the water. In subsequent weeks, other special *yerei'im* and *sheleimim* were lost in a similar manner around bodies of water.

This was all but a prelude to 5780. The year started sorrowfully for many families in our Baltimore community. During Tishrei-Cheshvan, *levayos* for members of the community or their immediate relatives occurred at a higher frequency than usual.³ In shuls where *aveilim* gather at the *bimah* for *kaddish*, it was sometimes hard to find a spot. In the beginning of the year, *Klal Yisrael* also lost prominent *Gedolim*.

For our own family, the world went dark in the wake of the unexpected and sudden loss of our cherished father, Mr. Jacob Schuchman, יעקב ליל שבת קודש פרשת גוטמאן בן יהושע ע"ה, on 11 Cheshvan, Friday night, לך-לך.

That *Erev Shabbos* he went about his usual routine of *chassadim*: bringing weekly donuts after shul to grandchildren for breakfast, driving Bais Yaakov Elementary School carpool (all the kids loved

³ Including the devastating and dramatic *petirah* of Mrs. Debra Friedman, *a"h*, as she returned home after *Nei'lah* from the Bais Medrash of Ranchleigh.

when he drove, not just his own grandchildren), and returning to pick up our preschoolers and bring them to playgroups. This was followed by shopping for himself and for others. In the stores, he greeted and schmoozed with his usual cadre of friends and acquaintances. Next, he spent a few hours with our mother in Levindale. That was a primary fixture of his daily schedule upon retirement the previous year from his position as principal of Ner Yisrael's Mechina High School, which he held with distinction for eighteen years. On his way to shul for *Minchah*, he dropped off Shabbos goodies for grandchildren (at two locations on opposite sides of town), along with the signature *Shalosh Seudos* foods that he brought to our house weekly. (He usually joined us every week, but brought the foods even when he would not be there.) Up until his last weeks, he typically walked 6 to 8 miles over the course of Shabbos.

Leil Shabbos, he walked the mile home from Hertzberg's, his shul for over 55 years, talking with people along the way, and, in typical fashion, saying *Gut Shabbos* to everyone he passed with his usual smile and cheer. At home, he made *kiddush* and *hamotzi*, had a small *seudah*, and sat down on a comfortable chair in the living room with a Chumash and *Midrash Rabbah* before him. While still bedecked in clean, fresh Shabbos clothing, his precious *neshamah* blissfully slipped away, leaving him with a serene, almost angelic look on his face. In the words of the *Chevra Kaddisha* who observed his body's pristine state, he departed this world with a *misas neshikah*.

It was peaceful for him, but highly traumatic for us.⁴ In an instant, our world turned upside down. It was hard not taking for granted the rare privilege we enjoyed having a father/grandfather who played an active role and was an integral part of our daily lives. His sudden departure left a tremendous void. However, as the Talmud (*Berachos* 13a)

⁴ Our family is greatly indebted to the *Mara D'Asra*, מו"ר HaRav Abba Zvi Naiman שליט"א, for all the comfort and assistance that he provided for us during this most difficult of times.

describes the progression of *galus*, צרות אחרונות משקחות את הראשונות, the later tragedies downplay the earlier ones. Nobody could have predicted that our personal ordeal was soon to be eclipsed by a global tragedy on a scale not seen since World War II.

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A terrifying episode shook America once again on 12 Kiselev (December 10, '19), when two domestic terrorists, after murdering a plainclothes detective at a nearby cemetery, brazenly stormed a Jewish grocery store in Jersey City, NJ, killing the proprietor (a young *Yiddishe* mother of three children), a *bachur* shopping in the store, and an employee. Then, barely two weeks later, on the seventh night of Chanukah, a knife-wielding maniac invaded a *mesibah* in Monsey and stabbed five people, one of whom succumbed to his wounds a few months later.

Anguish and mourning were briefly interrupted by the massive events orchestrated for the 13th Siyum HaShas of Day HaYomi held on a frigid afternoon, 4 Teves 5780 (January 1, '20), at MetLife Stadium in the Meadowlands, NJ. Satellite locations worldwide brought together hundreds of thousands of *Yidden* in a beautiful and moving celebration of *kavod haTorah*. A year later, we can attest that one of its goals, motivating people to incorporate serious *limud haTorah* into their daily lives, has been successfully accomplished.

The Siyum was the last major occasion to be held under normal circumstances, as we had previously known them. About a month later, in Shevat 5780 (February '20), news became overwhelmingly dominated by the discovery of a new coronavirus, ostensibly originating in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019, and poised to rampage across the globe. Following the route of blood applications on the corners ("keronos," a cognate of "corona") of the *mizbei'ach* for a *korban chatas*, infections spiked, starting in Southeast China, rippling

up through Japan and Korea in the Northeast, shifting over to Russia and Europe, then crossing the Atlantic into North America, and finally heading southward to South America. More Americans died in just the first three months than all servicemen killed in the Vietnam War, and it only got worse. *Yehi ratzon* that the suffering should serve, like a *chatas*, as a *kaparah* for the world.

Klal Yisroel was hit hard. Waves of *aveilim* were left bereft of their precious relatives, who were often alone in hospital rooms during their last moments. On top of that, government lockdowns imposed by numerous countries took away access to the halachic mechanisms which cushion the harsh emotions of mourning, such as saying *kaddish* and *shivah*-houses with in-person *nichum*.

Arguably, the most widely disruptive of the lockdown measures for *Yidden* was the shuttering of schools and shuls. In Baltimore, the last *parshah* read inside many shuls was *cheit ha'eigel* (*Ki-Sisah/Parah*, 18 Adar), only to resume again over four months later with *cheit ha'mergalim* (*Shelach*, 28 Tammuz). Outdoor *minyanim* operating with specific guidelines set by the Vaad HaRabbonim commenced abruptly with *minchah* on 26 Iyar, the Wednesday of *Parshas Bamidbar*.⁵ Now in Teves 5781 (as of this writing), there are still outdoor options for those wary of entering a shul, even with ubiquitous mask wearing and social distancing.

For all the downsides of lockdown, there were a few unexpected benefits. The frantic pace of life slowed, and more time was spent at home. Without many cars on the road, there was noticeably less noise and air pollution. Even non-birdwatchers could not help but notice the

⁵ This was my first chance to say *kaddish* for my father, *a"h*, after an eight-week hiatus. The last opportunity was a hasty *Kaddish Derabanan* at 7:00 a.m. on Friday, the 24th of Adar, at Dulles airport in Virginia, while picking up my son who was on one of the last flights out of Eretz Yisrael.

variety of birds alighting in yards; brightly colored blue jays, cardinals, and other beautiful birds unidentifiable to the amateur.

For many it was the first time that whole families gathered in their living rooms and *davened* together. While men and boys were missing out on *tefillah betzibur* and *devarim shebikedushah*, women and girls were delighted by the sweet sounds of *Lecha Dodi* or *Keil Adon*, which they rarely, if ever, heard. *Parshas HaShavuah* was read slowly, discussing points along the way. Learning Torah was no longer an activity mostly done while away in yeshivah or shul. It was special for daughters and sisters to see their brothers and fathers learning by themselves, with one another, or with *chavrusos* over the phone or Zoom (a technology that became familiar to all in a short duration).

Unfortunately, there was (and continues to be) suffocating loneliness for those living alone who were confined in solitude. Especially difficult were Shabbos and Yom Tov *seudos* and the Pesach Sedarim. Mental health issues developed or were aggravated by the lack of human interaction and socialization. Additionally, intra-familial tensions arising from conflicting medical advice and personal comfort levels about infection prevention have created wounds that are yet to heal.

Any perception of stability in the world was shattered. Longstanding assumptions about the strength of established institutions, such as the health care system, livelihood, government leadership, or freedom to practice religion dissolved almost overnight. The very fabric of societal structure unraveled in summer 5780. Violent riots and calls for anarchy, fueled by racially charged and political rhetoric, took place all over the United States. Internal tensions flared in other countries too.

ראו עתה כי אני הוא ואין אֱלֹקִים עִמָּדִי, אֲנִי אֲמִית וְאַחֲתָהּ מְסַצְתִּי וְאֲנִי אֶרְפָּא וְאִין
(פרשת האזינו לב, לט) מִיָּדִי מִצִּיל See, then, that I, I am He; There is no G-d

beside Me. I cause death and I give life; I wounded and I will heal; there is no deliverance from My hand.

Hashem's close involvement in every aspect of our lives became apparent to those who choose to look at the dramatic events surrounding us with even half-opened eyes. For those who acknowledge it, His exclusive mastery and absolute dominance over every sphere of existence has become more overt than it was previously.

Everyone surely has his own takeaway from this experience. Hopefully it includes greater appreciation of our access to shuls where *davening* with a *tzibur* should no longer be *מִצְוַת אֲנָשִׁים מְלַמְדָּה (ישעיה* (כט:ג), something done out of habit. We have had ample impetus to upgrade our *bitachon*, respect for *kedushas bais haKenesses*, and *emunas chachomim*, among other areas of *avodah*. The effort lies in translating the inspiration into improvements that endure.

I heard from Rav Sheftel Neuberger, *shlit"a*, (may he have a *refuah sheleimah bekarov*) about the trip he took with his father, Rav Naftoli ז"ל, in the summer of 1967, to consult with HaRav Yechezkel Abramsky, ז"ל.⁶ The trip took place a few months after the spectacular Six Day War, when Israel not only defended itself against its enemies on multiple fronts, but also made sensational gains, including the Old City of Yerushalayim, Shomron, Golan Heights, and the Sinai Desert all the way to the Suez Canal. At the time, there was an electric atmosphere of *hisorerus*, spiritual awakening, to return to authentically Jewish roots. The *baal teshuvah* movement was born then. Yet, Rav Chatzkel told his visitors that although hardly three months had passed, the powerful effects had already largely worn off.

⁶ Their primary mission was to discuss the *shailah* of what was allowed to be done with the Ner Yisrael *beis medrash* building on Garrison Boulevard after the yeshivah will move to its new campus in Baltimore County.

With minimal creativity, we can identify ways to hold onto personal and communal improvements that were spurred by this Heaven-sent pandemic, whether they are in *bein adam laMakom* or *bein adam la'chaveiro*.

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בְּרוּךְ הוּא לֵה' אֲשֶׁר לֹא עָזַב חֶסְדּוֹ אֶת הַחַיִּים וְאֶת הַמֵּתִים וּגו' (רות ב:כ) *Blessed is Hashem, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living or to the dead*

Less than three months after the *petirah* of our dear father a"h, a grandson was born. My sister in Milwaukee had a boy, and they named him Yisroel Aharon.⁷ Then, while in the height of lockdown, on the 12th of Nissan, exactly five months to the day from the *keivurah*, our family was bestowed the wonderful *berachah* of a newborn son. *Bechasdei Hashem*, eight days later on י"ט ניסן, Monday, the third day of *Chol HaMoed* Pesach (in *Chutz La'aretz*), we merited bringing him into the *bris* of Avraham Avinu a"h. Never would we have imagined holding a *bris* in our living room, with no minyan and no *kaddish*. Rabbi Moshe Rappaport, the intrepid veteran *mohel*, bravely ventured into our home, clad in mask and gloves, to perform the *bris* with only the baby's parents and siblings in attendance. We were overjoyed that Bubby and Zayde Silverberg were present, standing outside next to an open window. It was very gratifying that more than one hundred friends and relatives from all over the world joined to celebrate the *simchah* with us virtually through Zoom.⁸

דוֹר הַלֵּךְ וְדוֹר בָּא וּגו' וְזָרַח הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וּבָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וּגו' (קהלת פרק א) *A generation goes and a generation comes; and the sun shines and the sun sets.*

⁷ My brother-in-law's name is Yaakov Chaim, so the name Yisroel was chosen to commemorate our father.

⁸ Ironically, because the pandemic popularized use of Zoom, many people joined who otherwise would not have participated.

With hearts overflowing with gratitude to Hashem, we had the *zechus* to name our son Yaakov י"ג, after his Zayde Schuchman. There is also added significance to the name in that a few hours after he was born (on the 13th of Nissan), the Novominsker Rebbe, Rav Yaakov Perlow זצ"ל, *Rosh Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah* of Agudah, eloquent expositor of *daas Torah* and articulate leader of our generation, was *niftar* in New York.⁹ Our heartfelt *tefillah* is that our son will follow in the ways of his great namesakes and fully reach his potential greatness in Torah and *maasim tovim*.

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The rest of 5780 and throughout the beginning of 5781 continues to be eventful with many more “unprecedented” developments. Many new “normals” have been created. It is no longer a given that children will be going to school; a few “positives” and students are sent home to quarantine. (Girls continue to attend class on Zoom; T.I. boys on the phone. All schools have significantly increased their use of electronic communication.) By all appearances, the social expectation of greeting people with a handshake has met its demise.¹⁰ Stressful

⁹ The Novominsker Rebbe was the brother-in-law (twice, from both his marriages) of my Rosh HaYeshivah, HaRav Moshe Meiselman, *shlit"a*. As a *bachur*, my Rebbe, HaRav Moshe Twersky, ז"ל, *Hy"d*, was a *ben-bayis* in the Novominsker Rebbe's home. I was privileged to see the Rebbe in person a few times and gain from his masterful insight and oratory, including the Yeshivas Toras Moshe dinner honoring Rav Twersky, the dinner in Rav Twersky's memory right after his *pitrah al Kiddush Hashem*, at an AKO kashrus meeting in the OU's New York offices, and when he came to Baltimore for various functions. His keynote address at Agudah conventions was one of two sessions I strove to hear each year.

¹⁰ Besides the benefit in preventing the spread of germs (not just corona, but common illnesses like colds and flus), dropping this protocol helps religious people, both men and women, avoid awkward situations in the workplace. Furthermore, others have noted that avoiding interacting this way serves as a prelude to the era when we will once again observe the strictures of *tumah* and *taharah*.

commutes are mitigated by the ability to work from home. Will *simchahs* finally become more reasonable? Only time will tell.

The flurry of peace agreements brokered by the Trump administration in its waning days between Israel and Arab nations has drastically altered the landscape of the Middle East. In a matter of mere weeks, the United Arab Emirates has become the most popular *Yiddishe* destination spot in the world, by far. Truly unprecedented! Is this all a harbinger of a glorious dawn very soon? נחמה לו בכל יום שיבא.

Part II – The *Refuah* of *Bris Milah*

Chazal, in *Talmud Bavli, Moed Katan* (27b) and *Yerushalmi* (3:6) teach us about the *middas hadin*, an aura of judgment and scrutiny, that is applied to the family of a *niftar*. For the first three days of *aveilus*, the danger is depicted as an unsheathed sword held against the neck (or between the shoulders). For the rest of *shivah*, the sword recedes back into a corner but remains a menacing presence. Over the duration of *shloshim* and the twelve months of *aveilus* (for a parent), the sword lurks whenever the *aveil* ventures out, albeit from a distance. After twelve months, it returns to its sheath.

The *Yerushalmi* concludes: אמר רבי לעזר: אם נולד בן זכר באותה המשפחה, נתרפאת כל אותה המשפחה, *R' Lazer said: If a male child is born in that family, that entire family is "healed."* In this context, it means that upon the birth of a boy the *middas hadin* is removed, even before the term of *aveilus* concludes.¹¹

The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh Deah* 394:4) quotes the passage in its entirety, including the reference to *refuah* that comes with the birth of a boy:

כל שלשה ימים יראה האבל כאלו חרב מונחת לו בין כתפיו; משלשה ועד שבעה, כאלו זקוף כנגדו בקרן זוית; משבעה ועד שלשים, כאלו עובר לפניו בשוק; וכל אותה השנה הדין מתוחה כנגד אותה משפחה; ואם נולד בן זכר באותה משפחה נתרפאת כל המשפחה.

Curiously, *Rambam* (*Hilchos Aveil* 13:12) cites these different stages of danger for an *aveil*, but he stops short and does not mention the

¹¹ Poskim discuss if this has any practical relevance in terms of relaxing *aveilus* restrictions. See *Nitei Gavriel* who cites those who hold that after a boy is born an *aveil* may participate in a *seudas mitzvah*. Some hold that it even permits the prohibition of *sh'eilas shalom*, which includes giving/receiving gifts and *mishloach manos* on Purim.

refuah brought by the birth of a son. Why does he not include that line?

Reading the entire passage of *Rambam* in context, one sees that he is not merely collecting statements from Chazal on the subject; he is conveying a fundamental aspect of *aveilus*. While halachah places various requirements and limitations on the conduct of an *aveil*, the fulfillment of *aveilus* goes beyond simply adhering to a program of what to do and what to avoid. Underlying the halachos is a *kiyum shebaleiv* (קיום שבלב), a message the *aveil* must take to heart. The formal obligations serve to engender a mode of inner awareness.

What is the *kiyum shebaleiv* of *aveilus*? Through contemplating the meaning of his loss, the mourner will ultimately have a broader and more comprehensive perspective on his mission in life. He gains a sharper understanding of man's position in the world and his obligations. This cognition invariably leads to personal restructuring and *Teshuvah*.

In the *Rambam*'s words (ibid.):

כָּל מִי שֶׁלֹא מִתְאַבֵּל כְּמוֹ שְׂצוּי חֲכָמִים, הָרִי זֶה אֶכְזָרִי, אֵלֹא יִפְסֹד וַיִּדְאָג וַיִּפְשָׁפֶשׂ בְּמַעֲשָׁיו, וַיִּחְזֹר בְּתוֹשׁוּבָה. וְאַחַד מִבְּנֵי חֲבוּרָה שְׂמֵת, תִּדְאָג כָּל הַחֲבוּרָה כָּלָה. כָּל שְׁלוֹשָׁה יָמִים הָרֵאוּשׁוֹנִים, יִרְאֶה אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלוֹ חֶרֶב מְנַחֶת לוֹ עַל כְּתָפוֹ; מִשְׁלוֹשָׁה וְעַד שִׁבְעָה, מְנַחֶת בְּקִרְוֹ וְנֵית; מִכָּאן וְאַלֶּף, עוֹבְרֶת כְּנִגְדּוֹ בְּשׁוּק. כָּל זֶה קָדְרִי לִהְיוֹן עַצְמוֹ לַחֲזֹר, וַיַּעֲזֹר מִשִּׁנְתּוֹ, וְהָרִי הוּא אוֹמֵר "הַכִּיתָה אֹתָם וְלֹא-חָלוּ" (ירמיהו ה, ג), מִכָּלֵל שְׂצָרִיד לִהְיוֹן וְלַחֲזֹל.

Based on the *pasuk* in *Yirmiyah* (5:3), "You have hit them, but they sensed no pain," the *Rambam* derives that when one receives a Divine blow, he is obliged to react and feel the pain. He must be roused from spiritual slumber and become inspired to improve. The intense *middas hadin* imposed on an *aveil* serves to provoke him to increase spiritual reflection.

Aveilus for a parent lasts twelve months. Throughout the entire year, the mourner is enjoined to fulfill both its external and internal expressions. In this regard, it makes no difference whether a son was born or not. As long as the *aveilus* lasts, the process of growth and *teshuvah* continues. Therefore, for his purposes, *Rambam* has no need to quote that line.

On the other hand, the *Shulchan Aruch* records the passage for a completely different reason. It is not discussing the *kiyum shebaleiv*, but rather the practical measures an *aveil* must take to safeguard his well-being while in mourning. Everyone takes precautions on a regular basis to avoid danger, with varying degrees. An *aveil* must be more vigilant because of his precarious situation, beyond what is usually needed.¹² Hence, it is necessary for the *Shulchan Aruch* to mention that the birth of a boy brings *refuah*, which relaxes the *middas hadin*. From this point on, the *aveil* may resume life based on his regular degree of caution from danger.

Why should this *refuah* come only with the birth of a boy? Why not a girl? Especially when the deceased family member was a woman, one would think that the birth of a girl would have equal significance!

If the *refuah* is associated with a sense of compensation for the tragic loss, then the question is justified. The birth of a girl would be equivalent to that of a boy. However, it appears that the *refuah* is not affected by the birth of the child alone, but by the subsequent *bris milah* (Chazal's terminology of גילול, *born*, notwithstanding). Thus, it applies only to a boy.

Indeed, connections between *milah* and *refuah* are well established. The Talmud (*Megillah* 17b), discusses the order of *berachos* in

¹² I know of a *Talmid Chacham* who was extra careful when walking on streets without sidewalks during his year of *aveilus*.

Shemoneh Esrei and explains why *Refa'einu*, the request for healing, is placed eighth: מה ראו לומר רפואה בשמינית? אמר רבי אחא: מתוך שנתנה מילה בשמינית שצריכה רפואה לפיכך קבעוה בשמינית [berachah] about healing? R' Acha said: since milah, which is given for the eighth [day], requires healing, therefore it was established as the eighth [berachah].

R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld (1848-1932, founding Rav of the *Eidah HaChareidis* in Yerushalayim) understands this *Yerushalmi* the same way. He asks why the *berachah* in *Shemoneh Esrei* end with רופא חולי עמו ישראל, which is particular to *Klal Yisrael*, and not the more universal רופא כל בשר ומפליא לעשות לעשות, found in the conclusion of *Asher Yatzar*? He answers, based on our *Yerushalmi*, that *bris milah* has a property of healing. Since the *berachah* of *Shemoneh Esrei* invokes *mitzvas milah*, as seen by its placement in the eighth position, it is limited to *Klal Yisrael*; for only we have that *mitzvah*. However, the *berachah* of *Asher Yatzar* is a general recognition and praise for Hashem's Providence over health and well-being, and that applies universally to all mankind.

The *middas hadin* faced by the *aveil* may have ramifications in the physical world, but the healing described in *Yerushalmi* is evidently in the spiritual realm. The passing of a close relative reflects a spiritual rift in *ruchniyus* that is repaired by *milah*. (All *mitzvos* we do have profound impact in the spiritual realms, see *Nefesh HaChaim*, *Shaar Aleph*. We are discussing a type of spiritual *tikkun* from *milah* that has more noticeable impact to us.)

This power of *milah* can be demonstrated even without turning to mystical sources; it is explicit in the Talmud (*Shabbos* 132a): מתיבין: מה מילה שהיא מניין לפיקום נפש שדוּחָה אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת? רבי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲזַרְיָה אָמַר: מֵהַ מִלָּה שֶׁהִיא, אֶחָת מֵאַיְבָרָיו שֶׁל אָדָם דּוּחָה אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת — קָל וְחוֹמֶר לְפִיקוּם נֶפֶשׁ שְׂדוּחָה אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת. *From where do we know that saving a life overrides the Shabbos? R' Elazar Ben Azrayah says: the mitzvah of milah is the source; just as*

milah, which pertains to only one of a person's limbs, overrides the Shabbos (when performed on the eighth day), kal vachomer saving a person's life, should override the Shabbos!

It is said that R' Gershon Henoch Leiner ז"ל, the Rebbe of Radzyn, was once speaking with R' Chaim Soloveitchik.¹³ The Rebbe wanted to prove to R' Chaim that sometimes plain *pshat* in the Gemara can only be understood with a "Chassidic" approach. His proof was this passage about *milah* and *pikuach nefesh*.

The Rebbe asked: if failure to perform *milah* causes physical harm to a limb, we could extrapolate from the Torah's permission to violate Shabbos for *milah* that one may also violate Shabbos to save life itself. But what harm is caused by not performing *milah*? One concept may be derived from another only if there exists some equivalency between them. In what way does *milah* relate to *pikuach nefesh* to serve as a basis for allowing the violation of Shabbos?!

We can only understand this derivation if we accept that not performing *milah* on the appointed day causes a *spiritual* danger (סכנה ברוחניות). Whether or not the danger is tangible, it is very real nonetheless. Then the *kal vachomer* is valid: if we override Shabbos for the sake of saving one limb from spiritual danger, we may certainly override Shabbos to save an entire life. This *halachic* equivalence between spiritual and physical dangers, averred the Rebbe, demonstrates the veracity of a "Chassidic" approach. R' Chaim graciously accepted the Rebbe's proof.¹⁴

¹³ This conversation must have taken place before R' Chaim assumed the *rabbanus* of Brisk, as the Radzyner Rebbe was *niftar* in 1890, while R' Chaim did not take that position until 1892, after the *petirah* of his father, the *Beis HaLevi*.

¹⁴ ע' אסופות רבינו חיים הלוי, שבת סימן יג (לדף קלב:)

Consequently, both the *Yerushalmi* (in *Moed Katan*) and the *Bavli* (in *Shabbos*) are referring to the power of *milah* to provide a spiritual *refuah* that has practical impact even in our physical world.

All of humanity escapes the sentence of death introduced by the sin of Adam in *Gan Eden* by its ability to procreate. However, a baby born is not a replacement for the life that ended. It is a new life with a new identity. *Klal Yisrael* is exceptional in that the dedication, values, and status of our *Avos* can be imparted to our offspring. Unique to us, there is continuity and connection between *doros*, generations. This is accomplished by bringing the child into the *bris* of *milah* that was originally forged between Hashem and *Avraham Avinu*. Therefore, the *refuah* is not simply the birth of the child; it is the legacy that has been transmitted through *milah* to yet another generation. This is how the wound left by the departure of a loved one is healed.¹⁵

¹⁵ The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 49:2) relates that Avraham was scared to perform *milah* on himself and he could not complete the task until Hashem assisted him. How do we understand this? What was he nervous about? His hesitation could not have been the result of fright from facing the physical challenge of self-inflicted pain. Avraham was passionate about his love for Hashem and His mitzvos in the extreme. (*Navi Yeshayah* 41:8 describes him as אֱלֹהִים אֶתְיָר.) This was true for the myriad mitzvos he did voluntarily, all the more so for the precious mitzvah of *milah* for which he received a specific Divine command! He showed no such fear when he bravely walked into Nimrod's *kivshan ha'eish*, the fiery furnace, affirming his absolute belief in Hashem. Therefore, it does not make any sense that he was challenged by the prospect of physical pain. Perhaps, in light of the idea presented, we can suggest that his fear stemmed from an understanding that the *bris* of *milah* imparts into the *nimol* the qualities and attributes of those who preceded him. This covenant connects earlier generations with later ones. Avraham worried lest he introduce any of the traits and attitudes of his forebearers, who were *ovdei avodah zarah* (pagan idol worshippers), amongst whom he was raised, into his new persona that would carry to further *doros*. He was distraught by the idea of perpetuating any attachment to those wayward beliefs. Therefore, Hashem came and helped him. Hashem who is the absolute beginning of all existence, Who was preceded by utterly nothing, granted Avraham the ability to make a clean break and totally detach from any precedent.

Part III – *Mesiras Nefesh* as the Catalyst of *Geulah*

The joyous *seudas bris* for our son Yaakov נ"י was held in the company of his parents and siblings only. These *Divrei Torah* were shared:

In the *Arizal's* version of the *Haggadah shel Pesach*, a line is added to the paragraph of *Maggid* that opens with ורַב: נֹאמֵר לָךְ בְּדַמִּיךָ חַיִּי, נֹאמֵר לָךְ בְּדַמִּיךָ חַיִּי (יחזקאל טז:ו): *And I said to you, by your blood you will live; And I said to you, by your blood you will live.*

What is the purpose of this addition? On a simple level, it is the conclusion of the first part of the *passuk* that was just recited: וְאָעֲבַר עָלֶיךָ וְרָאִיתִיךָ מִתְבַּסֶּסֶת בְּדַמִּיךָ, *And I passed over you and I saw you wallowing in your blood.* There is a general rule that it is improper to recite only half a *pasuk*.¹⁶ Are those words added just to complete the *pasuk*, or is there another meaning?

The *Mechilta*¹⁷ associates these “bloods” with the two mitzvos involving blood in whose merit the *geulah* from Mitzrayim occurred: the blood of the [*korban*] *pesach* and the blood of *milah*. They deserve mention while recounting the story because of the critical role they played in the process of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת - מִפְּנֵי מַה הַקֳּדִים לְקִיחָתוֹ שֶׁל פֶּסַח לְשַׁחֲיִיתוֹ אַרְבַּעַה יָמִים? לְפִי שֶׁלֹּא הָיוּ לָהֶם מִצְוֹת שִׁיעֶסְק בָּהֶם קוֹדֵם שִׁיגְאֻלוֹ, נִתֵּן לָהֶם הַקֶּב"ה שְׁתֵּי מִצְוֹת, דָּם וְיֵהָלָלוּ עָלֵיהֶם בְּנוֹסַח קִידוּשׁ לְבָנָה. ¹⁸., *Why did the taking of the [korban] pesach precede its*

¹⁶ כל פסוקא דלא פסקיה משה אנו לא פסקינן ליה (מגילה כב:). מטעם זה יש נוהגים לשנות ממה שנדפס בסידורים ב"יהללו" בשעת כנסת ספר תורה, "וזאת התורה" בשעת הגבהה, ו"תפול עליהם" בנוסח קידוש לבנה.

¹⁷ ברש"י פרשת בא (יב:ז) ע"פ מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל, מסכתא דפסחא - בא, פרשה ה, ד"ה והיו לכם

¹⁸ לכאורה, זהו שלא כסדר. קודם מלו ורק אה"כ שחטו את הפסח, כי ערל אינו בתורת הקרבן (ע' יבמות עא.).? החיד"א מתרץ ע"פ המדרש (שמו"ר יט:ה): והיה הקב"ה מבקש לגאלן ולא

slaughter by four days? Because they [Bnei Yisrael] did not have any mitzvos in which to involve themselves prior to their redemption. Thus, Hashem gave them two mitzvos, the blood of the [korban] pesach and the blood of milah.

Maharal in Gur Aryeh asks: Why were these two mitzvos chosen to serve as triggers for the process of geulah? We can further ask: how does the Mechilta answer its question of why the taking of the korban pesach precede its shechitah by four days? In what way does engaging in these mitzvos explain the four-day spacing?

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 16:3) records that when Hashem sent Moshe to tell *Bnei Yisrael* about *shechting* the *korban pesach*, Moshe countered, “*Ribono Shel Olam*, how can we do this? The Egyptians worship flock animals, and they will stone us!” Hashem replied, “*Bnei Yisrael* will not depart from here until they will *shecht* the *pesach* right in front of the Egyptians’ eyes. I will make known to them the worthlessness of their idols.”

Moshe’s initial concern is perplexing. The Almighty gave him a clear directive to carry out. What worried him?

היה להם זכות, מה עשה הקב"ה? קרא למשה ואמר לו לך ומהול אותם, ויש אומרים שם היה יהושע שמל אותם שנאמר (יהושע ה, ב) ושוב מול את בני ישראל שנית, והרבה מהן לא היו מקבילים עליהם למול, אמר הקב"ה שיעשו הפסח, וכיון שעשה משה את הפסח גזר הקב"ה לארבע רוחות העולם ונושבות בגן עדן מן הרוחות שבגן עדן, הלכו ונדבקו באותו הפסח שנאמר (שיר ד, טז) עורי צפון ובואי תימן, והיה ריחו הולך מהלך ארבעים יום, נתכנסו כל ישראל אצל משה, אמרו לו בבקשה ממך האכילנו מפסחך מפני שהיו עייפים מן הריח, היה אומר הקב"ה אם אין אתם נימולין אין אתם אוכלין שנאמר ויאמר ה' אל משה ואל אהרן זאת חקת הפסח וגו', מיד נתנו עצמן ומלו ונתערב דם הפסח בדם המילה, והקב"ה עובר ונוטל כל אחד ואחד ונושקו ומברכו שנאמר (יחזקאל טז, ו) ואעבור עליך ואראך מתבוססת בדמך וגו' חיי בדם פסח חיי בדם מילה, עכ"ל המדרש. הרי שסדר הזה מרמז לאותם שלא מלו עד אחר שכבר התחיל שחיטת הפסח. גם להם ניתנה האפשרות שוב ליכנס בתוך הכלל. (הגש"פ פניני החיד"א עמ' 141)

Chida, in his *Haggadah* called *Simchas HaRegel*,¹⁹ resolves this with an insight into the way *geulah* operates: The Talmud (*Pesachim* 8b) teaches that although there is a principle of *shluchei mitzvah einan nizakin* (שלוחי מצוה אינן נזוקין), meaning that no harm befalls emissaries involved in mitzvos, nonetheless, in situations of *shechicha hezeikah* (שכיחא הויקא), where danger is commonly expected, the rule does not apply. One may not rely on a miracle to be saved despite his involvement in a mitzvah.

That explains why *Shmuel HaNavi*, when tasked with anointing Dovid as king to replace Shaul, challenged Hashem, “How can I go? Shaul will find out and kill me!” (*I Shmuel* 16:2) Evidently, even though he clearly had a mitzvah from Hashem, since there was a realistic danger, he was not allowed to rely on a miracle to be saved.

This was also *Moshe Rabbeinu*’s challenge to Hashem. How can *Bnei Yisrael* be expected to fulfill the mitzvah of *korban pesach* in a situation of assumed mortal danger when one may not rely on a miracle in such circumstance?

Hashem responded by teaching Moshe that when it comes to generating a *zechus* that will serve as a catalyst for *geulah*, a different system applies. Redemption is a very big thing. It is exceedingly rare that the laws of nature are suspended in miraculous fashion. Nothing less than an act of *mesiras nefesh*, readiness to give up one’s life for the sake of Hashem’s Will, can bring about that outcome.

Chida demonstrates this notion from the Talmud (*Berachos* 20a): אמר ליה רב פפא לאבאי: מאי שנא ראשונים דאתרחיש להו ניסא, ומאי שנא אנו דלא מתרחיש לן ניסא? וכו' אמר ליה: קמאי הו קא מסרי נפשיהו אקדושת השם, אנו לא מסרינן נפשין אקדושת השם, *Rav Papa said to Abaye: “Why did overt miracles take places for the earlier [generations] but not for us? He*

¹⁹ נעתק באותיות בהירות בהגדה של פסח פניני החיד"א עמ' 139-141

answered him: The earlier ones were willing to sacrifice their lives to sanctify the Divine Name, while we are not willing to sacrifice our lives to sanctify the Divine Name.

Taking the *tzon*, the sheep or goat, which the Egyptians worshiped and preparing it for slaughter in full view, was an act of *mesiras nefesh*. The Egyptians surely would be seething with anger, poised to attack for this sacrilege. *Bnei Yisrael's zechus* was not merely offering the *korban pesach*. The *zechus* was also doing the mitzvah under dangerous circumstances despite the risk to their lives.

Their *mesiras nefesh* actually went even further. During these four days, while preparing the sheep for the *korban*, they were instructed to perform *milah*, which was a prerequisite for participating in the *korban*, (וכל ערל לא יאכל בו (פ' בא יב:מח).²⁰ We know from the beginning of *Parshas Vayeira*, after Avraham's *milah* and also from the episode with Shechem in *Vayeishev*, that the third day after *milah* is the most painful. Thus, the 14th day of Nissan, when they were to *shecht* the *korban* in front of its *Mitzri* worshipers, was also the day when they would be the most vulnerable to attack. This augmented the act of *mesiras nefesh*, complete self-abnegation in face of the Divine directive, even further, and provided the needed *zechus* for *geulah*.²¹

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²⁰ Whether this approach works with other Midrashim regarding when the sheep was taken or when *milah* was done requires further study.

²¹ In the end of *Parshas Shemos*, the *Zekeinim* are called to join Moshe and Aharon, and accompany them to Pharaoh's palace. They were not willing to risk their safety and they all slipped away before the meeting. One can speculate that perhaps this mission was given as an opportunity for *mesiras nefesh* that would have triggered the *geulah* process. Since they were not up to the task, the slavery continued, and the burden was further increased, leading to more suffering.

The *geulah* from *Mitzrayim* set the precedent for the way redemption would unfold in subsequent eras. Time and again, *mesiras nefesh* served as the catalyst for miraculous salvation. Just seven days later after leaving Pharaoh's jurisdiction, when *Bnei Yisrael* encountered the raging waters of the *Yam Suf*, an act of self-sacrifice prompted the sea to split. The Talmud (*Sotah* 37a) teaches that Moshe's *tefillah* is not what precipitated the miracle; rather, it was generated by the willingness of Nachshon ben Aminadav (and, according to Midrashim, other *tzaddikim* too) to be *moser nefesh* by walking into the water almost until the point of drowning.

Normally, placing oneself in such mortal danger is unreasonable and even prohibited, with the exception of the three cardinal *aveiros*. Preservation of life, *pikuah nefesh*, is a paramount consideration and an overriding halachic principle that takes precedence over most other considerations. But we see that to activate miraculous salvation, we are called upon to demonstrate *mesiras nefesh*.

Similarly, the miracle of Purim occurred only after the people of Shushan placed blind faith in Mordechai and Esther and fasted for three days (missing the Pesach Seder). After that, Esther was *moseres nefesh* – וְכִאֲשֶׁר אֶבְרָתִי אֶבְרָתִי (ד:טז) – by defying royal protocol that declared death upon anyone who entered the king's chamber without prior summons - אָמַת דָּתוֹ לְהִמִּית (ד:יז). Only after this *mesiras nefesh* did she petition the king (not only the earthly king, but also the King of Kings) for a *yeshuah*.²² The result was a *geulah* that materialized in a matter of days.

²² In a 5729 ('69) *shiur* on *Megillas Esther*, R' Soloveitchik highlighted a central halachic lesson that we learn from the story is the duty of the individual to sacrifice his life if the destiny and the future of the community is at stake. Also, that someone – in this case, Mordechai – may advise or coerce one to such sacrifice if it will save the people.

Regarding Chanukah, the *Bach* (אורח חיים תרע"ה) describes the *mesiras nefesh* of the Chashmonaim to restore the defunct *avodah* in the *Beis HaMikdash*. They went into battle against all odds; death should have been a given²³. (In fact, some died in battle.) This *mesiras nefesh* led to the *neis milchamah*, miracle of the military victory, which was reflected later in the miracle of the oil. In the *tefillah* composed by the *B'nei Yisosscher* to be said before lighting the *Neiros Chanukah*, this key feature is emphasized: (ע"פ ישעיה נג"ב) *that they exposed themselves to give up their lives*.

At crucial junctures involving *hatzalah* of *Klal Yisrael* from seemingly inescapable doom, willingness to be *moser nefesh* in the service of Hashem is the call of duty.

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Applying this essential precept was part of Mir Yeshivah's calculation in 1941, during WWII, when it embarked on its incredible escape from Europe. R' Michel Shurkin, *shlit"a*, in *Megged Givos Olam* (vol. 4 p. 152), records that when security conditions in Vilna deteriorated, there was a *machlokes* in the yeshivah whether to leave Lithuania on an eastward-bound Soviet train for a two-week journey, crossing Siberia on the way to Vladivostok, *en route* to Japan. At that time, the immediate danger was not yet the murderous Germans. The menace was the Russians who still controlled Lithuania and were bent on shuttering all yeshivas within their territory, dispersing students and *rebbeim*, making Torah study and mitzvah observance impossible.

The *hanhalah* of the yeshivah, as well as other *Roshei Yeshivah* in Vilna at the time, and R' Yonah Minsker הי"ד (author of *Yonas Eilem*,

²³ Once *milchamah* begins, the primacy of *pikuah nefesh* no longer applies, otherwise no soldier could fight. The discussion here is the decision to go to battle when, physically, their lives were secure as long as they succumbed to the society promulgated by the Syrian-Greek rulers.

known as the greatest *bachur* in the yeshiva's student body), felt that travelling through Stalin-controlled Soviet territory was literal suicide, entering right into the jaws of a lion. They would likely either be killed or left to die in Siberia, רה"ל. Therefore, it was *assur*, prohibited, to willingly choose such a dangerous route.

However, there was a prestigious group of older *bachurim* who had been influenced by the famed *Mirrer* Mashgiach, R' Yeruchem Levovitz, ז"ל, (who passed away some five years earlier), among them R' Chaim Visoker, R' Leib Malin, and R' Chaim Shereshefsky. This group was adamant that their *mesorah* was to follow the example of the Chashmonaim who did not make *cheshbonos*, calculations based on personal safety, when facing a regime devoted to stamping out Torah (להשכיחם תורתך ולהעבירם מחוקי רצונך). We must regard the continuation of *avodas Hashem* as the primary concern, even when our physical survival is jeopardized. They took this pathway to freedom, and *b'chasdei Hashem*, Mir Yeshivah benefited from *nissim v'niflaos* as they successfully escaped the European inferno.²⁴

Along similar lines, *Megged Givos Olam* relates that the *Chafetz Chaim*, when he was already in his late 80s or 90s, often remarked to R' Moshe Londinsky, the Rosh HaYeshivah in Radin, "Nu, R' Moshe, let's go, you and I, and fight against the tyrannical Russians who are uprooting religion (post Bolshevik revolution). Let's take sticks to fight, and if we don't succeed and they kill us, it will be a *kiddush Hashem*." Like R' Yeruchem, he *paskened* that when dealing with religious oppression, statistically predicted outcomes may be ignored. Other times, the *Chafetz Chaim* said that he and R' Moshe Londinsky had an obligation of *teshuvah* since they did not actively fight against the Soviets (הרשעים הרוסים עוקרי הדת), even though a natural outcome of such activism would have been quick death.

²⁴ Just about all the *talmidim* survived, with the exception of R' Yonah. See further in *Megged Givos Olam* there for an account of miraculous events that occurred along the journey.

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Although it is not literal *mesiras nefesh* (willingness to give up actual life), even undertaking physical discomfort or economic hardship is a form of the same ideal. HaRav Hershel Schachter, *shlit"l*, (*Piskei Corona* #20, also in *Mipninei HaRav* pp. 187-188) mentions the *Beis Yosef* (*O.Ch.* 472) who quotes the *Yerushalmi* about many Amoraim who were careful to drink four cups of wine on Pesach night, even though they would suffer for many weeks from its after-effects. Basic halachah does not require such physical overextension.²⁵

The reason these Amoraim made such sacrifice was because this mitzvah is rooted in *pirsumei nissa*, an obligation to publicize the miraculous redemption. HaRav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik, *z"l*, explained that the mitzvos instituted for *pirsumei nissa* (i.e., drinking four *kosos* of wine at the Seder, reading *Megillas Esther* on Purim, lighting *neiros* on Chanukah) are a demonstration that Hashem superseded His normal mode of operation (i.e., *teva*²⁶, nature) with *nissim* at the time of those redemptions. So too, we yearn for Him to perform *nissim* redeeming us once again.²⁷ For this class of mitzvos, were we to limit ourselves by usual constraints and not exceed our comfort zone, by what right could we indicate that Hashem should reciprocate by exceeding the boundaries He instituted and perform miracles! That is why these particular mitzvos require spending more

²⁵ Rav Schachter refers to the *Mishnah Berurah* in *Shaar HaTziyun* 472:52 that one should push himself to drink four cups of wine only if it will make him a *חולה במצקת*, *slightly ill*, but not if it will cause him to become bedridden, *חולה המוטל למשכב*.

²⁶ הטב"ע בגמטריא אלוקי"ם (86)

²⁷ Along the lines of the *tefillah* for *Rosh Chodesh bentsching*, מי שְׁעָשָׂה נְסִים, לְאִבּוֹתֵינוּ וְנָאֵל אוֹתָם מֵעֲבֹדוֹת לְחֵרֹת הוּא יִגְאֹל אוֹתָנוּ בְּקֶרֶב.

money²⁸ or accepting additional discomfort as demonstrated by the *Amorgaim*.

This same concept is an explanation (see *Iyun Yaakov*, also *Sifsei Chaim – Moadim*, Vol. II) for the *Gemara Berachos* 20a, cited above, which correlates *mesiras nefesh* with meriting *nissim*. By subjugating ourselves to Hashem's Will to the extent that we push past the boundaries of our own natural comfort, we show that only Hashem's existence has ultimate meaning. In kind, we merit a Divine response of intervention beyond the normal confines of natural order.

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Routine performance of mitzvot is what sustains individuals and Klal Yisrael within our current situation. But to bring *geulah*, a major change, much more is needed; *geulah* is sparked by *mesiras nefesh*. HaRav Moshe Shternbuch, *shlit"א*, illustrates this²⁹ from Rashi in *Parshas Ki-Sisa* where, in the aftermath of the Golden Calf, *Moshe Rabbeinu* pleads with Hashem to spare *Bnei Yisrael* from destruction: וְזָכַר לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדְּךָ (שמות לב:ג), *Recall what was to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yisrael, Your servants*. Rashi writes: אֲמַל לְשַׁרְפָּה הֵם, וְזָכַר לְאַבְרָהָם שֶׁמָּסַר עַצְמוֹ לְשַׁרְף עֲלֵידָה בְּאוּרִכַּשְׁדִּים, אִם לְהַרְיָגָהּ, וְזָכַר לְיִצְחָק שֶׁשָּׁפֵט צָנָאוֹ לְעֵקֶדָה, אִם לְגָלוּת, וְזָכַר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁנִּגְזַר לְחַרֵּן *them [Bnei Yisrael, as punishment for the sin], recall Avraham's mesiras nefesh to be burnt in Ur Kasdim [when Nimrod cast him into the fiery furnace for his being steadfast in his emunah]; if they are to be executed by sword, recall Yitzchak who stretched out his neck at the Akeidah; if they are to be exiled, recall Yaakov undertaking exile to Charan.*

²⁸ Usually, for a mitzvah, one need not spend more than a fifth of his assets. But these mitzvos, despite being Rabbinic enactments (although see glosses of *Chasam Sofer* to *Megillah* 6b, that they have an element of קיום דאורייתא), require one to even sell the shirt off his back for their fulfillment.

²⁹ *Pshat V'Iyun* to *Berachos* 20a.

The *Avos* each accumulated a lifetime of accomplishments, full of everlasting good deeds and mitzvos. Yet, invoking those merits for the salvation of *Bnei Yisrael* was not enough. *Yeshuah* is accomplished only through acts of *mesiras nefesh*.

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We are grateful to Hashem that we do not regularly find ourselves challenged to be *moser nefesh* literally. Nonetheless, there are elements in our ordinary regimen of mitzvos that present opportunities to express willingness for *mesiras nefesh al kiddush Hashem*, were we asked to do so. For example, performing *milah* is regarded as a form of *mesiras nefesh*. *David HaMelech* says in *Tehillim* (44:23): כִּי עָלִיךָ הִרְגָנוּ כָּל הַיּוֹם נִחָשְׁכָנוּ כְּצֹאן טִבְחָהּ *It is for Your sake that we are slain all day long, that we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.*

One of the interpretations of כִּי עָלִיךָ הִרְגָנוּ כָּל הַיּוֹם proffered by the Talmud in *Gittin* (57b) is that it refers to *milah*. *Rashi* explains, דַּפְעִימִים מֵת, there is a chance that the child will be wounded mortally, רַח"ל. *Mesiras nefesh* can take one of two forms: either actively engaging in a dangerous endeavor for the sake of a higher cause or ideal, or passively allowing oneself to be violated rather than partake in a morally repugnant act. *Milah*, according to this interpretation, is representative of the second type.

As mentioned above, with rare exception, a *mitzvah* is not performed when it poses a danger to life. However, the *Shem MiShmuel* (*Parshas Emor*) deduces from this Gemara in *Gittin* that *milah* is different. The commandment inherently introduces an element of danger.

He proposes that this is the intent of the *Rambam* (*Hilchos Milah* 1:18), who rules that we may not do *milah* on a baby who is sick because “it is possible to circumcise later (when he recovers) and it is not possible to restore a Jewish life.” This implies that if it were not

possible to do the mitzvah later (i.e., the mitzvah only applied on the eighth day and could not be pushed off), we would do it even while the baby is sick. What about *pikuach nefesh*, the supreme imperative to protect life, which the *Rambam* himself mentions in this very same halachah? The answer is that since a degree of danger is an intrinsic element of the mitzvah of *milah*, were it not been possible to perform it later, we would have disregarded the added hazard of the child's illness. (See also *Shu"t Chasam Sofer Y.D. §245*)

Of course, halachah demands that *milah* may not be done to a sick baby. Yet, from *Rambam's* formulation we observe that the *mitzvah* of *milah* is itself a display of a willingness to surrender life when that is the Divine Will. Perhaps this facet of *milah* is what endows it with properties of *refuah*, as discussed above. *Refuah* is a form of personal *geulah*, and as we have demonstrated, *mesiras nefesh* is a prerequisite for *geulah*.

An appropriate place to conjure thoughts of being willing to give up our lives *al Kiddush Hashem* happens twice a day, in the mitzvah of *Kerias Shema*.³⁰ At the end of *Maseches Berachos* (61b), R' Akiva expounds the words in *Shema* which outline the degree to which one must love Hashem: *אֶת נַפְשְׁךָ אֶפְּלוּ נוֹטֵל אֶת נַפְשְׁךָ*, [*You shall love Hashem*] *with all your soul – even if He is taking your soul*.

The Gemara depicts the sensational account of R' Akiva's martyrdom. Even when the Romans sought to detach the Jews from Torah and deemed its teaching to be a capital crime, R' Akiva persevered and continued to teach publicly. When he was arrested and taken out to be

³⁰ בקונטרס "בכל יום יהיו כחדשים", כתב הרה"צ רב מרדכי פוטאש שליט"א (עמ' נו אות ה), "כשאומר ואהבת וכו' בכל נפשך, יכוון למסור נפשו על קידוש ה' אם מן השמים יגזרו עליו את הנסיון הזה."

בסידור מתוק מדבש מביא מסידור הרש"ש: משמע עד אמת ויציב, יכוין לקיים מצות עשה ליחד את ה' ב"ה. גם יכוין למסור נפשו על יחוד וקידוש שמו יתברך לאכללא גרמיה גו אינון דמסרי נפשייהו עד קדושת שמיה. [כמבואר זהר פרשת בלק]

killed, it was the time to recite *Kerias Shema*. As they lacerated his flesh with iron combs, he willingly accepted upon himself the Authority of the Heavenly Kingdom. When his students questioned him, he replied, “My entire life I was aggrieved; when will I fulfill this mitzvah of “*b’chol nafshecha*,” to serve Hashem with love even as He is taking your soul?! Now that I have the chance, shall I not fulfill it?!”

While reciting the first *pasuk* of *Shema Yisroel*, R’ Akiva elongated his pronunciation of the word “*Echad*,” affirming his absolute conviction of Hashem’s Unity. With that his soul returned to its Maker. Thereupon a *Bas Kol* declared, “Fortunate are you R’ Akiva, that your soul left you with *Echad*!”

What did R’ Akiva mean when he said, “My entire live I was aggrieved?” It means that every day of his life when he said *Kriyas Shema* he mentally depicted himself being tortured for his steadfast belief in Hashem and prepared himself to give up his life – gladly, with love – rather than succumb to the will of harsh tormentors.

HaRav Moshe Twersky, ז"ל, הי"ד, once spoke in *shiur*³¹ about the importance of accepting to give up one’s life *al kiddush Hashem* while saying *Shema*. He told of a *bachur* who was killed by an Arab, who said *Shema* as he was dying. Rav Twersky said in the name of that *bachur*’s *rosh yeshivah* that he was able to do so because when he said *Shema* on a regular day, he kept the mitzvah of *mesiras nefesh* in mind. Therefore, when it came to actuality, he was already prepared.³²

Immediately following recitation of *Shema* in the morning and evening, we say the *berachah* of *Geulah*, concluding with גאלי ישראל. This progression is consistent with our understanding that *mesiras nefesh* provides the spark to initiate *geulah*.

³¹ *A Malach in our Midst*, by Rabbi Yehoshua Berman, pp.4-5.

³² וכעין זה מובא בס' פשט ועיון מס' ברכות שם מעוד רבותינו הקדושים.

Another place we say *Shema* in davening is during the *Kedushah* of *Mussaf* on Shabbos and Yom Tov. There too, *sefarim* speak about concentrating at that time on being *moser nefesh* for *kiddush Hashem*.³³ Along the same pattern, the *pasuk* of *Shema* is immediately followed by a declaration of our conviction that Hashem is our Savior. In the *Nussach Sefard* version, the connection to *geulah* is abundantly clear: הוא אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוּא אֱבִינוּ. הוּא מֶלֶכְנוּ הוּא מוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ. וְהוּא יוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ וְיַגְאֲלֵנוּ שֵׁנִית הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוּא אֱבִינוּ, *He is our Elokim, He is our Father, He is our King, He is our Savior, and He will save us and redeem us a second time, and He will listen to us with His compassion a second time before the eyes of all living beings, to say...*

Nussach Sefard continues: הֵן גְּאֻלָּתִי אֶתְכֶם אַחֲרִית כְּרִאשִׁית לִהְיוֹת לָכֶם לְאֱלֹקִים, *Behold, I will redeem you, the last time as the first time, to be for you a G-d.*

Navi Michah tells us that the future, and final, redemption will mirror the first redemption from *Mitzrayim*: כִּי־מִי צֵאתָה מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲרָאנוּ נִפְלְאוֹת (מיכה ז:טו), *As in the day when you left from the Land of Mitzrayim I will display for him wonders [in the upcoming geulah].*

The way events will unfold in the future will parallel the way *geulah* occurred in the past, just on a more majestic scale (see *Yeshayah* 30:26). Our ancestors in *Mitzrayim* were given the mandate to be *moser nefesh* with *korban pesach* and *bris milah* in order to stimulate *geulah*. It follows that *mesiras nefesh* will also be a feature of the final *geulah*.

Many aspects of serving Hashem while in *galus* involve some level of *mesiras nefesh*. People working in jobs whose timetables must comport to secular demands must persevere to maintain *davening* and

³³ סידור מתוק מדבש ע"פ שעה"כ ופע"ח, "...ולכן עתה [בקדושת הכתר] אנו צריכים למסור נפשינו על קידוש השם במלת אחד בפסוק שמע."

learning schedules, and to adequately prepare for Shabbos and Yom Tov. Really, anyone who takes his or her commitment to *tefillah*, Torah, and *mitzvos* seriously must forgo some comforts offered by society to meet those duties. However, in recent decades, as living standards increased and conveniences have become available, the *mesiras nefesh* needed has decreased. Never in the history of *galus* has it been so easy to fulfill mitzvos with such *hiddur*.³⁴

The coronavirus pandemic, besides its effects on health and well-being, injected an extra level of *mesiras nefesh* into our daily *avodah*, more than our accustomed amount. At least while shuls were closed, sustaining consistent dedication to *tefillah*, *tefillah b'tzibur*, and *limud haTorah* became more challenging and more effort was necessary. Somewhat akin to the way *Bnei Yisrael* felt pressured when performing their *avodah* in front of the Egyptians, we too had to contend with public perceptions, even when we knew that we were following all recommended health guidelines.

May it be Hashem's will that the additional efforts we have expended in Torah and *mitzvos* during this difficult *tekufah* constitute a measure of *mesiras nefesh* that, together with all the heroic efforts of our ancestors throughout the centuries, will cumulatively form a *Kiddush Sheim Shamayim* of colossal proportion that will serve as the catalyst needed to bring *geulah shleimah*; may it come soon in our days. א

³⁴ For example, in the not-too-distant past, each *kehillah* had perhaps just a few sets of *daled minim* shared by its members, if that many. Now, even children have *daled minim* whose quality surpasses what was available then. Many families have stories going back a few generations where potatoes were hollowed out to use as *neiros Chanukah*. (Hence, prompting the *Avnei Nezer* to opine against that practice.) Using olive oil was not even a dream. In America too, eating meat entailed an arduous process of *kashering* before it could be cooked. How to perform *nikur*, *melichah*, and broil liver, have now largely been forgotten. Another upside of the corona lockdown is that many families *kashered* and prepared for Pesach for the first time. Resorts and even parents' homes were not an option.

Introduction

This is a section that we should never have to include again, and that is why we are calling it an “addendum,” rather than a “section.”

Since last Pesach, most of us have experienced a *mageifah* for the first time. My hope is that by the time you read this, Hashem will have rid the world of this plague. However, I think it is worthwhile to examine whether we have gained anything from the experience. This in no way should be construed as not caring about the hundreds of our nation, including Gedolim, Rabbonim, and leaders, who are no longer with us. Nor can we forget the thousands, or perhaps tens of thousands, who were sickened – missing countless *tefillos* and other mitzvos, possibly having long-term side effects from their illness. However, even in a terrible *eis tzarah* we should look to see how we can improve, and how we have improved, based on our experiences.

This addendum will feature some of the thoughts that were written during this time, both by our *Manhigim* and by our members. I will take this space to review what davening was like during this *tekufah* and perhaps derive some lessons from it.

We all remember how it started. That letter from the Vaad HaRabbanim, instructing us to close down our shuls, forbidding any semblance of a minyan. We were all forced to daven at home for an extended period of time. We missed the *devarim shebekedushah*, the *laining*, the *chazaras hashatz*, etc. But we replaced it with a more focused davening in the corners we created in our homes, without the distractions we typically face in shul. Davening took longer, we sang the *nigunim* we enjoyed, we had our children join us. We never came late, we never left early, and we did not talk to anyone during davening. It wasn't the ideal situation, but we made the best of it.

Then came the day we were waiting for. Permission was granted to resume minyanim outdoors, with a bare minimum allowed for a viable minyan. We remember the sweetness of that first minyan and those that followed. Hashem granted us beautiful weather, we all felt the responsibility to come, and we never missed a minyan.



Our first minyan behind the shul

As this enterprise was taking longer than we had hoped, we tried to make ourselves more comfortable.



Finally, the day came when we were permitted to return inside our *Mikdash Me'at*. Yes, we had strict distancing restrictions, mask requirements, and Purell at every seat, but it was so exciting to be davening with the Sifrei Torah in front of us.




We had been concerned all along about how we would be able to manage during the upcoming Yomim Tovim, but somehow even with the restrictions still in place we had beautiful *tefillos* over the Yomim Noraim, through Succos, and even Simchas Torah.

As of this writing during Chodesh Shevat, we still have most of the restrictions in place, but we have somehow become accustomed to the new reality while at the same time anxiously waiting to move on to the next stage with the end of the *mageifah*. By the time you read this, I hope we have reached this point, but how will we be different?

My hope is that just as we appreciated each stage of returning to our customary manner of the *tefillos*, we will fully appreciate it when we will all be able to daven together without masks and distancing. But in addition to this appreciation, I hope we can bring what we gained from our *mageifah* davening to the post-*mageifah* world. We are more focused on the words; we understand more than we had before; we have learned how to say them more carefully. We do not look at our phones at any point during davening. And being distanced, we do not talk at all to anyone from beginning to end. If we can continue at least these practices, we will have accomplished something important.

But I would like to close with a thought about our deprivations that I sent out as 5780 was coming to a close: Does having to wear a mask compare with not being able to bring *bikkurim* to the *Beis HaMikdash*? Does distancing compare with not being able to crowd together at the *simchas beis hasho'eivah*? Does not hearing every word of the *shaliach tzibbur* compare with not hearing the *melech* read *Sefer Devarim* during *hakheil*? Does having to sanitize our hands compare with not having a *parah adumah* to purify us from our *tumah*? Does not seeing our families in person compare with not being able to be *oleh leregél* three times a year, or not being able to be with our families for the *korban Pesach*? Do we complain about the latter deprivations as much as about the former inconveniences?

By the time you read this, I hope we will not need masks, distancing, and sanitizers any more. But I hope more than that that we will have our *simchas beis hasho'eivah*, *hakheil*, *parah adumah*, and *aliyah leregél*. And if *chas veshalom* we have only the former without the latter, let us not become complacent with being back to what we consider “normal.”

We now present the thoughts of our *Manhigim* and our members that were expressed during this trying time. 



A Message
from
Rabbi Yaakov Hillel
Rosh Yeshivat Ahavat Shalom

The Corona Pandemic, 5780

"It is a time of suffering for Yaakov, and from it, he will be saved."

(Yirmiyahu 30:7)

A Changed World

Many friends in *Eretz Yisrael* and abroad have asked for help in understanding the difficult situation we all face as a new disease with no known cure ravages the globe. Our world has been upended. The stock market, countless businesses, and employees in every sector have been hard hit, and wealth and income are frighteningly unstable.

With the spread of the coronavirus, sports stadiums, theatres, restaurants, bars, shopping malls and more, until recently frequented

by thousands, are closed.¹ Overseas and much domestic travel, so popular in our times, is no longer possible. A generation where traditional moral standards have become a relic of the past now contends with “social distancing.” In some cases, people’s whereabouts are being tracked by the authorities to prevent the spread of the disease, infringing on privacy and freedom of movement.

We have great faith in today’s modern medicine, sophisticated hospitals, and highly trained specialists, with good reason. New advances in medicine extend life far beyond what was common in earlier times. X-rays, CAT scans, and MRIs have made the inner workings of the human body an open book. With the arrival of the new coronavirus, Hashem has swept all this and more away. There are not enough hospital beds, there is no known vaccine or cure, and people all over the world are falling ill – tragically, with many fatalities.

No one is immune to the fear and the illness, including the professional athletes, entertainers, politicians, military leaders, and wealthy celebrities idolized by the masses. What is Hashem’s plan, and what does He want of His children, the Jewish people?

The age of prophecy is past, and no mortal being in our generation can fathom the depths of the Creator’s Divine wisdom. However, we can gain important practical insight from our Sages about how to understand and respond to current circumstances, and use them as a springboard for growth.

Egypt

Let us begin by considering an early parallel. Long ago, Hashem turned a very comfortable, very advanced civilization upside down, showing the world that He alone is the Creator and Ruler. Ancient Egypt was a mighty power in its time. They had everything they

¹ Most sports and entertainment events in Israel are held on Shabbat, may G-d spare us, resulting in massive desecration of Shabbat.

needed to guarantee their security: a strong king, an army, great wealth, and sophisticated knowledge. Their vast slave labor force was trapped, with the country's exits all sealed shut by their magicians' spells. The Egyptians believed in the power of their many idols – including Pharaoh himself, who was worshipped as a god – and the Nile, their source of sustenance and life. Their moral standards were disgracefully low (see *Esther Rabbah* 1:16; Rashi, *Shemot* 12:30), but as a nation they were invincible – or so it seemed, until it all came crashing down with the onset of the Ten Plagues. The king, the army, the idols, the money, and the magicians were helpless to stave off the devastation that destroyed their country. They watched as the forces of nature they revered ran wild in a manner so obvious that even the magicians themselves could only acknowledge it as “the finger of G-d” (*Shemot* 8:15).²

Pharaoh trusted in what he perceived to be the sources of his material power: his army, his money, his magic, and his idols. The Plagues left him with nothing. The parallel to our own times is eerily accurate, as the pleasures we so enjoy and the institutions we rely on slip away, one after the other. What does all of this mean us?

In my opinion, there is a clear message in the current crisis. Throughout our lives, we grapple with the constant conflict between physicality and spirituality. Living as we do in a highly materialistic society, all too often we do not make the right choices. A phenomenon of this scope, with the rapid decline of opportunities for pleasure and comfort, does not happen for nothing. We need to reevaluate our

² Pharaoh refused to acknowledge the existence of a G-d Who was intimately involved with man and had a plan for His world. He said, “Who is Hashem that I should listen to His voice?” (*Shemot* 5:2). He accepted only the concept of a deity represented by the name “Elokim” (see *ibid.* 41:38–41), associated with the forces of nature. The Plagues proved beyond all doubt that the world belongs to Hashem and that He rules it entirely as He sees fit (*Shaar HaKavanot, Derush Pesah, Derush Alef*). Even Pharaoh, a self-proclaimed “god” (see Rashi, *Shemot* 7:15), understood this.

priorities, and our understanding of why Hashem has placed us in this world and what He expects of us.

The Roots of Disaster

The Sages teach that calamity has spiritual roots:

“Seven types of calamity come to the world [in punishment] for seven types of sin. When some people separate tithes and some do not separate tithes, a famine caused by drought comes. Some are hungry and some are satisfied. If everyone stopped separating tithes, a famine caused by upheaval and drought comes. And [if everyone stopped] separating hallah,³ a famine of destruction comes.⁴

“Plague comes to the world over the death penalties mentioned in the Torah which were not handed over to the court,⁵ and over [improper use of] the fruits of the Sabbatical year.⁶ The sword [of

³ *Hallah*, a portion separated from a specified quantity of dough, is one of the twenty-four Priestly Gifts given to the *Kohanim*. In our times we are still obligated to separate *hallah*, but the piece of dough designated as *hallah* is burned.

⁴ These sins and their consequences are related to food. The message is clear: if we want to have sufficient food we need to be careful to fulfill the *mitzvot* related to food.

⁵ This refers to judges in a *bet din* who did not do their duty, whether because they did not rule in keeping with Torah law or did not judge at all (Bartenura), or to cases that were out of the hands of the *bet din* (*Tosfot Yom Tov*), whether because the perpetrator fled, or because the necessary conditions were not met (see Rambam, *Hilchot Sanhedrin* 12:1–2).

⁶ It is forbidden to do business with the fruit that grew during *Shemittah*, the Sabbatical year. The owner can only collect as much as needed for the personal use of himself and his family. The rest is *hefker*, ownerless, and anyone may come and take it (*Shevi'it* 9:2; *Avodah Zarah* 62a; Rambam, *Hilchot Shemittah* 6:1).

war] comes to the world over delaying judgment,⁷ and over perverting judgment,⁸ and over those who interpret the Torah not in keeping with halachah.”⁹

The next mishnah continues in a similar vein, driving home the same principle: “Wild beasts come to the world because of false oaths, and because of desecration of Hashem’s Name. Exile comes to the world because of idol worshippers, and because of immorality, and because of bloodshed, and because of failure to observe the Sabbatical year” (*Avot* 5:9). Tragedy, upheaval, and suffering do not just happen; there is a reason, and that reason is the neglect of our obligations as Jews.

Body and Soul

A Jew is composed of both body and soul. The two work together to serve Hashem in this world, a concept alluded to in our Forefather Yaakov’s prophetic dream of “a ladder standing on earth and its head reaching to the Heavens” (*Bereshit* 28:12). We hope and pray that our physical body remains healthy, but our connection to Hashem is through the spiritual soul. There is no end to what we can do to refine and perfect our soul. Every mitzvah we fulfill is its own special, specific bond to Hashem, in a way no other commandment can duplicate – we have 613 ways to connect to Hashem. Torah study in particular, the source and life force of all the mitzvot, forms a bond between Hashem and the Jewish people like no other. In the words of the Zohar, “the Holy One, blessed be He, Israel, and the Torah are one” (*Zohar*, vol. III, p. 73a).

⁷ A case where the judges know the relevant *halachah* but delay issuing the ruling.

⁸ A case where the judges know what the proper ruling should be, but for reasons of their own, knowingly issue a ruling contrary to halachah.

⁹ Ruling incorrectly on halachic questions, whether in a *bet din* or on any other halachic issues, for example, the laws of Shabbat.

The *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) is a constant challenge to our quest for spirituality (see *Sukkah* 52b). It is the source of all evil in this world, and it knows no rest. For close to 6,000 years, it has earned a stellar record for devotion on the job; all day, every day, 365 days a year, it is hard at work causing us to sin. It is a wily opponent, and for the most part, it certainly seems to be winning the battle. It plays on our weaknesses, glorifying an ever-growing, ever-changing array of material nonsense, and trivializing the spirituality that is our true essence. However, if we take the initiative in the fight against it, we will prevail.

We find this concept in the verse, “When you go out to war against your enemies, and Hashem your G-d will give [your enemy] into your hand and you will take captives from him” (Devarim 21:10). When we “go out to war,” taking the offensive in the battle with the evil inclination, surely the worst of all enemies, we will merit Hashem’s help and He will give him over into our hand (*Arizal, Likute Torah, Parashat Ki Tetze, Devarim* 21:14; *Ohr HaHayyim, Devarim* 21:10). This is why our Sages tell us, “Man should always incense his good inclination [to do battle] against his evil inclination” (*Berachot* 5a).¹⁰

How can we overcome the *yetzer hara* and help shape the world in keeping with Hashem’s plan for mankind? By recognizing what we are and what He intends us to be. We are above all a spiritual soul, clothed in a physical body. The body is strictly secondary to the soul – it is important primarily as the tool that enables us to bring

¹⁰ Every time we sin we grant more power to the Forces of Impurity. When we do a *mitzvah*, on the other hand, we diminish their power, restoring it to the Forces of Sanctity. The Arizal interprets the verse in *Iyov* (20:15), “He swallowed wealth and vomited it out” in this context. On a profound level, “wealth” refers to the abundance of *shefa* (spiritual bounty) consumed by the Forces of Impurity when we sin. When we triumph over the *yetzer hara* and do a *mitzvah* or repent our sins, we impel these evil forces to relinquish the *shefa* they have swallowed and return it to the Forces of Sanctity (*Sefer HaLikutim*, p. 60b).

spirituality into the physical world through Torah and mitzvot. The current situation makes this unmistakably clear.

The Beauty of the Soul

The Torah goes on to describe another wartime phenomenon: “And you see in her captivity a beautiful woman, and you desire her and you take her for yourself for a wife” (*Devarim* 21:11). The Arizal interprets this as a reference to the soul.¹¹

A sinner sees only the body and its pleasures and desires – he is oblivious to the soul. When he repents, he becomes capable of a new, greater clarity of vision, and is suddenly aware of the unearthly beauty of the spiritual G-dly soul that is our link to Hashem. Once we can appreciate spirituality, we can understand that Hashem placed us in this world for the sake of the Torah and mitzvot that earn us our eternal reward. At this point, the Torah tells us, “desire her” – strive to make the soul’s beauty your own, and seek to “take her for yourself for a wife.” We should invest in our soul with Torah, *mitzvot*, refined *middot*, and *hesed*, instead of pouring our time and energy solely into the body and its cravings.

Many people today attach excessive importance to designer clothes, shoes, and accessories. They are simply not worth it. We would do far better to work on the soul’s eternal garment, the *haluka d’rabbanan*

¹¹ *Rashi*, citing the Sages, explains that the basis of this commandment was the Torah’s understanding of the heightened power of the yetzer hara that grips a soldier in the flush of victory. If the Torah had forbidden the captive woman, *Rashi* writes, the soldier who craved her would succumb to temptation and sin with her in any case. By following the procedure outlined by the Torah in order to marry her, he will ultimately come to despise her, and get rid of her. This is the literal explanation of this commandment. The *Arizal*’s interpretation is *derush*, an explanation based on Scriptural verses and teachings of the Sages, not necessarily in keeping with the literal meaning.

woven by our Torah and mitzvot in this world. Every word of Torah is another thread in this immeasurably precious piece of spiritual clothing, and that is what really matters.

Holding on to Torah

We are experiencing troubled times, but the Sages teach us how to respond to trouble: “If a person sees that he is afflicted with suffering, he should scrutinize his deeds” (*Berachot* 5a). Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin discusses the basis of this spiritual scrutiny. We have 248 positive commandments and 365 negative commandments, corresponding to our 248 limbs and 365 sinews respectively. If we know which limb or sinew has been stricken, we should analyze our fulfillment of the mitzvah related to the limb or sinew in question. Repenting our transgression of that mitzvah will annul the decree of illness, bringing about a cure (*Nefesh HaHayyim, Shaar Dalet*, chapter 29).

The Gemara continues, “If he scrutinized [his deeds] and did not find [any sins], he should attribute [the suffering] to *bitul Torah*.”¹² Why *bitul Torah*? Because the *mitzvah* of Torah study outweighs all the *mitzvot* combined (*Pe’ah* 1:1), and “is equivalent to all the *mitzvot*” (*Shabbat* 127a). Torah teaches us how to fulfill all the mitzvot, and guides us on the proper path: “The purpose of [Torah] wisdom is repentance and good deeds” (*Berachot* 17a). If Torah study is the greatest of mitzvot, it follows that *bitul Torah* is the gravest of sins.

We can use our current circumstances to study Torah and come closer to Hashem. Our Torah “is a Tree of Life to those who hold on to it, and its supporters are fortunate” (*Mishle* 3:18). In the turbulent world around us, we are like the survivors of a shipwreck struggling to stay afloat amidst the waves. Torah is the lifesaving driftwood that helps us weather the storm (see *Ruah Hayyim, Avot* 6:7).

¹² Neglect of Torah study.

Those who hold on to Torah study will be safe and protected. Supporters of Torah will also have the merit and protection of a connection to Torah study; “The more Torah, the more life” (*Avot* 2:7). Torah study has the power to save the world and our people from calamity, and they too have a share.

Countries that did not take immediate action to halt the spread of the coronavirus by shutting down their accustomed activities and entertainments are paying a terrible price. We as Jews, and in particular, *bne Torah*, can turn the situation around by learning the lessons of these difficult days and doing our part: working on our *middot* and deepening our Torah study. We can annul the decree and bring an abundance of Divine blessing to the world. The Torah world will flourish, with Hashem’s help, and Torah students and scholars will be recognized as the jewel in Hashem’s Crown, and the source of our people’s blessing, sustenance, safety, and protection.

New Perspectives

Contemporary society cherishes a materialistic, pleasure-seeking lifestyle antithetical to Jewish values and traditions – a lifestyle that is now inaccessible. In my opinion, Hashem is showing us what He despises, and what He loves.

He despises hedonism, immorality, and blind adulation of our contemporary idols, and He has removed them from our reach. A principle from the *Zohar* can give us an entirely new perspective on many of the recent changes and restrictions, turning them into a lesson that will last a lifetime: “Light is only appreciated in contrast to darkness” (*Zohar*, vol. II, p.184a).

For example, let us consider Shabbat. Shabbat is a day with a purpose. It elevates physicality to spirituality, imbues the six weekdays with blessing and success, and is an ongoing declaration of a Jew’s trust in

Hashem as the Creator and Provider. Secular society has turned this sacred day into a “weekend,” time off to relax, shop, visit friends, go the beach, and enjoy concerts and sports. Their version of “Shabbat” is unavailable now – they cannot go anywhere, and are forced to stay home with their families. At least in this sense, they are keeping Shabbat. This is an unparalleled opportunity for many estranged, misguided Jews to emerge from darkness to light. They can have a glimpse of Hashem’s Shabbat – free of travel, sports, and cafés – and hopefully come to appreciate what the day can truly be. That is already half the battle. By going on to keep the laws of Shabbat, they can tap into the day’s innate spirituality.

There is also the matter of *kashrut*, a fundamental of Jewish observance. On a spiritual level, forbidden foods contaminate us, dull our intellect, and prevent us from studying Torah. On a practical level, *kashrut* is a powerful safeguard against assimilation – refraining from non-kosher food in all venues obviously limits social interaction with non-Jews, and the serious transgressions that can result. But eating, and especially eating out, has become a culture and a pastime, with many flocking to restaurants, from gourmet to fast food, that are unfortunately not kosher. With the spread of the coronavirus, eating establishments are closed until further notice. As with Shabbat, this is a message and an opportunity. Now that nonobservant Jews have been separated from the spiritual darkness of the non-kosher restaurants they once patronized, they can be more open to making a commitment to *kashrut*, and appreciating the spiritual uplift it provides.

Another example is in a very personal realm: the laws of Family Purity. The society around us is permissive and often perverted. At worst, anything goes. At best, among many respectable people, the idea of separation and restraint within the framework of marriage seems impossible to live with. Today, with the fear of contagion, the rules have changed for everyone. This is an ideal time to appreciate that the discipline of Family Purity is doable and beneficial. Stepping

away from the darkness of constant indulgence can open a couple's eyes to the new light and freshness. Family Purity brings to their marriage month after month, even after many years together.

Alone with Torah

These excesses are what Hashem despises. What does He love? Torah, *mitzvot*, prayer, good *middot*, and *hesed*. Spiritual assets remain available at all times, even if we are confined to our homes. "The Holy One, blessed be He, has nothing in His world other than the four cubits of halachah" (*Berachot* 8a), and He has left these "four cubits" intact even in a world filled with the risk of infection. Nothing is preventing us from praying, studying Torah, keeping mitzvot, educating our children and more, at home.

Hashem has not eliminated our spiritual world – only the material trappings. Even in quarantine, we can take along our Gemara, *siddur*, *tallit*, and *tefillin*. The *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) is present not only among a large number of people gathered to study Torah; it is also there with one solitary Jew who studies Torah (*Avot* 3:6).

Practically speaking, the unusual circumstances suggest specific areas that we can work on. One obvious problem that comes to mind is the unfortunate lack of unity prevalent in our times. Many people prefer not to see and speak to certain fellow Jews, for whatever reason. Hashem is showing us that when our sense of friendship and brotherhood is deficient, He can separate us from one another against our will.

In addition, staying home is an opportunity to work on two often neglected areas: *shalom bayit*, and spending time with our children, including teaching them, talking to them, and encouraging them.

Another important issue is our attitude toward money. The economy worldwide has suffered a serious blow. I have received numerous calls

from people who see their wealth and assets plummeting in value, and they are at a loss.

Many people view their money as their lifeline, and they would never dream of letting go and giving to others. They dedicated their every waking hour to making their millions, and suddenly, it is no longer secure. It is time for us to latch on to the true lifeline of *tzedakah*, *hesed*, and support of Torah study. These are assets that will never lose their value, and they are insurance in these troubled times: “Charity delivers from death” (*Mishle* 10:2). Supporting Torah study has an extra benefit, because Torah has the power to save the world and our people from disaster.

Hashem’s Crown

We mentioned the concept of appreciating light after emerging from darkness, and how the current situation can bring the beauty of mitzvot to light. We can suggest that our response to the coronavirus outbreak highlights the difference between our people and the world at large. We have Torah, mitzvot, and a connection to Hashem, Who is with us wherever we may be. The world fears the new “corona,”¹³ but we have a “crown” of our own, the *tefillin* we wear every weekday on our arm and our head (*Devarim* 6:8, 11:18).¹⁴ The hand *tefillin* corresponds to the heart, and the head *tefillin*, to the brain.¹⁵ The hand and the head also represent physical strength and intellectual capacities. If they are directed to Torah and *mitzvot*, we can sanctify the body by using it as a vehicle for service of Hashem.

¹³ The virus is named “corona” (crown) because when viewed under a sophisticated microscope, its appearance is reminiscent of a crown.

¹⁴ The Sages teach that the verse, “And all the nations of the land will see that Hashem’s Name is called upon you, and they will fear you” (*Devarim* 28:10) refers to the head *tefillin* (*Berachot* 6a).

¹⁵ The hand *tefillin* is worn facing the heart in order to control the desires of the heart, and of the evil inclination that dwells there. The head *tefillin* controls and purifies the thoughts of the brain (*Shulhan Aruch Orach Hayyim* 25:5).


The world around us is having a hard time without its pubs and stadiums. We, who wear Hashem's crown, are capable of far more than that. We can give spirituality prominence over physicality, and uplift physicality, transforming it into spirituality. This is service of Hashem on a lofty level. I often say that our Free Will comes down to two basic choices: we can choose to live the life of a cat, scampering about and scavenging for scraps, or we can choose to be a human being, living a life of Torah and *mitzvot*. With Hashem's help we can choose light over darkness during these difficult days, and merit His salvation.

Pesah will soon be here, and we will recall the exodus from Egypt and the miracles and wonders Hashem wrought for our ancestors. Let us learn the lessons of the events we are living through, and internalize a basic, essential fact. The world and all that transpires is Hashem's alone. As he did in Egypt, He sets nature aside as He wills, and can heal us and protect us from all harm.

May Hashem grant us complete recovery, happiness, success, and good health. We hope and pray that in the merit of our increased dedication to the spiritual treasures of Torah and *mitzvot*, we will very soon see the end of this Divine decree, and the entire world will recognize that *en od Milvado* – there is none other than Him (*Devarim* 4:35).

This essay contains divre Torah. Please treat it with proper respect.

To put your name on our e-mail list, please contact us at
office@ahavatshalom.org.il¹⁶

¹⁶ Thank you, Aitan Zacharin, for sending us this valuable *hadrachah* in the beginning of this *matzav* and getting permission for us to reprint it in our *Kuntress*. 

Sometimes Mashiach Is Not the Solution¹

Rabbi Aharon Lopiansky

"Rebbi?" The voice on the other end of the line was a former talmid, now teaching in a girls' school. "Basically, the girls want to know if they should get their tambourines ready to celebrate and welcome Mashiach."

I received this call in the weeks between Purim and Pesach. A number of other calls soon followed, all asking some variation of the same question: "What's the point of doing anything (or davening for anything) other than awaiting Mashiach?"

At first, these calls imparted a positive feeling — *Mi k'amcha Yisrael*. However, I gradually began to feel deeply troubled by the emerging realization that we have never properly taught our children about Mashiach.

I would like to voice two concerns, and then try to describe what should be at the heart of our awaiting Mashiach.

My first concern is our deep ignorance of Jewish history — or any history for that matter. It is simply mind-boggling to hear people state that "Never has anything like this happened before. This virus must be heralding the coming of Mashiach!"

History quickly negates that thought. Cholera and typhus epidemics (and sometimes pandemics) regularly swept through Europe. Women commonly died in childbirth. Appendicitis was usually deadly. Any memoir written before "the war years" almost always features death

¹ Printed with permission by Rabbi Lopiansky and Mishpacha Magazine, www.mishpacha.com, where this was originally featured in Issue 812.

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as a central part of family life. The typical account of yeshivah life in Europe inevitably records the tragic *petirah* of at least one *bochur*. Towns were often destroyed by fires that ravaged the wooden homes in an instant, rendering entire populations homeless and penniless.

In more recent times, we had the polio epidemic. During the pre-polio-vaccine era (circa the early 1950s) if a child woke up with a fever, his parents rightfully worried that he would spend the rest of his life in an iron lung or a wheelchair (as happened to my first cousin).

This “never-ever” perspective extends to many other areas of current events. I often hear that “Never, ever has there been so much anti-Semitism.” This sentiment is astonishing! Even putting aside the Holocaust for a moment, there are people alive today who have lived in countries where the normal legal status of a Jew was second- or third-class citizen. Throwing rocks at Jews in public was the norm rather than the exception.

And most disconcerting is the claim that “Never, ever has the Jewish Nation experienced such spiritual decline.” Yiddishkeit literally disintegrated from the mid-1700s until World War II, with enormous numbers of Yidden abandoning it completely. The postwar renaissance is nothing short of a miracle. Of course, there are some issues that challenge our generation more than previous generations and there is much to improve, but that does not belie the general picture of the state of our Yiddishkeit relative to other generations.

I understand that a speaker may resort to “never-ever” as a rhetorical flourish, but should our real understanding of events be based on such an egregious dearth of historical context?

We need to teach our children history. And that history needs to include much more than dry names and dates and stories of *gedolim*. They need to have an accurate understanding of the experiences of the

Jewish communities of each generation – the daily life, the hardships, the challenges, the successes, and the wounds. The pasuk implores us to “contemplate the years of each generation.”

Besides not allowing us to understand the events unfolding, our ignorance of history does not allow us to duly thank Hashem for the wonderful times we live in! How much *hakaras hatov* do we owe, for the plentiful food, advanced medical knowhow, tolerant governments, and incredible *siyata d'Shmaya* for our spiritual growth.

A wise man once said, “Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it.”

The second source of distress is the current Mashiach fervor. Klal Yisrael has had many “Mashiach is here” moments. Read the excellent *Mashichei Hasheker U'misnagdeihem* (all 700 pages) of Rabbi Binyomin Hamburger, and you will get a feel for how numerous and how destructive these movements were.

Even in best-case scenarios where no false Mashiach or ideology takes root, the fervor still comes with a devastating downside. Just as a person who summons up adrenaline reaches an exhilarating high, only to crash and feel an equally dramatic letdown afterward, so too do we become emotionally spent and cynical if our “Mashiach moment” passes by unfulfilled.

Someone recently told me a story about Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky (which the family later confirmed). A rav excitedly told Reb Yaakov about a member of his shul who was not shomer Shabbos, but was prompted by a “Mashiach is coming” moment to finally close his store on Shabbos.

Reb Yaakov told the rav to tell this congregant, “I [Rav Yaakov] assure you Mashiach is not coming.” He explained, “Right now, he is

a *mechallel* Shabbos, but at least he's a believer. But when this frenzy blows over, and Mashiach hasn't come, he will stop believing as well." The absence of historical context and the danger of messianic fervor are two concerns. But more important is to properly understand to explain what Mashiach is all about.

One of my rebbeim, Reb Yitzchok Tendler, once used the following *marshal* to illustrate our lack of understanding of Mashiach and *Geulah*: A man walked by a shul on Tishah B'Av and saw the congregation wailing and crying. He turned to an elderly man saying *Kinnos* and asked, "Excuse me, but what are you crying about?"

"Our Temple was destroyed," the elderly fellow said.

"So what?" the passerby asked.

The man was a bit confused. He thought for a moment and answered, "It says that from the day that the Temple was destroyed, meat has lost all taste!" (*Pa'aneach Raza-Bo*)

"But doesn't it say," the passerby said, "that the taste is now in the marrow of the bone (ibid.)? Why don't you simply chew the bones and then suck the marrow?"

"Well, I have dentures, and they're not quite up to the task," replied the elderly gentleman.

"I see," reflected the questioner. "You are mourning the loss of your teeth."

When we describe Mashiach as solving our health issues, shidduch crisis, legal issues, and so on, we are looking for a solution to a personal issue. Our yearning has nothing to do with Mashiach; it has

to do with our blood pressure, our bank account, the IRS, or our child waiting for a shidduch.

So what is Mashiach and what, in fact, should we be eagerly awaiting? The *Rambam*, at the end of the *Yad HaChazakah*, defines it for us most clearly. It is perhaps the only halachic sefer dealing with Mashiach, and should be our firm starting point for any ideas or thoughts about this topic.

By listing what Mashiach will accomplish, the *Rambam* implies what we are missing in the absence of the *Geulah* and Mashiach. I will try to paraphrase his breakdown by describing four categories:

1. Mashiach will restore our nationhood by reinstating a central authority. We are no longer/not yet a nation in the full sense. A nation is an entity that has a framework whereby it can act as a unit. Without Mashiach, we have no head, no authority, no structure, no enforcement. We can have rousing speeches, ringing *kol-koreis*, an inspirational Siyum HaShas, and stern admonitions, but we do only what we wish to do. Even for the people who are sympathetic to the values expressed in the proclamations, there is very little specific follow-through.

Yes, thankfully we have our *gedolei* Torah, but even that seems to be subjective depending on who you are speaking to. For those who point to “The Moetzes” as “leadership,” I would ask, do you mean Agudah’s Moetzes, Degel’s Moetzes, Peleg’s Moetzes, or Shas’s Moetzes Chachamei HaTorah? Is it the Crown Heights Beis Din? And what about Satmar and others who do not subscribe to any of the above? And Centrist Orthodox and Modern Orthodox? And the many Yidden who do not fit into any of those categories?

In our current state, so many frustrating issues that require “law and enforcement” are in hopeless abandonment. So many of our monetary

disagreements are adjudicated in secular courts because we simply don't have the apparatus to effectively force the issues into our *batei dinim*. And this applies certainly to *agunah* issues and much more. Mashiach will be our king and will have the authority to restore our national apparatus; we will then be a nation with the full significance of that word.

2. Mashiach will restore the wholeness of the Jewish People. While we Torah-observant Jews rightfully take pride in our achievements, the vast, vast majority of Klal Yisrael is evaporating. The people who have married out, dropped their connection to Yiddishkeit, and/or have gone “off the derech” are all bona-fide members of Klal Yisrael. If we are missing 90 or even “just” 80 percent, or even one soul, then we are not Klal Yisrael!

We tend to think of “ourselves” — the Torah-observant community — as Klal Yisrael, and the others as a reservoir of potential additions. It's the other way around! Klal Yisrael is the sum total of all of us, and we are missing 90 percent of our “self.”

Thus, the second mission of Mashiach is to restore “*nidchei Yisrael*,” the forgotten souls of Klal Yisrael.

3. Mashiach will restore Torah to Klal Yisrael. We identify ourselves as “*shomrei Torah u'mitzvos*,” and we do live up to that description. Yet we keep at best a minority of the mitzvos. We do not observe *Kodshim*, *Taharos*, much of *Zeraim*, Sanhedrin, *kenasos*, and on and on. True, it is not our fault, but if we genuinely believe that mitzvos perfect a man, we are woefully lacking. Mashiach's third task is to restore all of the mitzvos that were performed at the time of the Beis HaMikdash.

4. Mashiach will restore the Divine Presence. We have no way to describe *Shechinah* or Divine Presence, except perhaps as “a sense of

immanence or connection.” One malaise of our times is that although we seem to be doing everything right, we still don’t feel a sense of reciprocity; i.e., that Hashem is there, waiting for us and accepting our offerings.

In *Parshas Shemini*, the Divine Presence is described as the fire descending from Heaven and “consuming” our offering. There was a time when we saw and heard that “Your deeds and offerings are pleasing to Me.”

Of all the mitzvos, *aliyah l’regel* expresses this sense of connection most strongly. The *Rambam* (*Beis HaBechirah* 1:1) says that the purpose of the Beis HaMikdash is for *korbanos* and *aliyah l’regel*. The mitzvah of *aliyah l’regel* is meant to recharge our spiritual batteries by “connecting” to Hashem three times a year; as the *Kuzari* describes it, “to be invited to sit at the King’s table.” Mashiach’s fourth task, then, is to restore that sense of “presence” and “connection” that we describe as the *Shechinah*.

One Tishah B’Av, I heard this point powerfully presented by HaRav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik. He said, “People say to me, ‘We have Eretz Yisrael, Yerushalayim, and even the Kosel. Why are we still mourning as intensely as ever?’

He said, “I reply, ‘Have you ever seen an estranged son sitting at his father’s table? There is only one foot of distance between their bodies, but a thousand miles between their hearts! This creates an unbearable tension, intensified, not ameliorated, by their physical proximity.’ So too, to be so close, yet so estranged...”

Thus, the lack of HaKadosh Baruch Hu’s “Presence” or palpable manifestation of any desire to “connect” with us is the fourth aspect of galus that Mashiach will rectify.

So how does our understanding of these four losses translate into yearning for Mashiach? When and how should we express our yearning?

Imagine that you are at a wedding of very fine people. At the end of the *chasunah*, as you wish mazel tov to one of the *mechutanim*, he remarks, “I wish that my late parents were alive and with us tonight.” Your eyes mist and you cluck sympathetically, and he continues, “...because they would have picked up the bill!”

What would you think of him?

When we wish for Mashiach to pay our bills, heal our ailments, or help us with any other of our myriad needs, is that called yearning for Mashiach?

What is this yearning supposed to feel like? To me, it is a feeling like the painful hollowness and sorrow I experience when I attend a simchah where a family member is missing: where a parent has not come to a wedding out of anger; a child has not invited a parent out of spite; a son fallen in battle is not there; or a “lost” daughter is missing in the family picture. Because of the extraordinary joy that should have been felt, the emptiness is so sharply painful.


Quite a few years ago, I attended the wedding of a wonderful bochur. He was a budding *talmid chacham*, talented in many areas, handsome, and full of personality. His father had passed away a few years back, but the family had continued on resolutely and flourished. The *mechutanim* were very prominent people, and the ruach at the wedding was heavenly.

After the *badeken*, the spirited crowd danced the regal *chassan* to his room, and I walked in to help him with some last-minute items. As soon as the door closed, the chassan put his arms around me, crumpled, and sobbed uncontrollably. I understood. The event was

magnificent — but someone was missing. And that meant that everything was missing.

The time and place to yearn for Mashiach is especially when we are at our magnificent best. We have Torah and *gedulah*; we are marrying off our wonderful daughter to a great *metzuyan*. Everything and everybody are in attendance, and everything we could have wished for has been fulfilled.

But as we look around, a great void fills us. The surrounding laughter and gaiety throw into stark relief the pain and emptiness that we feel. And we say to ourselves, “What’s the point of it? He is not here, nor is His presence felt.”

That is yearning for Mashiach. ^א

Making Up Missed *Parshiyos* ¹

Rabbi Abba Zvi Naiman

During the *mageifah*, the Gedolim in many communities ruled that we should not have minyanim because of *pikuach nefesh*. When the shuls were permitted to function again, the question arose about *laining* the *Parshiyos* that were not read during the weeks the shuls were closed. We will discuss the various opinions in the case of our community, which canceled minyanim from the double *Parshah* of *Vayakhel-Pikudei* and did not reopen until *Parshas Bamidbar*.

The *Rama* rules (*Orach Chaim* 135:2): *If they cancelled (בטלו, bitlu) reading the Parshah in the tzibbur for one Shabbos, they should read it the next Shabbos with the Parshah of that Shabbos.*

We will explore two issues with this *psak*. (1) The *Rama* talks about missing one *Parshah*. What happens if more than one *Parshah* was missed as in our case? (2) What is included in the word “*bitlu*,” when the *Rama* says that they did not read the *Parshah*?

§ Missing More than One *Parshah*

The first issue is addressed by the *Mishnah Berurah*. He writes (135:6): *If they missed many Shabbasos, some say that on the next Shabbos they should read only the Parshah of the previous Shabbos, and some say that it is necessary to complete with the tzibbur all the Parshiyos that were missed. And from the Beur HaGra it seems that he agrees with the first opinion.*

The two opinions are those of the *Maharam Mintz* and the *Elyah Rabbah*, respectively, as the *Mishnah Berurah* writes in his *Shaar*

¹ This *sugya* first appeared in my *Kuntres HaKetores* that I published during the *mageifah*.

HaTziyun. Before we examine these opinions, we need to study the source of the entire concept of making up a missed *Parshah*, the *Ohr Zarua*.

The *Ohr Zarua* (*Hil. Shabbos* §45) is talking about an incident that occurred in a town called Klonya. On Shabbos *Parshas Emor*, someone lodged a complaint before *Kerias haTorah*, and the ensuing argument prevented the *Parshah* from being read that day.² The next Shabbos, R' Eliezer the son of R' Shimon, *zt"l*, ruled that they should read *Emor* together with *Behar* in order that no *Parshah* should be skipped from the Torah readings. He explained that from the times of Moshe Rabbeinu there was a *takanah* to read the entire Torah each and every year so people would learn the mitzvos and laws. And he added that there is no reason to say that the *Parshah* has to be read specifically on the intended Shabbos.

This *Ohr Zarua* is cited by the *Sefer HaAgudah* in *Megillah* (*Perek HaKorei* §30), where he says simply that if on one Shabbos they missed the *Parshah*, they should read two *Parshiyos* in the coming week. The *Teshuvos Maharam Mintz* (§85) notes that the *Agudah* said only if they missed the *laining* on one Shabbos, they read two *Parshiyos* the next Shabbos. He did not say that if they missed several *Parshiyos* in a row, they should make them all up the first Shabbos they can. And he adds that this makes sense because otherwise there would be no end to it. The only reason we add the one *Parshah* is because we sometimes find during the year that we have a double *Parshah*. But since we never *lain* three *Parshiyos* on a Shabbos, if they missed *laining* for two weeks, they do not *lain* all three *Parshiyos* the next Shabbos.

The *Maharam Mintz* takes this one step further. In the case he was writing about, the shul in Worms was *laining* a double *Parshah*,

² This was a custom in their times based on a *takanah* of Rabbeinu Gershom.

Vayakhel-Pikudei. An argument broke out towards the end of *Pikudei*, and they were not able to complete the *laining*. The question arose as to whether this shul had to *lain* these *Parshiyos* together with *Vayikra* the following Shabbos. The *Maharam Mintz* wrote that based on his reasoning they should not *lain* all three *Parshiyos* the next week because we never find three *Parshiyos* read on a given Shabbos. And there was also no point in *laining* just *Pekudei* with *Vayikra*, because it would not accomplish compensating for the missed *Parshah* of the previous week, since both *Parshiyos* were supposed to be read then.

In this particular case, the *Maharam Mintz* adds another problem. The *Parshah* that was missed was in *Sefer Shemos*. The *Parshah* of the following week would begin *Sefer Vayikra*. In his opinion, it is not possible to combine a *Kerias HaTorah* of two different *Chumashim*. This is so because when there is a double *Parshah* we call up one *aliyah* to read the end of the first *Parshah* and continue into the next so the *laining* does not seem disjointed. In this case, he writes ז"ה אינו בכ"ן, *it is not proper*, for one person to *lain* from two *Chumashim* because there is supposed to be a separation between each *Chumash*. There is also the *minhag* to shout out *chazak*, or something similar, when a *Chumash* is finished, and this is not proper to do in the middle of the *aliyah*. Therefore, the *Maharam Mintz* concluded that they should *lain* only *Vayikra* the following week.

We learn the following *halachos* from the *Maharam Mintz*: (1) The rule of the *Ohr Zarua* applies only to a single *Parshah* that was missed. If more than one *Parshah* was missed, only the *Parshah* of the previous week is read with the current *Parshah*. (2) If the previous week was a double *Parshah*, no *Parshah* is added to the current *Parshah* because we never find a case where three *Parshiyos* are read together, and reading just one would not replace what was missed. (3) If the previous week was the end of a *Sefer* (for example, *Vayechi*), it is also not added to the current *Parshah*, because we cannot read two *Chumashim* together.

The *Magen Avraham* (135:4) cites the latter two rulings of the *Maharam Mintz*. However, in between them, he inserts in parenthesis that the *Hagahos Minhagim* disagrees with the *Maharam Mintz*.

The *Elyah Rabbah* is the second opinion mentioned by the *Mishnah Berurah*. He quotes the *Hagahos Minhagim* disputing the *Maharam Mintz* about the case of repeating a double *Parshah* from the previous week. He adds that it makes sense that no *Parshah* should be skipped. He then cites a *Gilyon Mordechai Katan* that says from the times of Moshe Rabbeinu there is a *takanah* for the public to hear the *Parshiyos*. He therefore concludes that even if they missed *Kerias HaTorah* for two or three Shabbasos, they should read all the missed *Parshiyos*, in dispute with the second ruling of the *Maharam Mintz*. But he then quotes the third ruling of the *Maharam Mintz* about not combining two *Chumashim*, without disputing it.

It would seem that the dispute between the *Maharam Mintz* and *Elyah Rabbah* centers on the justification in making up a missed *Kerias HaTorah*. According to the *Maharam Mintz*, it is because we find that sometimes we read a double *Parshah*, so we can do the same whenever a *Parshah* was missed. But we never read three *Parshiyos* on a regular Shabbos, so if two weeks were missed, we do not read all three the next week. According to the *Elyah Rabbah*, the reason we make up a missed *Parshah* is because there is a *takanah* from the times of Moshe Rabbeinu to read the entire Torah during the course of the year. This is very similar to the reasoning we find in the *Ohr Zarua* himself, as cited above.

However, we must add that the *Ohr Zarua* mentions another issue about adding a *Parshah* to the *Kerias HaTorah* – *torach hatzibur*, troubling the *tzibbur* to sit through both *Parshiyos*. But the *Ohr Zarua* concludes that we learn from *Meseches Sofrim* (11:6) that we repeat *Kerias HaTorah* of an entire *Parshah* because of a mistake in a single *pasuk*. Certainly, then, if the entire *Parshah* was not read, we should

not have to be concerned about *torach hatzibur*, since anyway we often have a double *Parshah*. It would seem from this reasoning, though, that the *Ohr Zarua* could agree that reading more than two *Parshiyos* could present a problem of *torach hatzibur*.³

Many *Poskim* pick sides between the two opinions. We will skip some generations to see what the *Mishnah Berurah* and the *Aruch HaShulchan* hold.⁴

³ We can understand why the *Mishnah Berurah* provides the *Elyah Rabbah*, rather than the *Ohr Zarua*, as the source for the view that requires making up the *Kerias HaTorah* for many missed weeks. The *Ohr Zarua* was talking about a case where they had missed only one *Parshah*. Even though his reasoning is based on the *takanah* of Moshe Rabbeinu to complete the Torah reading each year, he might still agree with the reasoning of the *Maharam Mintz*. And as we have just seen, he does say only that reading two *Parshiyos* does not result in *torach hatzibur*, since that often happens in normal circumstances. Even the *Hagahos Minhagim* cited by the *Magen Avraham* and others disputes only the *Maharam Mintz's* opinion about repeating a double *Parshah*. The *Elyah Rabbah* is the first who clearly disputes the *Maharam Mintz* regarding multiple *Parshiyos*.

⁴ For those who do not want to skip generations, here are some of the *Poskim* that I saw, in no particular order:

- The *Pri Chadash* (end of 144:1) disagrees with the *Maharam Mintz's* ruling about not combining *Parshiyos* from two *Sefarim*.
- R' Shlomo Kluger (*Chochmas Shlomo* 135:2) writes that if either a double *Parshah* was missed or the new week is a double *Parshah*, we do not make up the missed *Kerias HaTorah*.
- The *Maharam Schick* (*Orach Chaim* §335 ד"ה והנה) quotes the *Chasam Sofer* who says that his teacher, *HaRav Nosson Adler*, actually had a case where he ruled that multiple *Parshiyos* should be read.
- The *Toras Chaim* (*Sofer* 135:3) concludes that it is clear that we make up only one missed *Parshah*.
- The *Shevus Yaakov* (3:7) mentions that the *Maharam Mintz* derived several laws from the *Ohr Zarua*, giving the impression that he agrees with him.
- The *Chida* (*Teshuvos Chaim Shaal* 2:16) sides with the *Elyah Rabbah* not to miss any *Parshiyos*.

We first have to recall that the *Mishnah Berurah* cited the *Beur HaGra* as siding with the opinion that only one *Parshah* should be added. But as we see from the *Mishnah Berurah's* *Shaar HaTziyun*, the *Gra z"l* has different reasoning than the way we understood the *Maharam Mintz*. The *Beur HaGra* understands the *Rama's* ruling to make up a missed *Parshah* to be based on the similar case of someone who missed davening *Shemoneh Esrei*. The *Mishnah Berurah* notes that in the case of a missed *Shemoneh Esrei*, only the previous *tefillah* can be made up. If someone missed two *tefillos*, he can make up only the previous *tefillah*. In the same way, he thinks that the *Gra* would hold that if a *tzibur* missed *Kerias HaTorah* for two weeks, only the *Parshah* of the previous one can be added to the current *Parshah*.⁵

The *Beur HaGra* is therefore similar to the *Maharam Mintz* in trying to find a justification in making up a missed *Kerias HaTorah*. However, where the *Maharam Mintz* finds a precedent in a typical double *Parshah*, the *Gra z"l* finds his precedent in the laws of a missed *Shemoneh Esrei*. Either way, only one *Parshah* can be added to the current *Parshah*.⁶

Now, back to the *Mishnah Berurah*. From the way the *Beur HaGra* is cited after mentioning the dispute between the *Maharam Mintz* and *Elyah Rabbah*, it seems that he prefers the approach of adding only one *Parshah*. He then (§7) cites the *Maharam Mintz's* opinion about

⁵ It should be noted that *Tos. Maaseh Rav* (§34) reports that when the *Gra z"l* was released from an unjustifiable stay in jail, he asked the *Baal Korei* to read the four *Parshiyos* that he had missed.

⁶ The *Maharam Schick* (*Orach Chaim* §335 ד"ה והנה), too, writes clearly that the *Maharam Mintz* does not seem to be basing his ruling of not reading more than two *Parshiyos* from the *tashlumin* for a missed *Shemoneh Esrei*. Rather, it is because we never find more than two *Parshiyos* read together. *Toras Chaim* (Sofer 135:3) also makes this distinction between the two reasons, and adds that according to the reasoning of the *Maharam Mintz* we can understand why there is no difference between whether the missed *Parshah* was deliberate (in which case one does not make up a missed *Shemoneh Esrei*) or inadvertent.

a double *Parshah* that was missed, adding that the *Hagahos Minhagim*, followed by the *Elyah Rabbah*, disagrees with the *Maharam Mintz*, and the *Magen Gibburim* seems to agree with them. In this issue, the *Mishnah Berurah* apparently holds that they should read all three *Parshiyos* the following week. Finally, he cites the *Maharam Mintz*'s opinion about not mixing together two *Chumashim*, and he says that some disagree with him on this. But here the *Mishnah Berurah* concludes by citing the *Shulchan Atzei Shitim*, who says that if someone wants to combine two *Chumashim* אין מוזהין בידו, *we should not protest*. This implies that the preferred practice is not to combine the two.

Let us see how the *Mishnah Berurah*'s preferences fit our case where all the *Parshiyos* from *Vayakhel-Pikudei* through *Bamidbar* were missed.

The first issue is that there was certainly more than one *Parshah* missed. In this case, the *Mishnah Berurah* prefers the opinion of the *Maharam Mintz* that we make up only one *Parshah* when we begin again.⁷ However, the previous week was actually the double *Parshah* of *Behar-Bechukosai*, in which case the *Maharam Mintz* holds that we do not add any *Parshah* the next week. But in this issue, the *Mishnah Berurah* seemed to side with the *Elyah Rabbah* that we do make up the previous week's *Parshah* even if it was double. Now, we have the third issue that we have been discussing – combining *Parshiyos* from two *Chumashim*, *Behar-Bechukosai* from *Sefer Vayikra* with the first *Parshah* of *Sefer Bamidbar*. In this issue, the *Mishnah Berurah* prefers the practice of the *Maharam Mintz* not to mix two *Chumashim*. In conclusion, according to the *Mishnah Berurah*, no *Parshah* would be added to *Parshas Bamidbar*.

⁷ We should also remember that the *Ohr Zarua* himself seemed to say that there would be an issue of *torach hatzibur* in reading more than two *Parshiyos*.

The *Aruch HaShulchan* (135:6), though, has a completely different approach to this issue. He rules very simply that in all cases every *Parshah* that was missed should be read the first available Shabbos. He apparently agrees with the approach of the *Elyah Rabbah* that there is an obligation for each *kehillah* to read the entire Torah during the course of the year, without concern that it be read in the expected calendar week.⁸

§ What is included in the word “*bitlu*”?

We now move to the second issue. The *Rama* says that they *bitlu*, canceled, the *Kerias HaTorah*. As explained above, the case in the *Ohr Zarua* that is the source of this ruling is where someone's complaint blocked the *Kerias HaTorah* of a shul that Shabbos. The case of the *Maharam Mintz*, as well, involved a person who blocked the *Kerias HaTorah* in his minyan.

This is also the way the other Poskim talk about this ruling. For example, the *Mishnah Berurah* (135:5) writes that they canceled the *Kerias HaTorah* “because of an argument or something similar.” The word *bitlu* is being used like the term *bitul chametz*, where someone has *chametz* and he nullifies it. Here, too, we are talking about where there was a need to read the Torah, and someone blocked the reading.

⁸ Here are the views of some other Poskim, in no particular order:

- The *Kaf HaChaim* (135:5) cites many Poskim who agree with the *Hagahos Minhagim* and the *Elyah Rabbah*. However, he concludes with the *Pesach HaDevir* who holds that it is not proper for one person to read two *Sefarim*, as the *Maharam Mintz* says.
- The *Maharsham* (*Daas Torah* 135:2) cites many Poskim who dispute the *Maharam Mintz's* ruling about not making up a double *Parshah* the next week.
- The *Orchos Chaim* (Spinka 135:3) cites Poskim who agree with the *Elyah Rabbah* that they are allowed to read all the *Parshiyos* they missed during the next Shabbos. If they were in two different *Sefarim*, he cites a view that three people should be called up to the last *Parshah* and four to the current one, rather than have one person read from two *Sefarim*.

Understood this way, the rulings we have been discussing would not be relevant to a case where there was no minyan at all that Shabbos. In that case, *Kerias HaTorah* was not canceled. There was simply no minyan where the Torah could be read.

This is, in fact, what the *Shaarei Ephraim* says. He first (7:9) follows the rulings of the *Maharam Mintz* about making up only the last *Parshah* that was missed, and if the previous Shabbos was a double *Parshah* not to make it up at all. However, for this he rules that if someone wants to read all the *Parshiyos* that were missed אין מזניחין אותו, *we do not reject him*.⁹ He then adds the last ruling of the *Maharam Mintz* and concludes that it is not proper to read *Parshiyos* from different *Sefarim*. He concludes by saying to look further in *se'if* §39.

In *se'if* §39, the *Shaarei Ephraim* writes that the rules he stated earlier apply only if a minyan canceled the *Kerias HaTorah* during the previous Shabbos. But if there was simply no minyan that Shabbos, there is no need to make up for that *Parshah* the following Shabbos. The *Pischei She'arim* there explains that all the rulings about making up a missed *Parshah* apply to people who were obligated to read the Torah but were prevented from doing so. If, however, there was no minyan, there was no obligation to start with.¹⁰

The *Shaarei Ephraim* is pointing out that the obligation to read the *Parshah* each week is not an obligation placed on each individual as, for example, the obligation of *Kerias Shema*. The obligation is placed on a *tzibur* of ten men who are davening in a minyan. They are required to read the weekly *Parshah*. But if there was no minyan to start with, there was no one who became obligated to read the

⁹ See *Chullin* 7a for this expression.

¹⁰ Rav Shlomo Kluger presents similar reasoning in his *Sefer HaChaim* (§135), and then adds that he afterwards saw the *Shaarei Ephraim*.

Parshah. Therefore, when they get together the next week, they have an obligation to read that week's *Parshah*, not the one of the previous week.

However, a careful reading of the *Shevus Yaakov* (3:7) might show that he disagrees with the reasoning of the *Shaarei Ephraim*. He discusses a small village that occasionally does not have a minyan. The question is if the community has to make up the missed *Parshah* every time there is no minyan. He notes that the *Rama* talks about where they canceled the reading *one* Shabbos, implying that this was a one-time event. If they would regularly cancel the reading, though, the *Rama* would hold that they would not make up the *Parshah* each time they missed. This is so because the custom accepted by *Klal Yisrael* is to read the *Parshah* according to the regular weekly schedule. To constantly add another *Parshah* to the *Parshah* of the week would be a breakdown of *Klal Yisrael's* custom.¹¹ He further notes that the *Ohr Zarua's* case where an argument prevented the *Kerias HaTorah* was also a one-time event.

Now, since the *Shevus Yaakov* is talking about a village that did not have a minyan, he apparently does not agree with the *Shaarei Ephraim's* reasoning that the entire law does not apply in that case. It applies, but only on a one-time basis. The question, though, remains regarding what he would hold in a case like our *mageifah*, where many *Parshiyos* were missed consecutively.¹²

¹¹ The *Shaarei Rachamim* (to the *Shaarei Ephraim* 9:3) quotes similar reasoning from the *Sefer Zecher Dovid* who writes that every Shabbos has its own unique *shefa*, which is reflected by the *Parshah*. (There is also the well-known *Shel"i HaKadosh*, who writes that the *Parshas hashavua* is always related to the special days on the calendar, giving the example of the *Parshiyos* of Yosef HaTzaddik being read around Chanukah time.) The *Shaarei Rachamim* therefore wonders why this reasoning does not play a role in the discussion of making up missed *Parshiyos*.

¹² We should presume that the Poskim who hold that all the missed *Parshiyos* should be read are not talking about a case where there happened to be a fight

The *Chida* (*Chaim Shaal* 1:71 §5), though, clearly disagrees with the *Shaarei Ephraim*. He talks about a small village that had only ten people in its minyan, and one Shabbos a member was too sick to come to shul. He rules that on the next Shabbos they should read both *Parshiyos*. It is unlikely that he would make a difference between that case and where there was no one at all in shul the previous Shabbos.

The *Chida* apparently holds that there is an obligation on a community to read the weekly *Parshah*. Therefore, even if on one Shabbos there was no minyan, the people as a community have to make up the missed *Parshah* the next Shabbos. The *Shevus Yaakov* agrees with this on a one-time basis, but he holds that if this were an ongoing problem, the result would be a *Kerias HaTorah* that was totally out of sync with the Jewish calendar.

§ Conclusion

Let us go back to our case where all the *Parshiyos* from *Vayakhel-Pikudei* through *Bamidbar* were missed. We have seen that according to the *Mishnah Berurah* no *Parshah* should be added to *Parshas Bamidbar*, while according to the *Aruch HaShulchan* all the missed *Parshiyos* should be read.

Now we have learned that this entire discussion might not be relevant to our case because those Poskim were talking about cases where people were at a minyan where the *Kerias HaTorah* was blocked. Since they were obligated to hear the *Parshah*, there is reason for them to make it up the next week. However, when there was no minyan at all, the obligation never existed, and there might consequently be no need to make up the missed weeks. Therefore, even those who side

every week for several weeks in a row. Perhaps from their very *psak* to read all the *Parshiyos* we should assume that they are talking about a case where there was no minyan for several weeks, a more likely possibility. On the other hand, they typically talk about missing “three or four weeks.” Perhaps there could be disputes in the shul for that amount of time.

with the *Elyah Rabbah* in opposition to the *Maharam Mintz* could agree that when there was no minyan, the *Parshah* would not be made up.¹³

Generally, when there is a dispute among the Poskim, there is no problem in acting according to the more stringent view, and it could even be praiseworthy to do so. For example, in the case of the different opinions about how much matzah one needs to eat to fulfill the mitzvah at the Seder, one may eat as much as he wants to make sure he has fulfilled all the opinions (unless it becomes an *achilah gassah*). And in the case of how long one has to wait after sunset for Shabbos to end, one may act stringently and wait until the opinion of the latest time. In our case of the missed *Parshiyos*, we might say that since according to the *Mishnah Berurah* we do not have to make them up while according to the *Aruch HaShulchan* we do have to make them up, we will act stringently to read all of them the first available week.

However, this is not so simple. In stating the opinion of the *Maharam Mintz*, the *Mishnah Berurah* says that he holds אין לקרות, *one should not read*, more than the previous week's *Parshah*. He does not say that we do not have to read it. And the *Shaarei Ephraim* says about someone who does want to read all of the *Parshiyos*, אין מזניחין אותו, *we do not reject him*. In other words, it is wrong to do it, but we will not belittle the one who does it.¹⁴ And we must remember that even the *Ohr Zarua* seems to hold that reading more than two *Parshiyos* would involve a *torach hatzibbur*.

Regarding the fact that the previous week was a double *Parshah*, it is true that the *Mishnah Berurah* prefers the opinion that one should

¹³ For example, the *Maharsham* (ibid.) also cites the *Shaarei Ephraim*, even though he agrees with the *Elyah Rabbah* in cases where there was a minyan.

¹⁴ We should add that according to the *Beur HaGra* it might also be improper to do, just like it would be wrong for someone to make up two *tefillos* that he missed.

make up a double *Parshah* that was missed, but in this case the double *Parshah* was at the end of *Sefer VaYikra*. To combine those *Parshiyos* with the first *Parshah* of *Sefer Bamidbar* the *Maharam Mintz* says אין נכון לעשותו, *it is not proper to do*. And the *Mishnah Berurah* concludes אין מוחין בידו, *we do not protest* someone who does it; but he does not say that it is the proper thing to do.

Added to this is the possibility that these disputes might not be relevant to cases where there was no minyan at all. To read them all in order to be stringent would encounter all the previously mentioned problems.

The issue of whether *Kerias HaTorah* is an obligation on each individual or on the *tzibbur* has other ramifications besides the issue at hand.¹⁵ Our goal here was to organize the different views specifically on the issues involved in making up the *Kerias HaTorah* in the case where all the *Parshiyos* from *Vayakhel-Pikudei* though *Behar-Bechukosai* were missed. א

¹⁵ For example, if an individual is obligated to make up *Kerias HaTorah* when for some reason he did not hear it.

A Corona Pesach Seder and Pesach in Egypt

Moshe Kravetz

I would like to reflect on the similarities between our “Corona Pesach Seder” and Pesach of Mitzrayim.

On the night of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the *Bnei Yisroel* were commanded to stay indoors to protect themselves from the plague of *makkas bechoros*. If you think about it, until the night of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* the *Bnei Yisroel* had been essentially passive characters in the unfolding drama of their redemption. Marking their doors with lamb’s blood is the first thing that they were asked to do for themselves. This act thus became their first step towards freedom.

However, as *Rashi* points out, this instruction seems rather strange. Does Hashem need blood on a doorpost to know who is a Jew and who an Egyptian? Rather, *Rashi* notes (*Shemos* 12:13) that “the blood will be a sign *for you*” – that is, a sign for the Jews, not for Hashem. But why did *they* need this sign?

This is a famous question, but the answer is in two parts:

1. In order to take a step toward becoming a free people, the Jews had to mark themselves and do **something active** to express their faith.
2. Placing the blood on the doorpost gave Hashem an opportunity to bring His presence to each and every home as He passed over them. In addition to the common translation of Pesach as “to pass over”, it can also mean “to hover or dwell.” This act of faith caused Hashem to bring his *Shechinah* by hovering or dwelling on each home and be concerned about us. This is illustrated by Yechezkel’s

reference to *Bnei Yisrael* using the metaphor of an abandoned baby. Hashem is the only one that stops and cares for the baby that is wallowing in blood.

The *pasuk* says (*Yechezkel* 16:6), ואעבר עליך ואראך מתבוססת בדמיו ואמר, לך בדמיו חיי ואמר לך בדמיו חיי, *And I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, and I said to you, 'In your blood you shall live,' and I said to you, 'In your blood you shall live.'*

Similarly, we spent last Pesach (and longer), just like the *Bnei Yisrael*, locked in our homes as an act of faith that we are in Hashem's hands – and when we washed our hands, we realized in Whose hands we really are.

Although we could not go to shul where, in our time, much of the *Shechinah* resides, the goal over this quarantine time was to be locked down and infuse the *Shechinah* into our homes. We try to do that always, but without shuls and yeshivos being open, our homes are being infused with the extra *davening* and learning we do not normally do at home.

Perhaps this was a time to refocus on our home, and we were to focus on ways to strengthen our relationship with our family as well as our Creator, to encourage Him to want to dwell in our home. Just like *Bnei Yisrael* quarantined on the night of Pesach and took action to make themselves worthy of redemption, we hope that we have spent our time on actions which strengthen our home and make us worthy of the final redemption.

Although we do not understand the purpose of the quarantines and lockdowns we had to endure, we know there is an ultimate purpose that we may see and understand fully at a later date.

We recite in the Hagadah: Rabban Gamliel was accustomed to say: “Anyone who has not said these three things on Pesach has not

fulfilled his obligation, and they are: the Pesach sacrifice, Matzah, and Maror.”

The historical aspect of the events (specifically: Jewish suffering, the *korban pesach*, and finally, hastily baked matzah shortly before departure) would seem to indicate that Rabban Gamliel’s order is not chronologically correct – it should start with Maror, followed by Pesach and Matzah. Why does he move Maror to the end, after Pesach and Matzah, when chronologically it should have been listed first?

One possible explanation is that Rabban Gamliel mentioned Maror last in order to refer to later exiles that followed the redemption from Egypt. Rabbi Bunim of Pashischa and others explain that the depth of the bitterness and suffering, and thereby the greatness of the salvation, cannot be fully appreciated until after one has been redeemed.

So too it may be as with every *galus* and *tzarah* we have experienced, although difficult as it was to live through, looking back often affords a view of some positive outcome. After Mitzrayim we became a nation. Although we do not know all the answers and fully fathom reasons, I think all would agree, for instance, that after the Holocaust we saw the rebirth of Torah and *Yiddishkeit*, perhaps stronger than ever.

So, it will be with Corona. Once it is over, we will appreciate the outcome and may even appreciate having gone through it. Even in the interim there are certainly positive outcomes, such as slowing down our *tefillah* when we are at home as well as slowing down our lives in general – and not living on autopilot. We may gain better appreciation for our children’s Rebbeim and Morahs after going through a period of “zoom homeschooling”. These are new appreciations that will make us better people and better *Yidden*.

By the time this is read Mashiach may or may not have come, but regardless we have certainly gained and grown and are more suitable for Masiach's arrival.

May the lessons learned be forever something that fortified us with the faith in Hashem! אֱלֹהֵינוּ

***Ketores* from an Economic Perspective**

Eliyahu Eliezer Singman ¹

Let us review the eleven key and supplementary ingredients as well as their respective quantities (Hebrew and English) in the *ketores*. Notably, 1 *maneh* consists of 150 drams, where 1 dram = 0.0625 oz. Further, a *se'ah* is 6 *kavim*, and a *kav* is 41.33 fluid ounces.

1. *tzari* – 70 *maneh* or 656.25 oz.
2. *tziporen* – 70 *maneh* or 656.25 oz.
3. *chelbanah* – 70 *maneh* or 656.25 oz.
4. *levonah* – 70 *maneh* or 656.25 oz.
5. *mor* – 60 *maneh* or 562.5 oz.
6. *ketziah* – 60 *maneh* or 562.5 oz.
7. ears of *naird* – 60 *maneh* or 562.5 oz.
8. *charkom* – 60 *maneh* or 562.5 oz.
9. *kosht* – 12 *maneh* or 112.5 oz.
10. *kilufah* – 3 *maneh* or 28.125 oz.
11. *kinamon* – 1 *maneh* or 9.375 oz.

Supplement 1 (S1): *boris karshinah* – 9 *kav* or 371.97 fl. oz.

S2: *Kafrisen* wine – 3 *se'ahs* and 3 *kav* (can be replaced with old *chivaryan* wine) or 867.93 fl. oz.

S3: Sodom salt – $\frac{1}{4}$ *kav* or 10.33 fl. oz. Note that salt weighs 2.17 g/cc and 1 cc is 0.035 fl. oz. Therefore, 10.33 fl. oz. is equivalent to 295.14 cc or 640.45 g or 22.59 oz.

S4: *maaleh ashan* – a small amount

S5: *kipas haYarden* – a minute amount (according to R' Nassan).

¹ This year we were privileged to read a *kuntress* concerning the *Ketores* written by our *Mara D'Asra*, Rabbi Naiman. Like many who read it, I was inspired by the lessons provided and that inspiration drove me to learn more and share that with our *kehillah*. My search started with *Me'am Loez*, which provided a treasure trove of information.

Notably, there is some disagreement concerning the exact identity of all these ingredients (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: Identification of *Ketores* ingredients

Hebrew	English	Alternative identity
<i>tzari</i>	Balsam	
<i>tziporen</i>	Onycha	Rockrose bush resin
<i>chelbanah</i>	Galbanum	
<i>levonah</i>	Frankincense	
<i>mor</i>	Musk	Myrrh
<i>ketziah</i>	Aloe	Cassia (alternatively: Costus)
<i>ears of naird</i>	Spikenard	
<i>karkum</i>	Saffron	
<i>kosht</i>	Costus	
<i>kilufah</i>	Cinnamon bark	Kilufah (possibly agarwood)
<i>kinamon</i>	Herb from Mecca (Aloewood?)	Aloe (alternatively: Cinnamon)
<i>boris karshinah</i>	Karshinah soap	vetch
<i>Kafrisen wine</i>	Cyprus wine	Caper wine
<i>Chivaryan wine</i>	Old white wine	Chiyuren (place name) wine
<i>Sodom salt</i>	Sodom salt	
<i>kipas haYarden</i>	Herb growing near Jordan river	Foam from the Jordan river
<i>maaleh ashan</i>	Known only to the Avtinas family	

We will explore these ingredients more thoroughly:

1. *tzari* – Balsam is the resinous exudate (or sap) which forms on certain kinds of trees and shrubs.
2. *tziporen* – There is debate as to what comprised onycha. *Me'am Loez* writes that it is an ingredient from the sea that had a fish odor, the traces of which had to be removed completely by the Karshinah lye soap. However, others believe this is *Cistus* (from the Greek *kistos*), a genus of flowering plants in the rockrose family *Cistaceae*, containing about 20 species. They are perennial shrubs found on dry or rocky soils throughout the Mediterranean region, from Morocco and Portugal through to the Middle East, and also on the Canary Islands.
3. *chelbanah* – Galbanum is an aromatic gum resin and a product of certain Persian plant species in the genus *Ferula*.
4. *levonah* – Frankincense is an aromatic resin obtained from trees of the genus *Boswellia*. Most frankincense comes from Somalia and India, but it is also found in Oman, Yemen, and Western Africa.
5. *mor* – Musk is a class of aromatic substances commonly used as base notes in perfumery. They include glandular secretions from animals such as the musk deer, numerous plants emitting similar fragrances, and artificial substances with similar odors. Myrrh, another candidate for this ingredient, is a natural gum or resin extracted from a number of small, thorny tree species of the genus *Commiphora*. *Commiphora myrrha* is native to Somalia, Oman, Yemen, Eritrea, (Somali Region) of Ethiopia and parts of Saudi Arabia.
6. *ketziah* – Aloe is a genus containing over 500 species of flowering succulent plants. The most widely known species is *Aloe vera*, or "True Aloe," so called because it is cultivated as the standard source of so-called "aloe vera" for assorted pharmaceutical purposes. The genus is native to tropical and southern Africa, Madagascar, Jordan, the Arabian Peninsula, and various islands in the Indian Ocean. The alternative identity, *Cassia*, or *Cinnamomum cassia*, called Chinese

cassia or Chinese cinnamon, is an evergreen tree originating in southern China, and widely cultivated there and elsewhere in South and Southeast Asia (India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam). It is one of several species of *Cinnamomum* used primarily for their aromatic bark, which is used as a spice. The other alternative identity, *Costus*, is a group of perennial herbaceous plants with spiraling stems, and thus the genus is known as spiraling gingers. It is widespread through tropical and subtropical regions of Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

7. ears of *naird* – Spikenard, also called nard, nardin, and muskroot, is a class of aromatic amber-colored essential oil derived from *Nardostachys jatamansi*, a flowering plant of the valerian family which grows in the Himalayas of Nepal, China, and India.

8. *charkom* – Saffron is a spice derived from the flower of *Crocus sativus*, commonly known as the "saffron crocus". The vivid crimson stigma and styles, called threads, are collected and dried for use mainly as a seasoning and coloring agent in food. Saffron has long been the world's most costly spice by weight. It is believed that saffron originated in Iran, Greece or Mesopotamia.

9. *kosht* – Costus is a group of perennial herbaceous plants with spiraling stems, and thus the genus is known as spiraling gingers. It is widespread through tropical and subtropical regions of Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

10. *kilufah* – Cinnamon is a spice obtained from the inner bark of several tree species from the genus *Cinnamomum*. The majority of cinnamon is grown in Indonesia and China. The alternative is Agarwood, aloeswood, eaglewood or gharuwood, a fragrant dark resinous wood used in incense, perfume, and small carvings. It is formed in the heartwood of aquilaria trees when they become infected with a type of mold (*Phialophora parasitica*). Prior to infection, the heartwood is odorless, relatively light and pale colored; however, as the infection progresses, the tree produces a dark aromatic resin, called aloes (not to be confused with *Aloe ferox*, the succulent known as bitter aloes) or agar (not to be confused with the edible, algae-derived

agar) as well as *gaharu*, *jinko*, *oud*, or *oodh aguru* (not to be confused with bukkhoor). In response to the attack, the tree produces a very dense, dark, resin-embedded heartwood.

11. *kinamon* – see *kilufah* above for cinnamon, aloewood. See *ketziah* above for Aloe.

S1. *boris Karshinah* – *Karshina* lye soap was made by burning great quantities of barilla plants in ovens, collecting the dripping exudate, and allowing it to congeal and become stone-like, before breaking it up into smaller fragments for use as a cleansing agent. It was not necessary to turn the ashes into an actual bar soap, such as that made nowadays, by mixing it with olive oil and lime for the production of an alkaline sodium soap. The congealed extract from the barilla plants was sufficient in cleansing the *tziporen*. Barilla plants include such desert flora as the Jointed Anabasis (*Anabasis articulata*), as also other related plants, such as saltwort (*Salsola kali*, or *Salsola soda*, or *Seidlitzia rosmarinus*), all of which are native to the regions around Eretz Yisroel and were used in soap making since ancient times. The alternative identity, vetch or *Vicia*, is a genus of about 140 species of flowering plants that are part of the legume family (*Fabaceae*), commonly known as vetches. Member species are native to Europe, North America, South America, Asia and Africa. The vetches grown as forage are generally toxic to non-ruminants (such as humans), at least if eaten in quantity.

S2. *Kafrisin* wine – Cyprus has been a vine-growing and wine-producing country for millennia. Alternatively, this wine could have been made from or at least included capers. Capers come from *Capparis spinosa*, the caper bush, also called Flinders rose, which is a perennial plant that bears rounded, fleshy leaves and large white to pinkish-white flowers. The plant is best known for the edible flower buds (capers), used as a seasoning, and the fruit (caper berries), both of which are usually consumed pickled. Other species of *Capparis* are also picked along with *C. spinosa* for their buds or fruits. Other parts of *Capparis* plants are used in the manufacture of medicines and

cosmetics. *Capparis spinosa* is native to almost all the circum-Mediterranean countries, and is included in the flora of most of them. S3. *Chivaryan* wine – Notably, “old white wine” according to *Me’am Loez*, could only be slightly white, since “it is forbidden to use wine that is more white than it is red.” Therefore, this ingredient was pink wine.

S4. *Sodom salt* – Dead Sea salt refers to salt and other mineral deposits extracted or taken from the Dead Sea. The composition of this material differs significantly from oceanic salt. The Dead Sea's mineral composition varies with season, rainfall, depth of deposit, and ambient temperature. Most oceanic salt is approximately 85% sodium chloride (the same salt as table salt) while Dead Sea salt is only 30.5% of this, with the remainder composed of other dried minerals and salts, including bromide, magnesium and potassium.

S5. *Kipas haYarden* – Jordan Kipah was an herb that grew near the Jordan river and had a very pleasant fragrance. Alternatively, foam from the Jordan river was smeared on the mortar used to crush the herbs so that the perfumes in the incense would not stick to it, preventing loss.

S6. *Maaleh ashan* – The Avtinas family never divulged to outsiders the identity of this herb, required to cause the incense smoke to rise in a straight column. The Talmud censured the family for holding the secret so closely, but praised them for never permitting the family's female members to be seen wearing perfume, to avoid any possible suspicion that they might be appropriating Temple resources for their own personal use.

Notably, the discussion of the ingredients in the *Gemara* mentions that *mei reglaim* (urine) could be useful to make the *tziporen* more pungent but this would be disrespectful to bring into the Temple. Some commentators suggest *mei reglaim* is a type of mineral water from a spring known as *Raglaim* and that because the name of this water is the same as urine, it should not be brought into the Temple.

Halachah prohibits us from replicating *ketores*. As a thought experiment, I tried to calculate the cost of trying to do so. My cost estimates are based upon the assumption that the Torah would want us to beautify the mitzvah by using the finest version of any ingredient. Table 2 shows the ingredients with the unit price and price for the amount required for a full batch of *ketores*.

TABLE 2 – Unit price and total cost of ingredients in *Ketores*.
(English translation of ingredients taken from ArtScroll Siddur)

Hebrew	English	Unit Price (5780)	Total Price
<i>tzari</i>	Balsam	\$8.50/oz	\$5,578.13
<i>tziporen</i>	Onycha (as Rockrose)	\$13.25/oz	\$8,695.31
<i>chelbanah</i>	Galbanum	\$17.00/oz	\$11,165.25
<i>levonah</i>	Frankincense	\$1.90/oz	\$1,246.88
<i>mor</i>	Myrrh	\$112.50/oz	\$63,281.25
<i>Ketziah</i>	Cassia	\$5.45/oz	\$3,065.62
<i>ears of naird</i>	Spikenard	\$5.00/oz	\$2,812.50
<i>karkum</i>	Saffron	\$100/oz	\$5,6250.00
<i>kosht</i>	Costus oil	\$31.80/oz	\$3,577.50
<i>kilufah</i>	Agarwood	\$2,835.27/oz ^b	\$93,762.00
<i>kinamon</i>	Cinnamon	\$48.62/oz	\$456.05
<i>boris</i> <i>Karshinah</i>	Karshinah soap	\$0.06/oz of seed ^c	\$512.00 (5lb)
<i>Kafrisen wine</i>	Cyprus wine	\$2.83/oz ^d	\$2,457.49
<i>Chivaryan wine</i>	Old white wine	\$0.80/oz	\$690.40
<i>Sodom salt</i>	Sodom salt	\$0.13/oz	\$2.99
<i>kipas haYarden</i>	Jordan amber	??	
<i>maaleh ashan</i>	Smoke rising herb	??	
TOTAL			\$253,503

Table Footnotes:

- a. Galbanum comes from Persia and it is increasingly difficult to obtain because of the strife in that region of the world.*
- b. Agarwood bark that is top quality has sold in 5770 for as much \$100,000/kg, or \$2835.27/oz. I could not find a price for 5780. The agarwood is becoming increasingly scarce from overharvesting, suggesting the price is even higher today. Using an inflation calculator, the dollar price of 5770 would be \$3,333.76/oz today.*
- c. I could not find barilla (saltwort) plants for sale, although I could find seeds. Each seed is expected to grow into a plant 8-18" tall and 6-10" wide. I priced out a 5lb bag because great quantities of plants are needed.*
- d. Cyprus wine price was based upon a recommendation from a wine seller. The wine was a 2000 Etke Centurion Commandaria sweet red and is considered a top vintage.*

This cost estimate is likely low. I did not attempt to include shipping costs. Even with modern technology, shipping costs for these ingredients would constitute thousands of dollars, recognizing that the constituents of ketores come from all over the world. In the days of the Beis HaMikdash, the most expensive ingredients on this list came from hundreds or even thousands of miles away from Yerushalayim and transportation was much slower and more dangerous, factors which would increase the price of shipping. Furthermore, the estimate does not consider the intensive and exacting preparation labor required to convert the raw ingredients into a mixture of spices.

Concerning the costs added to the mixture by *kipas haYarden* and *ma'aleh ashan*, I would expect that even if these ingredients were very expensive, they would not add much to the cost because only a minimum amount of either was employed. Furthermore, these ingredients were probably not expensive because they were local to Eretz Yisroel. In *Maseches Shekalim*, R' Akiva relates a story told to him by Shimon ben Loga who was collecting grasses and came upon

a child of the Avtinas family. The child noted that the herb was right where he was sitting.

In summary, the *ketores* was an incredibly expensive product, and deservedly so, considering how important it was. As Rabbi Naiman noted in his *kuntress*, the word *ketores* means “bonding”; the essence of the *ketores* is the yearning of our human soul to bond to the *Ribono Shel Olam*. I imagine you would not want to skimp on so valuable a vehicle for elevating the *neshamah*.

On a final note, I would like to mention that in the *Me'am Loez's* discussion of *Tehillim* 6, there is a cryptic sentence at the end of the chapter with no further expounding. It reads “The present psalm (i.e., 6) contains 11 verses, the same as the number of spices contained in the incense offering”. There are a number of explanations for this *tefillah*, read twice each day at *tachanun*. *David HaMelech* composed this psalm when he was sick and/or in pain and there were multiple instances of this occurring. Some say it occurred after he had erroneously taken a census of *Am Yisroel*. At any rate, based upon these explanations, I cannot find a way to tie this *tefillah* of *tachanun* to the offering of *ketores*. But *Me'am Loez* also suggests that David recited this psalm in celebration of his *bris milah*! This explanation does indeed lend itself to a connection because both *bris milah* and *ketores* both create an intimate spiritual and physical bond between Hashem and his people. א

Home Shul-ing

Label Cooper

Remember what it feels like to be the tenth man?
An importance that just seems so fine!
But what is the sense I'm now expected to feel
When I'm also number one thru nine?

On Shabbos I got ALL the Aliyos,
And everyone I got was for FREE!
I looked around so I could thank the Gabbai
Then I realized that the Gabbai was ME!!

Now catching a little nap by the *Derash*,
Is a thing I must admit that I love,
But what do I do if I'm the Gabbai,
And the Congregant, and also the Rav?

Before Musaf I thought it would go unnoticed,
So I stepped out for a little breeze on my lawn,
But when I peeked into the window I was horrified,
For the whole congregation was GONE!

At *pesukei dezimra* I got a text,
So I figured if I peek who would yell?
But I froze in my tracks at the nightmarish thought
Of an ENTIRE shul playing with their cell!!

Now who would ever have imagined
That a SHUL is where we must all stay away,
No Davening no learning no announcements,
No *kedushah*, no kiddush, no *Yehei Shmei*!!

But I assure you when Shuls finally open,
I'll smile broadly at the first shul-goer I greet!!
Even if he taps me on my shoulder,
To tell me that I'm sitting in his seat!! א

Intense in Tents

I just wish to express my level of appreciation at those who have been attending the Minyan.


I'm referring mainly to weekday Shacharis. For months, we've hardly had more than 10, yet no matter who doesn't show on a given day for some unexpected reason, someone else will randomly show up for the first time. But more than that, in the past 3 days we had 10 or 11, yet every one of those was there by starting time.

In no way is this meant to imply pressure for the months to come, if you make it late, or can no longer bear the cold or whatever may be, it would never be my place to be critical. But in our core group are people who don't always find it easy to be there bright and early, those who would much prefer to daven later if they could, and those for whom the elements are more challenging. So whether or not you can keep the pace, you should do what you need, but in the meantime I feel grateful for all the days from this morning and earlier. I got to say *kedushah, modim, yehei shmei rabbah*, etc., and I owe you all a very deep thank you. And furthermore, even though we are all masked and I don't even know what half of you look like, and it's almost impossible to even get to know you or even shake your hand, the feeling of warm friendship is also in the air.

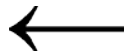
Shalom keenly pointed out that if you notice, though the tents are large, we have almost exactly one person per tent. He also noted that Chazal say that in the next world each person is *nichveh mechupaso*

shel chavero. Namely, each one is burned from the *chuppah* of his friend. The imagery aligns well when you must view your own attained level compared to the accomplishments of the person in the tent next to you.

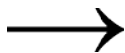
Last point, then I'll end my soliloquy. Yesterday I went to Costco with my wife. I made a special purchase of winter davening clothes. I.e., Spider gloves, very warm, but very thin material so I can turn the pages in my siddur. Long underwear – haven't worn those since I was a kid. One could easily be annoyed at having to do all this, but even in this challenging time, it's also a very special time, and at some level it's creating an opportunity to be a better Jew.

Yours warmly,
Label Cooper 

English Sections



מדור לשון הקודש



עם שהוא לא נופל מהם מהיותו בן מאמינים הקפיד עליו על שהוציא לעז
על כולם שיסכימו לד"א. ולא יחשדו כללות העם בכך משא"כ ביחיד אין
צדיק בארץ אשר לא יחטא.

ונמצא שמדרגת האמונה של כלל ישראל היתה גדולה אפילו ממדרגת משה
רבינו. ויש לפרש בזה, כי משה רבינו רק הגיע למ"ט שערי בינה כדאיתא בר"ה
(כא:), משא"כ כלל ישראל בכלליות אז עלו למדרגה של נ' שערי בינה, כמו
שנרמז בפסוק "וחמשים עלו בני ישראל מארץ מצרים".

ובזה אולי יש להבין מש"כ בפירוש הגר"א ז"ל להגדה של פסח (ד"ה ויוצאנו
ה' לא על ידי מלאך וכו'): :

והיינו שליח זה משה...ועיקר הגאולה לא היה ע"י אחד מאלו הג', וכלומר
שלא שלח אחד מהם להוציא אותם, ואפי' משה רבינו ע"ה לא שלחו ולא
צוה לו לעשות מאומה בעת הגאולה, רק כל ישראל ביחד עשו מצוות ה'
בפסח מצה ומרור.

ונמצא שעצם הגאולה היתה רק ע"י מדרגת כלל ישראל בכלליות, שהם
מקושרים למדרגות אלו ויכולים לזכות לגאולה ממצרים. ^אש

והענין הוא, כי אף שהאמונה הוא דבר ששייך אף להפחותים שבישראל שאין להם כלום, הוא ג"כ הדרך היחידי לעלות למעלה עד מדרגות גבוהות עד מאד. וזה מבואר בדברי הגר"א ז"ל ומהר"ל.

כתב הגר"א ז"ל (ספד"צ פרק ב') :

וענין מהימנותא כמו אמונת ישראל שבה משיגין את א"ס (אין סוף).

וכתב המהר"ל (נתיבות עולם - נתיב האמונה, פרק ב) :

כי המאמין בו ית' דבק בו ומגיע זה עד אין קץ ואין סוף כמו שהתבאר למעלה בענין אמן, ולכך ראוי בו כל המדות שראוי שירש עולם הזה ועולם הבא. כי כבר אמרנו מצד האמונה מתעלה למעלה ובזה יורש עולם הזה ועולם הבא, ובעל אמונה נכנס בשער עליון שאין נכנסין בו הכל כי הוא יוצא מן העולם הגשמי ודבק בעולם העליון.

וגם כתב זה בנתיב העבודה (פרק ב') :

והאמונה בו יתברך הוא דבק במדריגה העליונה הנעלמת, וזהו עיקר האמונה כי המאמין בו יתברך אמונתו מגיע עד המדרגה הנעלמת, וכמו שמורה עליו האל"ף שהיא ראשונה במלת אמן כי מגיע עד ההתחלה, גם כי האל"ף אותיות פלא שהיא לשון העלמה וכמו שיתבאר, והאמונה השלימה שהוא מתדבק באמונתו יתברך עד המדריגה העליונה הנעלמת.

וכ"כ ר' צדוק הכהן (פרי צדיק ח"א כא) :

וישראל מאמינים בני מאמינים. ועל ידי כן יוכלו לבוא לכל מדריגת היותר גדולות שאפשר לאדם לבוא. כי זהו השער לה' אשר צדיקים יבואו בו.

אמונת כלל ישראל

ויש להעיר עוד, דאיתא בגמרא (שבת צז.) :

אמר ריש לקיש החושד בכשרים לוקה בגופו דכתיב והן לא יאמינו לי וגו' וגליא קמי קודשא בריך הוא דמהימני ישראל אמר לו הן מאמינים בני מאמינים ואתה אין סופך להאמין הן מאמינים דכתיב ויאמן העם בני מאמינים והאמין בה' אתה אין סופך להאמין שנאמר יען לא האמנתם בי וגו'.

וכתב בהגהות יעב"ץ שם :

אך עיקר הענין בזה הוא כי הגם שאמרנו שאור הנסיי... הנה הוא עומד להאיר על ישראל שלא ע"פ המעשים כלל אלא הוא מכבשי דרחמנא ומסוד ברית אבות. אמנם הנה שיתקיים אורו על ישראל בקביעות ולא יסור מהם לעולם. הנה זה לא היה אפשר להיות אלא רק ע"י אתערותא דלתתא דוקא. וע"פ מה שאמרנו לעיל ענף ב' סי' ב' ע"ש. והגם כי לעתיד לבוא שהוא מעת ביאת המשיח והלאה הנה יתקיים אורו על ישראל תמיד. וביאת המשיח הוא בטוחה לבוא בעת בא זמנו אפי' בדור שכולו חייב. אך זהו רק אחר שעברו כל הד' גליות ובצירוף התורה שבידינו וגם אחר בוא יום ה' הגדול והנורא אשר עליו נאמר. מלאכי ג'. ומי מכלכל את יום בואו כו' וישב מצרף ומטהר כסף כו' וזיקק אותם כזהב כו'. וכל המאורעות הללו בצירוף התורה העומדת בישראל מיום שניתנה עד אז. הנה הם יספיקו כל די הצורך לאתערותא דלתתא המוכרח. וכמו שבארנו בספר הקדו"ש שער ו' ע"ש בארוכה. אבל בעת גאולת מצרים אשר היה עדיין גם קודם מתן תורה ועכ"ז הנה נתגלה עליהם... להאיר עליהם למעלה מן הטבע ולמעלה מן המדה. והיה כ"ז מסוד ברית אבות. והנה כדי להתקיים עליהם האור הגדול הזה תמיד שהוא ע"י אתערותא דלתתא דוקא כנז'. היה הצורך שישומו את כל לבם ונפשם לה' ויתחזקו את עצמם בהאמונה והביטחון שיעשה עמהם נסים ונפלאות תמיד. וזה היה מספיק להמשיך ולהעמיד עליהם את האור הגדול הזה לעולם. ולכך נצטווה משרבע"ה שילך מתחילה לישראל כדי שזכות האמונה יסבב עליהם כל טוב הזה ע"י אתערותא דלתתא. וזהו שאמר לו הקב"ה. לך ואספת את זקני ישראל ואמרת אלהם כו' ושמעו לקולך. כי ע"י האמונה יהיו כדאי להמשיך עליהם כל אור הנסיי... וכן אמרו במכילתא בשלח סוף פרשה ו' שלא נגאלו ישראל ממצרים אלא בשכר האמונה שנאמר ויאמן העם וכן אין הגליות מתכנסות אלא בשכר אמונה כו' ע"ש וכן בתנחומא בשלח סי' י' ובשמו"ר פ' כ"ג סי' ה'. ע' שם ושם בארוכה.

על ידי אמונה זוכים להנהגה שנתגלתה ביצ"מ ונמשיך עוד לבאר. הנה לא רק הצטרכו להאמין בהקב"ה, שבזה יהיה זכות גרידא כדי להגאל, אלא עצם ענין האמונה מקושר בדוקא לענין זה של הגילוי שהיה ביצ"מ. שע"י אמונה בפרט, זכו להנהגה שלמעלה מדרך בטבע.

ועוד כתב שם (ספר הדע"ה ח"ב דרוש ג' ענף ט"ז):

...וזהו שכתוב בפ' שמות וישמע אלהים את נאקתם ויזכור אלהים את בריתו כו' וכן בריש פ' וארא ואזכור את בריתי ולא נאמר שם זכות אלא ברית כי התחלת הגאולה לא היה אפשר להעשות אלא רק למעלה למעלה שהוא המקום אשר אין מעשי בני אדם מגיע שם כלל ושם הוא התחלת הרצון לכל גילויי ית"ש אשר במציאת העולמות כולם ומשם היה נמשך סוד גאולת מצרים ונעשה הגאולה מסוד אותו הגילוי עצמו אשר משם היה ראשית הבריאה כולה והוא מסוד אור הגנוז ובו הוא מציאת האבות וישראל והיה עומד להתגלה כולו בשלימות אלו שזכינו להלוחות הראשונות וגם עכשיו אשר לא זכינו עכ"ז הנה נמשך תמצית הארה ממנו דרך החומת ברזל שמפסיק בין ישראל לאביהם שבשמים ובו אנחנו חיים וקיימים בנסים נסתרים תמיד והוא הכל מהיסוד והשורש דברית אבות וישראל.

וזהו מ"ש הרב... כי ענין עליית... הוא נוהג גם עתה והגם שהוא למעלה מן הטבע ולמעלה מהמדה אך הוא נעשה מסוד ברית אבות וישראל אשר התחיל להתגלה בגאולת מצרים ואח"כ מתקיים ונקבע בנו במתן תורה ע"י משה רבינו ע"ה והוא מ"ש לו הקב"ה אני אעביר כל טובי על פניך והוא הי"ג מדות הרחמים שבהם אנחנו חיים וקיימים למעלה מהטבע וכ"ז הוא משום שסוד ברית אבות הוא עומד באור הגנוז שהוא היסוד דהבריאה כולה.

ונמצא שע"י ברית אבות בדוקא, שהוא ג"כ מושרש במקום גבוה זו, היו יכולים לזכות להנהגה זו של למעלה מן הטבע.

בזכות האמונה

אמנם גם מצינו בחז"ל שזכו לגאולה ממצרים מחמת זכות האמונה שלהם, כדאיתא במכילתא (בשלח פרשה ו):

וכן את מוצא שלא נגאלו ישראל ממצרים אלא בשכר האמונה שנא' (שמות ד') "ויאמן העם".

וצ"ב, הלא מבואר בפסוק שהיה בשביל ברית אבות, ולמה היו צריכים גם לזכות האמונה. ובעל הלשם (ספר הדע"ה ח"ב דרוש ה' ענף ד' סימן ו') כתב ישוב לשאלה זו:

וגם זה לטוב לנו כיום הזה שלולי שיגע אברהם אבינו ע"ה להעמיד רגל האמונה גם כן על תילה אנו מניין היה לנו כח לזכות לה כי כל כוחינו רק מורשה מאבות וכמו שאמרו (שבת צ"ז). הם מאמינים בני מאמינים שנאמר והאמין בה', וזה כל מעלת ישראל כמו שאמרו (ילקוט רמז תרפ"ד) הביאו לי ספר יוחסין כדרך שבני מביאין, ויעקב חבל נחלתו שהחבל נפקע בשלושה (בראשית רבה ס"ח, י"ב) היינו שיש להם כח מורשה משלושה אבות שכוחות האבות בבנים, וזהו זכות אבות וברית אבות הקיים כי כח זה קיים בכל זרעם אחריהם דלולי זה לא היו יכולים לעמוד כלל נגד השאור שבעיסה.

ועי' עוד במכתב מאלהו (חלק א' עמ' 9) מה שהאריך יותר בביאור דבר זה.

אמנם כלל ישראל במדרגתם כשהיו במצרים לא היו שייכים לזכות אבות, וכמ"ש בעל הלשם (ספר הדעי"ה ח"ב דרוש ה' ענף ג' סימן ד') :

והטעם הוא כי הנה בעת גאולת מצרים הנה לא היו אז ישראל כדאי לזה כלל וכמ"ש ואת ערום ועריה וכנודע ולכן לא נשתמשו אז בזכות אבות אלא רק בברית אבות וכמ"ש בפ' שמות ב' כ"ד וישמע אלהים את נאקתם ויזכור אלהים את בריתו את אברהם את יצחק ואת יעקב וכן בריש פ' וארא ואזכור את בריתי. כי לא יתכן להשתמש בזכות אבות אלא רק כשיש קצת זכות בהן עצמן ג"כ. וכמ"ש במדרש ב"ר פ' ע"ו ס' ד'. ביעקב אבינו ע"ה שאמר. אלהי אבי אברהם ואלהי אבי יצחק. הא לעשו לא. אלא הבוחר בדרכיהם והעושה כמעשיהם. אני מתקיים עליו. מי שאינו בוחר בדרכיהם ואינו עושה כמעשיהם איני מתקיים עליו. כי אז הרי אדרבה הוא שצדקת האבות הוא קטרוג לבנים וע"ד שכתוב. ירמיה ב' כ"א. ואנכי נטעתיך שורק כולו זרע אמת ואין נהפכת כו' ולכן בגאולת מצרים לא השתמשו אז בזכות אבות אלא רק בברית אבות. כי ברית לא תופר וכמ"ש ואף גם זאת בהיותם כו' לא מאסתם כו' להפר בריתי אתם כי אני י"א.

ולכן היו צריכים לברית אבות. וענין ברית אבות הוא כמ"ש בעל הלשם (ספר הדעי"ה ח"ב דרוש ה' ענף ב' סימן ג') :

וכן בענין ברית אבות. אומר רבינו תם בתוספת שבת נ"ה א' דה"מ ושמואל. דאפי' למ"ד דזכות אבות תמה אך ברית אבות לא תמה. ולכן כאשר שאין אנו ראויים מצד מעשינו אנו כוללים את עצמינו עם האבות. ועולים לשמו יתברך שנקרא עלינו ושוכן בישראל תמיד. להמשיך חסדו עלינו עכ"פ.

האופק שמתחת לארץ ומתחיל ג"כ אור השמש לנטות לצד האופק שאנו עומדים בו, ומאז מתחיל להאיר כל מה שהשמש מתקרבת יותר. והרי יש כאן ב' ממשלות הפכיות א' שלוחי הדין והב' הם שלוחי חסד ורחמים וישועה. וידוע כי ע"פ ענין הטבעי א"א להיות ב' הפכים בנושא אחד, כי השמש המחמם א"א שתקרר, וכל אחד שומר סדרו ופעולתו, אבל ע"פ ענין הנסיי אפשר להיות שני הפכים בנושא אחד, ובאותו דבר שהוא ית' מעניש לרשעים הוא נותן שכר טוב לצדיקים...

ולזאת ברגע חצות לילה עשה הוא ית' ב' הפכים בנושא א' שמה שחידש לענין א' משחית לכלל בכורי מצרים ע"פ מדת הדין הגדול, בזה הציל את בכורי ישראל ע"פ מדת חסדו ית', והיה גם כאן ענין נסיי שצמצם רגע חצות לילה, שע"פ טבע א"א לצמצם שהרי כל רגע מתחלק לכמה בחינות ואין הפרש ידוע כלל בין חצות הראשון לחצות השני, או שהוא סוף חצות ראשון או תחילת חצות שני, והוא ית' צמצם שיהיה למעלה מן הזמן, ולכך שמשו בו ב' הכוחות של חסד ושל דין ביחד.

וע"ע מש"כ בעל הלשם בספר הדע"ה ח"ב דרוש ה' ענף ד' סימן ג' וגם מש"כ שם בענף ב' סימן י"א.

ברית אבות

כתוב "וגם אני שמעתי את נאקת בני ישראל אשר מצרים מעבדים אתם ואזכר את בריתי", מבואר בפסוק שכלל ישראל זכו לזה ע"י הברית אבות. והנה באמת יש כאן שתי נושאים: זכות אבות וברית אבות. וענין זכות אבות יתבאר ע"פ מש"כ ברוח חיים (פ"ה מ"ג):

עשרה נסיונות נתנסה אברהם אבינו. כאן אמר אברהם אבינו. ולעיל אמר מנח ועד אברהם. ולא אמר אבינו. ירצה בזה על פי מה שכתוב (משלי כ, ז), מתהלך בתומו צדיק אשרי בניו אחריו. כי כמה מדות שהצדיק טרח ויגע להשיגם. לבניו אחריו המה כטבע מוטבע. ובקצת יגיעה יגיעו לזה. כמו שנראה בחוש שרבים מעמי ארץ מהיהודים מוסרים את עצמם על קידוש השם. והוא מוטבע בנו מאבינו אברהם שמסר נפשו לאור כשדים על אמונתו. וכן כל העשרה נסיונות היו להישיר הדרך לפנינו. וכן ההתעוררות לאדם פתאום לילך לארץ הקודש הוא מנסיון "לך לך". וקבלת כל דעבדין משמיא לטב מנסיון הרעב שלא הרהר אחר מדות השם יתברך.

ור' צדוק הכהן כתב שזהו ענין של זכות אבות (מחשבות חרוץ - אות ב):

בנס, כמ"ש "ותפתח ותראהו וכו' ותרא אותו כי טוב הוא", ואמרו שראתה עמו שכינה.

וכן פירש בענין העשר מכות, שכיון שהיתה התחדשות ממש של הנהגה זו למעלה מן הטבע, היתה כעין בריאה חדשה בהעשר מכות, והם היו כנגד העשרה מאמרות שבהם נברא העולם, וז"ל בהגדת יד מצרים:

ובא וראה נפלאות מתוה"ק, היאך אלו העשר מכות היו במספר ובמפקד מכון ממש נגד עשרה מאמרות שבהם נברא העולם כמ"ש, שביצי"מ היה ממש בריאת העולם מחדש ע"פ ענין ניסיי שהוא למעלה מן הטבע, והיה חידוש ממש בכל צבא השמים וביסודות התחתונים שנשתנו להתנהג ע"י ענין ניסיי שהוא למעלה מן הטבע. וכמו שבעשר מאמרות היו כלל ופרט וכלל, שמאמר ראשון "בראשית ברא וגו'", וארוז"ל "בראשית נמי מאמר הוא", ונכללו במאמר זה כל צבא השמים ותולדותיהם וצבא הארץ ותולדותיה, ואח"כ נבראו כל אחד בפרט, ואח"כ נכללו במאמר האחרון "נעשה אדם בצלמינו וגו'", שהאדם הוא בכלל הבריאה כולה והוא עולם קטן כמ"ש בכ"מ. וכן היה בעשר מכות אלו, כלל ופרט וכלל, שמכה הראשונה היתה ביאור שהוא אלוה של מצרים, כמ"ש "התנין הגדול הרובץ בתוך יאוריו", ובזה היה התחלת ביטול כוחו של מצרים ושינוי הטבע, וכמו שהשמים נבראו מאש וממים, כמו כן היה המכה הראשונה ביאור באש ומים, כידוע שדם בא משום הטבע שבו שהוא מיסוד האש שנהפך ממים, וכן כתיב "ונתתי מופתים בשמים ובארץ דם ואש ותמרות עשן", ומכה זאת היתה כוללת כל המכות וכל קלקול היסודות התחתונים ע"י שנלקה היאור שבו היה תלוי קיום יסוד העפר של מצרים, שהיה היאור משקה אותה.

ועי"ש מה שממשיך לבאר כל שאר המכות היאך היו כנגד העשרה מאמרות.

וכתב עוד בספר שיח יצחק (דרוש לשבת הגדול עמ' שצג) שלכן עיקר גאולת מצרים היתה בחצות:

וע"פ ענין הלז נבין הטעם למה היה ענין מכת בכורי מצרים בחצות הלילה ממש ואז היה עיקר גאולתם של ישראל. והוא, כי ידוע שביום אז שולטים שלוחי החסד וכל טוב משא"כ בלילה אז שלוחי הדין פועלים פעולתם ותורעין דגן עדן סתימן וחבילי טריקין משתכחין בעלמא, כמ"ש בזוהר בכ"מ שמדת הדין מתוח בלילה עד חצות, וברגע חצות לילה אז מתחברים רגע תכנית חשכת הלילה שהשמש מתרחקת הריחוק היותר גדול באמצע

התורה והמצוות, שלכן מלכי ישראל מניסן מנינן, ומלכי אומות העולם מתשרי. ולכן כתיב "החודש הזה לכם ראש חדשים", שבו היה התנשאות רא"ש של ישראל וביטול כח הנחש והסמאל, כמ"ש "הוא ישופך ראש". וחצי ליל ט"ו, אז תכלית עליית הלבנה בגובה הרום ותכלית מילואה באמצע החודש, שזה מורה על התנשאות יו"ד של אדנ"י, מה שהיתה בעקב, ועלתה לראש, ליו"ד של שם הוי"ה.

ומזה הטעם, כתב שם (ליקוטים עמ' שיב) שלכן השליח הנבחר לדבר זה - משה רבינו - היה מקושר לבחי' זו של הנהגה למעלה מן הטבע:

ולזה הטעם, שליח הנבחר להיות אמצעי וסרסור בינו יתברך לעם קדושו במ"ת, הוצרך להיות מציאותו ג"כ בדבר שאינו טבעי, מופשט מחומר ומזמן וממקום, והיו כל עניניו בדרך נסיי עבדו, ולידתו אחר שחזרה אמו לנערותה בדרך נס, ואח"כ הושלך ליאור, והיה ראוי להיות נטבע שם ע"פ מבטי הכוכבים, וכן כל עניניו והנהגתו בעת חייו לא היה נתלה בטבע החי הבשרי, שהרי היה שני פעמים בהר מ' יום רצופים, לחם לא אכל ומים לא שתה, רק נהנה מזיו השכינה ומאור התורה וצוף דברי אמרתיו, כאחד מצבא המרום ממש, ואז נסתלק מגדר מקום וזמן ממש...

ומזה הטעם נברא משה להיות כבד פה וכבד לשון, שישראל נגד נהוג הטבעי, שאדם אשר נבחר להיות שליח לדבר דברי שליחותו, צריך להיות דבורו צח ונעים, כראוי לשליחות יקרה כזו לעם ה' הנבחר לס"ר ישראל, להיות דבריו נשמעים בנועם, ודבריו ומליצותיו יעשה פרי למעלה, כמ"ש ישעיה הנביא ה' נתן לי לשון לימודים לדעת לעות את יעף דבר לשמוע בלימודים". אך לפי עניניו יובן הדבר על בוריו, שאדרכה לזה הטעם לא נתן לו כח דיבור גשמי כאחד האדם, רק דיבורו היה בנס גמור, דיבור רוחני, שזהו עצם כח האדם שהוא מדבר, שבזה נבדל נפשו מנפש בהמה להיות לרוח ממללא, והיה הבדלו בענין נשגב, דיבור ה' רוחני מדבר מתוך גרונו, שלא בכח שום אנושי כלל.

ועוד כתב שם:

וכן משה רע"ה ביאתו לעולם בנס, אחר יאוש הגמור שהושלך ליאור, והיה ראוי להתבטל מציאותו, כפי משפט מבטי הכוכבים, כמ"ש אצטגניני פרעה, שראו שמושיעם של ישראל יהיה נלקה במים. וכן לידתו היה בנס גמור, מיוכבד אמו שהיתה בת ק"ל שנה, שכבר ניטל ממנה כח התולדה, עד שחזרה לנערותה, ולכן תיכף כשנולד הוצרך להשראת השכינה לשומרו

יציאת מצרים

הרב אליהו מאיר ליפסקי¹

גילוי של יצ"מ - הנהגה הנסיית • ברית אבות • בזכות האמונה
• על ידי אמונה זוכים להנהגה שנתגלתה ביצ"מ • אמונת כלל
ישראל

גילוי של יצ"מ - הנהגה הנסיית
הנה, יציאת מצרים לא היתה רק בעבור שכלל ישראל יצאו משם, ושהקב"ה
יגלה להם השגחתו הפרטית על ידי הנסים והנפלאות שעשה בהעשר מכות
וקריעת ים סוף. אלא כל סדר היציאה היה לגלות הנהגה אחרת עם כלל
ישראל, שהם שייכים להנהגה למעלה מן הטבע, ובהגלות קשר זה שיש לכלל
ישראל עם הקב"ה, ממילא אינם משועבדים עוד להשעבוד של מצרים, ועי"ז
יצאו. ונביא מש"כ הגרי"א חבר להרחיב הביאור בענין זה.

כתב הגרי"א חבר בפתיחתו לביאור ההגדה (יד מצרים - פותח יד) :

שבעת יצ"מ היתה ממש בריאה חדשה, שאז התחיל הבורא יתברך להנהיג
עולמו ע"פ סידור הנסיי לפי התורה והמצוות, כפי מעשה בני אדם ע"י
ישראל עם קדושו, שקרבם לעבודתו מעת יציאתם ממצרים, מה שלא היה
כן בתחילה שהיה מתנהג ע"פ סידור טבעי לפי ענין שבע מצוות בני נח,
שהם ניתנו לתיקון המדינה שיהיה העולם כפי סידורו הטבעי, משא"כ
הסידור הנסיי הוא ע"פ תרי"ג מצוות והתורה עצמה.

ועוד כתב בספר שיח יצחק (דרוש לשבת פרשת בשלח עמ' רסה) :

ומעתה תשוב ותראה עוד ענין נפלא, במ"ש שמאז שיצאו ישראל ממצרים
ונבחרו לו יתברך לעם, אז נשרשו ישראל ונכנסו ברשות השכינה הנהגה
העליונה, השולט על כל דרכי הטבע, בבחינת י' של השם, שהיא נקודה
שאינה מקבלת חלוקה כלל, ואין בסוג מספר נפרד, וזה התחיל בחצי ליל
ט"ו של ניסן, שהחודש הזה הוא ראשון לישראל, שאף ע"פ שהעולם נברא
בתשרי, שלכן תשרי התחלת השנה, אינו אלא בסדרו הטבעי, שנברא כך
מתחילה, אבל מניסן היה התחלת סדור הבריאה ע"י השגחה נבדלת ע"פ

¹ פרק מספרו החשוב פתחי אמרים, באלטימאר, תשע"ט.

מחכמי התורה שדבר ה' נמסר אליהם. וממילא אע"פ שהקב"ה כיון בהבטחתו לביזת הים וזה היה צריך להיות האמת, מ"מ נקבע שהבנת אברהם אבינו היא היא האמת בשעת ההבטחה. ולכן אמר הקב"ה שישאלו בני ישראל ממצרים כלי כסף וזהב רק משום הטענה 'שלא יאמר אותו צדיק', וגם משום הכי לא היה מועיל שיסביר לאברהם אבינו שכוונתו לביזת הים. ^אש

אמיתות התורה מסורה לחכמי ישראל שבכל דור ודור

ה) והנראה בזה ע"פ מה שכתב הריטב"א במסכת עירובין (יג, ב) לבאר ענין אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים. וז"ל שם, שאלו רבני צרפת ז"ל היאך אפשר שיהיו שניהם דברי אלקים חיים, וזה אוסר וזה מתיר. ותירצו כי כשעלה משה למרום לקבל תורה הראו לו על כל דבר ודבר מ"ט פנים לאיסור ומ"ט פנים להיתר, ושאל להקב"ה על זה, ואמר שיהא זה מסור לחכמי ישראל שבכל דור ודור ויהיה הכרעה כמותם, עכ"ל.

וביאור הדבר, דכיון שהקב"ה אמר למשה בזמן קבלת התורה שהחכם רשאי להכריע כפי דעתו, א"כ כיון שהכריע כצד אחד הרי שעכשיו זו האמת שניתנה למשה מסיני. וא"כ אתי שפיר דזה אוסר וזה מתיר כיון שאין אמת אחת אלא כל מה שהחכם מכריע כפי ראות עיניו זו היא האמת האמיתית לשעתה. וכמו כן הענין לגבי בית שמאי ובית הלל, דאע"פ שאנו יודעים שהאמת כבית שמאי, מ"מ כיון שעכשיו נראה שהלכה כבית הלל א"כ זו האמת עכשיו, דזה גופא נמסר למשה בסיני.

ובזה אתי שפיר למה לא קבעו הלכה כבן עזאי על אף שנתגלה לו מן השמים שהאמת אתו. דאע"פ שהאמת כלפי שמאי היא כבן עזאי, מ"מ ההלכה אינה נקבעת לפי זה אלא לפי הכללים המקובלים בידינו האיך פוסקים הלכה. וגם מובן למה התנאים נשמטו מאחיו של רבי דוסא ולא רצו שיוכיחם בראיות, שכיון שרבי דוסא אמר להם שההלכה כמותו, שוב לא היה איכפת להם בראיותיו של אחיו של רבי דוסא, וכנ"ל.

הבטחת הקב"ה היא כפי הבנת אברהם אבינו ע"ה

ו) ובזה נראה לבאר דברי הגר"א לגבי יציאת מצרים, דכיון שאברהם אבינו הבין מהקב"ה שההבטחה של "ואחרי כן יצאו ברכוש גדול" היינו בזמן של יציאת מצרים ממש ולא בביזת מצרים, א"כ נקבע שזו היא האמת כלפי אותה הבטחה. שהרי אברהם אבינו היה בתחילת אלפיים שנות תורה ודינו כאחד

למה אין הלכה כבן עזאי ואע"פ שנתגלה לו מן השמים שהאמת אתו

ג) עוד יש לעיין בהא דנחלקו התנאים במסכת סוטה (ד, ב) כמה שיעור סתירה של סוטה, ולבסוף מסיק שם בגמרא, אמר רב יוחנן כל אחד ואחד בעצמו שיער [כמה שהיה שוהה בביאתו, רש"י], והאיכא בן עזאי דלא נסיב, איבעית אימא נסיב ופירש הוה ואיבעית אימא מרביה שמיע ליה ואיבעית אימא סוד ה' ליראיו, ע"כ. ולכאורה א"כ היה צריך לפסוק הלכה כמותו שהרי דבר זה נתגלה לו מן השמים וא"כ ודאי כיון להאמת. ולמה לא הודו לו כל התנאים שנחלקו עליו שהלכה כמותו.

אין לדיין אלא מה שעניו רואות

ד) ונראה ליישב בהקדם מה שכתב הגר"א וסרמז זצ"ל (קונטרס דברי סופרים סימן ה אות טז) לבאר מה שאנו פוסקים בכל מקום הלכה כבית הלל. וז"ל, ונמצא כתוב בספרים שלעתיד לבא יהיה הלכה כבית שמאי. ונראה הטעם לזה, דהא בית שמאי מחדדי טפי והאמת כדבריהם, אלא דבזמן הזה אין אנו יכולין לירד לסוף דעתם כמו שאמרו גלוי וידוע שאין בדורו של רבי מאיר כמותו אלא שלא יכלו לעמוד על סוף דעתו, ומשום הכי אין הלכה כבית שמאי דאין לדיין אלא מה שעניו רואות. אבל לעתיד לבא שיקום הכתוב "ומלאה הארץ דעה" יתברר שהאמת כבית שמאי וע"כ יהא הלכה כמותם. ומ"מ עתה אף שידוע לנו שהאמת כדבריהם אין הלכה כמותם כיון שלפי דעתנו והשגתנו שיש לנו עתה נראה יותר כדברי בית הלל, עכ"ד.

ומבואר בדבריו, דאע"פ שאנו יודעים שלפי האמת הלכה כדברי בית שמאי, מ"מ כיון שאין לדיין אלא מה שעניו רואות ממילא בזמן הזה הלכה כבית הלל. אלא שגם זה צ"ב, למה הדבר תלוי בראות עיני הדיין ולא במה שהוא האמת אליבא דאמת. ואם אנו יודעים שלעתיד לבוא תהא ההלכה כדברי בית שמאי למה לא ננהג כך גם עתה.

בשביל שלא יאמר אותו צדיק וכו', והיה מספיק להסביר לאברהם אבינו שהכוונה היא על ביזת הים.

שלא ימצאם כולם יחד ויקפחם בהלכות ויצטרכו לקבוע הלכה כמותו

ב) עוד יש להתבונן בהא דאיתא במסכת יבמות (טז, א), בימי רבי דוסא בן הרכינס התיירו צרת הבת לאחין והיה הדבר קשה לחכמים מפני שחכם גדול היה וכו'. אמרו מי ילך ויודיעו וכו' אמר להן רבי יהושע אני אלך, ואחריו מי רבי אלעזר בן עזריה, ואחריו מי רבי עקיבא וכו'. הלכו ועמדו על פתח ביתו וכו', התחילו מסבבים אותו בהלכות עד שהגיעו לצרת הבת, אמרו ליה צרת הבת מהו, אמר להן מחלוקת בית שמאי ובית הלל, הלכה כדברי מי אמר להן הלכה כבית הלל, אמרו ליה והלא משמך אמרו הלכה כבית שמאי, אמר להם דוסא שמעתם או בן הרכינס שמעתם וכו' אח קטן יש לי בכור שטן הוא ויונתן שמו והוא מתלמידי שמאי והזהרו שלא יקפח אתכם בהלכות לפי שיש עמו שלש מאות תשובות בצרת הבת שהיא מותרת, אבל מעיד אני עלי שמים וארץ שעל מדוכה זו ישב חגי הנביא ואמר וכו' צרת הבת אסורה וכו'. תנא כשנכנסו נכנסו בפתח אחד כשיצאו יצאו בשלשה פתחים, ע"כ.

ובתוס' שם כתבו וז"ל, יצאו בג' פתחים, שלא ימצאם כולם יחד ויקפחם בהלכות ויצטרכו לקבוע הלכה כמותו, עכ"ל. והיינו דכיון שהם פסקו את ההלכה כרבי דוסא שצרת הבת אסורה, משום הכי לא רצו לפגוש את אחיו של רבי דוסא כדי שלא יביא עליהם ראיות שהדין עימו שצרת הבת מותרת.

ודברי התוס' צריכים ביאור, דאם היו פוגשים את אחיו של רבי דוסא בן הרכינס והיה מקפחם בהלכות, א"כ האמת היתה אתו שהרי היה טוען עליהם טענות נכונות. ולמה לא ישמעו לו ויקבעו הלכה כמותו, ואדרבה ילכו אליו ויראו עם מי האמת.

האמת של התורה

הרב רפאל שעפטיל הלוי נויברגר

שלא יאמר אותו צדיק

א) איתא בגמרא בברכות (ט, א), דבר נא באזני העם וגו' אמרי דבי רבי ינאי אין נא אלא לשון בקשה, אמר ליה הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה, בבקשה ממך לך ואמור להם לישראל בבקשה מכם שאלו ממצרים כלי כסף וכלי זהב, שלא יאמר אותו צדיק [אברהם אבינו] "ועבדום וענו אותם" קיים בהם "ואחרי כן יצאו ברכוש גדול" לא קיים בהם, ע"כ.

והקשו המפרשים (למשל מהרש"א שם ופני יהושע ט:) שמדברי הגמרא משמע שלולא זה שאברהם אבינו היה בא בטענה להקב"ה לא היו צריכים בני ישראל לשאול ממצרים כלי כסף וזהב. וזה תמוה, דאם באמת הקב"ה הבטיח שיוציא את בני ישראל ממצרים ברכוש גדול א"כ צריך לקיים הבטחתו, ולמה רק משום הטענה 'שלא יאמר אותו צדיק' ביקש מישראל שישאלו ממצרים כלי כסף וזהב.

וביאר הגר"א (אמרי נועם שם, וביתר ביאור כתב בקול אליהו אות נד) וז"ל, שלא יאמר אותו צדיק כו'. קצת קשה דהא גם בלא אמירת הצדיק צריך הקב"ה לקיים הבטחתו ואח"כ יצאו ברכוש גדול, ועוד כמה דקדוקים יש כאן. והפירוש הנכון דודאי היו עתידין להיות בוזזין את המצרים אצל הים כמ"ש גדול ביזת הים וכו', רק כדי שלא יאמר אותו צדיק תיכף כשיצאו ממצרים שלא קיים בהם ח"ו הבטחתו וכו', עכ"ל.

ודברי הגר"א צ"ב, דלכאורה אם האמת היא שהקב"ה היה עתיד ליתן לבני ישראל את ביזת הים ובה תתקיים הבטחתו שיצאו ברכוש גדול, א"כ אם יבוא אברהם אבינו ויטען שלא קיים להם הבטחתו, יענה לו הקב"ה שכוונת ההבטחה היא על ביזת הים. ולמה צריך לבקש מישראל שישאלו ממצרים

הרב חיים והרב שמואל בן אחי משה ענו לבקשתי ושניהם יצביעו לאותו מאמר חז"ל (כל אחד ממקור אחר, הרמב"ן בפרשת אמור והילקוט שמעוני בתהלים) במדרש רבה (ויקרא ט, ז). רבי פנחס ור' לוי ר' יוחנן בשם ר' מנחם דגליא, לעתיד לבא כל הקרבנות בטילין וקרבן תודה אינו בטל, כל התפילות בטילות וההודאה אינה בטילה דכתיב "קול ששון" וכו'. ובפירוש עץ יוסף על המדרש מבאר שהקרבנות שיתבטלו הם רק קרבנות של יחיד מפני שלא יחטאו ולא יצטרכו בהם, אבל קרבנות חובה של ציבור לא יתבטלו כדכתיב "אז תחפוץ זבחי צדק". ולפי זה לשון הפיוט מאד מדויק כי התודה מיוחד בזה שהוא הקרבן היחידי שכל אחד מישראל יוכל להביא, אבל שאר הקרבנות נכתבו עם תוספת "ל" וכלשון הכתוב כי הם סוג אחר של קרבנות שלא יהיו נקרבות אלא בעת חיובה של צבור.

ונסיים בחרוז מפיוט מעוז צור של חנוכה המסכם דברינו. "תיכון בית תפילתי ושם תודה נזבח". יהי רצון שנזכה לזה בקרוב. ^א

לפטור עצמו מקרבן שהוא מחוייב בו, כי כן גזירת המלך לקיים מצותיו במעשים. אולם בימינו שאי אפשר להביא קרבנות, התיקון של לימוד התורה הוא גדול יותר.

ויש לחקור האם דרשת רבא שהעוסק בתורה אינו צריך עולה מנחה ושאר הקרבנות כוללת גם את הקרבן תודה. כי התודה מיוחדת, שלא כשאר הקרבנות, שאיננה באה לכפר ולא לצאת שום חיוב, וכל מהותה היא להכיר טוב ולהודות לבורא עולם על כל הטוב שהוא גומל. והנה הפייט מביע את הגעגועים על עבודת המקדש והציפיה לגאולה.

ובמסכת בפסחים על הפסוק "והיה ה' למלך על כל הארץ ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו אחד" שואלת הגמרא אטו האידנא לאו אחד הוא. ומתרצת לא כעולם הזה העולם הבא. העולם הזה על בשורות טובות אומר ברוך הטוב והמטיב ועל בשורות רעות אומר דיין האמת, לעולם הבא כולו הטוב והמטיב. והצל"ח מסביר שבאמת אין דבר רע יוצא מהקב"ה, והכל תמיד לטובה אפילו הפורעניות, אלא שהאדם בעולם הזה אינו מבין הדבר לאשורו ונדמה בעיניו כאלו הוא רעה. אמנם לעתיד לבוא, כשנזכה לזה במהרה, נוכל להבין את הטוב האמיתי שיש במה שחשב מקודם שהוא לרעה. וזה כוונת הגמרא, שבעולם הזה מברך על בשורות רעות דיין האמת שסובר שזה מצד מדת הדין, ולעולם הבא כולו הטוב והמטיב, פירוש שיראה למפרע שכולו הוה מדת טובה והיה לו לברך על הכל הטוב והמטיב.

ואם כן כשיבנה הבית המקדש ונראה בעליל שאפילו הפורענות היו רק לטובה בוודאי נצטרך כולנו להביא קרבן תודה להודות על זה. ואולי בגלל זה מנה הפייטן את התודה בראש וחילקו משאר הקרבנות.

לאחר שכתבתי הדברים למעלה שלחתי אותה לכמה מידידי ובקשתי דעתם כי היה נראה שהחילוק בין התודה לשאר הקרבנות הייתה צריכה ראייה. ואחי

יודו לה' תְּסִדּוּ

הרשל שבת

בפיוט "קה קלי וגאלי" שנוהגים לומר לפני מוסף בשלש רגלים, מונים הקרבנות בסדר הזה: "ותודה ולעולה ולמנחה ולחטאת ולאשם ולשלמים ולמלוואים כל קרבניך". וע' בסידור ארטסקרול שתמה על סדר הקרבנות, והקשה למה מזכירים את התודה לפני העולה, והרי העולה יותר מקודשת ממנה וע' שם הסברו.

ולכאורה יש גם להקשות למה בכל הקרבנות מקדים הפייטן "ל" (ולעולה ולמנחה ולחטאת וכו') חוץ מהתודה? ובפשטות יש לתרץ כי הפייטן שימש בלשון התורה (ויקרא ז, לז) "זאת התורה לעולה למנחה ולחטאת ולאשם ולמילואים ולזבח השלמים", והפסוק לא מזכיר התודה בפירוש (אם כי באמת התודה הינה קרבן שלמים ונימינית עמה). אבל אם כן יש להקשות למה הפייטן מזכיר "והתודה" בכלל.

והנה בסוף מסכת מנחות נחלקו ר"ל ורבא על הפסוק לעיל של "זאת התורה". ריש לקיש סובר שזה בא ללמדינו שכל העוסק בתורה כאילו הקריב עולה מנחה חטאת ואשם. ורבא חולק עליו ואומר שא"כ היה צריך הפסוק לכתוב זאת התורה עולה ומנחה וכו' ולמה כתוב "לעולה ולמנחה" וכו'. לכן דורש רבא שכל העוסק בתורה אינו צריך לא לעולה ולא למנחה ולא לחטאת וכו', והוא דורש את קידומת "ל" במשמעות "לא" שהלומד תורה אינו צריך להם.

והחפץ חיים בספר זבח תודה מבאר המחלוקת. דעת ר"ל היא שהתיקון הרוחני שאדם יכול להשיג בלימוד התורה הוא רק קרוב לזה של הקרבת קרבן, שהרי לימוד התורה אינה אלא כאילו הקריב קרבן. אולם רבא חולק וסובר שהמעלות של לימוד התורה הם יותר גדולות ועולות על השגות של הקרבת קרבן. אמנם, החפץ חיים מציין, שכל זמן שבית המקדש קיים אין אדם יכול

מה שנתקן לומר בלשון ארמי

ואומרים הא לחמא עניא בלשון ארמי. יצ"מ מקושר לענין להוציא עניני החול ולהביאם לתוך הקדושה. וזהו לשון ארמי, שהוא הלשון הקרוב ללשון הקודש מכל הע' לשונות, וצריך להביאו לתוך הקדושה. ולקחו בר ממצרים, שהיו דברים ששייכים לקדושה שנפלו לתוך הטומאה, וכן הוא ענין השאלת כלים. ולכן נרמז שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום בשמו"ת. שהוא הענין שכולל בחי' חול, לשון ארמי, תרגום, לתוך הקדושה. ומשה חשב שזה הזמן ששייך התיקון השלם ולכן רצה ליקח הערב רב ולתקנם. ערב רב גי' דע"ת וגי' תלמו"ד. בחי' תושבע"פ. ותלמוד בבלי בלשון ארמי. ורצה להביאם לתוך הקדושה ולתקן עה"ד טו"ר. ערב רב הם שאור שבעיסה שבא מחטא עה"ד טו"ר. ובציווי על בנין המשכן קודם חטא העגל נאמר "כל איש אשר ידבנו לבו", שגם הערב רב היו שייכים לנדב להמשכן. אבל אחרי חטא העגל נאמר רק כלל ישראל, שאחרי שהערב רב פגמו בבחי' הדעת בחטא העגל, לא יהי' תיקון ע"י נדבה שלהם, רק יעשו תערוכות שאור שבעיסה. ובליל פסח הוא קידוש עוה"ז. וקידוש בעניני אכילה, הא לחמא עניא. כל דכפין, תיקון ע"י אכילה. ולכן הוא בלשון ארמי, שהוא לקדש עוה"ז. ^א

ראוי לו וניתן לו מאדה"ר או מהאבות, אבל כתיב דוד מלך ישראל חי וקיים. שהוא הגיע לבחי' חי בעצם. וכן בפורים הגיע לבחי' החיים, כמ"ש בגמ' שהיה ממות לחיים. וזהו בקשת עוה"ז, שנשיג עצם החיים, חיים של קדושה, חיים של תורה. וכן בפורים הדר קבלוה בימי אחשוורוש. שקבלו את בחי' התושבע"פ שהוא חיי צער תחיה כמבואר במד' תנחומא פ' נח. וזה בא מעצם החיים של פורים. הסדר עצמו הוא ענין של מה שאלתך מה בקשתך, כמו שאמרנו ששאלה הוא בקשה, הסדר הוא בקשה כמו שמו"ע. מלכות שהוא בחי' דלות דאין לה כלום, שואל מהקב"ה. כאן הב"ן שואל, ב"ן בגי' בהמ"ה. שואל לבחי' החיים של עוה"ז, ר"ל חיים של קדושה תוך עוה"ז.

וכל זה הוא חצי הראשון, וחצי השני הוא צפון לעוה"ב. וזהו חיי עוה"ב. דבר זה מכוסה ולא נראה בעוה"ז. והוא ענין גילוי השגת היחוד שמשגיגים שהכל היה כל כולו הטבה מאת הקב"ה, ולא היה באמת שום שליטה להרע. וזה צפון לעוה"ב. "מה רב טובך אשר צפנת לרעך", לשון כיסוי. וגם צפון מידת הדין, שעיקר השכר בעוה"ב בא ממידת הדין. וע"פ מידת הדין כל הענין מכוסה, אבל לעתיד נזכה להשגת היחוד, שכל כולו היתה הטבה, מחזיר כל רע לטוב. לעתיד לבא רק נברך הטוב והמטיב.

אכילת האפיקומן הוא כנגד סעודת הלוי. ובלויתן מצינו ענין של שחוק, "יצרת לשחק". וכן לעת"ל שחוק של יום אחרון. וזה המהלך בפסח, שהיה מרירות מקודם ביסורין "וימררו את חייהם", ומזה גופא בא ההטבה, אין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן. לעת"ל יהי' התענוג של גילוי היחוד. ובאים באמונה שנשיג "מה רב טובך אשר צפנת לרעך" בעוה"ב. ולכן אומרים השתא הכא לשנה הבאה וכו'. ובאמונה זו מחכים שיהי' גילוי לבקשות אלו.

וזה בחי' היחץ. וזהו ההשגה שבא בהסדר בדרך כללית קודם שנספר בפרטיות דרגא אחר דרגא בהמשך הסדר.

הפסח והמצה, ולכאורה אחרי שיש פסח ומצה אין עוד קיום ל"וימררו את חייהם". והענין הוא שזה הגילוי שהמרור היתה גופא הסיבה לענין יצ"מ, ע"י המרירות במצרים, מזה גופא בא ההטבה. אחרי שמשה בא לפרעה העבודה נעשה יותר קשה ממה שהיתה ושאל להקב"ה "למה הרעותה" וכו', ור"ל שהוא מבין שפרעה לא ישמע, אבל היאך יתכן שעבודת יתרבה ויתקשה יותר. אבל באמת בפנימיות הענין, עי"ז היה ההטבה. דילג על הקץ ע"י עבודה קשה זו, בשנים אלו נולדו מרים, שמה על שם "וימררו", באר מרים גילוי תושבע"פ.

יחץ

וכן ביחץ יש ענין זה, שחולקים המצה להיות מצה פרוסה, רמז ללחם עוני. אבל גם מניחים חצי השני לאפיקומן, לצפון, והוא "מה רב טובך אשר צפנת לרעך". צפון הוא מה שמכוסה, וגם הוא רוח צפון הוא מידת הדין. שבדין הדבר מכוסה, לא נתגלה הטבה זו, אבל בפנימיות כל הדין מסבב שיבא להטבה שלימה זו שנגיע לה לעת"ל.

הנה יש מנהגים לקרוא את המה נשתנה "הד' קושיות". אבל לכאורה בהפסוק ובמשנה הוא בלשון שאלה. שכתוב "כי ישאלך בנך". ובמשנה איתא כאן הבן שואל. ומהו לשון שאלה. כתוב מה שה' שואל ממך. ויש שומר שנקרא שואל. ושאלו הכלים מהמצריים. ובפשטות, שאלה הוא ששואל דבר מאדם שרוצה דבר ממנו. רוצה תשובה לשאלתו. הבן שואל לדבר. לא רק מקשה קשיא, אלא שואל מאביו שיתן לו הדבר שמבקש.

חז"ל אומרים על הפסוק "מה שאלתך מה בקשתך עד חצי המלכות" וכו' ש"בקשתך" הם כנגד הי"ב בקשות שבשמונה עשרה, אבל חצי האחר הוא כנגד אפיקומן, שהוא צפון לעתיד לבא. וזהו "מה שאלתך", לשון שאלה. "מה שאלתך וכו' עד חצי המלכות", יכול לבקש עד חצי המלכות שהוא הי"ב בקשות שבשמונה עשרה. והם בקשות על בחי' חיים של עוה"ז. מבקש לבחי' נפש, וכמו שאמרה אסתר "נפשי בשאלתי". נפש הוא בחי' המלכות. שהיא בחי' דלות ואין לה מעצמה כלום. כמו בדוד המלך עצם החיים שלו לא היה

הגר"א ז"ל. וכמו בשבת שהוא תכלית מעשה שמים וארץ, מגלה שהששה ימים היה מהלך של יחוד ה', שבפנימיות הדברים היה מסבב הכל לשלימות. יכירו וידעו בניך כי מאתך היא מנוחתם. וזה ענין הזכרת שבת אצל בנין המשכן. שהמשכן הוא עבודת ה' אלפי שנים, בנין העולם. אבל צריך להיות מתחלה יכירו וכו' כי מאתך היא מנוחתם.

המהלך בפסח הוא ענין של גילוי ידיעה ובחירה. הקב"ה אמר למשה שידבר לפרעה, הוא בחי' השתדלות מלמטה, אבל אמר שפרעה לא יניח להם לצאת, וגם הסיר הבחירה מפרעה בפועל. ור' צדוק אמר שהקב"ה גילה למשה השם אק"ק אשר אק"ק שיהי' עמהם בצרה זו וגם בצרות אחרות, וזה בחי' ידיעה. ונתגלה בפסח שהכל מאת ה'. ענין גילוי היחוד, מיחד בחי' הקדושה. ואומרים אפילו כולנו חכמים כולנו נבונים כולנו יודעים את התורה, שיש לנו כל החכמה ובינה ודעת, מצוה עלינו לספר ביצ"מ. ששורש בחי' עבודת התורה בבחי' קדושה, השורש הוא מפסח. סימנים הוא שמיחד הכל עד להסוף. וזה ענין חד גדיא שאומרים בליל הסדר, עד סוף כל הגילויים. סימנים מייחד הדבר שכל מעשה, אינו במקרה. ואומרים הסימנים עד נרצה, עד הסוף.

כרפס

ידוע מה שאמר המהרי"ל שלוקחים דבר שנקרא כרפס לטיבול הראשון שהוא אותיות ס' פרך, שהמצריים שיעבדו את ששים ריבוא של כלל ישראל בעבודת פרך. וצריך להבין למה הרמז הוא בדוקא במש"כ שעבדו בעבודת פרך. כתב הגר"א ז"ל באד"א שעבודת הפרך הוא הגרוע ביותר, כמ"ש רש"י שאומר לו החם לי את הכוס ואינו צריך, שהיא עבודה לבטלה. ונאריך בזה יותר לקמן. והכרה זו שכך היתה השעבוד ומזה יצאנו צריך להיות בתחלת הסדר.

ולוקחים הכרפס ואוכלים אותו בדרך חירות שמטבילין אותו. נמצא שיש רמז בהכרפס לקושי השעבוד והגאולה ביחד. הנה אומרים בהגדה מצה על שום מה וכו' פסח על שום מה וכו' מרור על שום מה וכו', ויש להעיר הלא מרור נעשית ראשונה מקודם לפסח ומצה, ולמה אומרים אותו באחרונה רק אחרי

וענין זה בפרט נוגע לענין קדושה. קריאת ספר ויקרא מתחיל בזמן סמוך לפסח וידוע מש"כ השל"ה שהקריאה שקוראים בזמני השנה מקושרים לאותם זמנים שנקראים בה. ויקרא הוא קריאה, שהוא להזמין מקודם. מיוחד, כמו בקידושין, הרי את מקודשת לי, בחי' קדושה, לייחד הכלה רק להחתן. וכן בפסח יש בחי' קדושה כמו שאמרנו. ובכל התחלה בקדושה יש הזמנה. משא"כ באוה"ע לא נאמר ויקרא אלא ויקר, שאף שיש להם נבואה על העתידות, אבל הוא בדרך מקרה, אינו מיוחד להם. אבל לכלל ישראל יש גילוי עתידות שהוא מיוחד להם ממש, שנתגלה להם הדברים שיהי' גילוי של הרבש"ע בהשגחה פרטית.

איתא בגמ' ב"מ (פה:): אמר ליה רבי חייא לרבי חנינא בהדי ידי קא מינצית דעבדי לתורה דלא תשתכח מישראל, מאי עבידנא אזלינא ושדינא כיתנא וגדילנא נישבי וציידנא טבי ומאכילנא בשרייהו ליתמי, ואריכנא מגילתא וכתבנא חמשה חומשי, וסליקנא למתא ומקרינא חמשה ינוקי בחמשה חומשי, ומתנינא שיתא ינוקי שיתא סדרי, ואמרנא להו עד דהדרנא ואתינא אקרו אהדדי ואתנו אהדדי, ועבדי לה לתורה דלא תשתכח מישראל. היינו דאמר רבי כמה גדולים מעשי חייא. וצ"ב למה היה צריך להקדים כל כך גם לזרוע הפשתן. והגר"א ז"ל פי' שאם מתחילת הדברים יש הכנה לקדושה, ולוקח הגשמיות באופן שכלי הגשמי יחול עליו עניני קדושה, אז אם נעשה באופן כזה לא יהי' שייך לשכחת התורה, שלא יהי' שייך אחיזה להרע בדבר זה.

וקודם הסדר אומרים הסימנים כדי לקבוע שכל הסדר הוא בכוונה ליחד לקדושת הסדר, גילוי השגחת ה' בהעולם.

ואומרים זה בפה שהוא גילוי הדעת וזה היה גלות וגאולת מצרים, גלות הדעת והדיבור וגאולת הדעת והדיבור וכמו שידוע. דעת הוא ענין של יכירו וידעו בניך כי מאתך היא מנוחתם, שיש תכלית להבריאה שהוא מאת ה', מתחילת הבריאה עד הסוף. והסדר הולך מעוה"ז עד הלל שהוא כנגד עוה"ב כמ"ש

וגם יש כעין זה בביהמ"ק שכהנים אוכלים ובעלים מתכפרים. הם משפיעים ע"י אכילה שלהם. ובימות המשיח כל כלל ישראל יהיו במדרגה זו. וכותב שזה נקרא בחי' דעת ובחי' בני בכורי ישראל. וביצ"מ היה הלידה של בני בכורי ישראל. שבכור יורש פי שנים, חלק האב וחלק האם. שהם משפיעים על חנוך הבנים, הם הכוונה ורוחניות בחינוך הבנים, ומביאים הקדושה תוך הבן שלא היה שייך לו מצד עצמו מחשבות אלו. ובזה הוא יורש הדעת ונעשה במקום אביו ואמו ונעשה המשפיע לבחי' בן שלו. ר"ל נפש הבהמיות שלו וגם כפשוטו לבנים שלו. ובליל פסח משיגים מדרגת דעת זו ויכולים לבא לבחי' הקדושה.

אמירת הסימנים

יש שנוהגים לומר הסימנים קודם להתחלת הסדר. וצ"ב מה הענין במנהג זה. הנה גם מצינו ענין סימנא מילתא בר"ה בהסימנים שאוכלים בליל ר"ה. וגם איתא שיש להיות לאדם פנים של שמחה בר"ה בתפילה שיהי' סימן שהדין יצא לטוב. והענין של סימנים בר"ה הוא משום שר"ה הוא תחילת השנה, ואז הדברים באים מאין ליש. שהבריאה חוזרת לבריאת העולם מחדש באיזה בחינה, ונתעורר רצון להקב"ה לברוא העולם מחדש לגילוי מלכות הקב"ה. ובמצב של יש מאין, כמ"ש הרמב"ן בענין מעשה אבות סימן לבנים, שסימן הוא ענין הממוצע בין אין ויש גמור, ובהסימן נכלל כל המשך הדברים. והוא הצינור להביא מאין ליש. וזה גדר הריון, בתחלת הריון הוא סימן לדבר.

וגם בפסח יש גם כן ענין סימנים, ט"ו סימנים אלו שאומרים בתחלת הסדר. שגם בפסח הוא התחלת השנה לשנת הלבנה. ופסח הוא המועד הראשון מהג' רגלים שהיתה אז יצירת ולידת כלל ישראל. וכמו שמצינו מח' ר"א ור"י אם בניסן נברא העולם או בתשרי נברא העולם, נמצא שגם בניסן יש בריאת העולם מחדש. וזה לכלל ישראל בכלל וכן הוא לכל יחיד מכלל ישראל יש בחי' התחדשות בעבודת ה', בתורה ומצות, ולכן קודם שעושים הקידוש בפועל מייחד הדבר לתכליתו, להוציאו.

של עצם חיות האדם, אבל לא אוכלים חמץ שהיה נראה שהחיות בא מלחם של מצרים.

מבואר בכתוב שמצרים הוא לעומת א"י, כמ"ש שמצרים מקבלים ההשפעה של המים מהנילוס, וא"י מקבלת מהגשמים. והיציאה מארץ מצרים היה יציאה גם מעצם הארץ. והענין הוא, בארץ מצרים יש הכיסוי היותר גדול של שפע הקב"ה בהבריא. כמ"ש בא"י "עניי ה' אלקיך בה מראשית השנה עד אחרית השנה" וכו' שיש שם השגחה פרטית בגלוי, ודבר זה ניכר ע"י הגשמים. אבל במצרים אין גילוי של השגחה פרטית שהרי הנילוס נותן מימיו. ולכן שם עצם הארץ מכסה שכל קיום המציאות בא מהקב"ה. והם עובדים להנילוס, להם נראה שכל השפע רק מע"ז שעובדים, הכל בא מלמטה, מים תחתונים. אבל בא"י כל השפע ממים עליונים, שהוא גשמים, שהכל בא מלמעלה. וכך היתה עיקר עבודת האדם כשנברא כמ"ש "אדם אין לעבוד את האדמה" וכו'. שהיה צריך להכיר שחסר משפע הבורא עולם ולהתפלל לגשמים. שהרבש"ע נותן לנו עצם החיים וזה רק ע"י עבודה ותפילה שלנו.

ולכן ביציאת מצרים באים להכרה שיש מצה בלא חמץ, בלא שאור שבעיסה. שעצם החיים רק מהקב"ה. כשהיינו במצרים היה נראה שנקודת החיים משם, ובא בדרך קושי, ורק בעבודת פרך כשהיינו עבדים, והיו צריכים לאכול לחם העוני שהוא מצה. וכשיצאו, אז מכירים שעצם החיים, בתוך מצרים, עצם החיות מקב"ה. באכילת מצה היא ההכרה של נקודת החיים.

ומצוה זו בדברי רשות, צריכים לאכול כדי שנחיה והיה שייך לחשוב שמהלך של חיים זה לא מקושר לקדושה. אבל בליל פסח יש שפע שעצם החיות בא מזה. עצם החיים ממצה.

וזה ענין הקידוש שמקדש עוה"ז. שכל עניני בהמיות נעשו מיוחדים לקב"ה. כמ"ש הרמח"ל בכללים ראשונים (כלל כ"ג), ששלימות הדבר הוא בימי המשיח

הנה בכל השנה אוכלים חמץ, אבל בפסח אוכלים רק מצה. וחז"ל הקשו אם לא אוכלים חמץ בפסח משום שהוא כנגד היצה"ר למה אוכלים חמץ בכל השנה. והענין הוא, מצינו שכל הירידה למצרים היה בעבור חוסר לחם, וכן היתה הסיבה שאברהם אבינו ירד למצרים, וגם יצחק אבינו רצה לירד משום זה. נמצא שלחם יש תמיד במצרים, לחם מיוחד למצרים. ולחם שלהם ודאי היה חמץ. הלחמא עניא שאכלו אבותינו כשהיו עבדים היתה מצה, אבל מה שאכלו המצריים היה בחי' לחם שהוא חמץ. והגר"א ז"ל כתב שהחילוק בין חמץ ומצה הוא בחילוף אות ה' בח', שחמץ הוא כמו אות ח' מקיף וסוגר שלא יצא, וכשנעשה לה' יש פתח, וזה יצ"מ. וכן המצריים, רצו שיהיו סגורים במצרים באין פתח, אבל ביצ"מ נפתח, וזה כמו לידה. אז היתה לידת כלל ישראל.

ואחר יצ"מ האכילה היתה מן, לחם מן השמים. והמים מן באר של מרים. נמשך עוד לעניני אכילה, אבל במדרגה גבוה יותר, ואמרו חז"ל לא ניתנה תורה אלא לאוכלי המן. זכינו לבחי' המצה שהוא הלחם מן הארץ ואח"כ למן שהוא לחם מן השמים. ונאמר במן "כי לא על הלחם לבדו יחיה האדם כי על כל מוצא פי ה' יחיה האדם". וכוונת הכתוב לומר שהיה שייך לאדם לחשוב שחיו בא ע"י הלחם, והקב"ה אומר לא על הלחם לבדו, אלא שהקב"ה נתן בלחם עצמו כח החיות, שבלחם הגשמי יש המוצא פי ה', וכן הוא בכל אוכל אבל כן הוא בפרט בבחי' הלחם. ואה"נ מה שנותן חיים הוא לחם גשמי, וזה מה שצריך לאכול, אבל רק ע"י המוצא פי ה' נותן החיות. ובמן אכלו יותר מלחם גשמי, אכלו מאכל של המלאכים, שגם הגשמיות של כלל ישראל עלו למדרגה זו, והיו יכולים לאכול לחם מן השמים. ואז נתגלה יותר המוצא פי ה' באכילה זו.

הנה בירידה למצרים תמיד היה ע"י שהיה רעב בכל הארץ ובארץ מצרים היה לחם. ור"ל שהיה נראה שכל החיים בא ממצרים. אבל בפנימיות אינו כן, אלא החיות בא ממוצא פי ה'. ובפסח המצוה לאכול מצה, שבפסח זוכים לשפע

בענין מנהגי הסדר

הגאון הרב נחום מאיר הלוי לנסקי¹

קדש

כתב הגר"א ז"ל והענין של הד' כוסות... והן נגד ד' עולמות, שהוא עוה"ז, וימות המשיח, ותחיית המתים, ועוה"ב. דהיינו ראשון הוא קידוש נגד עוה"ז שצריך להתקדש עצמו בעוה"ז עכ"ל.

אף שבכל יו"ט ושבת יש קידוש, אבל ממה שכוס של קידוש בליל פסח הוא אחד מהד' כוסות שנתקנו נגד ד' לשונות של גאולה, רואים שענין של קידוש מתייחס בפרט לפסח. והגר"א ז"ל כתב שהוא נגד עוה"ז, להתקדש עצמו בעוה"ז. קדושה היא המידה שמקדש את עצם הגשמיות של עוה"ז, וכמ"ש במסילת ישרים. ולמשל ביעקב אבינו שהאבנים אמרו עלי יניח צדיק את ראשו, שע"י שהם משמשים לצדיק יש עליה לעוה"ז. ודבר זה מצינו בפרט ביעקב שהוא כנגד מדרגת הקדושה, ברכה ראשונה בשמו"ע כנגד אברהם אבינו וברכה שניה כנגד יצחק אבינו וברכה שלישית ואתה קדוש כנגד יעקב אבינו. ודבר זה גם נוגע ליצ"מ שאמרו חז"ל שיעקב הוא החצוניות ומשה הוא הפנימיות של מדרגתו.

וכאן בליל פסח ההתחלה של הסדר היא מקידוש. מצינו במצות הסדר שקובעים הכל על השלחן. וגם שעצם המצות הם בעניני אכילה, כמו מצות, מרור, ד' כוסות, אכילת קרבן פסח. וגם המצוה לספר ביצ"מ הוא רק 'בעבור זה' בשעה שיש מצה ומרור מונחים לפניך. שזה הקדושה שזוכים בימי הפסח, אנחנו מקדשים כל עניני האכילה להיות בקדושה. וזה בפרט בליל פסח.

¹ שנת תש"פ. נכתב ע"י הרב אליהו מאיר ליפסקי.

תוכן הענינים

בענין מנהגי הסדר

הגאון הרב נחום מאיר הלוי לנסקי שליט"א א

יודו לה' חסדו

ר' הרשל שבת..... י

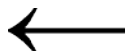
האמת של התורה

הרב רפאל שעפטיל הלוי נויברגר יג

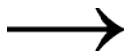
יציאת מצרים

הרב אליהו מאיר ליפסקי יח

מדור לשון הקודש



Dedications



לעילוי נשמת

יעקב אליהו בן דוד ע"ה ניימאן

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

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

נפטר בשם טוב ח' שבט תשס"ה לפ"ק

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

In Honor of our Dear Mother,

Deborah Naiman

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

Love,

Irvin and Family

In Gratitude
to
Hashem Yisborach

by
the Silverbergs

In Appreciation of the Rav and the Rebbetzin

by
the Solomons

In Honor of the
Rav, Gabba'im,
and Kiddush Committee
for their tireless efforts
at BMR

by
the Sugars

Thank you
to the Rabbi Naiman and
family
in recognition of all of your
hard work

by
**Eitan and Ariella Schuchman
and family**

In Honor of the
Zichron Yaakov Eliyahu
Kollel

by
the Kimelfelds

With much gratitude
to
Rabbi and Rebbetzin Naiman
and the entire BMR
community.

by
Moshe Arie Michelsohn

In Honor and Appreciation of
Rabbi and Rebbetzin Naiman
for all they do for the Bais Medrash
and the entire kehillah

by
Eli and Janice Friedman
and Family

In Honor and
with much gratitude to
Rabbi Abba Zvi Naiman
for his tireless efforts
at our *Kehillah*

by
Hershel and Sarah Schabes

In Honor of
R' Eli Friedman
and
R' Moshe Kravetz

Thank you for your constant concern and
commitment, which ensures that so many
vital things run smoothly and properly
throughout the year

by **Danny Menchel**

In Honor of the Members
of our
Kollel Zichron Yaakov Eliyahu

by
the Singmans

לזכר נשמתם

לזכר נשמת
יעקב בן דוד הלוי, ע"ה
Wiesel

תנצב"ה

לע"נ

יעקב גוטמאן בן יהושע, ע"ה

Mr. Jacob Schuchman

A longtime admirer of
the Naiman family
going back to Lower Park Heights
and an avid reader of the BMR
Pesach Kuntress

תנצב"ה

לעילוי נשמת
אהרן ישראל בן אריה ליב ע"ה
הרב חיים אריה בן יצחק אליעזר ז"ל
מלכה בת קהת הלוי ע"ה
נפתלי מאיר בן הרב חיים אריה ע"ה
by
Eli and Janice Friedman
and Family

In Memory of
Shlomo (Manfried) Strauss

שלמה בן שמואל ע"ה

תנצב"ה

לעילוי נשמות
הרב שמואל צבי בן הרב משה יצחק הלוי
ואשתו חיה פערל בת הרב שמעון זאב

ולעילוי נשמת
יעקב ישראל בן צבי הכהן

by
Sarah and Hershel Schabes

In Loving Memory of our Dear Grandparents

Yitzchak ben Mordechai Yehudah

Mr. Herb Prager

Avraham Chanoch ben Tuvyah Elazar

Mr. Avraham Krakauer

Rachel Leah bas Tzvi Dovid

Mrs. Rita B. Shames

Ozer ben Yisrael

Mr. Oscar Shames

by **Eliezer and Bracha Shames**

זכר נשמת האשה החשובה

דוואשא רחל בת ר' אהרן, ע"ה

Mrs. Debra Friedman, a"h

שנקטף מבית מדרשנו כעולה תמימה

לאחר הווידויים של יום הקדוש

וקבלת עול מלכות שמים בתפלת נעילה

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