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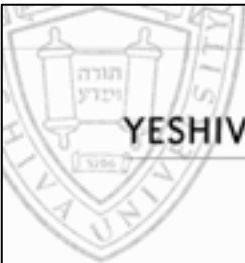
Pesach To-Go

5769



Featuring Divrei Torah from

Dr. Harvey Babich
Rabbi Reuven Brand
Rabbi Daniel Feldman
Rabbi Josh Flug
Rabbi Menachem Genack
Mrs. Yael Lebowitz
Dr. Michelle Levine
Rabbi Yaacov Neuburger
Rabbi Mayer Twersky



YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Rabbi Kenneth Brander, Dean, Center for the Jewish Future

Dear Friends,

It is my sincere hope that the Torah found in this virtual ספר will enhance your פסח (Passover) and your Yom Tov experience.

We have designed this project not only for the individual, studying alone, but also for a חברותא (a pair of students) that wishes to work through the study matter together, or a group engaged in facilitated study.

With this material, we invite you, wherever you may be, to join our Beit Midrash להגדיל תורה (to enjoy the splendor of Torah) and to discuss Torah issues that touch on contemporary matters, as well as issues rooted in the ideals of this time of year. We hope, through this To-Go series, to participate in the timeless conversations of our great sages.

בברכת חג כשר ושמח

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Dear Readers,

On Pesach, we celebrate our redemption from Mitzrayim, from Egypt. Rabbi Chaim Attar, the Ohr haChaim haKadosh, explains that Mitzrayim, *tzar* (narrow), and *meitzar* (strait) share the same root, Tz-R. This root denotes oppressive narrowness. In Mitzrayim, the oppression of our taskmasters prevented us from broadening our minds, from pursuing our souls' interests, from engaging in discourse about Hashem's values. Our redemption from Mitzrayim was redemption from narrow-mindedness, from a *weltanschauung* hemmed by falsehood, and an advent of broad-mindedness, of preparation for receiving the Torah.

It is therefore fitting, on the anniversary of our redemption from Mitzrayim, to engage our imagination and intellect in the mind-broadening exercise of Talmud Torah. In this spirit, we present this year's Pesach-to-Go, a publication filled with exciting, informative, and stimulating words of Torah. Our articles span a range of Torah topics, from explanations of the exodus narrative to halakhot of chametz, from discussion of pre-Pesach preparations to elaboration on the seder ritual. We are confident that you will find these *divrei Torah* both enriching and broadening.

We would like to thank President Richard M. Joel and Rabbi Kenneth Brander, Dean of the Center for the Jewish Future for their vision and support of the To-Go project. We also would like to thank the authors of the articles in this publication for giving so generously of their time.

Furthermore, we would like to thank all the people who made this publication possible: Rabbi Ronald Schwartzberg for general guidance, Rabbi Mordechai Willig for reviewing article content, Chaviva Fischer, Fayga Laya Brisman, and Naphtali Lavenda for proofreading, and Josh Van Dyke for printing assistance.

Chag Kosher veSameach,

The Pesach To-Go Editors

Blood, Frogs and Lice

Dr. Harvey Babich

Faculty, Stern College for Women

This article analyses the initial three plagues through the eyes of various Torah commentaries and synthesizes scientific explanations within the discussions. The approach, noted by Rav E. Munk¹, is as follows: “In the miracles recorded in the Torah, the supernatural is often interwoven with the natural and the plagues may be defined as miraculously intensified forms of the diseases and other natural occurrences encountered in Egypt.” Rav E. Dessler² explained that there is no essential difference between the natural and the miraculous. We term an act as a miracle when Hashem causes a novel occurrence, unfamiliar to us. Everyday natural events, those governed by the so-called laws of nature, are also miracles, but their common occurrence and recognizable patterns dilute their significance.

First Plague: Blood

So says Hashem, ‘Through this shall you know that I am Hashem; behold with the staff that is in my hand I shall strike the waters that are in the River and they shall change to blood. The fish that are in the water shall die and the River shall become foul. Egypt will grow weary of trying to drink water from the River’”

Shemos 7: 17-18

(יז) כה אמר ה' בזאת תדע כי אני ה'
הנה אנכי מכה במטה אשר בידי על
המים אשר בנחל ונהפכו לדם: (יח)
והדגה אשר בנחל תמות ובאש היאר
ונלאו מצרים לשתות מים מן הנחל:
שמות פרק ז

The River referred to in these verses is the Nile River, the key to the economic life of Egypt, an arid country of which 95% is desert. Waters from the Nile River were diverted to streams to irrigate the soil and also to provide a source of freshwater, both for human consumption and for the livestock. The Nile River teemed with various species of fish, readily consumed by the Egyptians. Periodically, the Nile River overflowed, thereby fertilizing the surrounding soils. The retreating waters left many fish trapped within the grasses and which were easily available for capture. This may explain (Toldos Yitzchak) B'nei Yisrael's complaint when traveling through the desert, “We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge” (Bamidbar 11:5). Wild game, such as water buffalo, were attracted to the Nile River and were either killed for food or were captured and domesticated to plow farm land. The Nile River provided a route of transportation for commerce and people. “And all the world came to Egypt” (Bereshis 41:57). Pharaoh viewed himself as master, or the god, of the Nile River, the life blood of Egypt. The Nile River was the initial target of the plagues.

¹ Munk, E. (1993). The Call of the Torah, Volume 2, Shemos. Mesorah Publ. Ltd., Brooklyn, NY.

² Dessler, E.E. (1999). Strive for Truth, Volume 2. Feldheim Publ. Co., New York, NY.

As mentioned in the Haggadah, each main plague consisted of either four (Rabbi Eliezer) or five (Rabbi Akiva) subcomponents. The first plague consisted of the following events:

- a) The Nile River changed to blood or to a blood-like substance;
- b) The fish died, leaving the Egyptians without their food staple;
- c) The Nile River fouled and emitted an offensive odor;
- d) The Egyptians lacked a suitable source of drinking water;
- e) And the Egyptians, wearied from trying to find drinkable water either had to purchase drinkable water from B'nei Yisrael (Rashi) or had to dig for underground water (Ibn Ezra).

Interestingly, in the Torah literature there appear to be two distinct interpretations of דם. The most commonly known translation of דם is that of actual human blood (e.g., Targum Onkelos; Maharal; S'forno). Rav Yaakov Culi, in his Me'am Loez, stated that the Nile River turned into blood, with the same taste, smell, and chemical and physical composition of actual blood. The Malbim noted that the Nile River water turned to blood and retained some of the characteristics of human blood, notably, the water was hot (human body temperature is 37°C) and caused the fish to die. The B'chor Shor commented that the Nile River turned to actual human blood, which coagulated, causing the fish to die.

A lesser known interpretation of דם is that it was blood-colored water, similar in appearance to, but not actual, blood (Targum Yerushalmi HaShalaim; Targum Yonasan). Rav Bachya, as cited by Rav Z. Sorotzkin³, suggested that water of the Nile River took on the appearance, taste, and smell of blood, but was not actual blood. A similar explanation was presented by Rav Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (see Haamek Davar; Shemos 7:19) and Rav Avigdor Miller⁴. Quoting Rav Miller, "It was not blood that could be used for transfusions or for fertilizing the land, but the resemblance was close enough to sicken the spectators. A revolting miasma came up from all the streams of Egypt, and the people (who were accustomed to eating and feasting always) lost their appetite, and instead vomited again and again at the sight and odor of the revolting liquid. Normal life in Egypt came to a shocked standstill; and thirst, now the first time in their history, became the chief matter in the land. Everywhere, the infirm and aged lay dead; and the nation groaned in the depths of despair."

The question of whether the water of the Nile River turned to actual blood or to a blood look-alike may relate to what caused the fish to die and why the waters were befouled. As suggested by Rav Sorotzkin, if the Nile River turned to actual blood, the befouling of the Nile River may be due to bacterial decomposition of the blood. Subsequently, unable to live in blood and in an aquatic ecosystem made anaerobic by excessive bacterial metabolic activities, the fish died. Bacterial decomposition of the fish added to the malodorous emissions from the Nile River.

On the phrase, "For they could not drink from the waters of the River" (Shemos 7:24), Rav Munk wrote that although blood is drinkable, the Egyptians could not endure seven days without drinking actual water. Do people really drink blood? Apparently, yes; the phrase "human hematophagy" describes the habit of certain societies to drink blood and to use animal

³ Sorotzkin, Z. (1993). Insights in the Torah, Volume 2, Shemos. Mesorah Publ., Ltd., Brooklyn, NY

⁴ Miller, A. (1992). Narrate to Your Son. Yeshiva Gedolah Bais Yisroel, Brooklyn, NY

blood in food items. The African Masai drink a liquid composed of a mixture of cow milk and cow blood and many communities throughout the world consume blood sausage. Ritual hematophagy, as seen in the consumption of human blood, is also known. The Scythians, a nomadic Russian people, drank the blood of the first enemy killed in battle⁵.

Rav C. Rabinowitz (Daas Sofrim) suggested that the very thirsty Egyptians, in the hope that the waters only appeared red but were not actually blood, drank from the Nile River. They were incorrect and the drinking of the blood only intensified their thirst. Rav Dovid Cohen (Simchas Yavetz, Haggadah of Pesach) noted that in the Torah it specifically mentioned that the Egyptians were not able to drink from the Nile River as it was polluted with dead and decaying fish, not because it was blood, implying, apparently, that people could drink. This last point is also stated by Rav Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg⁶ (see Munk). “In the worst emergency, the people could have drunk blood. If blood were not considered a drink by the Torah, its consumption would not have been forbidden on pain of death. This is why the Torah mentioned not only the fact that the water would turn to blood, but that the fish of the river would all die. Once the river would be full of blood plus rotting carcasses of dead fish, even the option of drinking the blood would not exist.”

If not changed to actual blood, what factors came into play to cause the waters to appear blood-like in color and in overall appearance? Rav Munk mentioned the possibility of aquatic vegetation causing the Nile River to turn a pale red in color. He suggests that perhaps the uniqueness of the plague was the supernatural intensity of a natural phenomenon. Secular scientists have offered a variety of possibilities, including the deposition of red meteorite dust from a passing comet, deposition of volcanic ash, the intrusion of red silt, and the contamination of the Nile River by red-pigmented flagellated protozoa, zooplankton, dinoflagellates, microfungi, and cyanobacteria^{7, 8}. This last hypothesis, sudden overgrowth of an aquatic microbial species, may have the most merit. Although little publicized because of its potential negative impact on tourism, Florida often experiences red tides caused by a bloom (population explosion) of the red-colored dinoflagellate, *Karenia brevis*. This specific alga produces many neurotoxins (termed, brevetoxins), some of which become airborne and when a red tide coincides with an onshore breeze, hospitals in Florida prepare for an influx of patients. Brevetoxins constrict pulmonary (lung) bronchioles and, thus, are extremely harmful to asthmatics and others with breathing problems⁹. Other red-pigmented dinoflagellates, including species of *Gymnodinium* and *Gonyaulax*, are also involved in such blooms and also produce various neurotoxins. Such toxins are harmful to fish and other aquatic vertebrates¹⁰. Apparently, the Nile River could not maintain such massive numbers of dinoflagellates; their subsequent

⁵ Wikipedia (retrieved in 2006). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/hematophagy>

⁶ Haketav Vehakabbalah. Torah Commentary by Rabbi Yaakov Tzevi Mecklenburg. Lamda Publishers, New York, NY

⁷ Marr, J.S. and C.D. Malloy (1996). An epidemiologic analysis of the ten plagues of Egypt. *Caduceus* 12:7-24.

⁸ Trevisanato, S.I. (2006). Treatments for burns in the London Medical Papyrus show the first seven biblical plagues are coherent with Santorini's volcanic fallout. *Med. Hypothes.* 66:193-196.

⁹ Potera, C. (2007). Florida red tide brews up drug lead for cystic fibrosis. *Science* 316:1561-1562.

¹⁰ Willey, J.M., Sherwood, L.M., and C.J. Woolverton (2008). Prescott, Harley, and Klein's Microbiology. McGraw Hill, New York, NY.

death followed by their decomposition by aquatic bacteria would lead to the generation of malodorous air pollution. As noted, each main plague had several subcomponents that added to the misery of the Egyptians; emissions of aquatic and airborne toxins generated by red pigmented dinoflagellates would be a deleterious subcomponent of the plague, ד.ג.

It really does not matter whether the Nile River was transformed into actual blood or into a blood look-alike. The Nile River was the pride of Egypt and was worshipped as a god. The Egyptians would prostrate themselves to the Nile River first thing in the morning, to the god who provided them with a livelihood. This so-called god was now transformed into a stinking cesspool! Rav Miller cited the following passages from the *Admonitions of Ipuwer*, an ancient Egyptian papyrus manuscript, which apparently referred to the first plague: “The river is blood... Blood is everywhere... Men shrink from tasting... That is our water... Everything is in ruination”

Second Plague: Frogs

Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Say to Aharon, stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the canals, and over the reservoirs, and raise up the frogs¹¹ over the land of Egypt’

Shemos 8:1

ויאמר ה' אל משה אמר אל אהרן נטה
את ידך במטף על הנהרת על היארים
ועל האגמים והעל את הצפרדעים על
ארץ מצרים:

שמות ח:א

Apparently, only the fish, not the frogs, died when the Nile River and its tributaries were changed to blood or to a blood-like substance. Why? Fish absorb dissolved oxygen through their gills, and perhaps, their death may be related to the lack of suitable quantities of dissolved oxygen in the Nile River due to bacterial decomposition of the dead dinoflagellates. Frogs are amphibians and are not confined to an aquatic system, and if the surrounding vegetation remained moist, they could have survived as terrestrial denizens for the week of the plague. Or, frogs have lungs and even if they remained in the anaerobic water of the Nile River, they could come to the water surface and breathe air. In addition to pulmonary (lung) respiration, frogs have two other modes of gaseous respiration, allowing for gas exchange both in water and on land. The moist skin of frogs is supplied with capillary blood vessels, allowing for cutaneous gas exchange when in water or on land. Gas exchange also occurs across the moist surfaces of the mouth and pharynx¹². Breathing through their lungs, most important when metabolic activity is increased, probably came into play when the frogs left the Nile River to infest Egypt. As noted, “The River shall swarm with frogs and they shall ascend and come into your palace and your bedroom and your bed and into the houses of your servants and of your people, and into your ovens and into your kneading bowls. And into you and your people and all your servants will the frogs ascend” (Shemos 7:28-29.).

¹¹ Although this will not be discussed, it is interesting to note that some commentaries, such as the Rav Bachya, the Ramban (see Munk), and the S'forno (Shemos 8:3), interpreted צפרדע as the crocodile. The Haamek Davar (Shemos 7:28) suggested that צפרדע referred both to frogs and crocodiles, with frogs infesting all of Egypt and crocodiles infesting Pharaoh's palace. For an in-depth analysis on the identity of צפרדע as the crocodile, the reader is directed to an article by Dr. S. Sperber, Department of Talmud, Bar-Ilan University on Bar-Ilan University's Parashat HaShavua Study Center, Parashat VaEra <http://www.biu.ac.il/JH/Eparasha/vaera/spe.html>

¹² Miller, S.A. and J.P. Harley (2005). Zoology. McGraw Hill, New York, NY.

When noting the dialogue Moshe should have with Pharaoh, HaShem stated, “But if you (i.e., Pharaoh) refuse to send out, behold I will strike all of your territory with frogs” (Shemos 7:27). Rav Miller suggested that the phrase “all of your territory” implied that not only aquatic frogs but various species of terrestrial frogs and land toads infested Egypt. In particular, he made note of the giant toad, *Bufo marinus*, which consumes birds and small mammals and has poisonous cutaneous glands that secrete a deadly toxin when inadvertently stepped upon. Another usually large amphibian is the West African frog, *Conraua goliath*, more than 30 cm long from tip to tip, and with a weight of 3.3 kg (or, about 7½ pounds). This giant frog devours animals, such as rats and ducks¹³ and may also have been involved in the plague.

The plague of frogs commences with the following, “Aharon stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt and the frog צפרדע infestation ascended and covered the land of Egypt (Shemos 8:2). In this verse the word “frog” is in the singular and Rashi cites a Midrash contending that one frog initially emerged from the Nile River. When the Egyptians struck the frog, it fragmented into many frogs. On the surface, this appears to describe cloning, through which differentiated adult cells become embryonic or totipotent to develop into copies of the original organism. Interestingly, prior to cloning the lamb Dolly, the initial successful cloning experiments, developed in the 1950s by Robert Briggs and Thomas King, were with frogs (*Rana pipens*)¹⁴. With this in mind, and probably pushing a scientific explanation to its extreme, striking the initial frog may have caused shedding of its differentiated epidermal somatic cells, which became totipotent or zygote-like cells, undergoing mitotic divisions to generate multicellular frogs.

In addition to causing physical discomfort to the Egyptians, the frogs and toads employed psychological warfare. As part of their reproduction and mating behavior, male frogs and toads croak and call vociferously to attract females (Hickman *et al.*, 2005). The Egyptians believed that the frogs were the reincarnation of the Hebrew babies cast into the Nile River; “Pharaoh commanded his entire people, saying, ‘Every son that will be born - into the River shall you throw him’” (Shemos 1:22). The Egyptians imagined that the frogs emerging from the Nile River, with their incessant croaking, were the reincarnated bodies of the dead babies crying out for their blood to be avenged. Eventually, Pharaoh pleaded with Moshe to eliminate the plague of frogs. “HaShem carried out the word of Moshe and the frogs died - from the houses, from the courtyards, and from the fields. They piled them up into heaps and heaps and the land stank” (Shemos 8:9- 10). Thus, the pollution of the atmosphere initiated through the rotting fish in the Nile River from the first plague now continued throughout the land as the frogs slowly decomposed in the hot Egyptian climate.

Third Plague: Lice infestation

HaShem said to Moshe, “say to Aharon, ‘Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the land; it shall become lice throughout the land of Egypt. So they did; Aharon stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the land, and the lice

(יב) ויאמר ה' אל משה אמר אל אהרן
נטה את מטך והך את עפר הארץ והיה
לכנם בכל ארץ מצרים: (יג) ויעשו כן
ויט אהרן את ידו במטהו ויך את עפר

¹³ Hickman, C.P., Roberts, L.S., and A. Larson (2003). Animal Diversity. McGraw Hill, New York, NY

¹⁴ Gilbert, S.F. (1994). Developmental Biology. Sinauer Associates, Inc. Publishers, Sunderland, MA

infestation was upon man and beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout the land of Egypt.

Shemos 8:12-13

הארץ ותהי הכנם באדם ובבהמה כל
עפר הארץ היה כנים בכל ארץ מצרים:
שמות פרק ח

Note the differential spellings of “lice” in these two sentences. The initial term, כנם, is thought to refer to the white parasitic body lice that attach to, sting, and penetrate the bodies of humans and animals (Or HaChayim). Rav Miller suggested a connection between the first and third plague. When the Nile River changed to blood or to a blood-like liquid, the Egyptians stopped from bathing and laundering their garments, thereby initiating a hygienic scenario to promote lice infestation of their scalp and body. The latter term, כנים, written in the plural, refers to at least 14 varieties (Rav M. Alshich) of species of jumping, black lice that originated from the Egyptian soil (Or HaChayim). The Ramban suggested that these were actually a new creation, “for it is not in the nature of dust to turn into lice.” Whereas the white body lice produced visible eggs (“nits”), the jumping, black species (Tosfot citing Rav Joseph of Orleans, Shabbos 12a) produced microscopic eggs¹⁵ and thus were believed to have arisen by spontaneous generation (Rashi explaining the opinion of Beis Hillel, Shabbos 12a). Rav Miller postulated that כנים included numerous parasitic species of lice, fleas, ticks, and mites and suggested that this plague caused more than a mere excessive itching of the skin. He noted a host of pathologies, ranging from sores, rash, fever, and general debilitation to nervous complications, meningitis, and encephalitis, cardiac anomalies, and arthritic symptoms. Ticks, mites, fleas, and lice are classified within the phylum Arthropoda, with mites and ticks in the Class Arachnida and fleas and lice in the Class Insecta. Ticks are larger than mites and carry a greater variety of infectious microbes than any other arthropods. Lice and fleas are types of wingless insects that are parasitic throughout their lifecycle (Hicksman *et al.*, 2003). There are several arthropod-borne diseases, through which a specific flea, louse, tick, or mite transfer an infectious microbe from an animal, the primary reservoir, to a human being. The following are some diseases that Rav Miller may have included under the category of כנם. For example, the disease, ehrlichiosis (causative bacterial agent: *Ehrlichia chaffeensis*) is transmitted from white-tailed deer and dogs to humans by the Lone Star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*). Once inside the human body, the bacteria infect white blood cells (the monocytes) causing a nonspecific febrile illness. The disease, epidemic (louse-borne) typhus, caused by the bacterium, *Rickettsia prowazekii*, is transmitted from human to human by the body louse, *Pediculus humanus corporis*. These rickettsia spread in the infected person to cause inflammation of the blood vessels, leading to abrupt headache, fever, and muscle ache. More familiar is Lyme disease, caused by the bacteria of the genus, *Borrelia*. The tick, *Ixodes scapularis*, transmits the bacteria from infected deer to humans. The initial symptoms of Lyme disease include malaise, fatigue, headache, fever, and chills, which, if untreated, can progress to neurological abnormalities, heart inflammation, and arthritis. Finally, infected persons may develop symptoms resembling Alzheimer’s disease and multiple sclerosis. Other arthropod-borne diseases include plague (causative bacterial agent: *Yersinia pestis*), Q fever (causative bacterial agent: *Coxiella burnetii*), and Rocky Mountain spotted fever (causative bacterial agent: *Rickettsia rickettsii*).

¹⁵ Levi, L. (2004). The Science in Torah. Feldheim Publ. Co., New York, NY.

Whereas the above-noted diseases are caused by bacteria transmitted through lice and ticks, arthropods also may transmit disease-causing protozoa and viruses from infected animals to humans. For example, the group of human diseases, termed leishmaniasis, are caused by protozoa, with their reservoirs being dogs and rodents, and transmitted through female sand flies. The viral infection, tick-borne encephalitis, is transmitted through bites from infected ticks, *Ixode ricinus*, and is manifested as meningitis, encephalitis, and meningoencephalitis. Apparently, these are the types of arthropod-borne diseases suggested by Rav Miller to have occurred through the third plague.

Summary

In the first three plagues HaShem initiated an attack on Egypt, using components of nature as the invading army. In addition to adversely affecting the Egyptians, physically, psychologically, and economically, HaShem attacked all components of the Egyptian biosphere: the aquatic ecosystems—the waters of the Nile River changed to blood or to a blood-like substance; the atmosphere—the air became polluted with malodors emanating from rotting fish and frogs; and the terrestrial ecosystems—the soils became infested with lice, ticks, and mites.

Appreciation is expressed to Rabbi Dr. Barry Mittelman, *magid shiyur*, Agudas Yisroel of Madison, Brooklyn, NY, and to Rabbi Eric (Eli) Babich, Jewish Enrichment Center, New York, NY, for reviewing portions of this manuscript.

Feeling Freedom

Rabbi Reuven Brand

Rosh Kollel, Yeshiva University Torah Mitzion Kollel of Chicago

The four cups of wine that adorn our seder table each year represent a key element in our Pesach experience: freedom. Both men and women are required to drink the four cups, the daled kosot, which are patterned after the four descriptions of redemption at the beginning of Parshat Vaera:

6. Therefore say to the people of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you from their slavery, and I will redeem you with a outstretched arm, and with great judgments; 7. And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

Shemot 6:6-7

(ו) לכן אמר לבני ישראל אני ה'
והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלת מצרים
והצלתי אתכם מעבדתם וגאלתי אתכם
בזרוע נטויה ובשפטים גדלים: (ז)
ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם והייתי לכם
לאלהים וידעתם כי אני יקוק אלהיכם
המוציא אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים:
שמות ו:ו-ז

These four appellations describe the four stages of our redemption from Egypt that we re-experience each year on the eve of the exodus, the night of the 15th of Nissan. Let us explore the nature of this mitzvah to drink four cups of wine, and understand its role in experiencing freedom at the Seder.

An interesting question is raised by Tosafot regarding the four cups:

From the language it seems somewhat that one doesn't give to his children and members of his household, but only to himself and he discharges their obligation with his, and this is logical, because why should the four cups be any different from kiddush of the entire year, when one discharges the obligation of others... Yet, from the Talmud it seems that each one requires four cups, as it states, 'everyone is obligated in four cups, both women and children, R' Yehuda commented, "what purpose is there for children to have wine?"' Seemingly, the Tanna Kamma requires cups even for the children. Yet one could deflect this proof [and explain] that it means that [the children] are obligated to hear the blessings on the four cups due to the requirement for Chinuch... And it seems that we should be strict and require four cups for each one.

Tosafot Pesachim 99b s.v. Lo Yifchtu Lo MeArba

מתוך הלשון משמע קצת שאין נותנין לבניו ולבני ביתו כי אם לעצמו והוא מוציא את כולם בשלו וסברא הוא דמאי שנא ארבע כוסות מקידוש דכל השנה שאחד מוציא את כולם... ומיהו בגמרא משמע שצריך כל אחד ארבע כוסות דקתני (שם) הכל חייבין בארבע כוסות אחד נשים ואחד תינוקות אמר רבי יהודה מה תועלת לתינוקות בין משמע דלתנא קמא צריך כוס אף לתינוקות ויש לדחות דחייבין לשמוע ברכת ארבע כוסות קאמר ומשום חינוך ... ונראה להחמיר ולהצריך ארבע כוסות לכל אחד
תוספות פסחים צט: ד"ה לא יפחתו

Tosafot wonders whether each person present at the table must drink their own four cups of wine. Perhaps it is sufficient to have one member of the Seder drink the cups at the appropriate junctures in the Haggadah and discharge the obligation of all those present at the table, as is our practice at kiddush every Shabbat, when one person recites kiddush for all the rest present. According to this view, the rest of the participants in the Seder would not be required to drink at all, just as those who listen to kiddush on Shabbat are not obligated to drink from the kiddush cup. Tosafot concludes that one should be stringent and require each person at the table to drink his or her own four cups of wine.

Upon reflection, the source of Tosafot's dilemma is unclear. What unresolved issue would determine whether each person must drink their own cups, and why did Tosafot rule that we must do so? Perhaps an exploration of the Rambam's opinion regarding the four cups can shed light on this question within Tosafot. Regarding the four cups, the Rambam codifies a unique law:

If he drank these four cups from wine that was not diluted, he fulfilled the obligation of four cups, but did not fulfill the obligation of freedom; if he drank four cups of diluted wine at one time, he fulfilled the obligation of freedom, but did not fulfill the obligation of four cups.

Rambam Hilchot Chametz Umatzah 7:9

שתה ארבעה כוסות אלו מיין שאינו
מזוג יצא ידי ארבעה כוסות ולא יצא
ידי חירות. שתה ארבעה כוסות מזוגין
בבת אחת יצא ידי חירות ולא יצא ידי
ארבעה כוסות
רמב"ם הלכות חמץ ומצה ז:ט

Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Halevi Soloveitchik (1886-1959), known as the Brisker Rav, notes that this passage is highly unusual. The Talmud teaches that if one drank the four cups in immediate succession one does not fulfill the Mitzvah, yet the Rambam indicates that in such a case the individual would, in fact, have fulfilled the Mitzvah on some level- a fulfillment of "freedom". Similarly, if one drank four cups in their proper order, but the wine was undiluted and unfit for use, according to the Rambam, one would still have fulfilled the Mitzvah on some level- a fulfillment of "four cups". The Brisker Rav demonstrates that according to the Rambam, there are two distinct aspects of the mitzvah of daled kosot: cheirut (freedom) and the order of four cups according to the Haggadah. The first aspect is reflected by drinking fine wine which demonstrates freedom, while the second simply requires that four berachot be arranged and recites according to four cups of wine in the haggadah. Each of these elements has its own distinct role in the mitzvah of daled kosot; hence, the Rambam suggests that one can fulfill one part of the mitzvah without the other.

Perhaps Tosafot concurs with the Rambam's analysis and understands that there are two aspects to the mitzvah, the drinking, which displays freedom, and the arrangement of the cups, the fulfillment of four cups. However, Tosafot is unsure as to which of these elements represents the basic, fundamental character of the mitzvah. This question may determine whether each person must drink the four cups or one could fulfill the mitzvah via the leader of the seder drinking the wine, as we will explore.¹⁶

¹⁶ The Brisker Rav does not follow this approach and assumes that the Rambam and Tosafot disagree. However, this analysis of Tosafot is based on a lecture by Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg, shlit"a, written and published by Rabbi Aryeh Korn in *Or Hamoadim*, pp.69-78.

The second aspect of daled kosot, the arrangement of the four berachot on four cups, is a recitation, similar to kiddush, in which listeners can fulfill their obligation simply by hearing the kiddush. This principle of equating listening to reciting is known as shomeah k'oneh, and it has drawn extensive attention in halachic literature. However, this notion is limited to a recitation but would not apply to an action, like drinking the wine, the first aspect of daled kosot. Enabling one to fulfill an action, a maaseh mitzvah, via someone else invokes a different principle, the rule of shlichut- agency- which allows someone else to act on my behalf and discharge my obligation.

Rabbi Aryeh Leib Hakohen Heller (1745-1813), in the Ketzot Hachoshen, his classic commentary on the Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 182:1), defines the parameters of this key halachic concept based on the words of the Tosafot Rid (R' Yeshaya D'Trani, 12th-13th c.):

There are those who ask, if so, then for all mitzvot, agency should work and a person could say to his friend, sit in the succah for me, put on tefillin for me. And it is not so, for any mitzvah that the Torah requires one to do with his body, how can he fulfill this via an agent and [the sender] will do nothing?

Tosafot Rid, Kiddushin 42b

יש מקשים א"כ לכל דבר מצוה יועיל השליח
ויאמר אדם לחבירו שב בסוכה בעבורי הנח
תפילין בעבורי. ולא מילתא היא שהמצוה
שחייבו המקום לעשות בגופו האיך יפטר הוא
על ידי שלוחו והוא לא יעשה כלום.
תוספות רי"ד קידושין מב:

The Ketzot Hachoshen explains that any mitzvah whose fulfillment is in one's body would not be subject to the laws of shlichut, because shlichut does not transform the agent into the person of the sender. Only for those mitzvot that require an action can we invoke Shlichut because the action itself can be attributed to the sender. For example, one could have an agent put tefillin on his arm, as the action of putting on tefillin can be delegated to an agent. However, one could not fulfill the mitzvah of tefillin by putting tefillin on the arm of a shaliach because shlichut cannot relate to the body of the sender.

The aspect of daled kosot which requires drinking the wine to express freedom is clearly not subject to the principle of shlichut. A sense of emancipation demonstrated by enjoying a beverage cannot be transferred as it is a personal experience, not a detached action. Tosafot wonders whether the core of daled kosot is the recital of berachot that would be subject to fulfillment by listening, and the actual drinking is an ancillary aspect, or is the drinking, the experience of freedom, the key element, which could not transfer. Tosafot concludes that the basic character of the mitzvah of the four cups is the experience of freedom, and hence, each person must drink his or her own four cups.

This notion of freedom as the key to the mitzvah of the daled kosot is a central motif in the entire seder experience. In the Haggadah, we note that each year we are obligated to see ourselves as if we were freed from Egypt. The Rambam adds that we must not only experience but also demonstrate this freedom of the Exodus:

In every generation a person is obligated to show himself as if he himself left right now from the servitude in Egypt,

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

as it says in the Torah, "and He took us out from there"
Rambam Chametz U Matzah 7:6

שנאמר ואותנו הוציא משם וגו'
רמב"ם הלכות חמץ ומצה ז:ו

This, the Rambam adds, is the source for our custom to lean while eating and drinking at the Seder:

Therefore, when a person feasts on this night, one must eat and drink and recline in the manner of freedom.
Rambam Chametz U Matzah 7:7

לפיכך כשסועד אדם בלילה הזה צריך
לאכול ולשתות והוא מיסב דרך חירות
רמב"ם הלכות חמץ ומצה ז:ז

The mishna in Pirkei Avot adds a fascinating insight into the notion of freedom.

"Engraved on the tablets." Do not read it engraved, rather, emancipated as there is no free person other than one who studies Torah.
Avot 6:2

חרות על הלוחות אל תקרא חרות אלא חירות
שאין לך בן חורין אלא מי שעוסק בתלמוד תורה
משנה אבות ו:ב

On the surface, this mishna is difficult to comprehend. What does emancipation have to do with the study of Torah? How does this verse demonstrate the principle that the mishna taught? Rabbi Aharon Soloveitchik (1917- 2001) describes the Jewish notion of freedom in his book, *Logic of the Heart, Logic of the Mind* (pp.138-139):

The common understanding of freedom translates into the Hebrew term *cheirus haguf*, freedom of the body. The Torah, however, teaches and demands a higher level of liberty, namely, *cheirus hanefesh*, freedom of the soul. One who has attained *cheirus haguf*, although no longer subject to the will of others, is still enslaved by passions, whims and desires. On a physical level, one is only as free as one's addictions allow; is such a person truly liberated? The Torah, on the other hand, in cultivating *cheirus hanefesh*, commands discipline and self-control on a physical and intellectual level, which paradoxically nourishes freedom of the soul.

This teaches that one who drifts in the winds of societal fads is not truly emancipated. He is a slave to the trends and attitudes that surround him. In contrast, one who is connected to his inner soul is truly free.

The notion that freedom of the soul is true freedom can be understood with an idea of Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook (1865-1935). He observed that true freedom is the ability to connect to and experience one's self. A slave lacks freedom because he is inhibited from pursuing his personal calling, his unique destiny. In this light, emancipation is not a physical concept; it is a mindset. While in Egypt, the Jews were enslaved not only because of their physical labor, but in the way that they were not able to connect to themselves, to their heritage and their essence. The Egyptian exile shackled the Jewish people spiritually and they were unable to pursue their destiny. They were so broken, that when Moshe arrived to announce the impending redemption, they were unable to even listen to him.

When Hashem emancipated the Jews, He immediately brought them to Har Sinai to accept the Torah, at which time they achieved true freedom. They were able to live with the fullest freedom of the soul because their lives were connected to Torah, to Hashem, to their true selves. Each person has a divine spark that is the source of our spiritual freedom, and the Torah is the key to connect with that freedom.

Now we can better understand the mishna's description of freedom and engraving. Engraving is different from other forms of writing, in that the standard means of writing involves placing ink on paper. This bond of ink and paper is a close one, but the two substances do not form one organic whole. In contrast, letters which are engraved in stone are part and parcel of the material. The mishna indicates that our relationship to Torah is not a connection between two foreign substances like ink and parchment. Rather, it is similar to engraving, as every Jew is inherently connected to Torah. This is the source of our freedom, as one who studies Torah achieves freedom of the soul through his connection to his inner self, to his true identity and destiny.

At the Seder night, when we express our emancipation through drinking four cups of wine and other expressions of freedom, we are really celebrating freedom of the soul. We are toasting to the gift of our freedom, and to the hope that our people will soon fulfill the purpose of leaving Egypt, acceptance of the Torah. This gives us the greatest freedom, freedom of the soul.

My House Is Your House: The Mitzvah of Hakhnassat Orchim

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This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat; whoever is in need, let him come and conduct the Seder of Passover.

The Pesach Haggadah

הָא לַחֲמַא עֲנִיָא דִּי אֲכָלוּ אַבְרָהָמָא בְּאַרְעָא
דְּמִצְרַיִם. כָּל דְּכָפִיו יִיְיָ לִי, כָּל דְּצָרִיךְ
יִיְיָ וְיִפְסֹח.

הגדה של פסח

Hospitality, or hakhnassat orchim, occupies a unique position of honor even within the distinguished plane of chesed. R. Menachem ibn Makhir, in his work Seder HaYom,¹⁷ identifies a potential of five separate themes of chesed contained within this category: providing a resting place for those weary with the burdens of travel; providing food and drink to those who have been weakened by the lack of these resources; saving travelers from the shame and embarrassment of having to seek out lodging, or of going without; the opportunity to perform a magnanimous act of kindness, to one whom one may not previously know or have received any benefit from; and finally, if one follows in the model of Abraham, the potential exists to impact upon the visitor spiritually as well as physically.¹⁸

The Model of Abraham

Indeed, it is Abraham's model that is at the center of any discussion of this topic, and provides the basis for one of the most significant teachings about hospitality, namely that its importance is such that it outweighs even receiving the Divine presence.¹⁹ This is derived from the behavior of

¹⁷ Commentary to the mishnah "Eilu Devarim".

¹⁸ See also R. Ya'akov ben Chananel Sikli, *Torat HaMinchah*, Genesis, 9.

¹⁹ *Shabbat* 127a. See the various interpretations of this phrase cited in the Maharal of Prague, *Chiddushei Aggadot to Shabbat* (and in *Netivot Olam, Netiv Gemilut Chasadim*, ch. 4); see also R. Chaim Pardes, *Ashdot HaPisgah* to

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Abraham, who received a Divine visitation during his recuperation from his circumcision. Nonetheless, he interrupted that experience to greet the three mysterious guests, apparently in need of hospitality, who appeared afterward. This interpretation of events is based on a specific reading of the Biblical text, one that is itself debated²⁰, and, if understood in this manner deepens the astonishing nature of Abraham's behavior.

R. Yonatan Eibshutz²¹ emphasizes that Abraham had to chase after the guests. Consequently, he not only left the Divine presence, but turned his back on it, a more impressive act of prioritization.²² R. Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky²³ notes that in doing so, he proved himself a man of genuine chesed, not only unencumbered by ulterior motives, but also uninterested in even a spiritual reward, as he abandons a Divine audience to focus instead on the needs of his guests.

While Abraham's descendants have the benefit of his behavior to learn from, it is unclear how Abraham himself knew such a bold move was appropriate. This difficulty was reportedly posed by the author of the Responsa Noda B'Yehudah, R. Yechezkel Landau, to R. Ya'akov Shimon of Shpitokova²⁴, who responded that this lesson was derived from G-d Himself. As Rashi relates,²⁵ G-d initially wanted to protect Abraham from being burdened with guests, and thus made the day unusually hot so that travelers would not be outside. However, this seems unnecessary. If G-d was visiting Abraham, this fact itself would have stopped him from interrupting the meeting to attend to guests. Apparently, that premise is incorrect, and extending hospitality is a greater priority than receiving the Divine presence.²⁶

Genesis; R. Yitzchak Shrim, *Mussar Chakhamim HaShalem*; and R. Netanel haKohen Fried, *P'nei Meivin*; R. Asher Zelig Greensweig, *Beit Asher*, p. 29; R. Yisachar Ber Kohn, *Binat Yisachar*; R. Moshe Shimon HaLevi, *Yisamach Lev*; R. Eliyahu Meir Bloch, *P'nei Da'at*; R. Nissan Alpert, *Limmudei Nissan*; R. Yitzchak Eizik Lefkowitz, *K'Ayal Ta'arog*; R. Ilan Kadosh, *Hadrah Shel Torah*; R. Yisrael of Chortkov, *Ginzei Yisrael*; R. Uri Auerbach, *Ori V'Yishi*; all to Genesis; R. Moshe Yechiel Epstein (Ozerover Rebbe), *Be'er Moshe, VaYera*, 9 and 10; R. Michael Avitan, *Tiv HaParshah* to Genesis (p. 147-148) and R. Shlomo Kluger, *Chokhmata HaTorah* to *Parshat VaYera*, pps. 26,113,115. For a kabbalistically oriented interpretation, see R. Moshe Luria, *Beit Ginzi* to Genesis. Note also the innovative analysis of the Rambam's citation of this idea in R. Tzvi Meir Fogel, *Mar'ot HaTzov'ot* to Genesis. See also R. Ya'akov Reischer, *Resp. Shvut Ya'akov*, III, 31, and R. David Shperber, *Resp. Afarkasta D'Anyan*, II, O.C. 74.

²⁰ Prior to welcoming his guests, Abraham says, "Please, my adon, do not pass from before your servant." The Talmud (Shavuot 35b) records a debate as to the proper understanding of this verse. According to one interpretation, the phrase "my adon", my master, is a respectful reference to one of his potential guests. The verse thus relates his extending of hospitality to the travelers who were passing by. According to the second possibility, though, "my Adon" is meant to be read as G-d's Name. If so, Abraham was essentially asking G-d to wait, and to not remove His presence, while he interrupted so that he could attend to guests. The notion that Abraham not only ended a session with G-d, but asked that He wait in the meantime, makes the decision all the more remarkable.

²¹ *Medrash Yehonatan* to Genesis.

²² A similar idea can be found in *Pardes Yosef al haTorah*, Genesis, 18:3; see also the comments of the Gaon of Vilna, cited in *Kol Eliyahu*.

²³ *Torat Maharitz* to Genesis.

²⁴ As cited in the work *Shem MiShimon*; See, at length, R. Chanoch Chaim Weinstock, *Birkhat Hillel al HaTorah* (Genesis, #25).

²⁵ Genesis 18:1, citing *Bava Metzia* 86b.

²⁶ See also R. Moshe Dweck HaKohen, *Ben David* to Genesis; R. Shmuel Eliezer Rolnick, *Torat Shmuel* to Genesis, and R. Daniel Biton, *HaMaor Sh'B'Avot*, p. 42, citing *Tiferet Yehoshua*. For other approaches to this question, see also R. David Eibshutz of Soroko, *Arvei Nachal* to Genesis; R. Baruch Weiss, *Emek Berakhah* to Genesis; R. Yisrael

Similarly, R. Dushinsky suggests that Abraham, in his characteristic religious sensitivity, understood that God had sent the visitors just at that moment, to convey that attending to them should take priority. Others credit this sensitivity even further, asserting that Abraham's instincts, fully refined in spirituality, correctly guided him to this conclusion.²⁷ R. Yechiel Michel Charlop²⁸ observes that hospitality, like other acts of *chesed* mentioned in the Torah, was also modeled by God Himself. This happened in the garden of Eden, where we are told "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15). The word for "put him" (*va-yanicheihu*) can also be read "He allowed him to rest", indicating that God provided hospitality for Adam in the garden. Similarly, R. Nachum Matlin²⁹ suggests that Abraham derived this message from the fact of God modeling *chesed* as a whole, which is the underlying arena of *imitatio Dei*. Thus, Abraham understood that hosting guests, which benefits others, was a higher priority than experiencing the Divine presence, which benefits him. Along these lines, R. Eliezer Menachem Mann Schach³⁰ notes that following in God's path may be understood to be even greater than receiving His presence.³¹

Chaim Braun, *Pri Etz Avot* to Genesis, *piska* 4; R. Yitzchak Farkash, *Birkhat Yitzchak* to Genesis (*VaYera*, #10); *Limmudei Nissan* to Genesis; R. Moshe Blau, *Nefesh Berakhah*, to Genesis; R. Natan Margoliot, *Pilpula Charifta* to Genesis; R. Yirmiyah Menachem Cohen, *V'Herim HaKohen* to Genesis; *Netivot Rabboteinu Beit HaLevi Brisk* to Genesis 18:2, with fn 100; R. David Pinto, *Pachad David* to Genesis; R. Reuven Fine, *Bein haMishpatayim* (Genesis, *Parshat VaYera*, #1); R. Meir Shalom Cohen, *Meshekh HaParshah* (Genesis, p. 37); R. Mordechai ben Gedalyah of Zevhil, *Mordechai B'Sha'ar HaMelekh* to Genesis; and *Pardes Yosef al haTorah*, Genesis 18:1, and the glosses of the Gerrer Rebbe to that work, printed in vol. II, p. 10, #7; and see as well R. Baruch Yehoshua Rabinowitz, *Divrei Nevonim* to Genesis. Concerning other difficulties relevant to this derivation, see R. Meir Einat, *Imrei Eish – Chomat Eish* to Genesis, and compare the comments of R. Avraham Broda, *Eishel Avraham* to Genesis. See also R. Shaul Yediyah Elazar of Moditz, *Yisa Berakhah* to Genesis, who makes several innovative observations concerning this teaching. Further, R. Avraham Yitzchak Shain, *Birkhat Ish* to Genesis, questions the proof from Abraham, noting that perhaps Abraham obtained special permission, against what would be the general rule; he thus suggests the proof is built upon Abraham's "running" to greet them. See, as well, R. Binyamin Rabinowitz Teumim, *Yechalek Shallal* to Genesis, who raises various technical questions on the derivation from Abraham in light of the general rules regulating the interruption of one religiously mandated act for another (*osek b'mitzvah patur min ha-mitzvah*). R. Baruch Dov Povarsky, *Bad Kodesh* to Genesis, addresses similar issues. Central to this question is the issue of whether receiving the Divine presence actually constitutes a "mitzvah" in the technical sense. R. Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin (Netziv), *Ha'amek Davar*, Genesis 18:2, asserts that the *mitzvah* of loving God is involved; see R. Moshe Scheinerman, *Ohel Moshe* to Genesis, pp. 309-310; *Netivot Rabboteinu L'Beit HaLevi Brisk*, II, p. 11. fn 16; and R. Shlomo Cynamon, *Eish Tamid* to Genesis, pp. 100-105. On the other hand, before the giving of the Torah, even *chesed* may not have technically been a "mitzvah"; see R. Yitzchak Sorotzkin, *Rinat Yitzchak*, II, Genesis 18:1, and note *Responsa D'var Yehoshua*, II, 11.

²⁷ R. Natan Adler and R. Meir of Premishlan, cited in *Ish L'R'eihu*, Genesis, p. 137; *Birkhat Hillel*, *ibid*; R. Meir Yosef Birntzweig, *Otzerot Megadim* to Genesis, p. 184, in *Nitfei Megadim*, 6; R. Moshe Yehudah Katz, *VaYaged Moshe* to Genesis (printed in *U'L'Asher Amar* to Genesis), R. Avraham Abba Chazan, *Nachal Eitan* to Genesis (18:3); R. Yechiel Yehoshua of Bialia, *Kedushat Chelkat Yehoshua* (Genesis, p. 54); R. Ya'akov Katz, *Kehilat Ya'akov* to Genesis; R. Reuven Melamed, *Melitz Yosher* to Genesis. A detailed expansion of this theory can be found in R. Yosef Yashar, *Levush Yosef* to Genesis (18:3).

²⁸ As cited by his son, R. Zevulun Charlop, in his introduction to R. Y.M. Charlop's *Chof Yamim to Massekhet Makkot*.

²⁹ *Netivot Chaim* to Genesis.

³⁰ As quoted by his son-in-law, R. Meir Tzvi Bergman, *Sha'arei Orah* (vol.1, *Parshat VaYishlach*, p. 50); R. Moshe Yosolovsky, *Kishutei Torah* (Genesis 18:3), and R. Moshe Scheinerman, *Ohel Moshe*, Genesis p. 329. See also R.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik expresses another way in which G-d models hospitality: “The Almighty is the great *makhnis orchim*. His hospitality made it possible for humanity to exist, for the world to come into being. “To be” means to share in the infinite being of the Almighty. The Almighty, like Abraham, invites people to partake of His boundless existence. Creation is an act of *hakhnassat orchim*. Our sages (Berakhot 7b) said that Abraham was the first person to invoke God by the Name *A-donai*. This name is of juridic origin; God owns the world in juridic terms. Not only does God run the cosmos *de facto*, but the cosmos is His *de jure*. We are just strangers whom the Almighty has invited into his “tent”, which is the universe. How beautiful is the doctrine of *tzimtzum*, of contraction. What is creation if not withdrawal by God in order to make it possible for a world to emerge in space and time? Infinity steps aside and finitude is born. What is *hakhnassat orchim* if not withdrawal by the master from a part of his home so that a stranger can occupy the empty part he vacates?”³²

R. Mordechai Kahan, in his introduction to his book-length treatment of this obligation³³, theorizes as to why this activity is set aside from even other acts of *chesed*.³⁴ Citing the Alter of Kelm³⁵, he notes that *hakhnassat orchim*, when following a fully realized, “Abrahamic” model, involves placing one’s resources and attentions completely at the disposal of one’s guests. Other acts of kindness, generally fulfilled outside the home, can be accomplished in an exemplary fashion while still drawing upon one’s assets in a limited manner. *Haknassat orchim*, by contrast, involves bringing the beneficiary into one’s realm completely.

Most interestingly, the statement of “*Hakhnassat orchim* is greater than receiving the Divine presence” is recorded not only as a statement of emphasis, but is brought by the Rambam in his practical code of Jewish law, the *Mishneh Torah*.³⁶ The inclusion of this phrase in such a text is an implication that this dictum has a practical application.³⁷ The founder of the Chasidic

David Kviat, *Sukkat David* (Genesis, *Parshat VaYera*, #14), and, at greater length, R. Shmuel Weinbaum, *Sefer Sharti* (Genesis, *Parshat VaYera*). Compare also the somewhat different explanation of R. Reuven Katz, *Dudaei Reuven* (I, 12).

³¹ See also R. Elyakim Shlesinger, *Beit Av, Sichot*, pp. 227-229.

³² *Abraham’s Journey*, eds. David Shatz, Joel B. Wolewelsky, and Reuven Ziegler, p. 198. Rabbenu Bachya, *Kad HaKemach*, *erekh orchim*, identifies *haknassat orchim* with God in the fact that God sustains all the creatures of the world.

³³ *Birkat HaOreach*, pp. 5-12.

³⁴ Although some scholars did understand the Talmud’s reference to be applicable to all acts of *chesed*; see, for example, R. Shlomo Heiman, *Chiddushei R. Shlomo, psakim uksavim* #37, who is led by this statement to consider (although not conclude) that all interpersonal commandments supercede commandments between Man and G-d.

³⁵ See *Chokhmah U’Mussar*, II, # 211.

³⁶ *Hil. Eivel* 14:2. See also R. Meir Leibush Malbim, *Eretz Chemdah* to Genesis, and *Resp. Kol Mevasser*, *ibid*.

³⁷ The phrase is also cited in a halakhic context by R. Chaim Yosef David Azulai, known as the *Chida*, in his *Birkei Yosef*, *Yoreh Deah* 244:1. The Chida cites a responsum by an unnamed author who forbade rising in honor of a Torah scholar while involved in prayer. In the context of that discussion, the author dismisses Abraham as a possible model of interrupting interaction with G-d to honor humans; the Chida, however, disagrees and defends the inference from Abraham. Concerning the Chida’s position, see also the essay of R. Avraham David Rabinowitz-Teomim (Aderet), printed in *Otzerot HaBerakhah*, pp. 92-93. For another halakhic usage of this dictum, see R. Chaim Pilagi, *Responsa Chaim B’Yad*, 64.

movement, the Ba'al Shem Tov,³⁸ asserted that this statement does bear relevance to everyday life, in that welcoming guests often requires that one divert attention away from his own personal spiritual strivings. The demands of making small talk, with the possible inclusion of inappropriate speech, can serve as quite a frustration to one who is impassioned toward Torah study and exalted discourse. Nonetheless, we are therefore reminded that ultimately, extending hospitality is considered to be greater than more obviously spiritual experiences.³⁹

From a more legalistic standpoint, the importance of this mitzvah is further seen in that all its needs are taken to have the halakhic status of “sha’at ha’dchak”, an urgent situation.⁴⁰ One expression of this reality is various leniencies that appear in the laws of Shabbat⁴¹, as well as other areas⁴², to ensure that a guest is properly attended to⁴³. Similarly, R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach⁴⁴ recommends foregoing communal prayer (and instead praying alone) when it means leaving a guest who will feel discomfort.⁴⁵

The nature of the Shabbat leniencies is the subject of some discussion. R. Eliezer Waldenberg⁴⁶ infers from these leniencies that the imperative of making Shabbat pleasant (oneg Shabbat) is a sufficient justification. R. Yitzchak Sternhill,⁴⁷ however, objects, asserting that the needs of guests are indicative of a more sweeping license, one rooted in the fundamental concern for human dignity (k’vod ha-briyot). Further, as an independent mitzvah, presumably of Biblical origin, the need is more self-evident even than that of oneg Shabbat. As will be noted, these two perspectives may represent two elements of the mitzvah of hakhnassat orchim.

³⁸ Cited in *Toldot Ya’akov Yosef* (V, p. 355 in 1998 edition) and in *Sefer Ba'al Shem Tov al haTorah*.

³⁹ See, at length, *Birkhat Hillel al HaTorah* (Genesis, #27); *Mar'ot HaTzov'ot* to Genesis (18:3 and 18:5); R. Yonah Dreszer, *Eim L'Binah* to Genesis; and R. Shmaryahu Arieli, *Mishmeret Ariel* to Genesis (p. 92). See also R. Gideon Attah, *G'viat HaKesef* to *Massekhet Shabbat*, who understands the phrasing of a passage in the Talmud (“D'ktani mip'nei ha-orchin v'hadar u'mipnei bitul beit ha-midrash”, *Shabbat* 127a, with commentary of R. Elazar Moshe Horvitz) to be implying that hospitality justifies, to some degree, the neglect of Torah study. In his assessment, hospitality increases the bonds of friendship and unity, which are crucial prerequisites to proper Torah study. See also the commentary of *Chatam Sofer* to this passage. For various interpretations of this phrase, see *Birkhat HaOrech* ch. 6, fn. 8-11, and see as well R. Aharon Levine, *Birkhat Aharon* to *Massekhet Berachot* (in *Mateh Aharon, Metukei Aretz, Divrei Aggadah*, 1) and R. David Shperber, *Resp. Afarkasta D'Anyah*, IV, 322. Accordingly, one who is about to begin a set time for Torah study, or to attend a Torah lecture, would delay that activity if a guest presents himself and needs attention; R. Avraham Yisrael, *V'ein Lamo Michshol*, pp. 39-41, assumes this is true even for one who is presenting a public Torah lecture, citing to this effect the *Shlah* (*Massekhet Shavuot*, *Ner Mitzvah* 45). In a different vein, R. Yisrael of Moditz (cited in R. Shmuel Zakai, *Machmadei HaTorah* to Genesis) suggested that the message of the Talmudic declaration is to contrast hospitality with the blessing of the new moon, which is identified with receiving the Divine presence, and yet, as the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 42a) emphasizes, suffices at once a month. Hence, it is stated that hospitality is greater, and should be pursued more often than once a month.

⁴⁰ See Shach, *Yoreh Deah* 92:29, and 242, in *hanhagot horaot issur v'hetter*.

⁴¹ *Orach Chaim* 333:1.

⁴² See *Orach Chaim* 168:5, and *Kaf HaChaim*, *ibid.*, 39; *Yoreh Deah* 69:6 and Rama; and the *Mishnah* in *D'mai* (3:1), with the commentary of the Rambam.

⁴³ See *Shabbat* 126b; *Rambam*, *Hilkhot Shabbat* 26:15, *Shulchan Arukh*, *Orach Chaim* 333:1.

⁴⁴ *Halikhot Shlomo*, ch. 5, in *D'var Halakhah*, 25, and *Orkhot Halakhah*, 52.

⁴⁵ See also R. Yitzchak Zilberstein, *Resp. Avnei Choshen*, III, pp. 438-439.

⁴⁶ *Resp. Tzitz Eliezer*, VI, 34:8.

⁴⁷ *Kokhvei Yitzchak*, II, 2:13.

Charity, Chesed, or Both?

The chesed of hakhnassat orchim challenges the general distinction between the monetary realm, represented by tzedakah, and the realm of physical assistance generally subsumed within chesed. In this instance, monetary and physical elements are intertwined. On the one hand, the act mandates physical effort, a welcoming attitude, and possibly the endurance of inconvenience. In addition, there is a monetary cost, as the property of the host is consumed and otherwise utilized in the process.

As such, hakhnassat orchim is governed by two systems. As a charitable gesture, the Talmud's limitation of expenditure to one fifth of one's funds⁴⁸, a precept intended to prevent the donor from himself becoming impoverished, applies. As for the physical component, the mishnah's statement of "there is no limit"⁴⁹ is the guiding principle.⁵⁰

Even though hosting those who are needy is simultaneously both hakhnassat orchim and charity, the central obligation of hakhnassat orchim itself applies both to the needy and to the financially comfortable. As emphasized by R. Chaim ben Betzalel (the brother of the Maharal of Prague), the act of bringing associates closer is meritorious regardless of their status;⁵¹ he notes that a meal centered on friendship (though not on frivolity) is considered independently valuable by the Talmud⁵², and one need not interrupt such a meal even for purposes of prayer.⁵³ Beyond the responsibility towards friends, relatives are given special attention in rabbinic literature. According to the Midrash⁵⁴, the care one must be ready to provide for one's relatives is modeled by an unlikely teacher, Laban, who said to his nephew Jacob "Nevertheless, you are my flesh and blood" and hosted him for a month.⁵⁵

This is further seen explicitly in the writings of the Maharil, who actually focuses the concept away from the needy.⁵⁶ In his formulation, feeding the hungry is best characterized as charity; hakhnassat orchim, however, is primarily an effort of social bonding, aimed toward inviting

⁴⁸ *Ketubot* 50a; see Shulchan Arukh and Rama, Y.D. 249.

⁴⁹ *Peah* 1:1.

⁵⁰ See R. Yosf Tzvi Adler, *Al Pi HaTorah* to Genesis.

⁵¹ See *Sefer haChaim* (*Sefer Parnassah V'Khalkalah*, III, ch. 3, cited in *Birkhat Oreach*, ch. 2, fn 21 [in *Tziyyun L'Eishel*]). See also R. Katriel Ephraim Tsursh, *Hadrat Ephraim* (II, pp. 83-86). Of course, to prefer the wealthy over the needy would be contrary to the spirit of halakhah; R. Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (cited in R. Elyakim Devorkes, *B'Shvilei HaParshah*, p. 24, and R. Yosef Shabtai, *Shai L'Mora* to Genesis) suggests that the hospitality of Lot (Genesis 19:1-3) was inferior to that of his uncle Abraham, because he tended to his guests specifically because they appeared to be distinguished (as "angels") while Abraham's visitors were cared for despite appearing as simple people.

⁵² *Sanhedrin* 103b.

⁵³ *Shabbat* 9b.

⁵⁴ *Midrash Rabbah*, Genesis, 70:13.

⁵⁵ Genesis 29:14.

⁵⁶ *Likkutim* at end, 60; See *Yad Ephraim*, Y.D. 68, ;R. Yosef Engel, *Gilyonei HaShas*, Shabbat 127a; R. Natan Getsetner, *L'Horot Natan* to *Pirkei Avot*, 1:15.

guests for the purpose of honoring them rather than sustaining them⁵⁷. Perhaps for this reason, R. Chaim Pilagi asserts that the mitzvah is fulfilled specifically when the guests are hosted in one's home, as opposed to one who sends food out to a needy individual.⁵⁸ This is also evident in the episode of Abraham, who believed the angels were distinguished guests and served them accordingly. The Maharil's language leaves some room to question whether hospitality to the needy is purely charity and not hakhnassat orchim, or whether that kind of hospitality is a fulfillment of both categories.⁵⁹ The latter view is the explicit understanding of many later authorities.⁶⁰

An additional element merges the concept of charity with that of hakhnassat orchim, even when the guest is financially secure. The Mishnah⁶¹ teaches that one who is traveling from place to place is permitted to avail himself of charitable funds and related resources. According to R. Eliezer, he is obligated to make reimbursement once he returns home; according to the Rabbis, however, "he is a poor person at that time". The implication is that all who are away from their homes are considered "needy" due to their dislocation.⁶²

Nonetheless, there is some discussion as to whom the status of "guest" is granted, in light of the halakhic dispensation granted (in the laws of Shabbat, as noted above) to facilitate preparing for one. There appears to be a consensus that to justify leniencies in the laws of Shabbat, the guest needs to be more than a local resident or neighbor who is invited for a single meal. At the least, the guest is someone who is lodging as well, if not with the host of the meal then with another local host.⁶³ However, some later authorities⁶⁴ extend this status even to a neighbor, noting, as above, the tremendous value of hospitality distinct from considerations of need. However, they do recommend ideally avoiding any situations that require leniencies on Shabbat when possible. Similarly, many authorities permit leniencies to be employed on behalf of guests who have already been invited, even if these authorities would not have advocated such an approach *ab initio*.⁶⁵

⁵⁷ See also *HaMaor Sh'b'Avot*, p. 40, citing *Tiferet Yehoshua*, that the *mishnah* in *Avot* (1:5) is structured in two parts "let your house be open wide" and "the poor should be like members of your household" because these two phrases represent two separate *mitzvot*, *hakhnassat orchim* and *tzedakah*.

⁵⁸ *Tok'chat Chaim*, VaYera (ch. 4).

⁵⁹ See the analysis of this issue in *Resp. Divrei Moshe*, 42.

⁶⁰ See *Ahavat Chesed* 3:1; R. Avraham ben Shabtai Horowitz, *Yesh Nochalin*, ch. 2, *hagahot* #26; *Shnei Luchot HaBrit*, *Pesachim*, *Perek Ner Mitzvah*, # 67.

⁶¹ *Peah* 5:4.

⁶² See *Yesh Nochalin* (2:7), and R. Yitzchak Shmuel Schechter, *Resp. Yashiv Yitzchak*, XII, 10. See also *Beit HaBechirah*, *Sukkah* 34b, s.v. *shel d'mai*.

⁶³ This is the ruling of the Rama (O.C. 333:1); the *Beit Yosef*, citing the *Terumat HaDeshen* (72), was unsure if this status should be accorded to one who is being hosted elsewhere in the neighborhood. See also *Pri Megadim* in *Eishel Avraham*, O.C. 307:7.

⁶⁴ See *Pitchei Teshuvah*, Y.D. 69:13, citing *Solet L'Minchah*; *Sefer HaChaim* and *Yosef Ometz*, as cited in *Birkhat Oreach*, ch. 2 fn 11 [in *Eishel Avraham*].

⁶⁵ See *Shulchan Arukh*, O.C. 410 with *Magen Avraham* (#17) and *Machtzit HaShekel*, and *Pitchei Teshuvah* Y.D. 69:13, citing *Solet L'Minchah*. Note *Birkhat HaOreach*, 6 fn 16, who observes that it is unclear from the language whether the hesitancy to invite guests *ab initio* if they would require dependence on leniencies is referring to any guests, or just those who would not meet the full definition of "guests". See also *Mishnah Berurah* 333:9, who rules

In any event, it appears that a distinction must be made between hosting a “guest” in a sense that justifies compromises in the laws of Shabbat and the like, and a more socially motivated hospitality that may not rise to that standard. While that distinction does exist, both categories are subsumed within *hakhnassat orchim*. An example of this duality can be found in the responsa of R. Moshe Halberstam⁶⁶, who notes that guests who are charged money for their lodging are not considered “guests” in the first sense⁶⁷, but that such hospitality is still subsumed within the category of the *mitzvah*.⁶⁸ Similarly, R. Yitzchak Zilberstein⁶⁹ suggests that even guests who do not meet the standards for the above leniencies are still considered “guests” for other purposes, such as the host prioritizing taking care of them over attending a Torah lecture.⁷⁰

Apart from the considerations of need, there are additional factors that affect the nature of a specific act of hospitality. The Meiri⁷¹ states that while hospitality is a wonderful quality, it is enhanced even further when the guest is a Torah scholar, and such activity brings blessing into the home. This is consistent with statements in the Talmud that hosting a Torah scholar is an act comparable to bringing an offering in the Temple.⁷² Conversely, one is advised not to welcome into one’s home unworthy individuals, who will have a deleterious effect on the household and negate any fulfillment of a *mitzvah* of *hakhnassat orchim*.⁷³

The charitable component of *hakhnassat orchim*, when relevant, also impacts on its practice. For example, R. Avraham Kahana Shapiro⁷⁴ cites the Chafetz Chaim as mandating that one make

that the status of “guests” would be extended to locals who are invited to enhance the honor of the actual “guests”. See also R. Fragi Alush, *Responsa Oheiv Mishpat, Orach Chaim*, 12.

⁶⁶ *Resp. Divrei Moshe*, 9, and 42:4.

⁶⁷ Per R. Baruch Frankel *Teomim, Ateret Chakhamim*, Y.D. 5, and R. Shalom Mordechai Schwadron, *Da’at Torah*, O.C. 333:1.

⁶⁸ *Da’at Torah*, O.C. 306:4. See also R. Yisrael David Harfenes, *Responsa VaYivarekh David*, II, 176, p. 187 in fn, who quotes sources to the effect that one hosting guests for remuneration is fulfilling a *mitzvah*, without recording any distinction.

⁶⁹ *Resp. Avnei Choshen*, III, pp. 440-442. Compare, however, his comments on page 546.

⁷⁰ R. Zilberstein is quoted in a related context in R. Moshe Michael Tzurn, *Aleinu L’Shabeach*, III, pp. 192-193. It is related there that a Torah scholar left his house, on the intermediate days of the festival, to attend a Torah lecture and discovered a young couple, relatives of his, approaching his house for a festival visit. He asked the couple to return later, citing the impending lecture. The couple, offended, turned away and did not return. A learned neighbor who witnessed the incident challenged the Torah scholar on his behavior, asserting that welcoming guests is superior to accepting the Divine presence. The scholar argued the point, claiming this only referred to “guests” in the classical sense, not to relatives paying a social call on the festival. R. Zilberstein criticizes the scholar’s attitude on a number of grounds, including asserting that even were such hospitality not a function of *hakhnassat orchim*, it is at least included within “Love your neighbor”. The couple’s embarrassment was also a significant factor in his criticism.

⁷¹ *Berakhot* 64a.

⁷² *Berakhot* 10b, *Chagigah* 27a; *Midrash Rabbah, VaYikra, Parshat Behar* 34:13.

⁷³ This is the implication of *Yevamot* 63b.; See also Solet L’Minchah in *Pitchei Teshuvah*, *ibid*, where it is suggested that the status of “guests” for the purposes of leniencies is dependant more on moral worthiness and merit than on need; see also R. Tzvi Hirsch Schapiro, *Darkhei Teshuvah*, Y.D. 69:114, and R. Mordechai Shabtai Eizenberger, *Biurei Halakhot*, p. 517, commenting on *Turei Zahav*, O.C. 515:2. This topic is taken up at length, with many sources cited to this effect, by Dr. Naftali Toker, in the journal *Shma’atin* (2000, vol, XXXVII, #139, pp. 29-40).

⁷⁴ *Resp. D’var Avraham*, II, 2, in footnote.

Kiddush and begin his Friday night meal immediately upon arriving home if he is hosting needy people. This is seemingly in contrast with his view elsewhere⁷⁵ that one is not obligated to initiate Kiddush immediately. In the presence of such guests, however, the prohibition of “you shall not delay in paying [a monetary commitment]”⁷⁶ (*bal ta’acher*) is invoked, and the sustenance must be provided immediately.⁷⁷ The Chafetz Chaim’s son, R. Leib, related that in the presence of guests, his father would delay the traditional singing of “Shalom Aleichem” until after breaking bread, reasoning that even the ministering angels (to whom the song is addressed) would agree not to prolong the hunger of the visitors, as human beings experience hunger, while angels do not.⁷⁸

The Chafetz Chaim’s concern for needy guests is reflected in a ruling specific to the laws of Sukkot. One is exempt from the commandment of sitting in the Sukkah while it is raining. However, on the first night of Sukkot, when eating in the Sukkah constitutes an affirmative obligation, greater efforts are made to negotiate the situation. Accordingly, the Chafetz Chaim rules in his *Mishnah Berurah*⁷⁹ that if there is rain on the first night, one should wait until midnight in hopes that the skies will clear. Nonetheless, he rules⁸⁰ as well that when poor guests are present, who have presumably not eaten the entire day, one should not delay. Once again, the possibility of violating “you shall not delay” is invoked.⁸¹

The issue relating to Sukkot is especially relevant in that the festivals are a time when hosting guests, particularly needy ones, takes on an added dimension. The Rambam⁸² writes, “One who closes his door, and eats and drinks, he and his children and his wife, and he does not feed and give drink to the poor and the low of spirit, this [celebration of the festival] is not a joy of mitzvah, rather it is a joy of his belly (*simchat kreiso*), and this joy is a disgrace to them.” Thus, failing to express hospitality at this time constitutes an invalidating flaw in one’s festival observance.⁸³

⁷⁵ *Mishneh Berurah*, 271:1.

⁷⁶ Deuteronomy 23:22.

⁷⁷ Note R. Schapiro’s comment for a technical resolution to the problem posed by this prohibition.

⁷⁸ See R. Ya’akov Yehoshua Belkrovitz, *Tiferet Yehoshua, Avot*, pp. 81-82; *B’Shvilei HaParshah*, p. 25, and *Tenuat HaMussar*, citing R. Leib Chasman, who reported such an exchange with the Chafetz Chaim at his home. See also, more extensively, *Nachal Eitan* to Genesis (18:1), and R. Moshe Sternbuch, *Moadim U’Zmanim*, (VIII, 1:13).

⁷⁹ O.C. 639:35.

⁸⁰ In *Sha’ar HaTziyyun*, #7.

⁸¹ There is some discussion as to whether “you shall not delay” is truly applicable in this case; see R. Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz, *Chazon Ish, Yoreh Deah, Hilkhos Tzedakah*, 153:5, and see R. David Ariav, *L’Reakha Kamokha*, II, p. 196, in *Nir L’David*, #310.

⁸² *Hil. Yom Tov* 6:18, and *Hil. Chagigah* 2:14; see also *Shulchan Arukh*, O.C. 529:2 and *Mishnah Berurah* 17.

⁸³ See also R. Chaim Moshe Kurt, *Tiferet Moshe*, pp. 114-115. Note as well R. Yitzchak Sorotzkin, *Rinat Yitzchak*, Genesis 18:1, who suggests that this element was at play as well in the story of Abraham. The angels appeared to him on Yom Tov, as a response to his pain of not having guests, which was particularly exacerbated by the relationship between hospitality and proper festival celebration.

See also R. Aharon Yehudah Grossman, *Responsa V’Darashta V’Chakarta*, I, O.C. 78 and III, O.C. 64, for a discussion as to whether this particular obligation of hospitality on the festival can be fulfilled through straight monetary donations.

The Mitzvah of *Eiruv Tavshilin*

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It is well known that if Yom Tov occurs on a Friday, there is an obligation to establish an *eiruv tavshilin* prior to Yom Tov. This allows one to prepare food on Yom Tov that will be served on Shabbat. What is not as well known is the function and purpose of the *eiruv tavshilin* as well as the mechanism by which it operates. This article will explore these questions and provide modern-day practical applications.

Preparing non-Yom Tov food items on Yom Tov

And on the first day there shall be to you a holy convocation, and on the seventh day a holy convocation; no manner of work shall be done on them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done by you.

Shemot 12:15

וביום הראשון מקרא ק' דש וביום השביעי
מקרא ק' דש יהיה לכם פל מלאכה ל' א
יעשה בהם אך אשר יאכל לכל נפש הוא
לבדו יעשה לכם:
שמות יב:טו

The Torah permits *melacha* on Yom Tov for the purpose of *ochel nefesh* (food preparation). However, food preparation is only permitted if one intends to eat that food on Yom Tov. The Gemara cites a dispute between Rabbah and Rav Chisda whether one is culpable for baking on Yom Tov with intent to eat the food item after Yom Tov:

It was stated: [With regard to] one who bakes [food] on a Festival for [consumption on] a weekday, — R. Hisda said: He is flagellated; Rabbah said: He is not flagellated. 'R. Hisda said, He is flagellated': We do not say, Since if guests visited him it would be fit for him [on the Festival itself]. Rabbah said: He is not flagellated: we say, 'since' Said Rabbah to R. Hisda, According to you who maintain, We do not say, 'since', how may we bake on a Festival for the Sabbath? — On account of the eiruv of dishes, he answered him. And on account of an eiruv of dishes we permit a Biblical prohibition! — Said he to him, by Biblical law the requirements of the Sabbath may be prepared on a Festival, and it was only the Rabbis who forbade it, lest it be said, You may bake

איתמר האופה מיום טוב לחול רב
חסדא אמר לוקה רבה אמר אינו לוקה
רב חסדא אמר לוקה לא אמרינן
הואיל ומיקלעי ליה אורחים חזי ליה
רבה אמר אינו לוקה אמרינן הואיל
אמר ליה רבה לרב חסדא לדידך
דאמרת לא אמרינן הואיל היאך אופין
מיום טוב לשבת אמר ליה משום
עירובי תבשילין ומשום עירובי
תבשילין שרינן איסורא דאורייתא
אמר ליה מדאורייתא צורכי שבת
נעשין ביום טוב ורבנן הוא דגזרו ביה
גזירה שמא יאמרו אופין מיום טוב אף

on a Festival even for weekdays; but since the Rabbis necessitated an eiruv of dishes for it, he has a distinguishing feature.

Pesachim 46b (Soncino Translation)

לחול וכיון דאצרכוה רבנן עירובי
תבשילין אית ליה היכירא.

פסחים מו:

Rav Chisda is of the opinion that one is culpable. Rabbah disagrees and maintains that one is not culpable because there is always the possibility that guests may come and the food will in fact be served on Yom Tov. This principle is known as *ho'il* (based on the term *ho'il umikla'ei lei orchim*, translated as "since there is a possibility of guests arriving"). Rabbah attempts to prove the principle of *ho'il* from the concept of *eiruv tavshilin*. If there is a concept of *ho'il*, one can understand why it is permitted to prepare food on Yom Tov that is going to be eaten on Shabbat. The concept of *ho'il* permits all food preparation on a biblical level even if one intends to eat the food item after Yom Tov. The prohibition of preparing food on Yom Tov with intent to eat it after Yom Tov is rabbinic in nature. However, the rabbis permitted food preparation for Shabbat if one establishes an *eiruv tavshilin*. Rav Chisda responds that the reason why *eiruv tavshilin* works is because on a biblical level one may in fact prepare food on Yom Tov for the purpose of eating it on Shabbat. The biblical prohibition against preparing food for after Yom Tov only applies if one prepares food for an ordinary weekday.

While Rabbah's opinion does seem to be the lenient opinion, Tosafot ad loc., s.v. *Rabbah*, note that the principle of *ho'il* does not apply if there is no possibility of actually eating the food on Yom Tov. Therefore, any food that is prepared at the very end of Yom Tov is not subject to the leniencies of *ho'il*. R. Avraham Gombiner (1633-1683), *Magen Avraham* no. 527, suggests that according to Tosafot, it is prohibited to prepare food at the end of Yom Tov for the purpose of eating it on Shabbat even if one establishes an *eiruv tavshilin*. *Magen Avraham* further notes that many communities have the practice of accepting Shabbat early in this instance in order to avoid this problem.

If one understands that the permissibility of the *eiruv tavshilin* is based on the principle of *ho'il*, a contemporary issue arises. With the advent of electric lighting, one can question the applicability of *ho'il* in modern times to the mitzvah of lighting Shabbat candles when Yom Tov occurs on Friday. In previous generations, a candle that was lit at the end of Yom Tov served a Yom Tov purpose. Nowadays, if one lights a candle in a room that is well-lit, there is absolutely no purpose for it on Yom Tov, and *ho'il* may not be applicable. If so, what is the basis nowadays for lighting Shabbat candles on Yom Tov?

R. Ya'akov Betzalel Zolty (1920-1982), *Mishnat Ya'avetz* no. 37, notes that this question is not a new question; this question is addressed by *Maharach Ohr Zarua* (13th century) no. 32, in a slightly different context. As noted previously, many communities accept Shabbat early when Yom Tov occurs on Friday. As such, the Shabbat candles will be lit when it is still light outside. One can argue that at the time the Shabbat candles are lit, the candles serve no Yom Tov purpose. *Maharach Ohr Zarua* asks: if there is no Yom Tov purpose at the time of candle lighting, one cannot employ *ho'il*. Shouldn't it be biblically prohibited to light the Shabbat candles?

Maharach Ohr Zarua answers that if one accepts Shabbat early, it does not negate the fact that it is still Yom Tov. Therefore, the Shabbat meal in reality is considered a Shabbat/Yom Tov meal

and the candles do in fact serve a Yom Tov purpose. R. Zolty notes that the same logic can be applied to a room with electric lights. In general, the Shabbat candles that are lit in conjunction with the electric lights serve primarily to provide the Shabbat ambience. Based on the comments of *Maharach Ohr Zarua*, it is arguable that they provide a Yom Tov ambience as well in the waning moments of the Yom Tov.

The Mechanics and Purpose of the *Eiruv Tavshilin*

The Mishna records a dispute between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel regarding the necessary components of an *eiruv tavshilin*:

<p><i>Beit Shammai state that two dishes are required and Beit Hillel state one dish.</i></p> <p>Beitzah 15b</p>	<p>בית שמאי אומרים שני תבשילין ובית הלל אומרים תבשיל אחד.</p> <p>ביצה טו:</p>
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Rabbeinu Tam (cited in *Tosafot Beitzah* 17b s.v. *Amar Rava*) opines that while the opinion of *Beit Hillel* is accepted as normative, an *eiruv* of a cooked item is only sufficient for one who intends to cook on Yom Tov (for Shabbat) but does not intend to bake. If one intends to bake on Yom Tov, a baked item is required in addition to the cooked item. Rambam, *Hilchot Yom Tov*, Chapter 6, makes no mention of any requirement to incorporate a baked item into the *eiruv tavshilin*. *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 527:2, rules that ideally one should use a cooked item and a baked item for the *eiruv tavshilin*. However, if only a cooked item was used it is permissible to bake.

The Gemara records a dispute between Rava and Rav Ashi regarding the purpose of *eiruv tavshilin*:

<p><i>What is the reason (for eiruv tavshilin)? Rava states (that its purpose is) so that one designates a nice food item for Shabbat and a nice food item for Yom Tov. Rav Ashi states (that its purpose is) so that people will say that it is prohibited to bake on Yom Tov for Shabbat, certainly one cannot bake on Yom Tov for a weekday.</i></p> <p>Beitzah 15b</p>	<p>מאי טעמא אמר רבא כדי שיברור מנה יפה לשבת ומנה יפה ליום טוב רב אשי אמר כדי שיאמרו אין אופין מיום טוב לשבת קל וחומר מיום טוב לחול.</p> <p>ביצה טו:</p>
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Rava is of the opinion that the purpose of *eiruv tavshilin* is to ensure that there is specific food that is set aside for Shabbat. The concern is that all of the food will be eaten on Yom Tov and the Shabbat meals will not be given the due honor that they deserve. Therefore, the rabbis instituted that one must prepare a Shabbat meal (or a portion of a Shabbat meal) prior to Yom Tov and by doing so, everyone will be cognizant of the importance of honoring the Shabbat with meals that are appropriate. Rav Ashi disagrees and maintains that the purpose of *eiruv tavshilin* is to serve as a reminder that it is normally prohibited to prepare food on Yom Tov that is intended for after Yom Tov. The rabbis instituted the *eiruv tavshilin* as the only means of doing so. [See *Ba'al HaMa'or, Pesachim* 14b, who connects the dispute between Rava and Rav Ashi to the dispute between Rabbah and Rav Chisda.]

Rabbeinu Asher (1250-1328), *Beitzah* 2:1, notes that there is an important practical difference between the opinion of Rava and the opinion of Rav Ashi. According to Rava, since the purpose

of *eiruv tavshilin* is to prepare properly for Shabbat, the *eiruv* must be established on Erev Yom Tov and may not be established prior to Erev Yom Tov. However, according to Rav Ashi, since the purpose of the *eiruv* is to provide a reminder, the *eiruv* may be established prior to Erev Yom Tov. Additionally, if on Sukkot, both the first days of Yom Tov and the last days require an *eiruv tavshilin*, one may establish one *eiruv* that will serve as the *eiruv* for the first and last days. *Shulchan Aruch* 527:14, rules that one should not establish an *eiruv tavshilin* prior to Erev Yom Tov *l'chatchilah* (*ab initio*). However, if this was done, it is permitted *b'dieved* (*ex post facto*).

Are Guests Required to Establish an *Eiruv Tavshilin*?

A guest staying at someone else's house or in a hotel generally does not prepare food on Yom Tov. Is he required to establish an *eiruv tavshilin*? There are two components to this question. First, while the guest does not intend to prepare any food, the guest is required to light Shabbat candles. Is an *eiruv tavshilin* required for the lighting of Shabbat candles? Second, may the guest rely on the *eiruv tavshilin* established by the host (or the hotel caterer)?

There is a dispute among the Rishonim as to whether an *eiruv tavshilin* is required for kindling a flame. *Tosafot*, *Beitzah* 22a, s.v. *UMadlikin*, note that if one does not specifically designate the *eiruv tavshilin* to permit the lighting of candles (*l'adlukei shraga*), it is prohibited to light the Shabbat candles. R. Yosef Karo, *Beit Yosef*, *Orach Chaim* 527, notes that Rambam, *Hilchot Yom Tov* 6:8, does not require *eiruv tavshilin* in order to light the Shabbat candles. R. Mordechai Karmy (1749-1825), *Ma'amar Mordechai* 527:18, rules that if one is in a situation where he does not need to prepare any food on Yom Tov for Shabbat, he should establish an *eiruv tavshilin* without a *beracha* and this will allow him to light Shabbat candles according to all opinions.

Regarding a guest at someone else's house, the Gemara, *Beitzah* 16b, states that Shmuel used to establish an *eiruv tavshilin* on behalf of the entire city. However, this *eiruv* was only effective for those who weren't able to establish their own *eiruv*. Those who intentionally relied on his *eiruv* were not included. According to Rabbeinu Asher, *Beitzah* 2:2, one can never forgo the obligation of establishing an *eiruv* and rely on the *eiruv* of another individual. This opinion is codified by *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim* 527:7.

R. Avraham David of Butchatch, *Eishel Avraham* 527:7, questions the limitations of relying on someone else's *eiruv*. While it is clear that one household only establishes one *eiruv*, it is not as clear what the halachia is in a situation where one married couple stays at another married couple (such as parents, children, etc.) for the duration of Yom Tov. Is this couple required to establish their own *eiruv* or should they rely on the *eiruv* of their hosts? *Eishel Avraham* concludes that if the guests are eating together with the hosts they do not require their own *eiruv*. If a situation arises where the guests are eating separately from the hosts, then each group requires its own *eiruv*. Based on the various mitigating factors, R. Ovadia Yosef (b.1920), *Chazon Ovadia*, *Hilchot Yom Tov*, *Hilchot Eiruv Tavshilin* no.3, concludes that a married couple staying at the home of one of their parents is not required to establish their own *eiruv* if the purpose is only to be able to light candles. R. Simcha B. Rabinowitz, *Piskei Teshuvot* 527:17, presents the opinion of some Acharonim that if the couple has their own private quarters, they should establish their own *eiruv* without reciting a *beracha*.

Rabbi Soloveitchik on the Destruction of Chametz

Edited by Rabbi Menachem Genack

Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS

The Mishnah (Temurah 33b) divides issurei hana'ah, objects from which benefit is prohibited and thus must be disposed of, into two categories: nikbarin, those which are to be buried, and nisrafin, those which are to be burned. Nikbarin includes any such prohibited object that the Torah does not require us to eliminate through burning. The Mishnah then states that the method of disposal of these two kinds of objects may not be reversed: one may neither bury nisrafin nor burn nikbarin. According to the Rabbis (Mishnah, Pesachim 21a), bi'ur Chametz, the elimination of Chametz, may be done in any fashion. Chametz would thus seem to belong to the category of nikbarin. How then, asks Magen Avraham (Orach Chayyim 445:1), is it permissible to burn Chametz?

The Gra (Orach Chayyim 445:1) maintains that even the Rabbis are of the view that ideally one should burn the Chametz. In fact, this is implied by the language in the Mishnah, which states that one may even ("af") eliminate the Chametz through other means, implying that it is a secondary option; furthermore, there is frequent mention at the beginning of Pesachim of the rules regarding the burning of the Chametz without any indication that the majority opinion does not specifically require burning at all. Evidently, then, Chametz is different from other nikbarin in that it is preferable to burn it, even though secondary options certainly exist. Chametz, therefore, not only may be burned but should be burned.

We can utilize this idea to explain another halakhah as well. The Gemara (Pesachim 21b) states that Chametz that is singed before it becomes prohibited on Erev Pesach is permitted on Pesach. Some of the Rishonim (Tosafot, Pesachim 21b, s.v. horkho kodem zeman) are of the view that the statement of the Gemara deals with the case where the Chametz has been rendered inedible; only then is it permitted to eat this Chametz on Pesach; others (Rashi, Pesachim 21b, s.v. lo tzerikha) require the Chametz to have been transformed to the point that it no longer appears or

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tastes like Chametz. Rambam, however, does not specify any of these requirements. He might very well believe that since it is preferable for one to fulfill the mitzvah of tashbitu, eliminating the Chametz, by burning the Chametz, as opposed to other methods of destruction, it becomes permitted after it has been burned sufficiently, even if it is still edible and recognizable. This is due to the principle of na'aseit mitzvato: once one performs the specific mitzvah that is applicable to a particular prohibited item (if there is one), the prohibition is no longer in effect. It would be for this reason that Rambam records this halakhah in his discussion of the details of the mitzvah of bi'ur Chametz (Hilkhos Chametz u-Matzzah 3:11) and not while discussing the halakhos of inedible and ruined Chametz (ibid. 4:8–12).

There is, however, one caveat which must be added. It is explicit in the same Gemara that according to the Rabbis, this burning is effective in permitting the Chametz to be eaten only if it is done before the onset of the prohibition of Chametz on Erev Pesach; if it is done afterwards, the Chametz remains prohibited. According to Rabbi Judah, however, it becomes permitted if burned at any time. Now, if the Rabbis indeed apply the principle of na'aseit mitzvato, and allow the burned Chametz to be eaten, because they agree that ideally one must burn the Chametz, then they should allow the Chametz – no matter when it was burned. We must, therefore, conclude that according to Rambam (see Hilkhos Chametz u-Matzzah 2:1), since the mitzvah of tashbitu, destroying one's Chametz, is in effect only before the Chametz becomes prohibited, only then is there a preference to eliminate it specifically through burning. After it becomes prohibited, one is required to dispose of the Chametz simply so as not to violate bal yera'eh (the prohibition of possessing Chametz on Pesach) – but there is no longer a requirement to specifically burn the Chametz, because there is no kiyum aseh of tashbitu, to destroy the Chametz. Since there is no preference to destroy the Chametz by burning, no permissibility to consume the Chametz is created by na'aseit mitzvato. Rabbi Judah, however, derives the obligation to burn Chametz from the mitzvah of burning notar (sacrificial meat that was not eaten during its allotted time), and therefore, the mitzvah applies specifically after the prohibition sets in; he thus maintains that when one burns the Chametz, even at that point it becomes permitted.

Rama (Orach Chayyim 445:1) writes that the custom is specifically to burn the Chametz and not use other means of destruction. The Gra comments that the reason why this is only a custom is that even Rabbi Judah actually requires burning only after the time that Chametz is prohibited (except according to Rashi), and since our practice is to eliminate the Chametz earlier, there is no real obligation to burn it according to any opinion in the Gemara. Yet the Gra himself maintains, as noted above, that before the Chametz becomes prohibited, everyone agrees that at least ideally one must burn it! We must therefore conclude that even though one indeed fulfills a mitzvah by specifically burning the Chametz on Erev Pesach while it is still permitted, and that is why one may derive benefit from the burnt Chametz even on Pesach, it is still not in any sense obligatory to do so. Therefore, it is only a custom to burn the Chametz.

Destroying Chametz on Shabbat

On the fourteenth of Nisan, Erev Pesach, there is a mitzvah to destroy all Chametz found in one's domain. When the fourteenth of Nisan occurs on a Shabbat, Rabbi Meir (Pesachim 49a)

states, all Chametz must be destroyed before Shabbat (on the thirteenth of Nisan), except for Chametz that will be needed for two Shabbat meals. Rambam (Hilkhos Chametz u-Matzzah 3:3) and the Shulhan Arukh (Orach Chayyim 444) follow Rabbi Meir's opinion. With respect to Chametz that is left over on Shabbat, Rambam and Shulhan Arukh state that one must nullify the remaining Chametz and cover it until after the first days of yom tov, at which time one is to destroy any leftover Chametz. Rabbi Akiva Eiger, in his glosses to the Shulhan Arukh, wonders why one must wait until after yom tov to burn the Chametz instead of discarding the remaining Chametz on Shabbat itself, prior to the time that the prohibition against Chametz goes into effect. Rabbi Akiva Eiger suggests that there may be a prohibition of handling Chametz that must be destroyed, and states that the matter requires additional investigation.

The question posed by Rabbi Akiva Eiger can be resolved as follows. According to Rambam, Rabbi Meir, in requiring that Chametz must be destroyed on the thirteenth of Nisan prior to Shabbat, is of the view that one is not permitted to perform the mitzvah of destroying the Chametz on Shabbat. One may set aside the amount of bread that will be needed for the two Shabbat meals. One may not, however, destroy the leftover bread on Shabbat because that would violate a rabbinic prohibition of destroying Chametz on Shabbat.

The concept that destruction of Chametz on Shabbat violates a prohibition is analogous to the destruction of hallah that has become impure. The Mishnah (Beitzah 27b) states that hallah that has become impure may not be moved during a yom tov. Rashi states that although feeding one's animal on a yom tov is permitted, and ordinarily, one may feed impure hallah to his animals, one may not feed impure hallah to his animals on a yom tov, because there is a prohibition against the destruction on a yom tov of kodshim (consecrated items) that have become impure. Rashi explains that the fact that the Torah requires one to destroy impure kodshim indicates that the destruction of such items is considered a mela'khah (work), and performing a mela'khah on a yom tov is not permitted. Rashi's rationale may similarly apply to the destruction of Chametz. The fact that the Torah requires us to destroy Chametz before Pesach indicates that such destruction is rabbinically equivalent to a mela'khah. Consequently, we are not permitted to destroy Chametz on Shabbat.

Is There a Mitzvah of Tashbitu?

The punishment of lashes is not imposed for violation of a prohibition that is nitak la-aseh, that is, associated with and mitigated by fulfilling a positive commandment. The Gemara (Pesachim 95a) states that a person who did not remove his Chametz from his possession before Pesach is not liable for lashes, because the negative prohibitions of bal yera'eh – "lo yera'eh lekha se'or, no leaven shall be found in all your territory" (Ex. 13:7) and bal yimmatze – "se'or lo yimmatze be-bateikhem, no leaven shall be found in your houses" (Ex. 12:19) are each considered nitak to the positive commandment of "tashbitu se'or mi-bateikhem, eliminate leavening from your property" (Ex. 12:15). The ruling of Rambam (Hilkhos Chametz u-Matzzah 1:3), that a person who purchases Chametz on Pesach is punished with lashes, seems to be inconsistent with the Gemara. To resolve this inconsistency, Rav Hayim of Brisk explained that in this case the positive commandment actually acts as an implied prohibition. Although the mitzvah of tashbitu

is phrased in the active form, it does not, according to Rav Hayim, constitute a ma'aseh mitzvah. Rather, the verse implies an injunction against owning Chametz, with the requirement to destroy it being merely a preventive measure (issur aseh). Consequently, the aforementioned prohibitions are not considered nitak la-aseh, because the positive commandment of tashbitu is not an ordinary aseh.

The Mishnah (Pesachim 2:1) records a dispute between Rabbi Judah and the Rabbis as to the correct method of eliminating Chametz from one's possession. Rabbi Judah states that the only acceptable method for destroying Chametz is with fire. The Rabbis are of the opinion that any method may be employed, including grinding the Chametz and casting it to the wind. According to Rabbi Judah, burning Chametz is more than just a means to ensure that one will not violate the prohibitions of bal yera'eh and bal yimmatze, for if that were the case, he should agree that any method of destruction would suffice. Rather, burning Chametz, according to Rabbi Judah, must be considered a kiyum mitzvah, and as such, mitigates the prohibitions of bal yera'eh and bal yimmatze, and lashes would not be administered for their violation. According to the Rabbis, however, the desired result is the elimination of the Chametz. The purpose of destroying the Chametz is to preclude one from being in violation of the negative prohibitions and not to facilitate a kiyum mitzvah; the method of destruction is thus immaterial. As such, according to the Rabbis, there is no positive commandment to offset the negative commandments, and a violator would thus be liable for lashes. The ruling of the Gemara (Pesachim 95a) that one does not receive lashes for either of these prohibitions is based upon the opinion of Rabbi Judah, while Rambam (Hilkhos Chametz u-Matzzah 3:11), who states that one is liable for lashes if he commits these transgressions, accepts the ruling of the Rabbis.

If, however, according to Rav Hayim, tashbitu is only an implied prohibition, one may ask why it is that on Erev Pesach we recite a blessing on bedikat Chametz, the act which is a prelude to destroying the Chametz, as this would appear to violate the principle that one does not recite a blessing on a mitzvah that is designed to avoid a prohibition.

The answer lies in the important distinction between the nature of the mitzvah of tashbitu before midday of the fourteenth of Nisan, when Chametz is still permitted to be in one's possession, and after that time. Ramban (beginning of Pesachim) explains that just as we learn from the word "akh-however" (Ex. 12:15) that we are to split the day in terms of the prohibition of owning Chametz, meaning that it is permissible to own Chametz until midday and only forbidden after that time, so, too, we learn that we are obligated to remove Chametz from our possession before midday. Therefore, until midday, tashbitu is a kiyum aseh, representing a fulfillment of the mitzvah, and hence, it is appropriate to recite a blessing on this kiyum, because the bedikah and bi'ur are done before midday. However, the prohibitions of bal yera'eh and bal yimmatze, and hence the possibility of considering them nitak la-aseh, came into force only on Pesach, and at that point the mitzvah of tashbitu has already been transformed into an issur aseh, a prohibition derived from a positive commandment.

Alternatively, even if we were to assume that the prohibitions of bal yera'eh and bal yimmatze are nitak la-aseh, it is possible to suggest another reason why one would receive lashes for owning Chametz, despite the fact that this prohibited act can be mitigated by a positive commandment.

Rambam (Hilkhhot Temurah 1:1) writes that one receives lashes for violating the prohibition of temurah, transferring the kedushah from an animal designated as a korban to another animal. He explains that one gets lashes even though temurah can be rectified by fulfillment of the positive commandment that the sanctity devolves on both animals “ve-hayah hu u-temurato yihyeh kodesh” (Lev. 27:10), because temurah actually constitutes two negative commandments, “lo yah'alifennu, you shall not change it” (Lev. 27:10) and “ve-lo yamir oto, you shall not replace it” (Lev. 27:10). The positive commandment can rectify only one negative commandment; thus one receives lashes for violating the second negative commandment. Owning Chametz also entails two negative commandments, lo yera'eh and lo yimmatze. Since the positive commandment of tashbitu can mitigate only one prohibition, one receives lashes for purchasing Chametz. This approach is still difficult, because the Gemara (Pesachim 95a) clearly states that one is not liable for lashes for either prohibition, as they are associated with a positive commandment. Rabbenu Hananel presents an alternative text for this Gemara. His text reads, “One does not receive lashes for owning Chametz on Pesach, because this violation does not involve an activity.” This undoubtedly was the text that Rambam had as well. This text implies that a person who does take an active role in the violation of the prohibitions of bal yera'eh and bal yimmatze, such as by purchasing Chametz on Pesach, would indeed be liable to receive lashes.

The Heart of the Matter

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We are all by now well aware of the fact that Yetziat Mitzrayim entailed much more than the simple liberation of a People from the bonds of slavery. The makkot themselves, the order in which they struck, their varying degrees of magnitude and the media through which they were executed, were all part of a carefully calculated process. Yetziat Mitzrayim was, as Hashem made clear to Moshe at its inception, a platform on which the uniqueness of Hashem's omnipotence would be demonstrated to the entire world.⁸⁴ The impact of the process and the fact that it achieved its educational goal is attested to, not only in the responses of Bnei Yisrael and the Egyptians, but by those well beyond the borders of Egypt as well.⁸⁵ One of the elements of this process, which has raised its share of theological conundrums, is the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, a means by which Hashem delayed the Exodus, engendering time in which to amplify the above mentioned objectives.⁸⁶ The issues of free will and Divine determinism have been addressed by the greatest minds of our mesorah⁸⁷, and so rather than broach those topics, let us instead focus on the specific language employed by the Torah to describe the act of hardening.

Milieu for you

While it goes without saying that Tanach and all that is incorporated in it bear eternal significance, as 21st century readers, we often overlook, or don't have the tools by which to appreciate the significance of certain idioms and symbols that, in their cultural contexts would have resonated very powerfully with those who heard them.

By way of example, we know that in his first confrontation with Pharaoh, Moshe transformed Aharon's staff into a snake as proof of the powers of Hashem.⁸⁸ In Ancient Egypt during the period of the New Kingdom⁸⁹ the serpent or "uraeus" was a symbol of the king's authority. The

⁸⁴ E.g. Shmot 7:5,17; 8:6,18; 9:14, 29; 10:2; 11:7; 14:4,18

⁸⁵ Cf. Shmot 18:1; Yehoshua 2:9-11

⁸⁶ E.g. Shmot 7:3

⁸⁷ Cf. Midrah Rabbah Exodus 13:3; Ramban Shmot 7:3; Sforno Shmot 4:21; Rambam Mishna Torah Hilchot Tshuva ch 5; Rav Saadia Gaon Sefer Emunot V'deot 4:6; Rav Yitzchak Arama Akedat Yitzchak ch 36; Rav Yosef Albo Sefer Ha'ikarim 4:25 among others.

⁸⁸ Shmot 4:1-5; 7:3-12

⁸⁹ The Period of the New Kingdom dates to approximately 1550-1070 BCE. A rough date for the Exodus is 13th century BCE

famous hooded cobra that adorned the headdress of Pharaoh represented his kingship and, according to Egyptian thought, his implied dominion over the world.⁹⁰ As such, the first performance of Moshe did not merely display the superiority of Hashem's "magical" powers; it publicly and emphatically called into question the very symbol of Pharaoh's authority.

The constituents of Dor Hamidbar, the third generation of Bnei Yisrael to have spent their entire lives in Egypt, were aware of, if not assimilated into, the culture of their native country.⁹¹ They, along with the Egyptians would have immediately recognized the import of any references made to dominant Egyptian cultural and mythological beliefs. In keeping with one of the central themes of the Haggadah, *בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים*, in every generation one is required to see oneself as if he had gone out of Egypt, let us attempt to appreciate what the hardening of Pharaoh's heart might have meant to our forefathers in Mitzrayim so many generations ago.

During the theophany of the burning bush, Hashem informed Moshe that He would harden Pharaoh's heart,⁹² and this notion recurs no less than nineteen times, culminating in the final "hardening" that induced Pharaoh to pursue Bnei Yisrael after their Exodus and lose his entire fleet of chariots to the miracle of Yam Suf.⁹³ While this concept of divine hardening of a heart is by no means unique to Pharaoh,⁹⁴ its predominance in the account absolutely is. A closer look at the context in which the hardening took place may help shed light on its critical role.

The Egyptian Heart

In Ancient Egypt the heart, *ib*, believed to represent the essence of a person, was considered the most important part of the human body.⁹⁵ Thought of as the locus of the spiritual, volitional and intellectual components of man, the heart was regarded as an almost autonomous feature.⁹⁶ It functioned as an instrument through which god communicated with man, and at times it was even said that "the heart of a man [is] his god himself."⁹⁷ During the period of the New Kingdom, in fact, the heart became a symbol of god.⁹⁸ Because kings in Egypt were regarded as the embodiments of god on earth, the will of god was believed to exist within their hearts. The ability of the king to maintain *maat*, cosmic order, spoke to the divine powers that lay in his heart.⁹⁹

⁹⁰ J. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, (Michigan, 1997) 83-95

⁹¹ E.g. cf. Shmot Rabbah 16:2

⁹² Shmot 4:2

⁹³ Ibid. 14:8

⁹⁴ Cf. Devarim 2:30; Yehoshua 11:20; Yishayahu 63:17

⁹⁵ J. Currid, "Why Did God Harden Pharaoh's Heart?" *Bible Review* Dec 1993

⁹⁶ To appreciate the way that the heart is used and understood in Tanach, see for example: Bamidbar 32:7; Devarim 29:3; 1Melachim 3:9, 12, 8:66; Yishayahu 35:4, 46:12, 61:1; Yirmiyahu 5:23, 9:25; Yechezkel 2:4; Hoshea 4:11; Mishlei 17:20, 19:8; Iyov 8:10.

⁹⁷ G.K. Beale "An Exegetical and Theological Consideration of the Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart in Exodus 4-14 and Romans 9" *TJ 5 NS* (1984)

⁹⁸ N. Shupak, "Hzq, Kbd, qsh Leb, The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart in Exodus 4-15:21: Seen Negatively in the Bible but Favorably in Egyptian Sources" Penn State University, 2001

⁹⁹ D.G. Coover Cox, "The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart In Its Literary And Cultural Contexts" *Bibliotheca Sacra* July-September 2006

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart was more than simply an issue of divinely wrought obstinacy; it was, in and of itself a testament to Hashem's supremacy, and Pharaoh's powerlessness. As Pharaoh grew more stubborn, the cumulative effect of the makkot on the land and the Egyptians intensified. With each successive wave of destruction, the polemical nature of the makkot gathered momentum. The king's prior claim to being the all-controlling factor in nature and history no longer held. His heart, once believed to be the seat of his divine powers, had ironically been the cause of ecological, atmospheric and biological havoc; it was no longer sovereign and so by definition, the god-Pharaoh had been defeated.

The Weightiness of Weight

Perhaps even more fascinating is the distinctive phraseology used to describe the manipulation of his heart. Three terms describing the state of Pharaoh's heart appear in a variety of grammatical forms to connote his stubbornness: *hazaq*¹⁰⁰, *qasha*¹⁰¹, and *kaved*¹⁰². All of these words appear frequently throughout Tanach. At times they may appear alone, and at times in conjunction with organs of the body, metaphorically describing a state of mind, being, or functioning. What is particularly striking is the fact that the collocation *kvd lev* is strictly limited to the episode of Pharaoh in Egypt.¹⁰³ A series of ancient Egyptian texts from the time of Yetziat Mitzrayim¹⁰⁴ may provide us with a clue as to the phrase's specific application to Pharaoh and its consequent poignancy.

The *Book of the Dead* is a series of funerary texts that contained hymns, spells and magical texts. Ancient Egyptians were preoccupied with the afterlife, and the texts spoke to the belief that their actions and the moral quality of their lives in this world would be judged in the next. Accompanied by illustrations known as vignettes, the texts were often buried with the deceased or inscribed on the walls of tombs and coffins, as they were believed to assist with entry and passage into the afterlife.¹⁰⁵ The *Papyrus of Ani*,¹⁰⁶ one of the finest illustrated examples of these texts, depicts a scene in which the deceased stands with his wife in front of a large pair of scales. A feather, the Egyptian sign of truth and righteousness, is placed in the right pan, and the symbol of the dead man's heart is placed in the pan on the left. The hieroglyphic text bordering the figure of the deceased contained a plea from the dead man to his heart asking it not to bear witness against him on his day of judgment.

At post-mortem judgments such as those depicted, the secrets of the heart would be revealed. The heart, it was believed, functioned as an independent witness to the nature of man's deeds. A heavy heart laden with sins and misconduct doomed a person to annihilation. The heart of a

¹⁰⁰ Shmot 4:21; 7:13,22; 8:15; 9:12,35; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4,18, 17

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 7:3; 13:15

¹⁰² Ibid. 7:14; 8:11,28; 9:34; 10:1

¹⁰³ 1Shmuel 6:6 makes use of the phrase, but in that case the Philistine priests are referring to Pharaoh.

¹⁰⁴ The texts date to the 18th and 19th Dynasties (ca. 1580-1200 BCE)

¹⁰⁵ The *Scarabeus sacer*, a scarab that contained inscribed spells from the Book of the Dead, was one of the most popular amulets in Ancient Egypt. Believed to protect the heart, thousands have been unearthed.

¹⁰⁶ Today, the papyrus is being preserved in the British Museum

person whose life was filled with truth and righteousness, a heart not weighed down with iniquity, weighed no more than a feather; such a heart granted a person eternal life.¹⁰⁷ Salvation on the one hand, or condemnation to the terrors of death on the other, was determined by the relative weight of a person's heart.¹⁰⁸ By proclaiming Pharaoh's heart "heavy," Hashem both indicted Pharaoh and served as his ultimate judge.

Conclusion

With Ancient Egypt as the backdrop, we now understand that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was part and parcel of the polemic against him. His perfection was discredited, his powers overwhelmed and his claim of divinity eradicated. The man whose godliness and perfection were once extolled had been reduced to nothing. As Hashem had foretold, His omnipotence and glory were definitively established. Our commemoration of Pesach this year, as every year, celebrates both the experience of our forefathers in Mitzrayim as well as the legacy of their Exodus. A more nuanced understanding of that experience can enhance our appreciation of the words of the Torah and make our Yom Tov that much more meaningful.

¹⁰⁷ Shmot 9:34 links "sin" and "heaviness"

¹⁰⁸ S.G.F Brandon, "A Problem of the Osirian Judgment of the Dead", Lecture given to the Manchester University Egyptian and Oriental Society

From Darkness to Light, From Slavery to Redemption

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The story of the Egyptian exile, recounted in *Sefer Shemot*, marks the commencement of a new period in the history of *Bnei Yisrael*, which culminates in their miraculous redemption, the receiving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, and the building of the Mishkan. This episode, however, had already begun at the conclusion of *Sefer Bereshit*, when Jacob's family descended to Egypt in chapter 46. Since all of the members of the patriarch's extended family were counted at that juncture, Rashi questions why there is a necessity in the first six verses of *Shemot* to enumerate them once again. Later medieval commentators, such as Rashbam and Ramban, presume that the repetition is a literary device to guide the reader to establish the thematic connection between the earlier episodes in *Bereshit* and the beginning of *Shemot*, where the active stages of exile are now implemented. Citing a midrashic interpretation, Rashi, however, assigns intrinsic significance to this recapitulation, viewing the repetition as *Hashem's* second counting of *Bnei Yisrael* as a display of His profound love for His people. In counting them by number and by name, *Hashem* expresses his double affection for them, as individuals and as members of a collective nation.

Even though Scripture has already enumerated them by name while they were living, it again enumerates them when it tells us of their deaths, thus showing how dear they were to Hashem. For they are compared to the stars, which Hashem also brings out and brings in by number and by name, as it is stated, "He brings out their host by number; He calls them each by name."

Rashi, Shemot 1:1

אף על פי שמנאן בחייהן בשמותן, חזר
ומנאן במיתתן [אחר מיתתן], להודיע
חבתן שנמשלו לכוכבים, שמוציאן
ומכניסן במספר ובשמותם, שנאמר
(ישעיהו מ כו) המוציא במספר צבאם
לכולם בשם יקרא:
רש"י שמות א:א

In order to elaborate on this message, the midrash compares this event to the counting of the stars, which are enumerated in a similar fashion when they are brought out in the evening and brought in at dawn. The implication of this analogy is that while the beginning of *Shemot* paints a bleak picture concerning the destiny of Jacob's family which is entering into the darkness of

exile, they are like the stars. Their light is only hidden from view, but it will shine once again with the fulfillment of the divine promise of redemption and the establishment of the nation of Israel.

How will the “light” be discovered within the darkness of *galut*? This will be achieved through the able guidance of a leader, a savior, who personifies light itself: Moshe Rabbeinu. When Moshe is born, the Torah relates, “וַיֵּרָא אֵת כִּי טוֹב הוּא” (She saw that he was good)” [Shemot 2:2]. Questioning the unique “goodness” that this newborn possesses which stands out among others, for generally all mothers consider their infants to be “good” in their eyes, Rashi applies a midrashic explanation, that when he was born, the house filled with light. Clarifying the intent of this statement, Ramban analyzes that Moshe’s mother discerned a special aura about this child, knowing intuitively that he would be saved from Pharaoh’s decree to kill all the newborn males and that he would be destined for greatness.

The midrashic source for Rashi’s explanation correlates “טוב” with the light of the first day of creation: “וַיֵּרָא אֶל־קַיָּם אֶת־הָאוֹר כִּי טוֹב - Hashem saw the light that it was good” [Bereshit 1:4]. While all of creation is designated as “טוב,” Rashi focuses on this first of all creations, paralleling the birth of Moshe to that light which would penetrate the thick darkness that enveloped the world initially [Bereshit 1:2]. Moshe represents the new beginning that would pierce the darkness of *galut*, rejuvenate the families of *Bnei Yisrael*, and lead them to receive the Torah at Mt. Sinai. This culminating event has been anticipated since the creation of the world, as Rashi notes in his commentary on the first *pasuk* of *Sefer Bereshit*: “בראשית- בשביל התורה . . . בשביל ישראל”: The world was created for the sake of *Am Yisrael* who would eventually fulfill the Torah and mitzvot.

In his commentary on Rashi, the Maharal elaborates upon the parallel between Moshe’s birth and the creation of the world. Noting that the narrative in *Shemot*, chapter two, does not identify Moshe’s parents by name, the Maharal asserts:

Moshe was designated [to bring about] the redemption from the six days of creation; [therefore] his parentage was not essential by him.

Maharal, Shemot 1:15

משה היה מתוקן לגאולה מששת ימי
בראשית- לא היו אבותיו עיקר אצלו.
גור אריה שמות א:טו

The absence of names shifts the reader’s focus to Moshe himself, highlighting, in the Maharal’s view, that his divine mission as a redeemer of Israel was preordained from creation, regardless of the identities of his parents.

The profound implication of the juxtaposition between Moshe’s birth and the light of the first day of creation becomes apparent through the commentators’ understanding of the uniqueness of this first light. As Rashi explains, this light was not the physical light that shines forth from the luminaries, which were created on the fourth day. It was a spiritual, divine light, which was hidden for the righteous in the future.

Hashem saw that the wicked were unworthy of using the light. He therefore set it apart, reserving it for the righteous in the future.

Rashi, Breishit 1:4

ראהו שאינו כדאי להשתמש בו
רשעים והבדילו לצדיקים לעתיד לבא.
רש"י בראשית א:ד

Abarbanel, however, interprets that this hidden light is not reserved only for the far distant future, but is brought forth and “shines upon” select individuals at certain periods throughout Jewish history in times of need.

This light was hidden so that Hashem may use it in times of need for those whom He loves and who observe His mitzvot, according to what His wisdom determines.
Abarbanel, end of Parshat Pekudei

נגנז אותו האור כדי להשתמש בו ה' בעתות
הצורך לאוהביו ולשומרי מצוותיו כפי מה
שתגזר חכמתו
אברבנל סוף פרשת פקודי

Therefore, when Moshe's birth caused the house to fill completely with light, one may understand that *Hashem* enveloped Moshe with a special divine light, which would dissipate the darkness that surrounded *Bnei Yisrael* in the Egyptian exile. It is this divine light, says Abarbanel, which later radiated from Moshe when he descended Mt. Sinai with the *luchot* in his hands. [Shemot 34:29-35].

The Light of Fire

The motif of light is continued in another scene involving Moshe as he is initiated into his role as a national leader, but it is now revealed in the form of fire. While Moshe sees a bush ablaze with fire without being consumed, the reader is apprised that an angel of *Hashem* appeared to him in a blaze of fire from within the bush. [Shemot 3:2]. Although there is disagreement among commentators as to whether the angel was itself in the form of fire or only appeared from within a fire, the essential point is that the medium of fire is chosen for this divine manifestation.

Midrashic interpretations on this scene expose a double symbolism surrounding the image of the fire in this context. Fire not only has the power to give light and heat, but it has the power to destroy and consume. Questioning why *Hashem* chose this unusual means for a divine revelation, the midrash answers:

Because Moshe was pondering that perhaps the Egyptians would succeed in destroying Israel, Hashem showed him a fire that burns but does not consume. He said to him, "Just as the bush burns in fire and is not consumed, so, too, the Egyptians will not be able to destroy Israel."

Shemot Rabbah 2:5

לפי שהיה מחשב בלבו ואומר שמא יהיו
המצריים מכלין את ישראל, לפיכך הראהו
הקב"ה אש בוערת ואיננו אוכל, א"ל כשם
שהסנה בוער באש ואיננו אוכל, כך
המצריים אינן יכולין לכלות את ישראל
שמות רבה ב:ה

The image of fire represents the destructive forces of Egypt the persecutor, which is described as an iron crucible (כור ברזל) in Devarim 4:20. *Hashem* reassures Moshe that ultimately, the fire of Egypt will not succeed in destroying Israel.¹⁰⁹

Hashem intimates to Moshe: Fire will be fought with Fire. The fire, representing the divine presence, will combat the fire of Egypt, the thorniness of the *sneh* of Egypt, through the

¹⁰⁹ Similarly, the *sneh*, the thorn bush, represents the symbol of suffering and affliction. Therefore, Rashi explains that *Hashem* appears from within this tree in order to send His nation the message that He is with them in their suffering. [Rashi, Shemot 3:2].

mediation of Moshe,¹¹⁰ who himself is the embodiment of light. Moshe's light will push back the fire of Egypt; his light will prevail to ensure the *geulah*.

Redemption, however, does not come easily. It is a process requiring preparation. How will *Bnei Yisrael* achieve redemption, not only in body but in mind and soul? How can the light of redemption pierce the deep recesses of the soul of Israel which is languishing in the darkness of exile?

On the verge of redemption, *Hashem* commands *Bnei Yisrael* with the mitzvah of sanctifying the new moon [Shemot 12:2], and, as Rashi explains, Moshe is perplexed.

Moses was perplexed regarding the Molad (the exact moment when begins) the new moon- how much of it must be visible before it is proper to consecrate it as a new moon. Hashem therefore pointed it out to him in the sky with a "finger" and said to him, "Behold when you see it like this, consecrate it." And how did He show it to him, for He would only speak to Moshe during the daytime. . . but, when it was close to sunset, this portion was told to him; He showed him with the coming of darkness.

Rashi, Shemot 12:2

נתקשה משה על מולד הלבנה
באיזו שיעור תראה ותהיה ראוי
לקדש, והראה לו באצבע את
הלבנה ברקיע, ואמר לו כזה ראה
וקדש. וכיצד הראהו, והלא לא היה
מדבר עמו אלא ביום ... אלא סמוך
לשקיעת החמה נאמרה לו פרשה
זו, והראהו עם חשכה:
רש"י שמות יב:ב

Why is Moshe bewildered about this mitzvah of sanctifying the new moon? Moshe exemplifies the symbol of light; he saw *Hashem* through a clear vision and during the daytime. Moshe perceived that in order to bring about the state of redemption, all darkness needed to be erased, and light needs to fill its void completely. *Hashem*, however, responds that redemption can only be accomplished if one sanctifies the light, but the light that originates from the darkness.¹¹¹

Am Yisrael needs to remember the humble origins of its greatness, how it emerged from the darkness of exile into the light of freedom. The darkness must be consecrated by looking for the small speck of light within the darkness. As time progresses, the light spreads and saturates. But, the moon's light is cyclical. Eventually, the light wanes, and the darkness prevails, until the light is made visible again. *Hashem* teaches *Am Yisrael* that when darkness seems to predominate in different periods throughout Jewish history, they must continue to search for the light. They must remember their suffering, but this memory should not serve as an obstacle; it is a stepping-stone for the bright future that lies ahead. The collective memory of the past acts as a bridge to the future. *Am Yisrael's* new beginning is characterized by acknowledging the darkness and then searching for that small fragment of light which breaks through the darkness.

Accordingly, in order to be redeemed, *Hashem* demands that *Am Yisrael* demonstrate absolute and unconditional loyalty to Him through the fulfillment of the commandment of the *Korban*

¹¹⁰ Accordingly, in an extension of the symbolism of this scene, Rashi expounds that just as the bush fulfills its divine mission and is not harmed by the fire, so, too, Moshe is assured that he will fulfill his divine mission to Pharaoh and emerge unscathed, succeeding in bringing about the redemption of his nation.

¹¹¹ This can perhaps explain why so many of the mitzvot on *Pesach* take place at night, such as matza and sippur yetziat Mitzrayim.

Pesach. To appreciate how this sacrifice serves as a prerequisite for redemption, one must analyze the symbolism of the rituals involved.

The Bein Ha'arbaim: The In Between Time

The *Korban Pesach* is slaughtered "bein ha'arbaim - an "in-between time" which is neither fully day nor completely night. As Rashi explains,¹¹²

The period beginning at six hours and forward is called bein ha'arbaim because the sun then inclines in the direction of the place of its setting to become darkened. It appears to me that the language of bein ha'arbaim refers to the hours between the darkening of the day and the darkening of the night. The word, erev, is an expression for gloom and darkness, as in Isaiah 24:11, "All joy is darkened"

Rashi, Shemot 12:6

משש שעות ולמעלה קרוי בין הערבים, שהשמש נוטה לבית מבואו לערוב. ולשון בין הערבים נראה בעיני אותן שעות שבין עריבת היום לעריבת הלילה, עריבת היום בתחלת שבע שעות מכי ינטו צללי ערב (ירמיהו ד'), ועריבת הלילה בתחילת הלילה. ערב לשון נשף וחשך, כמו (ישעיהו כד יא) ערבה כל שמחה: רש"י שמות יב:ו

The *Korban Pesach* is slaughtered during an ambiguous period of time within the twenty four hour cycle; it is a time that hovers between day and night, between light and darkness. In order to elucidate further this understanding of "bein ha'arbaim," Rashi cites a *pasuk* from the book of Isaiah, which applies the meaning of *erev* in a figurative manner. Since the reader of the Torah surely knows the meaning of *erev* from the creation story, one wonders how this supporting text from Isaiah clarifies the import of the timing of the *Korban Pesach*, especially since that chapter in Isaiah does not speak about redemption, but highlights the mourning and grief which Israel will endure during its suffering in exile.

On the threshold of redemption, *Am Yisrael* hovers between darkness and light. This is not a time of complete light, but a time of confusion and ambiguity. *Hashem* confronts His people and challenges them to decide where their loyalties lie once and for all. Will they look for the light and set their sights on a bright, new future, or will they remain steeped in the darkness of exile and assimilation?

Hashem stipulates that if Israel performs the *Korban Pesach*, then He will fulfill "ופסחתי" (12:13). What is the definition of that term?

I will have mercy... and I say it refers to leaping and jumping ... as it says (1Kings 18:21) "How long will you continue to jump between two posts?"

Rashi, Shemot 12:13

ופסחתי – וחמלתי ... ואני אומר כל פסיחה לשון דלוג וקפיצה ... כן (מלכים א' יח כא) פוסחים על שתי הסעיפים ... רש"י שמות יב:יג

In order to support his interpretations, Rashi cites a text in which Eliyahu challenges *Bnei Yisrael* of his time at Mt. Carmel. Eliyahu confronts the people with the moment of decision, chastising them that they are leaping between two loyalties, a condition that can no longer persist. They must choose between *Hashem* or *Baal*. In a similar fashion, Rashi intimates that on the eve of *Yetziat*

¹¹² Some of the following insights on Rashi's commentary were taught to me by Rav Daniel Epstein.

Mitzrayim, Bnei Yisrael have not demonstrated steadfast loyalty to *Hashem*. They exist figuratively in a state of confusion, *bein ha'arbaim*, and the time has come to prove that they intend to follow *Hashem* and his mitzvot. In turn, *Hashem* asserts that if Israel performs the *Korban Pesach*, He will have mercy over them, “skipping over” the strict standard of justice in order to redeem them.

While the animals of all sacrifices must be unblemished, in this sacrifice, Israel is commanded to take the paschal lamb four days prior to its slaughter and to keep watch over it. [Shemot 12:6]. *Hazal* seek out the profound significance of this unusual aspect of the Pesach sacrifice.

R. Matya b. Cheres explained (based on Ezek. 16): “And I passed over and I saw you and behold, it was a time of love”: the time had arrived to fulfill God’s promise to Abraham that his children would be redeemed. But, they did not have commandments to perform in order to be redeemed, as it is stated, “You were naked” - naked from all commandments. *Hashem* gave them two commandments to perform so that they could be redeemed: the blood of the *Korban Pesach* and the blood of the circumcision. Therefore, the Paschal animal is taken four days prior to its slaughter, for reward is only gained through action. *R. Eliezer ha-Kapar*, however, responded: Did not Israel have four commandments which they performed, that make them more than worthy? For they were not promiscuous; they did not speak maliciously; they did not change their names or their language. If so, why did they have to take the Paschal animal four days before its slaughter? This is because Israel was steeped in the idolatry of Egypt, and the sin of idolatry is weighed against all of the commandments. Therefore, Moshe said to them, “Pull your hands from idolatry and cleave to the commandments” (12:21).

Mekhilta Bo 5

היה רבי מתיא בן חרש אומר הרי הוא אומר ואעבור עליך ואראך והנה עתך עת דודים (יחזקאל טז:ז). הגיע שבועתו שנשבע הקב"ה לאברהם שיגאל את בניו ולא היה בידם מצות שיתעסקו בהם כדי שיגאלו שנאמר שדים נכנו ושערך צמח ואת ערום ועריה וגו' (שם טז:ז) ערום מכל מצות נתן להם הקדוש ברוך הוא שתי מצות דם פסח ודם מילה שיתעסקו בהם כדי שיגאלו ... לכך הקדים הכתוב לקיחתו של פסח לשחיטתו ד' ימים שאין נוטלין שכר אלא על ידי מעשה רבי אליעזר הקפר ברבי אומר וכי לא היה בידם של ישראל ארבע מצות שאין כל העולם כדאי בהם שלא נחשדו על העריות. ולא על לשון הרע ולא שנו את שמם. ולא שנו את לשונם ... ומפני מה הקדים לקיחתו של פסח לשחיטתו ד' ימים לפי שהיו ישראל שטופין בע"ז במצרים וע"ז שקולה כנגד כל המצות ... אמר להם משכו ידיכם מע"ז והדבקו במצות

מכילתא פרשת בא פרשה ה

Hazal indicate that while *Bnei Yisrael* retained some aspects of their tradition and heritage, nevertheless, they also assimilated to the idolatrous forms of worship in Egypt, particularly the worship of the sheep (as noted by Maimonides in *Guide of the Perplexed*, 3:46). The foreign influence on the religious ways of Israel is evident as well in Ezekiel, 20:7, which indicates that *Bnei Yisrael* did not abandon the corrupt ways of Egyptian idolatry.¹¹³

Accordingly, when Moshe communicates the mitzvah of the *Korban Pesach* to *Bnei Yisrael*, he modifies *Hashem*’s original wording and states, “Pull and take for yourselves a sheep - משכו וקחו” [Shemot 12:21]. Since the act of pulling can be accomplished in one of two directions, toward or away, Moshe reiterates that now is the time to decide the direction in which they want

¹¹³ Similarly, see *Shemot Rabbah*, 1:8, which indicates that Israel did not perform the mitzvah of circumcision after Joseph died. Compare as well *Shemot Rabbah* 15:4, where *Hashem* asserts that only because of the patriarchs’ merits was Israel redeemed.

to go: pull away from the sheep, the symbol of Egyptian idolatry, by transforming it into a mitzvah, a symbol which demonstrates loyalty to *Hashem* through the offering of this sacrifice.

If Israel performs its own act of taking of this sheep with the intent of demonstrating absolute devotion to *Hashem*, then *Hashem* will carry out a reciprocal act of taking, as promised to Moshe:

*I will **take** you to me as a nation, and I will be to you a God*
Shemot 6:7

וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהָיִיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים
שמות ו: ז

With the active demonstration of their intent to commit themselves completely to *Hashem*, Israel can cross the threshold, leaving behind the darkness of exile and embarking on a new path as the chosen nation.

The symbol of light, in the form of fire, reappears at the culmination of the redemption, the giving of the Torah.

Mt. Sinai was all in smoke, for Hashem had come down upon it in fire
Shemot 19:18

וְהָר סִינַי עָשָׁן כִּלּוֹ מִפְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר יָרַד עָלָיו ה' בְּאֵשׁ
שמות יט: יח

And the sight of the Glory of Hashem was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain
Shemot 24:17

וּמִרְאָה כְבוֹד ה' בְּאֵשׁ אֲכָלֶת בָּרֹאשׁ הָהָר
שמות כד: יז

The goal of redemption is not only physical freedom, but ultimately, it is for the purpose of becoming *Hashem*'s servants, in order to fulfill the Torah- the luminary *par excellence*, which lights the way of *Am Yisrael* to fulfill their mission as the chosen nation, as was declared by *Hashem* to Moshe at the sight of the burning bush.

And He said: For I will be with you and this is the sign that I have sent you: When you will bring the nation out of Egypt, you will serve Hashem on this mountain.
Shemot 3:12

וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי אֲהִיָּה עִמָּךְ וְזֶה לְךָ הָאוֹת כִּי
אֲנִי כִי שְׁלַחְתִּיךָ בְּהוֹצִיאֲךָ אֶת הָעָם מִמִּצְרַיִם
תַּעֲבֹדוּן אֶת הָאֵל קִים עַל הָהָר הַזֶּה:
שמות ג: יב

Explaining *Hashem*'s intent, Ramban clarifies that the incontrovertible sign of Moshe's success in fulfilling his mission will be when he sees the fire smoking on top of Mt. Sinai. That very sight which Moshe will behold at the giving of the Torah will remind him of the fire of the burning bush. Only then will he understand that the climax of redemption has been achieved.

Nevertheless, Ramban indicates in his introduction to *Sefer Shemot* that in actuality, the process of redemption was not completed until the building of the Mishkan in the latter part of *Shemot*.

The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting and the Glory of God filled the Tabernacle
Shemot 40:34

וַיִּכַּס הָעָנָן אֶת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְכְבוֹד ה' מָלֵא
אֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן:
שמות מ: לד

The redemption is complete only when *Hashem* rests His *Shekhinah* among *Bnei Yisrael*, returning His nation to the spiritual heights of the patriarchs and experiencing His constant and open presence. As Ramban declares,

Now the exile did not end until [Israel] returned to their place and they were restored to the [spiritual] heights of their forefathers. Yet, when they arrived at Mt. Sinai and built the Tabernacle and the Holy One Blessed is He returned and manifested His presence among them, then they returned to the high stature of their forefathers . . . and they were considered redeemed.

Ramban, Introduction to Shemot

והנה הגלות איננו נשלם עד יום שובם
אל מקומם ואל מעלת אבותם
ישובו... וכשבאו אל הר סיני ועשו
המשכן ושב הקב"ה והשרה שכינתו
ביניהם אז שבו אל מעלות אבותם...
ואז נחשבו גאולים
רמב"ן שמות הקדמה

The history of *Am Yisrael* is progressive, but in actuality, it is also circular. The pinnacle of *Am Yisrael's* existence is when we achieve once again the spiritual stature of the *Avot* and *Hashem* "resides among us" continuously, as it says, "Make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell within them." [Shemot 25:8]

What is the message that we can learn for our survival in *Galut* today? In his commentary on *Shir ha-Shirim*, which we read on Pesach, Rashi expounds how Shlomo Ha-Melech reflects allegorically upon the relationship between *Hashem* and *Bnei Yisrael* in the periods of exile throughout Jewish history. In *galut*, Israel exclaims: "שחורה אני ונאווה" [Song of Songs, 1:5]. As Rashi interprets, Israel declares to the nations of the world: We may be blackened by our sins that keep us in exile, but the darkness of our appearance is only skin-deep. Underneath, we are glorious because we have the enduring merit of having accepted the Torah on Mt. Sinai.

Rashi elaborates that Israel asks within the dialogue of *Shir ha-Shirim* how to survive the torment and darkness of exile, and it receives the answer that it must present itself to the world as a "חומה" [Song of Songs, 8:9], a wall, steadfast in its belief and loyalty to *Hashem*. For if Israel acts like a door ("ואם דלת היא" - 8:9), which swings back and forth on its hinges, wavering in its commitment to Torah and mitzvot, then it will leave open the possibility that all will be lost through assimilation. When faced with this challenge, Israel responds fervently: "אני חומה" (8:10). Israel is that "wall," which demonstrates its consistent devotion to *Hashem* through prayer and Torah learning in the confines of exile. This persistent loyalty to *Hashem* will eventually earn Israel the merit of the final redemption in the future, when our nation will emerge for the last time "from darkness to light, from servitude to redemption."

So the Children Will Ask

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Chazal instituted that *sippur yitziat Mitzrayim* be performed in a question-answer format, as derived from the Mishnah in Pesachim (117a).¹¹⁴ The Emek Brachah (Haggadah, 1) quotes Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik who observes that this specific format is one of the three elements that distinguishes the mitzvah of *sippur yitziat Mitzrayim* at the seder from the mitzvah of *Zechirat Yitziat Mitzrayim* that applies every day of the year. Likewise, the Rambam's codification of the seder procedures includes the question-answer format.

Chazal instituted several practices that encourage children to ask questions, among them: removing the food early on, as if the meal was over (115b), dipping vegetables twice (114b), and distributing treats to younger members of the family (Rambam, Hilchot Chametz u-Matzah 7:1). Along these lines, Rav Gershon Zacks (Haggadah Siach ha-Grid, pp. 8, fn. 1) suggests that the Rambam opines that one should add anything he or she can that will cause children to ask questions. Rav Moshe Soloveichik explains that the custom to wear a Kittel at the seder is meant to spark the children's curiosity. This symbol of solemnity and sadness, donned at a time of redemption, will bring children to inquire about the custom.

The Rosh emphasizes the importance of questions in fulfilling the mitzvah of *sippur yitziat Mitzrayim*. The Rosh holds that one can only satisfy his Torah obligation of *sippur yitziat Mitzrayim* by responding to questions that are posed. Rav Yerucham Perlow (Sefer ha-Mitzvot le-Rasag, Asin 33, p. 167) notes that the Rosh holds that a lone person is only rabbinically obligated to ask himself questions at the seder. The Biblical obligation is limited to a seder where children are present, as described in the verse, "And it shall be when your son asks you..." (Shemot 13:14). However, the Rabbis, in order to reflect the Biblical commandment of answering the child's questions, required a single person to utilize the question-answer format.

Rashi's explanation of the verse in parshat Re'eh, Devarim 16:3, "*lema'an tizkor* - so that you will remember," seems to support the ruling of the Rosh. Rashi states that the only way of remembering is through eating the Korban Pesach and matzah, and "only when the son asks did the Torah impose the obligation to tell him."

¹¹⁴ The Rambam and the Rashbam argue whether this halachah entails asking specific questions, or would any questions suffice.

The rabbis prescribed actions that would beg the questions of the children, in order to ensure the fulfillment of the Torah obligation. If children were not motivated to ask, they might remain silent, depriving the adults of the mitzvah to answer them. This type of institution exists regarding other mitzvot. Chazal require one to purchase a four-cornered garment in order to create a Torah obligation to attach tzitzit to it. This stems from the Gemara in Menachot (41a) that tells us that in a "moment of anger" Hashem will punish one who does not obligate himself to wear tzitzit.

In light of the Rosh's opinion, one can understand the words of Tosfot in Pesachim (114b, s.v. Zot Omeret): If one has only enough greens for either karpas or maror, he should use it for karpas, which arouses children's curiosity, even though he will sacrifice proper observance of the mitzvah of maror. The Rashbam (ad loc.) finds this problematic. Why should one forfeit the mitzvah of maror simply for the purpose of arousing the curiosity of the children? The answer, based on the Rosh, is that karpas invites the questions of the children, allowing for the fulfillment of the Torah commandment of *sippur yitziat Mitzrayim*. Perhaps this opportunity, which arises first, supercedes the mitzvah of maror, which today is a rabbinical requirement.

In contrast to the Rosh, the Rambam (Hilchot Chametz u-Matzah 7:2) obligates one in the mitzvah of *sippur yitziat Mitzrayim* even in the absence of any questions.

- Q** If so, why was it necessary for Chazal to institute elements of the seder that are intended to invite questions?
- Q** Furthermore, it is clear from the Rambam's codification (ibid.) that even if no questions are spontaneously asked, one should still perform the mitzvah through the question and answer form. Why is this required?
- Q** The Rambam (ibid. 8:2) requires that the leader of the seder, rather than the children, ask the questions. The purpose of this is to focus the attention of the participants on the observances of the night. If so, the goal of the questions is actually the questions themselves, not the answers. Why is this focus so important?
- Q** Moreover, over the years, many practices have become so familiar that their observance does not arouse any questions at all. Indeed, the Rambam states that one may introduce new practices that invite inquiry. Why, then, do we still practice those customs that no longer arouse the curiosity of the participants?
- Q** The Shibbolei ha-Leket (218) explains that we read "*Baruch ha-Makom baruch Hu*" before the section of the Four Sons as a *Birkat ha-Torah* to precede the *sippur yitziat Mitzrayim*. Rabbenu Yeshaya is quoted as expressing a similar opinion. Why is there a need for a special *Birkat ha-Torah* before learning on this night more than any other night of the year?

Sippur Yitziat Mitzrayim through Talmud Torah

To answer these questions, we must begin with a fundamental principle that is alluded to by the Rishonim and illuminated by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (Shiurim le-Zeicher Abba Mari z"l vol. 2, pp. 156). The Rav explains that we are required to tell the details of the Exodus via the

medium of *talmud Torah*. The proof is the fact that the Haggadah revolves around the exposition of the portion from the Torah of *Arami Oved Avi*, recited by one who brings *bikkurim* - first fruits - to Jerusalem. Rabbi Yaakov of Lisa (Haggadah Maaseh Nisim, Introduction) and Rabbi Chaim Soloveichik (quoted in Emek Bracha) note that *sippur yitziat Mitzrayim* requires *ha'arachat devarim* - extensive elaboration. The way of one who wishes to express appreciation is to do so at length (see Rashi, Bamidbar 33:1). One would therefore expect the Haggadah's focus to be on the lengthy, organized verses of Shemot or the *aggadot* and *midrashim* that directly address leaving Egypt. Yet instead, the Haggadah focuses on disorganized *drashot* from the selection of *Arami Oved Avi*. Why is this so?

Chazal wanted us to engage in *sippur yitziat Mitzrayim* through a *Ma'aseh Limud*, learning a portion of the Torah with the thirteen methods of Torah exposition. The pesukim in Shemot are too explicit, and would not allow for the same richness of limud Torah. Therefore, the Torah chose more cryptic verses, to facilitate the limud experience of the seder.¹¹⁵

This idea, that we tell the story of the Exodus through the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*, emerges from the Mishnah in Pesachim (116a) and the Rambam (ibid. 7:2). Both express that the story must be told in a way that befits the intelligence of the children involved. This element is characteristic to the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah* itself, as explained by the Rambam in Hilchot Talmud Torah (1:6). The Rambam also states (ibid. 4) that the more intelligent and wise one is, the greater is his fulfillment of the mitzvah of *talmud Torah*. The Rambam also indicates that each person should elaborate on *yitziat Mitzrayim* to the best of his or her ability, and that the more one elaborates, the more he or she deserves praise. Clearly, it is not the terse specific text that is most important, but the learning and understanding of the subject.¹¹⁶

Perhaps the author of the Haggadah intended for all the participants at the seder to fulfill the mitzvah of *talmud Torah* in a complete fashion. The seder, therefore, includes portions from all sections of the Torah (see Brachot 11a): *mikra*, *midrash*, Mishnah and Gemara. According to Rashi, included in the category of Gemara are the answers of the Mishnayot that provide halachic rulings; for example, the Mishnah of "*yachol mei-rosh chodesh*." According to the Rambam (Hilchot Talmud Torah 1:12), *gemara* is defined as creative learning. This too can be fulfilled at the seder. Rabbi Soloveitchik explains that the words, "*afilu kulanu chachamim... chayavim anu le-saper be-yitziat Mitzrayim*," serve as an imperative. One is required to tell over the story in great depth. The Haggadah emphasizes the obligation of even *Chachamim* and *Nevonim*, people who are very knowledgeable in Torah. One is not merely required to *tell* the story of the Exodus from Egypt, *le-saper et yitziat mitzraim*, but to *be involved in telling* the story, *le-saper be-yetziat mitzraim*.

Rabbi Soloveitchik cited another proof to the idea of the seder revolving around the mitzvah of *talmud Torah*. The Haggadah includes the Mishnah of Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah and the sources

¹¹⁵ Alternately, both Kriat Bikkurim and Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim share the theme of showing gratitude to Hashem for taking us out of Egypt. For this reason, Chazal chose these verses as the focus of the seder night, rather than a selection from Shemot. Rabbi Soloveitchik demonstrates how Rambam's description (in Sefer ha-Mitzvot mitzvah 132) of Kriat Bikkurim and Sippur Yitziat Mitzrayim (mitzvah 157) parallel each other.

¹¹⁶ The source of the Rambam's opinion may be found in Torat Kohanim (Bechukotai 1:2-3, Rash MiShantz), as cited by Rabbi Michael Katz (Beit Yitzchak 1987).

of *Zechirat Yitziat Mitzrayim*. Rabbi Soloveitchik suggested that the Rambam's version of the Mishnah had Rabbi Elazar and the Chachamim actually debating the derivation of the mitzvah around the seder table. Yet the derivation of the mitzvah has nothing to do with the story itself; why, then, is it present? Clearly, the mitzvah is broader than mere story-telling; the mitzvah is to learn the sugya of yetziat Mitzrayim.

Further proof is found in the answer given to the Chacham, i.e. all the laws of Pesach, as well as the Tosefta that states that one should delve into the laws of Korban Pesach until the rooster crows. The laws of the Korban Pesach do not belong to the narrative portion of the exodus story. Yet their study is desirable, because *sippur yetziat Mitzrayim* is not merely a story; it is a sugya.

Rabbi Soloveitchik (Haggadah Siach haGrid pp. 39) also points out that the word "*Sippur*" can be understood in two different ways: retelling, as well as learning. Ibn Ezra (Tehillim 119:13) notes that the verb *sippur* is used to describe teaching Torah.

Q Why does the Haggadah formulate our gratitude to Hashem for freeing us from slavery in the form of *talmud Torah*?

Perhaps the purpose of this is to highlight that receiving the Torah was the ultimate purpose of the redemption. However, a deeper meaning may be seen in light of the Ramban's discussion of the selection and salvation of the Jewish people. The Ramban in his introduction to Shemot writes that the redemption is the process through which the Jewish people return to the level of the patriarchs and serve as the "Chariot of Hashem" in this world. In this way, the Exodus was not merely a transition from *Hester Panim* to *Gilui Panim* - God finally clearly revealing His Providence in the world. Rather, it was also the process through which the Jews themselves became the embodiments of Hashem's Presence and accepted responsibility for its further revelation in the world. The book of Shemot, the *Sefer ha-Geulah* - Book of redemption, begins with a nation that does not yet realize God's providence, and ends with Moshe's teaching Torah to the Jews and the Jewish people's travels through the desert - events that proclaimed Hashem's providence in the world. Through learning Torah, we perpetuate the exodus' legacy; we make ourselves "Chariots of Hashem" in this world. Specifically, the learning of great scholars, Talmidei Chachamim who have mastered the entire Torah, helps us accomplish this goal. The deeper one delves into this learning, the more Hashem's presence becomes known. The greater the understanding one achieves, the more Hashem's holiness is valued in this world. Through this, one becomes a partner in the process of the redemption; one exhibits an appreciation of its benefits and goals, and, as a result, is grateful for it in a most profound way.

Teaching Others

The Gemara (Bava Batra 21a) describes the development of yeshivot in Jewish communities. Originally, fathers would teach their sons individually, but since some boys had no father to teach them Torah, a system of Jewish education began with yeshivot in Yerushalayim. However, attendance was limited to older boys of the age of sixteen or seventeen. Yehoshua ben Gamla is credited with enabling the continuance of the Torah by expanding the yeshiva system to a

national scale and including boys from the age of six or seven. Tosfot (ibid. s.v. Ki me-Tzion) explains that the yeshivot were originally founded in Yerushalayim, because the students there would see the great sanctity of the city and the Kohanim performing the service in the Beit haMikdash. This environment would inspire them towards a greater fear of Heaven and a greater love of Torah study. Yet how was this supposed to aid the educational situation of orphans in other Jewish cities?

The Gemara explains that the impetus for providing education to the orphans stemmed from the verse "*Ve-limaditem otam* - and you shall teach them [i.e. words of Torah, to your sons]," which can be expounded upon to mean "and you shall teach them [i.e. all Jewish children who need education]." Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman asks why this explanation is necessary, if Chazal have already taught that the verse *Ve-shinantam le-vincha* - *Eilu ha-talmidim* indicates the obligation to teach Torah to students (see Rambam, Hilchot Talmud Torah 1:2; Sefer ha-Mitzvot 11).

The Birkat Avraham writes that the mitzvah to teach one who is not his son only applies if that student comes forward of his own volition. One is not required to search out others to teach, with the exception of his son (see Kiddushin 29a). He cites the words of the Vilna Gaon (Yoreh Deah 245:5) as proof. The Vilna Gaon explains that the requirement of a Talmid Chacham to teach students stems from the mitzvah of tzedakah - charity. Therefore, explains the Birkat Avraham, just as one need not give money to a poor person when that individual is not interested in the gift, one need not teach a student who does not wish to learn. It is not the responsibility of the rebbe to pursue the student.

However, this understanding is problematic according to the opinion of the Rambam. The Rambam (Hilchot Talmud Torah 1:2,3) lists the differences between the requirement to teach one's son and the requirement to teach others. He mentions only that one's son takes precedence over other children, and that only for the education of his own child is one required to spend money. The Rambam does not list that one must seek out and teach his son, but that one need not seek out others' children.

The Rambam explains the mitzvah of teaching Torah as, (mitzvah 11) '*Ve-shinantam le-vincha*' - *eilu ha-talmidim she-ha-talmidim keruyim banim* - 'You shall teach it to your son:' this is a reference to the students, since the students are called children [of the teacher]." By quoting this exposition of the Sifrei, the Rambam implies that one is obligated to teach Torah to his students. Formulating the obligation as teaching those who are already one's students appears to be consistent with the opinion of the Vilna Gaon quoted above. Although the mitzvah begins as tzedakah, once the teacher gains students, he becomes obligated to teach them, for they are treated by the Torah as his sons.

Perhaps for this reason, Chazal learn the obligation to teach the children of others from the verse "*Veshinantam*," from the word *Shinun*, which implies repetition or teaching for a second time. Only after he has taught them once and made them his students is he obligated to teach them a second time.

This may also be the explanation of the Beraita (Bava Metzia 33b) that states that one who learns one chapter, one halachah, one *dibbur*, or even one letter from someone else must treat this individual with the respect due to one's teacher. He is considered a student, and under these circumstances, the teacher is required to teach the student further.

Hence, the Vilna Gaon would understand that the Rambam's list of differences between teaching one's son and teaching others only applies when both obligations are already in effect, i.e. after the others have sought out their teacher.

With this background we can understand the institution of Yehoshua ben Gamla. The intention was to create the Rebbe-Talmid relationship that obligates continuing Torah study. The creation of yeshivot through the contributions of the community allowed greater opportunities for those relationships to exist. As Tosfot explain, the effort to focus the building of the yeshivot in Yerushalayim was due to the great influence that the environs of the Holy City would provide. When a father-son or Rebbe-Talmid relationship already exists, both elements naturally commit themselves to the study. However, when this relationship does not exist, the proximity to the Beit ha-Mikdash and the Temple service allows for the students to devote themselves and their efforts to receiving the Torah of their teachers. We also understand what follows in the Gemara, the acceptance of younger children to the yeshivah system. Though older students may be more prepared to absorb the teachings, it was too late in life to hope for the expected impact of Beit ha-Mikdash and the ability to capture the hearts of the students in order to influence them.

In conclusion, we can answer our earlier questions on the Rambam. Why is the question and answer format necessary, even when children volunteer no questions, and even when one is alone? Why is the focus generated by the seder leader's questioning so important? Why do we ask questions even about things that no longer appear strange to us? Why is there a *birkat ha-Torah* on *sippur yitziat mitzrayim*?

There is a unique fulfillment of *talmud Torah* on the seder night as a vehicle to perform the mitzvah of *sippur yitziat Mitzrayim*. The mitzvah of Talmud torah uncovers hidden ideas, gives expression to the geulah we celebrate, and ultimately reveals hidden evidence of Hashem dominion in this world. Since focus is essential to *talmud Torah*, Chazal required one to focus on this night's learning through the medium of questions, either because of the "*ki yishalcha vincha*" imperative, or because of a rabbinical decree to emphasize this element of *talmud Torah*. Moreover, question and answer format emphasizes the Talmid-Rebbi relationship, which is the neshama of Talmud Torah. Through the questions, one prepares himself to focus and receive the learning of the seder; children will feel the humility necessary for successful learning, and the mitzvah of *talmud Torah* will be performed in its complete form. This is why, according to the Shibbolei ha-Leket, a special *Birkat ha-Torah* is made. The purpose of every *Birkat ha-Mitzvah* is to focus the mind, according to many Rishonim. Similarly, the purpose of *birkat ha-Torah* at the seder is to focus the mind on the forthcoming talmud Torah. This emphasizes that the *Sippur* will be performed through the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah* and will prepare the participants for the great task at hand.

Zeicher le-Mikdash

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At the *Seder*, we eat *koreich zecher le-mikdash*. Interestingly, before eating, we explain that we are doing so *zecher le-mikdash*. The Mishna Berura is bothered by the problem of *hefseik*, and rather tentatively suggests that this explanation be omitted.¹¹⁷ Whilst the prevalent custom is to say the *zecher le-mikdash ki-hillel* paragraph, the Mishna Berura's question highlights our self-conscious preoccupation with *zecher le-mikdash* at the *Seder*.

Magid concludes with the *beracha* of *asher gealanu*. The original form of this *beracha* was considerably shorter than our present version. After the standard opening, the *beracha* immediately concluded with *asher gealanu ve-ga'al es avoseinu me-mitzrayim*. And, in fact, according to Rabbi Tarfon, this compact version is the only valid text of the *beracha*. Rabbi Akiva, however, maintains that after the destruction of the *beis ha-mikdash* we add to the *beracha* the request that *Hashem* rebuild the *beis ha-mikdash* and restore the *avoda*¹¹⁸. A noble request, to be sure, but does it really belong in this *beracha*? After all, this *beracha* caps our *sipur yetzias mitzrayim*. Its focus, therefore, is retrospective. Thus, while the initial thanksgiving is appropriate, the concluding petition seems, in context, inappropriate. We detect an emerging pattern; at the *Seder* we are preoccupied with the *beis ha-mikdash*.

This preoccupation with the *beis ha-mikdash* is reflected in various *minhagim* of the *Seder* as well. The Ramo quotes the *minhag* to eat an egg at the *Seder zecher le-churban ha-mikdash* because *tisha be-av* falls on the same day of the week as the first night of *Pesach*¹¹⁹. Is this convergence anything more than a coincidence of the calendar? Why is it important to mark this apparent irrelevant fact? Furthermore, it certainly seems anomalous to introduce an element of mourning into the *Seder*. Let us again note the preoccupation with the *beis ha-mikdash*.

The Netziv offers *zecher le-mikdash* as the reason for two other practices of the *Seder*, as well. Before eating *Karpas*, we wash *netilas yadayim*. All year long, however, the prevalent, if problematic, custom is that we do not wash *netilas yadayim* before eating foods dipped in liquids. Although the *gemora* clearly dictates that there is a rabbinic obligation to wash *netilas yadayim*, we rely on the opinion of *Tosafos* ad locum that this obligation was only in effect in the time of the *beis hamikdash*¹²⁰. The question arises as to why, according to *Tosafos*, we do so at the *Seder*. The Netziv explains that we wash *zecher le-mikdash*¹²¹. The Netziv (*ibid*) also explains the

¹¹⁷ *Orach Chayim* 475, *Beur Halacha* *ibid*.

¹¹⁸ *Pesachim* 116b

¹¹⁹ *Orach Chayim* 476:2

¹²⁰ *Pesachim* 115a and *Tosafos* ad locum

¹²¹ Introduction to commentary on the *Hagadah (Imrei Shefer)*

custom of wearing a *kitel* at the *Seder* in terms of *zecher le-mikdash*. The meat of *korbanos* was eaten in a manner befitting royalty. Accordingly, explains the Netziv, those eating the *korban pesach* would wear robes, and we, *zecher le-mikdash*, emulate that practice by wearing a *kitel*.

Q What accounts for this preoccupation with the *beis ha-mikdash*? We are always supposed to be mindful of the *beis ha-mikdash*, but our preoccupation at the *Seder* seems disproportionate.

We can derive a crucial insight into *yetzias mitzrayim* and *sipur yetzias mitzrayim* from *Shiras Ha-yam*. The *shira* celebrates the drowning of the Egyptians at *Yam Suf*, which consolidated and clinched the political exodus from Egypt. Accordingly, the *shira* focuses retrospectively on that seminal, miraculous event. Nevertheless, the *shira* concludes with a *bakasha* for the building of the *beis ha-mikdash*.

You will bring them and implant them on the mount of your heritage, a foundation for Your dwelling-place that You, Hashem, have made - a Sanctuary (mikdash), my Lord, which Your hands established.

Shemot 15:17

תבאמו ותטעמו בהר נחלתך
מכון לשבתך פעלת ה' מקדש
אדני כוננו ידיך:
שמות טו:יז

In a remarkable display of symmetry, according to Onkelos (15:2), the *shirah* also begins by focusing on the *beis ha-mikdash*. *Zeh kale ve-anvahu*, according to Onkelos, means: this is my God and I will build for Him the *beis ha-mikdash*. The conclusion of the *shirah*, and, according to Onkelos, its beginning, suggest that the building of the *beis ha-mikdash* was the culmination of *yetzias mitzrayim*. Accordingly, the *shira* concludes with a *bakasha* for the building of the *beis ha-mikdash*.

The *pasuk* in *sefer Melachim* also indicates that the building of the *beis hamikdash* represented the denouement of *yetzias mitzrayim*. Generally, in Navi, dates are expressed in terms of the reign of the monarch. The Navi, however, dates the building of the *beis ha-mikdash* from *yetzias Mitzrayim* as well. "And it was in the four hundred and eightieth year after the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel ... that he (began to) build the house of the Lord."¹²² The Navi highlights the climactic connection between *yetzias mitzrayim* and the building of the *beis ha-mikdash* by dating its construction accordingly.

In what sense was the building of the *beis ha-mikdash* the culmination of *yetzias mitzrayim*? When *Ha-Kadosh Baruch Hu* charges *Moshe Rabeinu* with the mission of leading *Bnei Yisroel* out of Egypt, He tells him, "When you take the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain".¹²³ Rashi, quoting the medrash, elaborates "I have a matter of great consequence dependent on this departure of *Bnei Yisroel* from Egypt; they are destined to receive the Torah upon this mountain three months after they leave Egypt." In other words, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* did not intend *yetzias mitzrayim* as an end unto itself. The *pasuk* indicates that *yetzias mitzrayim's* true significance was to facilitate *kabolas ha-torah*. On the other hand, we have

¹²² Melachim I 6:1

¹²³ Shemos 3: 12

inferred from *Shiras Ha-yam* that *yetzias mitzrayim* climaxed with the building of the *beis ha-mikdash*. Are these two different, distinct goals of *yetzias mitzrayim* or are they interrelated?

Ramban, in his introduction to sefer Shemos, beautifully explains the interrelationship of *kabolas ha-torah*, building the *beis ha-mikdash* and *yetzias mitzrayim*. *Galus mitzrayim* extended beyond the geographical confines of *mitzrayim* and physical servitude to Pharaoh; *galus* lingered until *Bnei Yisroel* returned to the spiritual station of their ancestors. This was achieved when *Bnei Yisroel* experienced the divine revelation at *Har Sinai*. The intimacy at Sinai with the *shechina* was not intended as a one time experience. Hashem sought to perpetuate the *geulah* by commanding that we construct the *Mishkan* because "the secret of the *Mishkan* is that the Glory which abode upon Mount Sinai should abide upon the *Mishkan* in a concealed manner." "Thus Israel always had with them in the *Mishkan* the Glory which appeared to them on Mount Sinai."¹²⁴ The *Mishkan*, of course, was intended as a temporary abode for the *shechina*. The *beis ha-mikdash* is Hashem's permanent home. Thus *yetzias mitzrayim* climaxed with *ma'amad Har Sinai*; that climax was perpetuated with the building of the *beis hamikdash*.

The *Mishna* teaches that *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* is accomplished by being *maschil be-gnus umesayem be-shevach*.¹²⁵ One element of our disgrace is that our ancestors were idolaters. The corresponding praise is the spiritual peak that we attained - that Hashem brought us close to Him, made us the chosen nation and allowed us to experience His unity.¹²⁶ We became the chosen nation at Har Sinai, seven weeks after the Exodus.¹²⁷ Clearly, the mandate of *maschil be-gnus umesayem be-shevach* requires that we look beyond what transpired the night of the Exodus and look to what developed from the Exodus. Accordingly, the mandate of *mesayem be-shevach* requires that we focus upon the *beis ha-mikdash* since *yetzias mitzrayim* culminated with its construction. Hashem's unity is experienced, most vividly and completely, in the *beis ha-mikdash*.¹²⁸

Thus, the *beis ha-mikdash* is an integral part of *sipur yetzias mitzrayim*. It is always a *mitzvah* to remember the *beis ha-mikdash*.¹²⁹ To do so at the *seder* is doubly significant because *zecher le-mikdash* is an integral part of *sipur yetzias mitzrayim*; hence, our declaration before eating *Koreich*, the various customs which are practiced *zecher le-mikdash*, and Rabbi Akiva's addendum to the *beracha* of *asher gealanu*. Celebrating the building of the *beis ha-mikdash* is an integral part of our *sipur yetzias mitzrayim*. It would be self-contradictory to ignore its destruction and not implore Hashem for its rebuilding.

We can now appreciate that the convergence of the first day of *Pesach* and *Tisha Be-av* upon the same day of the week is not a calendrical coincidence. It indicates that the tragic events of *Tisha Be-av* negated part of the attainment of *Pesach*. Thus, it is indeed appropriate, as part of *sipur*

¹²⁴ Vide Ramban, beginning of *parshas Terumah*, and Ramban, introduction to *Sefer Shemos*

¹²⁵ *Pesachim* 116a

¹²⁶ *Rambam, Chamet U'matzoh* 7:4

¹²⁷ *Shemos* 19:5

¹²⁸ Miracles were commonplace and many elements of natural law were suspended - vide *Avos* 5:2, *Yoma* 21a. For this reason the *shem ha-meforash* was pronounced in the *beis ha-mikdash*. Vide *Sotah* 37b, 38a.

¹²⁹ *Sukah* 41a

yetzias mitzrayim, to eat an egg at the *Seder zecher le-churban ha-mikdash*. We show our appreciation for Hashem's gift, the culmination of the Exodus, by subtly and symbolically mourning its loss.

Recognizing the prominence of the *beis ha-mikdash* within *sipur yetzias mitzrayim* illumines several other hitherto obscure features of the *Hagadah*. In the *al achas kamah ve-chamah* and *dayeinu* passages we trace the miraculous, beneficent course of Jewish history well beyond the exodus until the construction of the *beis ha-mikdash*. *Primo facie*, the relevance of these historical chronicles to *sipur yetzias mitzrayim* is dubious and their terminus arbitrary.

Moreover, according to the Vilna Gaon, the *Mishnah* includes within *sipur yetzias mitzrayim* a similar, albeit compressed, chronicle of Jewish history. The *Mishnah* teaches that we introduce our singing of *Hallel* by acknowledging that we are obligated to thank Hashem "who took us from slavery to freedom, from misery to joy, from mourning to festival, from gloom to a great light, from servitude to redemption". The Vilna Gaon explains that these phrases refer to successive events or generations.¹³⁰ Thus "from slavery to freedom" refers to the Exodus, "from misery to joy" at *yam suf*, "from mourning to festival" at *Har Sinai*, "from gloom to a great light" from the desert to *Eretz Yisrael*, and "from servitude to redemption" from the days of the Judges to the days of David and Shlomo.

The reason for these chronicles is abundantly clear. The *halacha* of *maschil be-gnus u-mesayem be-shevach* requires us to narrate the story of the Exodus and also its culmination, its crowning glory. Accordingly, we trace the course of Jewish history until the construction of the *beis ha-mikdash* when, in the words of the Vilna Gaon, the redemption was complete.

We can also appreciate another prime element of *sipur yetzias mitzrayim*. The centerpiece of *sipur yetzias mitzrayim* is the exposition of the *parshah Arame Oveid Avi* (*Devarim* ch. 26).¹³¹ The *Mishna*, however, does not explain why this *parshah* was chosen. Why not, for instance, the *parshios* in *Sefer Shemos* which provide a more extensive account of our servitude and redemption?¹³² The unique feature of *Arame Oveid Avi* is that it highlights the connection between *yetzias mitzrayim* and the *beis ha-mikdash*. The *parshah* begins *Arame Oveid Avi va-yeired Mitzrayimah* and concludes *ve-yevieinu el ha-makom ha-zeh*, which, of course, refers to the *beis ha-mikdash*.

This point is subject to an obvious challenge. We omit the final *pasuk*, *vayevieinu el ha-makom ha-zeh*. Why is the main *pasuk* missing? *Ikar chaser min ha-sefer!* Rabbi David Zvi Hoffman and the Rov, however, both maintain that originally in the time of the *beis ha-mikdash* this final verse was included, as per the *Mishna's* instruction that the **entire** *parshah* is to be expounded. Only subsequently, due to the destruction of the *beis ha-mikdash*, were we forced to omit this verse¹³³.

¹³⁰ Commentary to *Hagadah* ad locum

¹³¹ *Pesachim* 116a

¹³² Vide *Ohr Sameach* on *Rambam Chametz U'matzoh* 7:4. The Rov z"l explained that the *Seder* is dedicated to *masorah*. Accordingly, *Chazal* selected the terse account in *Arame Oveid Avi* to be elaborated by the *Tora she-ba'al peh* rather than the lengthier one in *Sefer Shemos* where the role of *Tora she-ba'al peh* would be less prominent.

¹³³ *Melamed Le-ho'il* 3:65; *Reflections of the Rav*, pp. 210-11

Our analysis also illumines a comment in *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*. When Hashem charges Moshe Rabeinu with the mission of taking the Jews out of *mitzrayim*, Moshe demurs. "Send whomever You will send."¹³⁴ *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* amplifies Moshe Rabeinu's response. "Send whom You wish, as it will not be my fate to bring the Israelites into the Land of Israel and to be their redeemer in the future."¹³⁵ This response would otherwise be a *non sequitur*. Why decline one mission because you can not fulfill a second one? But, of course, Moshe Rabeinu's response is very cogent. The Exodus was only the beginning of the mission; the mission would not be complete until the Jewish people entered *Eretz Yisroel* and constructed the *beis ha-mikdash*. Hence, Moshe Rabeinu argued that the mission should be entrusted to one who could fulfill it in its entirety.

¹³⁴ Shemos 4:13

¹³⁵ Quoted by *Rashi* ad locum

Yeshiva University

Center for the Jewish Future

our mission is to shape, enrich, and inspire the contemporary Jewish community
by convening the resources of Yeshiva University while:

- ❖ Infusing the student body with a spirit of leadership and sense of Klal Yisrael.
- ❖ Building, cultivating, and supporting communities, and their lay and rabbinic leaders.
- ❖ Creating a global movement that promotes the values of Yeshiva University.

Infusing the student body with a spirit of leadership and sense of Klal Yisrael...



THE YESHIVA UNIVERSITY STUDENT MEDICAL ETHICS SOCIETY, following up on their tremendously successful bone marrow drives last year, dedicated February as Bone-Marrow Awareness Month—or B.A.M!!!—on campus. Throughout the month, the group hosted lectures and held drives to recruit new donors to the Gift of Life registry and raise awareness about medical issues and Halacha [Jewish law]. Avi Amsalem, co-president of the Medical Ethics Society and a bone-marrow donor himself, was thrilled with the record turnout for all aspects of BAM! “Finding out that last year’s drives resulted in two confirmed matches really motivated and inspired our team to double their efforts in this year’s bone marrow recruitment program”, Amsalem said. This year’s drive resulted in nearly 500 potential donors who had their cheeks swabbed and joined the registry in the hopes of saving more lives.

TLN, THE TORAH LEADERSHIP NETWORK, a Torah learning program for High School students recently hosted its third annual Boys National Retreat on President's weekend. Over 95 High School boys and 25 YU students, who served as Madrichim (counselors) for the program, attended the event, which was held at the Berkely Oceanfront Hotel in Asbury Park, NJ. The purpose of TLN is to provide High School students with an experience learning Torah outside the classroom in a dynamic and intellectually stimulating setting. Every year TLN holds multiple Mishmar nights on the Wilf and Beren campuses, for boys and girls respectively, shabbatonim retreats for boys and girls, and local programs. Programs are led by Madrichim culled from the YU-RIETS student body, who give Shiurim (Torah lectures) and serve as general positive influences on the participants.



The theme of this year's boys' shabbaton was how the Mesorah (Jewish Heritage) has reacted to changing conditions through the course of history. Rabbis Daniel Stein of RIETS, Elly Storch of DRS High School, Reuven Taragin of Yeshivat HaKotel, and Eli Reich of Yeshivat Shaalvim served as scholars in residence for the event, giving lectures on such subjects as how Halacha has dealt with technological innovations in the past hundred years, how figures such as the Rav and the Chatam Sofer dealt with the cultural changes taking place in their times, and how the development of so many different Jewish ideologies over the course of the exile can be understood based on the theological principle of , "Elu ve elu divrei elokim hayim" ("both this and this are the word of the Living G-d). The girls Shabbaton in Teaneck took place in late March (after publication).

QUEST (Quality and Education Skills Training) is a two-semester undergraduate leadership training program that focuses on developing specific skills and techniques that are necessary for leadership in the larger Jewish community. During the first semester, participants attend two-hour weekly workshops where experienced leaders facilitate discussion on topics like public speaking, programming, fundraising, and leadership skills. Over the course of the second semester, students put what they learned into action by running programs in high schools or with other Jewish organizations. This year's class includes eight students from the Beren Campus and eleven students from the Wilf Campus.



THE EIMATAI LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROJECT ran two highly successful Conferences for 150 high school students representing 17 different yeshiva high schools across North America. Students were engaged with the theme "Citizen Jew vs Jewish Citizen," and were encouraged to understand their own personal identity as both Jews and National citizens. Each school group developed a project to run in their respective communities including a Habitat for Humanity volunteer day, Gmach stocking initiatives, and Yom Ha'atzmaut extravaganzas.

Building, cultivating, and supporting communities, and their lay and rabbinic leaders...



YESHIVA WITHOUT WALLS. We are proud to announce the opening of several new transformational community initiatives. These new initiatives - currently located in Chicago, San Francisco, and South Florida - serve to position Yeshiva University-RIETS as "Yeshiva without walls" primed to spread the values of Torah U'madda to the broader Jewish community. Each initiative, in its own unique way, looks to enrich and engage the greater Jewish community with inspired Torah living and learning, celebrating the core values of the primacy of Torah, embracing the larger world through the prism of Jewish ideals and the religious significance of the State of Israel. Moreover, these initiatives create a laboratory for cultivating RIETS musmakim as future communal leaders.

In September 2009 we will expand our vision of a "Yeshiva without walls" with the launch of a fulltime Yeshiva University - Torah Mitzion Toronto Beit Medrash under the leadership of Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, who will serve as Senior Scholar. This initiative is a result of the influx of YU programming. The Toronto community has rallied behind the idea of a Beit Medrash and, under the leadership of the national director of Canadian operations of Yeshiva University, Mr. Mo Lidsky, and the lay leadership of Mr. Eli Rubinstein and Mr. Saul Koschitzky, over \$2.5 million dollars has already been raised to support the full time Beit Medrash.



Creating a global movement that promotes the values of Yeshiva University...

JEWISH JOB FAIR 2009. As the economic downturn ripples through the US job market, Yeshiva University students, alumni and other community members interested in working in the Jewish community learned about various career opportunities at a job fair organized by CJF on the Wilf Campus on Feb 26. Organizational representatives promoted a wide array of opportunities ranging from teaching positions and fellowships to scholarships for master's programs and internships.

More than 300 people attended the Jewish Job Fair. Joining the 160 students who submitted resumes to CJF in advance were an additional 150 "walk ins," both student and non-student, who attended on the day of the fair.

"The fair created and shared new venues for our young women and men to play a professional role in the Jewish community, and served as a resource for the entire Jewish community in these difficult times," said Rabbi Kenneth Brander, dean of the CJF.

Twenty-one Jewish day schools from across the United States and 16 Jewish organizations participated in the fair.

Rabbi Shmuel Levine, head of Hillel Day School in Boca Raton, FL, spent the hours preceding the job fair interviewing YU seniors for teaching positions at his school. "One of the greatest challenges as an educator is finding quality Judaic studies faculty," Levine said.



"This event helped us see the light at the end of the tunnel," he said. "There is a real sense that the vision of the university is not just about YU but about the broader Jewish community and that's exciting."

Rabbi Daniel Kraut, executive director of Hillel Academy of Pittsburgh, said that his community's search for a new rabbi through YU's RIETS Rabbinic Placement Office gave him the idea to attend the fair. "It was only natural that we came to YU for the Jewish Job Fair to look for teachers," Kraut said.

Erin Zimmerman, coordinator of a Young Judea Israel Program in New York City, for example, offered an alternate track for recent college graduates. The six-month program in Israel enables college graduates "to build their resumes by interning in their field of interest while experiencing Israeli culture."

Rabbi Brander, and his staff considered the job fair a success, and he said that they would follow up with the nonprofits in an effort to keep their students apprised of job opportunities.

Scott Schulman, a senior majoring in business, praised YU's career placement office. "YU is helping ... they revamped their career development program. The resources and time they give us is incredible. I redid my resume six or seven times."

But in the end, Schulman said he is putting his faith less in the economic laws of supply and demand than in a higher law. "Certainly for [getting a job in] nonprofits, I'm concerned," Schulman said. "Long term, I'm not worried. YU has prepared me," he said.





A project of Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future,
Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies,
TEIQU, SOI, TAC, YCSA, the Office of Student Affairs, and
the Office of Alumni Affairs

EXILE AND REDEMPTION IN TANACH AND JEWISH HISTORY YOM IYUN • Sunday, April 26, 2009

9:45 AM Rabbi Jacob I. Schacter Exile, Redemption, and the State of Israel: *Reishit Tzemichat Geulatenu?*

10:30 AM

Rabbi Mordechai Cohen:

Nechama Leibowitz on Reading Tanach in Light
of Ramban's Literary Approach to Sefer
Shemot

Rabbi Jeremy Wieder:

Changes in Historical Writing in the Aftermath
of the Exile- Divrei HaYamim vs. Nevi'im
Rishonim

Rabbi Hayyim Angel:

Prophecy as Potential: The Consolations of
Yeshayahu in Context

Dr. Jess Olson:

The Hidden Religious Tensions in Jewish
Nationalist Identity Before World War I

Dr. Josh Karlip:

The Netziv's Views Toward the Redemptive
Potential of the Early Zionist Movement

11:30 AM

Mrs. Yael Leibowitz:

Sin and Exile in Genesis: A Commentary on the
Human Condition

Dr. Ephraim Kanarfogel:

The Messianic Age in the Thought of Rishonei
Ashkenaz: A Comparative Analysis

Dr. Shira Weiss:

"Let Freedom Ring": Does Physical Liberation
Constitute Freedom?

Mrs. Daphna Fishman Secunda:

Maimonides and Mashiach

Dr. Aaron Koller:

Can Life Go On Without a Temple? A Debate in
Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism

12:30 - 1:00 PM

LUNCH

1:00 PM

Dr. Naomi Grunhaus:

"Sheep Being Led to the Slaughter": Jewish
Interpretation of the Suffering Servant in
Yeshayahu 53

Dr. Shawn Zelig Aster:

Building the Jewish Nation in the Time of
Nehemiah

Mrs. Elana Stein Hain:

Vegetarianism and Sacrifice in Messianic Times

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin:

The First Exile: Uncovering the Roots of the
Eitz Hada'at

Dr. David Berger:

When Will the Messiah Come? Jewish
Calculations of the End of Days

2:00 PM

Mrs. Nechama Price:

Splitting the Seas in Tanach

Rabbi Shalom Carmy:

Messiah Son of Joseph: From Tanach to
Rav Kook

Rabbi Menachem Leibtag:

The Purpose of Prophecy vs.
The Realities of Redemption

Dr. Mitchell Orlian:

Churban u'Yinyan biSefer Michah (Hebrew)

Rabbi Yaakov Elman:

The Principle of "First Darkness, Then Light"
in Reb Zadok's View of Creation, the Exodus
and Human Life

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The screenshot shows the YUTorah.org website. At the top, it says "The Marcos and Adina Katz YU Torah Online A Project of Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future". Below this, there's a "Go" button and a list of featured shiurim with speaker photos and names. The speakers listed include Rabbi Shimon Glusberg, Rabbi Josh Flagg, Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg, Rabbi Zvi Sobelshon, and Rabbi Josh Blum. On the right side, there's a "Join Weekly" button and a "New" section. At the bottom, there are sections for "Most Recently Viewed" and "Most Recently Updated" with links to various articles and shiurim.

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