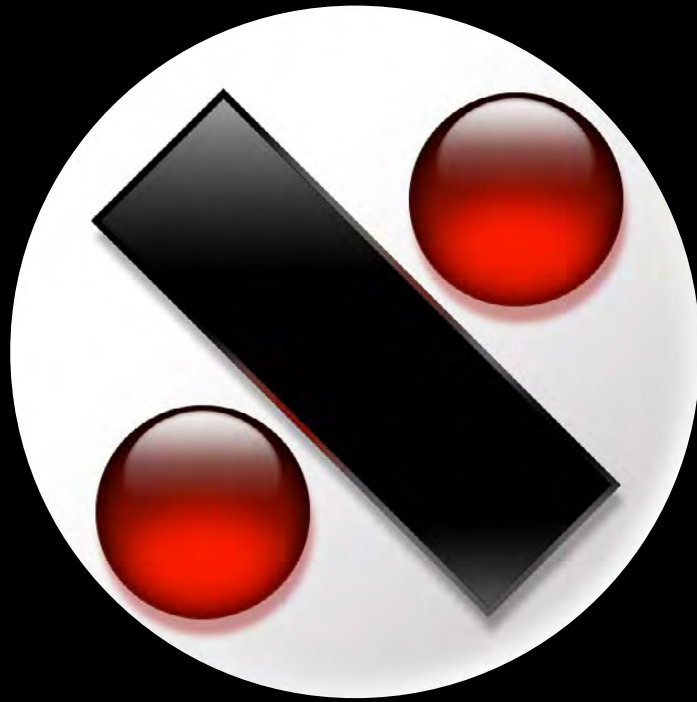


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Pesach 4
Rabbi Bernie Fox

Free Slaves II
Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

Hazereth 14
Rabbi Dr. Darrel Ginsberg

Tzav 16
Rabbi Bernie Fox

For the Kids 18
Imagery for your storytelling



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Two Themes of the Seder

This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who so require come and join in the Pesach meal. Now, we are here. Next year, may we be in the Land of Israel. Now, we are servants. Next year, may we be free people. (Hagadah of Pesach)

1. Ha Lachma Anya – Its components and context

The Seder begins with the recitation of Kiddush. The Kiddush is not unique to the Seder night. Every Shabbat and Yom Tov is introduced with Kiddush. We continue the Seder by washing our hands and then dipping a vegetable into saltwater and eating it. This process is unique to the Seder night and is specifically designed to stand out, draw attention, and evoke questions. The Seder focuses upon the children and its objective is to involve them in learning about our redemption from Egypt. We can only succeed in teaching our children once we evoke their curiosity and engage their minds. We intentionally adopt this unusual activity of dipping and eating a vegetable to initiate the learning process by seizing our children's attention.

The Seder continues with Yachatz – the breaking of the middle of three matzot that are on the table.[1] Ha Lachma Anya – the short paragraph above – is recited immediately after breaking the matzah.[2] The paragraph contains three elements[3]:

1. It begins by describing the matzah as the bread eaten by our ancestors during their bondage.
2. It includes an invitation to others to join in our meal.
3. It closes with an affirmation of our conviction in the coming of the Messiah. The Messiah will come and we will be a free people in the Land of Israel.

The relevance of the first of these three elements is easily grasped. In Yachatz we divided the middle matzah into two parts. The first component of Ha Lachma Anya provides an explanation for this step of the Seder. Why do we perform Yachatz? Rav Yosef Dov Solovaitchik Z"l offers a simple explanation for this practice. The Torah refers

to matzah as "lechem oni." [4] The Talmud offers various interpretations of this phrase. One interpretation is based upon the traditional pronunciation of the phrase. Translated on this basis the term means bread over which we recite. We are required to recite the Hagadah over the matzah. An alternative interpretation is based upon the spelling of the

phrase. If the phrase is pronounced exactly as spelled, it would be read "lechem ani" which means bread of affliction or impoverished bread. The matzah is a form of bread that reflects poverty and suffering. It is hastily baked and composed of simple ingredients. However, the Talmud adds that our ancestors rarely had the opportunity to eat a full matzah. Instead, they sufficed with a portion of a matzah.[5] Yachatz reflects both of these interpretations. As we prepare to recite the Hagadah over the matzot – the lechem oni, we break the matzah so that it will more accurately reflect lechem ani – bread of affliction and poverty that our ancestors ate in Egypt. In other words, we initiate the matzot into their role as bread used in our recital of the Hagadah by rendering the matzot into a perfect simulation of the fractured bread of poverty and affliction that our ancestors ate in Egypt.[6]

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RABBI BERNIE FOX

Pesach

The first element of Ha Lachma Anya explains the significance of Yachatz. We state that with the breaking of the matzah, it now perfectly represents the bread of affliction and poverty that our ancestors ate in their bondage.

2. Pesach and our longing for the redemption

The final element of the Ha Lachma Anya is an expression of our confident expectation of redemption and our return to the Land of Israel. Why is this sentiment expressed at this point in the Seder? Some have suggested that this sentence is added as an expression of a halachah that was established by the Sages after the destruction of the first Temple. Maimonides discusses this law in the final chapter of his Laws of Fasts. He explains that after the Churban – the destruction of the First Temple – the Sages established a number of observances designed to draw our attention to our loss. Many of the observances share a common design. They moderate or in some way qualify our happiness on joyous occasions. In this manner, we are reminded at times of happiness that our joy cannot be complete as long as we remain in Exile and the Temple is in ruins. One of the practices established by the Sages is placing ashes on the head of the chatan – the groom – at his wedding. Another of these practices is that when entertaining guests at a meal, we are required to introduce an element that qualifies and diminishes the celebration. We leave out some component from the meal or we leave one place at the table unset.[7] Some have suggested that our reference in Ha Lachma Anya to our longing for and anticipation of our return to the Land of Israel is an expression of this halachah. According to this interpretation, this sentence is not uniquely relevant to the Seder; it is a sentiment that should be expressed at every festive or festival meal. However, these other festive meals do not have a text associated with them. Only the Seder has a text. Therefore, at other festive meals, we must express our inconsolable disappointment with our continued exile through another method – those discussed by Maimonides.[8]

This explanation is not unreasonable. However, it ignores the context of the sentence. Were this sentence in Ha Lachma Anya the sole mention of our longing for redemption, this explanation would be more plausible. However, even a cursory examination of the Hagadah indicates that this is a basic and recurrent theme of the Seder. In fact, the Seder shifts its focus between two redemptions – our redemption from Egypt and our awaited redemption from our current exile.

3. The two redemptions in the Blessing of Ga'al Yisrael

At the end of the Magid – the portion of the Hagadah that retells the story of the exodus – we recite the blessing of Ga'al Yisrael – Redemption. In this berachah we begin by thanking Hashem for redeeming us from Egypt. We acknowledge that we now celebrate the Seder as a result of this redemption. We, then, express our wish to soon be able to celebrate the festivals in the rebuilt Holy Temple.

This reference to two redemptions – our historic redemption from Egypt and our anticipated redemption from our current exile – is reflected in our recital of Hallel at the Seder. We recite the first two paragraphs of the Hallel before the meal and recite the balance of the Hallel after the meal. The interruption of the Hallel between the first two paragraphs and the remaining paragraphs is not arbitrary, but instead, reflects the different themes of these two parts of the Hallel. The first two paragraphs of the Hallel are composed entirely of praise and thanksgiving. These paragraphs relate to our redemption from Egypt. The second portion of the Hallel that is recited after the meal also contains praise and thanksgiving. However, an element of

petition is also present. This portion of the Hallel deals with our anticipated, final redemption and return to the Land of Israel. We petition Hashem to deliver us from our exile and restore our people.[9] Like the blessing of Ga'al Yisrael, the Hallel deals with two redemptions – our redemption from Egypt and our coming redemption.

So, it is not surprising that the Ha Lachma Anya introduces the Seder by expressing our prayers for our ultimate redemption. But how is the celebration of Pesach related to the Messianic era? What is the exact relationship?

4. The Pesach redemption is completed by the Messianic Era

There are two basic approaches to understanding the relationship between Pesach and the final redemption. The first is that the redemption from Egypt was incomplete; it lacked finality. We are again in exile. Our affirmation of the approach of the Messianic Era and our petition to Hashem to hasten the Messiah's coming express our longing for the completion of the drama that began with our redemption from Egypt. This explanation is consistent with the formulation of the blessing of Ga'al Yisrael. We begin the blessing thanking Hashem for our redemption. Then, we implicitly acknowledge that this redemption is incomplete. We cannot serve Hashem in the Bait HaMikdash – the Holy Temple. We pray that Hashem rebuild the Temple so we can serve Him more perfectly and completely.

The Talmud asserts that just as we were redeemed from Egypt in the month of Nisan, our current exile will end in Nisan.[10] What is the message communicated to us through both redemptions occurring in the same month? The apparent message is that the final redemption is the completion of the first. Their shared month communicates to us that the awaited redemption is the continuation of a process that began in the month of Nisan long ago.

At the Seder we drink four cups of wine. These four cups correspond with the four expressions of redemption that Hashem employed in describing to Moshe the approaching deliverance of Bnai Yisrael from Egypt. Hashem told Moshe that He would “take out” the people, “save” them, “redeem” them, and “take” them to Himself as His nation.[11],[12] However, it is customary among Ashkenazim to pour a fifth cup of wine which we do not drink. This custom seems difficult to understand. The fifth cup is clearly different from the others; we do not drink it.[13] What is the meaning of this cup and how can its ambiguous nature be explained?

This fifth cup is commonly referred to as the “Cup of Eliyahu.”[14] It corresponds with a fifth expression of redemption which Hashem used to describe our rescue from Egypt. He told Moshe that He would “bring” us to the Land of Israel.[15] The incorporation of this fifth cup alerts us that there is an expression of redemption in addition to the four represented by the four cups we drink. However, this final expression of redemption is different than the first four.[16] It awaits Eliyahu whom the Prophet Malachi tells us will be the harbinger of the approach of the Messiah.[17] This cup is poured but we do not drink it. It refers to a final step of the redemption that we confidently await but which we cannot yet celebrate through drinking its cup.

In conclusion, there are many indications that the Seder calls upon us to recognize that our redemption is not complete and we still await its conclusion with the coming of the Messiah. However, this insight does not seem to explain the affirmation of the Messianic Era at the opening of the Seder in the Ha Lachma Anya. This interpretation only explains our mentioning of the Messianic Era after recalling our

redemption from Egypt. We are asking Hashem to complete the redemption. But in Ha Lachma Anya we express our longing for the Messiah's arrival before we even mention our redemption from Egypt. It does not seem sensible to petition Hashem to complete our redemption from Egypt before we discuss our historic rescue from bondage.

The order of the Seder expresses this theme. We begin with an affirmation of the Messianic Era. We then discuss the basis for our conviction – the redemption from Egypt. We close the Magid section of the Hagadah with the blessing of Ga'al Yisrael in which we articulate the connection. Hashem redeemed us from Egypt. Therefore, we can be sure that He will redeem us again.

5. The Messianic Era is a Fundamental Element of the Torah

Maimonides identifies thirteen convictions that are essential to Torah observance. He contends that only through accepting these convictions can a person be regarded as a member of our religious community and attain the afterlife – Olam HaBah.[18] Many of these thirteen convictions are obviously elemental to our religion. They include belief in a cause Who is the source of all that exists, belief in Revelation and the immutability of the Torah. However, Maimonides's characterization of some of his principles as elemental to the Torah has been criticized. One of these thirteen fundamentals is the belief in the coming of the Messiah. Abravanel formulated the question well. What is lacking in my observance if I do not believe that the advent of the Messianic Era is predestined? How is my observance or commitment to Hashem and His Torah compromised?[19]

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to understand the nature Maimonides thirteen principles.[20] The answer is that Maimonides maintains that the Torah is more than a set of religious beliefs and practices; it is a perspective upon and interpretation of our world. Our belief in Hashem is not merely a religious affirmation; it is an understanding of how our universe operates and is constructed. For this reason he does not describe the first of these thirteen principles as belief in Hashem as the G-d of the Revelation or the G-d described in the Torah. Instead, the first of his principles is to accept that there is a cause of all that exists. All that exists depends upon this prime cause for its continued existence and this first cause does not require any prior cause to sustain its existence. This first principle is not merely a religious affirmation; it is an outlook or interpretation of the universe that surrounds us. Similarly, our belief in the divine origins of the Torah is not just an expression of devotion and commitment to its observance; it is a perspective on Hashem's relationship with humanity in general and the Jewish People specifically.

Our conviction in the advent of the Messianic Era must be understood in a similar manner. It is not merely a religious or national aspiration; it is an interpretation of the history of humankind. It is an assertion that there is meaning in history. It has a direction and end. History is not the sum total of human endeavors and achievements; it is the inexorable progression to an inevitable outcome.[21]

6. The Redemption from Egypt confirms our ultimate redemption

Through introducing the Seder with an acknowledgement of the Messianic Era we are identifying one of the objectives of the Seder. The purpose of the Seder is not solely to recall our exodus from Egypt. Retelling the story of our redemption serves another purpose. We are obligated to fully accept that the Messiah will ultimately arrive. How do we know that there is a basis for this conviction? During periods of suffering throughout our history our ancestors' confidence in our ultimate redemption must have been severely tested. The redemption from Egypt provided them and continues to provide us with proof of our destiny. Hashem rescued our ancestors from slavery. He created a free nation from an oppressed people. If we accept the truth of these events, we have a firm basis for our conviction in a second redemption through the Messiah.

7. Inviting the needy – Rav Huna's practice

The middle element of the Ha Lachma Anya is an invitation to the needy and less fortunate to share with us our matzah and join us in the Pesach meal. This invitation seems out of place. Why at this point do we invite the hungry and the less fortunate to join with us in our celebration? Of course, this is a commendable sentiment and we cannot be surprised that the Seder should include an invitation to the less fortunate to share in our meal. But it seems odd that this invitation should be inserted into the Hagadah at this specific point. Ha Lachma Anya begins by explaining Yachatz and ends by introducing a basic theme of the Seder – our anticipation of our coming redemption. Why are we interrupting our discussion of issues specifically relevant to the Seder with this invitation?

Rabbaynu Matityahu Gaon suggests that the source of the phrasing of this invitation can be traced to the Talmud. The Talmud explains that Rav Huna's practice before every meal was to announce that any

(continued on next page)



person who is hungry is welcome to participate in the meal.[22],[23] We do not generally engage in this practice and Torah law does not require of us this remarkable level of kindness and hospitality. Why, then, are we required to adopt Rav Huna's practice on Pesach night?

8. Including the needy in the Yom Tov meal

One possibility is suggested by a comment of Maimonides. Maimonides explains that we are required to experience joy and happiness on our festivals. One of the means through which we experience and express our happiness is the festival meal. Maimonides continues and explains that we are required to include among the participants in the Yom Tov – the Festival – meal the poor, destitute, bitter and the less fortunate. He explains that a person who bars his doors against the intrusion of these less fortunate, needy people and shares his meal with only his family has distorted the joyous celebration of the Festival transforming it into a hedonistic pleasure. [24],[25]

If this is the source for our invitation to the hungry and needy, then we are engaging in a practice that is appropriate to every Yom Tov meal. The proffering of this invitation is not a requirement specific to the Seder or even Pesach. According to Maimonides, we should pronounce this same invitation before all Pesach meals and our Shavuot and Succot meals. Of course, there is no text that is recited at these other meals; there is no Hagadah to provide a formula for the invitation. Nonetheless, the Ha Lachma Anya is only providing an appropriate formula for the pronouncement of an invitation that is required before every Yom Tov meal.

9. Special considerations related to Pesach

Rav Matityahu Gaon, seems to suggest that the Seder engenders an additional obligation to invite the needy. He explains that the invitation extended in the Ha Lachma Anya is the completion of a process that begins earlier in the day, perhaps even days and weeks before Pesach. Before the night of Pesach, the members of the community would search for all those who were in need of assistance or companionship and invite them to their various homes for the celebration of the Seder. The pronouncement of the Ha Lachma Anya invitation was the completion of this process.[26] Rav Matityahu Gaon seems to suggest that this practice was specific to Pesach. In other words, in addition to the general obligation to include the poor and needy in every Yom Tov meal, Pesach engenders its own unique obligation to reach out to those who are less fortunate.

There is other evidence that Pesach prompts its own unique obligation to include the poor and less fortunate in our celebration. Rama comments that it is customary in the weeks leading up to Pesach to purchase wheat or the matzot themselves on behalf of the poor and to distribute these provisions to them.[27] The Gra points out that this custom is very ancient; it is mentioned in the Talmud Yerushalmi.[28],[29]

In summary there are three sources for the Ha Lachma Anya's invitation to the needy. The wording seems to be derived from the practice of Rav Huna who would extend this invitation to the poor any time he engaged in a substantial meal. We do not engage in Rav Huna's remarkable degree of charity and compassion. However, we do borrow the wording of his invitation for the Ha Lachma Anya. Why are we more demanding of ourselves on the night of Pesach? There are two reasons. First, every Yom Tov meal is only properly celebrated when we include among our guests the less fortunate. Second, the celebration of Pesach engenders its own unique obligation to offer support and encouragement to the needy and less fortunate.

What is it about Pesach that engenders this additional requirement that we reach out our hands to the needy? In order to answer this question we must consider another aspect of the Seder and its Hagadah.

10. The Pesach narrative style – Ascension from humble origins

The process of recounting the events of our redemption is performed according to a specific formula. Of course, we are encouraged to explore the themes found in the Hagadah to the extent of our ability. The mitzvah of recounting the events of our redemption is not fulfilled in its most complete form through merely recounting a specific narrative. Instead, the material in the Hagadah provides a minimum standard. But we are charged to expand upon and to enrich this material to the extent of our ability. Nonetheless, we cannot abandon the format and formulation of the Hagadah. We must embellish but we must not revise or ignore the framework contained in the Hagadah.

One aspect of the formula we follow is discussed by the Talmud in Tractate Pesachim. The Mishne explains that we begin our account by describing the humble beginnings of our people and we then proceed to describe its ascent to greatness. What is the specific historic process that we describe? The Talmud explains that Rav and Shemuel dispute this issue. Rav suggests that we are required to acknowledge that our ancestors – Avraham's own father and later our more immediate ancestors in Egypt – were idolators. But Hashem chose us as His people and He gave us His Torah. Shemuel suggests that we begin the process of recounting our redemption by describing the bondage of our forefathers in Egypt. We then describe our redemption through the miracles and wonders that Hashem performed.[30]

We can easily understand Shemuel's interpretation of the formula. We must recount our redemption by first describing our humiliating servitude and then we describe the process of our redemption. This is exactly as we would expect the narrative of our redemption to be developed. But how do we explain Rav's alternative interpretation? Why begin our Pesach narrative by recalling our primitive ancestors from before the time of Avraham? It is difficult to even characterize these pagans as our antecedents. With the emergence of our forefather Avraham we rejected the culture, values and religious fallacies of his predecessors. We refer to Avraham as our first forefather; this is because he is our beginning and not his ancestors.

Rav and Shemuel agree on the basic theme of the Pesach narrative. They both agree that the formulation of the narrative is designed to communicate that we did not ascend to greatness through our own might, wisdom, or tenacity. We climbed out of the depths of despair or spiritual corruption through the mercy and intervention of Hashem. This message of our dependence on Hashem forms the underlying motif of the Hagadah. Rav and Shemuel only differ on a relatively minor issue: Do we demonstrate our helplessness and our dependence upon Hashem through acknowledging His redemption of our ancestors from inevitable material destruction or do we provide this demonstration through acknowledging His rescue or our ancestors from moral and religious debasement? Shemuel suggests that we acknowledge our helplessness and dependence through the experience that is most relevant to the Seder – our rescue from Egypt. Rav suggests that our recalling of our redemption from Egypt should occasion our recognition of our general helplessness and dependency. We expand upon the lesson of our redemption from Egypt and extend that lesson to the earliest history of our nation.



11. The Pesach motif – Humble acknowledgement of helplessness and dependence upon Hashem

This dispute provides a basic insight into the celebration of Pesach. Pesach recalls and celebrates the emergence of the Jewish nation – Um Yisrael. Our redemption from Egypt is a central event in the drama of our ascent to the position of Um Hashem – Hashem's chosen nation. But the central motif of the Festival is not the celebration of our accomplishments and our pride in earning Hashem's covenant. The central motif is acknowledgement of Hashem's role in this process. He redeemed us. He rescued us. We did not shape and engineer our fate; we are the beneficiaries of Hashem's benevolence.

We can now appreciate our focus on Pesach upon charity and our sensitivity for others less fortunate than ourselves. A person who does not feel the misery of others and cannot empathize with those who are suffering, has lost touch with his own essential helplessness and dependence. When we identify with the less fortunate, when we empathize with them, we recognize that we are the same. Had Hashem not redeemed us, we would be more desperate than those to whom we are extending a helping hand. If He had not rescued us, we would be far more lost than those we are including at our Seder meal. Any person who recognizes that his own good fortune is the result of the kindness that Hashem has bestowed upon Him will naturally reach out to others.

12. Dependence and Redemption

The second and final components of the Ha Lachma Anya reflect two basic themes of the Seder. The middle component reminds us of our kinship with the less fortunate and needy. We reach out to them in recognition of our own helplessness and our reliance upon Hashem. The final component expresses our anticipation of redemption from our current exile. These two themes are closely connected. The Torah informs us that before Bnai Yisrael were redeemed from Egypt they called out in prayer to Hashem.[31] Hashem tells Moshe that He will redeem the people in response to their prayers.[32] Turning to Hashem, recognizing that He alone could provide salvation was prerequisite to Bnai Yisrael's redemption. Maimonides generalizes this lesson. He explains that any affliction visited upon the Jewish People requires that we respond with prayer and acknowledgement of our dependence upon Hashem. Only through this response can we illicit His intervention.[33]

We precede our longing for our redemption with an invitation to our brethren who are in need. In this way, we affirm our own dependence upon Hashem. From the depths of our acceptance of our own helplessness and our dependence upon Hashem we reach out to Him with our prayers and yearnings for redemption. ■

FOOTNOTES

[1] The performance of Yachatz that this point of the Seder is in accordance with the ruling of Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 473:6) and reflects general practice. However according to Maimonides (M.T. Hilchot Chametz u'Matzah 8:6) Yachatz is performed immediately before eating the matzah.

[2] The recitation of Ha Lachma Anya immediately after Yachatz is in accordance with the ruling of Shulchan Aruch (Ibid.) However, According to Rabbaynu Amram Gaon, Ha Lachma Anya is recited after the Seder Plate with the matzot are removed from the table and the second cup of wine

has been poured. It immediately precedes Ma Nishtanah. Maimonides' position is unclear on this issue. In his discussion of the laws of the Seder (M.T. Hilchot Chametz u'Matzah Chapter 8) he excludes any mention of Ha Lachma Anya. However, in the versions of the Hagadah attributed to him it is included without indication of whether it is recited before the Seder Plate with the matzot is removed or after pouring the second cup.

The origins of Ha Lachma Anya are not clear. It is not mentioned in the Mishnah, Talmud, or Midrash. The earliest

references to this portion of the Hagadah appear in the writings of the Geonim. Both Rabbaynu Amram Gaon and Rabbaynu Saadia Gaon include a variant of Ha Lachma Anya in their Hagadot. The versions currently in use closely model Rabbaynu Amram's version.

[3] Rabbaynu Saadia Gaon's version contains two of the three elements. It begins with an invitation to join in the Seder. It concludes with the affirmation of our conviction in the coming of the Messiah.

[4] Sefer Devarim 16:3.

- [5] Mesechet Pesachim 115b.
- [6] Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *Harerei Kedem* vol 2 p 161.
- [7] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam/Maimonides) *Mishne Torah*, Hilchot Ta'anuyot 5:13.
- [8] Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik discusses this position in his lecture of *Ha Lachma Anya*. He rejects this position as not having a basis in halachah. (<http://download.bcbm.org/Media/RavSoloveitchik/Moadim/>)
- [9] Rav Yitzchak Mirsky attributes this explanation to Levush. (*Hagadah Higyonai Halachah*, p 133, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik discusses the explanation in his lecture on *Ha Lachma Anya* (Ibid.) and adopts this explanation.
- [10] Mesechet Rosh HaShanah 11a.
- [11] Sefer Shemot 6:6-7
- [12] Talmud Yerushalmi, Mesechet Pesachim 10:1.
- [13] Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan, *Mishne Berurah*, 480:10.
- [14] Ibid. For a more extensive discussion of the origins of this custom and its meaning see: Yosef Lewey, *Minhag Yisrael Torah*, vol 3, pp. 158-60.
- [15] Sefer Shemot 6:8.
- [16] Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *Harerei Kedem* vol 2 p 208-9.
- [17] Malachi 3:23.
- [18] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam/Maimonides) *Commentary on the Mishne*, Mesechet Sanhedrin 10:1.
- [19] Don Yitzchak Abravanel, *Rosh Amanah*, Chapter 3.
- [20] Various scholars have provided differing interpretations of Maimonides' intention in describing these principles as fundamental. It is difficult to describe these principles as postulates. Postulates are independent principles that cannot be derived from one another. This is clearly not true of Maimonides' principles. For example, his second principle is that Hashem is an absolute unity. This means the He has no parts, divisions, or aspects; it is not appropriate to describe attributes to Him in their literal sense or characteristics.

From this principle one can easily derive the conclusion that Hashem cannot be material. Any material entity cannot be described as an absolute unity. Nonetheless, Maimonides lists as his third principle that Hashem is not material.

Others have suggested that these thirteen principles are not a set of postulates but instead are fundamental beliefs. We are required to be aware of and to accept each explicitly. Implicit acceptance of any of these principles does not suffice. Therefore, it is necessary for Maimonides to specifically describe the principle of Hashem's non-material nature even though this can be deduced from the principle of His unity.

However, even if we assume that these are fundamental convictions which require explicit acceptance, it remains unclear why Maimonides selected these beliefs and no other or fewer. Some are clearly within the class of beliefs we would ascribe as appropriate to a religious system – belief in the existence of an ultimate cause for all that exists, that He is a unity, Revelation, that He interacts with humanity. Others of the thirteen beliefs outlined by Maimonides seem less essential. Abravanel identifies two beliefs in Maimonides' list that he regards as subject to this criticism: belief in the Messianic Era and in the resurrection of the dead.

Abravanel points out that it is difficult to imagine that one's religious experience, outlook or practice would be significantly impacted if one did not ascribe to these beliefs. Of course, it is not Abravanel's intention to imply that these beliefs are not part of the Torah and or not absolutely correct and even required. However, he questions why they should be identified as fundamental.

[21] Implicit in Maimonides' perspective is rejection of the division commonly suggested between religious and scientific knowledge. According to Maimonides, both combine into a comprehensive understanding of the universe. The scientist who arbitrarily interrupts his study of the universe and his search for causes and will not consider the source of the natural laws

has only a partial understanding of the universe that he studies. Similarly, the student of religion who regards G-d as the Creator but is ignorant of and uninterested in the means by which Hashem governs His universe has artificially truncated his study of Hashem and His ways.

[22] Mesechet Ta'anit 20b.

[23] See Yekutieli Cohen, *Hagadat HaGeonim ve'HaRambam* p 39.

[24] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam/Maimonides) *Mishne Torah*, Hilchot Yom Tov 6:17-18.

[25] See Yekutieli Cohen, *Hagadat HaGeonim ve'HaRambam* p 40.

[26] See Yekutieli Cohen, *Hagadat HaGeonim ve'HaRambam* p 39. It is not completely clear from the earliest sources of Rabbaynu Matityahu's comments that he regarded this procedure as unique to Pesach. However, Avudraham seems to interpret Rabbaynu Matityahu's comments as referring only to Pesach. Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik discusses Rabbaynu Matityahu's comments in his lecture on *Ha Lachma Anya* and assumes the comments are specific to Pesach. The above interpretation of Rabbaynu Matityahu's comments is based on Rav Soloveitchik's understanding of his position.

[27] Rav Moshe Isserles (Rama), *Comments on Shulchan Aruch*, *Orech Chayim* 429:1.

[28] Rav Eliyahu of Vilna (Gra), *Biur HaGra*, *Orech Chayim* 429:1.

[29] Talmud Yerushalmi, Mesechet Baba Batra, 1:4.

[30] Mesechet Pesachim 116:a. In the standard text of the discussion in the Talmud, Rav does not mention the idolatry of our ancestors in Egypt, only the practices of Avraham's predecessors. Rashbatz, in his commentary on the Hagadah, includes in Rav's position the idolatry of our ancestors in Egypt.

[31] Sefer Shemot 2:23-25

[32] Sefer Shemot 3:7-8

[33] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam/Maimonides) *Mishne Torah*, Hilchot Ta'anuyot 1:2-3.



RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Free Slaves

AS IS TRUE REGARDING ALL OF GOD'S MITZVAHS, THE OBJECTIVE IN THE PHYSICAL, OBLIGATORY COMPONENTS OF PASSOVER LAWS ARE ONLY REALIZED THROUGH OUR INTELLECTUAL GRASP AND APPRECIATION OF THE MITZVAH'S UNDERLYING LESSONS. WITH THAT SAID, LET'S ADDRESS A FEW QUESTIONS...

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Why did God cause the Jews to leave Egypt, in haste? (Exod. 12:39) Maimonides commences his Haggadah with the words "Bebehilu yatzuanu mimitzrayim", "With haste did we leave Egypt". His additional words are significant: For it was this very haste that retarded the dough from rising, resulting in matzah (not chametz) once the Jews camped and baked that loaf. Why then did God wish the dough not to become chametz? We also wonder what ideas demand the commands to drink four cups of wine, and to lean during our feast?

Maimonides is known as the master, halachik formulator. Each word he wrote contributes to the full understanding of his intent. Not a word is superfluous or out of place. Therefore, if he groups certain laws in one section, he does so not based on convenience, but based on purpose. Here is an example: in his laws of Leaven and Matzah 7:6, he explains the obligation that we each must act as if we exited Egypt. This is derived from Deuteronomy 24:18, "And you shall remember that you were slaves in Egypt..." Law 7:7 states, "Therefore when one feasts on this night, he must eat and drink in a manner of leaning, as a free person." But then Maimonides immediately adds in that law, the requirement to drink four cups of wine. One might think this law to be out of place, perhaps better grouped with the other laws of 'eating', i.e., matzah and maror. How does the inclusion of drinking four cups express freedom, as does leaning? This question is strengthened, as we must also lean when eating matzah, yet Maimonides does not include matzah in Law 7:7. So why include the four cups?

Furthermore, at times we are required to drink a mere cheekful, but to fulfill the four cups, we are required to drink the majority of each cup. What is derived from this law?

The Four Cups

As stated in the Jerusalem Talmud and by Rashbam, the four cups correlate to the "four terms of redemption" stated by God in Exodus 6:6 and 6:7:

"Therefore, tell the Children of Israel, I am God, and I will take you out (1) from under the oppression of Egypt, and I will rescue you (2) from their labor, and I will redeem you (3) with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. And I will take you to Me (4) as a nation and I will be to you a God and you will know that I am your God who took you out from the oppression of Egypt."

These two verses deserve analysis.

Prior to the plagues' onslaught, God tells us that He will remove us from our servitude, but He uses four terms. "I will take you out from under the oppression of Egypt" – referring to the removal of our psychological stress. "I will rescue you from their labor" – referring to the end of physical toil. So these first two terms address God's removal of our 'negative' status. Next, God describes how He will continue, and bring us into a 'positive' state: "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments" – referring to reinstating us to a life where we reject Egypt's deities and follow God alone. Meaning, His "outstretched arm" is a reference to God's unimpeded power – He stretches His arm (power) and none can oppose Him. This teaches of His unique role as Creator, as all is under His control. Our recognition of God as the only power is the objective. All of Egypt's deities will be exposed as powerless lies. God uses this term "judgment" again when referring to the destruc-

tion of idols. (See Rashi, Exod. 12:12) Finally, God says "And I will take you to Me as a nation" so that we are unique from other peoples. This purpose is so the nations might learn about God, through us. If we were not distinct, the world would not know where to turn to learn of God. But through our unparalleled successes when we follow God, and our horrific tragedies when we sin, we bear the truth of God and His Torah promises and threats.

It is notable that the fourth term "And I will take you to Me as a nation" relating God's will that the Jews are a beacon to others, is not placed in the same verse as the first three terms. This is because our role as a beacon addresses a 'national' phenomenon, while the first three terms address our benefits as 'individuals'.

Corresponding to each of these four terms, we drink cup of wine, as a toast of sorts. Wine is used to underscore something of great distinction.

Free Slaves

What emerges from this is the following: we were not freed for freedom's sake. If that were so, we would have the first two terms alone: God's removal of our psychological and physical suffering. But God also said the next two terms, teaching that His act of redemption has a higher purpose: "and I will be to you a God and you will know that I am your God who took you out from the oppression of Egypt". God's objective is not that men and women be free, but that we attain the best lives we can through following God's commands. We were freed so we could be slaves to God. But not a slave in a negative light. A slave whose actions and rewards benefit him, is living the best life. Similarly, one who is a slave to his medication to maintain his health, is not a slave in a negative sense. We may now answer our other questions.

God hastened our exodus to prevent the Jews from expressing and enjoying a false idea. The Torah teaches that when the Jews left Egypt, they took no food. (Exod. 12:39) Rashi (ibid) explains the Jews did not do so, as they trusted God would provide food. However, this very same verse says the Jews baked the loaf! So did they, or did they not trust God? And why did the Jews as a whole have dough ready at that moment? Why did God rush out the Jews?

"And the Children of Israel traveled from Raamses [Egypt] to Succot, about 600,000 men aside from children. And also a mixed multitude ascended with them; sheep, cattle and flock of great numbers. And they baked the loaf which they took from Egypt into matzah cakes, for it did not leaven, for they were ousted from Egypt and had no time to tarry and they also did not prepare provisions."

I do not feel the Jews took that loaf from Egypt for the purpose of consumption alone. This is Rashi's point. The Jews took the loaf because of what it represented: 'freedom'.

The Jewish slaves were fed matzah by the Egyptians for the duration of their bondage. However...now they were free. They cherished this freedom and longed to embody it in expression. Making bread – instead of dry poor man's matzah – was this expression of freedom. They now wished to be like their previous taskmasters: 'bread eaters'. A free people! Baking and eating bread was the second most overt distinction of master over slave in Egypt, than was freedom over servitude. The Jews wished to shed their identity as slaves and relish the sensation of a free people. Baking and eating bread would achieve this. To further prove that the Jews

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valued such identification with the free Egyptians, Rashi comments that when the Jews despoiled the Egyptians of their silver, gold and clothing, at Moses' command, they valued the Egyptian clothing over the silver and gold. (Exodus 12:35) Meaning, 'self-image' was valued over all else. The Jews desired this self-image.

However, the Jews had the wrong idea. God never willed their newfound freedom to be unrestricted. They were freed, but for a new purpose; following God. Had they been allowed to indulge unrestrained freedom, expressed by eating leavened bread...this would corrupt God's plan that they serve Him.

Complete freedom, and servitude to God, are mutually exclusive. God therefore did not allow the dough to rise. They saw all the miracles – they trusted God. They needed no food for their journey, as God would provide. But they took the dough in hopes of making that "free man's food", leavened bread. The cakes of dough were not taken for subsistence alone, but to symbolize their freedom. They hoped, upon reaching their destination, to bake bread, expressing their own idea of freedom so they might identify with the Egyptians. But the verse says the dough only became matzah, not their intended end-product. Matzah was a mere result of a hurried exodus. Matzah was so significant, that the Torah recorded this event of their failed bread-making. They planned to bake bread, but it ended up matzah. The Torah teaches that matzah was not the Jews' plan. It points out through inference that they desired leavened bread. It also teaches that bread was not desired so much for subsistence, as the verse ends, (Exod. 12:39) "and provisions they made not for themselves." They did not prepare food, as they relied on God for that. This is Rashi's point. The dough they took was not for provisions alone; it was to express unrestricted freedom. This unrestricted freedom is a direct contradiction to God's plan that they serve Him.

The Jews were now excited at the prospect of complete freedom. God's plan could not tolerate the Jews' wish. God desired the Jews to go from Egyptian servitude, to another servitude: adherence to God. He did not wish the Jews to experience or express unrestricted freedom, as the Jews wished. To facilitate this, God retarded the dough from leavening. The matzah they baked at Succot was not an accident, but God's purposeful plan, that any expression of unrestricted freedom be thwarted. Matzah now relates this very lesson, that a restricted freedom is God's plan for mankind. We were freed so we might obey the Torah, for our benefit.

This also explains Maimonides' formulation. When describing the obligation to lean as an expression of freedom, we must temper that freedom with the recognition that we were freed, to follow God. Therefore, in the law concerning leaning, Maimonides includes the law of drinking four cups, which in essence praises God for the exodus. The exodus was so we might be free, to serve Him. So we are taught in one law that we must lean – expressing freedom; and drink four cups – tempering that freedom with subjugation to God. Had Maimonides recorded the law of leaning as a separate law without including the law to drink the four cups, one might conclude that leaning, or freedom, is an end in itself. Thus, Maimonides' inclusion of the law to drink four cups as praise to God, inhibits our expression of freedom as an end in itself.

What is freedom – *chayrus*? This is defined as unrestricted activity. Thus, one must lean and not be compelled to present one's self as dignified, as if to answer to others. One must drink, and not just average wine, but what he or she enjoys. And one must not drink a

cheekful, but a majority of the cup. All of these acts display freedom, and demonstrate our conviction that had God not freed the Jews, we too would yet be slaves to humans. Simultaneously we subjugate ourselves to God, as was the purpose of our release from bondage.

From the Torah's four terms, to Maimonides' formulations, we witness a system of law so profound. Each mitzvah has not the act as the goal, but we are to uncover the beauty of the Torah's brilliance. An appreciation of the sensibilities, the intricate design and harmony of all laws with human perfection must permeate any person with a great appreciation for God. We must be thankful to God for having created each one of us. ■



The well known idiom “a bitter pill to swallow” takes a literal seat at the forefront of the seder with the commandment to eat maror. Maror occupies a crucial role in the evening’s events, its consumption “uncomfortable” at best, serving as a window into our forefather’s slavery - slavery.



RABBI DR. DARREL GINSBERG

Hazereth

As many people are aware, there are a variety of different customs that dictate people’s choice regarding the consumption of the bitter herb. For those who eat romaine lettuce, consuming leaf after leaf is certainly not an enjoyable culinary experience. For those who choose horseradish, especially the raw type, the red eyes and flushed cheeks are demonstrative of the strong effects of this type of maror. Which vegetable is preferable? Is there a preference at all?

An initial foray into maror leads to the observation that there is a lack of a specific, defined entity. The Oral Law for example, identifies the esrog as the only fruit befitting the description in the Torah of kapos temarim—it is not up for debate. Most mitzvos reflect a certain precision in their structure and composition, without any room for discrepancy. Yet, regarding maror, we see different options:

“The School of Samuel taught: These are the herbs with

which a man discharges his obligation on Passover: With lettuce, with endives, with tamka, with harhabinin, with harginin, and with hardofannim.” (Pesachim 39a)

It is clear there is no set prescribed vegetable to fulfill one’s obligation of maror on Pesach.

On the other hand, the idea maror is supposed to convey is seemingly clear, regardless of the choice of bitter herb. In the famous dictum of Rabban Gamliel (as written in the haggada), we see as follows:

“This maror that we eat for what reason? Because the Egyptians embittered our fathers’ lives in Egypt, as it is said: “They made their lives bitter with hard service, with mortar and with bricks, and with all manner of service in the field; all their service which they made them serve with rigor.”

It would therefore seem the maror is the categorical vehicle to experiencing the bitterness of Bnai Yisrael’s slavery.

So, which maror should we use?

The Talmud (ibid), in its investigation of the different

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vegetables to be designated as maror, looks to chazeres:

“...and the School of Samuel taught, Hazereth; while R. Oshaia said: The obligation is properly [fulfilled with] Hazereth. And Raba said: What is Hazereth? Hassa. What does hassa [symbolize]? That the Merciful One had pity [has] upon us. Further, R. Samuel b. Nahman said in R. Jonathan's name: Why were the Egyptians compared to maror? To teach you: just as this maror, the beginning of which is soft while its end is hard, so were the Egyptians: their beginning was soft [mild] but their end was hard [cruel]”

One can see from this description that chazeres seems to offer more than Raban Gamliel's notion of maror as a reflection of being embittered. One additional idea is that chazeres is synonymous with “hassa,” thereby connoting mercy from God. This seems odd—how does the attribute of God's mercy find its way into remembering the suffering we encountered in Mitzrayim? The second reasoning also adds more to the picture. Rashi explains that the “soft” referred to regarding the Egyptians was their method in transforming the Jews into slaves. At first, they enticed the Jews to work, hiring them for their labor at a reasonable cost. However, as time went on, they changed to becoming “hard,” mercilessly oppressing Bnai Yisrael. An expression of mere bitterness alone, seems to be incomplete—if possible, a vegetable with the feature of “soft to hard,” reflecting the evolution of Bnai Yisrael's slavery, would be more apropos. What is this additional concept bringing to the table?

Maror occupies a unique place in the pantheon of mitzvos, a commandment where the physical, culinary ‘effect’ produced by the object at hand, rather than the entity itself, is the objective of the action. The taste and effect of the maror serves as the vehicle to reflect on our state of slavery, the means to focus and contemplate our existence prior to the redemption from Mitzrayim. The consumption of the maror, and the subsequent “bitter” effect it produces, is the ideal mechanism to best reflect upon the state of slavery. It is important to emphasize that the idea is not to recreate the feeling of slavery. To eat something bitter or sharp, while maybe uncomfortable, obviously could never be physically comparable to being enslaved, a life replete with daily suffering. So, one can see that the maror functions to bring about a certain reflective state, focusing our thoughts on the phenomenon of slavery. This is Raban Gamliel's concept, and it can be achieved through any of the vegetables listed in the Talmud.

Chazeres adds another dimension. The Talmud shows that secondary characteristics in the vegetable, namely its name and its texture, help enhance the understanding of this unique slavery. First of all, there is the issue of God's mercy and its place in the contemplation of our slavery. It could be that while reflecting on slavery is important in and of itself, one must be careful to put it in its proper context. To isolate it as a separate, distinct event might lead one to view that period of time as objectively bad, an incorrect conclusion in the context of God's justice. The mercy here might refer to the fact that the slavery was part of an overall process, a step in the imminent geula from Mitzrayim. The mercy, therefore, alludes to God's removing the physical and psychological shackles of slavery, the knowledge that the slavery had an ending point. The soft-to-hard transition also adds a distinctive character to the nature of the slavery. Different nations and diverse peoples have faced the threat of being enslaved throughout history. Quite often, it is a sudden event, a physical enslavement occurring at the onset. For

example, during war, conquering armies turn their prisoners into slaves. Yet psychologically, it takes years of enslavement until the conquered become tied to their masters, their sense of freedom destroyed. In the case of Bnai Yisrael, it was the opposite. The Egyptians at first employed Bnai Yisrael, establishing a more business type of relationship. As they settled into this, becoming more and more dependent on the Egyptians, the slave mentality began to emerge. It became easier over time to shift Bnai Yisrael into more backbreaking labor, ensuring a complete and total slavery. These two ideas are expressed with the eating of chazeres, and add to our overall contemplation of the slavery of Bnai Yisrael.

Certainly, the above demonstrates a philosophical superiority in using chazeres. Yet, there are even halachic discussions that seem to indicate a preference for chazeres.

Chazeres is normally understood today to be a type of lettuce, usually romaine lettuce (the vast majority of poskim agree with this, although there is some debate as to the veracity of chazeres being lettuce). Yet there are those who choose horseradish (tamcha of the Talmud, according to many poskim), whether raw or not, as their choice of maror. It is interesting to see how the poskim deal with a stronger type of bitter herb, such as horseradish. A baseline for this debate can be found as early as the times of the Rishonim. The Ritva (Pesachim 39a) quotes the Ra'ah, who explains that the vegetable chosen for maror should be one that is capable of being eaten “a bit” whereas one should not use one where the “sharpness” is so intense that it is not considered edible. Clearly, supreme spiciness is not the defining characteristic. The Chacham Tzvi (Responsa 119) offers an extensive review of how chazeres should be the maror of choice. He discusses how horseradish became the replacement for chazeres due to climate conditions in Europe, among other reasons. However, he admonishes those who use horseradish, explaining that due to its intensity, most people are unable to consume the necessary quantity to fulfill one's obligation. Furthermore, it is damaging to eat it raw. As a result, he strongly urges those who have the choice to stick with romaine lettuce. But not all is lost for those who choose horseradish. The Chasam Sofer (OC 132) writes that since most people are not experts at detecting the bugs located on romaine lettuce, it would be preferable to use horseradish, and this is cited by the Mishna Berura (OC 473:42). R Ovadia Yosef (Yechave Daat 1:17) refutes this concern in his recommendation that one use chazeres as maror. He cites R Shlomo Kluger (1783-1869), who explains that one should not use a magnifying glass when searching for bugs in lettuce. The system of halacha was given to humans, not angels, and therefore one has the right to rely on his/her own eyes to clean off the problematic bugs. With all this said, there is still considerable debate amongst modern day poskim as to the preference of one over the other. Of course, a posek should be consulted as to which direction to take.

Clearly, whether you are a consumer of romaine lettuce or raw horseradish on the seder night, the significance of maror is not to be found in the redness of your face, the clearing of your sinuses or your expression of disgust. Rather, the significance of maror lies in its consumption leading to our reflection on our pre-redemption state, how we got there, and the mercy of God in bringing about our redemption. ■

The Special Garments Worn for Removal of the Ashes from the Altar

And the Kohen should wear linen vestments and linen pants he should wear upon his flesh. And he should lift the ashes of the Olah consumed by the fire from the altar and place them near the altar. (VaYikra 6:3)

Each morning a portion of the ashes is removed from the altar and placed near the altar. This is a positive command. Because it is an element of the service in the Mishkan, it can be performed only by a Kohen. The Kohanim wear special garments when performing any avodah – the service – in the Mishkan or Bait HaMikdash. These vestments consist of four garments. The Kohen is required to wear these garments when removing the ashes. Maimonides explains that the garments worn during this service are not exactly the same as those worn during other elements of the avodah. The vestments worn for the removal of the ashes are of slightly lesser quality. Maimonides explains the reason for this requirement. It is inappropriate that garments used for the removal of the ashes be worn when performing the more elevated aspects of the service. He expresses this concept with a parable. A servant would not serve a meal to his master in the same clothing worn when cooking the food.[1]

This explanation presents a problem. Based upon Maimonides reasoning, it is appropriate for the Kohen removing the ashes to put on fresh garments after this service. However, Maimonides does not seem to provide the reason the garments worn for removal of the ashes must be of lesser quality!

In order to answer this question, we must more carefully consider the function of the garments worn by the Kohen. These vestments are very carefully and beautifully designed. Maimonides explains that the Kohen is dressed in these garments and only then may he perform the service in the Temple.[2] This seems to imply that these special vestments are required to glorify the avodah. Through wearing these special vestments, the Kohen demonstrates the sanctity of the service.

Now, it is possible to understand Maimonides' position. How do the garments glorify the avodah? They are reserved exclusively for the service. This exclusive designation is essential to their function. If these vestments are worn casually and at other times, their special status will be lost. They can no longer demonstrate honor for the avodah. Similarly, it is not appropriate to allow these garments to be worn for the removal of the ashes. This detracts from the elevated status of the vestments. Nonetheless, the removal of the ashes is part of the daily service. The removal also requires that the Kohen wear his special garments. How can these two considerations be reconciled? Maimonides responds that the Kohen wears a set of the special vestments when removing the ashes. However, these are not of the same quality as the garments worn at other times. Now the problem has been solved. The Kohen wears the appropriate garments for the removal of the ashes. Yet, the vestments worn for other services retain their exclusive designation.

The Offering of a Portion of the Shelamim Sanctifies the Entirety

And if the flesh of the Shelamim sacrifice will be eaten on the third day, it will not be accepted. It will not be accounted for the one who offered it. It will be disgusting. And the one who eats from it will bear his sin. (VaYikra 7:18)

The Shelamim sacrifice is shared between three "parties." A portion is burned on the altar. A portion is given to the Kohanim. The rest is handed to the person bringing the sacrifice. The consumption of the sacrifice is a mitzvah. The Kohanim and the owner participate in this mitzvah, through their eating of the sacrifice. In addition to this mitzvah requiring the consumption of the entire sacrifice, there is a prohibition against leaving any portion of the sacrifice unused.

Rabbeynu Avraham ibn Ezra offers an interesting explanation for this law. The portion of the sacrifice that is offered on the altar is regarded as part of a larger whole – the entire animal. Therefore, although only a portion of the animal is consumed on the altar, the offering of this part of the animal on the altar sanctifies the entire animal from which this portion is taken. Because the entire animal is sanctified, any failure to respect the sanctity of the remainder of the animal is a failure to respect the portion offered on the altar. Therefore, all parts of the Shelamim must be consumed. No portion can be discarded.

Ibn Ezra applies this reasoning to another area of halachah. The Bait HaMikdash – Holy Temple – and its altar are constructed of stones. The Torah specifies that only whole stones may be used. Ibn Ezra applies the above reasoning to explain this requirement. He explains

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Tzav

that the law reflects a practical consideration. The inclusion of a portion of a stone in the Temple would sanctify the entire stone. Therefore, any portion not used in the Temple would require special treatment consistent with its sanctity as a remnant of stone used in the Bait HaMikdash. It would be impossible to assure that these fragments received appropriate treatment. In order to avoid this problem, halachah requires that only whole stones should be used. No leftover fragments are created.[3]

The Installation Ram

And he brought forth the second ram, which was the installation ram. And Aharon and his sons pressed their hands on the ram's head. (VaYikra 8:22)

A seven-day process was required to initiate the Mishkan – the Tabernacle – and the Kohanim. Each day three basic sacrifices were offered. These were an Olah offering, a Chatat offering, and a Shelamim offering. The Shelamim was accompanied by a Mincha offering. Our pasuk is discussing the procedure Moshe followed each of the seven days. Specifically, the pasuk introduces a discussion of the offering of the second ram which was a Shelamim offering. The passage describes it as the “installation ram.”

Each of the sacrifices was essential to the initiation process. However, the only offering referred to as an installation offering is the Shelamim. Why are the Chatat – the sin offering – and the Olah not defined as installation offerings?

Rabbaynu Yonatan ben Uzial explains that the Shelamim was the final offering of the three installation sacrifices. It completed the process of installation. The installation was affected with this final offering. Therefore, only this sacrifice is referred to as the installation sacrifice.[4]

Nachmanides offers an alternative explanation. The Olah and Chatat sacrifices were required as atonements. The Shelamim was not offered as an atonement. It was brought as an expression of gratitude to Hashem. In offering the Shelamim, the Kohanim gave thanks to Hashem for selecting them to serve Him.[5] This is a fundamental distinction. The Olah and Chatat sacrifices were required to execute the installation. The Shelamim was intended as a reflective expression upon the process and expressed gratitude. It is a consequence of the installation process. Only this sacrifice that is a response to and reflection upon the process is identified as the installation sacrifice.

Unjustified and Justified Pride

And from the opening of the Ohel Moed you should not go out for seven days, until the days Thus says Hashem, “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man in his might, nor the rich man in his riches. For in this should one glory - that he understands and knows Me. For I am Hashem who does kindness, justice and righteousness in the Land. For in these things I delight. “ So says Hashem. (Yermiya 7:22-23)

This pasuk is found in the haftarah for Parshat Tzav. If Parshat Tzav is read on the Shabbat before Pesach, this Haftarah is replaced by an alternative selection.

The Navi – the Prophet – explains that a person should not take pride in his wealth or wisdom. The only legitimate source of pride is one's knowledge of or relationship with Hashem. One possible interpretation of the Navi's comments is that wealth and might are not meaningful. They may seem to us to be valuable accomplishments. However, they are merely temporary, fleeting achievements that end with our short time in this world. In contrast, the knowledge and understanding that we acquire and the relationship that we develop with Hashem are eternal. These have true everlasting significance and appropriate cause for pride.

Malbim offers an alternative explanation. He explains that personal pride is rarely justified. Most of our accomplishments are only partially a result of our own choices. A person may enhance his physical might through proper exercise. However, genetics play a major role in the success of his exercise program. Wealth is a result of sound business decisions combined with good fortune. Not every skilled entrepreneur achieves wealth.

However, there is one area in which a person may claim credit for his accomplishments. This is in regard to moral conduct and the performance of mitzvot. The Navi describes this moral person who is committed to mitzvot as possessing knowledge of Hashem. Why does this person deserve credit for his accomplishments? Malbim responds that every person is endowed with freewill. Through freewill we determine the level of our observance and the morality of our conduct. In this area, the outcome is totally in our hands.[6] ■

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam/Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Temidim U'Musafim 2:10

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam/Maimonides) Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvat Aseh 33.

[3] Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer VaYikra, 7:18.

[4] Rabbaynu Yonatan ben Uzial, Targum on Sefer VaYikra 8:22.

[5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban/Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer VaYikra 8:22.

[6] Rabbaynu Meir Libush (Malbim), Commentary on Yirmiya 7:22-23.

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