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Rabbi Jachter's Halacha Files (and other Halachic compositions)

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GEMS FROM RAV SOLOVEITCHIK ON THE HAGGADA

BY RABBI CHAIM JACHTER

Introduction Rav Hershel Schachter recently published a work entitled "MiPenieni HaRav," his second volume of collections of Torah insights of Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik. In this essay, we shall present a number of the Rav's ideas regarding the Seder that Rav Schachter published in this work.

Ha Lachmah Anya The commentaries to the Haggada pose many questions regarding the introductory section to Maggid, Ha Lachma Anya. We shall focus on the question regarding the relevance of the declaration we make at the conclusion of Ha Lachma Anya, "this year we are here, next year we shall be in the Land of Israel, this year we are slaves, next year we shall be free." Many ask why we mention this at the conclusion of Ha Lachma whose purpose is to invite any who are hungry to come and join us at the Seder. Rav Soloveitchik cites the Mishna in Bava Metzia 83a to resolve this problem. The Mishna there relates a story about Rav Yochanan ben Matya who instructed his son to hire some workers for a particular job. The son proceeded to hire Jewish workers and he agreed, among other things, to provide them with food. When the son told the father what he did, the father became concerned regarding the fact that the son did not specify to the workers what type of food he agreed to provide them. The father ordered his son to immediately tell the workers before they started the job that he agrees to provide them with only an average meal. Rav Yochanan explained that without specifying otherwise, the workers enjoyed the Halachic right to demand the most lavish meal imaginable. This is because the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, are entitled to the finest treatment possible. Similarly at the Seder, explains Rav Soloveitchik, when we invite a Jewish person to the Seder they are entitled to the most lavish meal imaginable unless we specify otherwise. Hence, when we extend an invitation to poor people to attend our Seder, we indicate that in principle they are entitled to the finest meal possible. However, due to our current pre-Messianic circumstances we are unable to provide them with such a meal. This indication raises the self-esteem of the poor guests as we gently imply that their status as Jews endows them with "VIP status" and that anything we give them is less than what they deserve.

Vehee Sheamda Why do we mention at the Seder that in every generation there are people who seek to destroy the Jewish people? What does this have to do with Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim, telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt? The Rav explains that it places the Egyptian experience into perspective. We might have sought to explore

whether there was some sociologic, economic, or political motivation for the Egyptians oppressors. However, we note that in every generation and in every imaginable circumstance, enemies have arisen to oppress us. Thus, we cannot attribute any particular set of circumstance as the trigger for hatred of Jews. We must conclude that the reason for the Egyptian oppression is the sad reality that Rashi quotes in his commentary to Breishit 33:4 that it is the way of the world that Esav hates Yaakov. The implications for the contemporary situation are painfully obvious.

Onus Al Pi Hadibbur We emphasize that Yaakov went to Mitzrayim, Onus Al Pi Hadibbur, coerced by the divine instruction to descend to Egypt. The Rav explains that we emphasize this to contrast Yaakov's leaving Eretz Yisrael with Esav's exit from Eretz Yisrael. Esav gleefully abandoned Eretz Yisrael, regarding it a nuisance. Rashi (Breishit 36:7) explains that Esav felt that the price to inherit a share in Eretz Yisrael – four hundred years of being rootless and enduring slavery and torture as foretold in the Brit Bein Habetarim – was too steep and was happy to rid himself of this great burden. This attitude caused Esav to forfeit any right he had to Eretz Yisrael when he left the country. Yaakov, by contrast, left Eretz Yisrael unwillingly and thus did not forfeit his right to the land. This is reminiscent of the Rama Orach Chaim 539:7 (citing the Maharil) who states that when one leaves his Sukka because of heavy rain or some other significant irritant his attitude should not be that he is happy to rid himself of a nuisance. Rather, he should be upset that Hashem has exiled him from his Sukka by sending rain or some other disturbance. Interestingly, our sages compare the Mitzva of sitting in the Sukka with the Mitzva of living in Eretz Yisrael. For example, the Vilna Gaon noted that the only two Mitzvot that we fulfill with our entire bodies are the Mitzva of sitting in the Sukka and the Mitzva of Yeshivat Eretz Yisrael. Similarly, the attitude of those of us who do not have the privilege of living in Eretz Yisrael should be like Yaakov Avinu and not Esav. Our attitude should be that the circumstances that Hashem has placed upon us (familial, economic, etc.) force us to reside outside the Land. We should not be happy that we reside in Chutz Laaretz.

Hallel The Rav asks why don't we sing the Shirat HaYam at the Seder as the song that celebrates Hashem's delivering us from slavery. Why did Chazal choose Hallel as the celebratory song of the Seder? He answers based on Rashi's commentary to the Pasuk in Shmuel 2:23:1 that describes David Hamelech as the "sweet singer of Israel". Rashi explains "the Jewish people do not sing songs of praise to Hashem in the Bait Hamikdash unless it was composed by David Hamelech." The Rav notes that the same applies to Pisukei Dizimra, where we note in Baruch Sheamar that we will sing David Hamelech's songs of praise to Hashem. Indeed, it is for this reason that the Rambam (Hilchot Tefilla 7:13) records a custom to recite the Shirat Hayam, in our daily prayers only after the Bracha of Yishtabach is recited. He believes that since David HaMelech did not compose the Shirat Hayam its place is not in the P'sukei Dizimra that are recited between Baruch Sheamar and Yishtabach. Similarly, the Rav suggests that at the Seder we utilize only songs composed by David Hamelech to sing praise to Hashem for redeeming us from Mitzrayim.

The Division of Hallel The Rav explains why the first two chapters of Hallel are recited before the meal and the rest of Hallel is recited after the meal. He notes (see Pesachim 108a for a basis for this assertion) that before the meal we should feel as if we were just redeemed from Mitzrayim. After the meal, the mood is one of reflecting on the fact that we have been redeemed in the past. Accordingly, before the meal we engage in Hodayah, an expression of thanks to Hashem for redeeming us from Egypt. Hodaya may be offered only by someone who experienced the redemption and thus may be expressed only before the meal. Shevach (praise) on the other hand, may be offered even by someone not involved in the event. After the meal, we can no longer thank Hashem for redeeming us (as at that point we no longer feel as if we were

redeemed), so instead we express Shevach to Hashem for what He did for us in the past. The Rav explains that the first two chapters of Hallel are expressions of Hodaya and are thus appropriate to recite before the meal. The subsequent chapters are only expressions of Shevach and thus are appropriate for recitation only after the meal.

Shifoch Chamatcha Many wonder why Chazal included the plea of Shifoch Chamatcha in the Haggada. The Rav explains that it is an introduction to the prayer of Nishmat that is recited soon after we say Shifoch Chamatcha. In the Nishmat prayer, we pray for the arrival of the Mashiach when the soul of all people will call out to Hashem. This is appropriate for the Seder since Hashem introduced himself to Moshe Rabbeinu and Am Yisrael as "I am who I am" (Shemot 3:14). Rashi (ibid) explains this term to mean that I am with them during this period of misfortune and I will be with them in future periods of misfortune. The Rav explains that Hashem promised Moshe Rabbeinu that just as He will redeem Klal Yisrael from Egypt, so too He will redeem us from future difficulties. As such, we ask Hashem at the Seder to fulfill His promise made on the eve of the redemption from Egypt that He redeem us from our current difficulties and send the Mashiach. Similarly, in the Malchiot prayer of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we ask Hashem to bring the time when all of humanity will recognize Hashem "and all of creation will know that You created them". Accordingly, those people who do not know Hashem might be preventing the arrival of the Mashiach. It is for this reason we ask Hashem to take His wrath to those who do not know Him, so that an impediment to redemption is eliminated. We may suggest a variation of this theme. We emphasize at the Seder that Hashem fulfilled His promise He made at the Brit Bein Habetarim (Breishit 15:14) to punish the nation that will torture and enslave us. We develop at length how Hashem punished the Egyptians both in Egypt and at the Yam Suf. Indeed, part of the Rambam's (Sefer HaMitzvot 157) definition of the Mitzva of telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt includes telling how Hashem punished our oppressors. The point of this emphasis is to demonstrate that there is a heavenly Judge and there is heavenly Justice, which is a general theme of Pesach (see Ramban at the conclusion of Parashat Bo). Accordingly, in Shifoch Chamatcha we ask Hashem to fulfill His promise to punish our contemporary oppressors, those who do not know Hashem, just as He punished our Egyptian oppressors. "Those who do not know You", that we mention in Shifoch Chamatcha, seems to refer to those who reject the seven Noachide Laws such as the prohibition to kill people. Even "religious" people who kill innocents seem to be included in this prayer.

Conclusion We hope you found these insights to be helpful and inspiring. One might consider sharing them with his family this Yom Tov.

From: innernet-owner@innernet.org.il on behalf of Heritage House [innernet@gmail.com] Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2005 To: innernet@innernet.org.il Subject: InnerNet - Of Matzah and Maror INNERNET MAGAZINE April 2005

See this and other Passover articles at: <http://www.innernet.org.il/>
"OF MATZAH AND MAROR"

by RABBI SHIMON SCHWAB

The Torah tells us (Exodus 12:8) that children of Israel ate the Pesach offering together with matzah and maror while they were yet in Egypt. The obvious question here is: When our forefathers ate the first Pesach offering in Egypt, during the night of the fifteenth of Nissan, together with matzah and maror, not a single firstborn had yet died in Egypt. The Pesach offering had to be eaten quickly, before midnight, even though G-d had not yet "spared the Jewish houses" during the plague of the firstborn. Also, the miracle of the unleavened dough was yet to occur the next morning, hours later. Therefore, our forefathers ate the Pesach

offering and matzah, seemingly, in "commemoration" of something which was yet to happen!

And furthermore, astonishingly, while still in Egypt they were commanded to eat the maror to remember their bitter lives: "They embittered their lives with hard work" (Exodus 1:14). Does one have to eat maror while still in a concentration camp? At this point, they certainly did not need to refresh their bitter memories -- they were still in Egypt!

The answer to these questions is inherent in the father's answer, which must be given in the presence of matzah and maror, and, if possible, the Pesach offering. And the meaning is that when G-d commanded our forefathers to eat the Pesach offering with matzah and maror while still in Egypt, they did so with absolute faith that God's promise to redeem them would occur. They ate the Pesach offering and matzah as if the events that these symbols were to commemorate had already occurred; and the maror as if their redemption had occurred so long ago that they had to be reminded of the bitterness that they had experienced.

And it was in the merit of this faith that G-d acted on our behalf. [The father answers]: "I merited the redemption, because I kept the mitzvot of pesach, matzah, and maror as I was preparing to leave Egypt. I kept these mitzvot before the events that they were to commemorate actually occurred. My faith was so strong that I considered these events as if they had actually already occurred."

And this story has to be retold again every year, in the presence of the Pesach offering, matzah, and maror, on the night of the fifteenth of Nissan, to emphasize that we merited our redemption from Egypt because of our total faith in G-d -- that night in Egypt -- that the redemption from Egypt would actually take place.

The custom of Yachat, whereby we break the matzah into a larger and smaller piece, with each being used for its special purpose, is also deeply symbolic. The smaller piece, the "Lechem Oni," the poor man's bread, is left in the Seder plate along with the maror and the charoses. However, the larger piece is hidden away for the afikoman by the children, who will ask for a reward for its return, and it is then eaten at the end of the meal.

I heard a beautiful explanation for the symbolism of this custom from my father ob"m. He explained that the smaller piece of matzah represents Olam Haze (this world), with all its trials and tribulations. This piece is left in the Seder plate along with the maror and charoses, reflecting life in this world, with all its sweet and bitter experiences. However, the larger, main piece, which is hidden away during the Seder, to be eaten after the meal as the afikoman, represents Olam Haba (the world to come), which is hidden from us during our lives in this world.

The eating of this piece after the meal, when one is satiated, is symbolic of our reward in Olam Haba, which can be obtained only if we have first satiated ourselves in this world with a life of Torah and mitzvot. The children's request for a reward before giving up the afikoman is symbolic of our reward in Olam Haba, which is granted to us by G-d if we have earned it.

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From: hamaayan-owner@torah.org on behalf of SHLOMO KATZ [skatz@torah.org] Sent: Mar31, 2005 Subject: HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parashat Shemini PESACH Pesach

At the end of the Pesach Seder, we sing the song "Chad Gadya," the enigmatic story of "the kid that father sold [some say: 'bought'] for two

zuz." R' Mordechai Twersky, the Maggid of Chernobyl z"l (died 1838) explained this song as follows: The word "gadya" / "kid" is related to "haggadah" / "statement." "Chad gadya, chad gadya," refers to two statements, specifically, the first two of the Ten Commandments: "I am Hashem" and "You shall not have other gods." These two statements encompass all of the mitzvot; "I am Hashem" encapsulates all of the positive commandments, and "You shall not have other gods," all of the negative commandments.

"That father sold" alludes to the Sages' teaching that the Torah is unlike any other acquisition. Ordinarily, when one sells an object, the seller's connection to the object ends. Not so, however, when Hashem "sold" us the Torah; He, our Father, sold Himself to us with the Torah. In other words, through the Torah, one connects himself to Hashem.

However, one who wants to come close to Hashem and His Torah must experience yearnings / kissufim for that goal. This is alluded to by the "two zuz," as those coins are made of silver / kesef. Moreover, it is not enough to yearn for Hashem and His Torah. One must also hate evil, i.e., he must be a "soneh ra." This is alluded to by the cat (or weasel), referred to in the song as a "shunra." Of course, the yetzer hara will not stand by idly while a person attains these spiritual accomplishments. Rather, the yetzer hara, represented by the kalba / dog, will attack the shunra.

When the yetzer hara threatens to defeat a person, the surest way to prevail is to strengthen one's emunah / faith. This is the chutra / the staff on which one can lean and with which one can hit the dog, i.e., the yetzer hara. However, the yetzer hara is tenacious and does not give up easily. Thus, the nura / fire of the yetzer hara may burn the staff of emunah.

What should one do to protect himself? Study Torah, which is likened throughout Rabbinic literature to maya / water.

Our sages teach that the Torah can be an elixir of life if one studies it with the proper motivation, but it can be poisonous if one approaches it with the wrong intentions, for example, if one studies Torah so that he can attack Torah scholars on their own ground. The tora / ox that drinks the water in the song represents the animal that one can become if he misuses the Torah. [Ed. Note: The Aramaic word "tora," meaning ox, is related to the Hebrew word "shor," but is unrelated to the Hebrew word "Torah."]

The shochet who slaughters the ox represents one's slaughtering of the yetzer hara that caused him to act like an animal. However, the "angel of death" (who is one and the same with the yetzer hara) may slaughter the shochet, i.e., it may cause a person to act hypocritically. This is alluded to by the Gemara's teaching that one who slaughters an animal on Shabbat is liable for the act of painting (i.e., painting the skin of the animal with the animal's blood). The word "tzavua" / "painted" also means "hypocrite."

In the end, however, Hakadosh Baruch Hu / The Holy One Himself will destroy the angel of death and the yetzer hara. (Likkutei Torah)

Pesach Stories (From Otzrotaihem Shel Tzaddikim)

Once, when a student of R' Yitzchak Ze'ev Soloveitchik z"l (the Brisker Rav; died 1959) was leaving Yerushalayim to return to his home in Bnei Brak, the Brisker Rav said, "Please tell your father that I wish him a `Chag Sameach.' Also, please give him my wish that the holiday should pass with no shailos [i.e., that no questions should arise regarding whether chametz had found its way into the food or into the pots and pans]."

The Brisker Rav added: "Do not think that this is a small blessing. I remember that when I was a child, my father [R' Chaim Brisker z"l] once said to my mother after Pesach, `Thank G-d the holiday passed with no shailos.' He spoke then the way a person speaks after successfully undergoing difficult surgery."

The Brisker Rav also added: "A shailah in those days was not like a shailah today. I remember as a child in Volozhin that a question arose in someone's kitchen, and all of his pots and dishes were declared chametz. Today, rabbis are so much more likely to accept a lenient opinion among the poskim / halachic authorities."

The 19th century chassidic rebbe, R' Yechiel Meir of Gostynin z"l, barely slept all of Pesach. His family was worried about his health and asked him why he would not sleep. He replied, "If I had won the lottery, would you ask me why I couldn't sleep? Believe me! Every minute of Pesach is like winning the lottery." What did he mean by this? Why did he feel more fortunate on Pesach than on any other day? The Amshinover Rebbe explained: Our Sages say that chametz represents the yetzer hara. Thus, Pesach is a time that is free of the yetzer hara. Every minute of such a time is priceless.

From: hamaayan-owner@torah.org on behalf of Shlomo Katz [skatz@torah.org]
Sent: Thursday, April 07, 2005 5:07 PM To: hamaayan@torah.org Subject: HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parashat Tazria PESACH

Why does the recitation of "Mah nishtanah" follow immediately after the recitation of "Hah lachma ania"? R' Yosef Chaim of Baghdad z"l (died 1909) explains: In Hah lachma ania we proclaim: "Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat! Who ever is in need let him come and share the Pesach sacrifice!" This confuses our children, so they ask: "Why is this night different from all other nights? On all other nights, you slam the door in beggars' faces or leave them standing in the front hall. Why, tonight, are you are inviting them into the dining room?" (Haggadah Shel Pesach Orach Chaim p.85)

A Pesach Parable Why is Bedikat Chametz / the search for chametz carried out at night? Commentaries explain that chametz is a metaphor for the yetzer hara. Since the yetzer hara takes advantage of darkness, as explained below, it is in the darkness that we must seek it out. Darkness causes two undesirable consequences. Firstly, it causes people to trip over unexpected obstacles. The yetzer hara also places unexpected obstacles in people's way. Thus we read in Mishlei (4:19), "The way of the wicked is like darkness, they do not know upon what they stumble."

Secondly, it causes even familiar territory to become confusing. In the dark, one may think that a door is a wall or a wall is a door, or that gold is iron or iron is gold. So, too, under the influence of the yetzer hara, one may think that a sin is a mitzvah or that a mitzvah is a sin.

There is a story popular among Yemenite Jews about a widow named Sadah who was very punctilious in her observance of mitzvot. When she heard that the prophets promise that the miracles of the future redemption will be equal to those of the Exodus, she concluded that mashiach will come on the Seder night. Throughout the Seder, which she observed at a neighbor's house, she watched the door carefully, waiting for mashiach to enter and redeem all those assembled. Alas, he did not come by the time the Seder had ended.

In the meantime, Sadah drank four cups of wine, the hour grew late, and her eyelids began to grow heavy. She desperately wanted to sleep, but just as desperately, she wanted to stay awake to greet mashiach. Warily, she made her way home and, fighting off sleep for a short while, she hit upon an idea:

Our Sages say that mashiach will arrive riding a donkey. Surely, if mashiach arrived while Sadah was sleeping, her donkey would prance and bray to greet its cousin bearing the redeemer. Realizing this, Sadah took a rope and joined her leg to her donkey's leg. That way, when her donkey saw mashiach's donkey, its movement would awaken her.

However, Sadah was not aware of another teaching of our Sages which says (Berachot 3a) that donkeys commonly prance and bray in the first third of the night. Sure enough, Sadah's donkey took off running through town, all the while dragging the unfortunate widow behind it. This was painful indeed for Sadah, but in her heart she rejoiced, for surely mashiach had arrived!

All of the neighbors were awakened by Sadah's screams of pain mixed with cries of joy. Quickly they reined in her donkey and helped her to her feet. Only then did she learn, to her dismay, that mashiach had not arrived.

What does this parable teach? It illustrates that sometimes we are seduced to perform what we believe to be a mitzvah, when in fact it is the yetzer hara that is motivating us. For a young yeshiva student, there might be a yetzer hara to learn Torah all night, forgetting that this causes one to sleep through the next morning's prayers. For others, it is the yetzer hara to speak lashon hara about a neighbor who, we tell ourselves, is so evil it is a mitzvah to speak about him. About this the prophet says (Yishayahu 5:20): "Woe to those who speak of evil as good and as good of evil; who make darkness into light and light into darkness . . ." The first step in eliminating this darkness is to light the candle of Bedikat Chametz. With it, one should search every nook and every corner until the trickery of the yetzer hara is rooted out.
(Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Avoteinu Sipru Lanu p.11)

From: hamaayan-owner@torah.org on behalf of Shlomo Katz [skatz@torah.org]
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Our Sages teach that if Bnei Yisrael had remained in Egypt a moment longer than they did, they would have become mired in the "Fiftieth Gate of Tumah / Ritual Impurity," from which there is no escape. R' Gedalia Schorr z"l (1911-1979; Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vodaath in Brooklyn) asks: What does it mean that there is no escape from the Fiftieth Gate of Tumah? Chazal's statement implies that even Hashem could not have removed them from there, but surely there is nothing that is impossible for Hashem to do! R' Schorr explains: Hashem promised Avraham that his (Avraham's) descendants would be enslaved in a foreign land for 400 years and then redeemed. But not all of Avraham's descendants were enslaved in Egypt, only those who both carried Avraham's physical DNA and were his spiritual heirs. Had Bnei Yisrael sunk down to the fiftieth level of ritual impurity, the spiritual link with the Patriarchs would have been severed. Of course Hashem could still have saved them, but He would not have been saving the spiritual descendants of Avraham. Rather, it would have been a new people that He was taking out of Egypt. That could not be permitted to happen. (Ohr Gedalyahu)

The leaders of the town of Radin complained to R' Yisrael Meir Hakohen (1839-1933; the Chafetz Chaim) that donations to the town's Ma'ot Chittim / Pesach charity fund were inadequate to feed the town's poor. The Chafetz Chaim acceded to the leaders' request that he address the townsfolk.

"I am an old man," the Chafetz Chaim said in his speech. "Soon I will be called to give an accounting in the World-to-Come, and, since I am an influential person in this town, I will be asked whether the people of my town of Radin gave generously to charity. I will then be faced with a dilemma. If I say that they did, I will be telling a lie, something I have never done. On the other hand, if I say that the people of Radin did not give generously, I will be speaking lashon hara, which I also have never done.

"There is only one solution to my dilemma - for each of you to give generously to the Ma'ot Chittim campaign."
(A Word of Wisdom, A Word of Wit)

Perhaps one of the most perplexing parts of the Haggadah is the song known as "Dayenu," in which we say that if G-d had taken us out of Egypt but had not judged the Egyptians, that would have been enough for us. Or, if He had judged the Egyptians, but had not destroyed their idols, that, too, would have been enough for us. Or, if He had destroyed their idols, but had not killed their firstborns, that, too, would have been enough. Or . . . What does this song mean? R' Eliyahu Hakohen Ha'itamari z"l of Izmir (died 1729; the "Ba'al Shevet Hamussar") explains that for each of the Divine gifts or miracles listed in this song, one could make an argument that G-d should have acted otherwise. Our

praise of G-d is that He considered all these arguments and acted in the way that was best for us and for the glory of His Name. For example, one could argue that if G-d had taken us out of Egypt but had not judged the Egyptians so harshly as to practically destroy them, His name would have been magnified even more because the Egyptians would live to remember, and to tell others, how He had humbled them. On the other hand, one could argue that they would not feel humbled in that event. Rather, they would say, "He won this battle, and we will win the next battle."

G-d considered these arguments and decided to judge the Egyptians harshly. However, one could argue that if G-d had judged the Egyptians harshly but had not destroyed their idols, those idols would have served as constant reminders of G-d's power to anyone who saw them. On the other hand, some people would say that G-d was not strong enough to destroy the Egyptians' idols. G-d considered these arguments and decided to destroy the Egyptians' idols. However, one could argue that if G-d had destroyed their idols, but had not killed their firstborns, then those firstborns would have had a special reason to tell others of G-d's greatness. It was customary at that time to devote one's firstborn to the service of the idol; with all the idols destroyed, the Egyptian firstborn, who were no longer performing that service, would be a testament to G-d's power. On the other hand, Pharaoh was a firstborn; if the firstborns had not been smitten, people would say that it was Pharaoh's merit or power which saved him and those like him.

G-d considered these arguments and decided to kill the firstborn. . . (Minchat Eliyahu ch.32)

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<http://www.chaburas.org/sippur1.html>

RABBI AARON ROSS
SIPPUR YETZIAT MITZRAYIM - PART I
I. TELL ME A STORY

Of the commandments that are particular to the Seder night, the broadest, and perhaps most perplexing, is that of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim, the injunction to tell over the story of the Exodus from Egypt. Our fulfillment of this commandment is most manifest in our recitation of the Magid section of the Haggadah, but clearly it does not stop there. Even within that section we are told the story of the five Rabbis who stayed up all night in Bnei-Brak recounting the wonders of the Exodus, until their students came to call them for the morning prayers.

Our goal herein will be twofold. First, we must answer a major question concerning the mere existence on the mitzva of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim: We know that there is a commandment to remember the Exodus every day, a commandment that we generally fulfill by reciting the third paragraph of the Shema. If this is so, then what is added by this special commandment on Pesach? Is one merely an expansion of the other? Are they separate commandments? If they are distinct, what distinguishes them and are they perhaps still connected in any way?

Our second issue will be to use our understanding of this commandment to try to make some sense of the structure of Magid. While we are all very familiar with all of the various paragraphs that we recite, we must consider the fact that Magid is essentially a hodgepodge of unrelated selections from Rabbinic literature. For now, we will offer just two examples. First, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria's statement about trying to institute the mentioning of the Exodus at nights is not a statement that is in any way related to Pesach. Rather, it is a mishna in Berachot that speaks about the recitation of the Shema. Second, one of the central elements of Magid is the recounting of Jewish history beginning with Lavan's deceit of Yaakov (or possibly with Avraham - there is a big debate who "Arami Oveid Avi" refers to). Again, we must ask why that is directly relevant to the story of the Jews in Egypt and their eventual salvation. While we may be able to connect it, that does not explain its

prominence in the Seder. We will return to these issues, along with several others, in the latter portions of this Chabura.

II. DO YOU REMEMBER...?

Let us begin now with our analysis of the first question posed. Rambam (Sefer HaMitzvot Aseh #157, Hil. Chametz U'Matzah 7) lists Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim as its own commandment, although his sources are not so clear. In the Sefer HaMitzvot, he claims that this mitzva is based on the verse of "And you shall tell it to your sons (V'Higadeta L'vincha) on that day..." (Shemot 13:8), while in the Yad HaChazakah itself he lists both that verse and the verse of "Remember (Zachor) the day that you left Egypt..." (Shemot 13:3). In the latter locale, he uses Zachor to inform us of the existence of such a commandment, and V'Higadeta L'vincha to tell us that it must be fulfilled on the night of the fifteenth of Nissan. The Minchat Chinuch (#21) notes that Rambam uses both verses as complementary to each other, and thus both are needed.

We must now revisit our question. If we already have a commandment to mention the Exodus every day (and every night), what is added to this commandment on the night of the fifteenth? Is it merely a numbers game, i.e. by saying the Shema on that night we will fulfill two commandments instead of one, or is there something more substantial going on?

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik ("Grach") offers three distinctions between the two mitzvot. First he notes that the daily commandment to remember the Exodus can be done alone, while the specific commandment of Sippur must ideally be done with others (Rabbeinu Manoach encourages a person who would otherwise be alone to try to find other people to have Seder with so that he may fulfill this aspect). This element is accentuated by the fact that a person who is alone cannot simply read the story to himself, but must use the same question-and-answer format that would be used if others would be present (Ritva even says that a person who is alone must say the Ma Nishtana to himself). Second, Rav Chaim notes that, as per the mishna in Pesachim 116a, when telling the story on the night of Pesach we must begin with the shameful portions and conclude with praise. While the precise referents of this phrase will be dealt with as we proceed, it is certainly an element that is not necessary on any other day. Finally, Rav Chaim claims that the commandment on the first night of Pesach includes a requirement to discuss the reasons behind the various laws of Pesach, such as matza and maror. While our execution of this is clearest by our recitation of the mishna of Rabban Gamliel, we will see that this aspect plays a very large role in the whole of this mitzva.

There are a few other distinctions between Zeicher and Sippur that are offered. Rav Chaim's son, Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik ("Griz") notes that not only does one have to discuss the reasons for the mitzvot while recounting the Exodus during the Seder, but he also must actually be involved in the performance of those mitzvot. This becomes an issue with regard to the latest time for fulfilling the mitzva of Sippur. If it is completely tied up in the performance of the mitzvot, then perhaps it is bound by midnight, as one may not eat matza after midnight. If, however, its connection to the actual performance of the mitzvot is loosened, then perhaps it can still be fulfilled throughout the entire night and into the morning (Shibbolei HaLeket notes that the five Rabbis could have continued discussing the Exodus all day if not for the fact that Shema is time bound and its time would have passed had they continued their discussions).

Finally, a distinction brought by Rav Chaim's grandson, Rav Yoseif Dov Soloveitchik ("The Rov"). In addition to those ideas already cited, he also notes the fact that the daily commandment to remember the Exodus has no connection to saying Hallel in praise of G-d for redeeming us. On the other hand, the mitzva of Sippur on the first night of Pesach entails a requirement to say Hallel. Thus, the mishna in Pesachim 116b discusses how much of Hallel must be appended to the end of Magid (we include the last two paragraphs at that point).

This view may provide us with another reason why no blessing is said on Hallel at the Seder. While many Rishonim (Ritzba, Maharam MiRutenberg, Rav Hai Gaon, Rav Tzemach Gaon, Rav Amram Gaon) actually advocated saying two blessings on Hallel at the Seder - one by Magid and one when we recite it after the meal, our custom is to follow Ra'avyah, Ritz Giat, Rosh, and the Tur, who follow Tosafot Rid and do not say a blessing on it at all, as it is all one unit and there is a huge time lapse in between the beginning and the end of its recitation. However, this idea of The Rov may offer a further explanation, one highlighted by the Derisha. He explains that saying Hallel at the Seder is a fulfillment of the need to see oneself as if they just came out of Egypt (as per Rambam's formulation that one has to actually imagine that it is happening to him right now). Just as the Jews said Hallel when they were redeemed, so too do we have to say it in our moment of (virtual) redemption. Taking these two views together, it seems to me that there is no reason to make a blessing on Hallel, as it is not its own mitzva - it is merely a segment of the commandment to tell over the story of the Exodus.

This is all good and well, but there is at least one Rishon who maintains a connection between the daily mitzva of remembering the Exodus and the special mitzva on the first night of Pesach of recounting the entire story in full detail. In answer to the question of why there is no blessing made on the reading of the Haggadah (as there seemingly should be), Rif answers that we do, in a way, fulfill the need to make such a blessing. How so? Since the text of kiddush includes the phrase "Zeicher l'yetziat Mitzrayim" (a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt), that counts as enough of a connection between the commandment to tell the story and some form of a blessing (which kiddush is) to fulfill this need (Rashba says that there is no blessing because the mitzva of Sippur has no fixed time limit). What is notable about the view of Rif is that this line in kiddush occurs in every kiddush during the year and addresses the daily commandment, and not the one for the first night of Pesach. Nevertheless, he maintains that while they may be very distinct in many aspects, there is still enough of a connection to allow for kiddush to cover the commandment of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim.

SIPPUR YETZIAT MITZRAYIM - PART II

III. SAY WHAT?

We now begin the real challenge - understanding how the Magid section of the Haggadah is structured. Two main questions will guide this inquiry. First, based on our conception of the commandment of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim, what parts of Magid actually fulfill that mitzva? Is saying "Avadim Hayinu" enough? Is saying everything in our current text enough? (content question)

The second big question is what does the gemara mean when it says that we must "begin with the shame and end with the praise"? What is the shame? What is the praise? How do the varying opinions on each not only find their way into our Haggadah but also how are they placed in relation to each other and to other elements of the Magid section? (structure question)

Let us begin with figuring out what should be included in our fulfillment of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim. The simplest approach would seem to be that we are enjoined to tell over the actual story of our enslavement in Egypt and the redemption that ensued. This idea is bolstered by the story of the five Rabbis in Bnei Brak, and perhaps also by the inclusion of the mishna of Rabi Elazar ben Azariah. As we noted last week, he is speaking not about Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim, but rather about the "other" mitzva, namely the daily commandment to remember the Exodus. Nevertheless, the presence of that mishna in our Haggadah may point to the fact that the special commandment of Sippur is, in a sense, merely an expansion of the daily commandment, and thus the real focus on this night is to relate the Exodus story.

However, we must also consider the other option for what our focus should be. Near the end of Magid, we read the mishna of Rabban Gamliel (Pesachim 116b), who states that one must mention the three main commandments of this night - the Pesach-sacrifice, the matza, and the maror. Here the focus seems to be not as much on the story as it is on the mitzvot themselves. This may be highlighted by a line in Pesachim 116a. In discussing the need to ask the four questions, the gemara says that if one has no son or wife, he asks the questions to himself. The gemara then states that "even two wise men who are well-versed in the LAWS of Pesach must ask the questions." While the Haggadah (in "Avadim Hayinu") says "even if we know the entire Torah, we are still commanded to talk about the Exodus," the fact that the gemara focuses on these laws may imply that they are a focus.

This focus on the laws has various other advocates. The Shibbolei HaLeket links the entire mitzva of Sippur to the other mitzvot of the night, and claims that for this reason we raise up the matza and maror when we speak about them. Rambam has perhaps the clearest formulation of this idea when he states "One must say Pesach, matza, and maror, and that is what is called Haggadah," seemingly hanging the entire mitzva of Sippur on its connection to the other mitzvot (this may be consistent with his use of "V'Higadeta L'vincha" as a source for this commandment - that verse appears in the context of the commandment for us to eat matza and not to eat chametz during Pesach - see Shemot 13:6-8). Bach claims that ideally the Haggadah should be said in the presence of the matza that will be used for the mitzva, and thus we begin with "Ha Lachma Anya" - a reference to the matza. We should also note, as we did last week, the view that Sippur is so connected to the other mitzvot of the night that it only applies as long as the mitzva of matza applies, and thus there is only a commandment to tell over the story of Pesach until midnight.

(As a postscript to this idea, we should note that Rav Yoseif Dov Soloveitchik claims that the five Rabbis in Bnei Brak were discussing the mitzvot of Pesach, and were not just telling stories).

As it turns out, we satisfy both views in our Haggadah - we say "Avadim Hayinu" as well as "Arami Oveid Avi," both of which recount the story of the slavery and redemption, and we also recite the mishna of Rabban Gamliel, thus focusing somewhat on the mitzvot themselves. However, we should also note that these two

views are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Meiri notes that the three things in Rabban Gamliel's mishna are a part of telling the story. How is this so? One possible viewpoint requires us to pause and remind ourselves of what Rabban Gamliel really demands of us. He does not insist that we merely mention these three commandments, but that we explain them and give full detailed accounts of why we are performing them. If one takes this seriously, he will inevitably wind up telling the story with all of its minutiae and nuances. Following Rabban Gamliel thus achieves the beautiful result that we "jump off" from his mishna, satisfy both views of what Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim is, and manage to make the mitzvot of eating matza and maror, which could very easily be done by rote, into meaningful and living aspects of our celebration of Pesach.

IV. A METHOD TO THE MADNESS

Now that we understand a small part of why we have so many varied elements in Magid, we will now try to offer an insight into the composition of the Haggadah. As mentioned above, we have to first understand what is meant by "shame" and "praise."

Rambam has a most interesting, and somewhat confusing, approach to this issue. He states "We begin with shame, which is 'Terach the father of Avraham' and end with praise, which is the true faith. We also begin with 'Avadim Hayinu' and end with the miracles that Hashem did for us, which means learning the exegesis on the verses of 'Arami Oveid Avi.'" What is Rambam talking about? What does the "true faith" refer to in the context of our Haggadah? What does he believe is the shame? What is the praise? Does his second statement offer an alternative to his first, or is he being sensitive to the fact that the mishna tells us both to "begin with the shame and end with the praise" as well as to "learn the verses of 'Arami Oveid Avi'"?

However we explain Rambam, the current arrangement of the Haggadah is somewhat difficult to fit into his view. He sees our reference to Avraham as being a beginning point and Arami Oveid Avi as being an ending point. However, they come next to each other in our text. If we were really following Rambam, it would seem to make sense to fulfill each of his statements separately, as opposed to overlapping them!

I would like to suggest that what we really have is a "Haggadah within a Haggadah" (you can call it chiasmic if you want, but I do not plan on getting too sophisticated at this point). There are two keys to this point. The first is the double Hallel that occurs within Magid. One is the two chapters of Tehillim (113 and 114) that we conclude this section of the Seder with, which we generally refer to as Hallel. The second one is Dayeinu, which is also a form of Hallel - it is sung "Hallel u'lhodot" - to praise and to thank Hashem for all that he did for us when he took us out of Egypt. Why do we need two different Hallel's? If we look at the view of Tosafot Rid, we find that he says that saying Hallel is the fulfillment of the gemara's demand that we "end with praise." If this is true, then by saying Hallel twice, that would seem to imply that we discharge our duty to "begin with shame and conclude with praise" not one, but two times during the course of Magid.

The Shibbolei HaLeket makes an interesting comment which may help us to further understand this issue. He claims that "Avadim Hayinu" comes as a direct answer for the question about why we lean, and the answers to the other questions are deferred until the very end, when we recite the mishna of Rabban Gamliel. If this is true, then the beginning and end of Magid may be able to be viewed as forming bookends to what comes in between. We begin with the four questions, we give the initial answer of "Avadim Hayinu," we answer the other questions with Rabban Gamliel, and then we say Hallel. This mini-structure alone fulfills just about every requirement that we have for the Seder - it is done in question-and-answer form, it both tells the story and discusses the mitzvot, it goes from shame to praise, and it includes Hallel.

Within that structure, we have the meat of Magid. The "internal Magid" begins with two introductory paragraphs about the mitzva of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim (the five Rabbis and Rabi Elazar ben Azariah). We then say "Baruch HaMakom," which some view as being the blessing on the commandment of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim. Having made the blessing, we begin fulfilling the commandment. Instead of simply asking four questions, we discuss four types of sons and their questions. We then begin our answer by mentioning "V'Higadeta L'vincha" - stating our obligation to tell over the story on this night (and mentioning the need to relate the story to the other mitzvot). From there we recount Jewish History, beginning with our idolatrous ancestors, proceeding to Avraham's discovery of Hashem and Hashem's promise to him that his descendants would be enslaved but would ultimately be freed, and finally learning the Midrash on "Arami Oveid Avi" as a way of telling over many of the details of our enslavement in Egypt and Hashem's salvation of us. We end all of this with Dayeinu.

What should be clear is that the "internal Magid" is a near-copy of the "external Magid," albeit more detailed. Why do we do this? It would be much simpler to have one, continuous progressive text! I would like to suggest that in arranging

itself in this manner, the Haggadah stresses the entire point of this mitzva. The "external Magid" is an extremely basic fulfillment of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim. It fulfills all of our requirements, but does so in the most general way possible. The "internal Magid" plays off of the general structure of the external one, but gets even more detailed. As such, the internal Hallel, Dayeinu, is very specific in what it praises Hashem for, while the external Hallel is more general in its praise. Perhaps the editor of the Haggadah is reminding us that even the text that we have is not enough. True, we can fulfill our obligation by reciting only what is contained in the "external Magid," but we must strive to step it up a level and recount the story of the Exodus in the manner of the "internal Magid." Beyond that, even the internal section is not sufficient - just as the Haggadah surpasses itself in its execution of this commandment, so too are we encouraged to surpass the text of the Haggadah in our telling of the story. The Haggadah should serve not as the central point of our Seder, but as the basic point of departure for much greater discussion
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From: halacha-owner@yutorah.org on behalf of Beit Midrash [BeitMidrash@yu.edu] Sent April 11, 2005 halacha Subject: Weekly Halacha Overview - The Mitzvah of Sipur Yetziat Mitzraim

RABBI JOSH FLUG

THE MITZVAH OF SIPUR YETZIAT MITZRAIM

There are many mitzvot, practices, and traditions that relate to the first night of Pesach. The most central is the mitzva of sipur yetziat Mitzraim, the recounting of the story of the exodus from Egypt. Acharonim ask a fundamental question regarding the mitzva of sipur yetziat Mitzraim. The Mishna, Berachot 12b, as well as the Haggadah, record a dispute between Ben Zoma and Chachamim as to whether there is an obligation to mention the exodus from Egypt on a nightly basis (zechirat yetziat Mitzraim). Rambam, Hichot Keri'at Sh'ma 1:3, rules in accordance with Ben Zoma that there is a mitzva to mention the exodus on a nightly basis. If in fact, there is such a mitzva, what is added by having an additional mitzva on the first night of Pesach of sipur yetziat Mitzraim. Isn't this already a nightly obligation?

The Difference between Sipur and Zechirah

R. Chaim Soloveitchik, Chidushei HaGrach al HaShas, Pesachim 116a, answers that the mitzva that exists throughout the year is a mitzva of zechirah, mentioning the exodus from Egypt. The mitzva on the first night of Pesach is a mitzva of sipur, recounting the exodus from Egypt. R. Chaim states that this difference is manifest in three ways. First, the Beraita (quoted in Pesachim 116a) states that part of the requirement of sipur yetziat Mitzraim is that it must be in question and answer format. The extent of this requirement is such that even if a person is alone, he must ask questions of himself. R. Chaim notes that this requirement only applies to the mitzva of sipur yetziat Mitzraim. It does not apply to the nightly mitzva of zechirat yetziat Mitzraim. Second, the Mishna, Pesachim 116a, states that the story of the Exodus must start by mentioning the dishonorable events and end with the praiseworthy events. R. Chaim notes that this requirement is limited to the mitzva of sipur yetziat Mitzraim, and not the mitzva of zechirat yetziat Mitzraim. Third, the Mishna, Pesachim 116a, states in the name of Rabban Gamliel that in order to fulfill the mitzva of sipur yetziat Mitzraim, one must mention the korban pesach, the matzah and the maror, and how they relate to the story of the exodus from Egypt. There is no such requirement when fulfilling the nightly obligation to mention the exodus from Egypt.

R. Chaim's grandson, R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (quoted in Hagadat Si'ach HaGrid no. 27), adds one more fundamental difference between the mitzva of sipur yetziat Mitzraim and the mitzva of zechirat yetziat Mitzraim. The mitzva of sipur yetziat Mitzraim not only requires one to recount the story of the exodus from Egypt, but requires that one also praise the Almighty for all of the miracles that were performed at the time. This is why Hallel is recited on the first night of Pesach. As such, Hallel is part of the mitzva of sipur yetziat Mitzraim.

The Tosefta, Pesachim 10:8, states that there is a requirement to learn the laws of Pesach the entire first night of Pesach. [Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 481:2, codifies this Tosefta and writes that one is not required to stay up the entire night, but should at least learn the laws of Pesach until sleep overcomes him.] R. Soloveitchik, *ibid*, no. 22, comments that the requirement to spend the night learning the laws of Pesach is part of the mitzvah of sipur yetziat Mitzraim. One can then add another distinction between the mitzvah of sipur yetziat Mitzraim and the mitzvah of zechirat yetziat Mitzraim. As opposed to the mitzvah of zechirat yetziat Mitzraim, the mitzvah of sipur yetziat Mitzraim requires that one familiarize oneself with the laws that relate to the mitzvot of the first night of Pesach.

A unique aspect of the seder is that one is required see oneself (*lirot et atzmo*) as if he was personally liberated from Egypt (Mishna, Pesachim 116b). Rambam, *Hilchot Chametz UMatzah* 7:6, writes that one must exhibit oneself (*l'harot et atzmo*) as if he was liberated from Egypt. Rambam then writes (*ibid*, 7:7) that this is the reason why one eats in a reclined position (*heseibah*), and why one drinks four cups of wine on the first night of Pesach. One can argue that the requirement to exhibit oneself as if he was liberated is an independent fulfillment of the mitzvah of *pirsumei nissa*, publicizing the miracles. However, one can equally argue that publicizing the miracles of the night is an added fulfillment of the mitzvah of sipur yetziat Mitzraim. Whereas the mitzvah of zechirat yetziat Mitzraim only requires that one mention the exodus from Egypt, the mitzvah of sipur yetziat Mitzraim demands that one re-experience the exodus.

The Role of Children

An integral element of the mitzvah of sipur yetziat Mitzraim is the role of children. Rambam, *ibid*, 7:3, writes that one is required to make certain changes to the meal in order to elicit questions from the children. Rambam, *ibid*, 7:2, adds that even if the children do not ask any questions, there is a mitzvah to teach one's child about the events surrounding the exodus from Egypt.

The Gemara, Pesachim 109a, quotes R. Eliezer that one should grab the matzahs in order that the children don't sleep. Rashi, *ad loc.*, s.v. Chotfin, and Ra'avad, *Hilchot Chametz UMatzah* 7:3, interpret this to mean that the matzah should be eaten without delay in order that children should remain awake. Rambam, *ibid*, 7:3, states that R. Eliezer refers to the practice of stealing the *afikoman* in order that the children stay awake until the end of the meal.

There is another aspect of the mitzvah of sipur yetziat Mitzraim that seems to be at odds with Rashi's interpretation that the matzah should be eaten without delay. The Haggadah states that with regards to the mitzvah of recounting the exodus from Egypt that the more one adds in recounting the exodus from Egypt, the more praiseworthy he is. The Haggadah supports this point by relating a story of five great sages who stayed up the entire night discussing the exodus from Egypt. Many commentaries (*Meyuchas LaRashbam ad loc.*, *Orchot Chaim ad loc.*, and *Kol Bo ad loc.*) ask, how can it be praiseworthy to spend more time recounting the exodus from Egypt; shouldn't the matzah be eaten without delay? They answer that the concept of spending additional time relating the story of the exodus from Egypt does not apply until after the matzah is eaten. The five great sages who spent the entire night discussing the exodus from Egypt only did so after they finished the seder.

Mishna Berurah, Sha'ar HaTzi'un 472:2, implies that there is a different answer implicit in the comments of R. Shimon Ben Tzemach (*Rashbetz*), Ma'amar HaChametz s.v. Tanya. *Rashbetz* writes that the children should be fed expeditiously. Mishna Berurah interprets this to mean that one does not have to perform the seder quickly, but rather one should make sure that the children eat earlier than the rest of the participants.

The practical difference between the two interpretations is whether one should perform the seder quickly, and expound upon the exodus

from Egypt after the seder, or whether one should expound upon the exodus from Egypt during the actual seder while providing the children with an abridged form of the seder. Mishna Berurah leans slightly towards the latter approach.

Both interpretations offer varied solutions as to how ensure that the children are active participants in the seder. They both agree that the participation of the children is of primary importance. Regardless of which approach one follows, one should ensure that the conversations and discussions surrounding the seder are age-appropriate to the participating children.

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"AND G-D HARDENED PHARAOH'S HEART"
BASED ON A SICHA BY HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL
Summarized by Matan Glidai
Translated by Kaeren Fish

"In order that you will tell your children and your children's children of that which I PERFORMED in Egypt, and of the signs that I showed them, that you may know that I am God." (Shemot 10:2)

Rashi and the Ramban explain the phrase, "I performed in Egypt" (*hit'alalti be-Mitzrayim*), as meaning, "I played with Egypt," i.e. I toyed with them. Thus, the verse defines two things which a person must tell his children: a. how G-d "played" with the Egyptians, and b. the signs and wonders that G-d performed in Egypt, demonstrating His power.

A study of the Pesach Haggada reveals that, in fact, we discuss only the second point – we give thanks to G-d Who saved us from Egypt with signs and wonders, and we praise His strong arm. There is no mention in the Haggada of how G-d "played" with the Egyptians. This leads us to ask what exactly this "playing" refers to, and what its purpose was.

Reading the account at the beginning of Sefer Shemot, another question arises, concerning Moshe's running back and forth to Pharaoh. Moshe engages in negotiations with Pharaoh in which, *inter alia*, he proposes a limited three-day journey, and the question concerns who will go and who will remain. Why does Moshe need to engage in these negotiations? Does the Holy One really need Pharaoh's agreement in order to take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt? "And it happened when Pharaoh sent out the nation..." – why the emphasis that Pharaoh sent them out? Why could Bnei Yisrael not have left Egypt quietly and peacefully during the plague of darkness, during which the Egyptians were unable to move?

To answer this, we must understand that Pharaoh had put himself in an unprecedented position: he saw himself as a god, doing as he wished, without being answerable to anyone. Regarding the Nile, he said, "The river is mine, and I have made it for myself" (*Yechezkel* 29:3). During the first five plagues, he hardened his heart and refused to let Bnei Yisrael go, although he saw that he was unable to stand up to the power of God. This phenomenon in itself is most interesting, and Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlap once asked Rav Kook how it is possible for a person to reach a situation of "knowing his Master and nevertheless intending to rebel against Him." To deny G-d is one thing, but how can a person recognize G-d and have

experienced His power, yet nevertheless rebel against Him and refuse His discipline? Rav Kook's answer was that a person's free choice can bring him even to this: if a person reaches a situation where his morality is perverted, then his logic likewise is affected and he will act in an illogical manner. Even if Pharaoh had capitulated and decided to let Bnei Yisrael go, this would not have contradicted his ideology: he would have claimed that no one had forced him to send them out, but that he was his own master and that he had made his own decision at his own discretion. In order to prove that Pharaoh had been wrong and that no one can rebel against the Holy One and be his own master, it was necessary to harden Pharaoh's heart during the last five plagues, withholding his free choice so that he would act in accordance with God's will and not in accordance with his own. This is the meaning of the "playing" with Pharaoh, and this explains the negotiations with him and the running back and forth to him over and over: G-d wanted to show Pharaoh that he was nothing more than a pawn in the Divine plan, and that G-d was able to remove the free choice from someone who had undertaken to rebel against Him. The Rambam, in the last chapter of his "Shemonah Perakim," writes as follows:

"You may ask why he (Moshe) asked of him (Pharaoh) to send out Israel time after time, but he (Pharaoh) was prevented from doing so and the plagues befell him but he was steadfast in his refusal... surely there was no point in asking him (Pharaoh) something that he was unable to do! But this too was done out of God's wisdom, to show him that if G-d chose to cancel his free choice, then He would do so. He said to him, 'I will demand of you to send them out, and if you were to send them out, you would be saved. But you will not send them until you are destroyed.' ... This was also a great sign for all of humanity, as we read, 'In order that My Name be told throughout the land' (Shemot 9:16) – that it is possible for G-d to punish a person by preventing him from being able to do something, and for the person thereby to know and to be unable to bring himself back to that choice."

This was an important lesson that was also learned from the exodus. It is not mentioned at the Seder since it is not connected to the salvation of Am Yisrael, but it is important in its own right. We learn from this that a person who degenerates morally can deteriorate from the level of a human to the level of an automaton. He may perform illogical actions and lose control of his own conduct; in fact, his free choice has been removed from him. This is both a consequence of his immoral behavior and attitudes, as well as a punishment for them. Only conscious moral improvement can prevent this eventuality.

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From: halacha-owner@yutorah.org on behalf of Beit Midrash [BeitMidrash@yu.edu] Sent: Monday, April 18, 2005 1:16 PM To: halacha Subject: Weekly Halacha Overview - The Mitzvah of Achilat Matzah Weekly Halacha Overview from RAV JOSH FLUG @ www.yutorah.org <http://www.msdc.org/emailbanner_flug.JPG> THE MITZVAH OF ACHILAT MATZAH

The Torah, in referring to the holiday of Pesach as Chag HaMatzot, highlights the centrality of the mitzvah of eating matzah on Pesach. Although the laws of preparing matzah are intricate, the laws of eating it are not. Rambam, Hilchot Chametz UMatzah 6:1, states that if one eats a k'zayit (an amount equivalent to the volume of an olive) of matzah, he has fulfilled the mitzvah. However, Rambam's statement only describes the minimum requirement in order to fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzah. When one incorporates the mitzvah of matzah into the seder, numerous complexities arise.

The Need for Three Matzahs

Most families have the tradition of placing three matzahs on the seder plate. What is the need for three matzahs? The Gemara, Pesachim 116a, derives

from a verse (Devarim 16:3) referring to matzah as lechem oni, bread of poverty, that just as a poor person eats bread that is not whole, so too the matzah should be broken and not whole. R. Yitzchak Alfasi, Pesachim 25b, rules that because of this, the seder night serves as an exception to the rule of lechem mishneh that requires one to use two whole loaves for Shabbat and Festival meals. At the seder, one uses two matzahs, but one of them should be broken in order to fulfill the requirement of lechem oni. Rambam, Hilchot Chametz UMatzah 8:6, also concludes that only two matzahs are used, one whole and one broken.

However, Tosafot, Pesachim 116a, note that the requirement of lechem oni, does not impinge on the regular requirement to have two whole loaves at a Yom Tov meal. Therefore, there is a requirement to have three matzahs, two of which are used for lechem mishneh, and the third for lechem oni.

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 473:4, rules in accordance with the opinion of Tosafot, that three matzahs are required at the seder. However, the Vilna Gaon, Biur HaGra, ad loc, rules in accordance with the opinion of Rambam that only two matzahs are required. Furthermore, the Vilna Gaon adds that by using three matzahs, one no longer fulfills the requirement of lechem oni. This is because the purpose of lechem oni is to have an inferior set of lechem mishneh. By having two whole matzahs plus a broken matzah, the set of lechem mishneh becomes superior to that of an ordinary Yom Tov meal. According to the logic of the Vilna Gaon, using three matzahs in order to fulfill both opinions is not an option, because by doing so one undermines the requirement of lechem oni according to Rambam. Most families have the tradition of using three matzahs. Nevertheless, some families use only two matzahs as per Rambam and the Vilna Gaon.

Which Matzah is Used to Fulfill the Mitzvah?

For those who use three matzahs, another issue arises. Rosh, Pesachim 10:30, writes that since there is a requirement to have two whole matzahs, the beracha of hamotzi is recited on the two whole matzahs. However, since the beracha of al achilat matzah is recited on the broken matzah, one would have to eat a k'zayit from the whole matzah as well as another k'zayit from the broken matzah. As Mishna Berurah, Sha'ar HaTziun 475:6, (based on Bach 475) explains, the requirement to eat lechem oni demands that one should fulfill the mitzvah using the broken matzah. However, since the whole matzah is on top, it is improper to bypass the whole matzah in order to eat the broken matzah. Therefore, one should eat both matzahs together and fulfill the mitzvah on both matzahs simultaneously.

Tur, Orach Chaim 475, quotes that there is an opinion that is the reverse of Rosh's opinion. This opinion maintains that the hamotzi is recited on the broken matzah, and al achilat matzah is recited on the whole matzah. Tur writes that in order to satisfy both opinions, one should eat both the whole matzah and the broken matzah together. Perisha 475:1, explains that ideally one should eat the matzah upon which the beracha of al achilat matzah was recited immediately after recitation of the beracha. Since there is a dispute as to which matzah that is, one should eat a k'zayit of each one at the same time.

R. Yechezkel Landau, Tzelach, Pesachim 115b, notes that the items that we use to base our measurements on have gotten smaller since the times of the Talmud. Therefore, one should assume that the k'zayit is twice the size of a normal olive. Mishna Berura 486:1, rules that one should follow this stringency for biblical mitzvot. Despite this stringency, many Poskim (see R. Shlomo Z. Grossman, Siddur Pesach K'Hilchato 8:3) note that one who eats two k'zayitim of matzah in order to eat the whole matzah and the broken matzah together, does not have to eat the larger size k'zayit but rather the smaller size, and inevitably will fulfill the stringency of R. Landau.

The Mitzvah of Afikoman

The Mishna, Pesachim 119b, states that one may not eat after eating the korban pesach. As Rashbam, ad loc., s.v. k'gon, explains, the korban pesach must be eaten by one who is satiated. Therefore, it is eaten at the end of the meal. The Mishna is teaching that not only must one eat the korban pesach at the end of the meal, but one may not eat afterwards in order that the taste of the korban pesach remain in one's mouth. This principle is known as afikoman.

The Gemara, ad loc., further states that the principle of afikoman applies to matzah as well, and therefore one may not eat anything after eating the matzah at the end of the meal (known colloquially as the afikoman). Rashi, ad loc., s.v. Ain, notes that the afikoman is the primary matzah and serves as the matzah in which one fulfills the biblical obligation to eat matzah. However, Rosh, Pesachim 10:34, maintains that the mitzvah of matzah is fulfilled with the matzahs upon which one recites the berachot.

The most significant difference between Rashi's opinion and Rosh's opinion is the time in which one must eat the afikoman. The Gemara, Pesachim 120b, quotes a dispute between R. Elazar Ben Azariah and R. Akiva regarding the

final time to eat the korban pesach. R. Elazar Ben Azariah is of the opinion that the final time is midnight. R. Akiva is of the opinion that the final time is dawn. The Gemara then quotes Rava who states that according to R. Elazar Ben Azariah, one who does not eat matzah until after midnight does not fulfill the mitzvah of matzah. Tosafot, ad loc., s.v. Amar, question whether the halacha follows R. Elazar Ben Azariah or R. Akiva. Rosh, Pesachim 10:38, notes that if one assumes that the fulfillment of the mitzvah of matzah is performed through eating of the afikoman, one should be stringent as this is a matter of Torah law. He then writes that for this reason, Rabbeinu Tam was particularly careful to eat the afikoman before midnight.

R. Avraham Borenstein, Teshuvot Avnei Nezer, Orach Chaim 381, provides a novel approach to the concept of afikoman. R. Elazar Ben Azariah's opinion that one must eat the korban pesach before midnight is derived from makat bechorot, the slaughter of the Egyptian first-born, which was exactly at midnight. Avnei Nezer suggests that according to R. Elazar Ben Azariah, one should ideally eat the korban pesach exactly at midnight. However, since it is impossible to perform such a feat, the formulation of the mitzvah was such that at midnight, the korban pesach should be the dominant food item in one's digestive system. Therefore, one must eat the korban pesach before midnight, and one may not eat anything else after eating the korban pesach. By refraining from eating after the korban pesach, the korban pesach becomes the dominant food as the taste of the korban pesach remains in one's mouth.

Based on this understanding of R. Elazar Ben Azariah's opinion, Avnei Nezer provides a simple solution for those who cannot finish the seder before midnight. Since the time of midnight is only significant in that the afikoman must play the dominant role in one's digestive system at midnight, one can simply eat matzah immediately prior to midnight and refrain from eating until midnight. In this way, the opinion of R. Elazar Ben Azariah is satisfied and one has fulfilled the mitzvah of matzah. Once midnight arrives, even R. Elazar Ben Azariah agrees that one may continue eating as the only critical time is midnight itself. After one finishes the meal, one then eats matzah again to satisfy the opinion of R. Akiva that one may eat the afikoman until dawn. One should not eat anything else after eating this second afikoman. [See Ran, Pesachim 27b, s.v. Garsinan, who notes that there are some who are meticulous to finish the fourth cup of wine before midnight.]

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WHAT IS THE REAL SOURCE FOR
THE TERM "KRIAS" YAM SUF?
By MICHAEL HOENIG

1. The Question

The question is: what is the Makor (source) for Chazal's use of the language, "Krias Yam Suf," specifically utilizing the term "Kriah," commonly understood as "tearing"? Exactly when did this usage start? And, more important, why? Starkly put, the term "Kriah" is an extraordinarily inapt word to use with any body of water, let alone a sea. How does one "tear" the sea? Minimally, it is awkward and clumsy. Moreover, Torah's further text states, "Vayoshuvu Hamayim" (the waters returned). That simply is not the opposite of, or the "repair" for, "tearing" or "Kriah." It is, however, apt opposing terminology for the act of "Bekiah" or splitting of the sea, as Torah actually puts it. Waters divided would "return" to each other. In fact, one can search high and low, but the entire Torah text offers no usage of the word "Kriah" with a body of water. Neither do the books of the Neviim, the Prophets. And Dovid HaMelech (King David), in Tehillim (Psalms), apparently eschews use of the word, seeming to prefer other terminology. The latter fact is quite significant for Tehillim frequently soars with majestic descriptions of Hashem's creations animating extraordinarily beyond their wont: seas seeing and fleeing; mountains trembling or jumping swiftly, etc.

In Sefer Bereishis, at creation, when Hashem separated the waters of the Rakia, the Torah does not use "Kriah" but, rather, "Vayivdelu" (the waters divided). In the Book of Yehoshua (Joshua), when the Jordan River (Yarden) splits miraculously, the text on two occasions is not "Kriah" or "Bekiah" or "Vayivdelu." Rather, it is language of "Krisa" (HaMayim Nichras), also somewhat awkward but, still, no mention of "Kriah." And although "Krisa" might be closer in parlance to "Kriah," that usage in Yehoshua suggests that "Krisas Yam Suf" would then be more apt.

Biblically speaking, therefore, the expression, "Krias" Yam Suf, so ubiquitous

today, indeed now almost the exclusive vernacular, is unknown to scripture. Not only that, the traditional Siddur (prayer book) does not use the term at all, although the splitting of the Yam Suf is mentioned several times in our daily prayers. Likewise, the major Piyutim, for example, the Selichos prayers, when referring to the sea dividing, do not seem to mention "Krias" Yam Suf. Other expressions are used.

Torah references to the miracle at the Sea actually use the language of "Bekiah" (dividing or splitting) as in "Vayivaku Hamayim." Siddur references do likewise, as in "Bokeah Yam Lifnei Moshe." The Book of Nechemia (9:11) says "Vehayam Bakaata Lifneihem." Tehillim, Psalm 136, uses language of "Gezirah" as in "Legozer Yam Suf Ligzorim," referring to the miracle where the splitting of the sea was further refined to create 12 distinct, parallel paths each separated by a wall of water, through which each tribe could pass within its own pathway. So, if the ancient, original sources eschew use of "Kriah," how and why and when did this markedly inapt term work its way into Rabbinic dialogue and then become perhaps the dominant expression?

The question is not merely academic. Torah language has a profundity to it. Torah text ought to be continually studied, used and not cast aside for a perhaps inappropriate substitute that may distort the linguistic, interpretive, poetic and scriptural message the original term intended. Pinpointing exactly when and why the expression "Krias Yam Suf" surfaced would help explain whether certain of Chazal may have intended the expression to play some important role and, perhaps, why it became so popular. Was it meant to explain or interpret scripture? Enhance scripture? Be synonymous with scripture? Displace scripture? If we are to recall the Yam Suf phenomenon each day in holy prayer, why change the seemingly preferred, classical texts?

The HaKesav VeHaKaballah, Part I, on Shemos 14:16, Parshas Beshalach (Rabbi Yaakov Tsvi Mecklenberg), actually asks the question the other way around: why does Torah use the language of "Bekiah" when Chazal use the expression "Kriah."? The answer given is notable and remarkable, yet it only heightens our questions. This respected commentary suggests that a fantastic geological and topographical miracle occurred in which a deep, low valley (Bikah) was formed in the sea bed. This miracle is said to be a response to Bnai Yisrael's explicit refusal to enter the sea when Moshe commanded. "We will not pass until the sea is turned into a valley before us" ["Lo Naavor Ad Sheyeaseh HaYam Bikah Lefonenu"], they said. In this version of the miracle, not only did the water shift but a major geological change occurred. Given the arguably "greater" miracle of water splitting plus valley-formation, one would expect the language of "Bekiah" to not only be retained but preferred. Such imagery would add glory to the miraculous events. Why would Chazal shift at some point to an awkward expression that does not convey this astounding result?

2. The Time Frame

The Passover Haggadah mentions language of "Kriah" only once, in the "Dayenu" recitation. However, it is not clear that the "Dayenu" composition itself was actually in the Haggadah when originally issued or added later. Although the Passover Haggadah was assembled in Talmudic times, its content seemed to be fluid. Apparently, it was during the "Gaonim" period (9th and 10th centuries C.E.) that a stable text form emerged. The earliest, completed Haggadah text, according to one internet source, appeared in the Siddur of Rav Saadia Gaon of the Sura Academy (Babylonia, 10th century C.E.). However, an earlier, almost complete text appeared in the Seder (or Siddur) of Rav Amram Gaon (Scholar of the Sura Academy, 9th century C.E.). Other than Rav Amram's, the earliest written forms of Haggadah text are mostly found in the Cairo Genizah (depository in Egypt in the 10th and 13th centuries C.E.).

According to the Ohr Somayach website ("Pesach/The History of the Haggadah"), additions were made to the Haggadah, such as Chad Gadya and Dayenu. Says this source: "Rav Saadia Gaon (882 CE-942 CE) included neither in his Haggadah, although he did recognize the existence of Dayenu." Neither Rashi nor Rambam included Chad Gadya in their versions although Rashi did include Dayenu. The foregoing seems to suggest that elements of Haggadah text trace back to Talmudic times but that the more stable text originates in the Gaonic era. This still raises questions as to when "Dayenu" was added and, even, whether the original text of the song had the language of "Kriah" as do later versions.

The Passover Haggadah titled, "The Temple Haggadah" (The Temple Inst., Carta; Cana 1996), by noted Beis HaMikdash (Holy Temple) expert and author Israel Ariel, provides a commentary oriented to Temple practices. At p. 36 of the English version, the author suggests that the "Dayenu" was "a song recited by the festive pilgrims upon the 15 steps." The 15 points of Dayenu, it is suggested, correspond to the 15 "Songs of Ascent" in the Psalms. Others maintain they symbolize the 15 steps in the Holy Temple leading from the Women's Court to the Nikanor Gate and on through to the Court of Israel (citing Mishnaic, Talmudic

sources). The author then develops the conclusion that the Dayenu song is “indeed ancient, and dates from the era of the Temple,” suggesting that it was sung by joyful pilgrims and was connected to the recitation made by persons bringing the first fruits. If Dayenu dates to Temple times, which Temple was it? And did it actually incorporate the language of “Kriah” as do later versions?

With the help of a young Talmid Chacham, a Smicha candidate from Yeshiva University’s RIETS, a computer word search was conducted upon the Bar Ilan Responsa Project (number 10) for the expression “Krias Yam Suf.” It appeared five (5) times in the Talmud Bavli (Babylonian) and three (3) times in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Jerusalem). This clearly suggests some usage of the term during Talmudic times but, given the textual breadth of these works, such numbers do not seem overwhelming. By contrast, there were more “hits” for usage of “Kriah” in Midrashic literature such as the Mechilta, Sifri, Bereishis and Shemos Rabbah and others. By the time of the Rishonim Commentators such as Rashi, “Krias Yam Suf” seems the dominant expression.

Notably, the foregoing appears to suggest that Torah, Navi, Psalms, the Siddur and earlier holy writings all use terms other than “Kriah”; that this expression is only modestly reflected in Talmudic texts and somewhat more in Midrashic sources; and, later, after the Gaonic era, the Dayenu song was added to original Haggadah texts where “Kriah” is mentioned only once. Israel Ariel suggests “Dayenu” was sung in the Temple by Olei Regel (pilgrims) but it is not clear from his comments which Temple or whether the ancient version of the song actually used language of “Kriah.” If the foregoing rough survey is correct, clearly, a “sea change” of sorts (pun intended) seems to have occurred in Talmudic – Midrashic times. Why? What is so preferable about “Kriah.”? What is “wrong” with the classic scriptural language? As the HaKesav VeHaKabbalah suggests, the miracle had been enhanced. Why not project that more majestic image?

3. Some Responses

A. A “Simple Answer”: The Question is Flawed

A celebrated Rosh Yeshiva and scholar advised this writer that, from his perspective, there was a “simple answer” and that, in essence, the question was “in error.” The question mistakenly focuses on Chazal’s language change here as if it were a single issue. In fact, however, there are literally thousands of instances where Chazal departed from the Lashon Mikrah, the Torah’s language, to form a Lashon Chachomim. Essentially, it is as if there are two Hebrew languages, that of Torah and that of the Mishnah. To illustrate, this scholar offered some examples. Take the word, “sun.” In Torah the term used is “Shemesh” but Mishnah uses the expression, “Chamah.” Similarly, the word, “moon,” is signified in Torah by “Yareach” but Mishnah uses the term “Levana.” The word for “here” in Torah is “Po” but in Lashon HaMishnah, the word, “Kan” is used. The Rosh Yeshiva says there was a totally different Hebrew spoken by the Tannaim. Chazal quite unconsciously changed word forms. This phenomenon is also traced in a two-volume text called, “Lashon Mikrah VeLashon Hachamim” (author: Abba Ben David; Devir Publishers, Tel Aviv, 1967), giving many examples.

Perhaps the word “Gazar,” in Mishnaic times, became a word more associated with passing laws and Bris Milah so Chazal did not wish to utilize the term Dovid HaMelech used for the miracle at the Sea, “Gozer Yam Suf LeGezorim.” In the Mishnah the word “Bekiah” is associated with wood-chopping, so perhaps the majestic splitting of the Sea was, instead, called “Kriah.” Since this particular change in language is only one among countless others, the methodological approach of the question posed at this essay’s outset is wrong. Indeed, says this scholar, one could ask the same question about many word changes made by Chazal. According to this viewpoint, therefore, Chazal’s change from “Bekiah” to “Kriah” evolved and was not necessarily purposeful or distinctive.

B. Questions of Great Depth; Perhaps A Secret (Sod)?

The questions posed in this essay and the elusiveness of answers seem validated, however, by statements attributed to three Torah luminaries as recorded by other notables. Indeed, so deep and complex are the reasons, they seem shrouded in some mystery. These sources were referred to this writer by a recognized Talmid Chacham in Toronto, Canada.

1. The Chidushei HaRim

The Likutei Yehudah, sefer of the grandson of the Chidushei HaRim (the Gerrer Rebbe), reports [at Beshalach, pp. 94-95] that the Gadol Hador (the Great Sage of his generation) was asked why Chazal use language of “Krias Yam Suf” but in Torah we find only language of “Bekiah”? [Shoalti Oso (the Chidushei HaRim) Lama Bedivrai Chazal Nikra Krias Yam Suf, UBeTorah Lo Matzinu Kasuv Ela Lashon Bekiah]. The Gerrer Rebbe answered that he had many things to say on this subject but was unable to transmit but a small “Remez” or hint. [VeHeshiv, SheYesh Lo Devarim Harbei BaZeh VeEino Yachol Lomar Ach Remez MeAt].

The Chidushei HaRim went on to explain his Remez snippet in terms of

“Kriah” being terminology used when two separate things have been made into one and then, afterwards, when they are separated, this is called “Kriah.” But, as to an item that was unitary to begin with, the act of separation is not called “Kriah.” Since the Sea had a “Tnai” or condition that it would split and glorify Hashem but was held together until the miracle of separation, the apt language is “Kriah.” The waters, so to speak, were “separated” from inception but thereafter put together as one. Therefore their later division is called “Kriah.” [Likutei Yehudah, Beshalach, p. 95].

Now a startling further revelation by the Likutei Yehudah! The Chidushei HaRim was also asked, why then did the Torah use language of “Bekiah”? [VeShoalti Oso Lama BaTorah Nikra Bekiah?] The Gerrer Rebbe answered that he was not able to respond because his lips were sealed on the matter! [VeHeshiv Li Ki Eino Yachol Lomar Ki Mastimin Es Piv (on these matters)]. With the latter expression, the Chidushei HaRim obviously was not saying he did not know the answer but, rather, meant to say that the matter was not one for him to reveal; his lips were sealed on it; it was a matter of Sod (secret)!

The Likutei Yehudah cites the Ramasayim Tzofim, a commentary (Perush) on the Tanna DiBay Eliahu [see Zuta, Perek 16, Ramasayim Tzofim 10, Parshas Beshalach], where this entire episode with the Chidushei HaRim is also quoted along with additional pertinent elaboration by the commentator on Chazal’s choice of “Kriah.”

2. The Baal HaTanya Commentary

The Baal HaTanya (Lubavitcher Rebbe) Siddur has a commentary called Shaar Chag HaMatzot [see pp. 578-584], where the episode of Krias Yam Suf and its particulars is discussed at length. Much of it is Kabbalistic in nature and beyond this writer’s comprehension. The commentary says near the outset that it is important to comprehend the “body” or essence of the episode of Krias Yam Suf and why it was referred to in the idiom of “Kriah.” [Yesh LeHavin Guf Inyan Krias Yam Suf ... VeLama Nikra BeShem Kriah ...] Citing the Zohar, Arizal, etc., the author somehow connects the descent of Neshamos (souls) to this world as a kind of “birth” with an analogy to the birth of a baby who passes from the realm of the unseen to be revealed. This, then, is the pertinence of the subject of “Kriah,” analogous to the opening of the narrow womb for the birth of a baby, where the infant passes from the waters that housed him and is revealed via the “tearing” away from the womb. [See discussion, id at pp. 578-579]. For our purposes here, the significance of such profound thoughts is that there somehow is a purposefulness and, indeed, profound depth in Chazal’s election to use the language of “Kriah.”

3. The Reshimos Lev: ‘Utmost Depth’

The Reshimos Lev, a sefer by Rabbi Yonason David, contains certain MaMorim and HaOros (statements and insights) attributed to the noted Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Chaim Berlin, Rav Yitzchak Hutner ztl. Under the title, “Pesach (Year Tof Shin Lamed Aleph),” at p. 54, the Reshimos Lev states that scrutiny is required as to why Chazal used the term “Krias,” and did not say “BeKias” Yam Suf, as the Torah uses the latter expression. The Reshimos Lev recites that Rabbi Yonason David, son-in-law of Rav Hutner, advised that this question had been asked of the Chidushei HaRim and the latter responded that the subject was extremely “deep,” to the utmost. [VeAl Zeh HeFr ... Rav Yonason Shlita SheShoAlu Ken LeChidushei HaRim, VeHeshiv SheHu Davar Amuk Ad Meod].

C. A Scriptural Source?

A renowned Talmid Chacham from Queens, New York, well-known for his incisive Shiurim, suggests that the question is answered by Scripture, specifically in Yirmiah, 22:14, where the Prophet states, “VeKora Lo Chalony.” Astscroll translates this as, “he breaks open windows for himself.” Both Rashi and Radak, however, explain the word “VeKora” as a form of “opening.” Radak also refers to Targum Onkolos’ translation “Upatzem” similarly. Indeed, Rashi [at 22:14] cites other instances in Navi where the language of “Kriah” is used, also essentially meaning “to open.” Rashi says, after citing two such other Navi references, “Kulan Lashon Pesicha,” all are language of “opening.” Thus, suggests the respected scholar from Queens, Chazal’s use of the idiom “Kriah” for the Yam Suf experience is logical, i.e., the Sea “opened” before Bnai Yisrael. And Chazal thus had a Scriptural source for using this descriptive language.

Another Talmid Chacham from Queens, a Talmid of the former’s Shiurim, adds that Tosafos, in Sanhedrin 11a, in explaining how Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel can refer to the word “Chodesh” (month) as a period of only 29 days when Torah in another context refers to “Chodesh” as a full month of 30 days, says: “Lashon Torah LeChud VeLashon Chachamim LeChud” [the language used by Torah is one thing and the language used by Talmudic Sages is another]. In other words, Chazal can and do adopt suitable terminology which differs from that used by Torah. Combining their suggestions, this learned duo believe Chazal meant to

emphasize the Sea “opening” (as Rashi and Radak opine “Kriah” to mean in Yirmiah) and that it is not at all strange that Chazal departed from the Torah language.

However, the cited text in Yirmiah clearly does not deal with a sea or a body of water. Moreover, one of Rashi’s additional sources for “Kriah” meaning “Pesicha” (opening) is from the Book of Yeshayah (Isaiah) 63:19, where the Prophet renders, “Lu Korata Shamayim ...” [If only you would tear open the heavens ...] Rashi in Yirmiah reads “tearing” here as an idiom for “opening.” Yet, a few Pesukim earlier, the very same Prophet says, “BoKeah Mayim Mipneihem LaAsos Lo Shem Olam” [“Who split the Sea before them to make Himself eternal renown? [Isaiah 63:12]. Thus, when dealing with a body of water, and specifically the Sea, Yeshayah uses language of “Bekiah,” the very same expression used elsewhere in Scripture with the Yam Suf episode. Would Chazal eschew the Navi’s language dealing directly with the Yam Suf in order to adopt other language not dealing with water at all simply because the latter meant to convey a form of “opening”? And, in any event, why should “Kriah” supplant “Bekiah”?

4. Other Rabbinical Responses

A. ‘Tearing’ Up the ‘Shtar Chova’

A Haggadah in Hebrew entitled, “Ki Yishalcha Bincha,” featuring more than 600 questions and answers explaining the Haggadah, asked a question on “Dayenu.” “Why did the Magid use language of Kora” in the song? Why didn’t he say, “Boka Lanu Es HaYam,” given the language of “Bekiah” in Torah? The text’s commentary answers as follows. Midrashically speaking, the Yam Suf at creation was formed with a “Tnai,” a precondition or obligation – a kind of “genetic debt,” so to speak – that it would split at precisely the time of the Exodus. The sea was thus pre-programmed to divide (citing Yalkut Shimoni). Building on this Midrashic thought, the author of the response suggests that, when the sea divided as it was obligated to do, the “Shtar Chova,” the IOU or document of debt, was “torn up” thereby releasing the obligation. [Kemo Adam SheYesh Lo Chov Al Chavero BiShtar UBeshaas Periah, Korea HaShtar]. To commemorate this occasion, the Dayenu song uses language of “Kriah,” i.e., “tearing.” Nice! But where is the Makor for that? Did Chazal really reason similarly when they started to use the term?

B. ‘Jewish Press’ Answer

In September 1998, the basic question was posed by a fascinated, learned letter writer to the author of the Jewish Press’ “Questions and Answers” column [see Jewish Press, Sept. 4, 1998, pp. 5, 76]. The column reinforces our question: later references to “Kriah” by Rashi and Kli Yakar “do not explain why Chazal chose this particular terminology ... in preference to several other available synonyms. Better yet, why didn’t they use the scriptural text itself.”? [Id. at 76] The column then notes scant Talmudic references to “Krias Yam Suf,” one suggesting that marriage matchmaking is as difficult as splitting the Yam Suf (Sotah). Commentaries suggest this only refers to matchmaking of a second marriage. (zivug sheni) Two couples, two unions, are torn apart in order to arrive at the zivug sheni. There is some parallel to events at the sea since rescue of Bnai Yisrael meant drowning of the Egyptians, ostensibly a kind of tearing apart. The Jewish Press column also suggests that “Kriah,” rending of a garment, is a sign of mourning. Likewise, there was crying in Heaven at the destruction of the Almighty’s creatures at the sea, a kind of mourning. These suggestions are interesting but do they clearly and authoritatively answer the questions?

C. Emunah and Bitachon Enhance “Bekiah” into “Kriah”

A notable Talmid Chacham from Toronto combines a point from Rav Chaim Volozhin’s, Nefesh HaChayim [Shaar Aleph – Perek 9, at pp. 32-33], with the Baal HaTanya’s commentary, previously addressed, about the “tearing” of the emerging baby from the mother’s womb. The Nefesh HaChayim relates that when Hashem said to Moshe, “Why do you cry unto me? Speak to the Bnai Yisrael and let them proceed” [Ma Titzak Elai, Daber El Bnai Yisrael VeYisaU (Shemos 14:15)], Hashem wanted the nation’s faith and confidence to manifest so that their certainty of the Sea splitting would be felt. The miracle would thereby be enhanced as the People proceeded. However, the first few steps, the initial burst forward into the Sea, was paramount. Says the Nefesh HaChayim, this expression of Bitachon and faith would be a stimulus in Heaven above to effect the miracle and the Sea would split before them. [VeYisru Haloch VeNasoa El HaYam ... MeOtzem Bitachonam SheVadai Yikora Lifneihem. Az Yigremu Al Yedai Zeh HisOreus LeMaalah, SheYaaseh Lahem HaNes VeYikora Lifneihem] Hashem wanted the honor and distinction (Kavod) for the miracle to be attributable to the Bnai Yisrael for their confident dismissal of fear and assumption of absolute faith.

Under this dynamic, the opening aspects of the miracle were “Bekiah,” an initial splitting of the water, the sea bed becoming dry and the 12 walls being formed. However, as the People proceeded with surging confidence, “Kriah” occurred, in that the walls and other facets of the miracle “adjusted” further to the

People’s needs. The Baal HaTanya’s reference to the phenomenon of the newborn emerging by “tearing” away from the mother’s womb is similar in that Hashem greatly assists the infant’s egress after the first few human efforts ensue. The language of “Kriah” better emphasizes the role of the great Bitachon shown by Bnai Yisrael at a time of danger and glorifies their role in enhancing the miracle at the Sea.

D. Heightened Perceptions During the Miracle

A Talmid Chacham from Lakewood views Chazal’s change in terminology as reflective of the great status achieved by Bnai Yisrael during the miracles at the Sea. He suggests that the language of “Bekiah” connotes something done with an instrument or via some medium, citing to the Gemara in Kidushin 47, which speaks of a “ShoEl,” a borrower of an axe: “BaKa Bo, Bo KanOh”; if he chopped with the axe he becomes a ShoEl. When Hashem split the Sea, to the ordinary human eye, he seemed to use the medium or instrument of the strong east wind which blew all the night. But the People, having reached the intimate, visionary status of declaring “Zeh Keli VeAnvehu,” recognized instead that Hashem performed the miracle, so to speak, with his own hands. The language of “Kriah,” a tearing, is appropriate when one rends something with his own hands. Because “Kriah” better extols and reflects the unique perceptive ability of Bnai Yisrael at that special moment, Chazal preferred using this term. This approach is similar in style to another substitution by Chazal of a word in Torah with one of their own. The Torah calls the Passover Holiday, “Chag HaMatzos,” but Chazal (and we today) call the Festival, “Pesach.” The reason, said the Berditchover Rebbe, is this: Hashem emphasizes praise of Bnai Yisrael for abstaining from Chometz and eating Matzos, hence Torah calls the Holiday, Chag HaMatzos. Bnai Yisrael, on the other hand, praise Hashem for saving us from Makas Bechoros, the deadly Tenth Plague, hence we emphasize this aspect of the miracle with the name, Pesach. Similarly, Chazal elected to use the term “Kriah” to extol the Nation’s high status and its visionary recognition that the Sea was “torn,” so to speak, with Hashem’s own hands.

E. Terminology Related to Phases of the Miracle

In 1998, intrigued by the question, Rabbi Yaakov B. Ackerman, Rav of the Kehilla Heichal Shlomo in Kiryat Ata (as well as Director of Yeshivat Tikvat Yaakov in Sde Yaakov), Israel, researched the topic (including computer searches).

This resulted in an article, as yet unpublished [manuscript in Hebrew], entitled, “Krias Yam Suf; Belnian Lama Chazal Mishtamshim BeVitui Krias Yam Suf BiMekom BeVitui Shel HaTorah HaKedosha Bekias Yam Suf” [Regarding Why Chazal Use the Expression Krias Yam Suf Rather Than That of the Holy Torah, Bekias Yam Suf].

Rabbi Ackerman surveys scriptural, Midrashic, and Rabbinical usage of language of “Bekiah,” “Gezirah” and “Kriah” in attempting to answer the question posed. He notes the linguistic and idiomatic characteristics of the terminology as used in other scriptural contexts. For example, in Bereishis, Parshas VaYera, the Torah says, “VaYivaka Atzei Olah” [Avraham split the wood for the Olah offering], which Targum Onkolos renders “VeTzalach.” Here, according to Onkolos, it means to cut (or separate them) into a number of small pieces. Similarly, in a Navi text, “VaYivaku Atzei HaAgalah” [the wood of the wagon was split], Targum Onkolos translates it as “Tzalach” also meaning many pieces. Yet, in other references to “Bekiah,” Targum Onkolos translates them as “Boza.” The author suggests that all other scriptural references to “Bekiah” mean that the division or splitting was only into two pieces or two parts. So, too, with Krias Yam Suf. [Ulam Bishar Bekios SheMuzkarim BeTanach Haysa HaBekiah Lishnayim, Kemo VaTivaka HaAdamah – Velzbezata Ara. VeChen BiKrias Yam Suf – Muzkar SheHayam Nechlak LeShenayim].

Rav Ackerman focuses similarly on the Psalms’ use of language of “Gezirah” [Psalm 136 – LeGozer Yam Suf LiGezorum]. Targum Onkolos there explains Gezirah as “LeTzaleach Yama DeSuf LeTzilucha,” using the root word “Tzalach.” Rashi renders “Gezirah” as 12 “torn” parts for the 12 Tribes [12 “Keraim” for 12 Shevatim (using the root word “Kora”)]. Midrashic literature, however, is not uniform. The Yalkut says the Yam Suf was split in two. The Mechilta says it was divided into 12 parts. There are many Midrashic nuances on precisely what happened at the sea.

After similarly surveying the idiom in Talmudic, Midrashic and Commentary sources, Rav Ackerman suggests that the multiple terminology used variously by scripture and Chazal reflects the complexity and multiple-stage, miraculous nature of the splitting of the Yam Suf. The essential core of the miracle was the sea’s splitting into two parts – therefore, Torah language uses “Bekiah.” Then Dovid HaMelech, in Psalm 136, hints at a continuation of the miracle in a broader manner, namely, creation of 12 pathways for the Tribes. This explains use of the language of “Gezirah.” Chazal use language of “Kriah,” suggests Rav Ackerman, because the 12 passages were then refined even further to accommodate differences in the size and width needed for each Tribe to go through its pathway.

“Kriah,” this reasoning continues, is appropriate terminology because, when used in the Talmud [i.e., matchmaking is as difficult as Krias Yam Suf; and making a living is as difficult as Krias Yam Suf], Chazal intended to convey the message that Hashem actually matches couples or allots livelihood to persons according to their needs. [HaKadosh Boruch Hu Nosen Parnasa LeAdam Kefi Hatzorchim Shelo; Vegam Mezogeg Zivugim Lefi HaTzorech]. Similarly, the language of “Kriah” at the Yam Suf connotes a later, refined stage in the splitting of the sea whereby each of the 12 pathways [Gezirim] adjusted, so to speak, according to the needs of each Tribe. To glorify and extol the breadth and complexity of the miracle and thus increase faithful belief [Emunah], suggests Rav Ackerman, Chazal adopted usage of language of “Kriah.” The latter adds a dimension beyond initial splitting of the sea in two. [Ki HaKria HaPitzul Hevi LeAm Yisrael LeHaamin BaShem UveMoshe Avdo Emunah Gedola VeChazaka, VeLachen Mishtamshim Chazal BeLoshon Kria LeHachdir Bonu Emunah].

5. Absence of a Consensus

The foregoing scholarly and informative insights do not reveal a consensus definitively explaining the “when,” “how” and “why” “Krias Yam Suf” became Chazal’s dominant terminology. We do not have, it appears, an authoritative consensus as to why we should not persistently use Torah’s own terminology of “Bekiah” or why this expression was (or should be) supplanted. We do not precisely know why Tehillim’s use of “Gezira” is not sufficient of itself. That Torah luminaries and brilliant, scholarly minds differ so markedly on what seems a “simple” question is intriguing in and of itself. The range of opinion is startlingly broad. The Chidushei HaRim seems to suggest a complexity and depth of meaning partaking of “Sod” or secret. The Reshimos Lev, citing the latter, says the matter is of the utmost depth. The Baal HaTanya suggests that the expression connotes rich Kabbalistic meanings tied up with the birth of souls. On the other hand, a noted Rosh Yeshiva and scholar/author suggests that the question is not profound, indeed, it is methodologically flawed. Chazal often changed Torah language, sometimes quite unconsciously, and formed essentially a Mishnaic Hebrew different from scripture. This is one of those many instances. Other gifted Rabbis, scholars and Talmidei Hachamim disagree. Chazal’s change of terminology here was indeed purposeful. They answer the questions either by identifying a Makor (source) in Navi or by advancing a number of rationales rooted in established Rabbinic commentary or analysis of scriptural language.

6. This Writer’s Observations

Following years of grappling with the questions, this writer’s own, lay observations are offered here for what they are worth. First, the Siddur’s use of “Bekiah” and not “Kriah” makes eminent sense because the Siddur’s prayers are largely comprised of scriptural verses. Thus, if Torah uses “Bekiah” and not “Kriah,” then we can expect the Siddur to follow suit and not create new idiom. Second, the computer word-search survey noted above suggests modest infusion of the expression “Kriah” in Talmudic, Midrashic times. The Rishonim, such as Rashi, seem to have run with it. Since Rashi was one of the most prolific commentaries and was most commonly coupled with Books of Scripture which were distributed widely after the advent of the printing press, his (and possibly others’) influence in language usage could have popularized the term “Kriah” into dominance.

Third, this writer would hypothesize that language of “Kriah” for a body of water, while thoroughly awkward in the sense that one doesn’t “tear” water, is perhaps arguably fitting in regard to the Yam Suf miracle. Our tradition, Midrashically speaking, is that the Yam Suf was a “reluctant moose” when it was commanded to split. It simply “refused.” In effect, Midrashically speaking, it was forced to divide. Moreover, the nature of water (its Teva) is to come together, to remain together, to cling together, to flow uniformly within its container. Water is thus programmed, in a kind of “genetic” sense to “resist” division. (For example, water doesn’t “divide” with a knife or axe or scissor, etc.). Therefore, to force or coerce a sea to split, Divine power would, in effect, have to “tear” one portion away from another. Hashem’s overturning of the sea’s very nature would be a miracle, in effect, against nature, a kind of intrinsically violent, forceful ripping asunder of the sea’s “will.” “Kriah” might project an apt and vivid word picture of such divine coercion, perhaps lending itself to popularization of this concept. This hypothesis seems reinforced by Chazal’s teachings when, in Bereishis, Hashem divides the waters of the Rakia. For that day of creation, the Torah notably does not say “Ki Tov” [it was good]. The reason, suggest Chazal, is that waters wish to cling together so dividing the firmament’s waters was forcefully coercive and against their nature, not a suitable circumstance to commemorate with the statement “Ki Tov.” Perhaps this same notion was embraced by Chazal using the symbolic language of “Kriah” when describing the truly miraculous events at the Sea. (Yet, in the Rakia division of waters, Torah uses the term, “Vayivdelu.”)

In any event, this essay ends essentially with many “responses” but no

definitive, consensus answer. Hopefully, someone will soon come forward to reveal yet another authoritative source or to shed additional light on what the Makor of “Kriah” is and why. Perhaps knowledgeable experts will take up the challenge of a further search. Or, perhaps, this may be one of those tense occasions when a question resists any consensus and thus, arguably might be better than its answers.