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To: parsha@groups.io
From: Chaim Shulman <cshulman@gmail.com>
& Allen Klein <allen.klein@gmail.com>

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON Shvii & Achron Shel Pesach - 5785

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subject: Rabbi Benjamin Yudin - History is the Revelation of His Story
Rabbi Benjamin Yudin

History is the Revelation of His Story

The Torah (Devarim 16:8) teaches, "For a six-day period you should eat matzos, and on the seventh day, Atzeres LaHashem." Artscroll translates atzeres as "an assembly to Hashem," while Rashi, in his second interpretation, explains it as a day of ingathering. That is, we are to bring together all the concepts and ideas of the holiday. I'd like to suggest that the celebration of shevi'i and achron shel Pesach is the culmination of the holiday of emunah - complete and total faith in Hashem - granting us the fortitude to carry that faith forward.

At the Pesach Seder we follow the opinion of Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah who holds that the korban Pesach must be eaten by chatzos even though his colleague Rabbi Akiva permits it to be eaten throughout the night of the fifteenth of Nisan. One explanation is that unlike other celebrations - such as a wedding, bris, or pidyon haben - which celebrate an event that has already occurred (the ring placed on the bride's finger, the circumcision performed, etc.), nothing had yet happened by the start of Pesach night. Pharaoh only awoke and called Moshe and Aharon to free the slaves after chatzos, after hearing the cries of his people in response to the tenth plague.

Logically, then, one would expect us to celebrate after chatzos, since nothing redemptive had happened before that point and we were still slaves, but we do something counterintuitive. At the very first Pesach seder, even before chatzos, we celebrated our emunah that Hashem would somehow extricate and redeem us from Egypt. We therefore finish the afikomen before chatzos to relive and internalize the message of the matzah, which is referred to by the Zohar as michlah d'mihemenu (bread of faith).

Just as food provides nourishment and medicine provides healing, so too the very act of eating matzah is an injection of faith. It not only commemorates the faith of our ancestors who left Egypt without provisions, but it also empowers us to face and overcome personal and communal challenges. It gives us the strength to weather life's storms with emunah, i.e. with faith in

Hashem that everything He does is for the good, even when we do not understand it.

This is the lesson taught by Midrash Rabbah on the opening verse of the Shirah ("az yashir...") which we sing daily in Pesukei D'Zimrah and read from the Torah on shevi'i shel Pesach. According to the Seforno, this is why the seventh day of Pesach is a special yom tov - to commemorate the incredible miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea.

The Midrash notes that Moshe began the Shirah with the word "az", the same word he used earlier to complain to Hashem. In Shemos (5:23), Moshe had said, "Umei'az ba'si el Pharaoh - since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name, he made things worse, and You have not saved Your people." It is not coincidental that the same word - az- is used in both contexts. The Midrash explains that Moshe was now thanking Hashem not only for the salvation, but even for the suffering that preceded it. The Torah introduces the shira as follows (15:1), "then Moshe and b"y chose to sing this song to Hashem, and they said - leimor - the following." What does the last word - leimor - mean? Our rabbis answer that it means to teach future generations this most important lesson which is encapsulated by R' Akiva's statement (Berachos 60b), "kol ma d'avid rachmana l'tav avid - all that Hashem does is for the good". At times we might not understand it or realize it, but our Emunah shleima urges us to weather all storms.

The Brisker Rav, in his commentary at the end of Parshas Shemos, explains: if someone falls ill and then recovers, they will surely thank Hashem for their healing, but they might still wish the illness had never happened. Moshe, however, by using the same word "az", teaches that he and the Jewish people thanked Hashem not only for taking them out of Egypt, but also for the servitude itself. For through their suffering, they became the vehicle by which Hashem's greatness was revealed to the world, as the Midrash teaches that all the waters of the world split, proclaiming to all of mankind Hashem's power and omnipotence. The Shirah is not just thanks for drowning the Egyptians; it is thanks for the entire process that preceded it. Interestingly, the verse immediately preceding the Shirah says, "Vaya'aminu ba'Hashem u'b'Moshe avdo - and they believed in Hashem and in Moshe His servant." In the very next verse, they say, "Zeh Keili - This is my G-d." Rashi, citing the Mechilta, explains that a maidservant at the sea saw divine revelation clearer than the great Prophet Yechezkel. If so, why does the Torah use the language of belief (vaya'aminu)? Shouldn't it say they knew?

The answer is that their reward came in the merit of their faith. Rabbenu Bachya, in his introduction to Parshas Beshalach, teaches that the sea did not split immediately when the Jews reached its banks. Rather, each person had to walk into the water, step by step, based on their belief, and only then did the sea split. It was because of this faith that we merited redemption. As the Torah teaches (Shemos 4:31), the people believed that Hashem had remembered them, saw their suffering, and bowed in gratitude. Only after this faith was shown does the Torah begin chapter five: "Afterward, Moshe and Aharon came to Pharaoh." It was the emunah of the people that initiated the process of geulah.

Though the Jewish people physically left Egypt on the fifteenth of Nisan, it was on the twenty-first - the seventh day - that their faith enabled the splitting of the sea and the final severance from Egypt.

Just as we are instructed not to eat anything after the afikomen so that the taste of the matzah remains in our mouths, so too must the lessons of the seder remain with us long after the night ends. The atzeres - the concluding gathering of Pesach - emphasizes the importance of emunah. The stronger our faith, the more we merit Hashem's hashgachah pratit.

I would like to conclude with a careful reading of Tehillim (126), which we recite before Birkat HaMazon on Shabbos and Yom Tov. Shabbos is our declaration of faith that Hashem created the world, freed us from Egypt, and will one day redeem us again. The Psalm begins: "Shir ha'ma'alos, b'shuv Hashem es shivas tzion hayinu k'cholmim - when Hashem will return the captivity of Tzion, we will be like dreamers. Az - then - our mouths will be filled with laughter, our tongues with glad song. Az - then - the nations will declare that Hashem has done great things for His people." The Metzudas

David explains that at the time of the future redemption, the Jewish people will look back and see all the suffering of exile as if it were but a fleeting dream. The miracles and goodness of the redemption will be so overwhelming that the pain of the past will feel like a distant memory. In light of the current war in Eretz Yisrael and the challenging global environment, it is easy to feel daunted and disheartened. But the taste of the matzah, the infusion of belief from the Yom Tov of Pesach, especially emphasized in the Haftarah of acharon shel Pesach, can help us conclude the holiday with complete faith and confidence.

Indeed, the best is yet to come.

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Rabbi Michael Rosensweig

Shevii Shel Pesach: The Yom Tov of Shirah

Shevii Shel Pesach (the seventh day of Passover) is an unusual yom tov (Jewish religious holiday). Though it commemorates the extraordinary miracle of Keriat Yam Suf (splitting of the Red Sea), this theme is omitted in Emor and the other relevant parshiot in the Torah. Notwithstanding the significance of the miracle, this is the only yom tov in which the complete hallel is not recited, as it does not differ from the days of chol ha-moed with respect to its korbonot (sacrifices in the Holy Temple) (Arachin 10b).

Indeed, this yom tov is completely subsumed under the broad rubric of Chag ha-Matzot (Holiday of Matzot, i.e. Passover) in parshiot Bo, Mishpatim, Emor, Pinhas, and Re'eh. While the Drishah (Tur, O.C. no. 490) cites the Maharil's view that one should formulate this yom tov in tefillah (prayer), kidush (sanctifying the day over wine), and birkat ha-mazon (grace after meals) as "yom simchatenu" ("the day of our joy") due to keriat yam suf, this position is almost uniformly rejected in favor of the continued emphasis of the exodus from Egypt and "zeman cherutenu" ("the time of our freedom"). There are also some indications that the shirah (song of praise) that followed the miracle may be as central to this yom tov as the event that inspired it.

Indeed, the selection of a haftarah reading for this yom tov entirely ignores the specific occurrence of this day. Instead, the portion (Samuel II, 22) reflects the broader theme of shirah, faith, and gratitude. Perhaps, a brief examination of the phenomenon of shirat ha-yam (praise sung to God by the Jews after the splitting of the Red Sea) may further illuminate these emphases.

Shirat ha-Yam is written in a special formation in the Torah, underscoring its uniqueness. At the same time, its relevance is attested to by its inclusion in the daily prayers. While it seeks to commemorate a singular event, there are indications that its significance transcends its origins. The fact that a shirah did not follow immediately in the aftermath of the makkot (plagues) or even of yeziat mizrayim (exodus from Egypt) seems to underscore that it was not just a response to a supernatural experience. Moreover, the double introduction to the shirah- "va-yiru ha-am...va-yaminu" ("and the people feared...and they believed") requires clarification. The mention of Moshe Rabbenu in conjunction with Hashem is puzzling, as well. Having articulated their faith in Hashem, is it not superfluous or even inappropriate to affirm their belief in Moshe? The term "az" ("then") - implying a transition from, as well as a connection to, what preceded it suggests that the inspiration to express shirah constitutes an important juncture in the fledgling development of Klal Yisrael. Commenting on the future tense of "yashir" ("will sing"), Chazal view this moment also as a foundation for faith in the future destiny of the nation: "shar' lo ne'emar ela 'yashir'...mikan le-techiyat ha-meitim min ha-Torah" ("it did not state 'sang', rather 'will sing'...from here we have a source in the Torah for the future resurrection of the dead") Furthermore, there is an interesting debate as to when the shirah begins: Tosafot in Sotah sees "az yashir" as an introductory sentence, while Rambam, hil. Sefer Torah, perceives it as first verse of the shirah itself. Rambam's intriguing perspective implies that Klal Yisrael's state of awareness is an integral aspect of the shirah itself!

Perhaps what differentiates this miracle and the response of shirah that it engendered was precisely the timing, as well as the order and emphasis

delineated in the Torah that reflected a moment of spiritual clarity for Am Yisrael. The fact that the nation did not previously respond with shirah although they had frequently encountered supernatural manifestations, demonstrates that the shirah was more than a reaction to a superficial stimulus. The double introduction in which the theme of yirah (fear) preceded that of emunah (faith), after a period of deliberation and reflection implied by this series of pesukim, projects, at least momentarily, the spiritual maturity of Klal Yisrael. It was indeed, "az", a moment of import, with implications for the application of the concept of emunah for the future- "shar lo neemar". Thus, according to the Rambam, the verse of "az yashir" constitutes not only the introduction but the beginning of the shirah! Moreover, it is consistent with this newly discovered broader perspective that at that moment, the nation finally fully comprehended the subtle critical role of Moshe Rabbenu. An understanding of the relationship between observing the mizvot- "zeh keili ve-anveihu" ("this is my Lord and shall glorify him"), especially as expressed in Chazal's doctrine of hidur mitzvah (adorning the mitzvah),- and acknowledging Divine intervention- "ashirah la-Hashem ki gaoh gaah" was critical at that special moment of keriat yam suf, but is no less pivotal in daily prayer.

The Torah chose not to formulate a separate yom tov commemorating keriat yam suf since the primary significance of this miracle was its impact on the concept of emunah and yirat Hashem that well transcended the event. The shirah that it engendered was possibly not less important than the physical salvation of Klal Yisrael. It is appropriate, indeed, that the last day of Chag ha-matzot, the anniversary of keriat ha-yam and the shirah, be fully integrated into the celebration of yeziat mitzrayim and "zeman cherutenu", as both the miracle of keriat ha-yam and the shirah that it inspired magnificently highlight the theme of emunah and hashgahah (Divine providence) that stand at the core of the significance of the exodus from Egypt (see Ramban, end of parshat Bo) and the integrated holiday of Chag ha-matzot.

from: **Ira Zlotowitz** <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>

date: Apr 17, 2025, 10:02 AM

subject: Tidbits for Shevi'i & Achron shel Pesach 5785

Tidbits Klal Gavoah in memory of **Rav Meir Zlotowitz zt"l**

Shevi'i & Achron shel Pesach 5785

On Shevi'i Shel Pesach we commemorate Kerias Yam Suf and lein the Shiras Hayam (Shemos 13:17-15:26), which occurred on this day.

Shevi'i Shel Pesach falls on Shabbos and thus all Shabbos restrictions are in effect, including cooking and carrying (outside an eruv). The berachah at Hadlakas Neiros is L'hadlik Ner Shel Shabbos V'shel Yom Tov. Many light an additional 48-hour candle on Erev Yom Tov to have a pre-existing flame for Yom Tov use • For those with the custom of lighting yizkor candles, many advise lighting a 48-hour candle on Erev Yom Tov (to avoid the possible halachic problem of lighting one on Acharon Shel Pesach) • Shehecheyanu is not recited on the final days of Pesach • Yaaleh Veyavo is included in Shemoneh Esrei and Bircas Hamazon; if one forgets Yaaleh Veyavo, all must repeat Shemoneh Esrei, while only a man, not a woman, repeats Bircas HaMazon • Half-Hallel is said both days • An abridged version of Kabbalas Shabbos is recited on Friday night • The additions for Shabbos are added in Shemoneh Esrei • Shir Hashirim is leined after Hallel • The Yud Gimmel Middos before Kerias Hatorah are omitted. Kerias Hatorah is divided into seven aliyos (instead of five). Kah Keli is not recited before Mussaf. The special supplications during Bircas Kohanim are omitted • Seudah Shelishis should be eaten before tesha sha'os (the end of the halachic 9th hour of the day [midpoint between chatzos hayom and shekiya]; approx. 4:17 on the East Coast). Many fulfill seudah shelishis through splitting up the day meal (Typically, bircas hamazon is recited after a course or two, followed by a halachic break [e.g. by taking a walk or davening Minchah] and then washing again for hamotzi and completing the meal) • One may not prepare on the first day of Yom Tov for the second night of Yom Tov. As such, preparations for the second night of Yom Tov may not begin until

button worn by young people who have never really known it. It has degenerated into promiscuity, unchastity, and a tolerance of obscenity and pornography. What then is the importance to us of the theme of ahavah as it emerges from Shir Ha-Shirim?

What Solomon wants from us is not only romantic love in the classical sense, but a profound empathy, a new emphasis on intimacy, in order to overcome the alienation and solitude and isolation which are endemic to the human condition, and which are especially pronounced in the modern age. The need for depth in our emotional life, the want of intimacy and empathy, and the curse of emotional poverty and personal superficiality was pointed out in a poignant scene some 25 years ago in one of the first plays (The Bald Soprano) of Eugene Ionesco. In this scene, we find a young man meeting a young

1 For the divine Name Elokim represents teva (numerically, Elokim = ha-teva) and the Tetragrammaton signifies the supernatural; but according to the Zohar, Hashem ve'Elokim kulah had – they are both one.

And when that is the case, we respond – with shirah. woman on Fifth Avenue and engaging her in conversation. They learn, to their surprise, that they had both come in from Connecticut on the same train. Further conversation between them reveals that, coincidentally, both live in Manhattan. Further on, they learn that not only do they live in Manhattan, but they actually live on the same street – and in the very same apartment building! As the conversation develops, they also become aware of the fact that they live – on the same floor. Finally, they discover that both of them have a ten-year-old daughter of the same name. Indeed, she is the same child – husband and wife have met and introduced themselves to each other! The kind of love that Shir Ha-Shirim calls us to, is that of personal closeness, of intimacy, of an openness to each other that will overcome the distance that life and society impose upon us. It summons husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, teacher and student, and friends to new closeness and understanding, to the kind of love which forsakes superficiality and demands attention, concern, engagement, closeness.

IV.

There is a third lesson for us in the Song of Songs. Solomon calls, according to the interpretation of the Rabbis, for an end to the bitterness of exile. The climax of the Song of Songs is the very last verse: ברה בשמים הרי על האילים "make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young deer upon the mountains of spices." The Midrash interprets this as follows: "Make haste or flee, my beloved – הגלות מן, from exile where you are sullied by sin. And become like a gazelle – which is tahor, pure, kosher, innocent. And ואלים גדיים כקרנן תפילתנו קבל, accept our prayers as if they were an offering of the deer upon the altar. May our prayers go up to You and be לריח טוב בזכות טוב לריח, as sweet and acceptable to you, O Lord, and as fragrant as spices, in the merit of our ancestors." Solomon, in other words, is praying for redemption, and urging it upon us. It is the theme of liberation.

V. These three teachings – of wonder and love and liberation – ought to be focused by us on one event of our days that is of the utmost importance. One of the great dramas of this generation is the developing story of the 21/2–3 million Jews of Russia. Heretofore we referred to them as the "Silent Jews." Now they are no longer silent. Too many of them have concluded that life in the Soviet Union is simply too painful for silence. They have spoken out at the risk of professional advancement, freedom, and even life and limb. Our reaction must proceed according to the three lessons of the Song of Songs. We must react with wonder at the courage and the heroism that people are capable of after 50 years under Communism. Apparently, despite three generations of studied de-Judaization, the pintelev Yid, that sacred and ineffable core of Jewishness, remains alive in the hearts and the souls of Russian Jewry. And that little spark has now become a conflagration of love and loyalty for Israel and the State of Israel. This is nothing short of a miracle, and it demands of us the response of shirah – of song – and that song must come loud and clear. We must react with love. We must not

ignore them. We must not leave the Russian Jewry problem to shtadlanim, to self-appointed Jewish leaders. We must not be naive in our confidence in Jewish leaders, leaving all to them. We have had too much unfortunate experience with such misplaced confidence. Jewish leadership is remarkably weak unless there is a mass outpouring of popular sentiment. We must express our profound closeness with Russian Jewry and we must do it en masse and we must do it often. And out of a sense of identification and love. Finally, liberation. We must not rest until they have been given the right to go, to leave. We must continue our shirah – singing and crying, shouting and pleading and protesting – until they will have fulfilled ברה – they will have been able to flee and make haste. For these Jews, though they may be denied a Jewish education, will become tahor katzvi, pure as a deer or gazelle, because of their willingness to sacrifice everything for their beliefs. And the זכות אבות – the merit of the great Russian Jewry of two or three generations ago, will stand in their stead. We shall have the opportunity of so doing. Tomorrow morning, New York Jewry, as organized by the New York Conference on Soviet Jewry, will hold an Exodus March on behalf of the Jews of the Soviet Union. We shall assemble on Park Avenue between 65th and 70th Street at 11 A.M. After a brief ceremony at the Soviet Mission, we shall march, in the thousands, to an area not far from the Isaiah Wall at the United Nations. A program has been prepared in which distinguished people will address the gathering. But that is only of secondary importance. What is of greatest importance is that each and every one of us be there, to express our wonder, our love, our hope for redemption for our brothers and sisters behind the Iron Curtain. It is important that we come in ever larger numbers, so that the Soviet authorities will be forced to hear what the force of public opinion is trying to tell them. Let each of us come in person. And let the word go to Russian authorities, to Russian Jews, to the United States and the United Nations, that we will not forget them; that in wonder, out of love, and with encouragement to exodus, we stand with them. Thus will our song become – the Song of Songs, indeed: "The choicest of all songs, the most excellent of all songs."

Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabiyy@theyeshiva.net> Thu, Apr 17, 2025 at 9:39 PM

Reply-To: info@theyeshiva.net

Julius Caesar, Moshiach, And the State of the World

We Are Ready for a New-Old Consciousness

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

Moshiach's Meal

It was the custom of the Baal Shem Tov to partake of three meals on the last day of Passover. The third meal, which took place late in the afternoon, was known as the "Festive Meal of Moshiach," or "Moshiach's Seuda," for on this day the energy and light of Moshiach and the future redemption shines and is more revealed.

That is why the Haftorah read on the eighth day of Passover is Isaiah chapter 11, containing many of the majestic prophecies about the redemption and Moshiach. Why on this day? Because the first two days of Passover celebrate primarily the past redemption, while the last days of Passover, especially the 8th day, represent the future Messianic redemption.

The Caesar

There is a strange statement in the Talmud regarding Moshiach. When the Talmud wishes to describe Moshiach, the man who will redeem the entire world from bloodshed, oppression, greed and corruption, it describes him as the "Caesar," while describing King David as a "half a Caesar:"[1]

סנהדרין צט. ב: אמר רב יהודה אמר רב עתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא להעמיד להם דוד אחר, שנאמר ועבדו את ה' אלהיהם ואת דוד מלכם אשר אקים להם, הקים לא נאמר אלא אקים. א"ל רב פפא לאבבי והכתיב ודוד עבדי נשיא להם לעולם? כגון קיסר ופלג קיסר.

Rabbi Judah said in the name of Rav: The Holy One, blessed be He, will establish for the Jewish people another David, as it is written, And they shall serve the Lord their G-d, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them; not 'I raised up,' but 'I will raise up' is said. Rabbi Papa asked Abaye: But it is written, And my [first] servant David shall be their prince forever?

They will be like a Caesar (emperor) and a half Caesar (viceroy). [Moshiach, the new David, will be the Caesar and the original David will be the Viceroy, the half-Caesar].

A few questions come to mind:

- 1) What does this mean? Why will there be a need for a Caesar and a half Caesar?
- 2) Why will Moshiach be the Caesar and King David the half-Caesar?
- 3) The title "Keisar," or "Caesar," originating in Latin, served as the family name of the powerful dictator of the Roman Republic, Julius Caesar (100 BCE—44 BCE), who lived 130 years before the destruction of the Second Temple (in 68, 69 or 70 CE), and played a critical role in the gradual transformation of the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire. Julius Caesar's conquest of France, Britain, and Germany, and his assassination of the Roman leader Pompey (in 48 CE), had him emerge as the unrivaled leader of the Roman world. Julius was ultimately stabbed 23 times on the steps of the Roman Senate, where he fell to his death, and the title Caesar was embraced by subsequent Roman Emperors.

What began as the family name (the cognomen) of Julius Caesar became a title of imperial character, used by all Roman and Byzantine Emperors. The change from being a familial name to a title adopted by the Roman Emperors can be dated to about 68/69 CE. This is quite interesting because it is the year of the destruction of the Second Temple by Rome.

Now, when the Talmud wants to describe Moshiach and King David it employs this term: "Caesar" and "half-a-Caesar." Why? The term for a king usually used in Torah and Talmud is "Melech." The viceroy is called "Mishneh Lamelech," second to the king. Why, suddenly, when it comes to Moshiach, the greatest king of Israel, does the Talmud choose a Latin term, and what is more, the title embraced by the very Emperors who were responsible for the war against the Jews and the very destruction of the Temple—the exact antithesis of Moshiach who will redeem the Jews, rebuild the Temple, and bring us all back to the Holy Land?!

What is more, the very title Caesar was adopted by Rome in the very year it destroyed our Temple and exiled the Jews. Could the sages of the Talmud not find a better name for Moshiach than the title of the Roman Emperors, Caesar?

How about King David? He lived 800 years before Julius Caesar. Why is he defined as a "half-Caesar?"

The Relationship Between Julius Caesar & the Jews

True, the Jews did take a special liking to Julius Caesar. Many earnestly mourned the murder of Julius Caesar on March 15, 44 CE; but none so vigorously as the Jews.

Caesar's biographer, Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, wrote this: At the height of the public grief a throng of foreigners went about lamenting each after the fashion of his country, above all the Jews, who even flocked to the place [of his burial] for several successive nights.

Why were the Jews so shattered? The proverb "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" definitely applies in this case. The High Priest at the time was a descendant of the Chashmoneim, Hyrcanus, who had been somewhat in alliance with Pompey, the great Roman general, Caesar's enemy, who marched into and dominated the Land of Israel. Yet Hyrcanus later allied with Caesar against Pompey. Hyrcanus' change of heart might have been partially motivated by Pompey's harsh decrees and burdensome taxes and partially motivated by the power that Caesar was rapidly gaining over Pompey.

If Hyrcanus hadn't committed thousands of Jewish soldiers to Caesar's Alexandrian siege, Caesar's ending might have come a lot sooner than 44 BCE. As it were, the Jews were instrumental in helping Caesar to win this civil war and become the sole ruler of Rome. Caesar never forgot this. Not only did Caesar revoke Pompey's decrees and taxes, but he also allowed the walls and fortifications of Jerusalem to be rebuilt and restored Jaffa, as well as a number of other coastal cities, to Jewish rule.

Yet, notwithstanding the benevolent relationship, we are still baffled why Moshiach is defined by his title Caesar?

I want to share with you an explanation I heard from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, 37 years ago, during a public address on the last day of Passover 1988.[2] as he celebrated the Moshiach feast of the Baal Shem Tov.

Caesarian Birth

First, we need to understand the origin of the family name Caesar.

Tosefot, the commentary on the Talmud authored by the Ashkenazic scholars in Germany and France from the house of Rashi during the 12th and 13th centuries, explains the origin of the name Caesar:[3]

לסוף כמה שנים מלך עליהם אחד בחזקה, שמתה אמו בלדתה ובקעת בטנה ומצאוהו חי ומלך עליהם ונקרא קיסר בלשון רומי, והוא לשון כרות בעברית, ועל שמו נקראו כל המלכים שלאחריו קיסר.

Caesar in Latin means a cut, hence the English name for a "Cesarean Birth," what we call today C-Section. When the fetus cannot exit the womb of its mother via the natural birth canal, the mother's stomach is cut, and the fetus is extracted. This procedure, which was performed on a dead or dying mother, dates back around 700 years before Julius Caesar. In the Mishnah and the Talmud[4] we discuss the "Yotze Dofen," the child who "comes out through a wall," extracted from the mother's abdomen and uterus, as a natural delivery is not possible.

Julius Caesar had a grandfather who was born through a Caesarian procedure. His mother died and they extracted the fetus through "the wall." This child was thus given the name Caesar and it became the family name of all his descendants, including Julius. Thus, the title: Julius Caesar.[5]

Which only intensifies and expands our original question: Why did all the Emperors wish to adopt the name Caesar? What is even more absurd: The title Caesar as a title for a King has become universal, adopted in almost every culture and language. In German and Yiddish we have the "Kaiser," in the Russian dialect we have the "Tzar." In English, we have "Caesar." Many other languages, including Japanese, Arabic, the Slavic, Baltic, Germanic, Turkic, Uralic, African, Asian, African dialects and many more—use this term to describe Imperial power. And the Talmud ensures us that even Moshiach will be described as the Caesar! Why?

Stuck

To explain this, I am going to tell you a little story. There was a poor Jew, Mosheleh, who trudged up and down the steep staircases in the high apartment buildings in his neighborhood. He knocked on doors and asked for charity. At the end of a tiring day, he sat on a park bench and counted the coins people had given him. His mind wandered and he dreamed of better times.

"One day, I will be rich. I will own great fortunes and have a lot of influence in the community." The poor man rubbed his hands and his forehead became wrinkled as he thought.

"Then," he thought to himself, "I will make a new law. All new houses which are built will have to be only one or two stories high. My life will be much easier! I will not have to climb all those stairs in order to collect alms! Yes, poor Mosheleh, could never liberate himself from the idea that he will one day not have to beg for money. His greatest fantasy, his most broad vision, was that he would not have to climb up all those stairs in order to get his few dimes and quarters.

What Is a Leader?

The first definition of a leader is that he does not follow, but leads. He can lead his people to expand the horizons of his people and lead them to new, previously uncharted terrains. He opens new pathways in their thinking process and achieves what others might think is impractical. Only then can he truly lead and significantly enhance the lives of his constituents. In the words of General Montgomery: "The difficult we do immediately; the impossible takes a little longer!"

The best way to describe such a personality is "Keiser," or Caesar, that procedure which creates a "door," an "opening," where nobody saw it possible. The true leader extracts the child through unconventional channels and pathways. Where others see closed walls, he creates unconventional openings.

The Greatest Revolutionary

Yet from all revolutionaries in history—from all the Caesars in history-- Moshiach is going to be the greatest one yet: transforming the very consciousness of the entire world. He will win the greatest battle of all time: the battle over our instinctive selfishness, greed and egocentricity; the battle over our perceived material crudeness.

Moshiach will help people discover the inherent spirituality and unity of the entire universe and every creature in it. Such a leader must think "out of the box" in the most radical way, as he will reveal a new reality which the rest of us see as almost impossible. He will usher in the ultimate Caesarian birth: The "wall" which separates us from each other, the "wall" which separates us from infinity, the "wall" which eclipses our vision of the true integrated reality of our universe, will be opened and a new child, the child of peace and love, will emerge.

An Integrated Revolution

Yet here is the deal: Where many kings throughout history, many Casers, were indeed brazen, audacious, and unabashed—this quality of theirs was often mean and destructive: they imposed new realities on the people, causing bloodshed, violence and untold pain. Our world has seen many revolutionaries, many people who dream big and achieved the seemingly impossible, but at what price, and for what purpose? The French revolution killed three million, and the Russian revolution—50 million! The Chinese revolution exterminated 70 million. Most revolutions in history have been brutal and bloody, ultimately denying the human right they initially came to secure.

The uniqueness of Moshiach's leadership is this: Though it will be the greatest revolution in history, it will nonetheless not be superimposed on humanity. On the contrary, Moshiach will reveal the incredible potential each person already has inside of him or her which lay dormant. He will not superimpose on humanity a "world order" to suit his dreams but will show humanity how to actualize its own inherent and innate spiritual and emotional potential, bringing to the fore our incredible inner goodness and holiness which has always been there behind the "door" which Moshiach will burst open.

This is the idea of the Caesar and half-Caesar during the time of Moshiach: Moshiach will not only be a Caesar, creating an unprecedented, unmatched and unparalleled revolution unlike anything previously in history; his revolution will be one that is fully integrated in the consciousness of people, one that will resonate within our own souls and hearts. He will not only be a "Caesar," creating an opening in a closed wall but also a "half-Caesar," creating openings that don't seem radical at all, since they resonate so deeply. He will penetrate walls, which when penetrated reveal themselves to be no walls at all. Yes, he will break open walls, but only those which are blockages eclipsing our true inner alignment with infinity and oneness. In this he embodies the legacy of the first King David, a great revolutionary indeed, but one who worked and operated within the structure and framework of the people, not destroying them, but enhancing them.

The insane upheavels of recent times cracked open all of our egos. The Jewish people and humanity are ready to open themselves up to a new consciousness—of oneness, of interconnectivity, of transcendence, and a redefinition of the human being as a spiritual agent, an ambassador of love, light and hope. We are ready to live higher, to think higher, and to become the people we really are—manifestations of infinity in our world. We are ready for the revolution Moshiach will bring about, one that will be non-revolutionary at all: a return to the truth of our oneness with each other and with infinity.

[1] Sanhedrin 98b.

[2] Sefer Hasicchos 5748 vol. 2. Cf. Likkutei Sichos vol. 35 Vayigash

[3] Tosefos Avoda Zarah 10b

[4] Bechoros 8b

[5] There is a legend that Julius himself was born this way. So it would seem from the simple reading of Tosefot. Yet most modern historians challenge this legend, because in ancient times the mother would in most cases die during such a surgery (if she was not dead already), where Julius's mother lived to watch his victory against Britain. Actually, in Tosefot you can

interpret the story to mean that Julius's grandfather who was also a leader was born this way, or we may assume that in Julius' case the mother survived the surgery. Another possibility is that his supposed mother who watch him triumph, was really his stepmother.

<https://www.ou.org/holidays/shvii-shel-pesach/>
Shvii Shel Pesach – the 7th Day of Chag HaMatzot

BY Rabbi Menachem Leibtag

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Passover

This shiur provided courtesy of The Tanach Study Center

In memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag

We are all familiar with the historical reason for celebrating the 'seventh day of Passover' – for (according to the Midrash) the miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea took place seven days after Bnei Yisrael left Egypt.

Yet, to our surprise, that reason never appears in the Chumash. In fact, the Torah simply commands that we eat matza for seven days, and then to make a special celebration on that last day, without explaining why. [See Shemot 13:3-7.]

In regard to other Jewish holidays, SEVEN also seems to be a 'magic' number. Not only is Pesach is 'seven' days; we also count 'seven' weeks to Shavuot; then in the 'seventh' month – we celebrate several holidays including the 'seven-day' holiday of Sukkot!

So why do so many holidays revolve around the number seven? It is simply because there are seven days in a week?

In the following shiur we attempt to answer this question, as we search for a thematic connection between the 'historical' reasons for the holidays and the agricultural seasons when they are celebrated.

Introduction

In general, we are usually more familiar with the historical reasons for the holidays more than their agricultural perspective. For example, on Pesach we commemorate the Exodus from Egypt, on Shavuot – the giving of the Torah, and on Sukkot – God's special providence during our forty-year sojourn in the desert.

In regard to the historical reason for celebrating the 'seventh day of Passover', the Midrash informs us that the miracle of "kriyat Yam Suf" [the splitting of the Red Sea] took place seven days after Bnei Yisrael left Egypt. [See Mechilta quoted by Rashi on Shemot 14:5..]

[Hence, our custom to read "shirat ha'yam" (Shemot chapters 14 & 15) for the Torah reading on "shvii shel Pesach".

See also Ibn Ezra on 12:15-16, where he takes for granted that the reason for the seven days of chag hamatzot is because "kriyat yam suf" took place seven days after Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, even though it's not clear how he reaches that conclusion.]

Nonetheless, the Torah itself never connects the events of "kriyat Yam Suf" with the seventh day of Passover. In fact, the Torah first discusses these seven days in Shemot chapter 12 (see 12:15-20 and 13:3-8) way before the miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea, as detailed in chapter 14, ever took place!

[This does not mean that "kriyat yam suf" did not happen on "shvii shel pesach"; we are simply suggesting that there may be a different, or at least an additional reason for the seven day length of the holiday. (For a discussion of when and how the events of "kriyat yam suf" took place, see TSC shiurim on Parshat Shemot and Parshat Beshalach.)]

Therefore, if we follow the 'simple meaning' of the text, there should be an independent reason for the celebration of these SEVEN days, unconnected to the historical events of the miracle at the Red Sea

In our shiur, we will search for that reason by examining several additional instances (later on in Chumash) where the Torah presents the laws of Passover within the wider framework of the three pilgrimage holidays [="shalosh regalim"].

The Biblical Name for 'Shvii Shel Pesach'

In our introduction, we have referred to this holiday by its popular name – "shvii shel Pesach" [lit. the seventh day of Passover]. However, to be

‘Biblically correct’, the proper name for this holiday should be the seventh day of “chag hamatzot”. Let’s explain why: Technically speaking, Passover (in the Bible) is only a ‘one-day’ holiday – beginning on the 14th of Nisan in the afternoon, and ending on the 15th in evening – when the korban Pesach is offered (see Shemot 12:3-14). In addition to this holiday, the Torah also commands that we eat matza (and don’t eat “chametz”) for the next seven days (see 12:15-20, see also Vayikra 23:5-7 and Bamidbar 28:16-18!). Therefore, we refer to this holiday as “chag hamatzot”, and hence the celebration of the final day should be called “shvii shel chag hamatzot”.

[Note that in tefilah, the name of the holiday is chag hamatzot – and not chag haPesach.]

The Shalosh Regalim in Parshat Mishpatim

Even though the seven days of “chag hamatzot” are first mentioned independently in Parshat Bo, and apparently as part of an historical holiday; in Parshat Mishpatim they are presented once again – but this time as the first of a set of three agricultural holidays:

“Three times a year you shall hold a festival for Me. Keep: (1) CHAG HAMATZOT – SEVEN days you shall eat matza as I have commanded you [i.e. in Parshat Bo 12:15-10 & 13:2-8] at its set time in the [first] month of the spring [“chodesh ha’aviv”] – for in [that month] you left Egypt... (2) CHAG HA’KATZIR [the Harvest holiday] – the first grain of your labor from what you sow in the field, and (3) CHAG HA’ASIF [the Fruit Harvest holiday] when you gather in the fruits of your toil from the field. THREE TIMES a year, all your males shall appear before the Lord – Hashem...” (see Shemot 23:14-17)

Review these pesukim once again, noting how they present the “shalosh regalim” as a unit, and how the names of each holiday focus primarily on its agricultural aspect. Furthermore, these holidays are described solely by their ‘seasonal’ date, without even mentioning the precise lunar date.

It’s rather obvious how each of these three holidays corresponds to a critical time in the agricultural year in the land of Israel:

A spring holiday [chag hamatzot, b’aviv] – when the fruit trees blossom, and the grain begins to ripen. The grain harvest holiday [chag hakatzir – early summer] – when most of the barely and wheat harvest is complete. The fruit-gathering holiday [chag ha’asif – late summer] – after most of the grapes, figs, and dates have been gathered. These seasons are especially important in the Land of Israel, where it rains only in the winter, and hence its produce is harvested only once a year (during the summer).

For example, all of the grain that will be consumed during the course of the year is harvested during a short time, between the late spring and early summer. If that grain harvest fails, a famine will likely result, for the grain will not grow again until the next spring.

Similarly, the trees bear their fruit only once a year, towards the end of the summer. If that short fruit harvest season fails, the next crop will not grow until the next year.

Based on these observations, it appears that these “shalosh regalim” are simply ‘agricultural’ holidays, not very different than holidays found in the culture of other nations, especially in agrarian societies.

So why are they ‘special times’ for God’s ‘special nation’?

The ‘Danger’ of Working the Land

In ancient societies, it was very common to relate the success or failure of crops (or agriculture in general) to a pantheon of gods who controlled the various powers of nature. For example, historians inform us that the ancient Canaanites believed in a god who controlled the rain – known as Baal; and another who controlled fertility, known as Asherah.

Recall as well that God had taken Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt in order that they would conquer the Land of Canaan, and establish therein a special nation that would represent Him. Towards that purpose, God brought Bnei Yisrael to Har Sinai, where they entered a covenant and received a complete set of laws that would guide their behavior in the Land of Israel – which include the laws in Parshat Mishpatim! Therefore, we should not be surprised to find laws in the Torah that relate to the danger of following other gods, especially in relation to the agriculture of the land.

Even though God had proven His existence to His people via the miracles of the Exodus, and by providing for their physical needs in the desert with the manna (& water); there remained a serious fear that this belief would wane once the nation conquered the land, and their livelihood became dependent instead on cultivation of the land. This included the reasonable fear that Bnei Yisrael would follow the local customs of the other peoples living in Eretz Canaan, and begin to worship other gods.

The Shalosh Regalim & Agriculture

With this in mind, let’s consider the transition pasuk (23:13) in Parshat Mishpatim that introduces the laws of the “shalosh regalim”. Recall how Parshat Mishpatim presented a complete unit of both civil and ethical laws, that began back in chapter 21 (see Shemot 21:1 thru 23:12/ see shiur on Parshat Mishpatim). At the conclusion of that unit, we find a short ‘summary phrase’, followed by a very interesting additional command: “... and ALL [these mitzvot] which I have told you be sure to keep, and the NAMES of other gods do not mention; their names should not be heard on your lips. – “shalosh regalim” – you shall celebrate [instead] for Me!... (see 23:13-14)

Note how immediately after this summary phrase (in 23:13) God warns Bnei Yisrael: “DO NOT even mention the NAMES of these other gods (and certainly don’t worship them), instead -celebrate before God three times a year – during these three critical times of the agricultural year!

Clearly, these ‘NAMES of other gods’ refer to the ‘agricultural gods’ such as the Canaanite gods of Baal and Asherah. This would explain why the laws of the “shalosh regalim” that follow focus on how God expects His nation to celebrate these agricultural holidays. Let’s examine these pesukim once again to identify the primary mitzvah associated with these holidays:

“Three times a year you shall hold a festival for Me. Keep (1) CHAG HAMATZOT – SEVEN days you shall eat MATZA... in the [first] month of the SPRING [“chodesh ha’aviv”] – for in [that month] you left Egypt... (2) CHAG HA’KATZIR [the Harvest holiday] – the first [grain] of your labor from what you sow in the field, and (3) CHAG HA’ASIF [the Fruit Harvest holiday] when you gather in the fruits of your toil from the field. THREE TIMES a year, all your males shall appear before the Lord – Hashem...” (Shemot 23:14-17)

[Later in Devarim 16:1-17, in a parallel passage, the Torah explains that this “aliyah la’regel” must take place “ba’Makom asher yivchar Hashem” – or better known as the bet haMikdash in Jerusalem.]

Clearly, the primary mitzvah that links all of these holidays together is the obligation to ‘visit’ [lit. ‘to be seen’] by God – what we refer to as “aliyah la’regel”.

At each of these three critical times of the agricultural year, the Torah obligates us to ‘visit God’.

Apparently, God wants Bnei His nation to gather at His Temple during these critical times of the agricultural year – not only to thank God for their harvest, but also as a preventive measure to make sure that Bnei Yisrael would not worship other gods at these key times of agricultural year.

A similar fear is spelled more explicitly in Sefer Devarim, also in relation to Bnei Yisrael’s imminent entry into the land:

“And it shall be, when God shall bring you into the land which He swore unto thy fathers...., and give you great and goodly cities, which you did not build... and cisterns hewn out, which thou the didst not hew, vineyards and olive-trees, which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied– then beware lest thou forget HASHEM, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.... Do not go after other gods, of the gods of the peoples that are round about you.... lest the anger of God be kindled against you...” (see Devarim 6:10-15, see also 8:1-15!)

Based on this interpretation, there is ample reason to celebrate these three pilgrimage holidays, even had no significant events taken place in Jewish history during those times of the year. Nonetheless, the Torah goes out of his way to emphasize how Bnei Yisrael must remember their Exodus – specifically in the spring: Recall Moshe Rabbeinu’s first speech to Bnei Yisrael, immediately after they left Egypt and camped in the desert:

“And Moshe said to the people: ‘Remember this day that you are leaving Egypt... today you are leaving in the month of the SPRING. [Hence,] when you come to Israel... keep this custom in this month. Seven days eat matza...’ [See Shemot 13:3-6, note also Devarim 16:1-2.]

Therefore, it would only be logical to conclude that it was not simply incidental that God took Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt in the spring. Rather, it appears that God intentionally wanted our annual celebration of the Exodus to coincide with the beginning of the spring. In fact, God seems to have orchestrated those events, to make sure that our holiday of redemption would fall out in the spring!

With this mind, let’s return now to the ‘seven’ days of “chag hamatzot”, and attempt to explain why this ‘historical/agricultural holiday’ should last seven days.

Why Seven?

Considering that the agricultural holidays relate to ‘nature’ and its yearly cycle of fruit production, the Torah demands that we relate these powers of nature to the one God who created them. But how do we express this belief? Recall from the shiur on Parshat Breishit how we explained that this very point was the primary message of the first chapter of Sefer Breishit. The Torah’s use of the name ‘Elokim’ to describe God, even though it is written in the plural form [lit. all of the powers], emphasized how all the ‘powers of nature’ that appear to work independently – are truly the work of one God. Stage by stage, the organized world of nature was created by Elokim, one day at a time – for six days. By keeping Shabbat, once every seven days, we remember this point; and by refraining from work (or any ‘creativity’), we show our belief that it was God Himself who created nature and continues to oversee it.

From this perspective, any time in the Bible where we find ‘seven days’, it would be safe to assume that it relates in some manner to that same concept that there is only one God, and He is the true power behind all the phenomena that we refer to as nature.

This can explain why “chag hamatzot” is celebrated for seven days, in the beginning of the spring. By celebrating for ‘seven days’ at the beginning of the spring when nature blossoms in full force, and then counting ‘seven weeks’ until the grain harvest is complete; and then celebrating yet another ‘seven days’ and the conclusion of the fall fruit harvest – we relate all these phenomena of nature to God Himself.

[Note how almost every ancient [and even modern] culture relates its prosperity to powers of various gods. In Judaism, we declare that there is only one God, and our prosperity is a function of His will. (See Devarim 11:10-21!)]

The Shalosh Regalim in Emor

To support this explanation, let’s take a look at how the holidays are presented in Parshat Emor.

In our study of Parshat Emor (Vayikra chapter 23), we noticed how each of the “shalosh regalim” included a special law that relates to agricultural, and the specific season of each holiday.

On chag hamatzot – the OMER offering / see 23:9-14; from the first barley harvest, the first grain to ripen. On Shavuot – the SHTEI HA’LECHEM / see 23:15-21; an offering brought from the first wheat harvest. On Sukkot – the ARBA MINIM [four species] / see 23:39-41; the lulav, etrog, hadas and aravot are waived. Note also how in each of these mitzvot the holiday itself is referred to as a ‘shabbat’ or ‘shabbaton’! [See 23:11,15,& 39!] One could suggest that the Torah’s use of the word ‘shabbat’ to describe these holidays also relates back to “shabbat Breishit” and the creation of nature in seven days.

[See the shiur on Rosh Hashanah which discussed the agricultural aspect of Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur as well, i.e. the beginning of the autumn rain season.]

As we would expect, each special mitzvah relates to the specific time of the agricultural year in which it falls.

The Shalosh Regalim in Sefer Devarim

Finally, the Torah’s presentation of the “shalosh regalim” in Parshat Re’ay (see Devarim 16:1-16), also emphasizes agriculture as a primary theme of these holidays, as well as the number seven:

Its opening phrase reminds us to “keep the month of the SPRING – and celebrate Passover”. Then, we are commanded to eat matza for the SEVEN days that follow the Passover offering (see 16:3). Then, note how Sefer Devarim then presents the mitzvah to celebrate the seventh day of “chag hamatzot” in a manner very similar to the mitzvah of Shabbat:

“Six days you shall eat matzot, and on the SEVENTH DAY there shall be an ATZERET [a gathering] for the Lord your God, you shall not do any work.” (see Devarim 16:8, compare w/Shemot 20:8-10)

Similarly, Shavuot as well is presented as follows: “Count SEVEN weeks from the beginning of your grain harvest...” While Sukkot begins with:

“Keep the holiday of Sukkot for SEVEN days, when you gather your harvest...”

Once again, we find thanking God for our produce, and the number seven, as the primary theme of the “shalosh regalim”.

Back to History

Based on our above explanation, it appears that the agricultural seasons alone provide reason enough to celebrate before God on the “shalosh regalim”.. So why must each holiday include a historical aspect as well?

The reason why may be quite fundamental. As we explained above, God intentionally planned for Am Yisrael to leave Egypt in the spring – but we did not explain why.

One could suggest that by celebrating our redemption and freedom in the spring, Bnei Yisrael will better appreciate what our freedom is all about. As spring fills the air with hope and high expectations [what we call ‘spring fever’] and signals the beginning of a new season; we must assess the appreciation of our freedom as well. By remembering how (and why) God granted us our freedom – we become inspired, for it enables tremendous opportunities (& raises our hopes) for national and spiritual growth. It’s a ‘new start’ – with all its excitement and potential, if nurtured properly!

The celebration of our redemption from Egypt in the spring may reflect this very purpose. Yetziat Mitzrayim can be understood as the initial stage in a long and complex historical process leading towards the next two key stages of our national destiny:

Matan Torah – the giving of the laws at Har Sinai – which we celebrate on SHAVUOT; and Entering the Promised land – where the nation will be established – which we celebrate on SUKKOT. Furthermore, by adding historical significance to key agricultural times of the year, the Torah helps us recognize that the same God who oversees our national history [i.e. who performed the miracles of Exodus etc.] is also the same God who oversees nature (and will provide the produce of the land).

[In our previous shiurim on Shavuot and Sukkot, we discussed the connection between those holidays and their agricultural time of the year as well. It should be noted the Torah itself only provides historical reasons for chag hamatzot and sukkot. However the historical reasons for Shavuot [Matan Torah] and Yom Kippur [the second luchot] are rather obvious. (The question is actually quite the opposite, i.e. why doesn’t Chumash mention explicitly the rather obvious historical connection?) Therefore, it only makes sense that Chazal would assume that the seventh day of chag hamatzot should have historic significance as well, and “kriyat yam Suf” becomes the most obvious candidate.]

Back to Kriyat Yam Suf

One could even suggest a thematic connection between the historical event of the splitting of the Red Sea and the seventh day of chag hamatzot. From an agricultural perspective, the spring marks a new beginning, and clearly marks a new start. In a similar manner we can view the events of “Kriyat Yam Suf”.

Recall how Bnei Yisrael, expressed their fear of the Egyptians as they felt that they had been trapped at the Red Sea:

“As Pharaoh drew near, Bnei Yisrael lifted their eyes and saw the Egyptians advancing. Greatly frightened, Bnei Yisrael cried out... saying: ‘Were there not enough graves in Egypt that you brought us to die in the desert? ... Is this

not what we told you back in Egypt – LEAVE US ALONE and let us serve Egypt... Moshe calmed the people saying: ‘Have no fear... for in the MANNER which you view Egypt today, you will no longer see them in this way ever again...’ [See 14:10-14 (and previous shiur on Beshalach).] Up until that point in their history, Bnei Yisrael still viewed themselves as subservient to Egypt. That was the only existence that they ever experienced. The miracle of “kriyat Yam Suf”, just like the spring, marked a new beginning for the nation of Israel, as they now march into the desert, totally cut off from their Egyptian masters.

Freedom for Servitude

What would Bnei Yisrael do with their freedom?

Would they wisely reap its ‘fruits’ – to properly serve God?

During the seven weeks of intense experiences in the desert, from the Exodus until they arrive at Har Sinai, God consistently ‘tests’ the His people, preparing them for the challenge of Matan Torah.

Just as it will take another seven weeks from the early spring barley harvest (“omer”) until we can reap the fruits of our wheat harvest (“shtei halechem”) in the early summer – it will take us seven weeks of preparation, to internalize the spiritual message of Passover – until we are ready once again to re-accept the covenant at Har Sinai on Shavuot. That in itself would be reason enough to set aside a special holiday [an “Atzeret”/ see Devarim 16:8] on “shvii shel Pesach” – to contemplate the purpose of our freedom – and a sense of direction for the year that has just begun.

Something to think about when counting Sefirat haOmer!