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The Nation That Transcends Time

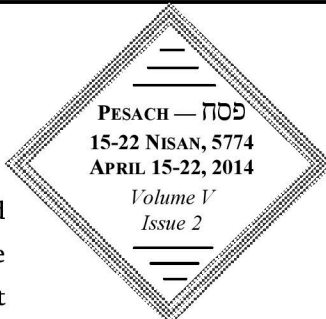
by Yitzi Lindenbaum (MTA '14)

“In each and every generation one is obligated to view himself as though he left Egypt.” This line from the Mishnah in Pesachim (116b) is quoted at the tail end of the Haggada. However, the requirement to view oneself as taking part in an event that occurred thousands of years ago seems daunting, if not impossible. In the words of Lemony Snicket in his commentary in the New American Haggada, “The story of Passover may seem very remote to you, as it happened thousands of years ago, when the oldest people at your Seder table were very, very young.”

Throughout the ages, many solutions to this problem have been suggested. Nevertheless, a very simple solution is suggested by the text of the Haggada itself.

The words “Arami oved avi” (Devarim 26:5), which begin the summary of Yetziat Mitzrayim that we are required to learn on the Seder night, can be understood in two basic ways: 1. “A wandering Aramite was my father.” Based on this reading, the pasuk is referring to Yaakov, who wandered while in Aram; this is the understanding of many of the pashtanim, including the Ibn Ezra. 2. “An Aramite attempted to destroy my father.” This more famous reading has “Arami” referring to Lavan the Aramite, who, as the pesukim imply, attempted to kill Yaakov; this interpretation is preferred by Targum Onkelos, Rashi, and many other mefarshim.

The Haggada, interestingly enough, chooses the second reading. Before the exegetical reading of the pasuk, it declares, “Go out and learn what Lavan the Aramite tried to do to Yaakov our father! For Paroh only decreed on the males, and Lavan tried to uproot everyone.” This choice is rather surprising, since that understanding takes the focus off Yetziat Mitzrayim. With the first interpretation, the pasuk is stressing the limitless extent of Hashem’s abilities – He turned a poor, wandering Aramite into a massive, powerful nation – which is exactly what we are supposed to appreciate in studying Yetziat Mitzrayim! With the



second interpretation, the pasuk is giving us a seemingly irrelevant fact about a different story in Jewish history. Wouldn't the first reading be more appropriate for the Haggada's purposes?

The answer to this question becomes clear if we look at the section immediately preceding this one in the Haggada. Right before delving into these loaded pesukim, the Haggada says in the famous paragraph of Vehi She'amdah, “In every generation other nations stand up to us to destroy us, and the Holy One, Blessed be He, saves us from their hand.” The Haggada is talking about post-Exodus salvations – relative to Yetziat Mitzrayim, it is talking about the future. Thereby, it is putting Yetziat Mitzrayim in a historical context. To complete the historical picture, the Haggada then mentions salvation of the past – the salvation from Lavan. Only then can it begin to relate the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim itself.

By understanding the Pesach story's historical context, we can “see ourselves as though we left Egypt.” We need to remember that we are part of the selfsame entity that experienced Yetziat Mitzrayim – Knesset Yisrael – and we have experienced and will continue to experience salvations that form its historical context. No, our physical bodies did not leave Egypt. But our nation did – and that nation is and always will be the same nation.

This theme – the continuity of Knesset Yisrael – is one that appears in other Pesach related areas as well. In the beginning of Sefer Bamidbar, there is a complicated passage in which Hashem instructs Moshe as to how to transfer kedushah from the Israelite firstborn sons to the Levi'im. Since there are 273 more firstborns than Levi'im, each of the extra 273 are required to give the Kohanim 5 shekalim to relieve their kedushah. According to the Chizkuni, this process is identical to the process of pidyon haben which exists to this day. As he explains, all Jewish firstborn males throughout history require that their kedushah be relieved. That can be done by a Levi that needs the kedushah, or through paying Kohanim. However, since leviyus is hereditary, all Levi'im after the story in Bamidbar are already kadosh, and cannot relieve any firstborns, so all firstborns must relieve their

kedushah through paying Kohanim. What this means is that the mitzvah of pidyon haben, one inextricably linked to Yetziat Mitzrayim (it was enacted to commemorate Jewish firstborn survival during Makkat Bechorot), is actually nothing other than the continuance of a process that began in the times of Moshe Rabbeinu!

When we sit down on the Seder night to eat the same food that our ancestors ate 3000 years ago, we must remember that we are the exact same nation that was taken out from Egypt with glorious miracles. That we are continuing the tradition, and that our children will continue to do so. That we ourselves are forming the historical context of Yetziat Mitzrayim.

Redemption: Past and Future

by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz (DRS)

The night of the Seder, while primarily focused on geulas Mitzrayim, begins and ends with a hope for the ultimate redemption. We begin with “Hashta Hacha, l’shana ha’ba’ah b’ara d’Yisroel” (now we are here, next year we will be in Israel) and end with “l’shanah ha’ba’ah b’Yerushalayim” (next year in Jerusalem). Each and every year we find ourselves inspired by past redemption and hoping for future redemption. Unfortunately, we haven’t been successful at achieving this final redemption yet. The obvious question is: Why haven’t we been successful? We are learning so much Torah, doing so much chessed, and praying with such fervor! Why hasn’t God brought the geulah?

The notion of togetherness is so critical to the Seder night that it is built into one of the issues discussed in the Ma Nishtana and one of the more prevalent minhagim of the night.

We speak about two “dippings” on the night of the Seder. The Ben Ish Chai writes that the first dipping is a reminder of Yosef’s coat being dipped into blood, a subtle reminder of how we descended to Mitzrayim in the first place. The second dipping is reminiscent of the Agudas Ezov, which will begin the process of our redemption. The symbolism is that only when we correct the first dipping will we merit the fulfillment of the promise of the second.

The Meshech Chachmah on Parshas Acharei Mos points out that on Yom Kippur we pray, “for you are the pardoner

(salchan) of Israel, the forgiver (machlan) of the tribes of Yeshurun”. The double language of “pardon” and “forgiveness” is an allusion to the fathers of each of the two primary categories of sin. The sin of the Eigel (golden calf) is the father of all sins between man and God, and for that we pray, “for you for the pardoner of Israel”. The sale of Yosef is the father of all interpersonal sins, and for that we pray, “and forgiver of the tribes if Yeshurun”.

Rav Elchonon Wasserman writes in Kovetz Ma’amarim that most lies are based in a small kernel of truth, yet the blood libels that have plagued the Jewish people for generations don’t even reflect the smallest hint of truth. Not only do we never offer human sacrifice, we abhor those that do. How did the blood libels gain footing if it has no basis in truth?

Rav Elchonon explains: “It is clear that this punishment has befallen the Jewish people as a direct result of a sin whose payback has spanned all of the generations. Had it not been that I am unworthy, I would have suggested that it is directly related to the sin of the dipping of Yosef’s coat in blood. If I have erred, Hashem should atone for me.”

The first dipping is into salty tears to remind us of the difficult servitude, but the second dipping is of something bitter into something sweet, to give us hope that the bitterness can turn around. We are able to express confidence because in this regard we are in control of our own destiny. The path out of exile is illuminated by the light of brotherhood.

The Rama (Orach Chaim 476:2) records the custom to eat an egg at the Seder as a reminder of mourning. The reason to recall mourning is that the night of Tisha b’Av is determined on the Seder night. The first night of Pesach is always the same as the night of Tisha b’Av. The clear message is that the geulah we hope for on Pesach can only be achieved once we correct the problems that brought about the mourning of Tisha b’Av.

When discussing servitude and redemption, there are some things that are beyond our control and others that are well within our control. The Gra explains that when Rivkah told Yaakov “alai kilelascha beni” (your curses will be ‘on me’ (alai), my son), the term “alai” was a prophetic allusion to the three types of challenges that Yaakov and his children are destined to face. There is the “ayin” of Eisav, symbolizing pain caused by those who want to physically destroy us, as Eisav did. There is the “lamed” of Lavan, symbolizing those who want to spiritually annihilate us. Finally, there is the “yud” of

Yosef, symbolizing the pain we bring on ourselves. This Yom Tov is all about fixing the kelalah of Yosef and thereby convincing the Ribono shel Olam to reverse the kelalos of Lavan and Esav, so that our declaration of “l’shanah ha’ba’ah b’Yerushalayim” this year can prove prophetic.

A Spiritual Cleanse

by Miriam Isakova (Central ‘14)

The much-anticipated chag that stands before us is one that charges the Jewish nation with various burdensome tasks for preparation. The detailed rules of Pesach invite us to totally rid our homes and belongings of chametz. Ironically, bread is an important staple at many Jewish celebrations; we see a special holiness that centers on bread on Shabbat, at weddings and brit milot. There is even a set process of self-purification that must be completed before making a blessing on bread. The Kav HaYashar raises an intriguing question about the dual role attributed to bread on Pesach: because bread is a most essential element within Jewish traditions, it is puzzling that we are commanded to remove any bread in our midst for Pesach.

There is a deeper essence to the unwanted impurity of bread on Pesach, which highlights the true purpose of our challenging preparations, which lies in the symbolism of each component of the bread. Seur shebaisa is the part of the bread, which allows it to rise, representing the self-pride of a Jew that has risen, bringing him to sin. Matzah, unlike bread is flat; not having risen and being plain and simply made represents the virtuous form of a Jew, the low degree of self-pride that he must aspire to have.

The Kav HaYashar outlines the parallelism that exists between the physical and spiritual realms specifically during the time leading up to Pesach. Upon cleansing our homes for Pesach, we must evaluate the cleanliness of our own souls; introspecting on our risen prides that have brought us to wrongdoings. This process, while it is a physical removal of chametz, is equally the purification of one’s self.

The Seder is a formal engagement between the Jewish nation and God, as the Kav HaYashar reveals. It is this special union for which we must sanctify ourselves through preparation, redeeming ourselves and making our connection to God on this evening possible.

Bedikat chametz is so divinely spiritual, if we take this

message to heart. While looking for the chametz within the home with the help of a candle, we are symbolically searching for the flaws within ourselves using the guiding light, which represents our own soul. The warmth and intimacy embedded in a candle that is lit in total darkness, as it is during bedika, sets the tone for one to delve deep into his understanding of himself and examine his soul. As we peak into each cracks of our homes, we must inquire not only of the physical chametz, but of the spiritual blemishes within us as well.

There is an underlying theme of slavery and redemption in the Seder as well, which is linked to that of self-purification. During the Seder we repeat that we are slaves and that we are hopeful to be freed in the coming year. The slavery that we refer to can be simply the slavery that we endured in Mitzrayim, or, more deeply, the many actions that we are slaves to, trapped by our own selves and forced to endure. If the preparation for Pesach is successful, at the Seder, one is aware of his blemishes which welcomes the possibility of Teshuva. Once a person recognizes his flaws and understands that he is a slave to them, he will crave redemption.

The Kav HaYashar tells a story of a duke who was looking to purchase a magnificent gift for his wife. He traveled a long way to eventually find a beautiful bird, which had a marvelous voice. Knowing that his wife adores a bird’s singing, he was willing to give anything to get it. His butler, examining the situation, observed that the duke gave a large amount of gold to acquire this bird. Intrigued by the obvious splendor of this bird, the butler chose to gather up his savings and purchase the same bird for his own wife. Upon bringing it home, the butler explained that the duke’s highly-priced purchase must have been with reason, saying that this bird must taste fantastic. He and his wife happily prepared the bird for supper. When they found the bird to be disgusting, they understood that it was meant for something entirely different and that they had sadly wasted all its value.

Pesach is the most marvelous of holidays and allows for a stunning melody: self-renewal. Only when delving into our souls, finding blemishes, and desiring to free ourselves from our own captivity will we be using the gift of Seder properly. Let us trust the light of our candles and the absence of seur shebaisa in our matzot to guide us to the most fulfilling destination.



Thoughts on Tur: The End is the Beginning

by Jake Stern (RTMA '15)

The centrality of Yetziat Mitzrayim to Judaism is clear, and so much we do is tied to leaving Egypt. One noteworthy time that Yetziat Mitzrayim is discussed is in the ultimate set of pesukim of sefer Devarim. "To all the signs and wonders that G-d sent to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and all his servants and his whole hand. And the whole of the great hand and all the awesome sights that Moses did before the eyes of Israel" (Devarim 34:11-12) The Ba'al Haturim (Tur) explains a deeper connection between Yetziat Mitzrayim and the conclusion of chumash.

The last two pesukim of the Torah are part of a larger episode which includes the death of Moshe, Yehoshua taking leadership, and the beginning of the plans to enter Eretz Yisrael. Also according to the Tur, the last eight pesukim of the Torah were written by Yehoshua. With that footing gained, we can now delve into the Tur's comments.

In Parshat Va'eirah, the Torah describes the land of Israel as a "morasha," an inheritance (6:8). The Tur notes that the word morasha appears twice in Tanach; the other is in reference to the Torah itself: "Torah tziva lanu Moshe morasha kehillas Yaakov" - "Moshe commanded us in the Torah, an inheritance to the congregation of Yaakov." This is hinting that the receiving of Eretz Yisrael is dependent on keeping the Torah. The Tur further elaborates on the use of the term "morasha" rather than "yerusha." A yerusha is something you inherit, while a morasha is something you pass on. The Tur notes that Hashem is saying that this generation will not inherit Eretz Yisrael; rather they will pass it on to the next generation as a "morasha."

In Parshat Bo (13:11) there is a verse famous for its inclusion in tefillin, but very few know of the archaic scribble tradition related to this pasuk. The pasuk, when describing Eretz Yisrael, uses the word "un'tanah," meaning "he will give." The Hey at the end of this word is written with three (or three additional) crownlets, as opposed to the regular one crownlet most Heys receive. The Tur comments on this once again that the giving of Eretz Yisrael is dependent on Bnei Yisrael keeping the Hey (five) books of the Torah. There are two questions on the basic understanding of this Tur. First, why would the Tur need another proof that the receiving of

Eretz Yisrael is dependent on keeping the Torah? Second, it seems like the Tur is forcing his connection to the number five. After all, aren't the extra crownlets what we are concerned with?

Now the pieces can start to click. The second Tur shows the concept of five books because until Sefer Devarim was complete, the Jewish people as an entity could not go into Eretz Yisrael. The Tur holds that the last eight pesukim of Torah were written by Yehoshua bin Nun, meaning that Moshe could not have entered Eretz Yisrael because Sefer Devarim was not finished in his lifetime. On some higher level, Moshe as an entity was incapable of entering the land of Israel. Furthermore, the second comment of the Tur has in it no mention of Moshe telling Bnei Yisrael about this conversation; rather it was a private talk between Hashem and Moshe. Additionally, the second pasuk the Tur quotes in his comment on "morasha" is actually from Parshat V'zot Haberacha, the last parsha of the Torah. Given that context, the pasuk has new meaning. The generation about to enter Eretz Yisrael is saying that "Moshe commanded us the Torah," and that our parents "kehillas Yaakov," inherited it as a morasha.

We still have our question about why we end the Torah with the mention of Yetziat Mitzrayim. The above hints make it very clear that on some level, Moshe knew he was not going to enter Eretz Yisrael, but despite that fact, performed Hashem's great miracles and wonders in front of Pharaoh, the most powerful man on the planet. He risked his life and led with Bnei Yisrael all while knowing he would not enter the land. A generation of people dedicated their lives so their descendants could say, "Torah tziva lanu Moshe morasha kehillas Yaakov." The Tur has shown us the true power of Moshe's life, and all the selfless actions he did. May we all learn from the example set forth by our greatest leader, and may we celebrate Pesach next year in a rebuilt Yerushalayim.

All Who Are Hungry?

by Esther Malka Issever (Ramaz '14)

"Let all who are hungry, come and eat." This phrase, recited at the beginning of Magid, is difficult to say with complete sincerity. Do we really want anyone at our Passover table?



After the sin of the Golden Calf, Moshe implored God to save the Jewish people (Shemot 32:32): אֶם-תִּשְׁחָט אֶת-עַמִּי, מִסְּפָרָה אֲשֶׁר כָּתַבְתָּ

One of the most well-known interpretations of this pasuk comes from Rashi. Rashi explains that in asking God to spare Bnei Yisrael, Moshe essentially told God that, if He forgave them, everyone should live, but if He did not forgive the Jewish people, that God should “erase” Moshe from His book too.

The issue with this translation is that the literal translation of Moshe’s words reads: “If you bear their sin... if not, erase me from Your book.” Rashi’s interpretation adds words after “if you bear their sin.” Additionally, Hazal teach us that Moshe’s name is not mentioned in Parashat Tetzaveh because of this statement. But God did forgive the Jews in the end, so why was Moshe’s name “erased” from the Parasha?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe offers an explanation. Prior to this request, when God initially told Moshe of his plan to wipe out the Jewish nation, Moshe countered God’s proclamation. He pointed out that by doing so, God would be going against His promise to the forefathers that He would “multiply” the Jews’ “seeds as the stars of the heaven” (32:13). It was later that Moshe realized that God would not be violating this promise, because He would make a great nation out of Moshe himself. This realization stung Moshe. The only reason God would have been able to kill the Jewish people was because of Moshe’s existence. When Moshe realized this, he not only couldn’t stand the thought of his people dying, but could not even bear life. Moshe no longer wanted to live knowing that there was even a possibility that he could have played even the tiniest role in the destruction of his people.

In a pit of despair, Moshe told God, אֶם-תִּשְׁחָט אֶת-עַמִּי ; אִם יִשְׁחָט אֱלֹהִים אֶת-עַמִּי - “If You do bear their sin, or even if You do not bear their sin, erase me.” This was not an ultimatum; it was a plea! With these words, Moshe essentially told God that one way or another, he wanted out. The thought that he may be used as an instrument to cause harm to his people was simply too much to bear, and he no longer wanted to live. For this reason, it made no difference that God eventually forgave the Jewish people. Moshe begged to be erased, and therefore God erased him from an entire Parasha.

Moshe was willing to sacrifice everything at even the thought of causing harm to the Jewish people. What are we willing to sacrifice to attain unity? What are we willing to let go? How far will we go to lend a hand to our fellow? Do we only seek to help our friends, or also our enemies?

One proof of how far we are supposed to go, and how serious this invitation is supposed to be, is the fact that one of the four sons present is the rasha. There is an explanation in the Carlebach Haggada as to why we are told to “blot out the teeth of the rasha.” Though this advice seems quite harsh, there is a beautiful underlying message in it. The Hebrew word for “his teeth” is “Shinav.” But this word can also mean, “his shin.” The letter shin is the middle letter of the word, rasha, or evil. Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach explains that the three staves of the letter shin represent the three Avot [This idea can be found in the Shla Hakadosh on Parashat Vayechi]. Therefore, a symbol of the three Avot is inherently present inside the Rasha. In other words, every person, even a rasha, has goodness inside of them. When the rabbis tell us to knock out “Shinav,” his shin, they encourage us to bring out the rasha’s shin: the goodness that is buried in each person, even the “bad” people.

Every person has some good inside of them. Moshe understood this, and thus could not bear life knowing that he could cause harm to even one member of the Jewish nation. On this Pesach, look around. Find someone with whom you have not spoken in a while, and mend that broken relationship. The message of the Pesach Seder is that everyone, whether they are righteous or wicked, whether they are our family, friends or enemies, should celebrate this joyous holiday with love and unity.

Earn Your Miracles

by Baila Eisen (WYHS '15)

The exodus of the Jews from Egypt seems to be all about the miracles. G-d brings the plagues, G-d splits the sea, G-d gives the Torah – all, seemingly, without any effort on the Jews’ part. In fact, they constantly make mistakes, from blaming Moshe for their added workload when they were still slaves to idolatrously building a golden calf. As Hashem himself says in Sefer Shemot, right before declaring his intentions to kill the Jews and start over, “I have seen this people and behold! They are a stiff necked people.” Overall,

the Jews do not seem a very worthy people for G-d to have chosen. But at the end of the day, for some reason Hashem decides to allow them to live anyway—and not only to live, but to remain His chosen people.

Furthermore, why did G-d choose Moshe to lead His people? As Rashi explains, Moshe was a stutterer, obviously not a charismatic leader. But his ineptitude stretches even deeper than this. As any politician will say, whether from a democratic country or a dictatorship, a leader must be someone with whom the people are familiar. This leader must be a figure of great admiration or fear – but one way or another he must be well-known. Not only was Moshe brought up in the palace, isolated from the Jewish nation, but he also apparently ditched the Israelites ages ago, running off to Midyan to settle down away from his people. How could G-d possibly have chosen this man, who obviously cares so little for the chosen people, to step in and be their leader?

To truly understand the Jewish people as well as their leader, one must take a closer look. Rather than considering an overall impression, one must study the specifics. G-d has a method for choosing His favorites that stretches back to the times of Avraham Avinu. Avraham was known for being kind, for being a thinker – but the overwhelming impression a person would receive upon meeting him was that he was different. His tent had four doors. He prayed to an invisible G-d. He didn't believe in sacrificing children. Now, let's compare Avraham to Moshe. Think about it – why did Moshe Rabbeinu flee Egypt? Not because of any sense of entitlement. He didn't think that he was better than his people. If he did, he could have simply stayed in the palace as an Egyptian prince and bossed Jews around to his heart's content.

Let's take a look at the Pasuk that describes the reason that Moshe fled his homeland, Mitzrayim. In Sefer Shemot, perek bet, the familiar scene is painted for us: Moshe becomes curious about his roots, so he goes to check out the Israelites. An Egyptian man is beating a helpless Jewish slave. Moshe, glancing around, kills the Egyptian man. Without thinking twice, shrugging off years of indoctrination that he must have received that Egyptians are better than Israelites, Moshe defended his people. And he would have gotten away with it, too, except that he wasn't satisfied with defending the Jews just once – he had to do it again! And this time, he was

defending them from themselves.

Another familiar story: two Jews are fighting. Moshe tries to break them up. One turns to him and nastily says, "What, are you going to kill me like you killed that Mitzri man?" At first glance, this seems like nothing more than proof of the low level to which Bnei Yisrael had sunk. But try seeing it a different way, from Moshe's perspective. He's decided to completely give up his Egyptian values and try to be accepted by the Jewish people. If a kid at school is attempting to join a new social group, and he sees two of its members fighting, what will he do? He'll take his cues from them. If others are egging them on, he'll join in. Whichever one wins, he'll congratulate, trying to get in good with the cool kid. Moshe, while he has it all going for him in the secular world, is like the outcast of the Jewish hierarchy. He dresses like an Egyptian prince, the oppressor of his people. He probably speaks a different language, and even if he does know a little Hebrew, he speaks with a stutter that will not allow him to integrate normally in social situations. If his goal is now to get in with the Jews, he should be trying to get on their good side. But he doesn't. It seems that, once again, Moshe puts his ideals above his personal feelings. Not only does he disown his childhood society, but he also refuses to be part of something that he feels is immoral, no matter how much pressure he feels to do so. No wonder G-d chose this man as the leader of His people!

But what about the people themselves? Have we forgotten their mistakes, their lack of faith in G-d every five seconds? What have they done to deserve a leader like Moshe – or, for that matter, a G-d like Hashem?

Bnei Yisrael's relationship with Hashem has been compared to that of a bride and groom. To me, their relationship seems like that of an old, married couple who are constantly bickering, about mundane things and important ones, to the point that it's hard to believe that they even like each other, let alone live together. Yet, they've been married for fifty years! Similarly, Hashem and Bnei Yisrael always seem to be at odds. They don't believe in Him, He's punishing them again, yet they never give up on each other. And when it really counts, when it's time to renew the wedding vows, Bnei Yisrael is there to say "na'aseh v'nishmah," "we will do and we will listen." Perhaps that is what G-d likes about Bnei Yisrael,

that they are such a stubborn people. Because though that stubbornness occasionally presents itself as building a golden calf to worship, it also shows up in the willingness of a people to have faith throughout hundreds of years of slavery, to keep their Jewish names and language and identity. It shows up in their leader, Moshe, who will do what's right no matter what the consequences. Finally, that stubbornness is evident in the Jews of today and yesterday, who stood up against oppression and said, "We will never stop being Jewish." In Shemot Rabbah (42:9) the midrash questions: "What is meant by, 'And behold, it is a stiff-necked people'?" Rav Yitzchak ben Redifa answers, "You think that this is said disparagingly, but it is really in their praise."

So the exodus is not only about the miracles that G-d did for a helpless people. It's about miracles done for a nation that earned its right to the Torah, and proves it again and again by overcoming every challenge thrown its way.

Ha Lachma Anya

by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom (YULA)

Just before beginning the "question-answer" part of the Seder, we raise the Matzah and make a three-tiered statement in Aramaic (the vernacular at the time of the composition of the Haggada), identifying the "bread of affliction," inviting anyone who is hungry to join us and partake in our Korban Pesach and praying that next year, unlike now, we will be in Eretz Yisrael as noblemen.

There are several classic questions that are asked about this portion of the Seder called "Ha Lachma Anya": 1) Why is the paragraph in Aramaic? 2) How could we reasonably be inviting someone into our house for a Seder - at such a late hour? No one may partake in a Pesach offering without having joined a Chaburah in advance! 3) Why is the prayer at the end presented in a doubled form - here/Israel, slaves/noblemen? Why not combine the two? 4) What is the purpose of this paragraph?

The ultimate goal of the evening is to give thanks to God for the Exodus. The vehicle for that Shirah is "Hallel"; since this is an evening of Hallel, it is prudent for us to examine the "Hallel experience" in order to understand the meaning of the night.

The Gemara in Megillah (14b) provides three answers as to why Hallel is not said on Purim: a) The Megillah is the

Hallel. b) Hallel is not recited for a miracle that took place outside of Eretz Yisrael. c) Hallel is guided by the opening line: "Give thanks, you servants of God" - the implication being that we are only servants of God and no longer servants of Pharaoh. (We were still enslaved to Achashverosh.)

We must sadly admit that much of the goal of Yetziat Mitzrayim has not yet been realized. Even those components that were "real" for a time are not now part of our reality. There is no Bet Hamikdash, and we are still scattered throughout the world and our position as instructors and guides for the world is sorely tarnished by our own ethical and religious weaknesses.

We come to the Seder with only one side of the Exodus experience, namely, poverty and oppression; nobility and freedom are still part of an unrealized future and a nostalgic past. There are two roles for the Matzah - as an independent Mitzvah commemorating the refugee experience and as an auxiliary to the regal Pesach offering. The only one that we can honestly point to tonight is the "Lachma Anya" - like our ancestors in Egypt - we are "pre-Geulah."

Now we can understand the paragraph. Before beginning our "fantasy" trip through Jewish history (one symptom of which is conversation around the table in Hebrew), we declare that we are celebrating a "poor" Seder - and we pray that next year, we should be able to do it "the right way."

We make this declaration in the vernacular, as it is the last point of "reality" during the evening.

Ironically, we invite people in to share our "Pesach" - reminding ourselves that the Pesach is missing from the table while pointing to the sad situation that we are reasonably have fellow Jews who are hungry and need a place to have their Seder- hardly nobility!

We then point to the two factors making our Hallel incomplete - we are "here" (even those in Eretz Yisrael say this because the rest of us are not yet home) and we are "slaves" (under foreign rule); these two features also get in the way of a complete and proper Hallel.

At this point, we pour the second cup, signifying the redemption that we will reenact - and, God willing, live to experience in "real time."

B'tzelem Elokim Bara Otam: The Recreation of a Nation

by Ben Atwood (Frisch '14)

The Exodus from Egypt is the beginning of the formation of the Israelite nation. Interestingly, the narrative bears many striking similarities to a creation story much earlier in the Torah - the original creation of Man. Comparing the two narratives will provide insight into the primary messages of each story and what these events signify for the future of the Jewish People.

Picture the Children of Israel in Egypt, literally slaving away and performing back-breaking labor for their Egyptian masters. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, in his essay "Redemption, Prayer, and Talmud Torah," defines slavery as "speechlessness," lack of independent voice or creative thought. In fact, the slave often becomes so marginalized that he is ignorant to its own subjugation and makes no effort to improve his situation. Similarly, R. Soloveitchik notes that it is not until Moses kills the Egyptian (Exodus 2:12) that the slaves call out to God to save them from their plight (2: 23). At this point in the narrative, the Israelites have been slaves for many generations; they have never known a superior life. When Moses publically defends the rights of an Israelite by striking the taskmaster, the slaves finally acknowledge their right to freedom. They begin to shed both their ignorance and speechlessness and raise their voices to God for salvation.

Eventually, the Israelites develop to the extent that they lose their slave status and are, in essence, recreated as free, autonomous beings. To better comprehend this national creation story, we must examine a similar process that occurs many years earlier during the original Creation narrative.

Dr. Leon Kass, in *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis*, notes that each of God's creations in Genesis harbored its own level of autonomy. In other words, some items were stationary, such as the seas and the sky; some displayed movement strictly along fixed paths, such as the constellations; some were physically unrestrained but limited in creative thought, such as nonhuman animals. These entities were, according to Rabbi Soloveitchik, speechless slaves. As a result, God introduced a new form of being: Human.

Man's uniqueness stems from being created "in the image

of God" (Genesis 1:27). This status can be defined as Man possessing the traits of God revealed thus far in Genesis, specifically creation through speech. Similarly, Man, distinct from other creations, has the ability to creatively harness the power of speech to dominate the world, exemplified by Adam's task of naming the animals in 2:19.

It seems that the state of being in "the image of God" is the antithesis of R. Soloveitchik's perception of slavery. In this vein, the Israelites' redemption from Egypt can be further viewed as a form of recreation. When the slaves regained their creative freedom during the Exodus, they reacquired the status of being "in the image of God." Thus, the Exodus from Egypt celebrates not only physical redemption, but metaphysical as well.

However, the Children of Israel's redemption is not complete with the Exodus, nor is Man's with the creation of the world. After performing each of His creations in the first chapter, God reflectively describes almost all of them as "good," except Mankind. Kass explains that the word "good" in this context means complete, as in the object is fully created. However, Mankind's situation is unique: rather than God completing Mankind, Mankind must complete itself. The freedom that accompanies being "in the image of God" is a responsibility more than a gift - he is trusted to use his unparalleled freedom constructively and appropriately.

The lesson of the sin of the Etz haDaaat is that Adam and Eve initially believe that their personal autonomy is limitless until they break God's one rule of the Garden of Eden. As a result, they woke up to the reality that their freedom must be used intelligently. Mankind must remember that God is the One who provides his freedom and, when faced with life's daily choices, each member of Mankind must complete himself by making the right decisions.

When the redeemed Israelites regain their status of being in "the image of God," God brings them to Mount Sinai. There, He challenges the Israelites to use the Torah as a thorough guidebook to using their newly garnered gift of autonomy constructively. To paraphrase Spider-Man, with great freedom comes great responsibility: the responsibility of a Torah lifestyle.

The Exodus of Egypt was more than simply a physical redemption; it was one step in the process of recreating the Children the Israel to be creative and free, "in the image of

God.” That process proceeded to the giving of the Torah and continues until today. As Adam teaches that each member of Mankind is constantly called upon to complete himself by making good, productive choices, the redemption of the Israelites instructs each Child of Israel to “complete the process of recreating the nation by making the right choices and following the guidelines God supplied at Sinai. Although to be created in “the image of God” is a gift that we cannot possibly repay, we must at least attempt to do so, each and every day.

God’s Name: A Warning or a Beacon of Hope?

by Yael Marans (SAR '16)

In the third perek of Shemot, at the burning bush, Moshe asks what name he should call God when speaking to Bnei Yisrael. God responds with the cryptic words, אֶקְוֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶקְוֶה. He instructs Moshe to tell Bnei Yisrael that “Ehyeh” sent him to them, establishing yet another one of God’s biblical names.

Even the literal understandings of this name vary. On Chabad.org, the translation of the name reads, "Ekyeh Asher Ekyeh (I will be what I will be)," including the English interpretation of the phrase apparently as an afterthought. Similarly, the JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh merely transliterates the name into English and lists possible translations of the name in a footnote. The footnote reads, “Meaning of Heb. uncertain; variously translated: ‘I am that I am’; ‘I am Who I am’; ‘I Will be What I Will Be’; etc.” Evidently, several modern Torah scholars are comfortable with the literal ambiguity of this phrase, since they are not particular about its technical translation. In contrast to this, the rishonim write extensively regarding the deeper meaning of these words.

In modern Hebrew, “Ehyeh” means “I will be,” leading certain commentators to believe that God is referring to His status in the future. Rashi cites an aggadic story from Masechet Berachot to help clarify God’s obscure words. The passage explains that the first usage of the word Ekyeh denotes that God “will be” with Bnei Yisrael throughout their present suffering, Asher Ekyeh just as God “will be” with Bnei Yisrael throughout their suffering in the future. When

Moshe hears this, Rashi explains, he challenges God, claiming that it would be inappropriate to mention the future tragedies Bnei Yisrael will undergo. God, according to Rashi, agrees with Moshe and retracts his previous statement, telling Moshe to simply say “I will be,” or “Ehyeh.” This interpretation is logical according to the literal order of God’s words, since God tells Moshe, אֶקְוֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶקְוֶה, pauses, and adds, כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם.

The Ramban also dissects this passage from Berachot, but he extracts a different meaning than Rashi does. According to Ramban’s understanding, Moshe asks God how to respond when Bnei Yisrael ask for His name, expecting that they will desire a name that proves His existence unequivocally. But God believes that Bnei Yisrael do not need His name to comprehend His existence. The only evidence they need, God explains, is that “I will be with them (Ehyeh) through all of their troubles.” Ramban also cites a different aggadic midrash that interprets the words אֶקְוֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶקְוֶה as God saying, “I will act toward you as you act toward me.” Therefore, according to the midrash, if people perform acts of charity, God will be charitable to them. However, if people do not extend themselves and help others, God will withhold His help from them. Such an interpretation is fitting since God is about to send help to Bnei Yisrael. He is therefore warning them now that his help must be earned.

Another opinion the Ramban cites is that of Rabbi Yitzchak. According to Rabbi Yitzchak, God’s repetition of the word “Ehyeh” demonstrates His eternalness. The first time God says it, He notes that He existed in the past. Subsequently, God repeats it to represent His existence in the present. The last time refers to God’s kingship in the future. Rabbi Yitzchak’s opinion begs the question: why did God use the future tense for all of these statements? The Ramban resolves this question by stating that God defies time, so it makes no difference which tense He uses; the past, present and future are all like the present to God.

Applying Rabbi Yitzchak’s logic, God is reminding Bnei Yisrael of a core aspect of His existence. He tells Bnei Yisrael that the same God that spoke to their forefathers is reaching them and will redeem them from the slavery of Egypt. Reminding Bnei Yisrael that He transcends that concept of time, God is stressing that he is greater than any human king. אֶקְוֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶקְוֶה are the first words that God speaks to Moshe

as a message to Bnei Yisrael. The first idea God wants to transmit to Bnei Yisrael is that He will always be there. God reaches out to Bnei Yisrael with words of comfort. I have been here. I am here. I always will be. God plants a seed of hope in Bnei Yisrael.

A Grave Difference

by Ari Bar-Shain (Mizrachi '14)

Glancing at the end of Sefer Bereishit and the beginning of Sefer Shemot we see the transition from one Jewish leader to another. The similarities between these two chieftains are striking. Both Yosef Hatzaddik and Moshe Rabbeinu were separated from their families and forced into an Egyptian lifestyle. Yosef was quickly appointed viceroy after correctly interpreting Paroh's dreams and spent much of his time in Paroh's palace. Moshe Rabbeinu was adopted by the princess, when she saved him from the river and brought him into the royal manor. He was raised in the stately residence and eventually became the leader of the Jewish people. Yosef marks the beginning of Bnei Yisrael's long stay in Egypt. Moshe's comes into play at the termination of the enslavement.

Despite all of the parallelism, the fate of the two protagonists differs greatly. Yosef dies in the last Pasuk of Sefer Bereishit. The Torah records in 50:26, וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף, בֶּן- - "So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old. And they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt." Later on in Sefer Yehoshua we see Yosef's bones find a permanent resting place in Israel. The pasuk reads, וְאֵת-עַצְמוֹת יוֹסֵף - "And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, they buried in Shechem." In contrast, Moshe dies on top of Har Nevo, in Moav, and according to Devarim 35:6 is buried בְּעוֹר פְּעוֹר מוֹאָב, מוֹל בֵּית פְּעוֹר - "In the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor."

Yosef merited his bones being entombed in the Holy Land. Moshe warranted his bones finding a resting place in Moav. The disparity in sepulchers is jarring. Moshe Rabbeinu is undoubtedly the greatest Navi of all time. Every single day we affirm in the Tefillah of Yigdal, לֹא קָם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה עוֹד, - "In Israel, none like Moses arose again." So why are his

bones lingering somewhere in the Diaspora, while Yosef's are situated in Israel?

The Midrash in Devarim Rabba 2:8 picks up on the connection between Moshe and Yosef and provides a thought provoking answer. Rabbi Levi says, מִי שֶׁהוֹדָה בְּאֶרְצוֹ נִקְבֵּר בְּאֶרְצוֹ - "One who identifies with his Land will be buried in the Land, and one who does not identify with his Land will not be buried there."

Let's examine how this plays out in Yosef's narrative. While incarcerated, Yosef befriends the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers and the Chamberlain of the Bakers. One night, Yosef interprets their troubling dreams. He requests of the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers to remember him and help him get out of jail. In Bereishit 40:15 he reasons, כִּי-גִנַּב גִּנְבֹתַי, - "For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon." The Midrash claims that Yosef identified with his Homeland and therefore was buried there.

Moshe, on the other hand, is quite different. To understand his case we need some background information. Moshe murders an Egyptian who was beating a Jew. He finds out that word spread, and Paroh became aware of the homicide. In an effort to escape punishment, Moshe runs away to Midyan. When he arrives, he encounters the seven daughters of כַּהֵן מִדִּין who are at a well about to give water to their sheep. A group of male shepherds try to drive the shepherdesses away, but Moshe valiantly steps in, saves the women, and hydrates their flock. The women run to their father Reuel and say in 2:19, אִישׁ מִצְרִי, הִצִּילֵנוּ מִיַּד הָרֹעִים; - "An Egyptian man delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and moreover he drew water for us, and watered the flock." Moshe is labelled "An Egyptian man," and makes no attempt to correct the error. The Midrash argues that לֹא נִקְבֵּר לֹא לְפִיכֵךְ הוּא שׁוֹמֵעַ וְשׁוֹתֵק, - "And he heard and he was silent, therefore he wasn't buried in his Land."

What is our relationship with Israel supposed to look like? Is our connection to the Land part of our essence, or is it an afterthought that we celebrate by eating falafel on Yom Ha'atzmaut? Do we view our Homeland as an intrinsic part of ourselves like Yosef, or do we shy away from identifying with

the Land like Moshe?

Nowadays, it is easy to forget the centrality of and significance of Israel to the Jewish people, as life in America is comfortable. It has become our wont to complacently settle outside the Land of Israel. Thank God we have many successful Yeshiva day schools, Shuls, and communities, but it is not the Land that Hashem bestowed upon the Jewish people. Let's end the current Galut and seize the opportunity we have in Israel. This year let's internalize the message and make progress in **לשנה הבאה בירושלים הבנויה!**

Recreating the Past Every Year

by Noam Fromowitz (TABC '14)

Rambam in Hilchot Chametz UMatzah (7:1) states that there is a Mitzvah Deoraita to remember Yetziat Mitzrayim, as the Pasuk states, "Zachor Et Hayom Hazeh Asher Yatzatem MiMitzrayim," "Remember this day in which you came out from Mitzrayim" (Shemot 13:3), which is similar to a Pasuk discussing Shabbat, which reads, "Zachor Et Yom HaShabbat," "Remember the Shabbat day" (Shemot 20:8). There are several instances where the Torah commands us "Zachor," "remember," the most famous of which is in reference to Amalek. Why does Rambam equate these two cases of Yetziat Mitzrayim and Shabbat specifically? Furthermore, even if there is basis for the comparison, the two obligations are very different from each other. The obligation of Shabbat is simply to recite Kiddush over a cup of wine, while the obligation of Pesach is to delve into the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, to involve our children in the process, and even to feel as though we are personally experiencing Yetziat Mitzrayim. How can Rambam possibly equate these two obligations?

Perhaps there is more validity to the comparison than meets the eye. The Zechirah of Shabbat focuses on remembering the creation of the world - the beginning of nature and mankind. The text of Kiddush itself centers on the creation of the world and Hashem's rest after He completed His work. In a similar spirit, the Zechirah of Yetziat Mitzrayim revolves around the fact that Yetziat Mitzrayim was the creation of the Am HaNivchar, Bnei Yisrael. Thus, both Zechirot are beginnings.

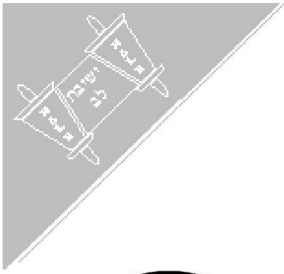
In spite of this understanding, however, the question of

the discrepancies in the form of Zechirah becomes even stronger. It would make more sense for the Zechirah of Shabbat to be more dramatic and weighty. The creation of the entire world, which was a creation of 'Yeish MeiAyin,' 'something from naught,' seems to be far more significant than the establishment of a nation which was 'Yeish MiYeish,' only a change in the existing. Why is it that on Shabbat all we do is recite Kiddush over a cup of wine, while on Pesach we undergo an entire emotional experience and extend that experience to our families and everyone around us?

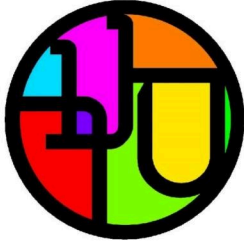
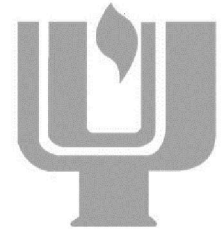
Perhaps this question stems from an improper perspective on these two events. The way to gauge the significance of an event is not by the level of miracles performed, for Hashem's capabilities are so great that grand miracles simply do not indicate anything about the significance of an event. Rather, the significance of an event should be judged by the value and importance of that which resulted from it.

Rav Dessler in Michtav MiEliyahu quotes Maharal who states that the purpose of the creation of the world was for Hashem to have creations who would cleave to Him and experience revelation and closeness to Hashem. Thus, the inherent value of the creation of the world would be fairly minimal were it not for events such as Yetziat Mitzrayim and Matan Torah. Yetziat Mitzrayim was the creation of the nation set out to serve as an 'Ohr LaGoyim,' a light to the rest of the nations, to bring the goal of creation to fruition. The entire process of Yetziat Mitzrayim and Kabbalat HaTorah all come together to serve as the manifestation of Hashem in this world, both through the revelations in the events themselves, as well as the results of the events. Yetziat Mitzrayim gave the world Klal Yisrael, and Ma'amad Har Sinai gave the world the Torah, both of which bring the Shechinah into this world.

It is now clear why the Zechirah on Pesach is far more dramatic than that of Shabbat. The Zechirah on Pesach requires us to feel as though we ourselves left Mitzrayim, as Rambam states, since the purpose of Yetziat Mitzrayim stands true in every generation. In every generation Klal Yisrael must feel as though they themselves left Mitzrayim and remember their responsibility to be an Ohr LaGoyim. The period of Pesach and Shavuot should serve as a reminder of what happened then, and of our responsibility to recreate those events in our lives.



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