

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHIOT TZAV - SHMINI - PESACH SPECIAL · 12-26 NISSAN 5764 · APR. 3-17, 2004 · VOL. 11 NO. 26

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Tzav

THE CONSTANT FIRE

“...a constant fire shall burn upon the altar; it shall never go out.” (6:6)

Throughout their journeys in the wilderness, the Jewish People carried with them the Mishkan. The word Mishkan comes from the word in Hebrew which means “to dwell.” Through the Mishkan, G-d caused the Divine Presence, the *Shechina*, to dwell amongst the Jewish People.

There was an altar in the courtyard of the Mishkan. On it burned three different fires. On the eastern side of the altar was the *maracha gadola*, the “large arrangement”. On this largest fire, the *korbanot* sacrifices were offered. On the southwestern corner there was another fire that was used solely to ignite the pyre of the golden altar inside the Mishkan on which the incense was burned.

And there was a third fire which had no fixed place but could be made anywhere on the outside altar. This fire had one purpose and one purpose only – to fulfill the words of the Torah in this week’s portion : “a constant fire shall burn

upon the altar; it shall never go out.” Come rain or shine, weekdays and Shabbat, this fire never went out. It burned all the forty years that the Jewish People were traveling in the desert. In fact, it burned without interruption for a total of over one hundred years, in the desert, fourteen years in the Mishkan at *Gilgal*, and fifty-seven years in the Mishkan at Nov and at Givon. Two pieces of wood had to be added to the fire twice a day. One in the morning at the time of the morning offering, and one in the afternoon at the time of the afternoon offering.

One might ask, why were three fires necessary? Wouldn’t one have sufficed?

These three fires can be understood as three aspects of our relationship with G-d:

The large fire represents our external service; the performance of the *mitzvot*, the obligations of prayer at its fixed times throughout the day and throughout the year. Because it was the largest fire, it was the most visible, just as our external duties as Jews are the most visible, be they the giving of charity or the care of the orphan and the widow. These are things that are as visible as a large fire.

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Tzav

The Torah addresses Aharon and his sons to teach them additional laws relating to their service. The ashes of the *korban olah* — the offering burnt on the altar throughout the night — are to be removed from the area by the *kohen* after he changes his special linen clothing. The *olah* is brought by someone who forgot to perform a positive commandment of the Torah. The *kohen* retains the skin. The fire on the altar must be kept constantly ablaze. The *korban mincha* is a meal offering of flour, oil and spices. A handful is burned on the altar and a *kohen* eats the remainder before it becomes leaven. The Parsha describes the special *korbanot* to be offered by the *Kohen Gadol* each day, and by Aharon’s sons and future descendants on the day of their inauguration. The *chatat*, the *korban*

brought after an accidental transgression, is described, as are the laws of slaughtering and sprinkling the blood of the *asham* guilt-*korban*. The details of *shelamim*, various peace *korbanot*, are described, including the prohibition against leaving uneaten until morning the remains of the *todah*, the thanks-*korban*. All sacrifices must be burned after they may no longer be eaten. No sacrifice may be eaten if it was slaughtered with the intention of eating it too late. Once they have become ritually impure, *korbanot* may not be eaten and should be burned. One may not eat a *korban* when he is ritually impure. Blood and *chelev*, forbidden animal fats, are prohibited to be eaten. Aharon and his sons are granted the breast and shank of every *korban shelamim*. The inauguration ceremony for Aharon, his sons, the Mishkan and all of its vessels is detailed.

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GETTING OUT OF EGYPT – GETTING EGYPT OUT OF US

The Shabbat just before Pesach, the Festival of our Freedom from Egyptian bondage, is called *Shabbat Hagadol* – the Great Shabbat. Its greatness is that it recalls the great miracle which took place for our ancestors in Egypt on the Shabbat preceding the Exodus.

Jews were commanded by G-d to take a sheep on that day and set it aside for slaughtering as a sacrifice four days later. Their Egyptian neighbors were shocked at the sight of animals they worshipped being chained to beds in Jewish homes, and were even more upset when informed that this was in preparation for their being slaughtered. Heavenly intervention which prevented this anger from exploding into violence was a great miracle to be recalled on every “Great Shabbat”.

But why was it necessary for such action on the part of our ancestors before their liberation?

The answer lies in the wording of the command to “draw forth or purchase for yourselves one of the flock for your families and slaughter it as a Pesach sacrifice” (*Shmot 12:21*). “Draw forth” is interpreted by our Talmudic Sages as a command to “draw away” from the idolatry of the Egyptians. Jews had been seriously influenced by the culture and beliefs of their Egyptian taskmasters and neighbors. It was therefore not sufficient to take Jews out of Egypt. It was absolutely necessary to take Egypt out of the Jews!

This could only be achieved by insisting on Jews courageously taking the very personification of Egyptian culture and sacrificing it to G-d. This should serve as a reminder in our own times to divest ourselves of all the corrupt elements of secular “culture” and thus be worthy of miracles like that of the “Great Shabbat” which will preserve Israel forever.

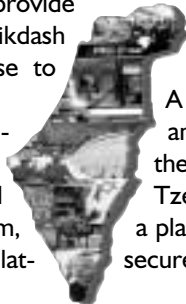
LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

GAGOT TZERIFIN – A CODE FOR THE OMER

The barley used on the second day of Pesach to provide the flour for the *Omer* offering in the Beit Hamikdash was supposed to come from a site as close to Jerusalem as possible.

Where this was impossible it could come from distant places in *Eretz Yisrael* as well. This actually happened during the Hasmonean civil war, which found Aristobolus entrenched within the walls of Jerusalem, while his brother Hyrkonus laid siege without. The lat-



ter's forces had destroyed all the produce in the vicinity of Jerusalem, so a call was issued if anyone knew where barley for the *Omer* could be acquired.

A mute Jew came along and put one hand on a roof and another on a shack. Mordechai, of Purim fame, asked the people if there was a place called Gagot (Roofs), Tzerfin (Shacks) or Tzerifin Gagot. A search was made, a place named Gagot Tzerifin was found, and barley was secured for the *Omer*.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THANKS TO 669

It is not often that an Israel Air Force base sees such a delegation as the one which visited the Tel Nof base in southern Israel a couple of weeks ago. The heads of a Beit Yaakov Seminary in Jerusalem, the Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, and the head of the City's Religious Education Department spent a morning as guests of the base's Unit 669 Rescue Squad.

The reason for the visit was to express the appreciation of the school and the city for the magnificent job which members of the unit did a couple of months earlier in rescuing girls from a bus threatened with flooding. A few busloads of girls had left for a tour of Ein Gedi one morning after

receiving a go-ahead from the responsible authorities who assured them that weather conditions permitted such a trip. An unexpected thunderstorm sent a torrent of water, which derailed one of the buses and threatened to flood it. The Air Force was summoned and it was decided to evacuate the girls from the bus by pulling them up rope ladders to helicopters above.

The soldiers involved in the rescue were full of praise for the levelheaded cooperation of the girls and the girls paid tribute to the consideration of the soldiers for their sensitivities of modesty. It was on their behalf that the delegation came to say thanks.

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The Matzah Message

By **RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH**

“The Matza that we eat — for what reason? Because the dough of our forefathers did not have time to become leavened before the King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He, revealed Himself to them and redeemed them.”

The Exodus from Egypt was sudden — so sudden that “they could not tarry” and therefore “baked the dough which they had brought forth from Egypt into unleavened cakes (matzahs).” What would have transpired had our forefathers been given a little more time before leaving their homes in Egypt? Would they have utilized this time to bake the dough into loaves of bread to sustain them on their journey into the wilderness rather than bake it into matzahs? Or would they have baked the dough into matzahs in the comfort of their homes and transported them in this convenient form rather than carry dough on their shoulders and be forced to bake matzahs while on the road?

Both approaches find support in the commentaries with a preponderance in favor of the second one. The big problem facing this approach is how it was possible for our ancestors to carry the dough for so long without it becoming forbidden chametz — a leavening that transpires if dough is left unattended for eighteen minutes.

The variety of solutions proposed range from the dough being miraculously baked by an extraordinarily blazing sun (*Targum Yonatan ben Uziel*), to the dough being steadily kneaded by the Jews carrying it on their shoulders for that purpose (*Ohr Hachayim*), to the distance being covered in miraculously short time as they were being “carried on eagles’ wings” (*Ramban*).

A particularly interesting approach is that of the great nineteenth century commentator Rabbi Meir Leibush Malbim, whose analysis of another Midrash led him to the conclusion that the miracle was that G-d, Divine Author of Nature, simply repealed the natural law which dictates that unattended dough must become chametz!

Despite this fascinating divergence of approaches all are united in viewing the eating of matza on Pesach as a reminder of the speed with which Jews were liberated from Egypt. Why is this such a crucial factor?

We can easily understand the other features of the Seder. The bitter herbs of *maror* recall the bitterness of our bondage. The four cups of wine and the reclining are expressions of freedom from that bondage. The four cups of wine and the reclining are expressions of freedom from that bondage. But why is it so significant to highlight the speed with which this liberation was effected?

A charming incident, which took place in Jerusalem a number of decades ago, may help us unravel this mystery of the matza.

All the guests gathered around the wedding canopy excitedly waiting the big moment. The officiating rabbi, a sage renowned both for his Torah knowledge and practical wisdom, had concluded the opening blessings over a cup of wine and it was now the chatan’s turn to put a ring on the kallah’s extended finger and say the magic words which would make them man and wife. This particular chatan was a bit more nervous than other grooms and he let the ring fall from his hand. As he bent down to pick it up, the father of the bride, who was apparently not very pleased with the match, muttered something about this perhaps being a Heavenly sign that the wedding should not take place.

The rabbi quickly defused a potentially explosive situation by declaring: “Yes, it is indeed a sign from Heaven.”

As the chatan, kallah and their parents and witnesses looked at him in bewilderment the rabbi continued: “It is a sign from Heaven that when he first took out

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TO MAGNIFY AND GLORIFY

One of the passages most familiar to Jews who regularly pray and study Torah is that which is said at the conclusion of the *Uva Letzion* prayer:

"G-d wished for the sake of His righteousness to magnify Torah and glorify it." (*Yeshayahu* 42:21)

There are many dimensions to this concept of magnifying the Torah. In our *gemara* it is applied to explaining why the Torah went to such lengths to teach us that the presence of scales on a fish is the definitive proof of its kosher status. Even though it could simply have written the word *kaskesses* and relied on a passage elsewhere to define that word as "scales", the Torah underscores this by including the word "fins" in the identifying signs of kashrut. This seems superfluous since any fish which has scales also has fins. It is there only to ensure that we will not mistakenly translate *kaskesses* as fins and rely on that feature alone as a sign of kashrut. This seemingly superfluous proof is there in order to magnify and glorify the Torah we study.

Rabbi Chananya ben Akashya (*Mesechta Malkot* 23b) expands on this perspective. Because G-d wished to endow Israel with greater opportunity for merit, he points out on the basis of the passage, He gave them much Torah and many *mitzvot*.

While these *gemaras* focus on the role of G-d in magnifying the scope of His Torah, a somewhat different interpretation is offered by *Metsudat David* in his commentary on *Yeshayahu*. After the prophet has castigated those with Torah knowledge and commitment for being blind and deaf to the faults of their generation, and failing to reach out to their fellow Jews, he reminds them that the reason they were blessed with knowledge was because G-d wished them to bring righteousness to others and to magnify and glorify the Torah by teaching it to them.

• *Chullin* 66b

DISCOVERING THE GUILT

We sometimes find that we are capable of understanding a Torah passage only by relying on a signal from another one.

A case in point is the passage which describes the need for an atonement by sacrifice if "one touches a carcass of an unclean beast or a carcass of unclean cattle" and subsequently forgets about it only to later "become aware and be guilty." (*Vayikra* 5:2) There is no indication in this passage as to what guilt requiring atonement there is in merely becoming ritually unclean through contact with a carcass.

The Sage Rebbie (Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi) solves this mystery by deducing a superfluous term in this passage. Another

Torah source has already taught us that wherever the term "beast" is used it includes cattle as well and vice versa. If the passage has already mentioned the result of touching the carcass of a beast there is no need for mentioning the carcass of cattle. His conclusion therefore is that the inclusion of the cattle carcass is a signal to connect this passage with another in which the same term appears.

That other passage is in *Vayikra* 7:21 and it informs us that one who touches the carcass of dead cattle and, in his impure state, knowingly eats the sacred flesh of a sacrifice is punished by extirpation. Just as the guilt for which one is deserving such harsh retribution is the result of consciously consuming sacred flesh, so too is the atonement required for one who committed this same offense out of forgetfulness related to the eating of sacrificial flesh.

This methodology employed by Rebbie in reaching this conclusion is that of *gezeira sha've* – a similarity of terms in two different places which allows for making an equation. But it was possible to apply this method only after detecting the signal to do so communicated by that superfluous term.

• *Chullin* 71a

THE LAMB MYSTERY

The firstborn of an ass, commands the Torah, must be redeemed by giving a lamb to a *kohen*. (*Shmot* 13:13) Can one use a *ben pakua* – the firstborn lamb which was still inside its mother when she was slaughtered – for this purpose?

According to the position of Rabbi Meir that such an animal requires *shechita* of its own and cannot be considered as having been already slaughtered, there is no problem in using such a lamb for redemption since it has the status of a full-fledged lamb. In regard to the position of the other Sages who rule that such an animal requires no *shechita* because the slaughtering of its mother suffices for it as well, there is a difference of opinion amongst the later Sages.

The Sage Mar Zutra contends that such a lamb cannot be used for redemption because the same term *lamb* used here appears in regard to the animal used for the *korban Pesach* (*Vayikra* 12:2).

Just as a *ben pakua* is not qualified to serve as a *korban Pesach*, so too can it not qualify for redemption.

But why is a *ben pakua* not eligible to serve as a *korban Pesach*?

Rashi offers two different explanations. The first is that no animal delivered by Caesarian section and not born through the womb is eligible to be a sacrifice and therefore is ineligible for redemption. This is rejected by Tosefot because it would leave us with a problem as to how Rabbi Meir permits redemption with such an animal. The other explanation is

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PARSHA Q&A ? _____

Tzav

1. What separated the *kohen's* skin from the priestly garments?
2. How often were the ashes removed from upon the *mizbe'ach*? How often were they removed from next to the *mizbe'ach*?
3. If someone extinguishes the fire on the *mizbe'ach*, how many Torah violations has he transgressed?
4. The portion of a flour-offering offered on the *mizbe'ach* may not be *chametz*. But is the *kohen's* portion allowed to be *chametz*?
5. When a *kohen* is inaugurated, what offering must he bring?
6. What three baking processes were used to prepare the *korban* of Aharon and his sons?
7. What is the difference between a *minchat kohen* and a *minchat Yisrael*?
8. When is a *kohen* disqualified from eating from a *chatat*?
9. What is the difference between a copper and earthenware vessel regarding removing absorbed tastes?
10. Can an animal dedicated as an *asham* be replaced with another animal?
11. How does an *asham* differ from all other *korbanot*?
12. Unlike all other *korbanot*, what part of the ram or sheep may be placed on the *mizbe'ach*?
13. What three types of *kohanim* may not eat from the *asham*?
14. In which four instances is a *korban todah* brought?
15. Until when may a *todah* be eaten according to the Torah? Until when according to Rabbinic decree?
16. How does a *korban* become *pigul*?
17. Who may eat from a *shelamim*?
18. What miracle happened at the entrance of the *Ohel Moed*?
19. Other than *Yom Kippur*, what other service requires that the *kohen* separate from his family?
20. What are the 5 categories of *korbanot* listed in this Parsha?

PARSHA Q&A! _____

Answers to Tzav's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 6:3 - Nothing.
2. 6:4 -A) Every day. B) Whenever there was a lot.
3. 6:6 - Two.
4. 6:10 - No.
5. 6:13 - A *korban mincha* — A tenth part of an *ephah* of flour.
6. 6:14 - Boiling, baking in an oven and frying in a pan.
7. 6:15 - The *minchat kohen* is burnt completely. Only a handful of the *minchat Yisrael* is burnt, and the remainder is eaten by the *kohanim*.
8. 6:19 - If he is *tamei* (spiritually impure) at the time of the sprinkling of the blood.
9. 6:21 - One can remove an absorbed taste from a copper vessel by scouring and rinsing, whereas such a taste can never be removed from an earthenware vessel.
10. 7:1 - No.
11. 7:3 - It can only be brought from a ram or sheep.
12. 7:3 - The tail.
13. 7:7 - A *t'vul yom* (a *tamei kohen* who immersed in a *mikveh* yet awaits sunset to become *tahor*); A *mechusar kipurim* (a *tamei* person who has gone to the *mikveh* but has yet to bring his required offering); An *onan* (a mourner prior to the burial of the deceased).
14. 7:12 - Upon safe arrival from an ocean voyage; Upon safe arrival from a desert journey; Upon being freed from prison; Upon recovering from illness.
15. 7:15 - a) Until the morning. a) Until midnight.
16. 7:18 - The person slaughters the animal with the intention that it be eaten after the prescribed time.
17. 7:19 - Any uncontaminated person (not only the owner).
18. 8:3 - The entire nation was able to fit in this very small area.
19. 8:34 - The burning of the *parah adumah* (red heifer).
20. *Olah* (6:2); *mincha* (6:7); *chatat* (6:18); *asham* (7:1); *shelamim* (7:11).

PARSHA Q&A ? _____

Shemini

1. What date was “*yom hashemini*”?
2. Which of Aharon’s *korbanot* atoned for the golden calf?
3. What *korbanot* did Aharon offer for the Jewish People?
4. What was unique about the *chatat* offered during the induction of the *Mishkan*?
5. When did Aharon bless the people with the *birkat kohanim*?
6. Why did Moshe go into the *Ohel Mo’ed* with Aharon?
7. Why did Nadav and Avihu die?
8. Aharon quietly accepted his sons’ death. What reward did he receive for this?
9. What prohibitions apply to a person who is intoxicated?
10. Name the three *chatat* goat offerings that were sacrificed on the day of the inauguration of the

Mishkan.

11. Which he-goat *chatat* did Aharon burn completely and why?
12. Why did Moshe direct his harsh words at Aharon’s sons?
13. Moshe was upset that Aharon and his sons did not eat the *chatat*. Why?
14. Why did Hashem choose Moshe, Aharon, Elazar, and Itamar as His messengers to tell the Jewish People the laws of *kashrut*?
15. What are the signs of a kosher land animal?
16. How many non-kosher animals display only one sign of *kashrut*? What are they?
17. If a fish sheds its fins and scales when out of the water, is it kosher?
18. Why is a stork called *chasida* in Hebrew?
19. The *chagav* is a kosher insect. Why don’t we eat it?
20. What requirements must be met in order for water to maintain its status of purity?

PARSHA Q&A! _____

Answers to Shmini’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 9:1 - First of Nissan.
2. 9:2 - The calf offered as a *korban chatat*.
3. 9:3,4 - A he-goat as a *chatat*, a calf and a lamb for an *olah*, an ox and a ram for *shelamim*, and a *mincha*.
4. 9:11 - It’s the only example of a *chatat* offered on the courtyard *mizbe’ach* that was burned.
5. 9:22 - When he finished offering the *korbanot*, before descending from the *mizbe’ach*.
6. 9:23 - For one of two reasons: Either to teach Aharon about the service of the incense, or to pray for the *Shechina* to dwell with Israel.
7. 10:2 - Rashi offers two reasons: Either because they gave a halachic ruling in Moshe’s presence, or because they entered the *Mishkan* after drinking intoxicating wine.
8. 10:3 - A portion of the Torah was given solely through Aharon.
9. 10:9-11 - He may not give a *halachic* ruling. Also, a *kohen* is forbidden to enter the *Ohel Mo’ed*, approach the *mizbe’ach*, or perform the *avoda*.
10. 10:16 - The goat offerings of the inauguration ceremony, of *Rosh Chodesh*, and of Nachshon ben Aminadav.
11. 10:16 - The *Rosh Chodesh chatat*: Either because it became *tamei*, or because the *kohanim* were forbidden to eat from it while in the state of *aninut* (mourning).
12. 10:16 - Out of respect for Aharon, Moshe directed his anger at his sons and not directly at Aharon.
13. 10:17 - Because only when the *kohanim* eat the *chatat* are the sins of the owners atoned.
14. 11:2 - Because they accepted the deaths of Nadav and Avihu in silence.
15. 11:3 - An animal whose hooves are completely split and who chews its cud.
16. 11:4,5,6,7 - Four: Camel, *shafan*, hare, and pig.
17. 11:12 - Yes.
18. 11:19 - Because it acts with *chesed* (kindness) toward other storks.
19. 11:21 - We have lost the tradition and are not able to identify the kosher *chagav*.
20. 11:36 - It must be connected to the ground (i.e., a spring or a cistern).

PARENTS WITH BREAD

FROM: I. M. BURNS

Dear Rabbi

I am living with my parents now and they do not keep mitzvot nor Shabbat nor the holidays. They are respectful but they just don't know and can't be bothered to learn. Pesach is coming up. I am trying to arrange with them to go out to a kosher Hotel for the first two nights (including the Seder - hope that works out) but as far as cleaning for Pesach I don't know what to do. My parents may/may not want to clean up, and even if we try to, I'm convinced they will bring chametz [leaven] in at some point (knowingly or not). What should I do?

Dear I. M. Burns,

The Torah prohibits owning chametz on Pesach. This is derived from the verse "Nothing leavened may be seen in your possession." This prohibition applies only to chametz which you own. It does not apply to someone else's chametz even if it's in your house. Assuming that your parents own (or rent) the house and assuming that all the chametz in the house belongs to them, it is their responsibility to get rid of the chametz, not yours.

Of course, chametz which you personally own you have to get rid of before Pesach. Also, any of your personal belongings in which you might put chametz require a pre-Pesach search. For example, pockets and knapsacks should be checked for forgotten candy bars or half-eaten sandwiches. But since you are a "guest" in your parents home — i.e., you have no ownership or legal rights over your room — you wouldn't say the blessing when searching for chametz.

I spoke to Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg, *shlita*, and he said that a child may stay at his parents home for Pesach even if they haven't removed their chametz. The best scenario would be if you could agree with your parents to keep the house chametz-free. That way, your parents will be doing a mitzvah, and also, neither you nor your parents will accidentally eat any chametz. But this *must* all be done in a way that causes no friction between you and your parents and conveys no disrespect to them whatsoever.

Sources:

- Exodus 13:17, Tractate Pesachim 5b
- Chayei Adam 119:18, Chok Yaakov, Orach Chaim 436
- After the Return, Rabbi M. Becher and Rabbi M. Newman, p. 80

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WHAT'S NOT IN A NAME

FROM: MARSHA IN NYC

Dear Rabbi,

Why is Moses' name not mentioned in the Haggada?

Dear Marsha,

The Torah attests, "Moses was the most humble person on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3). It should be no surprise, then, that the world's humblest person omitted his name from the story, and instead he attributed all the credit to G-d.

Your question raises an interesting point. After a full year in the desert, the Jewish People celebrated the Pesach festival. They offered the Paschal lamb and ate matza and *maror* bitter herbs. But when it came time to tell the Pesach story, who did they tell it to? To whom did they relate the plagues and miracles, the Strong Hand and Outstretched Arm? Everybody was there! Everyone saw it with their own eyes!

Only one person had children who did not personally experience the going out of Egypt - Moses! Moses' two sons were in Midian during the Exodus. Moses, therefore, was the first person in history to relate the Pesach story to children who didn't know it first-hand.

THE RIDDLED IN THE MIDDLE

From: Neil Reznik in Valley Forge, PA

Dear Rabbi,

Why is the afikomen taken from the middle matza during the Seder rather than from the top or bottom matza?

Dear Neil,

On the first night of Pesach, we say two blessings over the matza. The first blessing, *hamotzi*, is the usual blessing we say when eating bread. Since this blessing is always best to say on a whole "loaf," we therefore put an unbroken matza on top of the stack.

The second blessing, *al achilat matza*, is the special blessing we say for the commandment to eat matza on this night. This blessing applies especially to the broken matza, because this matza symbolizes our broken, impoverished state as slaves in Egypt. Since this blessing is the second one, the broken matza is second in the stack.

The third matza is included in order to complete *lechem mishne*, the requirement on Shabbat and festivals to use two whole loaves instead of one, and it goes on the bottom. According to widespread custom, this bottom matza is let to slip from the hands before the second blessing is said.

Sources:

- Mishnah Berura 473:57, 475:2

REJECT AND SUSPECT

Question: I try my best to observe the laws of *lashon hara* by not only guarding my tongue against gossip and slander but also guarding my ears against accepting what people tell me about other people. How am I to react to a report that someone gives me about a fellow who intends to do me harm?

Answer: There is a fast day in the Jewish calendar related to your question called "Fast of Gedalia". On the third day of the Month of Tishrei Jews fast because on that day about two and a half millennia ago Gedalia ben Achikam, the leader of the Jewish community in Eretz Israel following the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, and the exile of most of Jewry to Babylon, was assassinated, a tragedy which sealed the doom of hopes for reviving the Jewish presence in their Land.

Gedalia was warned by one of his officers that another officer named Yishmael had been hired by a foreign power to assassinate him, but refused to believe him. This naivete led not only to his death but also to that of a large group of Jewish pilgrims who Yishmael murdered after carrying out the assassination for which he gained infamy. The Talmud (*Mesechta Nidda 61a*) quotes a passage referring to Gedalia as the murderer of these pilgrims, placing blame on him for ignoring the warning given to him regarding Yishmael's murderous intentions.

The lesson to be learned from this, says the Sage Rava, is that even though it is improper to give total credence to the bad report we hear about someone else, we have a responsibility to treat it seriously and take the necessary precautions.

PUBLIC DOMAIN _____

Re: The Ohr Somayach Haggada

I am looking everywhere for the Ohr Somayach Haggadah. I have 12, but I need 14 more copies for the seder. Do you know where I can find them? I live in-town, but can have them shipped from anywhere. Thank You.

• Bonnie

Ohrnet replies:

Dear Bonnie,

The Ohr Somayach Haggada is published by Targum Press and distributed by Feldheim Publishers and can be found on their websites feldheim.com and targum.com

Re: Ask! - A Question of Ridicule (Ohrnet Vayikra)

Wow! That was an excellent rebuttal. I've received that email message you responded to more than once, and you

did a much better job of replying to it than I did. Thanks! And an early Chag Pesach v'Somayach. Happy cleaning!

• Ken in Chicago

That was interesting. You analyzed the intent of the questioner; it was ridicule. However, you did not answer the question(s). I hope that you will "take the bull by the horns," and in a later email do so. Thanks. Shabbat Shalom.

• J@aol.com

Ohrnet replies:

The full reply to the question was sent to the person who sent in the questions, while only what we deemed appropriate and important for the public was published in the Ohrnet magazine as is our practice with all Ask! columns.

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WEEKLY DAFootnotes

that since this animal, in the view of the other Sages, is considered as slaughtered, we view it as “meat in the basket” which cannot be used for redemption purposes.

• *Chullin 74b*

FALLING FRUITS

Asick tree that sheds its fruits is marked with a red dye. The purpose of this marking, explains our *gemara*, is not to invoke some pagan, superstitious cure but to draw the attention of passersby and invite them to pray for its recovery.

The basis for such action is what the Torah prescribes for one who has become ritually impure through the leprosy-like condition of *tzara'at*. In addition to being isolated from the community with rent garments and uncut hair the *met-zora* is also required to call out “Impure, impure!” (*Vayikra* 13:45). This is done in order not only to warn others from approaching him and becoming ritually impure through contact with him, but also to evoke the compassion of passersby who will be moved to pray for his recovery.

The *gemara*'s conclusion that this same course is advisable for anyone suffering from a tragic condition received an interesting application in an observation made by the Torah giant of our generation, Hagaon Rav Yosef Sholom Eliyashiv, *shlita*. He calls attention to a note which appears in the writings of one of the great early Talmudic commentators. MahaRYT, in his commentary on the first *perek* in *Mesechta Kiddushin*, states that he had many innovative explanations on a certain topic but unfortunately forgot them.

What purpose did this great author have in mentioning this? Since there was no expectation from anyone studying his works that he would have something innovative to offer on every point such an apology seems superfluous. Rav Eliyashiv explains that it was not an apology but an invitation for those studying his works in his lifetime to pray for him to recall those insights which he viewed as fruits falling from the tree of Torah.

• *Chullin 78a*

THE DUSTY ENVELOPE

When a Jew slaughters a beast or fowl he is commanded by the Torah to “pour out its blood and cover it within dust” (*Vayikra* 17:13).

Since the Torah does not instruct us to cover it with dust and uses instead a term implying that the blood be enveloped in dust, the *gemara* concludes that the command is to have dust both below and above the blood.

There is a difference, however, between the manner in which these two coats of dust are applied. Tosefot points out

that the top layer must be applied by man. This is why the rule is that while if one covered the blood with dust and it subsequently became exposed he is not required to cover it again, this is not the case when it was the wind which blew dust upon the blood. Although there is no obligation to remove this windblown dust should the wind subsequently blow it away, there is an obligation to cover the blood because there has not yet been a fulfillment of the mitzvah to cover exposed blood by human effort.

In regard to the layer of dust below the blood, however, there is no requirement for it to be placed there by human effort. All that has to be done is to assure that the surface upon which the blood rests is crushed earth. This is why in an earlier part of our *Mesechta* (*Chullin 31a*) we find that Rabbi Yona bar Tachlifa was able to properly slaughter a bird in flight with a specially prepared arrow and to simply make sure that the area upon which its blood would fall would not be hard earth. He did apply the top layer of dust himself but did not have to do so in regard to the bottom layer.

• *Chullin 83b*

WILL IT BE FISH OR MEAT?

Which is more expensive – fish or meat? Opposite signals are given in our *gemara* and in a *midrash*. Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah saw in the Torah's statement about “slaughtering from your herd and from your flock” (*Devarim* 12:21) for the purpose of eating meat an admonition to man not to slaughter *all* his animals but to be sparing in his consumption of meat. If one has a very limited budget for food he should subsist on vegetables. With more money available he can afford fish and only with considerably greater means should he indulge in meat.

This order of placing meat on a higher level in terms of expense runs counter to the *midrash* in *Parshat Pinchas* (as quoted by Rashi in *Bamidbar* 29:36) which explains why on the first seven days of Succot the number of bullocks offered as sacrifices in the Beit Hamikdash was reduced by one each day – from 13 to 7. This was intended to teach a lesson in human conduct regarding hospitality. The first day a guest is served fattened fowl, the next day fish, followed in decreasing order by meat and finally vegetables.

How do we reconcile these two disparate ratings of fish versus meat?

Tosefot offers a simple solution. It all depends on the place. In Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah's community, like in most of the places with which we are familiar today, meat was more expensive than fish while in the place where the author of the *midrash*, quoted by Rashi in Chumash and Tosefot here, even fish cost more than meat.

• *Chullin 84a*

PARSHA INSIGHTS

However there was another fire whose function outside was for no other purpose than to kindle an internal fire. That fire teaches us that we must take our exterior service and use it to kindle the interior fire. That internal fire represents the duties of the heart: our belief and trust in G-d and our constant striving to be better people. That's something you can't see from the outside, but like the incense that is burned on the golden altar, it emerges from within a person with a scent that is unmistakable.

The third fire can be moved anywhere, but it must never go out. This represents the undying fidelity of the Jewish People to G-d throughout our long and difficult Diaspora. Even though we have had to move from one corner of the world, our devotion to G-d has never been extinguished by an unkind world. Whether in the light of morning, or the impending darkness of approaching night, throughout our long history, the Jewish People have always placed the kindling on the altar of our devotion to G-d.

Shemini

CHANT OF LOVE

"Aharon raised his hands toward the people and blessed them..." (9:22)

One of the most awe-inspiring experiences is the *Birkat HaKohanim*, when a thousand-or-so *kohanim* bless the many thousands at the Western Wall in Yerushalayim on the second day of Chol HaMoed Pesach and Succot.

Most of the time, prayer at the Wall is a segmented affair. This group starts as this one finishes, while yet another group is somewhere in the middle.

Apart from the daily moments of silence at the dawn's break when everyone begins together the Silent Prayer of Eighteen Blessings, I can think of no other time when the whole of the Kotel is as unified as it is by *Birkat HaKohanim*.

The haunting chant of the Kohanic blessing evokes deep and powerful feelings in the heart of every Jew however reli-

gious he may be. It is a chant that echoes down the years. It is a living witness to the unbroken chain of Jewish tradition that links us to Sinai.

The first appearance of that chant is in this week's Torah portion. Aharon completed his first day of service in the Sanctuary and he then blessed the people with great joy. Such was his desire to bless the people that G-d rewarded him and his descendants that they should bless the Jewish People thus throughout the generations.

The word for blessing in Hebrew – *beracha*, is connected to *bereicha*, which means a "pool." Blessing is an overflowing pool that enriches and fills our lives.

In the time of the Holy Temple, when the *kohanim* would bless the people, they would raise their hands over their heads and make a space between the third and fourth fingers of hands. When they recited the blessing using the ineffable Name of G-d, the Shechina, the Divine Presence, would rest on their hands. Although the Shechina no longer rests on the hands of the *kohanim*, to this day they still cover their heads and hands with their prayer shawls when they recite the blessing.

But maybe we could also understand a different symbolism behind the covering of the kohen's hands.

Our Sages teach us that blessing only descends on things that are hidden from the eye, that the eye doesn't see. For example, a farmer who starts to weigh his grain may pray that his crop will be large, but if he has already weighed it, he may no longer make such a request, for the size of the crop is already revealed to the eye. When the *kohanim* cover their hands they symbolize this idea that blessing descends only on that which is hidden from the eye.

Mind you, I wouldn't recommend that because of this you give up checking your bank balance once in a while!

Sources:

- *Talmud Bavli Bava Metzia 42a, Mishna Berura, 128:98*

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Shemini

On the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan, Aharon, his sons, and the entire nation bring various *korbanot* (offerings) as commanded by Moshe. Aharon and Moshe bless the nation. G-d allows the Jewish People to sense His Presence after they complete the Mishkan. Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, innovate an offering not commanded by G-d. A fire comes from before G-d and consumes them, stressing the need to perform the commandments only as Moshe directs. Moshe consoles Aharon, who grieves in silence. Moshe directs the *kohanim* as to their behavior during the mourning

period, and warns them that they must not drink intoxicating beverages before serving in the Mishkan. The Torah lists the two characteristics of a kosher animal: It has split hooves, and it chews, regurgitates, and re-chews its food. The Torah specifies by name those non-kosher animals which have only one of these two signs. A kosher fish has fins and easily removable scales. All birds not included in the list of forbidden families are permitted. The Torah forbids all types of insects except for four species of locusts. Details are given of the purification process after coming in contact with ritually-impure species. *Bnei Yisrael* are commanded to be separate and holy — like G-d.

PESACH 5763 SPECIAL

the ring the time had not yet come for the marriage to begin. Now the time has finally come!"

The experience of Jews in Egypt was a preparation for their future role as the holy nation that would receive the Torah. Exile in a foreign land and the sufferings of backbreaking labor were the bricks that built the "forging furnace" of a nation which would learn to so abhor the moral corruption which had been imposed on them in Egypt that it would be enabled to go on to become a "light unto the nations."

But if you stay too long in the forging furnace you can be destroyed. Our Sages tell us that there are fifty levels of spiritual corruption and our ancestors, in their physical and spiritual bondage, had already reached the forty-ninth level. One moment longer in Egypt and they would have sunk to that fiftieth level from which there is no redemption.

Here then is the "catch twenty-two" situation of our ancestors in Egypt awaiting liberation. One moment too early and they lack the finishing touches of the forging furnace. One moment too late and they are beyond redemption.

Only the Divine Creator of time was capable of the perfect timing that was needed. Just as the climactic plague of the Death of the First Born took place exactly at midnight for reasons known only to G-d, the Exodus began at exactly the moment that we too can understand as being perfectly chosen as not too early and not too late.

So when we eat our matza we are reliving that experience of perfect timing that is so vital for us to remember in so many aspects of our national and individual lives. How often have Jews in their long exile felt a sense of impatience for the ultimate redemption for which the Exodus from Egypt was but a preview? The eating of matza on Pesach reminded them that there is a Divine plan in the length of our exile and that when Heaven determines that we have learned all that was necessary from our suffering our redemption will not be a moment late in coming.

How often has the individual Jew reached the brink of despair as he waited for his personal salvation in terms of a mate, of children, of good health, of financial and physical security? Matza reminded him too that the *Mitzrayim* (the Hebrew name for Egypt which literally translated means "straits") constrictions in his life have their purpose and there is a perfect Divine

schedule for when his own exodus will arrive.

Now let us see what other lessons there are in the eating of matza beyond the issue of perfect timing.

Following the aforementioned approach that the dough taken out from Egypt was miraculously saved from becoming chametz we discern two different lessons from this Heavenly intervention in the leavening process. Whether it was the lightning speed of traveling "on eagles wings" or the blazing sun serving as a baker, we are witnesses to the Divine support provided for the Jew who puts trust in G-d.

The Torah stresses that our ancestors left Egypt in such a hurry that they took along no provisions other than the unbaked dough. This willingness to "follow Me into the wilderness, into an uncultivated land" earned us G-d's eternal love because it expressed our limitless trust in His providence.

The great Chassidic leader, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev thus explains the contrast between the name we use in referring to the holiday and the one that appears in the Torah. We call it "Pesach" but the Torah calls it "*Chag Hamatzot*" (the Festival of Matzahs). This is but another expression of the romantic relationship between G-d and His beloved people, which is the theme of the sacred and beautiful "*Shir Hashirim*" (Song of Songs of King Solomon) which many Jews recite at the conclusion of the Seder.

"Pesach" means "pass over" and recalls the miraculous lovingkindness of G-d as he passed over the Jewish homes in Egypt as He slaughtered the firstborn in the Egyptian homes all around them. We call the holiday by this name to express our appreciation of G-d just as the *tefillin* we wear on our heads and arms contain the Torah chapter that proclaims that there is only one G-d.

That one G-d, in Whose *tefillin* is the Torah phrase which proclaims "who is like Your people Israel, one nation in the world", praise our plunge into the wilderness with nothing more than the raw material for matza because we were so confident that G-d would provide.

The first vindication of that faith came with the miracle that prevented the dough from becoming chametz and condemned to burning. This was certainly an omen for all succeeding generations that trust in G-d will be rewarded with miraculous results even if they sometimes wear the veil of natural events.

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PESACH 5763 SPECIAL

If this approach has been a lesson in the physical protection represented by matza the approach of the Malbim offers a spiritual perspective as well.

What was the significance of G-d repealing the chemical law of fermentation at the time of the Exodus so that the dough of the fleeing Jews would not become leavened before being baked into matza?

The answer can be found in the special prayer that the Talmudic sage, Rabbi Alexandria, was accustomed to saying when he completed his regular daily prayers. "Sovereign of the Universe" he would begin his appeal, "It is clear to You that it is our desire to do Your will but we are prevented from doing so by the leavening agent in the dough."

The *yetzer hara*, man's evil instinct, is thus referred to as the catalyst for chametz. Some commentaries focus on the single letter difference between the Hebrew words for matza and chametz to explain why one represents good and the other evil. Others simply point to the difference in their physical forms. Matza is simple and flat while chametz is inflated. All of human sin is rooted in either passion or pride, both of which are symbolized by the inflated bread, which mirrors satisfied appetites and blown-up egos.

On the eve of the Exodus Jews were treated to an unparalleled spiritual experience which all of us get at least a tiny taste of when we sit at the Seder table and attempt to relive that experience. But what was going to keep them on a high spiritual level for the next

seven weeks till they reached Sinai and received the Torah? Were they condemned to exchange the chains of the physical bondage to the evil instinct that would ferment their souls?

G-d provided the answer to these doubts by demonstrating that He can momentarily suspend the power of the leavening agent to turn the dough into chametz. In similar fashion our ancestors were assured that the leavening agent within them would also have no power to serve as a catalyst for corruption.

This was a dramatic, tangible expression of that famous Divine guarantee of spiritual security: "Make for Me an opening like the eye of a needle and I will make for you an opening like a great hall."

Matza thus reminds us that as difficult as it may seem to overcome the natural forces of passion and pride represented by chametz, we must always remember that the Creator of those forces can suspend their power over us. All that is required is the first step taken by us to open a needle's eye measure of desire to improve. In Egypt it was the courage of Jews to take the local deity and offer it as a sacrifice to Heaven which provided that first step which led to such great spiritual heights that reached their climax at Sinai. For Jews in every generation the eating of matza should serve as a reminder that we must not hesitate to take a little step in coming closer to G-d because we can be confident that He will turn it into a giant step for us, our people and all mankind.

Melach
**Ohrnet wishes you
A Happy and Kosher Pesach**

THE HAGGADAH

Q&A

and more...

Q

1. What does *Haggadah* mean?
2. Name all the items on the Seder-plate.
3. Why do we wash our hands before eating the *karpas*?
4. What is the answer to the “four questions?”
5. Name the Sages in the Haggadah who held a seder in B’nei Berak.
6. Why did Elazar ben Azarya say he was ‘like’ seventy years old?
7. What does *afikomen* mean literally?
8. Which two of the ‘four sons’ receive the same response?
9. What did Esav inherit?
10. What does “*Arami oved avi*” mean?
11. What do the nations try to do to the Jewish People in every generation?
12. What is derived from the verse “they were a nation there (*vayehi sham l’goi*)?”
13. Name the ten plagues in order.
14. What is the acronym for the ten plagues?
15. In the ‘*dayenu*’ section of the Haggadah, what is the last item mentioned in the list of things Hashem did for us?
16. Rabban Gamliel said: “Whoever doesn’t explain the following three things hasn’t fulfilled his obligation.” What obligation is he referring to?
17. What are the three things? (see question 16)
18. At which point in the seder do we say *hallel*?
19. What does *tzafun* mean?
20. Why does the Seder end with the phrase “Next year in Jerusalem?”

A

1. Telling.
2. *Beitzah* (egg), *zeroah* (bone), *charoses* (fruit, nut and wine mixture), *chazeres* (Romaine lettuce), *karpas* (vegetable) and *maror* (bitter herb).
3. It’s a reminder of Temple times, when the laws of ritual purity required one to wash one’s hands before eating food dipped in liquid. It also arouses the children to ask questions. (In fact, this washing before eating certain wet foods is required all year long.)
4. We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and Hashem, our G-d, took us out of there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm.
5. Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Tarfon.
6. He was much younger, but his hair miraculously turned white when he was appointed as the head Sage.
7. Dessert.
8. The wicked son and the one who doesn’t know how to ask.
9. Mount Seir.
10. Lavan the Arami *tried* to destroy my father, Yaakov.
11. Annihilate them.
12. The Jews were different from the Egyptians (in their language, dress and moral conduct).
13. *Dam* (blood), *tzefardeah* (frogs), *kinim* (lice), *arov* (wild beasts), *dever* (cattle disease), *shechin* (boils), *barad* (hail), *arbeh* (locusts), *choshech* (darkness), *makas bechoros* (death of the firstborn).
14. Datzach, Adash, B’achav.
15. Built the Temple for us.
16. The obligation to tell about the going out of Egypt.
17. The Pesach offering, *matzah* and *maror*.
18. We say part of *hallel* before the second cup of wine, and the rest of *hallel* we say before the fourth cup.
19. Hidden, referring to the hidden *matzah*.
20. This year, our Seder was missing the Pesach offering. We pray that next year the Temple will be rebuilt and then our Seder will include the Pesach offering. *Next Year In Jerusalem!*

BONUS Q&A

Q “*This is the bread of affliction our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt.*” Matzah symbolizes the haste of the redemption. Why, then, is matzah called “bread of affliction?”

A The Egyptians gave their slaves matzah, because it is inexpensive and very filling. Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra was once taken captive, and his captors fed him matzah for this reason.

Q “*...In order that you remember the day you left Egypt, all the days of your life.*” In fulfillment of the above verse, we mention the Exodus every day and night in our daily prayers. What’s different about the obligation to relate the Exodus on the first night of Pesach?

A On the first night of Pesach, we are required to relate the Exodus in question/answer form. Even if a person is alone, he should relate the Exodus by first asking himself the four questions. • *Minchas Chinuch*

Q “*The Pesach offering, what does it signify? It signifies that Hashem skipped over our houses in Egypt...* *The Matzah we eat, what does it signify? It signifies that our ancestors’ dough didn’t have time to rise...* *The Maror we*

eat, what does it signify? It signifies that the Egyptians embittered the lives of our ancestors in Egypt...” Maror symbolizes bitterness. Pesach and matzah symbolize redemption. Chronologically, the bitterness preceded the redemption. Why, then, is maror listed last?

A After the redemption, the bitterness is seen in a new light. We can’t fully explain the significance of the bitterness until we first recognize it as being a step towards the redemption.

• *Based on the Chasam Sofer*

Q Why do we interrupt *hallel* with a meal?

A The purpose of the Exodus was for the Jewish People to receive the Torah. With the Torah we gain the ability to serve Hashem not only through ‘spiritual’ means — Torah study and prayer — but through ‘physical’ *mitzvos* as well — marriage, enjoying Shabbos, eating *matzah*, *maror*, etc. We eat in the middle of *hallel* in order to praise Hashem for sanctifying and elevating our physical existence. Even mundane activities like eating are elevated when we do them in the service of Hashem.

• *Netziv (heard from Rabbi Mordechai Perlmán)*

I DIDN’T KNOW THAT!

- In Temple times, the *Mah Nishtana* included the following question: “On all other nights, we eat meat either roasted, baked or boiled. Why on this night do we eat only roasted meat?” This was because the Pesach offering was eaten roasted.

- Avraham was without an heir for 100 years and Sarah was childless for 90 years. Hashem added up those years of suffering and subtracted them from the decree of slavery in Egypt. Hence, we were redeemed 190 years early.

- According to some authorities, we should drink five cups of wine at the Seder. Although we don’t follow this view, we nevertheless fill a fifth cup in expectation of the imminent arrival of Elijah who — according to tradition — will resolve all unresolved halachic questions. He will tell us whether or not we should drink it!

It once happened ...

During a scholarly lecture, a person asked Rabbi Yonason Eybeschitz the following: The Torah says, “*and they embittered their lives,*” but the cantillation symbol that the cantor reads is a **happy** tune! The simplicity of his question amused the more erudite listeners.

“Excellent question!” said Rabbi Yonason. “Hashem told Abraham that his offspring would be in exile for 400 years.

But in fact we were in Egypt for only 210 years. Why was this? Since the Egyptians “embittered their lives,” Hashem had pity on us and shortened the exile by 190 years — surely a cause for song!

“By the way,” said Rabbi Yonason, to the astonishment of his listeners, “the cantillation symbol, ‘*kadma v’azla*,’ hints at this idea by its exact numerical value: 190 !