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PESACH SPECIAL FEATURE

THOU SHALT NOT STEAL... EXCEPT FOR THE AFIKOMEN

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

For the children, one of the unforgettable moments of the Seder is when the middle matzah – the afikomen – is broken into two halves (with one piece slightly bigger than the other).

The larger piece is put to one side by the person leading the Seder, to be eaten much later on at the end of the seudah. As this is taking place, the children are on “full alert,” watching eagle-eyed to try and see where the afikomen has been left because there is a longstanding custom that whoever “steals” the afikomen only returns it after holding it for ransom for an exorbitant reward! It is a lot of fun and it definitely keeps the children engaged and full of excitement as they try to sneak the afikomen away without any of the participants at the Seder realizing what they are doing. Of course, the leader of the Seder is completely aware of what is going on and (usually) cooperates complicity with the children to let them get away with the heist. And just before the fateful moment arrives when the afikomen must be eaten, the children can then start their negotiations in the hope of “cleaning up like bandits!”

But, despite the fact that the joy of the children and their high-spiritedness adds so much to the general atmosphere around the Seder table, the whole ritual is somewhat of an anomaly. The Torah states categorically that it is forbidden to steal. There is absolutely no “wobble room” with regards to the command. Jewish literature is replete with accounts of people ranging from the greatest Rabbis to the simplest individuals doing everything that they possibly can to avoid anything that even resembles thievery. So scrupulous were they that the Talmud (Chullin 7) relates that even the donkey of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair would not eat from any fodder that had not been tithed, as it was akin to eating stolen food! And yet, at the Seder of all nights – the very night that is dedicated to transferring the foundations of Jewish belief from one generation to the next – we seem to be encouraging the children to steal!

Interestingly enough, at my parents’ Seder we did not steal the afikomen. Rather, our family custom was that my father would hide the afikomen and we would run around the house trying to find it. And, aside from the thrill of being the lucky one to actually find it, no one ever lost out, because my mother, being the quintessential “Yiddishe Mama,” bought presents for all of us.

My parents’ custom originated with Rabbi Meir Horowitz of Dzikov (1819-1877). In his brilliant work, *Imrei Noam*, he writes that in general it is correct to conceal one’s good deeds and not to publicize them. However, parents should not hide their good deeds from their children so that they can learn from them. Rabbi Horowitz writes that this idea is alluded to by breaking the middle matzah. We hide the larger half of the matzah, which implies that we should conceal the majority of our good deeds from public view. The children

search for, and find, the afikomen because on the night of the Seder it is proper to reveal even the half which is usually concealed, so the children can learn from it and follow in their parents' ways. However, when all is said and done, the prevalent custom is for the children to "steal" the afikomen.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman, one of the most influential and sought-after spiritual mentors of our generation, asks why do we only break the middle matzah? If it is a praiseworthy thing to do then, perhaps, we should break all three of them? His answer is a key to understand why the children "steal" the afikomen at the Seder. He cites the very first of Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith, that Hashem "alone, made, makes, and will make everything." According to Rabbi Biderman, one of the symbolisms of the three matzahs is that the top matzah represents our belief that everything that happened in the past was from Hashem. The middle matzah represents everything that is happening now is according to His will. And the bottom matzah represents our belief everything that will happen in the future is from Hashem.

He points out that, in general, it is easier to believe that what happened in the past is from Hashem. When a person looks back, they are often able to perceive and believe, retroactively, that everything was destined by Hashem. In the same way, when we look into the future it is often easy to trust that Hashem will take care of us and that things will work out for the best.

The real test, however, is the present. Often, it is hard to believe that the seemingly unpleasant things happening to us are from Hashem. Because, in the here and now, we lack the ability to see the greater picture. Therefore, it is the middle matzah that is broken – the matzah that represents the present – to instill in us the awareness that, despite the fact that we do not always perceive the "Wholeness" of Hashem's presence in our lives, He is always with us. "All" we have to do is search for Him and we will find Him.

Perhaps that can help us understand another detail pertaining to the afikomen. The Sefat Emet (1847-1905) points out that the afikomen is referred to as "Tzafon" in the Haggadah.

The word tzafon means hidden and the Sefat Emet explains that it hints to the idea that the redemption from Egypt was only the very beginning of the process. The Final Redemption, which we so long for, is still "hidden" from us. It is up to us to try to "steal" as many mitzvahs and kind deeds as we can in order to tip the balance, "allowing" Hashem to send the Mashiach and permanently end our exile. This explains why we put aside the larger half of the matzah for later. Because we still have a lot to do in order to make that happen.

And for this reason, explains Rabbi Mordechai Gifter (1915-2001), we are not supposed to eat anything at all after we have eaten the afikomen. Why we are supposed to go to sleep after the Seder with the taste of the afikomen still in our mouths, as it were. One of the spiritual foundations that the Seder is imparting to us is that we must aspire to live the mitzvahs. We remain with the taste of the afikomen in our mouths to symbolize the thought that we must continue to experience the sweetness and the delight of having performed the mitzvahs even after we have performed them. So that we understand that the inspiration and growth of this extraordinary night should remain with us and accompany us throughout the rest of the year. That the "taste" of the mitzvahs remain with us long after the actions have been done.

As we approach the upcoming Seder – with all of its foundational and unforgettable lessons – please accept my heartfelt blessing that your Seder (and mine, too) be inspirational and uplifting. That your Seder be full of enthusiasm and joy. That the children return the afikomen on time(!) and that the "taste" of the afikomen remain long after the Seder has come to an end. And may we all merit to "steal" as many mitzvahs and good deeds as possible so that we can celebrate Pesach next year together in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

Q & A - TZAV

Questions

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?

Answers

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 oman (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 morning b) 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 aduma (red heifer).
20. Olah (6:2); mincha (6:7); chatat (6:18); asham (7:1); shelamim (7:11)

Q & A - SHEMINI

Questions

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 G-d 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?

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

Answers

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).

Q & A - TAZRIA

Questions

1. When does a woman who has given birth to a son go to the *mikveh*?
2. After a woman gives birth, she is required to offer two types of offerings. Which are they?
3. What animal does the woman offer as a *chatat*?
4. Which of these offerings makes her *tahor* (ritual purity)?
5. Which of the sacrifices does the woman offer first, the *olah* or the *chatat*?
6. Who determines whether a person is a *metzora tamei* (person with ritually impure *tzara'at*) or is *tahor*?
7. If the *kohen* sees that the *tzara'at* has spread after one week, how does he rule?
8. What disqualifies a *kohen* from being able to give a ruling in a case of *tzara'at*?
9. Why is the appearance of *tzara'at* on the tip of one of the 24 "limbs" that project from the body usually unable to be examined?
10. On which days is a *kohen* not permitted to give a ruling on *tzara'at*?
11. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow (e.g., the head or beard), what color hair is indicative of ritual impurity?
12. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow, what color hair is indicative of purity?
13. If the *kohen* intentionally or unintentionally pronounces a *tamei* person "*tahor*," what is that person's status?
14. What signs of mourning must a *metzora* display?
15. Why must a *metzora* call out, "*Tamei! Tamei!*"?
16. Where must a *metzora* dwell?
17. Why is a *metzora* commanded to dwell in isolation?
18. What sign denotes *tzara'at* in a garment?
19. What must be done to a garment that has *tzara'at*?
20. If after washing a garment the signs of *tzara'at* disappear entirely, how is the garment purified?

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

Answers

1. 12:2 - At the end of seven days.
2. 12:6 - An *olah* and a *chatat*.
3. 12:6 - A *tor* (turtle dove) or a *ben yona* (young pigeon).
4. 12:7 - The *chatat*.
5. 12:8 - The *chatat*.
6. 13:2 - A *kohen*.
7. 13:5 - The person is *tamei*.
8. 13:12 - Poor vision.
9. 13:14 - The *tzara'at* as a whole must be seen at one time. Since these parts are angular, they cannot be seen at one time.
10. 13:14 - During the festivals; and ruling on a groom during the seven days of feasting after the marriage.
11. 13:29 - Golden.
12. 13:37 - Any color other than golden.
13. 13:37 - He remains *tamei*.
14. 13:45 - He must tear his garments, let his hair grow wild, and cover his lips with his garment.
15. 13:45 - So people will know to keep away from him.
16. 13:46 - Outside the camp in isolation.
17. 13:46 - Since *tzara'at* is a punishment for *lashon hara* (evil speech), which creates a rift between people, the Torah punishes measure for measure by placing a division between him and others.
18. 13:49 - A dark green or dark red discoloration.
19. 13:52 - It must be burned
20. 13:58 - Through immersion in a *mikveh*.

Q & A - METZORA

Questions

1. When may a *metzora* not be pronounced *tahor*?
2. In the *midbar*, where did a *metzora* dwell while he was *tamei*?
3. Why does the *metzora* require birds in the purification process?
4. In the purification process of a *metzora*, what does the cedar wood symbolize?
5. During the purification process, the *metzora* is required to shave his hair. Which hair must he shave?
6. What is unique about the *chatat* and the *asham* offered by the *metzora*?
7. In the *Beit Hamikdash*, when the *metzora* was presented "before G-d" (14:11), where did he stand?
8. Where was the *asham* of the *metzora* slaughtered?
9. How was having *tzara'at* in one's house sometimes advantageous?
10. When a house is suspected as having *tzara'at*, what is its status prior to the inspection by a *kohen*?
11. What happens to the vessels that are in a house found to have *tzara'at*?
12. Which type of vessels cannot be made *tahor* after they become *tamei*?
13. Where were stones afflicted with *tzara'at* discarded?
14. When a house is suspected of having *tzara'at*, a *kohen* commands that the affected stones be replaced and the house plastered. What is the law if the *tzara'at*:
 - a. returns and spreads;
 - b. does not return;
 - c. returns, but does not spread?
15. When a person enters a house that has *tzara'at*, when do his clothes become *tamei*?
16. What is the status of a man who is *zav* (sees a flow):
 - a. two times or two consecutive days;
 - b. three times or three consecutive days?
17. A *zav* sat or slept on the following:
 - a). a bed; b) a plank; c) a chair; d) a rock.If a *tahor* person touches these things what is his status?
18. What does the Torah mean when it refers to a *zav* who "has not washed his hands"?
19. When may a *zav* immerse in a *mikveh* to purify himself?
20. What is the status of someone who experiences a one-time flow?

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

Answers

1. 14:2 - At night.
2. 14:3 - Outside the three camps.
3. 14:4 - *Tzara'at* comes as a punishment for *lashon hara*. Therefore, the Torah requires the *metzora* to offer birds, who chatter constantly, to atone for his sin of chattering.
4. 14:4 - The cedar is a lofty tree. It alludes to the fact that *tzara'at* comes as a punishment for haughtiness.
5. 14:9 - Any visible collection of hair on the body.
6. 14:10 - They require *n'sachim* (drink offerings).
7. 14:11 - At the gate of Nikanor.
8. 14:13 - On the northern side of the *mizbe'ach*.
9. 14:34 - The Amorites concealed treasures in the walls of their houses. After the conquest of the Land, *tzara'at* would afflict these houses. The Jewish owner would tear down the house and find the treasures.
10. 14:36 - It is *tahor*.
11. 14:36 - They become *tamei*.
12. 14:36 - Earthenware vessels.
13. 14:40 - In places where *tahor* objects were not handled
14.
 - a. 14:44-45 - It is called "*tzara'at mam'eret*," and the house must be demolished;
 - b. 14:48 - the house is pronounced *tahor*;
 - c. 14:44 - The house must be demolished.
15. 14:46 - When he remains in the house long enough to eat a small meal.
16. 15:2 -
 - a. He is *tamei*;
 - b. he is *tamei* and is also required to bring a *korban*.
17. 15:4-5 - Only a type of object that one usually lies or sits upon becomes a transmitter of tumah when a *zav* sits or lies on it. A *tahor* person who subsequently touches the object becomes *tamei* and the clothes he is wearing are also *tamei'im*. Therefore:
 - a. *tamei*;
 - b. *tahor*;
 - c. *tamei*;
 - d. *tahor*.
18. 15:11 - One who has not immersed in a *mikveh*.
19. 15:13 - After seven consecutive days without a flow.
20. 15:32 - He is *tamei* until evening.

Q & A - ACHAREI MOT

Questions

1. Why does the Torah emphasize that *Parshas Acharei Mos* was taught after the death of Aaron's sons?
2. What is the punishment for a *Kohen Gadol* who inappropriately enters the *Kodesh Kodashim*?
3. How long did the first *Beis Hamikdash* exist?
4. What did the *Kohen Gadol* wear when he entered the *Kodesh Kodashim*?
5. How many times did the *Kohen Gadol* change his clothing and immerse in the *mikveh* on Yom Kippur?
6. How many times did he wash his hands and feet from the *Kiyor* (copper laver)?
7. The *Kohen Gadol* offered a bull *Chatat* to atone for himself and his household. Who paid for it?
8. One of the goats that was chosen by lot went to *Azazel*. What is *Azazel*?
9. Who is included in the "household" of the *Kohen Gadol*?
10. For what sin does the goat *Chatat* atone?
11. After the Yom Kippur service, what is done with the four linen garments worn by the *Kohen Gadol*?
12. Where were the fats of the *Chatat* burned?
13. Who is solely responsible for attaining atonement for the Jewish People on Yom Kippur?
14. From one point in history, installation of the *Kohen Gadol* through anointing was no longer used but was conducted by donning the special garments of that office. From when and why?
15. What is the penalty of *karet*?
16. Which categories of animals must have their blood covered when they are slaughtered?
17. When a person eats a kosher bird that was improperly slaughtered (a *neveilah*), at what point does he contract *tumah*?
18. The Torah commands the Jewish People not to follow the "*chukim*" of the Canaanites. What are the forbidden "*chukim*"?
19. What is the difference between "*mishpat*" and "*chok*"?
20. May a man marry his wife's sister?

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

Answers

1. 16:1 - To strengthen the warning not to enter the *Kodesh Kodashim* except on Yom Kippur.
2. 16:2 - Death.
3. 16:3 - 410 years.
4. 16:4 - Only the four linen garments worn by an ordinary *Kohen*.
5. 16:4 - Five times.
6. 16:4 - Ten times.
7. 16:6 - The *Kohen Gadol*.
8. 16:8 - A jagged cliff.
9. 16:11 - All the *Kohanim*.
10. 16:16 - For unknowingly entering the *Beit Hamikdash* in the state of *tumah*.
11. 16:23 - They must be put into *geniza* and not be used again.
12. 16:25 - On the outer *Mizbe'ach*.
13. 16:32 - The *Kohen Gadol*.
14. 16:32 - Anointing ceased during the kingship of *Yoshiahu*. At that time, the oil of anointing was hidden away.
15. 17:9 - One's offspring die and one's own life is shortened.
16. 17:13 - Non domesticated kosher animals and all species of kosher birds.
17. 17:15 - When the food enters the esophagus.
18. 18:3 - Their social customs.
19. 18:4 - A "*mishpat*" conforms to the human sense of justice. A "*chok*" is a law whose reason is not given to us and can only be understood as a decree from Hashem.
20. 18:18 - Yes, but not during the lifetime of his wife.

Q & A - KEDOSHIM

Questions

1. Why was *Parshat Kedoshim* said in front of all the Jewish People?
2. Why does the Torah mention the duty to honor one's father before it mentions the duty to honor one's mother?
3. Why is the command to fear one's parents followed by the command to keep Shabbat?
4. Why does Shabbat observance supersede honoring parents?
5. What is "*leket*"?
6. In *Shemot* 20:13, the Torah commands "Do not steal." What does the Torah add when it commands in *Vayikra* 19:11 "Do not steal"?
7. "Do not do wrong to your neighbor" (19:13). To what "wrong" is the Torah referring?
8. By when must you pay someone who worked for you during the day?
9. How does Rashi explain the prohibition "Don't put a stumbling block before a sightless person"?
10. In a monetary case involving a poor person and a rich person, a judge is likely to wrongly favor the poor person. What rationale does Rashi give for this?
11. When rebuking someone, what sin must one be careful to avoid?
12. It's forbidden to bear a grudge. What example does Rashi give of this?
13. The Torah forbids tattooing. How is a tattoo made?
14. How does one fulfill the mitzvah of "*hadarta p'nei zaken*"?
15. What punishment will never come to the entire Jewish People?
16. What penalty does the Torah state for cursing one's parents?
17. When the Torah states a death penalty but doesn't define it precisely, to which penalty is it referring?
18. What will result if the Jewish People ignore the laws of forbidden relationships?
19. Which of the forbidden relationships listed in this week's Parsha were practiced by the Canaanites?
20. Is it proper for a Jew to say "I would enjoy eating ham"?

Answers

1. 19:2 - Because the fundamental teachings of the Torah are contained in this Parsha.
2. 19:3 - Since it is more natural to honor one's mother, the Torah stresses the obligation to honor one's father.
3. 19:3 - To teach that one must not violate Torah law even at the command of one's parents.
4. 19:3 - Because the parents are also commanded by Hashem to observe Shabbat. Parents deserve great honor, but not at the "expense" of Hashem's honor.
5. 19:9 - "*Leket*" is one or two stalks of grain accidentally dropped while harvesting. They are left for the poor.
6. 19:11 - The Torah in *Vayikra* prohibits monetary theft. In *Shemot* it prohibits kidnapping.
7. 19:13 - Withholding wages from a worker.
8. 19:13 - Before the following dawn.
9. 19:13 - Don't give improper advice to a person who is unaware in a matter. For example, don't advise someone to sell his field, when in reality you yourself wish to buy it.
10. 19:15 - The judge might think: "This rich person is obligated to give charity to this poor person regardless of the outcome of this court case. Therefore, I'll rule in favor of the poor person. That way, he'll receive the financial support he needs without feeling shame."
11. 19:17 - Causing public embarrassment.
12. 19:18 - Person A asks person B: "Can I borrow your shovel?" Person B says: "No." The next day, B says to A: "Can I borrow your scythe?" A replies: "Sure, I'm not stingy like you are."
13. 19:28 - Ink is injected into the skin with a needle.
14. 19:32 - By not sitting in the seat of elderly people, and by not contradicting their statements.
15. 20:3 - "*Karet*" ~ being spiritually "cut off."
16. 20:9 - Death by stoning.
17. 20:10 - *Chenek* (strangulation).
18. 20:22 - The land of Israel will "spit them out."
19. 20:23 - All of them.
20. 20:26 - Yes.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Tzav-Pesach: Escape from Patros

One of the most exciting highlights of the Passover liturgy is a poem written by a payytan named Yanai (who probably lived in the Holy Land under Byzantine rule during the sixth century). That work consists of a poetic list of different miracles recorded in the Bible that were said to have happened in the middle of the night. The poem is traditionally recited twice – once on Shabbos HaGadol and once in the Nirtzah portion of the Passover Seder. When listing the story of the Exodus by mentioning the Plague of the Firstborn, the poem reads: “You smote the seed of the firstborns of Patros in the midpoint of the night.” Essentially, when referring to the plague that was wrought upon the “Egyptians” in the middle of the night, the poet uses the word Patros instead of using the common Hebrew word Mitzrayim. In this essay we discuss the basis for the Hebrew word Mitzrayim as well as its apparent synonyms that refer to the land now known as “Egypt.”

The word Mitzrayim first appears in the Bible in the genealogical tables that detail the descendants of Noah’s son Ham (Gen. 10:6, I Chron. 1:8). In that context it refers to the name of one of Ham’s sons, whose progeny later inhabited the land known throughout the Bible as Mitzrayim. According to the Bible (Gen. 10:10:13-14, I Chron. 1:11-12), Mitzrayim the person was said to have fathered six sons: Ludim, Anamim, Lehavim, Naftuchim, Patrusim, and Kasluchim (the latter two begat the nations of the Plishtim and Kaftorim). All in all, the term Mitzrayim appears 680 times in the Bible, making it quite a common word.

When the Bible relates that after the Jews crossed the Red Sea, the Egyptians who pursued them drowned, it says: “And the Israelites saw Mitzrayim dead on the shore of the sea” (Ex. 14:30). The Midrash Sechel Tov explains that Mitzrayim in this context refers to “Grandfather Mitzrayim” – the progenitor of all Egyptians – whom Hashem took out of his grave and revived so that he would witness the annihilation of his wretched descendants. Some Tosafists even had a tradition that the word Mitzrayim earlier in that narrative (Ex. 14:10, 14:25) does not refer to the Egyptians collectively, but rather to “Grandfather Mitzrayim” individually (see Ateret Zekanim to Ex. 14:10, Hadar Zekanim to Ex. 14:10, Sefer Chassidim 607, Siddur Rokeach pp. 213, 222, Peirush Rokeach to Ex. 14:30).

In his commentary to Genesis, Radak (to Gen. 10:13) notes that we do not know why Noah’s son Ham named his son Mitzrayim with the YOD-MEM suffix that otherwise serves as an inflection to denote the plural. However, Radak suggests that it may have had something to do with the circumstances surrounding Mitzrayim’s birth. Remarkably, Radak does posit that once Mitzrayim was given a personal name that looks like a noun in plural form – for whatever reason that happened – Mitzrayim himself named his descendants in the same fashion, giving each one a name with the letters YOD-MEM at the end.

Elsewhere, Radak (Sefer HaShorashim and in his comments to Isa.) notes that sometimes the Bible refers to Egypt in singular form by the name Matzor (II Kings 19:24, Isa. 19:6, 37:25). In the same vein, the Arabic equivalent to the Hebrew word Mitzrayim is Misr, which seems to just be the singular form of Mitzrayim. However, commentators see the Biblical word matzor as a common noun referring to “narrow places,” and not as a proper noun referring specifically to Egypt.

In discussing Mitzrayim’s sons, the Midrash (Ber. Rabbah 37:5) notes that all of their names were coined with a suffix related to the yam (“sea”), but the Midrash does not explain why. Maharzu (there) explains that this refers to the fact that Mitzrayim and his descendants all settled along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and thereabouts (see also Nachmanides to Gen. 10:13 who writes that all of

Mitzrayim's sons settled in the general vicinity of Egypt or its immediate environs). But Rabbeinu Bachaya (to Gen. 10:13) says the plural marker YOD-MEM appended to the name Mitzrayim and his sons actually alludes to the fact that all of these family-nations were destined to be annihilated at the Splitting of the Red Sea when they drowned not long after the Jews exited Egypt.

To read the rest of this essay and learn about the other words that refer to "Egypt" visit us online at: http://ohr.edu/this_week/whats_in_a_word/

PEREK SHIRA

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

THE SONG OF THE GAZELLE

The Gazelle says: "I will sing of Your might, and I will praise Your kindness in the morning, for You have been a bastion for me, and a refuge on the day of my distress." (Tehillim 59:17)

The gazelle symbolizes flight for survival. With a small body, graceful figure, and nimble legs, it is among the fastest of all animals, and it survives by outrunning the many predators that wish to feast on its tender flesh. When the night ends and the beasts of prey return to their dens, and the gazelle opens its eyes to another day of existence, its survival is a song to its Creator no less than that which King David sang when he was saved from his enemies: "I will sing of Your might, and I will praise Your kindness in the morning, for You have been a bastion for me, and a refuge on the day of my distress."

On a deeper level of understanding, the Sages interpret this verse as an allusion to the Jewish nation's song when their Egyptian oppressors drowned in the sea, as well as an allusion to their song at the dawn of the final redemption. We too have "nighttimes" of travail in our lives, during which we turn to Hashem and pray with all our hearts. When "morning" comes, we need to remember to thank Him and sing to Him with no less intensity. By doing so, may we soon merit to sing to Hashem for the final redemption, when the sun will rise and never set again.

Sources: Perek B'Shir (by Rav Chaim Kanievsky); Shir HaChaim; Shemos Rabbah 23:6; Rabbi D. Orlofsky

*In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib

PARSHA OVERVIEW - TZAV

The Book of Vayikra (Leviticus), also known as *Torat Kohanim* – the Laws of the Priests – deals largely with the *korbanot* (offerings) brought in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). The first group of offerings is called a *korban olah*, a burnt-offering. The animal is brought to the Mishkan's entrance. For cattle, the person bringing the offering sets his hands on the animal. Afterwards, it is slaughtered, and the *kohen* sprinkles its blood on the Altar. The animal is skinned and cut into pieces. The pieces are arranged, washed and burned on the Altar.

A similar process is described involving burnt-offerings of other animals and birds. The various meal-offerings are described. Part of the meal-offering is burned on the Altar, and the remaining part is eaten by the *kohanim*. Mixing leaven or honey into the offerings is prohibited. The peace-offering, part of which is burned on the Altar and part eaten, can be from cattle, sheep or goats.

The Torah prohibits eating blood or *chelev* (certain fats in animals). The offerings that atone for inadvertent sins committed by the *Kohen Gadol*, by the entire community, by the Prince and by the average citizen, are detailed. Laws of the guilt-offering, which atones for certain verbal transgressions and for transgressing laws of ritual purity, are listed. The meal-offering for those who cannot afford the normal guilt-offering – the offering to atone for misusing sanctified property, laws of the "questionable guilt" offering, and offerings for dishonesty – are detailed.

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. Hashem 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 Hashem. A fire comes from before Hashem, consuming them and stressing the need to perform the commandments only as Moshe directs. Moshe consoles Aharon, who grieves in silence. Moshe directs the *kohanim* regarding 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. The Jewish People are commanded to be separate and holy – like Hashem.

PARSHA OVERVIEW - TAZRIA

The Torah commands a woman to bring a *korban* after the birth of a child. A son is to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life.

The Torah introduces the phenomenon of *tzara'at* (often mistranslated as leprosy) – a miraculous affliction that attacks people, clothing and buildings to awaken a person to spiritual failures. A *kohen* must be consulted to determine whether a particular mark is *tzara'at* or not. The *kohen* isolates the sufferer for a

week. If the malady remains unchanged, confinement continues for a second week, after which the *kohen* decides the person's status. The Torah describes the different forms of *tzara'at*. One whose *tzara'at* is confirmed wears torn clothing, does not cut his hair, and must alert others that he is ritually impure. He may not have normal contact with people. The phenomenon of *tzara'at* on clothing is described in detail.

PARSHA OVERVIEW – METZORA

The Torah describes the procedure for a *metzora* (a person afflicted with *tzara'at*) upon the conclusion of his isolation period. This process extends for a week and involves *korbanot* and immersions in the mikveh. Then, a *kohen* must pronounce the *metzora* pure. A *metzora* of limited financial means may substitute lesser offerings for the more expensive animals. Before a *kohen* diagnoses that a house has *tzara'at*, household possessions are

removed to prevent them from also being declared ritually impure. The *tzara'at* is removed by smashing and rebuilding that section of the house. If the *tzara'at* signs reappear, the entire building must be razed. The Torah details which bodily secretions render a person spiritually impure, and thereby prevent his contact with holy items. And the Torah defines how one regains a state of ritual purity.

PARSHA OVERVIEW – ACHAREI-MOT

G-d instructs the *kohanim* to exercise extreme care when they enter the Mishkan. On Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol is to approach the holiest part of the Mishkan after special preparations and wearing special clothing. He brings offerings unique to Yom Kippur, including two identical goats that are designated by lottery. One is "for G-d" and is offered in the Temple, while the other is "for Azazel" in the desert. The Torah states the individual's obligations on Yom Kippur: On the 10th day of the seventh

month, one must "afflict" oneself. We are to abstain from eating and drinking, anointing, wearing leather footwear, washing and marital relations.

Consumption of blood is prohibited. The blood of slaughtered birds and undomesticated beasts must be covered. The people are warned against engaging in the wicked practices that were common in Egypt. Incest is defined and prohibited. Marital relations are forbidden during a woman's monthly cycle. Homosexuality, bestiality and child sacrifice are prohibited.

PARSHA OVERVIEW – KEDOSHIM

The nation is enjoined to be holy. Many prohibitions and positive commandments are taught:

Prohibitions: Idolatry; eating offerings after their time-limit; theft and robbery; denial of theft; false oaths; retention of someone's property; delaying payment to an employee; hating or cursing a fellow Jew (especially one's parents); gossip; placing physical and spiritual stumbling blocks; perversion of justice; inaction when others are in danger; embarrassing;

revenge; bearing a grudge; cross-breeding; wearing a garment of wool and linen; harvesting a tree during its first three years; gluttony and intoxication; witchcraft; shaving the beard and sideburns; tattooing.

Positive: Awe for parents and respect for the elderly; leaving part of the harvest for the poor; loving others (especially a convert); eating in Jerusalem the fruits from a tree's fourth year; awe for the Temple; respect for Torah scholars, the blind and the deaf.

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Pesachim 2 - 8

Bye, Bye, Chametz

Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav, “One who checks (for chametz), also needs to nullify (chametz).”

The “checking” that Rav Yehuda refers to in the *gemara* (on *daf vav*) is taught in connection with the first *mishna* of our new *masechta*, which teaches the mitzvah of *bedikat chametz*: “On the night of the 14th of Nissan, one checks for chametz by the light of a lamp.”

What is the reason for this mitzvah to check for chametz, also known as *bedikat chametz*? Let's have a look at a few relevant laws of chametz and Pesach. First of all, there are prohibitions against eating or deriving benefit from chametz on Pesach. As the Rambam states, “On Pesach it is forbidden to have any benefit from chametz, as is stated in Shemot 13:3: ‘Do not eat chametz.’” (This verse not only prohibits eating chametz but also prohibits deriving benefit from it on Pesach.)

In addition, there are two prohibitions against the mere ownership of chametz on Pesach. “No chametz may be found in your homes” (Shemot 12:19). “No chametz may be seen in all your territory” (Shemot 13:7).

So, why does our *mishna* insist that *bedikat chametz* be done? Rashi explains that *bedikat chametz* is required in order to not transgress the Torah prohibitions against owning chametz on Pesach. By checking for chametz and destroying it before Pesach (or selling it to a non-Jew or giving it to a non-Jewish neighbor, as I recall doing as a youngster), a Jew will not possess chametz on Pesach. (*Rashi*)

Tosefot questions this reason based on the teaching of Rav Yehuda in the name of Rav, that even if one does *bedikat chametz* he must still *mevatel* and nullify it. If the purpose of the *bedika* is as Rashi claims – to not transgress the prohibitions against chametz ownership on Pesach – why is *bedika* also needed? Once a person does *bitul*, nullifying his chametz, he no longer owns chametz and therefore does not transgress. The gemara clearly states that according to the Torah, even *bitul b'lev* – “nullifying the chametz in one’s heart” – suffices for avoiding the Torah prohibitions of not owning chametz on Pesach. Due to this question, Tosefot argues that although the required *bitul* is indeed enough to fulfill Torah law, the Rabbis enacted a stringency to also do *bedika* so that one will certainly be chametz-free and not mistakenly eat chametz on Pesach.

One defense offered for Rashi’s explanation is that he is explaining the reason for *bedika* at the time of the *mishna* and according to the basic Torah requirement. *bedika* would suffice. Only later was there an additional decree added, the reason for which is explained in the *gemara* on *6b* and by Rashi there. (*Rabbeinu Nissim*)

There is much more discussion in the Rishonim and Achronim surrounding the mechanism of *bitul chametz* and the nature of the dispute between Rashi and Tosefot. Pursuit of further study of this subject makes for fascinating Torah study on a quite practical issue and is placed highly on this author’s “Recommended Reading List.”

And, in addition to the Torah’s prohibitions against owning, eating and benefiting from chametz on Pesach, there are numerous additional Torah mitzvahs related to Pesach, such as eating matzah, eating marror (bitter herbs), telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt (Hagaddah), bringing and eating a *korban* Pesach at the time of the Beit Hamikdash, and more. In fact, there is even a mitzvah to not break a bone of the *korban* Pesach while eating it. “And you will not break any of its (the *korban* Pesach’s) bones.” (Shemot 12:46)

This mitzvah has been explained in many rational ways, such as the notion that princes, unlike animals, eat with dignity, and that we should take special care to behave as royalty on the night of the Pesach Seder, not eating in an undignified manner and breaking bones of the food. (*Sefer HaChinuch* 16)

I would feel remiss in not citing an important life-lesson that the *Sefer HaChinuch* adds in noting the extraordinary abundance of “Pesach mitzvahs.” He explains that it is human nature that “a person is affected according to his actions.” Pesach is not just another holiday, but rather a time to reflect on our nation’s past, present and future eternal destiny. Pesach represents this all. The greater the number of mitzvahs that we do and the greater the number of prohibitions that we refrain from on Pesach serve to help shape us into the type of individuals and the nation that Hashem wants us to be.

▪ *Pesachim* 2a

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LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

Responding to the Progressive Son

The Torah not only anticipated the innocent, wondering and inquiring children, but also the fourth son. Not only the children who would harmoniously stand side by side with their parents in devoted observance, but another son, the “wicked son,” who would no longer fulfill, much less celebrate, the *mitzvot*. This progressive son sits at, or passes by, the table with derisive mockery, and interjects his taunt: *What does this service mean to you? Why do you trouble yourselves each year with these burdensome customs?*

How do we respond to the progressive son, who views the loyal elder generation as backward? We do not directly respond. The Torah instructs us to respond to the other sons directly: *Tell him, open up for him*, but to the progressive son, we are instructed to “say,” not to “say to him.” For his progressiveness has made him immune to your teachings – he has “advanced” to the point of instructing his father! His mission – to move his narrow father beyond his stale views and into the freshness of modernity – will not be derailed by any instruction from that father, however loving, brilliant and complete.

Instead, say to yourself. Continue to devote your own life to Divine *mitzvot*. The sway over the progressive son may well have been lost; the key to his heart rests in G-d’s hand. Until the time that his disillusionment with his newly embraced set of ideals leads him back to the happiness of the ancient Truth, you have nothing to say to him. But, the less you say to him, the more you resolutely and clearly express what the *mitzvot* are to you.

You must pit your determination and conviction against their doubt and wavering. And you must say: *It is a Pesach offering of devotion to G-d, Who passed over the dwellings of the children of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, and our homes He spared.* This self-response reaffirms the historical foundation of our identity, and the commitment we displayed which merited our salvation. It affirms that real progress is achieved only by joyous fulfillment of His commandments – the first bonds of servitude were broken only with that obedience, and it is that obedience that separated Jew from Egyptian. With clear and resolute loyalty, you save yourself and the other sons from the progressive son’s derision, and ensure that the bond of commitment has a stronghold in future generations.

- Sources: *Collected Writings, Vol. 1, Nissan III, pp. 60-65*

The Ohr Somayach Family wishes all our students alumni, friends and the entire Jewish People a “Chag kasher v’somyach.” May you all enjoy a festive, meaningful and kosher Passover!