

מעני תורה

פסח

The Meaning of Friendship

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Talmud, History, Student Activities

Toward the end of *Parashat Bo*, as the Torah describes the Jewish people's climactic exodus from slavery in Egypt, the Torah includes a puzzling detail: "*U-Bnei Yisrael asu ke-dvar Moshe, va-yish'alu mi-Mitzrayim kelei kesef u-klei zahav u-smalot*" (*Shemot* 12:35). In preparation for leaving Egypt, the Jews followed Moshe's instructions and requested or borrowed objects of material wealth from the Egyptians, such as silver and gold and articles of clothing.

The verse depicting this event uses a very strange word in describing the acquisition of the Egyptian wealth. "*Va-yish'alu*" – they requested, they borrowed – you can pick your translation. No matter how you explain it, the verse is not describing the bitter and resentful slave finally having the upper hand against his hateful taskmaster. *Va-yish'alu*? They asked for it!? How can we understand the friendly language used to describe the interaction between two nations whom we would think of as mortal enemies? Why request anything from the Egyptians? Why, with the opportunity in front of them, would the Jews not just take what they wanted? One would think they were entitled.

The *midrash* in *Pesikta Zutrata (Lekach Tov) Shemot* 11 picks up on this strange terminology and says:

Were the Egyptians really friends of the Jewish people, that the Torah says "a man from his friend and woman from her friend?" [*Shemot* 11:2]. Rather, this teaches that after the ten plagues, the Egyptians became like the friends and lovers (*ke-re'im ve-ke-ahuvim*) of the Jewish people, to the point of lending their vessels, and a Jew would say to an Egyptian, "my friend, my love, please lend me this item, or this garment, silver and gold vessels," and the Egyptian didn't have the nerve to withhold the item, as it says, "*HaShem* made the Jewish people find favor in the eyes of the Egyptians" (*Shemot* 12:36).

This *midrash* describes the relationship between the Jews and Egyptians as being not just cordial, but flourishing to the point where the riches of Egypt were willingly handed over to the

Jews upon their departure. They were not only not arch-enemies, they became akin to the best of friends, *ke-re'im ve-ke-ahuvim*; like dear loved ones requesting trivial goods from their friends. In fact, it is noteworthy that the terms that the *midrash* uses to describe the relationship between the Jews and Egyptians are the same terms used in *sheva berachot* to describe a husband and wife. The *midrash* is not suggesting that the Jews and the Egyptians were actually friends after the plagues, but rather that the Egyptians treated the Jews as if they were good friends, as the *midrash* says, "*Ve-HaShem natan et chen ha-am be-einei Mitzrayim*," *HaShem* made it so that the Jews found favor in the eyes of the Egyptians and were able to treat them like friends. When the Jews came to ask for anything - clothing or items of silver and gold - the Egyptians responded as they would to a good friend, by allowing them to borrow what they wanted.

If in fact this *midrash* is teaching us about the concept of friendship in its description of the relationship between the Jews and the Egyptians, a more subtle question arises. Why is friendship symbolized through monetary wealth? In the grand scheme of friendship, giving over gold, silver and dresses seems relatively insignificant. If the Torah wanted to teach us about a great friendship, why not talk about the *erev rav*, the Egyptians who were so inspired by the Jewish people that they joined their ranks? Why does the Torah use the money, clothing, and jewels to highlight this friendship between the Jews and the Egyptians?

Begging the question even further, the mention of the monetary gain that took place during the exodus from Egypt is not mentioned exclusively in *Parashat Bo*, during the telling of the actual exodus. Rather, this acquisition of material wealth as part of the exodus experience is emphasized as an essential part of the process from the time of the God's covenant with Avraham. Avraham is told at the *berit bein ha-betarim*, in *Bereishit* 15:14, "*Ve-gam et ha-goy asher ya'avodu dan Anochi ve-acharei chen yeitz'u be-rechush gadol*," "And also, the nation which they served I will punish, after which [Avraham's descendants] will leave slavery with great material wealth." This theme appears again at the burning bush in *Shemot* 3:21-22, when *HaShem* tells Moshe, "*ve-natati et chen ha-am ha-zeh be-einei Mitzrayim, ve-hayah ki telechun lo telchu reikam. Ve-sha'alah ishah me-shechenta u-mi-garat beitah kelei kesef ve-klei zahav u-smalot, ve-samtem al beneichem ve-al benoteichem ve-nitzaltem et Mitzrayim*," "I will

make the Jewish people find favor in the eyes of the Egyptians and when you leave, you will not leave empty-handed. Each woman will ask her neighbor for silver vessels, gold vessels and dresses, and they will put these items on their sons and daughters and empty out Egypt.”

This theme is mentioned yet again during *makkat bechorot*, the plague against the firstborn. In fact, this motif even makes it into the *Pesach Haggadah* in several places. For example, in “*Dayenu*,” one of the things for which we thank God for providing us is God having given the Jewish people riches from the Egyptians. If the message of this long-awaited material wealth was really about friendship, why did God choose to teach that message in this way? What is it about material wealth that is so significant?

The message of the material wealth is that ultimately it's not about the money – the money is representative of an aspect of a certain kind of relationship that was exemplified in Egypt. Material possessions are definitely mundane, but every person needs certain things in his life no matter how mundane they may seem. The friend, the parent, the grandparent, the sibling – they provide these necessities of life, and, as trivial as they may seem, providing them for someone about whom you care is reflective of a much greater bond. Maybe the message of this *midrash* is just that. The Egyptians providing these everyday, mundane things for the Jewish people showed just how devoted they were to one another – it was a symbol of their great friendship. These everyday things, which on the surface seem trivial, are really what show how much you care about another person. The little things in this context are much more significant than the sum of their parts.

Wishing you a *chag kasher ve-sameach*, and a holiday filled with doing “little” things for each other.

These Things Happen... and Happen... and Happen

Sara Schapiro ('17)

The story of the Jews' persecution in Egypt is the story of a dictator. There are parallels between the dictatorship of Pharaoh and other, more modern, dictators. Even some of the incidental aspects of the persecution in Egypt find parallels in the events of history as they have unfolded, proving once again that “history repeats itself.”

Adolf Hitler, *ym"sh*, perhaps the most infamous dictator in history, rose to power in Germany around 1933. Hitler was the orchestrator of the Holocaust, in which so many Jews were murdered in cold blood. The question becomes, how was Hitler able to convince average German citizens to exterminate Jews? How could he have convinced them to carry out the Final Solution? The answer is that Hitler started off slowly to dehumanize the Jews in the eyes of the

German people. He began by not allowing Jews to participate in German public life, which developed into prohibiting Jews from attending schools and taking most jobs. Then the laws became even more restrictive; Jews were forbidden to participate in Aryan society in any way, shape or form, and had to wear a yellow star on their clothing to differentiate themselves from other Germans. Eventually Jews were rounded up, sent to concentration camps and murdered. The Ramban (*Shemot* 1:10) describes Pharaoh doing something very similar. Ramban says that Pharaoh couldn't just destroy the Jews all at once, because “the populace would not have given the king permission to commit such an injustice.” That is what Pharaoh meant when he said “*havah nitchakmah lo*,” “Come let us deal craftily with them.” In the beginning, Ramban says, Pharaoh “levied on them a conscription of laborers. For it is normal for strangers living in a country to supply a conscription of laborers to the king.” Neither the Egyptians nor the Jews noticed that this was the first step, which then led to enslavement. Next, Pharaoh commanded the midwives to kill the Jewish babies, which led to a nationwide decree to throw Jewish baby boys into the Nile River. This last stage of Pharaoh's persecution is parallel to Hitler's genocide of the Jewish race.

Stalin was the dictator of Communist Russia (USSR) in the mid-twentieth century. He was paranoid and known for killing his political enemies or banishing them to Siberia. Pharaoh also attempted to kill Moshe, his political enemy: “And Pharaoh heard this thing and he sought to kill Moshe, and Moshe ran away to Midyan” (*Shemot* 2:15). Another parallel between Pharaoh and Stalin relates to their use of a secret police force. The NKVD, serving under Stalin, would scout out his enemies and make sure people were loyal to the Communist regime. Pharaoh also had secret police, as we see from the aforementioned Ramban in 1:10, “Egyptians began to search houses, entering at night in concealment and removing the little boys from there.”

An incidental parallel between events in Egypt and events under Stalin's regime can be seen as well. Stalin sent many of his enemies to Siberia, a harsh environment, where they worked hard, but produced very little because of the frigid weather. The pointless work of the prisoners in Siberia parallels the experience of the Jewish slaves in Egypt. According to the *Gemara* in *Sotah* 11a, the ground on which the Jews were working was so soft that anything they built would sink into the mud. Additionally, the bricks the Jews were building with were of such poor quality that after they built a structure it would crumble and they would have to start all over again.

Fidel Castro was the Communist dictator of Cuba beginning in the mid-twentieth century. Castro's daughter, Alina Fernandez, escaped from Cuba in 1993 as a fully grown woman, and immigrated to the United States. In the U.S., she criticized her father and the Cuban government through a radio

show and in her autobiography. Batya, the daughter of Pharaoh, also left her father's way of life. In *Shemot* 2:5 the *pasuk* says, "And the daughter of Pharaoh went down to bathe at the river." *Chazal*, in *Sotah* 12b, say she went to cleanse herself of the *avodah zarah* of her father's house. In other words, she rejected his way of life and his ideology. Another interesting parallel is that Batya called the baby "Moshe" (2:10), which, as Seforno points out, implies that he is one who draws others out and saves them. *Chizkuni* specifies that she meant to hint that Moshe would someday save the Jews. Batya subtly criticized Pharaoh, similar to Alina who openly criticized her father's regime.

Even right now, King Assad of Syria is in a civil war against his own people. He has been condemned for using chemical weapons against his own subjects. According to *Chazal*, Pharaoh also murdered his own people. The Torah says, "Pharaoh commanded to all his people, saying 'Every son that will be born – into the river you shall throw him'" (1:22). *Rashi* comments that "all his people" means that the decree was not just on the Jewish baby boys, but also on the Egyptian baby boys. Pharaoh had a "good" reason to do it; his stargazers could not tell if the savior of the Jewish nation would be a Jew or an Egyptian, so he commanded all baby boys in the country to be killed.

From Ancient Egypt until modern day, from Pharaoh to Assad, we can detect patterns that repeat themselves. The realization of this enhances our understanding of the *Mitzrayim* story, and a careful reading of the story of Pharaoh can shed light on more recent history.

Maror: Which Enslavement Does it Commemorate?

Tamar Even-Hen ('16)

A memorable part of the *Pesach seder* every year is the eating of the *maror*, the bitter herbs. The bitterness of the *maror* symbolizes the hardships and pain that were experienced by *Bnei Yisrael* during their enslavement in Egypt; by eating the *maror*, we try to feel the pain our ancestors felt and understand their experience in Egypt. The *maror* is an extremely important part of the *seder*; *Rabban Gamliel* says that one must mention three things at the *seder* in order to fulfill the obligation to retell the story of *Bnei Yisrael* in Egypt: *pesach*, *matzah*, and *maror*. However, why is the *maror* mentioned last out of the three things? It would make sense for the order of the foods to be in chronological order of what they represent – *maror* first, as it represents slavery, then *pesach*, the lamb offering given before the exodus from Egypt, then *matzah*, which represents the redemption and freedom of *Bnei Yisrael* from Egyptian slavery. Why, then,

do we not mention them in chronological order? Why is it mixed up and in this specific order?

In order to understand the answer to this question we must explore *HaShem's* redemption of *Bnei Yisrael* from Egypt. When *Bnei Yisrael* left Egypt, they had been enslaved for only 210 years, just half of the 400 years *HaShem* had originally intended for them to be enslaved. A popular explanation of the shortened stay is that because *Bnei Yisrael* had worked so hard in Egypt, it was as if they had worked for 400 years. The work they did in 210 years was equivalent to the amount done in 400 years, so *HaShem* took *Bnei Yisrael* out early. Although it would make sense that the order of the three foods be reversed since the *maror*, the hard work and labor, caused our redemption to come early, it is mentioned last because it represents the completion of our obligation of 400 years of labor and our eventual redemption from Egyptian enslavement.

Another possible answer to this problem, based on an idea of the previous Modzhitzer Rebbe (modzitz.org), is to say that they are actually in the correct order. *Maror* is correctly placed as last because our enslavement did take place last. It was not an enslavement to the Egyptians, however, but to *HaShem*, and it was not a negative enslavement, but rather a positive one. After we were freed from the painful and back-breaking Egyptian enslavement, we entered another type of service, a voluntary, positive and impactful one, a service of God. Although in this service we may feel limited, and attached to something, in reality we are much more free when invested in the service of *HaShem* than when we are not. Without this service, we believe that we are free, however, we are not truly free because we are letting our desires control us and take over. When we worship *HaShem* and serve Him, He grants us freedom and control over our desires, and ourselves, and for that reason, service of *HaShem* is our freedom. Therefore, *maror*, service of *HaShem* (not of Egypt) is last, to show that this service is what grants us freedom.

However, one might ask: Isn't *maror* meant to symbolize the bitterness of service and enslavement? Why would we use the bitter *maror* to represent our service of *HaShem*? The answer to this question is the *charoset*. We dip the *maror* in the *charoset* to show



that certain kinds of enslavement can be positive and beneficial. When we serve *HaShem*, we create a positive service, in which we grow, learn, and gain abilities to rule over our desires. By dipping the *maror* in the *charoet*, we are showing that bitter things can be turned into sweet things – service and enslavement can be positive if we serve *HaShem*.

Talking Karpas Yakira Escott ('16)

The *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim siman 158* states that we wash our hands before eating something that is dipped in a liquid. These days, we wash our hands only before we eat bread, but in the times of the *Beit HaMikdash*, the Jews were very concerned with the laws of purity and impurity and washed their hands before eating anything dipped in a liquid. *Chazal* are very *machmir*, stringent, about laws regarding water. They did not want a person coming close to water when his hands were not holy, especially when he was eating, because water is quite susceptible to becoming impure and transferring that status to other things such as the food being dipped into it. Therefore, *Chazal* made a rule that people must wash their hands before eating foods that are dipped into water or one of the other seven special liquids.

Although many *Rishonim* hold that washing one's hands before eating dipped foods does not apply today, there is a *machloket* about whether this *takanah* still holds. *Rambam* holds that people should wash and say "*al netilat yadayim*" before dipping food in water to eat. We follow the *pesak* of the *Shulchan Aruch*, which says that people should wash their hands without saying the *berachah*. In the most prominent example, at the *seder* we wash our hands without saying a *berachah* before we dip the *karpas* in the water and eat it, as the *Shulchan Aruch* says.

Many say that we should also not talk after washing and before eating the *karpas*. What is the reason for this? Some say that the reason for not talking after washing is because of a *hefsek*, an interruption. Rabbi Beinish Ginsburg explains this idea and states that talking after washing and before eating leads to *hesech ha-da'at*, an interruption of the mind. After people wash, their hands are clean to eat with, but if they talk, their mind wanders and they might talk with

their hands or touch something dirty that causes them to be unholy yet again, perhaps without even noticing it. The same applies to *karpas*. According to the view that one is supposed to wash his hands before eating something dipped in a liquid, the whole point is that hands should be clean and holy when one eats the *karpas*. Therefore, one should not talk in between the washing and eating of the *karpas*. Then, assuming our hands are still clean and holy, we dip the *karpas* in the salt water and eat it.

Back to the Basics Hana Chen ('18)

At the *seder* we have at the table and eat *matzah*, *maror*, four cups of wine, and *charoet*. Each food in this seemingly odd group symbolizes something different related to the story of *Pesach*.

Matzah is bread that does not rise and is made of flour and water. It is often called *lechem oni*, which means "the bread for the poor." This bread has a dual meaning to it. It represents slavery, since there are no eggs or other enriching ingredients in it, but it also represents freedom, because it is flat due to the hurried exit from Egypt. This dual meaning serves to teach that while we are being freed from Pharaoh and slavery in *Mitzrayim*, we are pledging our service to the Torah and to *HaShem*. A life of learning Torah and following the *mitzvot* is infinitely better than being enslaved to Pharaoh and *Mitzrayim*. *Matzah* is also called *lechem oni* because *oni* means answer. *Matzah* is different from other bread; the difference causes the kids to ask questions. The phrase "*lechem oni*" represents the answering of these questions, and consequently, the telling of the *Pesach* story.

Maror's purpose is to remind *Bnei Yisrael* of how bitter slavery was in Egypt. *Ashkenazim* eat horseradish, which tastes bitter, while *Sefaradim* often eat lettuce instead. The reason behind this is that in the beginning of the Jews' enslavement, life in Egypt was good and the Jews were welcomed. After Yosef died, life got worse, but it was only truly terrible towards the end of the time that *Bnei Yisrael* were enslaved. Similarly, the top of the lettuce is soft and mild, but towards the stem of the lettuce, it becomes hard and leaves a bitter aftertaste, representing *Bnei Yisrael's* experience in slavery.



The four cups of wine symbolize the redemption of *Bnei Yisrael*. Most people prefer to use red wine, which also has a dual meaning, for the four cups. The wine represents freedom, but the color red reminds *Bnei Yisrael* of their blood that was spilled by Pharaoh. This acts as a reminder that even though the Jews were freed, their freedom came at the cost of the blood of their ancestors. The Jews' blood, sweat, and work brought about their redemption, which is symbolized by the wine. The number four for cups of wine also symbolizes *ge'ulah*, redemption. The four cups correspond to the four terms of redemption, *ve-hotzeiti*, *ve-hitzalti*, *ve-ga'alti*, and *ve-lakachti*.

Finally, the *charoset* symbolizes the work *Bnei Yisrael* did while enslaved by Pharaoh, and the Jews who did this work themselves. *Charoset* is supposed to be as thick as the cement used to make Pitom and Ramses, two cities in Egypt that the Jews built. We add the fruits that are used to describe *Bnei Yisrael* in the Torah, such as apples, figs, almonds and pomegranate. Cinnamon or ginger is then added to remind us of the straw used by *Bnei Yisrael* in their work.

The special *seder* foods are rich with symbolic meaning and effectively help convey the story of the Exodus.

In the Merit of Righteous Women

Miri Cohen ('18)

Throughout *Sefer Shemot*, we read about many extraordinary women in whose merit we were brought out of Egypt. This is summed up in *Shemot Rabbah's* phrase "*bi-zchut nashim tzidkaniyot nig'alu avoteinu mi-Mitzrayim*." The first case where this concept comes up is when the midwives are given a decree from Pharaoh to kill all Jewish baby boys. The *pasuk* then explains that the midwives did not listen to Pharaoh and let the babies live. Ibn Ezra notes that since the *pasuk* mentions the fact that the midwives did not listen to Pharaoh, it seems obvious that they let the babies live. Rather, he says, these two statements mean two separate things. The first statement means that the midwives did not listen to Pharaoh and they did not kill the babies. The second statement about the midwives letting the babies live adds that they actively helped the babies survive. Rashi explains that the midwives actively helped the Jewish babies live by feeding them.

In *Shemot* 2:1, we are told that a man from *shevet* Levi came to take a wife from *shevet* Levi. This man and woman are Amram and Yocheved, Moshe *Rabbeinu's* parents. *Gemara Sotah* 12a explains the importance of this *pasuk* and Miriam's role in the survival of the nation. When Pharaoh decreed to kill all the Jewish baby boys, Amram decided to separate from Yocheved so they would not have any baby

boys that would be killed. After Amram's separation from Yocheved, the rest of the Jewish men followed his example and separated from their wives. Realizing what her father had done, Miriam explained to Amram that his behavior was worse than Pharaoh's since he was preventing both boys and girls from being born. Following the advice of Miriam, Amram reunited with his wife and had more children. As a result, the rest of the nation followed Amram's lead and returned to their wives.

The relevance of women in Moshe's early life is evident while looking at the *peshat* of *Perek* 2, which shows a chiasmic structure formed by the names of the people who were the most active in this *perek*. The *pesukim* mention Yocheved, Miriam, *Bat* Pharaoh, Miriam again, then Yocheved once more. The idea of the chiasmic structure is to make the subject in the middle more apparent and show its importance. Although Yocheved and Miriam were essential to Moshe's birth and initial survival, *Bat* Pharaoh was the most crucial character. After *Bat* Pharaoh took Moshe out of the basket in the river, she shaped his life and made him into the man who took us out of *galut Mitzrayim*.

In the first couple of *perakim* of *Sefer Shemot*, many women are mentioned both in the *pesukim* themselves and in many *mefarshim*. Each woman listed risked her own life and protected the future leader of the Jewish nation. In these first few *perakim*, we see the truth of the phrase "*bi-zchut nashim tzidkaniyot nig'alu avoteinu mi-Mitzrayim*." These righteous women are truly the reason that we were taken out of *Mitzrayim*.

From Generation to Generation

Adina Rosenberg ('16)

"*Ve-hi she-amdah...*" "And it is 'this' which stood for our fathers, and for us as well. For not only one enemy did try to destroy us; but in every generation they stand against us to destroy us, but God saves us from their hands." What was it that stood for our forefathers and for us? Rabbi Menachem Leibtag in his *shiur* on the *Haggadah* (Tanach.org – "A Guide to *Maggid*) suggests that we must look at the paragraph prior to "*ve-hi she-amdah*" in the *Haggadah* to find our answer. We say, "*Baruch shomer havtachato...*" which translates as "Blessed is He who keeps His promise to *Am Yisrael*, for God had calculated the end as He had promised Avraham *Avinu* at *berit bein ha-betarim*. As God stated: 'Know very well that your offspring will be strangers in a foreign land, and they will oppress and enslave them for 400 years. But that nation who will oppress them I will judge, and afterward they will go out with great wealth.'"

In this statement, we thank God for keeping the promise He made to Avraham Avinu at *berit bein ha-betarim*, to ultimately redeem *Bnei Yisrael* from their affliction after some 400 years. It was at *berit bein ha-betarim* that God made a covenant promising that no matter what, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* would save us. He was going to send us into slavery, but He was also going to bring us out and make us into an esteemed nation. After recalling *berit bein ha-betarim*, we then lift our cups and recite “*ve-hi she-amdah*” declaring *berit bein ha-betarim* as not only standing for our fathers, but for us and in every generation as well. We say, “And it is this, [the promise made at *berit bein ha-betarim*], which stood for our fathers, and for us as well. For not only one enemy [in our history] did try to destroy us, but in every generation they stand against us to destroy us, but God saves us from their hands.” Here we explain that *berit bein ha-betarim* was not merely “promising only one major redemption” from Egypt, but rather it “defined an eternal relationship between God and His people,” as R. Liebttag writes. “The events of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* are only the initial stage of this everlasting relationship. ...Any time in our history, whenever we are in distress, God will ultimately come to redeem us.”

Rabbi Leibtag takes this idea one step further. He explains that a covenant requires two sides and is only maintained when both sides keep their end of the deal. During *berit bein ha-betarim*, God promised to always save us, and we became His people, living our lives in service of Him. Therefore as we recite “*ve-hi she-amdah*” we not only remind ourselves of *HaShem*’s side of the promise, but of our side as well. We are privileged to a unique covenantal relationship with God. He will redeem us, but our redemption is contingent upon our keeping our side of the covenant.

Additionally, Ibn Ezra discusses how the generation that left Egypt was one of *shefeilut ruach*, lowliness of spirit and oppression. He explains that everything their generation experienced made it difficult to be a strong nation that goes out to fight. Therefore, it is the next generation that will persist and be strong in their place. Every generation must work to maintain the connection with God established by the generation before them, even as they move forward to new challenges. This connects to Rabbi Leibtag’s idea of an eternal *berit*, and highlights the importance of every generation remembering what happened in *Mitzrayim*, and more importantly, maintaining the relationship we are privileged to have with God.

Yetzi'at Mitzrayim was the initial stage of our everlasting relationship with God. However, the forming of our relationship goes far beyond the events of *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*. This relationship continues throughout the generations and is one that we must continue to maintain. Rabbi Leibtag’s idea greatly emphasizes the significance of telling the story

of *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*, throughout all generations. In doing so, we are not only reminded of our relationship with God, but the privilege and responsibility that we have to maintain it.

Wandering or Wondering: When Will We be Redeemed?

Meira Prager ('18)

At the beginning of *Parshat Va'eira*, *HaShem* speaks to Moshe about the future of *Bnei Yisrael*. In this speech are the *arba leshonot ge'ulah*, the four expressions of redemption: *ve-hotzeiti*, *ve-hitzalti*, *ve-ga'alti*, and *ve-lakachti*. As many people know, there is also a fifth *lashon shel ge'ulah*, *ve-heveiti*. This fifth expression is written one *pasuk* after the first four *leshonot*, but is separated from them by a long phrase, and is not counted by *Bereishit Rabbah* 88:5 when matching the four *leshonot* to the four cups we drink at the *sefer*. Although Eliyahu’s cup can represent the fifth *lashon shel ge'ulah*, we do not drink this cup, portraying that it is different.

Why the distinction between the fifth *lashon shel ge'ulah* and the other four? To answer this question, we first need to understand the meaning behind the *leshonot ge'ulah*. As a whole, *HaShem*’s speech to Moshe is about taking *Bnei Yisrael* out of *Mitzrayim*, and each *lashon shel ge'ulah* articulates a certain step in that process. The first *lashon shel ge'ulah* is *ve-hotzeiti*, “and I will take you out.” In other words, *HaShem* will take *Bnei Yisrael* out from the burdens of Egypt. The second *lashon* is *ve-hitzalti*, by which *HaShem* means, “I will save you from your work.” The third *lashon* is *ve-ga'alti*, meaning “I will redeem you with an outstretched hand and great judgments.” Then *HaShem* says *ve-lakachti*, “and I will take you as my nation.” The fifth *lashon shel ge'ulah* is *ve-heveiti*, “and I will bring you to the Promised Land.”

Between the fourth and fifth *leshonot shel ge'ulah*, the *pesukim* pause in their telling about the *leshonot* and instead focus on *HaShem* being the God of the Jews and his taking them out of *Mitzrayim*. Why is this? The answer I would like to offer is that the first four *leshonot ge'ulah* happen one after the other, but the fifth does not, because an unplanned event happened: *cheit ha-meraglim*, the sin of the spies in the desert. The punishment for this was that the Jews had to wander in the desert for 40 years before being able to enter Israel. Above, I used the word unplanned, but I would like to correct myself, as here at the four *leshonot ge'ulah* we have a hint to the sin. The Jews do not enter Israel right after becoming *HaShem*’s nation, so there is some separation in the *pesukim* between those two *leshonot ge'ulah*. *HaShem* is foreshadowing what is going to happen to the Jews; they are going to sin and not be able to enter the Land of Israel right

away. (Thank you to Mrs. Shifra Schapiro for helping me come up with this answer after we learned these *pesukim* in her class and I noticed this issue.)

What was so terrible about *cheit ha-meraglim*? It was a culmination of all that *Bnei Yisrael* doubted about the goodness of *HaShem*, and their desire, declared at *cheit ha-meraglim*, to return to *Mitzrayim*. The punishment for *cheit ha-meraglim* was that all the people over 20 years old in that generation would not enter into Israel, and the nation would wander the land for 40 years. What is the goal of having *Bnei Yisrael* wander in the desert for forty years? I think *HaShem* gives us the answer to this question between the fourth and fifth *leshonot shel ge'ulah*, when He says "I will be a God to you, and you will know that I am the Lord your God, Who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians." What *HaShem* says is exactly the belief in which *Bnei Yisrael* needed reinforcement. Between taking us as His nation and letting us into the Promised Land, we had to let *HaShem* be our God and know He is our God, as well as realize that He took us out of our suffering in *Mitzrayim*. *HaShem* had to let the Jews wander in the desert for 40 years because they did not understand this, and they could not enter Israel until they understood and believed that *HaShem* is their God and took them out of *Mitzrayim*.

When they finally were able to enter Israel, that was the first fulfillment of *ve-heveiti*, and now we are waiting for *HaShem* to fulfill it once again. *Ve-heveti* is the cup of Eliyahu because he is going to help *HaShem* do *ve-heveiti* for us. Our *ve-heveiti* is something we discuss at great length, and we talk about how *HaShem* is our God, and sing *le-shanah ha-ba'ah be-Yerushalayim*, because we hope that each year we have fulfilled what lies between *ve-lakachti* and *ve-heveiti* so that we can move on to *ve-heveiti* we fill the fifth cup and open the door for Eliyahu.

The Four Cups of Wine: A Deeper Meaning

Batsheva Leah Weinstein ('18)

One of the many rituals that we do during the *sedarim* on the first and second night of *Pesach* is drinking four cups of wine. Why do we drink four cups of wine? What is the significance behind it? The *Keli Yakar* gives us two distinct yet similar answers which offer us a deeper understanding of the *seder* nights and our redemption from Egypt.

Keli Yakar answers that we drink four cups of wine because we were redeemed from four troubles. He has two versions of these four troubles, one based on the *berit bein habetarim*, the covenant that *HaShem* made with Avraham in which He told him that his descendants would suffer exile in

Egypt, but would eventually be redeemed, and one based on the story of Yosef and the cupbearer of Pharaoh.

Keli Yakar explains that the *arba leshonot shel ge'ulah*, the four expressions of redemption that *HaShem* tells to Moshe, are an exact mirror of the *berit bein habetarim*. *HaShem* says to Avraham, "*Ki ger yihyeh zar'acha be-eretz lo lahem, va-avadum ve-innu otam arba me'ot shanah*," "your children will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they will enslave them and torture them for four hundred years" (*Bereishit* 15:13). Three levels of degradation are listed: *gerut*, *avdut*, and *innui* – being strangers, being slaves, and being tortured or oppressed. The first three *leshonot* redeem *Bnei Yisrael* from these three oppressions. The first expression states, "*Ve-hotzeiti etchem mi-tachat sivlot Mitzrayim*," "and I will take you out from under the oppression of Egypt" (*Shemot* 6:6). *HaShem* says He will redeem us from the crushing, backbreaking torture. This parallels to the "*ve-innu*" in *berit bein habetarim*, the torture about which Avraham was foretold. The second expression states, "*Ve-hitzalti etchem me-avadatam*," "and I will save you from their work." This refers to the typical slave labor, even without the torture, that the Jews faced, and parallels the less severe oppression of "*va-avadum*," "and they will enslave them," foretold in the covenant. Lastly, *HaShem* says "*Ve-ga'alti etchem bi-zro'a netuyah*," "and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm." This refers to *HaShem's* saving us from being strangers, because a stranger has no redeemer, and parallels the words "*ki ger yihyeh zar'acha*," "and your children will be strangers." Hence the expressions of redemption beautifully mirror the *berit bein habetarim* and show that *HaShem* fulfilled His promise to Avraham. The last expression of redemption, however, goes beyond what was explicitly promised to Avraham. *HaShem* says "*Ve-lakachti etchem li la-am ve-hayiti lachem l'Elokim*" –

"And I will take you to Me as a people, and I will be a God to you." This is the ultimate purpose of the redemption from Egypt – so that *Bnei Yisrael* will be a nation that serves *HaShem*. The *pasuk* ends by saying "*Viyda'tem ki ani HaShem ha-motzi etchem mi-tachat sivlot Mitzrayim*," "only then, after you become the nation of God, will you recognize that I am *HaShem* who took you out from under the



Egyptian oppression.” Thus, the four *leshonot shel ge'ulah* come full circle as we realize that it was *HaShem* who redeemed us from four oppressions -- torture, slavery, being strangers, and not knowing God. One reason, says the *Keli Yakar*, for having four cups of wine is to remember the four redemptions from which *HaShem* redeemed us.

In *Parashat Vayeishev*, we are told of an encounter between Yosef and the cupbearer of Pharaoh. They are both in jail, and the cupbearer has a disturbing dream that Yosef interprets for him. In his dream he sees three branches of grapes and he squeezes them into Pharaoh's cup. Yosef tells the cupbearer that in three days he will be taken out of jail and returned to his position as cupbearer of the king. When recounting his dream, the cupbearer uses the word “*kos*,” meaning cup, four times. This, says *Keli Yakar*, is why we drink four cups of wine at the *seder*. But how does the cupbearer's dream relate to our drinking four cups of wine? *Keli Yakar* explains that the cupbearer was redeemed in the same way that we were redeemed. A *pasuk* in *Yirmiyahu* states, “*Koh amar HaShem: asher la-cherev, la-cherev; va-asher la-mavet, la-mavet; va-asher la-ra'av, la-ra'av; va-asher la-shevi, la-shevi.*” “So says *HaShem*: those that are for sword, to sword; those that are for death, to death; those that are for famine, to famine; those that are for captivity, to captivity” (15:2). Four different troubles are listed in this *pasuk*: sword, death, famine and captivity. Being a captive is the worst of the four because one's captor can impose on him any of the other three troubles. Both the cupbearer in jail and *Bnei Yisrael* in *Mitzrayim* were captives. When someone is redeemed from captivity, he is in effect being redeemed from all of these four things. A *pasuk* in *Tehillim* says, “*Kos yeshu'ot esa*” – “I will raise a cup of salvations” (116:13). From here we learn that the proper thing to do when redeemed is to drink. When you are redeemed from being a captive and are therefore redeemed from four things, you drink four cups. Hence the cupbearer had the word “*kos*” four times in the dream that told of his redemption; and so too, we drink four cups of wine at the *seder* to commemorate *HaShem*'s redeeming us from four troubles.

Thus we have one main reason for drinking four cups of wine on *Pesach*: to commemorate *HaShem*'s saving us from four oppressions, with connections to two different stories. We recall *berit bein ha-betarim* and recognize *HaShem*'s fulfillment of His promise to Avraham. We also remember the story of Yosef and the cupbearer, a story that was fundamental to the eventual *galut Mitzrayim*, yet at the same time foreshadows our redemption from exile. Through both of these stories we see that although troubles may befall *Bnei Yisrael*, *HaShem* is always ready with the redemption before the oppression even begins.

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