

# מעני תורה

## פסח

### Affective Goals and Dramatic Effect

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*Talmud, Tanakh*

(*Ma'ayanei Torah* Editor-in-Chief '03-'04)

Educators in general, and Jewish educators in particular, throw around the term “affective learning outcome.” For those unfamiliar with the term, it can be loosely defined as an educational goal relating to a student’s emotion or belief rather than one addressing a specific point of knowledge or skill set.

As an educational experience, *Leil ha-Seder* involves both cognitive and affective goals. After all, the major educational objective of *Leil ha-Seder* seems to be *Sippur Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*: telling (or hearing) the story of the Exodus from Egypt. This is an information-oriented goal for the evening. Yet the *ba'al Haggadah* informs us of another imperative: *be-chol dor va-dor chayav adam lir'ot et atzmo ke-ilu hu yatza mi-Mitzrayim*; in every generation on *Seder* night, a person must picture himself as if he left *Mitzrayim*, which is an affective goal.

As the *Haggadah* proceeds, we hear about the importance of another educational term, differentiated instruction, with the discussion of the four sons. Each son is different and for each one, we must tailor our *Sippur Yetzi'at Mitzrayim* to his educational needs. But a closer look at the lesson plan for the *chacham* reveals the following: *af atah amur lo ke-hilchot ha-Pesach: ein maftirim achar ha-Pesach afkoman*; we teach the wise son the laws of *Pesach*: we do not eat an extra portion after the *korban Pesach* is eaten. *Haggadat Hegyonei Halachah*, quoting the Brisker Rav, notes that when we speak to the *chacham*, we are not instructed to relate the story at all! Rather, we are told to teach the *chacham* about the *halachot* of *Pesach*. The Brisker Rav (among others) deduces from here that discussions of the *halachot* relating to what we do on *Leil ha-Seder* can stand in for *sippur*, for the telling of the story.

Why are the actions we do on *Seder* night appropriate substitutes for relating the story of *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*? One of the most famous passages of the *Sefer ha-Chinuch* addresses this very issue. He explains that the prohibition to break the bones of the *korban Pesach* should engender feelings of prosperity and freedom. “*Acharei ha-pe'ulot nimshachim ha-levavot*,” action leads to affect. One action may not do the trick, but multiple actions and repetition thereof will cause an emotional change within us. For

this reason, the *Sefer ha-Chinuch* writes, we have a multiplicity of different *halachot* and *mitzvot* to perform on *Leil ha-Seder*. The more symbolic actions we perform, the more we internalize their symbolism.

This internal, emotional connection to *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim* cannot be achieved simply by telling or hearing a historical account of *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*. Hearing a story is a passive experience; acting it out is a transformative one. On one level, our symbolic actions at *Leil ha-Seder* remind us of various aspects of this seminal event in Jewish history.

But that is not the only purpose of these actions. In fact, even the generation that did leave *Mitzrayim* needed to artificially impose symbolic actions on their experience! Rav Menachem Leibtag writes that the various *halachot* found in *Shemot* chapter 12 about the original *Seder* come together to indicate that this was a “themed meal,” where the theme was, of course, *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*. He notes the requirement to eat *matzah* at that meal, for example, as reminiscent of the *lechem oni*, the slave food eaten by *Bnei Yisrael* during the time of their enslavement. Additionally, although *Bnei Yisrael* would not be leaving Egypt for several hours, they were instructed to attend their *Seder* in full travel garb. While this generation certainly knew cognitively that they would be leaving Egypt, they, too, were asked to dramatize their *Seder*. This indicates, then, that the purpose of symbolic actions of the *Seder* goes beyond ingraining the historical story deep

into our consciousness. Knowing the story is necessary, but not sufficient. (This may be why the Netziv indicates that *halachot* are an appropriate topic for the *chacham*, but not for the other sons, since they still are not completely familiar with the basic story.) Rather, the symbolic actions performed at the very first *Seder* forced the people to contemplate their experience rather than letting it pass them by (or over).

What, then, is the true educational goal here? What were the *yotz'ei Mitzrayim*, and those of us who are commanded to place ourselves in their shoes, supposed to recognize on *Leil ha-Seder* through our dramatizations and symbolic actions? The answer lies in the proof-text cited by the *ba'al Haggadah*: “*ba-avur zeh asah HaShem li*,” our Exodus was a miracle performed for us by *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, and was not an accident of history. It was “*li*,” for me, and I must relate to this personally. The Ramban



writes that the open miracles performed in *Mitzrayim* and at the *Yam Suf* proved certain theological truths. These proofs are not replicated in each generation. But each time that we perform an action *zecher le-Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*: wearing *tefillin*, putting up a *mezuzah*, performing *pidyon ha-ben*, or any of the *mitzvot* of *Leil ha-Seder*, we declare to the world that "I know G-d exists, cares, and is involved in this world—because He took me out of *Mitzrayim*."

### Dayenu: Unity and Love at Har Sinai

Tamar Fishweicher ('13)

In the *Hagaddah* we read in the song of *Dayenu*, "*ilu kirvanu lifnei Har Sinai ve-lo natan lanu et ha-Torah, dayenu*; if G-d had brought us to the foot of *Har Sinai* but we were not given the Torah, it would have been enough." How could we say such a thing considering the fact that the whole essence of *Bnei Yisrael* has always been focused on the Torah!? The whole redemption from *Mitzrayim* was for the purpose of coming to *Har Sinai* and receiving the Torah! For this reason, how could we say that it would have been enough if we had not received the Torah?

In *Parshat Yitro* (*Shemot* 19:2), the *pasuk* states "*Va-yichan sham Yisrael neged ha-har – Bnei Yisrael* camped near the foot of the mountain." Rashi asks a question: Why does the Torah use the singular form, "*va-yichan*," when it should have used the plural form, "*va-yachanu*"? Rashi answers, "*ke-ish echad be-lev echad*; they were like one person with one heart." This means that the estimated 3,000,000 Jews at *Har Sinai* were considered as one person because of the incredible unity they had amongst themselves. The Avnei Nezer quotes the *pasuk* from *Beshalach* (*Shemot* 14:10) that states, "*ve-hinei Mitzrayim nose'a achareihem – The Egyptians were chasing after them [Bnei Yisrael]*." Here too, the *pasuk* uses the singular form of "*nose'a*" in place of the plural term, *nos'im*. Rashi asks the same question as to why the singular term of "*nose'a*" is used and not the plural form of "*nos'im*." Rashi answers that the Egyptians were "*be-lev echad, ke-ish echad*; with one heart like one person." Regarding the Egyptians, Rashi reverses his formulation by stating "*lev echad*" before "*ish echad*," but *Bnei Yisrael* are "*ke-ish echad be-lev echad*."

In life, there are two types of love, conditional love and unconditional love. Conditional love exists when a person is in love with someone or something for a specific reason. Once that specific reason is lost, the love is gone. An example of conditional love is when someone is in love with a woman solely because she is beautiful. This may imply that when her beauty dissipates, his love for her will go away as well. On the other hand, unconditional love is when someone loves someone or something unconditionally, which serves as a love that will last forever. When the singular term "*nose'a*" was used in *Shemot* 14:10 to describe the *Mitzrim*, Rashi uses the phrase "*be-lev echad, ke-ish echad*" to show that the Egyptians had conditional love for one another. The *Mitzrim* were chasing *Bnei Yisrael* with one heart and one motive, which was to kill all the Jews. Therefore, after they completed their motive, the love they had for one another would disappear. However, for *Bnei Yisrael* at *Har Sinai* in *Shemot* 19:2, Rashi states "*ish echad*" first to teach us that *Bnei Yisrael* had unconditional love for each other because they each considered them-

selves as one person, and only then focused on the *lev*, their motives.

In *Beresheet* 25:28, we can find another example of conditional versus unconditional love. The *pasuk* states "Yitzchak loved Eisav because he was a hunter, and Rivka loved Yaakov." The love that Yitzchak had for Eisav was conditional. One may therefore deduce that when Eisav retires from his hunting, Yitzchak may no longer love him. However, it states that Rivka loved Yaakov without an explicit reason. Because no clear reason is mentioned, it is obvious that Rivka loved Yaakov unconditionally. A *mishnah* in *Pirkei Avot* also explains the entire concept of conditional versus unconditional love. In *Pirkei Avot* 5:18, the *mishnah* states: "Any love that depends on a specific cause, when that cause is gone, the love is gone; but if it does not depend on a specific cause, it will never cease."

"*Ilu kirvanu lifnei Har Sinai ve-lo natan lanu et ha-Torah, dayenu*; if G-d had brought us to the foot of *Har Sinai* but we were not given the Torah, it would have been enough." When we stood before *Har Sinai*, even before we received the Torah, the love that every Jew had for one another was unconditional. The unity among the Jews was unbreakable, and the Torah deals so much with *bein adam le-chaveiro*, a nation that is unified will never commit any *bein adam le-chaveiro* transgressions. Since *Bnei Yisrael* are considered one, no one would transgress against themselves. Of course ultimately we received the Torah at *Har Sinai*, but the lesson we learn is that unconditional love between fellow Jews can be as great as the entire Torah.

### Our Blood-Bound Belief in G-d

Esther Simchi ('13)

In the *Pesach* story, before *makkat bechorot*, *HaShem* commanded each household of *Bnei Yisrael* to slaughter a sheep and smear its blood on its front doorposts. Smearing the blood allowed *HaShem* to distinguish between the Jewish homes and the Egyptian homes. But a question arises: was this really necessary in order for *HaShem* to know which houses He had to pass over? If we believe that *HaShem* is all-knowing, why would He need an indication of the Jewish homes?

*HaKetav VeHakabbalah*, who lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Germany, suggests the following answer. This commandment was given to *Bnei Yisrael* in order to test them and their *emunah* in *HaShem*. By slaughtering the sheep and displaying the sheep's blood on their doorposts, *Bnei Yisrael* were making a statement. They were risking their lives by showing their religion to all, but they felt confident in their actions because of their intense faith in G-d.

Another opinion, given by the Slonimer Rebbe, is that through this commandment *Bnei Yisrael* showed that they had evolved into the Chosen People, and deservedly so, because they were willing to follow the word of G-d. However, the question still remains: does *HaShem* not know everything? Would He not know who from *Bnei Yisrael* would follow this commandment? Although *HaShem* did know who from *Bnei Yisrael* would obey, He nevertheless gave each and every Jew the opportunity to do a tremendous *mitzvah*.

The Slomimer Rebbe offers several reasons as to why *HaShem* chose a commandment specifically related to blood. Blood indicates our covenant with *HaShem* and our willingness to give of ourselves for *HaShem*. For instance, the *brit milah* performed on an eight-day-old baby is the sign of our covenant with *HaShem*. Conversely, a Jew who does not have a *brit milah* is considered "cut off from his people." One of the most extreme ways to give one's blood to *HaShem* is through giving one's life. For example, one is required to die instead of doing the three major sins: murder, adultery and idol worship. By giving up blood, we show *HaShem* our deep belief in Him, and this is why He specifically commanded *Bnei Yisrael* to use blood when He was testing their *emunah*.

Although some of our commandments may seem odd, or even at times inexplicable, we know in our hearts that they are for our benefit. This principle is what we refer to as *emunah* in *HaShem*. *Emunah* is when a Jew will smear blood on his doorpost and risk his life because it is a commandment and the will of G-d. One reason *Bnei Yisrael* merited *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim* was because of their observance of this *mitzvah* – having complete *emunah* in G-d during their hardships in Egypt. May we all be *zocheh* to observe the *mitzvot* of the *Torah* and to have the utmost *emunah* in *HaShem*.

### ***Pesach, Matzah, U-Maror***

Ilana Weinberger ('13)

During *maggid*, the leader of the *seder* quotes Rabban Gamliel, who states that we only "fulfill our obligation" if we discuss "*Pesach, matzah, and maror.*"

A few questions arise from this vague statement: first of all, exactly which obligation are we fulfilling? Second, why do we specifically discuss these three things?

The Ran, *Aruch HaShulchan*, and Tosafot agree that the obligation is simply to have "*Pesach*" (that is, the *korban Pesach* or a representation of it), *matzah*, and *maror* present at your *seder*. The Rambam, however, understands the obligation more figuratively. He believes that Rabban Gamliel is referring to the obligation to remember *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*.

Rav Soloveitchik addresses why it is specifically important to discuss *Pesach, matzah, and maror* at our *sedarim*. He believes that each of the three addresses the needs of recently-freed slaves. It is only natural for people to suppress unpleasant, bitter memories. *Maror* reminds us to remember our past as slaves, even though we were tortured. Next, freed slaves may become selfish, since as slaves they were not allowed to own anything. *Korban*

*Pesach* is a group *mitzvah*, and therefore reminds us to think of others. It is also natural for freed slaves to value money more than people who were never slaves, since slaves may associate money with power. *Matzah*, which is called "*lechem oni*," bread of poverty, is a subtle reminder that gaining as much money as possible should not be a person's life goal.

We must discuss *Pesach, matzah, and maror* in order to "fulfill our obligation" because each of the three teaches us an important lesson and together, the lessons span across time. Remembering our bitter past through *maror* helps us appreciate what we have, and everything that *HaShem* does for us. *Korban Pesach* teaches us to be generous and part of *Klal Yisrael* even now, in the present. *Matzah* reminds us to keep our values straight, so that in the future, *HaShem* never needs to put us into slavery again. This *Pesach, concentrate on the meanings behind the three foods to increase your kavvanah and appreciation of HaShem.*

### ***Avdut Mitzrayim and the Holocaust***

Ahuva Shafier ('15)

According to Ramban in *Shemot* 1:1, the stories and events in the *Torah* set an example for later events in Jewish history. Ramban defines the principle as "*ma'aseh avot siman le-banim*," the actions of the fathers are a blueprint for the nation's actions. Although the Ramban applied *ma'aseh avot siman le-banim* to understand why the *Torah* repeated the *shevatim*'s names in *Shemot* when it had just recorded them all in *Bereshit* 46:8-27, the idea of *ma'aseh avot siman le-banim* can also be applied to the Holocaust. There are many similarities between *Avdut Mitzrayim* and the Holocaust, and a comparison between *Avdut Mitzrayim* and the Holocaust can teach us many valuable lessons.

The comparison begins with the many stages that led to dissolution of moral and humane treatment towards the Jews in both *Mitzrayim* and Germany. In Germany it began with inconvenient, degrading rules and a lowering of social status. It then escalated to deportation, eventually leading to public shootings, then to systematic murder and all the terrible atrocities of the Holocaust. Similarly, the persecution in Egypt developed gradually. Ramban on *Shemot* 1:10 "*hava nitchakmah lo*," "let us outsmart them," asks precisely how Pharaoh was planning to outsmart the Jews. Ramban ultimately suggests that Pharaoh carefully implemented a similar sequence of events to the one mentioned above. Pharaoh purposefully put his plan to enslave the Jews into action in small justifiable pieces, so as not to create dissention from both the *Mitzrim* and the Jews. The Ramban explains that Pharaoh could not simply suggest that the *Mitzrim* kill all the Jews, because such a decree would never have been upheld. Because an earlier Pharaoh welcomed the Jews originally, if the current Pharaoh had made a decree to kill them, many Egyptians would not have accepted it. In addition, the *Mitzrim* would not simply allow genocide to occur in their land and certainly would not participate. Finally, Pharaoh knew that the Jews would not stand by and allow themselves to be killed. They would surely fight back to save their lives.

For these reasons Pharaoh decided to devise a strategy to gradually implement his plan. Therefore he began with private taxes on the



individual, and made each Jew work a little more, under the supervision of "sarei missim." A labor tax was common for foreigners at the time. Pharaoh then intensified these taxes until the work became backbreaking labor, which we see in *pesukim* 13-14, "avodat perech." Next, Pharaoh began killing the Jews. Pharaoh initially acted in secret; he asked two midwives to kill any male child born to the Jews. The last step was full-scale genocide; Pharaoh decreed that all Jewish male babies must be thrown into the river (*pasuk* 22). Both Pharaoh in *Mitzrayim* and Hitler in Germany successfully desensitized their nations and the Jews, to delude them about the true intentions of their decrees.

Unfortunately, there were many people who followed the example of these disturbed leaders. Rambam, in his *Hilchot Teshuvah* 6:5, discusses why the *Mitzrim* were punished for their enslavement of the Jews. If *HaShem* decreed that the Jews would be enslaved in the *brit bein ha-betarim*, then the *Mitzrim* were merely fulfilling *HaShem's* word by enslaving the Jews. Rambam answers that although *HaShem* decreed that the Jews would be enslaved, He did not specify by whom. The fact that the *Mitzrim* were the perpetrators was their own immoral choice. Rambam believes that this decision and the actions it entailed were the reason that the *Mitzrim* were punished. Rambam goes even as far as to say that the *Mitzrim* were not only punished as a nation that enslaved the Jews, but also individually. Every *Mitzri* had the opportunity not to participate and to possibly even stop the immoral behavior. Anyone who did this was not punished. The same personal, immoral, decisions can be seen among the Germans. No German soldier was ever forced to kill a Jew; it was a decision he made. Unfortunately, Germany as a nation and as individuals made the same incorrect decisions as the *Mitzrim*.

Although the Egyptians and Germans may have felt superior to the Jews, especially in refinement and morals, they were sorely mistaken. In fact, it was exactly the opposite. The Germans and *Mitzrim* were bystanders. They watched the atrocities of Pharaoh and Hitler, even if they were not personally involved in committing them. The Netziv explains that when Moshe saw the *Mitzri* beating the Jew, Moshe looked before taking action, and "va-ya'ar ki ein ish" (*Shemot* 2:12). According to the Netziv, this means there was no policeman or soldier or any *Mitzri* willing to intervene to stop the *Mitzri* who was beating the Jew. In *Mitzrayim* there were bystanders, people watching but doing nothing to save the Jew from the *Mitzri*. The Jews in both *Mitzrayim* and the Holocaust unable to defend themselves, but most Germans and *Mitzrim*, aside from the few righteous Gentiles, stood by and watched, doing nothing and allowing the atrocities to continue.

However, there were certain righteous individuals who saw through the transparent attempt to hide the true vulgar intentions of these rulers. In Germany many righteous Gentiles risked their

lives to save Jews. Certain Gentile individuals achieved incredible feats through their bravery and selflessness. Oskar Schindler, a factory owner, saved over one thousand Jews during the Holocaust by employing them, thereby keeping them out of the concentration camps. Similarly, Pharaoh's daughter bravely rescued Moshe from the Nile, had mercy on him and saved him, knowing he was a Jewish boy. "Va-tachmol alav va-tomer 'mi-yaldei ha-Ivrim zeh,'" "she took pity on him and said 'he is one of the Jewish children'" (*Shemot* 2:6). Her extreme courage to defy her father in order to save the life of this baby proves that non-Jews can and do have strong and good morals. Another example is the midwives Shifra and Puah. According to Shadal, the midwives were in fact *Mitzri* women, who, unlike many surrounding them, felt a moral responsibility to save the Jewish children Pharaoh had commanded them to murder. Shadal goes to great lengths to prove that "yira'at Elokim," fear of G-d, does not solely apply to Jews' fear and awe

of *HaShem* but can also apply to non-Jews' morals. The incredible display of moral responsibility from righteous Gentiles supports Shadal's idea that other nations can and do come to the aid of Jews at times; they do not always follow the terrible rule of their disturbed leaders.

The many comparisons between *Avdut Mitzrayim* and the Holocaust illustrate history's nature to repeat itself, making its lessons relevant and crucial. One vital lesson is the ability and responsibility of the individual to stand up for and do what it is right. Each

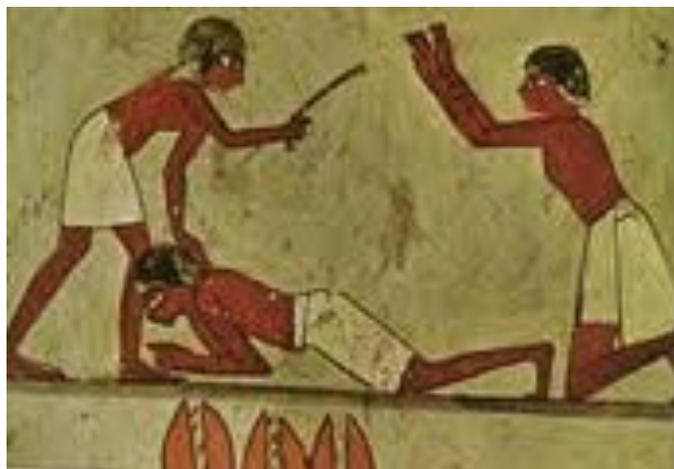
person has the free will to do as he or she pleases, and it is essential that we use this opportunity and gift to do right and to prevent or stop the wrongs in the world. Furthermore, we as a Jewish nation and as individuals must always have *emunah* in *HaShem* and His plan, even when it is impossible for us to understand. We must accept the responsibility upon ourselves to correct the previous and current wrongs committed by ourselves and others to end this time of Jewish suffering by bringing the *Geulah*.

Many ideas in this devar Torah came from Mrs. Schapiro's Tanakh class.

### The Four Cups of Wine

Kira Paley ('15) and Liat Clark ('15)

In *Shemot* 6:6-8, G-d tells Moshe the following: "Therefore say to the Children of Israel, I shall **remove you** from the oppression of Egypt, and I shall **save you** from their work, and I shall **redeem you** with an outstretched arm and with great signs, and I shall **take you** to me as a people and I shall be your Lord; and you shall know that I am the Lord your G-d, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will **bring you** in unto the land, concerning which I lifted up My hand to give it to Abraham,



to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for a heritage: I am the Lord.”

From these *pesukim*, Chazal established the requirement to drink four cups of wine at the *Seder*, to correspond to the four terms **remove you, save you, redeem you, take you**. These four terms are referred to as the “*arba leshonot shel geulah*,” the four languages of redemption. The term **bring you** is sometimes viewed as the fifth term, corresponding to the Cup of Eliyahu, or a requirement to drink a fifth cup according to R. Tarfon.

The *Torah Temimah* quotes the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Pesachim* 10): “What is the source for the four cups? R. Yochanan taught in the name of R. Benayah: They symbolize the four redemptions, as the *pasuk* says, ‘Therefore say to the Children of Israel, I shall **remove you** from the oppression of Egypt, and I shall **save you** from their work, and I shall **redeem you** with an outstretched arm and with great signs, and I shall **take you** to me as a people and I shall be your Lord.’”

Based on the *Yerushalmi*, the *Torah Temimah* challenges the widespread opinion that the cups were designated



in correspondence to the four terms, because the actual word “*leshonot*” is not found in the *Gemara*. Therefore, the four terms must refer to four different things, for if all four were meant to describe the same thing,

Chazal would only have had to designate one cup of wine in gratitude. However, these four terms represent four separate aspects of the redemption: “I shall **remove you** from the oppression of Egypt,” that G-d took *Bnei Yisrael* out from underneath the burdens of Egypt, that He lessened the workload; “and I shall **save you** from their work,” that G-d removed their workload completely, “and I shall **redeem you**,” that G-d redeemed them from Egyptian control and freed them from the bonds of slavery, and “and I shall **take you** to me as a people,” that G-d made *Bnei Yisrael* into an independent nation with Him as their Lord. The *Torah Temimah* describes these four aspects as a structure of “not only this, but even this,” that not only did *HaShem* lessen the workload, but He removed it entirely, and not only that, but He removed them from their slavery completely, etc., and for each of these aspects of the redemption *Bnei Yisrael* are obligated to thank *HaShem* through a cup of wine.

The Netziv poses the question of why Chazal designated four cups of wine, as opposed to any other food or beverage. He answers that nothing changes both the appearance and mood of a person as much as wine and therefore, wine represents change.

These four terms that G-d uses represent the gradual changes that *Bnei Yisrael* underwent, for it would be impossible for *Bnei Yisrael* to go in an instant from being slaves to being a nation worthy of receiving the Torah. Therefore there were four phases of *geulah*, which he defines similarly to the *Torah Temimah*. The four terms of redemption represent the rise in *Bnei Yisrael*’s knowledge and *kedushah* as they were saved from slavery and cruelty in Egypt.

The *Talmud Yerushalmi*, quoted above, continues with the opinion of R. Yehoshua ben Levi who says that the four cups of wine symbolize the four cups of Pharaoh, mentioned in the dream of the *sar ha-mashkim*, Pharaoh’s butler. In *Bereshit* 40:11-13 it says, “And the **cup** of Pharaoh was in my hand...and I squeezed them into the **cup** of Pharaoh...and I put the **cup** into Pharaoh’s hand...and you shall put the **cup** of Pharaoh into his hand.”

The *Kli Yakar* questions the connection between the cups of the *sar ha-mashkim* and the four cups of wine on *Pesach* and explains why Chazal would designate the *arba kosot* due to this connection. The *Kli Yakar* answers that drinking a cup of wine symbolizes salvation, as the *pasuk* states, “I will lift up the cup of salvation” (*Tehillim* 116:13). The butler’s dream told of his salvation from imprisonment. Imprisonment is one of the worst things that can happen to a person, as noted in *Yirmiyahu* 15:2, which describes four evil things that can befall a person. These four things are death, sword, famine, and captivity. In *Bava Batra* 8b, R. Yochanan says that among the list of death, death by sword, famine, and captivity, each one is progressively worse than the previous one, ending with captivity, which is the worst because the captor can do any of the other evils to his captive. When a captive is freed from jail, he is obligated to drink four cups of wine of salvation, because, he was not only saved from captivity, but from the other three evils which could have been done to him in prison as well. Thus, the four cups mentioned in the butler’s dream represent the four evils that he would be saved from when released from prison. Similarly, *Bnei Yisrael* were considered prisoners in Egypt, and because they were saved from all four evils, we are obligated to drink the four cups of salvation at the *Seder*.

The *Haggadah ve-Agadita* quotes a *midrash* that says Chazal ordained the four cups for the four types of service that were stated in *Shemot* 1:14. *Bnei Yisrael* were given hard work, had to work with mortar and brick, all the work the Egyptians gave them, and they were given cruel and extremely difficult work. Because G-d freed us from all four of these, we drink four cups of wine in gratitude.

At every *Pesach Seder*, we recite in the section of *maggid*, “In every generation, one is obligated to see himself as though he were leaving Egypt.” This sort of empathy and “placing ourselves in their shoes” is a difficult concept, and a hard requirement to fulfill. As the generations go on, we find ourselves more and more removed from these miracles that G-d performed for our ancestors in Egypt. By drinking these four cups of wine, we have the same feeling of celebration from the four bad aspects of our enslavement in Egypt, and the four stages of our *geulah*.

### The Significance of Yetzi'at Mitzrayim

Shira Sohn ('14)

*Pesach* is arguably the most important holiday for the history of the Jewish people. It commemorates *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*, the Jewish exodus from Egypt that began the journey into Jewish nationhood, leading *Bnei Yisrael* to *Matan Torah* and a forty-year journey through the desert into *Eretz Yisrael*. There is no question as to the importance of *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim* during the *Pesach seder*, a night dedicated to the remembrance of our slavery and redemption. The entire *maggid* section of the *Haggadah*, in which we recount the story of slavery and redemption, leads up to the Exodus. We are even instructed to view ourselves as if we were the ones who left *Mitzrayim* generations ago, "*Be-chol dor va-dor chayav adam lir'ot et atzmo ke-ilu hu yatza mi-Mitzrayim*," "In each generation, each individual must view himself as if he personally was liberated from Egypt."

It is clear that *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim* is important on *Pesach*, but why is it so important to remember it all other times of the year? Why are we commanded to remember it twice daily during our recitation of *Shema*? Of course it has historical significance for the Jewish nation, but how does it pertain to our daily lives as Jews?

The answer can be found by analyzing the different reasons for *Shabbat* that are given in *Shemot* and *Devarim*. In *Shemot* 20:10, the reason for *Shabbat* is explained as a remembrance that *HaShem* created the world, "Because in six days G-d made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them and He rested on the seventh day. For this reason, G-d blessed the day of *Shabbat* and sanctified it." However, in *Devarim* 5:13-14, the reason for *Shabbat* is a commemoration of the Exodus, "And you should remember that you were a servant in the Land of Egypt and G-d took you out with a strong hand and an extended arm. For this reason, G-d commanded you to observe the day of *Shabbat*." Why do the *pesukim* cite two separate reasons for *Shabbat*?

The Ramban explains that the reason for the discrepancy is that the creation of the world provides the main reason for *Shabbat*, whereas *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim* serves as a concomitant reason. *Shabbat* commemorates the idea that *HaShem* is the G-d who has the will and ability to create, as cited in *Shemot*. The *pesukim* in *Devarim*, however, come to teach us that if we ever have a doubt as to the observance of *Shabbat*, we should look to *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim* and remember the amazing miracles that G-d performed, once again proving that He is the G-d who has the will and ability to create.



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According to the Ramban's *perush*, *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim* is so important because it reminds us that G-d is one and the Creator of the world. We remember *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim* every day because it is the most foundational aspect of Judaism; it is the beginning of the Torah and the first of the *Aseret ha-Dibrot* – *HaShem* is our only G-d who possesses the power to create.

On the night of the *Seder* we remember the historical significance of *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*, but during the rest of the year we remember *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim* daily in order to remind ourselves of *HaShem*'s greatness and inspire ourselves to observe the Torah with fervor each day.

### Was Moshe a Murderer?

#### The Importance of Thinking Before Acting

Tamar Mendelson ('15)

We all know Moshe as the leader and prophet who took *Bnei Yisrael* out of Egypt. Moshe had many great qualities that we know and remember, but many of us forget that Moshe killed an Egyptian. If he killed someone, how could he really be so great? Was Moshe guilty of this murder?

In *Parshat Shemot* 2:10, when Moshe kills the Egyptian, the *pasuk* states, "He turned this way and that and saw that there was no man, so he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand." From the *pasuk* it seems that Moshe knew exactly what he was doing, and Rashi backs this idea up.

Rashi on *Shemot* 2:12 interprets the phrase "And he turned this way and that." In a previous Rashi, Rashi wrote that the Egyptian was beating the Jew because the Jew had discovered that the Egyptian had raped his wife in her own house. Rashi says that when Moshe "turned this way and that," he saw what the Egyptian did in the house and what he did in the field when he was beating the Jew to death. Rashi is pointing out that Moshe saw that the Egyptian committed rape and attempted murder and the punishment for these crimes is death. Moshe thought that killing the Egyptian was serving justice for what the Egyptian had done and also would stop him from murdering the Jew.

Rashi translates the phrase, "and saw that there was no man," to further explain why Moshe killed the Egyptian. Rashi states that Moshe saw that there was no man from the Egyptian's descendants that would convert to Judaism. Before killing the Egyptian, Moshe knew that no Jew would come from him so killing him would not prevent future Jews from being born. Rashi is pointing out that Moshe did indeed kill the Egyptian, but had a reason to do so, and made sure it would not have negative consequences on the Jews in the future.

The Chizkuni also tries to justify Moshe's actions by explaining that Moshe had a legitimate reason to kill the Egyptian. He says that the Egyptian transgressed two of the seven *mitzvot* of the sons of Noach, killing and adultery, and that Moshe did not have to warn the Egyptian as these are both punishable by death. As explained by the Chizkuni, the Egyptian committed adultery and was about to commit murder therefore Moshe was allowed to kill him.

Murdering a person is a very brutal and intense action and Moshe did that, but it was allowed because of the actions that the Egyptian committed. Moshe considered carefully what the predicament

was, and he made sure he was doing justice before he acted.

In the song *Dayenu* sung during the *Seder*, one line speaks about how thankful *Bnei Yisrael* are that G-d split the sea and gave them dry land to walk on. There is a *midrash* that says *Bnei Yisrael* saw the water, cried out, and wanted to flee. It then states that Nachshon ben Aminadav took a brave step forward and walked into the water up to his head, causing the sea to split. Nachshon realized that *Bnei Yisrael* needed someone to take the first step and do the right thing in order to believe in G-d. He thought that something needed to be done and proceeded to act, just like Moshe did when he killed the Egyptian. Nachshon did the right thing and thought about what he did before doing it, and he ultimately he was rewarded for his actions.

It is important to think about your decisions and the situations you are faced with before acting. When you are ready to act upon your decision, make sure you are correct in doing so. Never rush into anything, always think about your actions, and see how it will affect your life in a positive or negative way.

#### Moshe's and HaShem's Response to *Bnei Yisrael's* Enslavement

Tova Sklar ('15) and Moreet Levine ('15)

In *Shemot* 4:21, *HaShem* commands Moshe to approach Pharaoh and ask him to let *Bnei Yisrael* leave *Mitzrayim*. *HaShem* warns Moshe that Pharaoh will not allow them to leave, and indeed when Moshe asks Pharaoh in *Shemot* 5:1 if he can let his people leave and worship their G-d in the wilderness, not only does Pharaoh deny his request, but he also intensifies the workload of *Bnei Yisrael*. In response to Pharaoh's cruelty, Moshe says to *HaShem* in *Shemot* 5:22, "*Lamah hare'otah la-am ha-zeh? Lamah zeh shelachtani*; Why have You done bad to this nation? Why have You sent me?" This phrase is problematic for various reasons: first, what was the bad that *HaShem* was doing to His nation? Also, was Moshe actually rebuking or arguing with *HaShem's* actions? In response to Moshe's "question," *HaShem* answers in *Shemot* 6:1, "You will see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a strong hand he will send them and with a strong hand will he chase you from his land." Whether Moshe's reaction to the slavery of *Bnei Yisrael* was appropriate or improper, how was *HaShem* answering Moshe by saying to him that he will see what He will do to Pharaoh?

Many *mefarshim* attempt to resolve these questions. According to Rashi, Moshe's question to *HaShem* was inappropriate. *HaShem* responds to Moshe's inquiry of "*lamah hare'otah*" by saying, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh." Rashi writes that *HaShem* did not like the way Moshe challenged him. He compares Moshe unfavorably to Avraham, who did not question Him after he was told in *Bereishit* 22:2, "And you shall bring [Yitzchak] as a sacrifice," even though he was told beforehand, "through Yitzchak you will have many descendants." Because Moshe questioned *HaShem's* ways, *HaShem* answered him, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh," through the miracles and *makkot*, but what Moshe will not see, according to Rashi, is what will be done to the seven kings inhabiting the land of Israel when *Bnei Yisrael* conquer the land. *HaShem* punished Moshe for

speaking inappropriately by not allowing him to enter *Eretz Yisrael*.

Similarly, the Netziv writes that Moshe was questioning why Pharaoh was acting the way he naturally would by being cruel to *Bnei Yisrael*, and why *HaShem* was not performing miracles out of the ordinary, and thereby allowing bad to happen to His nation. The Netziv views Moshe as acting inappropriately toward *HaShem*. *HaShem's* response to this is, "*atah tir'eh*,"-now you will see what I shall do to Pharaoh, and you (Moshe) will recognize that what I am doing is for the good of *Bnei Yisrael* and not the bad." Because Moshe complained to *HaShem* and did not recognize that *HaShem* was *mastir panav*, hiding His face, and was not yet doing visible, open miracles, *HaShem* said to him, "Now you will see the open miracles that I will do to Pharaoh, and you will see that I am doing good for *Bnei Yisrael*."

Unlike the two *mefarshim* cited above, Rashbam writes that Moshe was not trying challenge *HaShem*. He connects the words, "*lamah hare'otah la-am ha-zeh*," "why have You done bad to this nation," to "*lamah zeh shelachtani*," "why have you sent me." Rashbam writes that Moshe was asking why *Bnei Yisrael* were suffering. If they were worthy of being enslaved because of the sins they had committed in the past and were not worthy of redemption, why did *HaShem* send him on a mission to lead the Jews out of Egypt in the first place? Moshe was not blaming *Bnei Yisrael's* misery on *HaShem*, because he recognized that *Bnei Yisrael* sinned. Rather, he was asking a logical question about his role in the redemption of the Jews.

Similarly, the Ibn Ezra comments on the words "*lamah hare'otah*" and writes that when Moshe approached Pharaoh, he was not expecting him to let *Bnei Yisrael* go but he thought Pharaoh would at least lessen *Bnei Yisrael's* workload. Pharaoh, however, made the slaves work even harder, making their lives worse than before. Moshe was therefore inquiring why *Bnei Yisrael* were treated badly.

The Ramban writes that Moshe was not acting inappropriately toward *HaShem*. He was simply asking a logical question about the duration of the process of redemption. He thought that *HaShem* would immediately begin performing miracles. Moshe was asking *HaShem*, "Why is the redemption taking so long?" Moshe was exasperated when he asked this, causing his emotions to be expressed strongly towards *HaShem*, but he was not intending to challenge Him.

Rabbenu Chananel also writes that Moshe was not challenging *HaShem*, but rather asking Him a philosophical question. After witnessing the terrible events that *Bnei Yisrael* experienced in Egypt, Moshe was asking *HaShem* through the words, "*lamah hare'otah la-am ha-*



*zeh*" why bad things happen to good people. Moshe was not blaming *HaShem* for doing bad to his nation, he was just wondering why *HaShem* was allowing Pharaoh to give *Bnei Yisrael* an intense workload. Rabbenu Chananel quotes *Shemot* 1:17 and 22, "*va-techayenah et ha-yeladim... ve-chol ha-bat techayun*," "[and the midwives] allowed the daughters to live.. .and [under Pharaoh's decree], let all the daughters live" to show that the *binyan* of *hif'il*, as in "*hare'otah*," "*va-techayenah*" and "*techayun*," is passive. Moshe was asking why *HaShem* is passive at times, why He allows (not causes) the good to suffer. Moshe was not criticizing *HaShem* for causing the workload of *Bnei Yisrael* to increase, and therefore says the word, "*hare'otah*," a passive term.

A theme that arises from most of these *mefarshim* is that Moshe recognized that *Bnei Yisrael* were suffering when they did not deserve to be. This was just the first time that the Jews were being persecuted in a land in which they were not natives. Throughout Jewish history, including today, Jews around the world have struggled and continue to struggle to maintain their Jewish identity despite persecution. Nowadays, there is so much anti-Semitism around us and so many oppressing nations that are trying to wipe the Jewish people off the face of the earth, but it is our test to not forgo our Jewish identity that has been preserved for so many years. Even though times get tough and we wonder why *HaShem* is allowing such horrible things to happen to us, we must always remember that *HaShem* has an ultimate plan for us like He did in *Mitzrayim*, and will bring the *geulah* through miracles like He did for the Jews in Egypt. Sometimes we do not always see *HaShem*'s master plan, but we have to remember that much of the time, *HaShem* is *mastir panav*, hiding, and performing hidden miracles for us every day.

*Ve-hi she-amdah* talks about the past enemies of our forefathers, and about nations throughout history that have persecuted and exiled the Jews. We say, "*ve-hi she-amdah la-avoteinu ve-lanu*," "This covenant that remained constant for our ancestors and for us." The reason that the word "*ve-lanu*," a plural term, is used is "*elah she-be-chol dor va-dor omdim aleinu le-chalotenu*" - "There are nations in every generation that try to stand up against us." There is never a year that the Jews are not being persecuted some place in the world. But despite the many nations that have stood up against us numerous times in Jewish history, "*Ve-Hakadosh Baruch Hu matzilenu me-yadam*"—*HaShem* will ultimately save us and bring the *geulah*, like He did to His nation in Egypt.

Thank you to the graduating seniors on the editorial staff and the writing staff for a wonderful year!  
Tali, Tzipporah, Tova, Shira, Julie, Daniella, Ilana, Tamar F., Tamar L., Gali, Hennie and Esther, you were competent, creative and on time!

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Thank you to Mrs. Orly Nadler, Mrs. Fran Rochwarger, Mrs. Madeline Schmuckler and Mrs. Andrea Winkler for their technical assistance.

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