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עֵלֵי דֶשֶׁה

ALEI DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"a of Gur

צמאה לך נפשי – Shabbos of Yearning

The *Tur*¹ writes: “The Shabbos preceding Pesach is called ‘Shabbos HaGadol,’ because a great miracle occurred that day.”

The question is well-known: why is the *nes* commemorated on the day of the week it occurred on, and not on the day of the month, as is usually done? The Sfas Emes discusses this at length and offers

Through the ratzon and hishtokekus that Bnei Yisrael would feel, they would be enabled to properly fulfill their two mitzvos, and be worthy of redemption.

many answers. In one place, the Sfas Emes writes that it was not coincidental that the *nes* happened on a Shabbos, because the *kedushah* of Shabbos played an important role in the *nissim* of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. This explains why the miracle

is commemorated on Shabbos. Let us explore the role that Shabbos played in *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

The Sfas Emes² cites Rashi:³ “Why was there a commandment that year to set aside a sheep four days before its *shechitah*, which does not apply to future *Korbanos Pesach*? R. Masya ben Charash would say: The pasuk states (Yechezkel 16:8), וְאָעֲבַר עֲלֶיךָ וְאָרְאָה וְהִנֵּה עִתָּךְ עֵת דְדָדִים, – *I passed by you and saw you, and behold, your time was the time of love* — the time has come to fulfill the oath I made to Avraham that I would redeem his descendants.

“But Bnei Yisrael did not have mitzvos to perform to merit redemption, as the pasuk says (ibid 7), וְאֵת עָרֹם וְעֶרְיָה, – *but you were unclothed and bare*. Therefore, Hashem gave them two mitzvos, the blood of Pesach and the blood of *milah*.”

The Sfas Emes points out that the original question seems to remain unanswered. The mitzvos of *Korban Pesach* and *milah* were given on the fourteenth of Nissan, in preparation for Bnei Yisrael’s redemption on the

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Pesach Seder

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*Shulchan Aruch*⁵ rules that at *Yachatz*, we break the middle of the three matzos, in order to recite the *Haggadah* over a broken piece, as an expression of *lechem oni*, poor man’s bread. The Makova Rebbe asked, why don’t we bring a broken piece to the table to start with? After all, a poor man does not break a whole bread into halves; all he has to start with are pieces.

*Shulchan Aruch Harav*⁶ writes that we begin with a whole matzah for *hiddur mitzvah* – to beautify the mitzvah. Others⁷ explain that breaking the matzah at *Yachatz* symbolizes *Krias Yam Suf*. If so, both allusions stand true: we use a broken matzah as *lechem oni*, but we begin with a whole matzah in order to visualize *Krias Yam Suf* by breaking it (or for *hiddur mitzvah*).

On a simple level, the question does not begin. Suppose one were to break the middle matzah before the *Seder* begins. He probably has other unbroken matzos in his house, and obviously, that doesn’t make a difference at the *Seder* table. In the same way, the wholeness of the matzah

5 O.C. 473:6

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6 458:12

7 *Da’as Zekeinim* and *Orchos Chaim* (*Seder Leil Pesach*)

1 O.C. 430

2 4638, 5640

3 Shemos 12:6

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fifteenth. Why did they need to set aside the sheep four days earlier?

The Sfas Emes explains that in the days leading to *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, Bnei Yisrael desperately needed the *zechuyos* their two mitzvos would provide them. Yet because of the spiritual bondage they were in, lowered into the forty-ninth *sha'ar* of *tumah*, they were incapable of fulfilling Hashem's mitzvos fully and *l'shem Shamayim*. As the *Zohar hakadosh* states, one bound up in the *Sitra Achra* is not able to take on *Malchus Shamayim* and the yoke of mitzvos. This was their conundrum: they could not be redeemed from servitude without fulfilling the mitzvos, but they couldn't fulfill the mitzvos because of their servitude.

This is why Hashem commanded them to take their sheep four days early. These would be days of preparation and anticipation for the mitzvah of *Korban Pesach*. Through the *ratzon* and *hishtokekus* that Bnei Yisrael would feel, they would be enabled to properly fulfill their two mitzvos, and be worthy of redemption.

Why couldn't they await the *Korban Pesach* for four days without preparing the sheep? There is no comparison between a longing in one's heart and a longing expressed through *mesirus nefesh*. When Bnei Yisrael tied the sheep to their bedposts, risking the wrath of their Egyptian neighbors, they ignited a fire of yearning in their hearts. They would now count down the moments until they could finally fulfill Hashem's mitzvah. It was

this enthusiasm for fulfilling Hashem's word that broke through the *tumah* and cleansed their hearts so they could perform the mitzvos and be redeemed.

The day Bnei Yisrael set aside their sheep was Shabbos. Why Shabbos? At its root, Shabbos is a day of longing to draw close to Hashem; a day of *me'ein Olam Haba*. It was the power of Shabbos that ignited the hearts of Bnei Yisrael to yearning for Hashem's mitzvos. And this is what Shabbos Hagadol presents us: a preparation for the *heilige* days of Pesach, by igniting a *hishtokekus* inside us as we prepare to leave bondage for freedom and darkness for a great light.

Rashi cites R. Masya ben Charash, who teaches us that the sheep were to be taken four days early to earn merit for redemption – by igniting a longing in the hearts of Bnei Yisrael. R. Masya ben Charash was himself a prime example of this concept, the true desire to disconnect from evil and remain connected to good only. The Midrash⁴ relates that the Satan once received permission to test R. Masya ben Charash. Wherever R. Masya turned, he was faced with a terrible *nisayon* in *shemiras einayim*. Fearing he would fall prey to the *yetzer hara* and sin, R. Masya placed burning hot nails into his eyes, blinding himself. Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded the *malach* Refael to heal R. Masya. R. Masya told Refael, "Leave me be; what was, was." Only once Hashem promised R. Masya that he would not be subject to the *yetzer hara* did he agree to be healed.

Citing R. Masya's words, Rashi states, "R. Masya ben Charash would say..." Why doesn't Rashi simply say "R. Masya said"?

Chazal occasionally attribute an oft-repeated adage of a *chacham*, saying, *הוא היה אומר* – *he would say*, or *he was this saying*. Rashi means that R. Masya's teaching about the power of yearning for *ruchniyus* – which led to Bnei Yisrael's redemption from Mitzrayim – is R. Masya's *הוא היה אומר* he *was* this saying. His own life story shows what true longing for closeness to Hashem means, and that it eventually leads to true freedom, which is freedom from the *yetzer hara*.

People often say and feel that they want to be rid of their *yetzer hara* and fulfill only the *ratzon Hashem*. Yet at the same time, these people maintain other desires, as well. That won't work. By contrast, R. Masya ben Charash had only one desire, which overrode every other consideration in his life. Every part of his body was consecrated toward that goal of drawing near to Hashem and avoiding evil. And in the end, he was rid of his *yetzer hara*.

The force of *hishtokekus*, of thirst to fulfill Hashem's word, stands at the foundation of the Jewish nation. It is how we were redeemed from Mitzrayim, and it is how we must prepare to relive that as Pesach draws near – with a deep yearning that this *yom tov*, finally, we will merit to eat from the *Korban Pesach*.

(בנאות דשא – צו - שבת הגדול, יו"ט פסח ושש"פ תשפ"ג)

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makes no difference before *Maggid*; all that matters is that while reciting the *Haggadah* and making the *berachah* on the matzah, it should be a broken matzah.

Nonetheless, there is a deep lesson here. If we would begin the *Seder* with a broken matzah, not only would the matzah symbolize poverty, but we ourselves would be poor. If a person feels that he has *nebach*, only a broken piece, he lacks proper *bitachon*. Instead, we bring a whole matzah to the table, to show that we are wealthy in *emunah*. We believe and know that Hashem can send His salvation in whole. And although we can only keep a

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broken matzah in the end, that’s all right with us, since that is Hashem’s will.

(עברא דדשא, פסח, קנז)



The *Haggadah* dictates our reaction to the *rasha*’s question: ואך אתה הקהה את

שיני – *You, too, blunt his teeth*. Why does our response relate to his teeth?⁸

The Gemara (Shabbos 111a) states that one who has a toothache should not drink vinegar. The Gemara⁹ concludes that this refers to juice of unripe grapes. On actual wine, one recites a special *berachah*, *borei pri hagafen*, because the wine is an improvement from its original form as grapes.

It is said of a *chassan* and *kallah*, ענבי הגפן – *grapes of the vine with grapes of the vine*. This is the start of a *Yiddishe* home. As children grow and follow in their path, it is reminiscent of wine – produced from ripe grapes and grown richer. But when a son does not follow in the proper way, he is like vinegar of unripe grapes, which is harmful to the teeth. Thus, our reaction to the *rasha* is, *blunt his teeth*.

Let us explain in another way. It is told that one Pesach, as the Yid Hakadosh sat at the *Seder* of his Rebbe, the Chozeh of Lublin, his teeth fell out – all but one. He initially referred to this last remaining tooth as a *rasha*, since it did not join its compatriots and fall out. But then he reconsidered; if this tooth, too, had fallen out, how could he eat the *afikoman*? So, it wasn’t a *rasha* after all. But an actual *rasha*, who declines to eat the matzah – what does *he* need teeth for? So, *blunt his teeth*.

*Midrash Talpiyos*¹⁰ states that Jews have thirty-two teeth, while non-Jews have thirty-three. Perhaps this is another

reason to focus our reaction on the *rasha*’s teeth: having rejected all that *Yiddishkeit* stands for, he has no need for this visible differentiation between Jew and non-Jew. Thus, *blunt his teeth*.

Yet another approach: R. Chaim Vital¹¹ explains the pasuk in Tehillim (3:8), כִּי הִכִּיתָ אֶת כָּל אֹיְבֵי לְחַי, שִׁנַּי רָשָׁעִים שִׁבְרָתָ – *for You struck all my enemies on the cheek; You broke the teeth of the wicked*, as referring to two different types of blows. *You struck all my enemies on the cheek* refers to external blows, since the most exposed part of a person’s body is his cheeks. *You broke the teeth of the wicked* refers to inward strikes, since the most naturally concealed body part is the teeth.

The Imrei Emes explained that the *rasha* of the Pesach *Seder* is one who masquerades as a *tzaddik*. Indeed, the question he poses is nearly identical to the *chacham*’s. But inside, he is rotten. This is why we address him in the third person: why we address him in the third person: אִילוּ הָיָה שָׁם לֹא הָיָה נִגְאָל – *If he had been there, he would not have been redeemed*. We don’t want to tell him the message directly, since he is playing the part of a *tzaddik*. So we just put the message out there; whomever it pertains to will hear it.

The *rasha* is a hidden one – just as teeth are hidden. That is why we *blunt his teeth*.

One last approach: The *rasha*’s question is מַה הָעֲבוּדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם – *Why must you perform all these rituals?* We still hear this refrain today: *I’m religious at heart; what’s the need for minutiae of halachah?* We respond to the *rasha*: *If he had been*

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8 See *Pnei Menachem*, Shemos pp. 10 and 25

9 As explained by Rashi

10 No. 1, *Anaf Eivarim*

11 *Eitz Hadaas Tov*

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there, he would not have been redeemed. Had he been there, and not sprinkled his doorpost with blood, because after all, Hashem knows what's in his heart – he would have fallen to the destroying angel.

The Mishnah (Bechoros 7:5) states that a person missing teeth is considered blemished only because of *maris ayin*, since it appears like a blemish. But the *rasha* isn't concerned with appearances; as he claims, it's what's inside the heart that counts to him. To him, missing teeth isn't a blemish at all. So we *blunt his teeth*.

(עברא דדשא, פסח, כה-כו)



אילו הוציאנו ממצרים ולא עשה בהם שפטים דיינו – *Had Hashem taken us out of Mitzrayim but not inflicted judgments upon them, it would have been enough for us.*

Why is *Dayeinu* phrased in the negative? Why not in the positive, in the manner it concludes: על אחת כמה וכמה. – *All the more so, since He took us out of Mitzrayim, and inflicted judgements upon them...*

Furthermore, why would it have been enough if Hashem had “split the sea for us but did not allow us to cross it on dry land” or “brought us near to Har Sinai but did not give us the Torah”? Why would that have sufficed for us?

The answer is that we do not mean that these things would have filled our needs; they certainly would not have. We mean that we never have any complaints at all,

no matter what Hashem chooses to serve us. We are only and eternally grateful. Had Hashem brought us to Har Sinai for no apparent reason, that would obviously have been the right thing for us.

When this kind of *emunah* becomes ingrained in a Yid, he no longer has any questions. He is thankful for everything that occurs to him, since it is all in Hashem's hand, and Hashem knows best.

(עברא דדשא, פסח, קכג)



בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו – *In every single generation a person must see himself as if he left Mitzrayim.*

The *mefarshim* write that wherever Chazal employ the term חייב, it is an obligation to the point of *mesirus nefesh*. What *mesirus nefesh* could be called for in envisioning oneself leaving Mitzrayim?

Furthermore, “חייב” implies an ongoing responsibility, from which one is never exempted. How is that so in this case?

Sefarim hakedoshim teach that “seeing oneself leaving Mitzrayim” is not limited to the actual land of Egypt. It means leaving one's personal Mitzrayim – his perceived *meitzarim* (confines), which are the limitations placed upon him by his *yetzer hara*. Each year on Seder night one must renew his fight to free himself from the shackles of the *yetzer hara* and elevate himself above the mire of this world. This

is no easy task. It means giving up all one's desires to Hashem. This is certainly a call for *mesirus nefesh* – lifelong.

(עברא דדשא, פסח, קלו)



In *Ha'elef Lecha Shlomo*,¹² R. Shlomo Kluger writes that if one ate matzah without reciting a *berachah*, he did not fulfill his obligation, since it is a *mitzvah haba'ah b'aveirah* (a *mitzvah* performed through an *aveirah*). This is difficult to understand. The *mitzvah* of eating matzah was not performed by not making a *berachah*, only the person did not fulfill the *mitzvah* of making a *berachah* before he ate the matzah.

But from a standpoint of *avodah*, it is certainly true. The objective of eating matzah is to remember Hashem and draw near to Him and become holy. If a person forgets to make a *berachah* on the matzah, he has missed the whole point, and has not fulfilled the *mitzvah*.

(עברא דדשא, פסח, נז)



The Mishnah (Pesachim 39a) states that one must eat a *k'zayis* of *maror*. According to the Rosh's explanation,¹³ the actual obligation of *maror* can be satisfied with any amount (*kol shehu*), but one must eat a *k'zayis* since the *berachah* is on eating *maror*, על אכילת מרור, and the term *achilah* implies a *k'zayis*.¹⁴

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12 No. 321

13 Pesachim 10:25

14 See *Terumas Hadeshen, Kesavim* 245

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Sha'agas Aryeh contends that the text of a *berachah* never defines the formula of the mitzvah; the reverse is true. If the mitzvah of *maror* required a *kol shehu*, the *berachah* would have been על מצות מרור (on the mitzvah of *maror*), without mention of *achilah*.

In a context of *avodah*, the Rosh may be well understood. True, the mitzvah only calls for the smallest amount of *maror*. But when a person begins to recite the *berachah* – *Blessed are You, Hashem, Our G-d, King of the world* – he begins to comprehend that all the “*maror*” of this world – all its bitter experiences in *ruchniyus* and *gashmiyus* – are hand-picked for us by Hashem. This realization empowers the person to withstand even a “*k'zayis*” – a sizeable serving – of these bitter herbs. We don't ask Hashem for hardships, but they are a fact of life in this world. Chazal instituted the *berachah* as על אכילת מרור, implying a *k'zayis*, to point out to us the lesson to be learned from the *berachah* – that by recalling that Hashem is in charge, a person can endure even a *k'zayis* of *maror*.

(עברא דדשא, פסח, צד)



Klal Yisrael has a *minhag* to allow one's children to steal the *afikoman* at the *Seder*. What is the reason for this?

A thief sometimes breaks into a home by digging a tunnel, as described in the Torah (Shemos 22:1), אם בִּמְחֹתְרֵת יִמְצָא הַגֵּנֵב,

– *If the thief is discovered while tunneling in. Teshuvah* can also be accomplished through tunneling, as with King Menashe. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 103a) tells that Hashem dug a tunnel in the Heavens to accept Menashe's *teshuvah*, to bypass *Middas HaDin*, which was preventing his *teshuvah* from being accepted.

The Midrash,¹⁵ too, tells of a tunnel of *teshuvah*, in the form of a *mashal*:

A group of prisoners secretly bored a tunnel from their cell and escaped to freedom. Only one prisoner remained behind. When the prison guard beheld the sight, he struck the remaining prisoner and yelled at him, “Fool! The tunnel is dug before you; why didn't you run away?” Hashem digs a tunnel of *teshuvah* for us, and our job is to make our escape.

Our children are allowed to steal the *afikoman* to remind us that tonight is a night of *teshuvah*, when we can – and must – tunnel our way to true freedom.

Let us explore another approach. The distinction between a *gazlan* and a *ganav* is that the *gazlan* steals in broad daylight, while the *ganav* takes care to hide his crime. The Gemara (Bava Kama 79b) states that a *ganav* is worse, since he is afraid of man but not of Hashem; he acts as if *k'veyachol* Hashem does not see.

Pesach night is when Yaakov Avinu received the *berachos*, about which is written (Bereishis 27:27), וַיִּרַח אֶת רִיחַ בְּגָדָיו – *he smelled the fragrance of his garments*. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 37a) reads בגדיו as

בוגדיו, *his traitors*. This means that even the sinful of Klal Yisrael give pleasure to Hashem, Who *k'veyachol* turns His eye from their low state and takes note of their mitzvos.

On this night of Pesach our children act as *ganavim*, to show that Hashem takes pleasure in us and “doesn't see” our low *madreigah*.

(עברא דדשא, פסח, לו)



The Poskim¹⁶ write that it is customary to place the *afikoman* in a cloth, to commemorate that when we left Mitzrayim, מִשְׁאֲרֵתָם צָרְרֵת בְּשִׁמְלֹתָם, על שְׂכָמָם – *their leftover (matzah and maror¹⁷) was bound up in their garments upon their shoulders* (Shemos 12:34).

So too, we must place the spiritual lights of this *yom tov* into packages, so that we can access them throughout the year; we mustn't leave Pesach empty-handed.

The Poskim also write that some have the custom to carry the *afikoman* on their shoulders, since we left Mitzrayim carrying the matzah on our shoulders. A shoulder symbolizes physical work, as is written (Bamidbar 7:9), בְּכַתֵּף יִשָּׂאוּ – *they carried on the shoulder*. The matzah is held on the shoulder to show that we must not suffice with nice *vertlach*; the *emunah* we imbibe at the *Seder* must drive real resolutions toward positive action.

(עברא דדשא, פסח, קפב)

15 *Koheles Rabbah* 7:32

16 *O.C.* 473:6; see *Shulchan Aruch Harav, se'if* 35, and *Mishnah Berurah* no. 59

17 *Rashi*

Shabbos Chol Hamoed

Flee Like a Gazelle or a Young Deer

On the first day(s) of Pesach and on Shabbos Chol Hamoed we recite the *piyyut* דודי ברח,¹⁸ in Shacharis. These *piyyutim* are based on the *pasuk* in Shir Hashirim, ברח דודי ודמה לך לצבי או לעופר האילים על הרי בשמים – *Flee, my Beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young deer on the fragrant mountains.*

There is a difference between the *piyyutim*. On the first day of Yom Tov the *piyyut* speaks of the suffering that the Jews endured in *galus*, and what the nations have wrought upon them, and we plead for the *geulah*. On Shabbos Chol Hamoed the *piyyut* focuses on what we have wrought — how much we have sinned, and how we need to do *teshuvah*.

This is the natural order. The *yom tov* of Pesach is a day of *geulah*, and Shabbos is a day of *teshuvah*, as in the acronym ש'בת ב'ו תשוב, cited in *seforim hakedoshim*.¹⁹

The *pasuk* in Shir Hashirim also compares Hashem, the Beloved, to a gazelle or deer: דומה דודי לצבי או לעופר האילים הנה זה עומד אחר כתלנו משגיח מן החלונות מציץ מן החרכים – *My Beloved is like a gazelle or a young deer; behold He stands behind our wall, looking through the windows, peering through the crevices.* The *Zohar hakadosh*²⁰ explains the analogy to a deer: “R. Shimon said: It is the desire of the Jewish people that Hakadosh Baruch Hu not walk, not go far, but flee like a gazelle or a young deer. Why? R. Shimon explained: There is no other animal in the world which flees like a gazelle or young deer. When it flees, it bounds forth a bit, and then glances back, and so it goes; he [bounds forth and] turns his head to

glance back.²¹ Yisrael says: Ribbono shel Olam, if we cause that You leave us, may it be Your will that you will flee as a gazelle or young deer, who runs and then looks back to the place he left.”

Klal Yisrael asks Hashem: “We have sinned, and You have, distanced Yourself from us. Please don't go too far away. Turn back and see if we are still chasing You away, or perhaps we are repentant, and wish to do *teshuvah* and be with You.”

R. Yitzchak of Neshchiz²² explains in the name of his father, the holy R. Mordechai, that the meaning of the rest of the *pasuk* follows this idea of the *Zohar hakadosh*. הנה זה עומד אחר כתלנו – זה refers to Hashem, as He is called in the *Shiras Hayam*: ז'ה א-לי 'ואנוהו'. There, Hashem is recognized by the young children and the lowest members of society; that is the pinnacle of *geulah* and closeness to Hashem. Now we are in *galus*, we are distant from Hashem. There is a wall constructed of our *aveiros*, a barrier between us. Still, the same זה, the same Hashem who was revealed to us at *Krias Yam Suf*, like a gazelle, keeps turning back to look; through the window, through the crevices.

We can't always tell that He is turning back like a deer, but, as the Sfas Emes²³ explained, even in *galus* there are always windows and crevices. The windows are the *tzaddikim*. Windows are two-directional; the *tzaddikim* recognize that Hashem is looking back at us. The crevices are one-directional. Regular Jews don't recognize it, but Hashem is peering at them no less. He looks back and

waits to see if we are ready to do *teshuvah*, if we are no longer chasing Him away.

Rivkah Imeinu instructed her son Yaakov to bring two good goats, so she could prepare them, כאשר אהב – *as he loves* (Bereishis 27:9). Rashi comments: “As he loves – since the taste of goat is similar to the taste of gazelle.” The commentators attempt to understand this cryptic comment. Firstly, why is gazelle the standard; who mentioned gazelle? Secondly, Rashi just finished telling us, quoting *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer*,²⁴ that the two goats were for the *Korban Pesach* and the *Korban Chagigah*. Gazelle is not a species which can be brought as a *korban*, so what is the parallel being drawn between the goats and the gazelle?

Based on the *Zohar hakadosh* we learned, we can understand the connection. When Yaakov entered his father's room, the scent of Gan Eden entered with him.²⁵ The *pasuk* says that Yitzchak smelled the scent: וירח את ריח בגדיו. בגדיו, 'his clothing,' can also be read to mean 'his rebels.' That is, as the Gemara (Sanhedrin 37a) tells us, Yitzchak perceived the scent of the rebellious among Yaakov's descendants. The scent of Gan Eden emanated from those rebellious Jews who, after descending to the lowest depths, elevated themselves with *teshuvah* and merited to sanctify Hashem's name.

That is what Rashi alludes to, telling us that the taste of goat is comparable to that of gazelle. “There is nothing which smells worse than freshly skinned goat hide,”²⁶ which Yaakov wore on his neck. Still, Yitzchak smelled the scent of Gan Eden,

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18 At the *tishen* of *Rabboseinu Hakedoshim* of Gur they would sing this *piyyut*.

19 *Sidduro shel Shabbos* 1:1:4:11.

20 Shemos 14a.

21 Since he is faster than his predator, he has the luxury of checking if he is still being chased.

22 *Toldos Yitzchok*, Likutim s.v. דומה.

23 Pesach 5643 s.v. בפסוק בשה"ש.

24 32.

25 *Bereishis Rabbah* 65:22.

26 *Ibid*.

Shabbos Chol Hamoed Flee Like a Gazelle or a Young Deer

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because even when there are putrid sins and the stench of rebellion (symbolized by the goat), Hashem is still looking back at us, waiting for us, like a gazelle. And so even on the first day of Pesach we recite the *piyyut*: ברח דודי ודמה לך לצבי.

The *pasuk* (Shemos 12:43, 48) limits the eating of the *Korban Pesach* to those who are worthy: בו לא יאכל – anyone who is foreign [in his actions]²⁷ shall not eat it, כל בו ערל לא יאכל – anyone who is uncircumcised shall not eat it. The Gemara (Pesachim 28b, 120a) learns from this: “He shall not eat it, but he

shall eat matzah and *maror*.” Tosafos ask, isn't it obvious that they are obligated in the mitzvos of matzah and *maror*?

The answer goes beyond the famous teaching of the Gra²⁸ that even the most egregious sinners will need to give an accounting for every mitzvah no matter how small, that they failed to complete. The lesson of the Gemara is that by eating matzah and *maror* even the greatest sinner will be awakened to *teshuvah*. Even today, when we unfortunately do not have the *Korban Pesach*, we can also benefit from

eating the matzah and *maror* to inspire us to do *teshuvah*.

May Hashem help us awaken within ourselves that desire for *teshuvah*. True, we have sinned, as we describe in the ברח דודי of Shabbos Chol Hamoed, but in whatever situation we are in, we are attracted to goodness, to come closer to Hashem who looks back at us, through the windows or through the crevices, and awaits our *teshuvah*.

(שבת חוהמ"פ תשפ"ג, ס"ג מאמר א')

27 I.e., a Jew who has turned to foreign gods.

28 See *Even Sheleimah* 8 footnote 20, 5 footnote 3. See also Rambam, *Iggeres Teiman*, cited in *Biur Halachah* 199 s.v. מזמין.

Shevi'i shel Pesach Navigating the Sea

The *piyyut* of R. Yehudah Halevi, the Kuzari, recited on *Shevi'i* (and *Acharon*) *shel Pesach* begins יום ליבשה נהפכו מצולים – the day that to dry land the deep waters turned. “The day” refers to *Shevi'i shel Pesach*, on that day ‘to dry land, the sea-depths turned.’ This is the version printed in all the *siddurim*. However there is another version, which is found in early editions of the Magen Avraham,²⁹ that goes: ים ליבשה נהפכו מצולים – the sea, to dry land the deep waters turned. Some claim that the former version is recited on *Shevi'i shel Pesach*, while the latter version is sung at a *bris milah*.³⁰

The latter version seems redundant, as the words ים and מצולים both refer to the sea. According to Radak (Yeshayahu 11:9) the term ים refers not to the water, but to the seabed; in that case, there is no redundancy, since ים refers to the seabed and מצולים refers to the water itself. The *piyyut* would mean:

The seabed turned to dry land where the deep waters had been. The way we have explained the term ים,³¹ it refers to the seabed along with its waters; in that case it still can read, as above: *The seabed of water turned to dry land, where the deep waters had been.*

Let us explain it in a manner that can inform our *avodas Hashem*. Chazal say that when Hashem split the Yam Suf, He split all the waters of the world along with it.³² Chazal say that even waters in cisterns or in pitchers became split.³³ The simple reason for this was to show the *nes* to the entire world. There is a deeper lesson here. ים is this world, this physical existence. The Maharsha³⁴ explains the *pasuk* כים והרשעים – the wicked are like a spewing sea – the actions of the wicked and the powerful forces of *gashmiyus* are referred to as the ים. Just as the sea constantly threatens to flood the dry land, heaving wave after massive wave

onto the beaches, so the heaving volume of physicality and wickedness constantly threaten to deluge the world.

When Chazal mention two times that the world's sins reached a dangerous level, the resulting calamity was that the oceans rose and flooded the world. This is because the sinful actions of the people chiseled away at the natural boundary which contains the sea; אשר שמתי חול גבול לים – I placed the sand as the border of the sea (Yirmiyahu 5:22).

At the time of *Krias Yam Suf*, the ים of the entire world split. All of the physical world, all of the desires and wickedness represented by the sea – became split. In other words, when Bnei Yisrael crossed the sea they were able to remain above all of that ים, they broke the waves of physicality, and were thereby *zocheh* to the heretofore unparalleled revelations of the Shechinah at the Yam Suf.

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29 O.C. 490:6; 584:7; and 621:1.

30 See *Pri Megadim* 490 loc. cit., and 584 loc. cit. The common custom in Europe, still maintained in some *kehillos*, was to recite this *piyyut* during the *berachah* of *Geulah* on any Shabbos when there was a *bris milah* in *shul*.

31 See *Ibra Dedasha – Pesach*, footnote on p. 102.

32 *Shemos Rabbah* 21:6.

33 *Mechilta* Beshalach, 4, וי'.

34 *Sotah* 5a, *Bava Basra* 7b.

Shevi'i shel Pesach Navigating the Sea

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The *pasuk* (Shemos 14:27) states, וינער ה' את מצרים בתוך הים – *Hashem shook the Egyptians within the sea*. Rashi explains, quoting the Mechilta, that the verb וינער here is the same verb used for stirring a pot. כאדם המנער. הקדירה והופך העליון למטה והתחתון למעלה. When stirring a pot, one churns the contents, bringing whatever is on the bottom to the top and whatever is on the top to the bottom.

Perhaps the Mechilta alludes to the famous Gemara in Pesachim (50a): R. Yosef the son of R. Yehoshua ben Levi became sick, and perished. Then he returned to life, and his father asked him what he had seen in his glimpse of the next world. He said עולם הפוך עלינו – *I saw an inverted world*; ראיתי עלינוים למטה – *the elites were on the bottom*,

A person is put on this world, a place where the pleasant and good come together with the foul and bad, *gashmiyus* and *ruchniyus*. Our job is to mix them so well that the *gashmiyus* is neutralized, nullified, and becomes part of the good

and the lowest were on top.” We learn from this statement that the higher world can be described as an inverted world; when we arrive in the next world, everything we will learn there can be encapsulated in these two words, עולם הפוך. This does not mean only that

people who are considered important here are considered insignificant there, and vice versa. The inversion also refers to people's actions. When the truth is revealed without darkness and without distortion, we discover that actions we considered insignificant are actually of tremendous significance, and things we thought were great and important become revealed as no more than a paper tiger. The description 'inverted world' really captures the essence of the next world, as it is the diametric opposite of this world.

We can see a connection to the aforementioned Mechilta on the *pasuk*, וינער ה' את מצרים בתוך הים. When all the waters of the world were split and the Egyptians drowned in the sea, the עולם of this world was also split. There was a moment in time when the falsehoods of this world, all of the screens of physicality that distort and conceal the truth, were sliced open. Even without a trip to the next world, we were able to see the unadulterated truth. We saw what is really up and what is really down. That is what happened when 'all of the waters split,' and even more so, when Hashem gave everything a good stir, showing us what is up and what is down, what is important and what is not.

This *pasuk* holds another allusion with a lesson for us. The Gemara (Chullin 108b-109a) mentions that stirring a pot helps to effect *bittul b'rov* (nullification of prohibited matter mixed into permitted matter). In Parshas Ki Sisa we are told that the Ketores was to be prepared 'ממולח' (Shemos 30:35), which Rashi translates, based on the Targum, as 'mixed.' The Sfas Emes³⁵ explains that as the Ketores contains *chelbenah* which has a foul smell,³⁶ it was necessary to mix the Ketores, thereby neutralizing the negative property of the *chelbenah*.

A person is put on this world, a place where the pleasant and good come together with the foul and bad, *gashmiyus* and *ruchniyus*. Our job is to mix them so well that the *gashmiyus* is neutralized, nullified, and becomes part of the good. The same is true within the person himself; there is *gashmiyus* and *ruchniyus*. His job is to mix them until they are 'ממולח', nullified. וינער, the way to get rid of the impurities of Mitzrayim is to mix the physicality within an overwhelming majority of *ruchniyus* so that it becomes *bateil*.³⁷

With this understanding, we can see the continuation of Rashi in a new light. Rashi writes that the verb ממולח is related to the noun מלח, a sailor. The reason sailors are called מלחים is because they churn the water when propelling the ship with oars.³⁸ Rashi is hinting to this idea. The world is a sea, a vast עולם, and the way to navigate through this treacherous sea is to churn and mix and nullify the *chelbenah* with an overwhelming measure of *yiras Shamayim*. During *Krias Yam Suf*, Bnei Yisrael were able to turn the entire world – the עולם upside down, nullifying the bad, and abandoning the distorted vision of the masses of the world. They were able to see with clarity what is important and what is not, what is great and what is insignificant.

And perhaps this is how to read the words of the *piyyut*, — ים ליבשה נהפכו מצולים — when the deep waters turned to dry land, there was also the great sea of this world that became nullified at the time of *Krias Yam Suf*.

May Hashem help us to extend and draw from the intense power of *Shevi'i shel Pesach* throughout the year.

(שביעי של פסח תשפ"ג, מאמר א)

35 *Likutim*, Ki Sisa.

38 ממלח - כתרגומו מעורב, שיערב שחיקתו יפה יפה זה עם זה. ואומר אני שדומה לו (יונה א, ה) וייראו המלחים, (יחזקאל כז, כז) מלחין וחובלין, על שם שמהפכין את המים במשותט, כשמנהיגים את הספינה, כאדם המהפך בכף ביצים טרופות לערבן עם המים, וכל דבר שהאדם רוצה לערב יפה יפה, מהפכו באצבע או בבזך.

36 See *Kerisos* 6b.

37 See *Sfas Emes* Re'eh 5656.

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