

# VAYOMER ELIYAHU

Inspiration and Encouragement on Topics of Trust and Faith in Hashem Yisborach  
Based on the Weekly Torah Portion

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In English



בס"ד

## One Must View Himself as If He Literally Leaves Mitzrayim on the Night of the Seder!

### » Two Reasons for Eating Matzoh

We find two reasons for the mitzvah of eating matzoh on Pesach which seem to contradict each other.

The Gemara in Pesachim (115B) asks why matzoh is called “lechem oni”. The Gemara offers two answers. The second reason is that “lechem oni” translates as “poor man’s bread”. Matzoh is called the bread of a poor man because just as a poor man eats only a small amount of his bread at one time, so too, we break the matzoh into pieces.

We see from this Gemara that we eat the matzoh as a remembrance of the poverty and affliction that we suffered in Egypt. This is as we recite at the beginning of the Hagadah: “This is the poor man’s bread that our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt...”

Later in the Hagadah we read that Rabban Gamliel would say (Pesachim ibid) that anyone who does not say three things on Pesach does not fulfill his obligation. These three things are: Pesach, matzoh and maror. Why do we eat matzoh? Because the dough of our fathers didn’t have enough time to leaven before Hashem redeemed them. We see from here that the main reason we eat matzoh is a commemoration of the freedom we experienced upon leaving Egypt.

The two reasons for eating matzoh seem to contradict each other. Is the reason to commemorate the suffering in Egypt or to commemorate the freedom from Egypt?

We may also ask a question on the words of Rabban Gamliel that we eat matzoh because the dough of didn’t have time to rise. We find that while still in Egypt, Hashem commanded us to eat matzoh (Bamidbor 9:11). Thus, it seems that the reason our forefathers ate matzoh was because Hashem had commanded them to do so before the redemption, not because their dough didn’t have time to rise.

### » The Reason for the Mitzvah of Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim!

The Mashgiach Rav Yeruchim Levovitz zt”l

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יוסף בן שמואל

states in his Sefer Da’as Chochmah (Chelek Aleph, page 124) that the purpose of relating the story of the exodus and the entire Pesach Seder is in order for one to view himself as if he left Egypt. He explains that the command is not merely to relate the story that happened to a past generation; rather, it is for each individual must internalize the message within himself until he is able to undergo his personal exodus from Egypt and to feel, as the Hagadah tells us, that “if He hadn’t taken us up from Egypt, we and our children and our children’s children would still be in bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt.”

Everyone must feel his personal connection to the bondage. Everyone must feel that he personally was redeemed from Egypt – for if the redemption had not occurred, he too would still be a slave in Egypt. That is the purpose of the mitzvah of relating the story of the exodus. The mitzvah is for us to experience the same situation that our forefathers had when they left Egypt. We must feel the same feelings they felt when they were redeemed and undergo the same experience.

The redemption of that generation must reoccur today for our generation. We must literally become people who left Egypt, just as our forefathers were. The purpose of the exodus is stated in the verse “To be for you as a G-d,” and “To be to him as a nation of heritage.” The purpose was for us to leave the ownership of Pharaoh and enter the domain of Hashem. That was the true purpose of the exodus, and we must reaccept that in our times as we reexperience yetzias Mitzrayim.

Rav Yeruchim adds that anyone who thinks that the purpose of the exodus was only to increase our emunah is making a mistake. If the sole purpose was for us to believe in the miracles, why must we reenact the events and view ourselves as if we personally left Egypt?

Thus, the purpose was not merely for us to believe in the miracles of the exodus. The purpose of these miracles was that through them we should become true servants of Hashem.

Rav Yeruchim continues by citing the Ramban (Parshas Yisro) who explains this

servitude to Hashem by stating that this bondage goes into effect when one accepts the yoke of the Heavenly Kingdom upon himself. We must accept *Ohl Malchus Shomayim* on this night, and thus become servants of Hashem, just like the generation that left Egypt.

**Rav** Yeruchim goes on to say: “Therefore, it is insufficient to just to remember and believe that miracles occurred. The obligation is to become amongst those who actually left Egypt, in order that we too should become servants of Hashem. This can only be done through performing all of the mitzvos of Pesach and relating the four terms of redemption.

“It is stated that even a poor man must beg for money in order to buy wine to drink the four cups. This sounds strange, but, according to what we said, it makes perfect sense because there is no other way for him to be on the level of being amongst those who left Egypt.”

» *One Can Only Say Hallel if He Has Already Left Egypt!*

**The** Mishnah (Pesachim 116B) brings a difference of opinion between Bais Shammai and Bais Hillel regarding how much of Hallel is recited on Pesach night before Shulchan Orech. Bais Shammai states that Hallel is recited until reaching the words: “*Aim Habanim Shemeicha.*” Bais Hillel states that Hallel is recited until the words “*Chalamish Lomayno Mayim.*”

**The** Yerushalmi (Pesachim 10:5) explains the reason behind the disagreement. It relates that Bais Shammai said to Bais Hillel, “Did the Jewish nation leave Egypt before *Chatzos* that we can say ‘*B’tzeis Yisroem M’Mitzrayim*’ at that time?” (Since the Jews only left Egypt after midnight, Bais Shammai stated that we cannot recite the verses regarding leaving Egypt before midnight on Pesach night.)

**Bais** Hillel answered, “Even if we would wait until morning, we still didn’t leave Egypt completely. How can we speak about the redemption when they still were yet to be redeemed? They only first left in the middle of the next day, as the verse states (Shemos 12:51): ‘And it was in the middle of that day Hashem took up the children of Yisroel from the Land of Egypt.’ But because we started the mitzvah already, we say it until the end.”

**We** see from the Yerushalmi that the reason Bais Shamai holds that one cannot say “*B’tzeis Yisroel M’Mitzrayim*” before *Chatzos* is because they did not leave Egypt until *Chatzos*. Bais Hillel agrees to this in

theory, but holds that according to this reasoning one would not be able to say “*B’tzeis Yisroel*” even after midnight, as they didn’t leave Egypt until midday of the next day. Therefore, he says that since the mitzvah was already begun, we are told to complete it.

**The** Yerushalmi is very puzzling. What difference does it make if Klal Yisroel left Mitzrayim before or after midnight? Why is that a reason not to say Hallel before *Chatzos*? Why can’t we say Hallel at any time?

» *One Only Says Hallel on a Miracle That Happened to Himself!*

**The** Ran in Perek Arvei Pesachim cites an opinion of Rav Hai Gaon that there are two distinct types of Hallel. The Brisker Rov *zt”l* (Chidushei Hagriz on the Torah – Hagadah Shel Pesach) explains that there is a Hallel that is a “*Kriyah*” (recited Hallel) This is the Hallel that we say on the 18 days of the year that Chazal enacted it to be recited. There is also a Hallel of “*Shira*” (song). We recite this type of Hallel when we are saved from a situation of danger or difficulty. However, one can only recite such a Hallel when the miracle occurred to him personally. One may not recite the “*Hallel of Shira*” for a miracle that happened to someone else.

**The** Hallel that we recite on Pesach night is a Hallel of *Shira*, not a Hallel of *Kriyah*. We sing Hallel on Pesach night even though we were not in Egypt and we were not saved from the bondage. However, we say in the Hagadah, “A person is obligated to view himself as if he left Egypt...Therefore, we are obligated to thank and praise...and say before Him a new song.” We state that we have an obligation to view ourselves as if we personally left Egypt on this night, and this time is considered as if it is literally the time of the actual redemption; therefore, we are obligated to say Hallel and we can recite a Hallel of *Shira*.

**We** can now understand the Yerushalmi. Bais Shammai is of the opinion that we should only recite the first portion of Hallel in which we praise Hashem for making us His servants before *Chatzos*. Before midnight, the bondage of the Jewish nation to Egypt had already become annulled. We had already become servants of Hashem and not servants of Pharaoh. However, we cannot recite the second portion of Hallel, which speaks of when the Jews left Egypt because we did not leave Egypt until after midnight. Since we view ourselves as if we literally are leaving Mitzrayim now, we cannot say this before we get

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to the time when we actually leave Egypt.

**In** this vein, Sefer Emek Bracha (written by Rav Aryeh Pomeranchik zt"l, a *talmid* of the Brisker Rov) writes that the Brisker Rov zt"l said in the name of his father, Rav Chaim Brisker zt"l, that since we do not sing *Shira* for a miracle until after the miracle has happened, it is debatable if a prophet would come and foretell that a miracle is going to occur, whether we could sing *Shira*. Even if someone has complete faith and believes fully that Hashem will perform a miracle for him, it is possible that he still does not sing *Shira* until the miracle actually occurs.

**He** adds that this is the meaning of the words Dovid Hamelech says in Tehillim (13:6): "And I trust in Your kindness. My heart rejoices in Your salvation. I sing to Hashem for he has been kind to me." Even during the time of difficulty, Dovid Hamelech already rejoiced for the salvation that was imminent. However, he only sang *Shira* after the actual salvation occurred.

**This** is seen from the words: "And I trust in Your kindness. My heart rejoices in Your salvation" Even before the salvation came, Dovid trusted with certainty that it was imminent; however, "I sing to Hashem for he has been kind to me" – he only sang *Shira* to Hashem after the salvation arrived.

**From** all this, we see that one must literally consider it as if he is leaving Egypt right now, on the night of the Pesach Seder.

#### >> "Hotzi" or "Motzi"?

**The** Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh, on the verse in Parshas Balak (23:52): "*Keil Motzi'am M'Mizrayim*" (G-d is taking them up from Egypt), notes that the verse doesn't use the word "*Hotziam*", which would mean that Hashem took us out of Egypt in the past tense. Rather, it uses the word "*Motziam*", which means that He is taking us out of Egypt in the present tense. This is because He takes us out anew every year.

**The** Ohr Hachaim goes on to explain the words we say in the Hagadah: "In every generation, a person is obligated to view himself as if he left Egypt." (The Rambam in Hilchos Chametz U'Matzoh (7:6) adds the words: "As if he is leaving Egypt now.") The Ohr Hachaim explains that the power of the redemption is renewed every year on the night of the Seder. He states that the redemption is a spiritual redemption that descends every year upon every person.

**Every** person receives this spiritual redemption every year on the night of the Seder. Therefore, a person must view himself as if he is being redeemed from Egypt on this night.

**The** Chinuch (Mitzvah 16) on the prohibition of breaking a bone of the Korban Pesach, asks: Why did

Hashem command us to do so many things as a commemoration of the miracles? If the purpose of the mitzvos is in order that we not forget the miracles, it should be enough for us to do one thing as a reminder for us. Why must we do so many different things?

**The** Chinuch answers that the reason we perform so many actions is because a person is transformed by the actions that he does. One's heart and thoughts are affected by the actions he performs – both for the good and for the bad. Even if someone is a completely wicked person, whose heart thinks evil thoughts all day, if he would he constantly busy himself with Torah and mitzvos, even not for the sake of Heaven, he would be transformed and become righteous. Through his actions he would slaughter his evil inclination. This is because one's actions deeply affect one's heart.

**So** too, a righteous man can be transformed negatively through improper actions. For example, if a king would force a righteous man to occupy himself in an improper craft, and he would spend his days immersed in performing inappropriate acts, he would eventually become a completely wicked person.

**This** is the meaning of the words of Chazal (Makos 2B): "Hashem wanted to give benefit to the Jewish people. Therefore, he gave them much Torah and mitzvos." Hashem gave us many mitzvos for our own good. By being constantly occupied with mitzvos we become transformed for the better.

**Again**, we see that the avodah of Pesach night is to feel that we ourselves are leaving Egypt on this very night. To do this we must speak about the exodus at length and internalize it into our hearts.

#### >> *The Answer to the Contradiction*

**We** thus need both reasons for the eating of matzoh in order to internalize the purpose of the matzoh. We need both the aspect of bondage and the aspect of freedom. When we perform the act of the mitzvah of eating matzoh, we first enter ourselves into the concept of "*lechem oni*", the poor man's bread. We first view ourselves as if we are living in the bondage and suffering in Egypt. After doing so, we may then truly feel the joy of going from bondage to freedom and experiencing all of Hashem's wonders and miracles.

**Therefore**, we recite the words of Rabban Gamliel – that one who does not say Pesach, matzoh and *maror* does not fulfill his obligation – at the end of the Seder. One may think that since this is the main obligation we should recite these words at the beginning of the Seder. However, according to our explanation, we must first place ourselves into the bondage and only then can we feel that we ourselves are leaving Egypt. We only recite the three main things, which are a commemoration of the freedom, after reaching this point.