

**SOME THOUGHTS FOR LEIL HA'SEDER**  
*[from 5766]*

**"HA LACHMA ANYA"**

This opening paragraph of MAGID is difficult to understand not only due to the Aramaic, but also due to its context and content. Let's begin by explaining the problems.

After breaking the middle matza for YACHATZ - we begin MAGGID with the following statement:

"ha lachman anya..." - 'This [matza that we just broke, and are now looking at] resembles the poor man's bread [or our 'affliction bread'] that our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt.'

First of all, it would make more sense to understand this statement as the completion of YACHATZ (since it refers to the matza that we just broke), and not necessarily the beginning of MAGGID (for it doesn't tell the story). However, even if this section is not an integral part of Maggid, it will form a significant transition between 'yachatz & maggid' - as we shall soon explain.

Secondly, this opening statement leaves us with the impression that we are eating matza at the Seder to remember how Bnei Yisrael ate matza during their slavery. However, Sefer Shmot leaves us with the impression that we eat matza in order to remember the hurried nature in which Bnei Yisrael left Egypt (see Shmot 12:33-40 and subsequently 13:3 & 13:8).

In other words, should we be explaining at this time that matza on our table is to remind us of our slavery, or to remind us of our redemption?

The simplest answer would be to explain that 'this is the matza that our forefathers ate in Egypt - **when they brought the very first korban Pesach!**' In other words, we are not stating that this poor man's bread was the 'staple' of the daily diet of our forefathers in Egypt - rather, it is the special bread that God commanded us to eat with the original Korban Pesach (see Shmot 12:8).

Furthermore, the reason for calling this bread "lechem oni" [lit. either bread of affliction or bread of poverty] is obviously based on Devarim 16:3 ["shivat yamim tochal alav matzot lechem oni - ki b'chipazon..."]. However, when studying the context of those psukim (see Devarim 16:1-4), the phrase "lechem oni" can be understood as a description of what matza is, and not necessarily as the reason for the commandment to eat it.

[In other words, the question is whether 'lechem oni' defines for us WHAT matza is, or explains WHY we eat matza.]

This returns us to our discussion of the two reasons for matza (see TSC shiur on Parshat Bo) - where we explained that the reason for eating matza with the original Korban Pesach in Egypt had nothing to do with the fact that we later rushed out on the next day. Rather, there had to be some intrinsic reason for eating matza (and not chametz) with that korban; either to remind us of our slavery, or to symbolize our need to reject Egyptian culture to be worthy of redemption.

If we continue with our understanding that this is the 'matza' that our forefathers ate together with the first Korban Pesach, then the next statement of "kol dichfin" - which otherwise is very difficult to understand - begins to make sense. Let's explain why.

The next statement (right after explaining that this matza used to be eaten by our forefathers) - at first sounds like an invitation:

"Anyone who is hungry, let him come and eat, anyone who is in need, let him come and join in the Pesach, this year 'here', next year in the Land of Israel; this year - slaves, next year - free men"

It can be understood in one of two ways, either:

- an open invitation for others to join us. - or
- a quote of what our forefathers once said.

These two possibilities are a result of how one understands the word "v'yifsach" in the phrase "kol ditzrich yete v'yifsach" [anyone who needs, let him come and join our Pesach].

If we take the word "va'yifsach" literally, then this must be an invitation to join in the korban Pesach - and hence, it must be a quote from an earlier time period.

If "va'yifsach" is not translated literally, and hence it refers to the Seder, then this section was composed to be recited as an invitation (to the Seder). But this wouldn't make much sense at this time, since everyone is already sitting down, and considering that we've already made Kiddush and eaten "karpas" - isn't it a bit late to be inviting people!

Let's return therefore to the possibility that "va'yifsach" refers to the actual 'korban Pesach' (which seems to be the simple meaning of this word). If so, then we can easily pinpoint exactly who we are quoting - as it must be from a time when the korban Pesach was offered, but also when we were not yet living in Israel, and still in slavery!. There answer is simple - this must be a quote of what our forefathers said to one another (translated into Aramaic) in preparation for the very first korban Pesach (i.e. the one in Egypt, as described in Shmot 12:1-23).

It can only refer to that very first korban Pesach, for that was the only time in Jewish history when the korban Pesach was offered when we were both (1) in slavery (hoping next year to be free) - and (2) living outside the Land of Israel (hoping to be next year in the Land of Israel)!

If this interpretation is correct, then the flow of topic makes perfect sense. We break the matza, and explain that this was the same type of bread that our forefathers ate with the first korban Pesach in Egypt, and then we quote what they said to one another in preparation for that special evening - fulfilling what God instructed them in Parshat ha'Chodesh (see Shmot 12:3-8!).

This quote of our forefathers, from the very first Seder in Jewish History, is quite meaningful - for we begin MAGGID by emphasizing the connection between our own Seder and the very first Seder that Am Yisrael kept thousands of years ago (and its purpose). By quoting from the special atmosphere of that very first korban Pesach family gathering, we highlight the continuity of our tradition and our hope for the fulfillment of its goals.

[Note how this would conform to Shmot 12:14, in its context!]

**MAGID & SEFER DEVARIM**

For those of you familiar with our Intro shiur to Sefer Devarim (i.e. in regard to the structure of the main speech), it will be easier to appreciate why the Haggada begins its answer to the "ma nishtana" with "avadim hayinu...". [Or basically, Shmuel's opinion for "matchilim b'gnut" in the tenth perek of Mesechet Psachim/ see 116a.]

Recall how that speech began in chapter 5, where Moshe Rabeinu introduces the laws [the "chukim upmishpatim"] by explaining how they part of the covenant that God had made with Am Yisrael at Har Sina; while the laws themselves began with the famous psukim of Shema Yisrael that begin in 6:4.

In that context, the question in 6:20 concerns the inevitable question of children relating to the very purpose for keeping all of these laws, while the phrase "avadim hayinu" (see 6:21) is only the first line of a four line answer to our children, that explains why God chose us, and why we are obligated to keep all of His laws (see 6:20-25).

Hence, it is not by chance that the Haggada uses specifically this pasuk to explain why we are obligated to 'tell the story of the Exodus' every year, as that very pasuk begins the Torah's explanation for why we are obligated to keep all of God's laws.

Note as well how the pasuk of "v'otanu hotzi m'sham **Imaan. [for the purpose of]...**" (see 6:22-23) is quoted at the end of MAGID in the "bchol dor v'dor" section - and not by chance!

Recall as well how the final mitzvot of this lengthy speech are found in chapter 26, namely "mikra bikkurim" and "viddui

maasrot".

In light of our study of Sefer Devarim and the sources in Sefer Shmot for Maggid (relating to how the experience in Egypt served to sensitize the nation - to act properly once they become sovereign in their own land), one can suggest an additional reason for why Chazal chose Mikra Bikurim - from Devarim chapter 26 - as the official 'formula' by which we tell the story. Note not only how the declaration in 26:5-9 constitutes a thanksgiving to God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha'btarim, but notice also the closing line in 26:11, where once again we are called upon to be sure that the stranger and Levite share in our happiness (for they have no Land of their own, and hence not able to bring their own first fruits).

It should also not surprise us that the next law, "vidduy maasrot" at the end of every three years, emphasizes this very same theme. Simply read its opening statement in 26:12-13, focusing on the need of the farmer to give the necessary tithes to the poor and needy, the orphans, widows, and strangers. Only afterwards does he have the ethical 'right' to pray to God that He should continue to bless the land and its produce - see 26:15! This law forms a beautiful conclusion for many of the earlier laws in the main speech of Sefer Devarim, again a set of laws originally given to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai (see Devarim 5:28).

One could even suggest that reciting these psukim as well may be what the statement in the Mishna in Pesachim refers to when instructing us to read from Arami oved Avi (from Devarim 26:5) until we finish the ENTIRE Parsha. If we read the entire Parshia, the should certainly should include 26:11, and may even allude to 26:12-15 ("vidduy maaser"), (and in my humble opinion even to the concluding psukim of the entire speech in 26:16-19!). ["v'akmal"]

#### **YACHOL M'ROSH CHODESH**

To appreciate the "hava amina" for why one might think that the mitzvah to tell the story may begin already from Rosh Chodesh, carefully review Shmot 12:14 - noting what day the phrase "ha'yom ha'zeh" may be referring to, based on its context from Shmot 12:1-6.

In other words, the day referred to in the phrase: "v'haya ha'YOM HA'ZEH lachem I'ZICHARON" could either be rosh Chodesh (based on 12:1-2); or the day that the korban Pesach was offered (i.e. the 14th during the day towards evening = "yachol m'b'od yom", based on 12:6). The conclusion however is that the mitzvah can only be fulfilled on the evening of the 15th, based on Shmot 13:8 in the context of 13:3-8! Read those psukim carefully, noting especially 13:5, and you'll see why.

[Note as well the connection between 12:14 & 12:15-20, as well as the connection between 12:21-27 with 13:3-8!]

#### **V'ACHSHAV KIRVANU HA'MAKOM L'AVADATO**

This key statement of the MAGID section (as discussed in our shiur on MAGID), that God chose the Jewish people in order that they could serve Him (by acting as His model nation) - is proven not only from our quote of Yehoshua 24:1-3, but more so from the remainder of that chapter - a 'must read' for anyone not familiar with that chapter!

For those of you familiar with Sefer Yehoshua, here's an observation that you may appreciate. One could suggest that the gathering, as described in Yehoshua 24:1-27, may have taken place at an earlier time, even though it is recorded in the final chapter of the book. Based on the content of this speech (and challenge) by Yehoshua for the entire nation to serve God - it would have made more sense for this gathering to have taken place soon after the original wave of conquest, and not at the end of his life.

In my opinion, the most logical time for this gathering to have taken place would have been at the same time when Bnei Yisrael first gathered at Har Eival to re-convene their covenant with God, in fulfillment the God's command in Devarim 27:1-8! This covenantal gathering, similar to the original covenantal gathering at Har Sinai (compare w/Shmot 24:3-11) is described in detail in

Yehoshua 8:30-35. Note that the city of Shechem - where the events in chapter 24 take place, is located at the foot of Har Eival (where the events in chapter 8:30-35 take place!)

Even though the events in chapter 24 should have been recorded after the events in 8:30-35, Sefer Yehoshua preferred to 'save' that speech for its concluding section, because of its thematic and everlasting significance.

If so, then Yehoshua chapter 23 would have been the last gathering of the people with Yehoshua prior to his death (as seems to be simple pshat of the opening psukim of that chapter), while the events described in chapter 24 were 'saved' for the conclusion of the book (even though they took place much earlier). [Note how the story of Yehoshua's death in 24:28-33 is not an integral part of the story in 24:1-27]

Hence, it may not be by chance that the Haggada quotes from this chapter to present its key point - that God chose us, and gave us the special Land, for the purpose that we would be able to serve Him. Its thematic importance results in its special placement at the conclusion of Sefer Yehoshua, and similarly, at a key position in MAGID.

#### **ETHICS & the EXODUS - [re: BRIT BEIN HA'BTARIM] [REMEMBER WHAT THEY DID TO YOU]**

The fact that God had already 'promised' Avraham Avinu at the same time when he was first chosen - that there would be a need for his offspring to become enslaved by another nation BEFORE becoming (and possibly in order to become) God's special nation (see Breishit 15:1-18) - begs us to search for a thematic reason for the necessity of this bondage.

[Indeed, some commentators see this 'bondage' as a punishment for something that Avraham may have done wrong (see Maharal - Gevurot Hashem); nonetheless, the simple pshat of Breishit chapter 15 is that this covenant was part of God's original plan.

We should also note that according to Seforno (based on Yechezkel 20:1-10), even though God forecasted our slavery, it didn't have to be so severe. Its severity, he explains, was in punishment for Bnei Yisrael's poor behavior.

See Seforno's intro to Sefer Shmot and his commentary on Shmot 1:13. .]

A rather obvious Biblical 'hint' to what the nation would 'gain' from this difficult experience; may be alluded to in the numerous commandments that Bnei Yisrael receive at Matan Torah (after leaving Egypt) that include the special 'reminder' of "v'zacharta ki eved ha'yita b'erev Mitzraim". Most often, this phrase is found not as a separate mitzvah, but rather as an additional comment following a law concerning the proper treatment of the 'less-fortunate' - as an extra incentive to keep some of the most very basic ethical laws of the Torah.

To prove this, simply review the following list of sources in your Chumash, paying careful attention to when and how this phrase is presented, noting both its topic and context:

See:

- Shmot 22:20 & 23:9 (note the type of mitzvot found in numerous laws recorded between these two psukim). Note especially "v'atem y'datem et nefesh ha'ger" in 23:9, that phrase highlights our above assertion.
- Vayikra 19:33-36 (concluding "Kdoshim tihiyu!")
- Vayikra 20:26! and 25:55! (note the context of Vayikra 25:35-55, noting especially 25:38.)
- Devarim 5:12-15 (shabbos is to allow our servants a chance to rest as well - v'zacharta ki eved hayita...)
- Devarim 10:12-20; in regard to how we must emulate God, just as he 'loves the stranger' - so must we.
- Devarim 16:11-12, in regard to "simchat yom tov"
- Devarim 24:17-18, noting context from 23:16 thru 24:18
- Devarim 24:19-22, continuing same point as above
- Note as well concluding psukim in Devarim 25:13-16, noting how they conclude the 'arami oved avi' section!

In light of these sources (a 'must read' for those not familiar with these psukim), it becomes clear that part of God's master plan when promising Avraham Avinu (at "brit bein ha'btarim") that his offspring would first undergo oppression in a foreign land; and only afterward become a great nation (see Breishit 15:13-18) - was to 'sensitize' His people, both as individuals and as a nation, towards the need to be caring of the oppressed and downtrodden.

God is angered when any nation takes advantage of its vulnerable population (see story of Sedom in Breishit chapters 18-19, noting especially 18:17-21!). In our shiurim on Sefer Breishit, we suggested that this may have been one of the underlying reasons for God's choice of a special nation, a nation that will 'make a Name for God', by setting an example in the eyes of these nations, of ideal manner of how a nation should treat its lower classes, and be sensitive to the needs of its strangers and downtrodden. [Note also Yeshayahu 42:5-6!]

Hence, after Bnei Yisrael leave Egypt, they must receive a special set of laws at Har Sinai that will facilitate their becoming that nation. As they are chosen to become God's model nation (see Devarim 4:5-8), these laws must set reflect a higher standard, to serve as a shining example for other nations to learn from. Note as well how the opening laws of Parshat Mishpatim (which immediately followed the Ten Commandments), begin with special laws for how to treat our own slaves, whether they be Jewish (see Shmot 21:1-11) on non Jewish (see 21:20 & 21:26-27). [Not to mention the laws that follow in 22:20 thru 23:9.]

With this background, one could suggest that the suffering of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt, their being taken advantage of by a tyrant etc., would help teach Bnei Yisrael what 'not to do' when they form their own nation, after leaving Egypt.

As anyone who is familiar with the prophecies of Yeshayahu and Yirmiyahu (and just about all of the Neviim Acharonim) knows, it was this lack of this sensitivity to the poor and needy that becomes the primary reason behind God's decision to exile Israel from their land, and destroy the Bet Ha'Mikdash.

In light of the numerous sources in Sefer Devarim as well in this regard, we may have an additional reason for why Chazal chose Mikra Bikurim - from Devarim chapter 26 - as the official 'formula' by which we tell the story. Note not only how the declaration in 26:5-9 constitutes a thanksgiving to God for His fulfillment of brit bein ha'btarim, but notice also the closing line in 26:11, where once again we are called upon to be sure that the stranger and Levite share in our happiness (for they have no Land of their own, and hence not able to bring their own first fruits).

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Let's return to the very pasuk from which we learn our obligation to tell the story at MAGID -"v'higadta l'bincha... ba'avur zeh asa Hashem li b'tzeiti m'Mitzraim". If we follow the interpretation of Rashi & Ibn Ezra, then this pasuk is commanding us that we explain to our children that God took us out of Egypt in order that we can fulfill His commandments. Or in essence, God

orchestrated all the events forecasted in "brit bein ha'btarim" to help us become that nation. Certainly, this approach fits nicely with our explanation thus far.

Finally, the very pasuk that Chazal chose that we must recite twice a day to 'remember' the Exodus on a daily basis (see Bamidbar 15:41) may allude as well to this very same point: "I am the God who took you out of Egypt IN ORDER to be your God...". In other words, God took us out of an Egypt **in order** that He become our God. Our deeper understanding of the purpose of the events (of the Exodus) can serve as a guide and a reminder to assure that we act in the manner that we assure that we will indeed become God's model nation.

[See Ibn Ezra to Shmot 13:8!]

In summary, when we thank God for taking us out of Egypt, we must remember not only **how** He saved us, but also **why** He put us there in the first place - i.e. to sensitize us towards the needs of the oppressed. Should we not internalize that message, the numerous "tochachot" of the Bible warn us that God may find it necessary to 'teach us the hard way' once again (see Devarim 28:58-68 and Yirmiyahu 34:8-22).

In this manner, the message of the Seder is both particular (in relation to the obligations of the Jewish people) and universal (in relation to their purpose - the betterment of all mankind). It is not only an evening when we express our gratitude to God, but also an evening dedicated to recognizing the destiny for why we were chosen.

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