

THE TANACH STUDY CENTER mail.tanach.org

In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag

Questions for Self Study - by Menachem Leibtag

for SHVII SHEL PESACH - Questions for self study

1. Even though the last day of 'Passover' is often referred to as "shvii shel Pesach", in Chumash - that name never appears. Before you prepare the following questions (that will point you to every instance when this holiday is described in the Torah), attempt to answer the following:

To the best of your recollection, why is [what we call] Passover a SEVEN day holiday? Does Chumash itself give a reason why the holiday last seven days, and why on the final day all work is forbidden?

If so, where, and what is that reason?

If not, can you explain why no reason is given?

Are there any other holidays mentioned in Chumash that last for seven days? If so, does Chumash explain why those holidays last for specifically seven days?

To the best of your recollection, where is the FIRST mention of the seven days of 'Passover' in Chumash?

Was it before or after Bnei Yisrael leave Egypt?

Was it before or after Bnei Yisrael crossed the Red Sea?

2. Next, quickly review Shmot 12:1-20, paying careful attention to 12:14-20, noting how this section describes the instructions that God had given Moshe. Then, quickly review from 12:21-13:10, paying careful attention to 13:3-8, and noting how that it is only after they leave Egypt that Bnei Yisrael hear this mitzvah to eat matza for seven days (and celebrate the 7th day as a holiday).

According to these sources, what seems to be the primary mitzvah (or mitzvot) that must be kept for these seven days? Be sure that you can explain Shmot 12:17 (noting its tense!)

In these sources, does Chumash provide a reason for why we must keep these mitzvot relating to matza & chametz, or why these mitzvot must be kept for seven days?

3. Review Shmot 23:14-17, and in its context (beginning from Shmot 23:10 thru 23:19).

Is this the same chag ha'matzot as mentioned in chapter 12?

[What does "ka'asher tzivitcha" in 23:15 refer to?]

If so, can you explain why this law is repeated here in Parshat Mishpatim? [Is there a new context?]

In your answer, relate this to the topic of "knisah la'aretz" - that begins in 23:20 and the original plan that Bnei Yisrael were about to enter the land immediately after they received God's mitzvot at Har Sinai.

4. Next, review Shmot 34:18-26, and its context within chapter 34. In what manner is this similar to 23:14-19, and in what manner are these laws different? Can you explain why (based on chet ha'egel)? [Relate to the addition of "kedushat bchor" in 34:19.

Relate this as well to Shmot 13:1-14!]

5. Review Vayikra chapter 23 (Parshat Emor), especially the laws of chag ha'matzot in 23:4-8, and the laws of the Omer in 23:9-15.

Are these the same laws that were already mentioned in Sefer Shmot? If so, can you explain why they are repeated?

Are there any 'new' laws in Vayikra chapter 23 concerning Pesach and chag ha'matzot that were not mentioned in Sefer Shmot. If so, what are they? Can you explain why they are recorded specifically at this point in Sefer Vayikra? In your answer, relate to the topic of chapter 23, and its context within Sefer Vayikra.

6. Next, review Bamidbar 28:15-25, i.e. laws of Pesach in Parshat Pinchas. [What we read for the last aliyah every day of Pesach.]

As above, what laws are added, and what laws are repeated

in this section? Relate to the context of Bamidbar 28->29!

7. Finally, see Devarim 16:1-8, regarding the laws of Pesach.

Once again, what laws are added, and what laws are the same as were found in Shmot, Vayikra, and Bamidbar?

Relate your answer to primary topic of Devarim chapter 16, i.e. "aliyah la'reglel la'Makom asher Yivchar Hashem".

Note how this "parshia" puts an emphasis on the need to offer the korban Pesach ONLY in the "makom asher yivchar Hashem"? [Relate this as well to the primary topic of Devarim chapter 12.]

Can you explain why it would be logical to think otherwise, based on Shmot 12:1-14 and 13:3-8! Relate to how the "korban Pesach" is different than all other "korbanot" (in relation to how and why it was first offered, and the punishment warned for those who do not offer it!

8. Note Devarim 16:8. Can you recall any other pasuk (or psukim) in Chumash that sound similar? If so, can you explain the nature of this parallel? [If you give up, try Vayikra 23:1-3 and Shmot 35:1-4!] Attempt to explain how this parallel may relate to WHY chag ha'matzot is celebrated for SEVEN days?

Would this have anything to do with the agricultural time of the year of Pesach? [Note again Shmot 13:3-5 and Devarim 16:1!] Why would this time of year also relate to the SEVEN days of Creation? [Relate this to the fact that God 'created' 'nature' and how man himself usually relates to nature?!]

9. Review once again Devarim chapter 16, this time noting how often the number SEVEN is found in this presentation of the "shalosh regalim".

Note also the dates of the "shalosh regalim" - are they lunar days or 'solar' dates (i.e. are the dates based on the agricultural seasons)? Note also the agricultural mitzvot related to the chagim in Vayikra chapter 23. In what manner do they relate to SEVEN? Can you explain why?

Is there a holiday in Chumash that doesn't relate in some manner or other to the number SEVEN?

10. Where else in Chumash (beginning with the SEVEN days of Creation in Sefer Breishit until Sefer Devarim), do we find that the number SEVEN is significant?

Do you think that this is simply coincidental, or is it significant? If so, can you explain why? [What vessel(s) in the Mishkan relate to the number SEVEN? Can you explain why?]

11. Finally, review Shmot 23:10-19, noting especially the transition from 23:13 to 23:14, and the relationship of this entire parshia to 23:20-24!

What would be the connection between "shem elohim acharim lo tazkiru" in 23:13 and the mitzva of "shalosh regalim tachog li" in 23:14?

How would this relate to the spiritual dangers of "knisah la'aretz" [entering the land] as described in Shmot 23:20-32?!

12. Based on all of the above, what would you say is the PRIMARY purpose of the "shalosh regalim"?

Can this mitzvah be fulfilled (at least partially) today, even without a Bet ha'Mikdash? If so, explain how!!

[See for example Mesechet Succah 27b (middle) re: mitzvah l'kabel pnei rabo b'moed..."]

13. In the Midrash, we find an alternate explanation for seven days of chag ha'matzot based on the calculation that the miracle of "kriyat yam suf" took place on the seventh day after Yetziat Mitzraim. Does this reason contradict any of your conclusions above, or does it complement them?

In general, can one find both historical reason as well as an agricultural purpose in each of the "shalosh regalim"? If so, bring examples.

b'hatzlacha, & chag samayach