

PARSHAT BO

PART I - QUESTIONS FOR THE 'SEDER TABLE'

'BA'AVUR ZEH...'

1. Surely you are familiar with the pasuk:

"Ve-higadeta le-bincha ba-yom ha-hu leimor: **ba'avur zeh asa Hashem li be-tzeiti mi-Mitzrayim**" (Shmot 13:8).

We quote it numerous times in the Haggada of Pesach!

[It's also the primary source for the mitzva of **maggid**.]

Did you ever try to translate it? It's not easy!

Read this pasuk carefully (in Hebrew), and attempt to translate it. Why is it so difficult to translate? For example:

What does the word 'zeh' refer to?

What does 'asa Hashem li' refer to?

Explain what is most problematic about this pasuk?

Next, consider the context of this pasuk by reviewing from 13:3-8. Can this help you answer any of the above questions? [How come you never noticed these problems before?]

Based on your conclusions thus far, does this pasuk explain why we are commanded to eat matza, or why God took us out of Egypt?

2. Let's see how the commentators dealt with this question.

First see Rashi on 13:8.

How does he explain 'zeh', and how does he translate this pasuk? Why does he 'widen' the meaning of 'zeh'?

What is problematic with this interpretation?

Next, see Rashbam (see also Rasa"g).

What does Rashbam do with the words 'ba'avur zeh' before he translates them, i.e. how (and why) does he change the order of the words in the pasuk? Why must Rashbam bring an example from a pasuk in Tehillim?

3. Now, see Ibn Ezra (aroch).

Note how he first quotes an interpretation similar to Rashbam's and then refutes it. Can you explain why?

Does Ibn Ezra agree with Rashi?

In what manner is his interpretation slightly different?

How does Ibn Ezra relate to the context of this pasuk?

Be sure that you understand how and why Ibn Ezra supports his peirush from Shmot 3:12 and Bamidbar 15:41!

[For 'extra credit', attempt to relate this 'machloket' to the machloket between Ibn Ezra and Rashbam re: the explanation of 'ta'avdun et Elokim ba-har ha-zeh' in 3:12.]

4. Next, see Chizkuni!

Read his interpretation carefully, noting how it relates to the questions of the four sons in the Haggada. Is this peirush the same as Rashi's, or a bit different? Explain!

Note how he explains 'zeh' and 'ba'avur zeh'!

Finally, see Ramban.

Is his peirush the same as Rashbam's or different?

If so, in what manner is it different?

Why does he bring support from Shmot 13:15?

What is special about how Ramban translates 'ba'avur'?

What problem does this solve?

Why do you think that Ramban quotes Ibn Ezra, just to disagree with his interpretation? Would you assume that Ramban considered that direction as well?

In closing, did you ever realize how complicated this pasuk was? In your opinion, what is the underlying 'theological' consideration that supports the interpretations of Rashi, Ramban,

and Chizkuni?

THE FOUR SONS

1. While studying Parshat Bo, try to find the 'four questions' [of the four sons in the Haggada]. Did you find all four, or are some missing? If so, which question(s) are missing?

After you identify these questions, note the Torah's answers to these questions in Parshat Bo. Are they the same answers that we find in the Haggada?

If not, can you explain why?

[Hopefully, you found three out of the four questions (12:26-27; 13:8; and 13:14). In case you didn't, read those psukim and answer this question once again.

2. You probably didn't find the fourth question; that's because its source is Devarim 6:20-23. Read those psukim, and (as above) compare the Torah's answer to this question to the Haggada's answer. Can you explain why the answers are different?

3. To better understand the context of the questions found in Chumash, review the psukim that precede each question, noting the context, and the precise topic that each question relates to. See: Shmot 12:21-28; 13:3-8; 13:10-16; and Devarim 6:1-25.

Did you find three questions concerning the same topic, or questions about three different topics? If so, explain what those topics are.

4. Now, review the section in the Haggada concerning the four sons: "Kenegged arba banim dibra Torah...", noting that the Haggada is quoting the Midrash [Mechilta]

Try to explain the opening statement: "kenegged arba banim dibra Torah". What assumption is the Midrash making? Be precise!

Note how the Midrash quotes the four 'questions' directly from Chumash, yet the answers are quite different. According to that Midrash, what is the topic of each question?

Is the topic of each question the same? If so, why are there four different answers!

In your opinion, is the intention of this Midrash to explain 'pshat' in Chumash? If not, what do you think is the intention of this Midrash? [i.e. What is it coming to teach us?]

Can you explain why we quote this Midrash at the Seder? How does its message relate to the primary mitzva of **maggid**?

THE MAKKOT

1. As you review the Ten Plagues, attempt to find a pattern following from 'aretz' [land] to 'shamayim' [heaven]. Can you suggest any significance in this progression? [Relate to Breishit chapter 1! / 'asara ma'amarot' to 'eser makkot'?

In Breishit chapter one, each act of creations begin with a statement by God ["va'yomer Elokim"], followed by action by God that fulfills that statement. Do the Plagues in Egypt follow a similar pattern? If so, which ones?

2. Review the makkot once again, and chart Pharaoh's reaction to each plague. In other words, categorize his reaction as either:

1) no reaction

2) promising to let them leave [then changing his mind]

3) admitting that he has sinned [chatati...]

[Be sure to note 9:27, & 10:16-17.]

Can you find a pattern? [Relate your answer to the 3x3x3 pattern of the Makkot - of 'detzach adash be-achav'.]

Attempt to distinguish between when Pharaoh hardens his own heart, and when God hardens his heart. Also distinguish between the Hebrew word 'va-yechezek' and 'va-yeched', when the Torah describes this 'hardening of Pharaoh's heart'.

See Ramban on Shmot 7:3!

3. Review Shmot 14:1-7, noting how God instructs Moshe to perform a 'maneuver' (see 14:1) that will 'trick' Pharaoh into chasing Bnei Yisrael. Note as well that the Torah refers to this as well as how God will 'harden Pharaoh's heart' (see 14:3). Relate this to the above question!

KORBANOT - PRO'S & CON'S

1. In Parshat Bo, we find how Bnei Yisrael must prepare for their redemption by offering a korban (see 12:3-14). In relation to this, read Yirmiyahu 7:21-22, then review from 7:1-22 to understand the context of these psukim.

Based on Parshat Bo, does 7:22 make sense?

In other words, how can Yirmiyahu claim that God never commanded Am Yisrael to bring korbanot on the **day that they left Egypt**, if the **only** mitzva they did perform on that day was to offer the korban Pesach!!]

Now read Yirmiyahu 7:23-28, especially 7:23!

Is this statement true? Do we find anywhere in Parshat Bo that God commands Bnei Yisrael 'shim'u be-koli'?

2. Where in Sefer Shmot do we find that statement similar to 7:23 [i.e. Listen to Me, Be My People - I'll be your God], which Yirmiyahu claims was made on 'the day they left Egypt'?

[Relate to Shmot 19:1-9, 24:3-9, Vayikra 26:3-13]

In your opinion, could this day relate to the day of Matan Torah?!

Did God command Bnei Yisrael to offer korbanot on that day? [Relate to Shmot 24:5-8!]

Now, review Shmot 6:2-9, especially 6:7!

Could these psukim fit into Yirmiyahu 7:22-24?

[In other words, could 6:6-8 be considered the 'day that I took Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt'?

What phrases are similar, what phrase is 'missing'?

3. Finally, review once again Yechezkel 20:1-11, especially 20:5-8. How can these psukim help answer the above question concerning when 'shim'u be-koli' was first told to Bnei Yisrael at Yetziat Mitzrayim?

Relate to the conclusion of last week's shiur on Parshat Va'era, in regard to the deeper meaning of **Ani Hashem**.

Can those conclusions help explain Yirmiyahu's statement? Relate this as well to the main points of Yirmiyahu chapter 7 (i.e. in regard to the reason for God's decision to destroy the bet ha-mikdash, and what could prevent it - noting especially 7:1-9.)

Relate this to the opinions of other prophets in regard to offering korbanot? [e.g. Yeshayahu 1:10-17! Tehillim 51:10-21!]

4. Note the phrase 'divrei ola va-zavach' in Yirm. 7:22. Compare this to the primary topic of Vayikra chapters 1-3. Based on Vayikra 1:1, when were these laws of korban Olah & shalim (as recorded in chapter 1-3) first given to Moshe! [In other words, were these mitzvot given on Har Sinai during Matan Torah, or only **after** the Mishkan was built and the Shchina had returned?]

PART II - QUESTIONS FOR PREPARATION (for the shiurim)

For shiur on PARSHAT HA-CHODESH - Shmot 12:1-20

1. As you review Shmot 12:1-20, attempt to create an outline for the primary topics that are discussed in these twenty psukim. Be sure that you can identify at least two distinct groups (if not more), and give a title for each section.

In your outline, be sure to distinguish between commandments that were to be fulfilled before leaving Egypt, and commandments that apply only to later generations.

2. On what day did Moshe receive this commandment? Support your answer from 12:1-3.

When you studied 12:14, how did you understand the phrase 'zechor et ha-yom ha-zeh'; or in other words, what day does "ha-yom ha-zeh" refer to?

Similarly, what day does the phrase 'ha-yom ha-zeh' in pasuk 17 refer to? Note that it is mentioned twice in this pasuk!

3. What is problematic with the phrase 'hotzeiti etchem' in 12:17? Did you translate it as past tense or future? Relate your answer to the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim as told in 12:34 & 12:39.

See Ibn Ezra (aroch) on 12:17. Note how many different answers he provides for this question. Be sure that you understand his final answer and its implication.

4. When did Moshe convey these commandments that are recorded in 12:4-20 to Bnei Yisrael?

To answer this question, carefully scan from 12:21 thru 13:10, noting each time that Moshe talks to Bnei Yisrael, and what he talks about. [Be sure to relate to 13:2-3!]

In your answer, be sure to relate as well to the various sections of your outline (discussed in question #1 above).

Based on 12:17, is there a logical reason why Moshe doesn't tell Bnei Yisrael about the mitzvot in 12:5-20 until 13:2-8, i.e. until after they had already left Egypt?

5. Review 12:43-50, noting how these psukim form a distinct 'parshia'. What is the primary topic of this unit? In your opinion, when were these mitzvot first given to Moshe (before or after they left Egypt)? [See Rashi on 12:43.]

How does the laws in this unit relate to 12:14?

If the mitzvot in 12:43-45 were indeed given earlier, can you explain why they are only recorded at this point in Chumash? Attempt to relate your answer to the topic of the psukim that precede them (12:40-43).

6. Read 12:14 carefully. Based on your understanding of this pasuk, what does 'chag' in 've-chagotem oto **chag** la-Hashem' refer to? Does this pasuk relate to the psukim that precede it, or to the psukim that come afterward?

See Rashi and Ibn Ezra (ha-aroch).

In your opinion, does 12:14 relate to 12:24-27 or to 13:3-6?

7. Read Vayikra 23:4-8 and Bamidbar 28:16-18 carefully.

According to these psukim, are Pesach and chag ha-matzot the same holiday or different holidays? Explain.

Define chag ha-pesach, and its purpose.

Define chag ha-matzot, and its purpose. Relate this distinction to the difference between 12:15-20 and 12:3-14.

8. Read Bamidbar 9:1-14. Explain how the laws of Pesach sheni are different from the laws of regular Pesach. In your answer, relate this to the distinction between Pesach and chag ha-matzot, as evident from Vayikra 23:4-8 and 12:3-20.

9. Review Yechezkel 20:1-12, noting especially 20:7-9.

According to Yechezkel, what was the spiritual level of Bnei Yisrael prior to the Exodus? Did they deserve to be redeemed?

Based on these psukim in Yechezkel, suggest a reason why it may have been necessary for Bnei Yisrael to offer the korban Pesach to save them from makkat bechorot?

Would it be important to remember this in future generations?

What does the Hebrew word 'pasach' mean (and imply)?

What happened to those who did not offer this korban?

Why?

10. Based on 12:26-27, what is the reason (and purpose) for offering a korban Pesach every year? In your opinion, based on Yechezkel 20:5-9 (see above), is there any other aspect of the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim that this korban remind us of?

[See also Seforno's introduction to Sefer Shmot [in some Chumashim it is found in the beginning of Sefer Breishit].

Note how Seforno relates Sefer Shmot to Yechezkel 20:5-9, and relate this to the above questions.]

11. In 12:8, the Torah commands that we are to eat matza with the korban Pesach? Is there any obvious reason for this commandment?

Based on 12:17, could it be for the same reason that the Torah commands that we eat matza for seven days? In your answer, relate to the story as told in Shmot 12:34 & 12:39.

If the reasons are different, be sure to explain why. [Which reason relates to 'lechem oni', and which to 'being rushed'?

In your opinion, why is chametz forbidden (see 12:15-20) - simply to encourage us to eat matza? Why, in addition, does the Torah forbid that we **own** chametz, or even **see** it? [i.e. 'issur bal yera'eh / bal yimatze']

12. Compare the laws of 'issur avoda zara' (see Rambam Hilchot Avoda Zara Chapter 7, Hilchot 1-3 & 7-8) to 'issur chametz' (see Rambam Hilchot Chametz u-Matza Chapter One).

In what ways are their prohibitions similar?

Based on the above questions (in regard to what chametz symbolizes), can you suggest a reason for this similarity? In your answer, relate once again to Yechezkel 20:5-9; or basically, relate to what God had expected from Bnei Yisrael before the redemption.

Based on these parallels, can you suggest a thematic connection between the laws of chametz in regard to korban Pesach and chag ha-matzot. [Relate as well to Devarim 16:1-4.]

13. The laws of korbanot also include a prohibition against offering chametz on the mizbeiach (see Vayikra 2:11, 6:10). Can you explain the reason for this prohibition? In your opinion, what does chametz symbolize; and why would the laws of korbanot be similar to the laws of Pesach?

[On Shavuot we find an anomaly to this law, as a special korban, the 'shtei ha-lechem', is offered 'chametz' (see Vayikra 23:15-21)! Explain this korban on the basis of the connection between chag ha-matzot and chag ha-shavuot.]

14. Compare the laws of the korban Pesach to the special laws of korban toda in regard to the need to offer it with different types of bread (see Vayikra 7:11-18). In what manner are these two types of offerings similar?

What is the logic behind the commandment to bring this 'thanksgiving offering' [korban Todah] together with bread? In your answer, relate as well to the fact that its 'time frame' during which it must be eaten is quite limited.

How does this comparison enhance your understanding of the laws [and purpose] of korban Pesach?

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PART III - PARSHANUT

400 YEARS - WHO'S COUNTING?

1. Review 12:40-42, noting how it relates to Breishit 15:13-15.

What is the obvious parallel, and what is the problem with that parallel?

If 12:40 is indeed speaking of the same 400 years, when did this 400-year count begin? How do you explain the 'extra thirty years'?

First, see Rashi on 12:40-41?

How does he understand this connection?

Note how he uses calculations based on Shmot 6:16-20 to prove that the 430 years cannot be only from the time that Yaakov's sons went down to Egypt. Explain why this 'forces' us to relate this pasuk to the 400 years of 'brit bein ha-btarim'.

2. How does Rashi explain the 'extra' thirty years?

Why does Breishit 12:4 make this problematic?

How does Rashi solve this problem? [See also Rashbam.]

3. Next, see Ibn Ezra [ha-aroach & katzar]

First, note how and why he quotes numerous examples of 'year counts' that are not clear regarding when they begin. Then note how he returns to a calculation similar to Rashi's, but provides a different explanation for the 'thirty years'. Be sure you understand how this differs from Rashi, and his need to explain that Avraham returned to Charan after he had already been in Eretz Canaan.

How do Rashi and Ibn Ezra explain the time period from the time that Avraham left Ur Kasdim until Avraham left Charan and came to Eretz Canaan?

4. Finally, see Ramban. How is his peirush similar, and how is it different from Ibn Ezra & Rashi.

Why does Ramban question the assumption that the '400 years' begins with Yitzchak's birth?

What is his conclusion concerning how long the actual enslavement lasted? In other words, where does Ramban place the extra thirty years?

In general, why do you think that all the commentators concur that these psukim (12:40-41) relate specifically to 'brit bein ha-btarim'.

THE LAST 'SHOWDOWN'

1. Review 10:24-29 (i.e. the conversation between Moshe & Pharaoh after the Ninth Plague), paying careful attention to its concluding psukim - 10:28-29.

In your opinion, what does Moshe do after he states that he won't see Pharaoh again (in 10:29)? Does he leave the palace? Would it make sense that he did?

Do they both keep their promises that they won't see each other again? If not, who breaks their promise and when?

Next, review 11:1-3. In your opinion, when, **where**, and why does God tell this information to Moshe? As God instructs Moshe to remind Bnei Yisrael to 'borrow' from the Egyptians (see 11:2-3), what should Moshe do immediately after he hears this command? Is that what he does?

Then, carefully read 11:4-7 (but no farther!), noting how 11:4 informs us that Moshe is speaking, but it doesn't tell us to whom. In your opinion, **who** is Moshe speaking to in 11:4, and why is he declaring this information?

Then, carefully study 11:8, making sure that you understand how it is a continuation of 11:4-7! Use your understanding of this pasuk to answer **all** of the above questions. [Did you ever notice this before?]

Be sure that you understand how Moshe's statement in 11:8 relates directly to 10:28-29.

2. Considering that Moshe is still speaking to Pharaoh in 11:4-8, it's quite clear that he didn't leave Pharaoh's palace in 10:29. What difficulty does this raise, considering when 11:1-3 took place? If God had told this information to Moshe at an earlier time, can you explain why the Torah records this information at this point in the narrative? [In your answer, relate to 3:18-22 and 4:21-23.]

3. Now, let's see how the commentators grappled with these questions.

First see Rashi on 11:4 (and Rashbam on 11:1). How does Rashi understand the sequence of events?

Then see Ibn Ezra on 11:1 (and also katzar on 11:1 and 11:4). Note how his commentary is very different than Rashi (and Rashbam's)! Be sure that you understand how Ibn Ezra takes into consideration all the points mentioned in question #2!

4. Next, see Ramban. Note how Ramban basically agrees with Rashi (and hence must disagree with Ibn Ezra), but explains how and why this case of God speaking to Moshe in Pharaoh's palace is special! See also Ramban's commentary on 10:29, noting how this relates to his explanation on 11:1.

See also Chizkuni who quotes a Midrash that brings a different solution (but quite creative) to this problem of how God talked to Moshe in Pharaoh's house!

5. Do Moshe and Pharaoh ever see each other again? In case you forgot, see 12:29-33!

Did Moshe keep his promise from 10:29?

Did Pharaoh keep his 'threat' from 10:28?

See Ramban on 10:29!

be-hatzlacha,
menachem