

Shvilei Pinches

Pesach

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The Chasam Sofer's Tremendous Insight:

"They Spoke of Yetzias Mitzrayim that Entire Night" To Make Amends for Not Doing So at the Time of Haman's Evil Decree!

We are rapidly approaching the holiday of Pesach, "זמן חירותנו", commemorating our freedom and emancipation from the exile in Mitzrayim. Our holy seforim emphasize that every Jew, no matter how lowly, is capable of realizing his own, personal exodus from his own, personal Mitzrayim--from slavery to freedom and from darkness to illumination. This idea is expressed in the Mishnah quoted in the haggadah (Pesochim 116:): **"In every generation, a Jew must view himself, as if he, personally, had left Mitzrayim."** In keeping with the time, it is appropriate to explore several issues pertaining to Pesach.

1) We have learned in the Mishnah (Pesochim 116.) that the story of the exodus from Mitzrayim is to be told in the form of question and answer — the son asking and the father answering. The source for this institution is found in the following verses (Shemos 12,26): **"והיה כי יאמרו אליכם בניכם מה העבודה הזאת לכם, ואמרתם זבח פסח"** (Shemos 12,26): **"והיה כי ישאלך בנך מחר לאמר מה זאת ואמרת אליו בחזק: 'הוא לה'"** and (ibid. 13,14): **"יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים מבית עבדים"**.

2) It is also worth examining the rabbinical institution to drink four cups of wine on the first night of Pesach. Albeit, the Talmud Yerushalmi (Pesachim 10,1) and the Midrash (B.R. 88,5) explain that the four cups correspond to the four "expressions of redemption", **לשונו של גאולה**, mentioned in parshas vayerah (Shemos 6,6): **והוצאתי, והצלתני, וגאלתי, ולקחתי**; nevertheless, where do we actually see more than a single redemption from the exile in Mitzrayim?

"They Spoke of Yetzias Mitzrayim that Entire Night"

Let us begin our explanation by quoting from the haggadah shel Pesach:

"מעשה ברבי אליעזר ורבי יהושע ורבי אלעזר בן עזריה ורבי עקיבא ורבי טרפון שהיו מסובין בבני ברק, והיו מספרים ביציאת מצרים כל אותו הלילה, עד שבאו תלמידיהם ואמרו להם, רבותינו הגיע זמן קריאת שמע של שחרית."

We find a phenomenal insight on this story in the "Derashos Chasam Sofer" (part 1, page 207, column 3), based on a teaching in the Gemorah (Gittin 57:): **"מבני בניו של המן — למדו תורה בבני ברק"**. In the time of Haman, the Jews failed to fulfill the mitzvah of recounting the story of yetzias Mitzrayim, as we find in the verse (Esther 4,17):

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“ויעבור מרדכי ויעש ככל אשר צוה עליו אסתר”; Rashi comments that Mordechai saw fit to fast on the first night of the yomtov of Pesach.

Not only did they not eat matzos and maror on the first night of Pesach, but they did not recount the story and the events of the exodus, either. We can deduce this from the Gemorah (Megillah 4.): **“one is required to read the megillah at night and once again during the day,”** and Rashi’s explanation that this is to commemorate the miracle, when they were crying out in prayer day and night; we see that all they did was pray.

The Chasam Sofer teaches that the sages who were reclining in Bnei Brak and discussing yetzias Mitzrayim that entire night, were trying to make amends on behalf of the descendants of Haman who taught Torah in Bnei Brak. It was their forefather, the wicked Haman, who caused the neglect of this same mitzvah in his time.

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify a point about the Chasam Sofer’s explanation. The sages were not trying to make amends for the wicked Haman’s sin; for, he was a descendant of Amalek and was beyond tikun. They were trying to make amends for the descendants of Haman. The holy seforim explain that descendants are contained within their ancestors. Therefore, these descendants of Haman were part of him when he caused the observance of Pesach to be ignored. Consequently, they required tikun.

The Exile in Mitzrayim Was to Purify Yisroel to Receive the Torah

Let us enjoy the wonderful words of the Chasam Sofer while delving deeper into this incident in Bnei Brak and the sages’ intent to rectify Yisroel’s negligence with regard to recounting the tale of yitzias Mitzrayim in the time of Haman. Chazal elucidate the possuk (Esther 4,15) in the Midrash (Esther Rabbusi 8,7):

“ותאמר אסתר להשיב אל מרדכי, אמרה לו (שם שם טז) לך כנוס את כל היהודים הנמצאים בשושן וצומו עלי ואל תאכלו ואל תשתו שלשת ימים, אלו הן י”ג וי”ד וט”ו בניסן, שלח לה והרי בהם יום ראשון של פסח, אמרה לו זקן שבישראל למה הוא פסח. מיד שמע מרדכי והודה לדבריה, הדא הוא דכתיב (שם שם יז) ויעבר מרדכי ויעש ככל אשר צוה עליו אסתר, תמן אמרין שהעביר יום טוב של פסח בתענית.”

How are we to make sense of Esther’s statement to Mordechai: **“זקן שבישראל למה הוא פסח”** — “Elder of Yisroel, what is the point of observing Pesach?” Clearly, it is prohibited, even in times of trouble, to cancel a mitzvah prescribed by the Torah. Just the opposite is true; in times of trouble, we must double our efforts to observe the Torah and fulfill the mitzvos. So, what motivated Esther to suggest this drastic measure, and why did Mordechai end up agreeing with her?

Let us explain the matter based on an enigmatic statement in the Zohar hokadosh (Bereishis 27.):

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“וימררו את חייהם בעבודה קשה, בקושיא, בחומר, בקל וחומר, ובלבנים, בלבון הלכתא, ובכל עבודה בשדה, דא ברייתא, את כל עבודתם, דא משנה.”

This Zohar draws an analogy between the various types of backbreaking labor Yisroel were subjected to in Mitzrayim and various aspects of study of Torah she'b'al peh. At first glance, it is difficult to comprehend the parallels drawn by this baffling Zohar.

Let us propose a worthy idea. It is known that Yisroel were exiled to Mitzrayim to purify them and prepare them for receiving the Torah. It is written (Devarim 4,20): **“ואתכם Hashem has taken you and removed you from the iron crucible, from Mitzrayim, to be a nation of heritage, as this very day.”** Rashi comments that an iron crucible is a vessel that was used to refine gold. Rashi (Shemos 3,11and 12) explains that Bnei Yisroel merited the miraculous exodus from Mitzrayim, because of Hashem’s future designs for them—they were destined to receive the Torah three months later on the mountain.

The Purpose of Yetzias Mitzrayim Was to Receive Torah She'b'al Peh

The Sefas Emes (Pesach 5639) teaches us an important principle. The purpose of the exodus from Mitzrayim was so that Yisroel would receive the oral law. It is, therefore, a mitzvah to discuss out loud the events of the exodus as an allusion to Torah she'b'al peh. This very idea is expressed by the Bnei Yissoschar (Nissan 1,5) to explain the following words of the haggadah: **“ואפילו כולנו חכמים כולנו נבונים כולנו זקנים כולנו יודעים את התורה מצוה עלינו לספר ביציאת מצרים, וכל המרבה לספר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משובח.”**

In other words, even if we were all learned in Torah—refers to Torah she'b'chsav—nevertheless, we would still be commanded to tell the story of the exodus from Mitzrayim—tell, specifically, by mouth, orally—and whoever recounts the story at greater length and in greater detail is praiseworthy.

This idea that we are invoking the merit of Torah she'b'al peh on the seder night fits in beautifully with a saying in the Gemorah (Rosh Hoshanah 11:): **“רבי יהושע אומר, בניסן נגאלו בניסן עתידין ליגאל, מנלן אמר קרא ליל שמורים, ליל המשומר ובא מששת ימי בראשית.”** **“Rabbi Yehoshua says, in Nissan they were redeemed and in Nissan they are destined to be redeemed again; from where do we know this? The verse states (regarding the night of the exodus from Mitzrayim): It is a ‘night of anticipation,’ a night that has been anticipated since the six days of creation (as the date of the final redemption).”** Additionally, the Midrash says (V.R. 7,3): **“אין כל הגלויות הללו מתכנסות אלא בזכות משניות”**—all of the redemptions, including the future redemption, will be realized in the merit of the study of Torah she'b'al peh.

We have presented many times before, in the name of Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zts”l, an amazing allusion in the possuk (Yeshayah 1,27): **“ציון במשפט תפדה ושביה”** **“Zion will be redeemed through justice, and those who return to her through righteousness.”** Now, the essence of Torah she'b'al peh is the Talmud Bavli

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and the Talmud Yerushalmi. Here is the allusion found in that verse: ציון במשפט has the same numerical equivalent as תפריה—both equal 1076; while, תלמוד ירושלמי has the same numerical equivalent as תלמוד בבלי, 524. The message is that just as we were redeemed from Mitzrayim on the night of Pesach in order to receive Torah she'b'al peh; so, too, we will be redeemed in the future, on the night of Pesach, in the merit of Torah she'b'al peh.

We understand so clearly, now, why the author of the haggadah instituted the recitation of verses from the written law, as well as mishnayos and braisos from the oral law in order to recount the story of yetzias Mitzrayim. Furthermore, he chose to conclude the mitzvah with the formula: "ברוך אתה ה' גאל ישראל" — **Blessed are You, Hashem, Who redeemed Yisroel**. By telling the story of the exodus from Mitzrayim, and fulfilling the notion of "פה סח" (a mouth that speaks), which is a fulfillment of Torah she'b'al peh, we will merit the ultimate redemption, quickly, in our days.

We can now explain the meaning of the enigmatic Zohar hokadosh cited previously: "וימררו את חייהם בעבודה קשה, בקושיא, בחומר, בקל וחומר, ובלבנים, בלבון הלכתא, ובכל עבודה בשרה, דא ברייתא, את כל עבודתם, דא משנה". The Zohar is teaching us that the whole purpose for the difficult labor during the exile in Mitzrayim, was to purify us and prepare us for the labor and toil of Torah she'b'al peh which includes kushyah, kal va'chomer, mishnah, and so forth.

This also illuminates for us why the story must be told in a question and answer format—with the son asking and the father answering. The nature of Torah she'b'al peh is the transmission from generation to generation, father to son and Rebbe to student. Therefore, it is appropriate that the recounting of yetzias Mitzrayim on the night of Pesach, which commemorates that we received Torah she'b'al peh as a result of that exodus, follow this format.

Four Cups of Wine Represent פרד"ס

Zohar hokadosh states (Ekev 271:): "לכו לחמו בלחמי דא אורייתא דבכתב, ושתו ביין" — מסכתא דא יינא דאורייתא דבעל פה—We can now proceed to explain the rationale for the Rabbinical institution to drink four cups of wine on the seder night. The bread alludes to the written law and wine to the oral law. Just as wine is derived from the fruit of the vine, so, too, the expositions of Torah she'b'al peh are derived from Torah she'b'chsav. We know from Toras Kohanim (Vayikra 1,1):

"רבי ישמעאל אומר בשלש עשרה מדות התורה נדרשת".—the Torah she'b'chsav is elucidated in the Torah she'b'al peh based on the thirteen hermeneutic principles.

In addition, Torah she'b'al peh, which includes all interpretations and commentaries on Torah she'b'chsav, falls into four categories symbolized by פרד"ס — **Pshat**, the straightforward, literal interpretation, **Remez**, interpretations based on allusions, **Drush**, lengthier expositions, and **Sod**, mystical interpretations. So, we can suggest that

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the four cups of wine were instituted to correspond to these four categories of Torah exegesis—which Yisroel merited as a result of their purification process in the iron crucible of Mitzrayim.

This also serves as an explanation for the deeper meaning of the Midrash and the Yerushalmi in regard to the four cups corresponding to the four expressions of redemption. In reality, these four expressions of redemption mentioned concerning the exodus from Mitzrayim, correspond to the four categories of interpretation found in Torah she'b'al peh represented by פֶּרֶשׁ—pshat, remez, drush, sod—which were redeemed with Yisroel from exile in Mitzrayim. After all, it was in the merit of that redemption that Yisroel received Torah she'b'al peh which is comprised of these four categories of interpretation.

Esther Cancelled Pesach in Order to Save Torah She'b'al Peh

Let us continue along this path to try and explain why Esther saw fit to cancel the observance of the first day of Pesach, at the time of Haman's evil decree. We will begin by introducing what we have learned in the Gemorah (Shabbos 88.)—on Purim, Yisroel received the Torah out of ahavah:

“ויתיצבו בתחתית ההר, אמר רבי אבדימי בר חמא בר חסא, מלמד שכפה הקב”ה עליהם את ההר כגיגית ואמר להם, אם אתם מקבלים התורה מוטב, ואם לאו שם תהא קבורתכם. אמר רבי אחא בר יעקב מכאן מודעא רבה לאורייתא [פירש רש”י: “שאם יזמינם לדין למה לא קיימתם מה שקבלתם עליכם יש להם תשובה שקבלוה באונס”]. אמר רבא, אף על פי כן הדור קבלוה בימי אחשורוש, דכתיב קימו וקבלו היהודים, קיימו מה שקיבלו כבר.”

In the Pri Tzaddik (Purim 2), Rav Tzaddok hokohen of Lublin, zy”a, proves that when Yisroel fulfilled and accepted the Torah on Purim out of ahavah, it is referring to Torah she'b'al peh—that is what they accepted willingly on Purim. Tosafos ask why was it necessary for Hashem to force Yisroel into accepting the Torah, by holding the mountain over their heads like a barrel and giving them an ultimatum, had they not already expressed their willingness to receive the Torah by proclaiming **נעשה ונשמע**? An answer to this question is found in the Midrash Tanchuma (Noach 3); they only accepted Torah she'b'chsav willingly at Har Sinai, but Torah she'b'al peh was accepted only under duress.

Since Torah she'b'al peh was originally accepted while the mountain was being held above their heads in a threatening manner, it is understandable why Rava said: **“אף על”** **“nevertheless, they received it again during the times of Achashverosh.”** This second acceptance was in regards to Torah she'b'al peh, which until then had only been accepted under duress, but, in the times of Achashverosh, was accepted willingly and lovingly. In this manner, Rav Tzaddok explains why we find in the Gemorah (Sanhedrin 96:): **“מבני בניו של המן למדו תורה: “בבני ברק”** **“the descendants of Haman taught Torah in Bnei Brak.”** Seeing as Haman was a catalyst for Yisroel accepting Torah she'b'al peh, he must have contained

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some sparks of kedushah belonging to Torah she'b'al peh; from those sparks, descended those who taught Torah in Bnei Brak.

This is also the reason why a feast over wine was established on Purim, as it is written (Esther 9,22): "לעשות אותם ימי משתה ושמחה". We cited a Zohar hakodosh above stating that wine is a reference to Torah she'b'al peh: "ושתו ביין מסכתי דא יינא" "דאורייתא דבעל פה". Therefore, the institution to drink wine on Purim, alludes to the fact that Yisroel accepted the oral law on Purim, which is compared to wine. For the very same reason, Esther invited Haman to a feast specifically with wine which led to his downfall; she foresaw that due to his downfall, Yisroel would accept the Torah she'b'al peh—which is also referred to as wine.

"Elder of Yisroel, Why Celebrate Pesach?"

We can now make sense of Esther's words to Mordechai: "זקן שבישראל למה הוא" "זקן"—"Elder of Yisroel, why do we celebrate Pesach?" She realized, by divine inspiration, that as a result of the miracle of Purim, Yisroel would accept the Torah she'b'al peh out of ahavah. She told Mordechai, therefore, to instruct the people to fast three days, on her behalf, including the first day of Pesach. When Mordechai questioned her concerning the cancellation of the mitzvos related to the first night of Pesach, she replied wisely: "זקן שבישראל למה הוא פסח".

In other words, since you are an elder of Yisroel, a scholar of the oral law, a זקן, and the Gemorah (Kiddushin 32:) teaches us: "זקן זה שקנה חכמה"—a זקן is one who has acquired chochmah, wisdom, then you should certainly realize that if Yisroel does not warrant the miracle of Purim, they will not receive Torah she'b'al peh. In that event, "למה הוא פסח"—what purpose would the holy ceremony of the first night of Pesach serve? After all, the ceremony is to invoke the aspect of "פה סח" representing Torah she'b'al peh.

For that reason, Mordechai, one of the heads of the Sanhedrin, the sages of the oral law, agreed to annul the rituals that Pesach night, including the eating of matzah and maror, the recounting of the story of yetzias Mitzrayim and the drinking of the four cups of wine. We discuss the exodus to invoke the "פה סח"; we consume four cups of wine corresponding to פרד"ס, the four categories of Torah exegesis. Seeing as all of these mitzvos are to commemorate the exodus, whose purpose was to allow Yisroel to receive Torah she'b'al peh, they would be meaningless without the miracle of Purim—which facilitated the acceptance of Torah she'b'al peh me'ahava.

We should now have a better understanding of the Chasam Sofer's explanation of the incident in Bnei Brak:

"מעשה ברבי אליעזר ורבי יהושע ורבי אלעזר בן עזריה ורבי עקיבא ורבי טרפון שהיו מסובין בבני ברק, והיו מספרים ביציאת מצרים כל אותו הלילה".

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As explained, these holy Tanaim, the leaders of Torah she'b'al peh throughout the generations, gathered, specifically, in Bnai Brak, to help make amends for the descendants of the wicked Haman, teachers of Torah in Bnai Brak. **“והיו מספרים ביציאת ממצרים כל אותו הלילה”**—**“and they discussed yetzias Mitzrayim, throughout the night,”** to invoke the kedushah of Torah she'b'al peh, by fulfilling the aspect of **“פה סח”**. Their intention was to correct the sin of Haman’s descendants; for, while they were still a part of Haman, they caused the cancellation of the mitzvah of sipur yetzias Mitzraim. By so doing, these holy Tanaim wished to awaken in the heavens the miracle of Purim which resulted in Yisroel’s accepting Torah she'b'al peh with love.