

In this week's *Parashah*, we read of the Exodus. R' Yaakov Chagiz z"l (1620-1674; Morocco, Italy, and Turkey) writes: One way to attain *Yir'at Hashem* / fear or awe of G-d is to reflect on the fact that we, *Bnei Yisrael*, are His servants, because He took us out of Egypt, from under Pharaoh's hand, where we had been enslaved and had performed hard labor with bricks and mortar. He took us from there to serve Him, as we read (*Vayikra* 25:55), "For *Bnei Yisrael* are servants to Me, they are My servants, whom I have taken out from the land of Egypt." Perhaps, writes R' Chagiz, the redundancy in this verse means to say: *Bnei Yisrael* are My servants because I am Master of the whole world, but more so than other nations, because I took *Bnei Yisrael* out of Egypt.

R' Chagiz continues: It appears to me that belief in the Exodus is the most important foundation of the Torah. Through that belief, we will come to accept in our minds the obligation to serve our King who took us out of Egypt, and we will be willing even to give our lives for the sanctification of His Name--as a devoted servant places himself in danger to fulfill the will of his master, and as soldiers go into battle, willing to die for their king. Certainly, we, *Bnei Yisrael*, whom *Hashem* has honored by calling us His children, as we read (*Devarim* 14:1), "You are children to *Hashem*, your *Elokim*," must be willing to give our lives and everything we possess in order to serve Him. (*Orach Mishor*)

## Tefilah

This year, we will *iy"H* devote this space to discussing various aspects of our prayers. This week, we continue to examine the structure of our daily prayers.

R' Elie Munk (1900-1981; rabbi in Ansbach, Germany and Paris, France) writes: The various prayers in the daily service were culled from multiple authors who lived in different periods, and were forged into a homogenous unit by a final author. This order was accepted by *Halachah*--it cannot be changed. To understand the inner structure of this order (as exemplified by *Shacharit*) we must turn to the *Midrashic* interpretation of Yaakov's dream (*Bereishit* 28:12): "Behold! A ladder was set earthward and its top reached heavenward." This, the *Zohar* says, refers to the prayer we utter on earth that reaches up to the heaven, as is written (*Melachim I* 8:39), "May You hear from the heaven . . ."

R' Munk continues: A ladder is a tool for ascent. It symbolizes rising to a climax. This, too, is the meaning of prayer. . . The human mind must raise itself, step by step, above and beyond earthly bondage until, at the summit of the ladder, it meets His presence--but only after man has risen to Him--just as the angels in the dream first ascended the heavenly ladder to bring the earthly prayers to the throne of the Almighty, and then descended.

The *Midrash* says that the heavenly ladder in the dream had four rungs, R' Munk continues. *Rambam* z"l, too, identifies four stages in the Torah's narrative of Yaakov's dream, paralleling the four levels through which human perception must advance to attain knowledge of G-d (see *Rambam's* introduction to his *Moreh Nevuchim*). - **Continued in box inside** -

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**“This day shall become a remembrance for you and you shall celebrate it as a festival for Hashem, for your generations, as an eternal decree shall you celebrate it.” (12:14)**

*Rashi z”l* writes: I might think that “generations” means “for two generations,” the smallest plural number; therefore, the Torah says “an eternal decree.” [Until here from *Rashi*]

R’ Ovadiah of Bartenura z”l (15th century; Italy and *Eretz Yisrael*; author of the *Mishnah* commentary known by his name) asks: Let the Torah not say “generations” and it will not be necessary to say “an eternal decree”! He answers: The Torah is teaching that for all time, eternally, *Pesach* should be celebrated as joyously as it was celebrated for the parents and children (the first two generations) who experienced it. (*Amar Naka*)

**“Bnei Yisrael carried out the word of Moshe, and they asked to borrow from the Egyptians silver vessels, gold vessels, and garments.” (12:35)**

R’ Menachem Mendel of Rimanov z”l (1745-1815; early *Chassidic Rebbe*) writes: As a father takes pride in, and tells acquaintances about, every little thing his child does, so the Torah praises *Hashem*’s beloved children for even the small matter of asking the Egyptians to lend them objects of value. But, why is this praiseworthy at all? R’ Menachem Mendel explains: In *Bnei Yisrael*’s joy to be leaving Egypt, one would have expected them to do everything possible to make a clean break with the Egyptians. Certainly they could anticipate that “borrowing” items of value from the Egyptians would make the latter chase them. Moreover, Moshe never told *Bnei Yisrael* that *Hashem* commanded them to obtain items of value from the Egyptians, as he was only instructed by *Hashem* to “Please speak to them . . .” (*Shmot* 11:2), as if he was only giving them good advice. Nevertheless, *Bnei Yisrael* listened to Moshe in this matter, as our verse describes, and for that they are praised. (*Menachem Tziyon*)

**“And it shall be for you a sign on your arm and a reminder between your eyes . . .” (13:9)**

The *Gemara* (*Menachot* 43b) teaches: If one has *Tefilin* “*b’rosho*” / on his head, *Tefilin* “*b’zro’oh*” / on his arm, *Tzitzit* on his clothes, and a *Mezuzah* on his door, it may be presumed that he will not sin. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R’ Chaim Avraham Dov Ber Levine z”l (1860-1938; *Chassidic Rebbe* in New York, known as “the *Malach*”) writes: Our every day experience seems to contradict this teaching, for many people have all of these, and yet they sin! However, R’ Levin writes, a careful reading of the *Gemara*’s precise wording answers the question. The *Gemara* does not say, “If one wears *Tefilin* and *Tzitzit* etc.” The *Gemara* says, “If one has *Tefilin b’rosho*”--literally, “*Tefilin* in his head,” not just “*Tefilin* on his head.” If one puts on *Tefilin*, but then takes his mind off of them or if one puts on *Tzitzit*, but hides them inside his clothes, even when he is at home, he is not called one who “has” *Tefilin* or *Tzitzit*. Such *Tefilin* are not “in” his head, but only “on” his head, and they do not provide any protection against sinning. (*Otzar Igrot Kodesh* No.36)

**“They shall eat the flesh on that night . . . and Matzot, with Merorim (plural of ‘Maror’) / bitter herbs shall they eat it.” (12:8)**

*Rashi z”l* writes: Every bitter herb is called “*Maror*.”

R’ Shlomo Kluger z”l (1785-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) writes: *Rashi*’s comment seems to contradict the *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 39a; *Sukkah* 13a), which limits the plants that may be used for *Maror* to those whose names do not include a “*Shem Levai*” / adjective or qualifier. (For example, writes *Rashi* to *Sukkah* 13a, “swamp *Maror*” may not be used for the *Mitzvah* because its name includes an adjective). Also, *Maror* must be a species that is soft when it is young but hardens as it ages; not all bitter herbs qualify!

R’ Kluger answers: When *Rashi* wrote that “every bitter herb is called ‘*Maror*,’” he did so because he was bothered by the use of plural form, “*Merorim*,” rather than the singular, “*Maror*.” *Rashi* understood from this wording that the *Mitzvah* of eating *Maror* has multiple forms: how we observe it today, after the Torah was given, and how it was observed in Egypt, before the Torah was given--the latter being what *Rashi* is addressing. After the Torah was given, *Maror* can be only those species that have no “*Shem Levai*,” as if to say: “If you, the Jewish People, experience bitterness, do not look for ancillary reasons. Look no further than your own sins, for G-d’s response to our own deeds is the only force that impacts our lives.” In contrast, before the Torah was given, even *Maror* with a *Shem Levai* was acceptable, just as *Bnei Yisrael* were, before the Torah was given, subject to the “ancillary” forces *Hashem* created to run the world, whether one calls them “nature,” “fate,” “angels,” or “the stars.”

Similarly, R’ Kluger continues, the rule that *Maror* must be a species that is soft when it is young but hardens as it ages, is meant to remind us that any bitterness in the Jewish People’s lives can be traced back to listening to the *Yetzer Ha’ra*, whose modus operandi is to be “soft” and appealing at first, and then to turn “hard” and aggressive. Again, however, this is relevant only after the Torah and its *Mitzvot* were given. (*Korban Pesach* 473:5)

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R’ Munk continues: R’ Yeshayah Halevi Horowitz z”l (the *Shelah Hakadosh*; rabbi of Prague and Yerushalayim; died 1630) notes that the “four worlds of the philosophers” described by *Rambam* parallel the four worlds discussed in *Kabbalah* (known as “*Asiyah*,” “*Yetzirah*,” “*Beriyah*,” and “*Atzilut*”). The quest for truth must pass through all four of these stages if it is to succeed: first, perceiving the physical world, then extracting the laws that govern these perceived things (their “forms”), then seeking the causes behind these forms, and finally proceeding to the Ultimate Cause (G-d). This is the basis for the structure of our daily morning prayer, concludes R’ Munk: The first part, from *Berachot* to *Baruch She’amar*; the second part, from *Baruch She’amar* to *Barchu* (*Pesukei D’Zimra*); the third part, *Kri’at Shema* and its blessings; and the fourth part, *Shemoneh Esrei*. (*The World of Prayer* p.10-12)

**– To be continued –**