

# Zeicher le-Mikdash

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*Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS*

At the *Seder*, we eat *koreich zecher le-mikdash*. Interestingly, before eating, we explain that we are doing so *zecher le-mikdash*. The Mishna Berura is bothered by the problem of *hefseik*, and rather tentatively suggests that this explanation be omitted.<sup>117</sup> Whilst the prevalent custom is to say the *zecher le-mikdash ki-hillel* paragraph, the Mishna Berura's question highlights our self-conscious preoccupation with *zecher le-mikdash* at the *Seder*.

*Magid* concludes with the *beracha* of *asher gealanu*. The original form of this *beracha* was considerably shorter than our present version. After the standard opening, the *beracha* immediately concluded with *asher gealanu ve-ga'al es avoseinu me-mitzrayim*. And, in fact, according to Rabbi Tarfon, this compact version is the only valid text of the *beracha*. Rabbi Akiva, however, maintains that after the destruction of the *beis ha-mikdash* we add to the *beracha* the request that *Hashem* rebuild the *beis ha-mikdash* and restore the *avoda*<sup>118</sup>. A noble request, to be sure, but does it really belong in this *beracha*? After all, this *beracha* caps our *sipur yetzias mitzrayim*. Its focus, therefore, is retrospective. Thus, while the initial thanksgiving is appropriate, the concluding petition seems, in context, inappropriate. We detect an emerging pattern; at the *Seder* we are preoccupied with the *beis ha-mikdash*.

This preoccupation with the *beis ha-mikdash* is reflected in various *minhagim* of the *Seder* as well. The *Ramo* quotes the *minhag* to eat an egg at the *Seder zecher le-churban ha-mikdash* because *tisha be-av* falls on the same day of the week as the first night of *Pesach*<sup>119</sup>. Is this convergence anything more than a coincidence of the calendar? Why is it important to mark this apparent irrelevant fact? Furthermore, it certainly seems anomalous to introduce an element of mourning into the *Seder*. Let us again note the preoccupation with the *beis ha-mikdash*.

The *Netziv* offers *zecher le-mikdash* as the reason for two other practices of the *Seder*, as well. Before eating *Karpas*, we wash *netilas yadayim*. All year long, however, the prevalent, if problematic, custom is that we do not wash *netilas yadiyim* before eating foods dipped in liquids. Although the *gemora* clearly dictates that there is a rabbinic obligation to wash *netilas yadayim*, we rely on the opinion of *Tosafos* ad locum that this obligation was only in effect in the time of the *beis hamikdash*<sup>120</sup>. The question arises as to why, according to *Tosafos*, we do so at the *Seder*. The *Netziv* explains that we wash *zecher le-mikdash*<sup>121</sup>. The *Netziv* (ibid) also explains the

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<sup>117</sup> *Orach Chayim* 475, *Beur Halacha* ibid.

<sup>118</sup> *Pesachim* 116b

<sup>119</sup> *Orach Chayim* 476:2

<sup>120</sup> *Pesachim* 115a and *Tosafos* ad locum

<sup>121</sup> Introduction to commentary on the *Hagadah (Imrei Shefer)*

custom of wearing a *kitel* at the *Seder* in terms of *zecher le-mikdash*. The meat of *korbanos* was eaten in a manner befitting royalty. Accordingly, explains the Netziv, those eating the *korban pesach* would wear robes, and we, *zecher le-mikdash*, emulate that practice by wearing a *kitel*.

**Q** What accounts for this preoccupation with the *beis ha-mikdash*? We are always supposed to be mindful of the *beis ha-mikdash*, but our preoccupation at the *Seder* seems disproportionate.

We can derive a crucial insight into *yetzias mitzrayim* and *sipur yetzias mitzrayim* from *Shiras Ha-yam*. The *shira* celebrates the drowning of the Egyptians at *Yam Suf*, which consolidated and clinched the political exodus from Egypt. Accordingly, the *shira* focuses retrospectively on that seminal, miraculous event. Nevertheless, the *shira* concludes with a *bakasha* for the building of the *beis ha-mikdash*.

*You will bring them and implant them on the mount of your heritage, a foundation for Your dwelling-place that You, Hashem, have made - a Sanctuary (mikdash), my Lord, which Your hands established.*

**Shemot 15:17**

תבאמו ותטעמו בהר נחלתך  
מכון לשבתך פעלת ה' מקדש  
אדני כוננו ידיך:  
שמות טו:יז

In a remarkable display of symmetry, according to Onkelos (15:2), the *shirah* also begins by focusing on the *beis ha-mikdash*. *Zeh kale ve-anvahu*, according to Onkelos, means: this is my God and I will build for Him the *beis ha-mikdash*. The conclusion of the *shirah*, and, according to Onkelos, its beginning, suggest that the building of the *beis ha-mikdash* was the culmination of *yetzias mitzrayim*. Accordingly, the *shira* concludes with a *bakasha* for the building of the *beis ha-mikdash*.

The *pasuk* in *sefer Melachim* also indicates that the building of the *beis hamikdash* represented the denouement of *yetzias mitzrayim*. Generally, in Navi, dates are expressed in terms of the reign of the monarch. The Navi, however, dates the building of the *beis ha-mikdash* from *yetzias Mitzrayim* as well. "And it was in the four hundred and eightieth year after the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel ... that he (began to) build the house of the Lord."<sup>122</sup> The Navi highlights the climactic connection between *yetzias mitzrayim* and the building of the *beis ha-mikdash* by dating its construction accordingly.

In what sense was the building of the *beis ha-mikdash* the culmination of *yetzias mitzrayim*? When *Ha-Kadosh Baruch Hu* charges *Moshe Rabeinu* with the mission of leading *Bnei Yisroel* out of Egypt, He tells him, "When you take the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain".<sup>123</sup> Rashi, quoting the medrash, elaborates "I have a matter of great consequence dependent on this departure of *Bnei Yisroel* from Egypt; they are destined to receive the Torah upon this mountain three months after they leave Egypt." In other words, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* did not intend *yetzias mitzrayim* as an end unto itself. The *pasuk* indicates that *yetzias mitzrayim's* true significance was to facilitate *kabolas ha-torah*. On the other hand, we have

<sup>122</sup> Melachim I 6:1

<sup>123</sup> Shemos 3: 12

inferred from *Shiras Ha-yam* that *yetzias mitzrayim* climaxed with the building of the *beis ha-mikdash*. Are these two different, distinct goals of *yetzias mitzrayim* or are they interrelated?

Ramban, in his introduction to sefer Shemos, beautifully explains the interrelationship of *kabolas ha-torah*, building the *beis ha-mikdash* and *yetzias mitzrayim*. *Galus mitzrayim* extended beyond the geographical confines of *mitzrayim* and physical servitude to Pharaoh; *galus* lingered until *Bnei Yisroel* returned to the spiritual station of their ancestors. This was achieved when *Bnei Yisroel* experienced the divine revelation at *Har Sinai*. The intimacy at Sinai with the *shechina* was not intended as a one time experience. Hashem sought to perpetuate the *geulah* by commanding that we construct the *Mishkan* because "the secret of the *Mishkan* is that the Glory which abode upon Mount Sinai should abide upon the *Mishkan* in a concealed manner." "Thus Israel always had with them in the *Mishkan* the Glory which appeared to them on Mount Sinai."<sup>124</sup> The *Mishkan*, of course, was intended as a temporary abode for the *shechina*. The *beis ha-mikdash* is Hashem's permanent home. Thus *yetzias mitzrayim* climaxed with *ma'amad Har Sinai*; that climax was perpetuated with the building of the *beis hamikdash*.

The *Mishna* teaches that *sipur yetzias Mitzrayim* is accomplished by being *maschil be-gnus umesayem be-shevach*.<sup>125</sup> One element of our disgrace is that our ancestors were idolaters. The corresponding praise is the spiritual peak that we attained - that Hashem brought us close to Him, made us the chosen nation and allowed us to experience His unity.<sup>126</sup> We became the chosen nation at Har Sinai, seven weeks after the Exodus.<sup>127</sup> Clearly, the mandate of *maschil be-gnus umesayem be-shevach* requires that we look beyond what transpired the night of the Exodus and look to what developed from the Exodus. Accordingly, the mandate of *mesayem be-shevach* requires that we focus upon the *beis ha-mikdash* since *yetzias mitzrayim* culminated with its construction. Hashem's unity is experienced, most vividly and completely, in the *beis ha-mikdash*.<sup>128</sup>

Thus, the *beis ha-mikdash* is an integral part of *sipur yetzias mitzrayim*. It is always a *mitzvah* to remember the *beis ha-mikdash*.<sup>129</sup> To do so at the *seder* is doubly significant because *zecher le-mikdash* is an integral part of *sipur yetzias mitzrayim*; hence, our declaration before eating *Koreich*, the various customs which are practiced *zecher le-mikdash*, and Rabbi Akiva's addendum to the *beracha* of *asher gealanu*. Celebrating the building of the *beis ha-mikdash* is an integral part of our *sipur yetzias mitzrayim*. It would be self-contradictory to ignore its destruction and not implore Hashem for its rebuilding.

We can now appreciate that the convergence of the first day of *Pesach* and *Tisha Be-av* upon the same day of the week is not a calendrical coincidence. It indicates that the tragic events of *Tisha Be-av* negated part of the attainment of *Pesach*. Thus, it is indeed appropriate, as part of *sipur*

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<sup>124</sup> Vide Ramban, beginning of *parshas Terumah*, and Ramban, introduction to *Sefer Shemos*

<sup>125</sup> *Pesachim* 116a

<sup>126</sup> *Rambam, Chamet U'matzoh* 7:4

<sup>127</sup> *Shemos* 19:5

<sup>128</sup> Miracles were commonplace and many elements of natural law were suspended - vide *Avos* 5:2, *Yoma* 21a. For this reason the *shem ha-meforash* was pronounced in the *beis ha-mikdash*. Vide *Sotah* 37b, 38a.

<sup>129</sup> *Sukah* 41a

*yetzias mitzrayim*, to eat an egg at the *Seder zecher le-churban ha-mikdash*. We show our appreciation for Hashem's gift, the culmination of the Exodus, by subtly and symbolically mourning its loss.

Recognizing the prominence of the *beis ha-mikdash* within *sipur yetzias mitzrayim* illumines several other hitherto obscure features of the *Hagadah*. In the *al achas kamah ve-chamah* and *dayeinu* passages we trace the miraculous, beneficent course of Jewish history well beyond the exodus until the construction of the *beis ha-mikdash*. *Primo facie*, the relevance of these historical chronicles to *sipur yetzias mitzrayim* is dubious and their terminus arbitrary.

Moreover, according to the Vilna Gaon, the *Mishnah* includes within *sipur yetzias mitzrayim* a similar, albeit compressed, chronicle of Jewish history. The *Mishnah* teaches that we introduce our singing of *Hallel* by acknowledging that we are obligated to thank Hashem "who took us from slavery to freedom, from misery to joy, from mourning to festival, from gloom to a great light, from servitude to redemption". The Vilna Gaon explains that these phrases refer to successive events or generations.<sup>130</sup> Thus "from slavery to freedom" refers to the Exodus, "from misery to joy" at *yam suf*, "from mourning to festival" at *Har Sinai*, "from gloom to a great light" from the desert to *Eretz Yisrael*, and "from servitude to redemption" from the days of the Judges to the days of David and Shlomo.

The reason for these chronicles is abundantly clear. The *halacha* of *maschil be-gnus u-mesayem be-shevach* requires us to narrate the story of the Exodus and also its culmination, its crowning glory. Accordingly, we trace the course of Jewish history until the construction of the *beis ha-mikdash* when, in the words of the Vilna Gaon, the redemption was complete.

We can also appreciate another prime element of *sipur yetzias mitzrayim*. The centerpiece of *sipur yetzias mitzrayim* is the exposition of the *parshah Arame Oveid Avi* (*Devarim* ch. 26).<sup>131</sup> The *Mishna*, however, does not explain why this *parshah* was chosen. Why not, for instance, the *parshios* in *Sefer Shemos* which provide a more extensive account of our servitude and redemption?<sup>132</sup> The unique feature of *Arame Oveid Avi* is that it highlights the connection between *yetzias mitzrayim* and the *beis ha-mikdash*. The *parshah* begins *Arame Oveid Avi va-yeired Mitzrayimah* and concludes *ve-yevieinu el ha-makom ha-zeh*, which, of course, refers to the *beis ha-mikdash*.

This point is subject to an obvious challenge. We omit the final *pasuk*, *vayevieinu el ha-makom ha-zeh*. Why is the main *pasuk* missing? *Ikar chaser min ha-sefer!* Rabbi David Zvi Hoffman and the Rov, however, both maintain that originally in the time of the *beis ha-mikdash* this final verse was included, as per the *Mishna's* instruction that the **entire** *parshah* is to be expounded. Only subsequently, due to the destruction of the *beis ha-mikdash*, were we forced to omit this verse<sup>133</sup>.

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<sup>130</sup> Commentary to *Hagadah* ad locum

<sup>131</sup> *Pesachim* 116a

<sup>132</sup> Vide *Ohr Sameach* on *Rambam Chametz U'matzoh* 7:4. The Rov z"l explained that the *Seder* is dedicated to *masorah*. Accordingly, *Chazal* selected the terse account in *Arame Oveid Avi* to be elaborated by the *Tora she-ba'al peh* rather than the lengthier one in *Sefer Shemos* where the role of *Tora she-ba'al peh* would be less prominent.

<sup>133</sup> *Melamed Le-ho'il* 3:65; Reflections of the Rav, pp. 210-11

Our analysis also illumines a comment in *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*. When Hashem charges Moshe Rabeinu with the mission of taking the Jews out of *mitzrayim*, Moshe demurs. "Send whomever You will send."<sup>134</sup> *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* amplifies Moshe Rabeinu's response. "Send whom You wish, as it will not be my fate to bring the Israelites into the Land of Israel and to be their redeemer in the future."<sup>135</sup> This response would otherwise be a *non sequitur*. Why decline one mission because you can not fulfill a second one? But, of course, Moshe Rabeinu's response is very cogent. The Exodus was only the beginning of the mission; the mission would not be complete until the Jewish people entered *Eretz Yisroel* and constructed the *beis ha-mikdash*. Hence, Moshe Rabeinu argued that the mission should be entrusted to one who could fulfill it in its entirety.

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<sup>134</sup> Shemos 4:13

<sup>135</sup> Quoted by *Rashi* ad locum