



**Daf 120: מִצְוַת מַצָּה וּמָרֹר – THE MITZVAH OF EATING MATZAH AND BITTER HERB**



The *mitzvah* of *maror* (bitter herbs): On Seder night, we eat both *matzah* and *maror*. We don't eat the *Korban Pesach* anymore, as the *Beit HaMikdash* no longer exists, and therefore, it is not possible to sacrifice *korbanot* (offerings).

Rava taught that according to Torah law, in the post-Temple era, we are only obligated to eat *matzah*. The Torah obligation to eat *maror*, however, applies only when there is a *Korban Pesach*. Nevertheless, under rabbinic law, the *mitzvah* to eat *maror* still applies even when there is no *Korban Pesach*.



The *mitzvah* of *Achilat* (eating) *Matzah*: Is it a *mitzvah* to eat *matzah* each of the seven days of Pesach? The answer is no. The *mitzvah* to eat *matzah* only applies to the first night, Seder night. After that, anyone who wants to refrain from eating *matzah* for the remainder of the holiday may do so.

**Daf 121: בְּרָכָה עַל אֲכִילַת קֶרְבָּנוֹת – BLESSING OVER THE EATING OF SACRIFICIAL MEAT**

On the final *daf* of *Masechet Pesachim* we learn an interesting *berachah* — the *berachah* for eating the meat of *korbanot*. Eating the meat of *korbanot* is a *mitzvah* would recite: “*Barukh Atah HaShem....le’echol et ha’zevach*” (Blessed are You...to eat the sacrificial offering).

What blessing was recited before eating the *Korban Pesach*? “..... *le’echol et ha’Pesach*” (.... to eat the Paschal sacrifice).



**FROM THE TALMUD**  
**SEDER MOED**  
**MASECHET PESACHIM**  
**DAF 108B**

מן התלמוד:

סדר מועד, מסכת פסחים דף ק"ח:

“תנו רבנן הכל חייבין בארבעה כוסות הללו אחד אנשים ואחד נשים ואחד תינוקות אמר רבי יהודה וכי מה תועלת יש לתינוקות ביין אלא מחלקין להן קליות ואגוזין בערב פסח כדי שלא ישנו וישאלו.”

**Explanation**

The Sages taught that men, women and children are obligated to drink four cups of wine on the night of Passover. Rabbi Yehuda objected, noting that there is no reason to give wine to children. Instead, children are given parched kernels and nuts on Passover eve so they will stay awake and ask questions.



**חג פסח**  
**כשר ושמח!**

**Happy Passover**  
**!from our family to yours**



מסכת שקלים  
פרק א' – באחד באדר  
TRACTATE SHEKALIM:  
Ch. 1 — ON 1 ADAR

**Daf 2: מִצְוַת מַחְצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל –  
THE MITZVAH OF THE HALF SHEKEL DONATION**



In *Masechet Shekalim*, we learn about the *mitzvah* of the half-shekel. Who was required to offer *korbanot* (offerings) during the time of the Beit HaMikdash? People who committed an *aveirah* (transgression) for which there was an obligatory *korban* (offering), and those who wanted to donate an offering to the Beit HaMikdash. There were also *Korbanot Tzibur* (communal offerings), which were sacrificed on behalf of *Am Yisrael*, e.g., the *Korban Tamid* (Perpetual Offering) and the *Korban Musaf* (Additional Offering).

The money to acquire *Korbanot Tzibur* was taken from the *machatzeet haShekel* (half-shekel) collections. What was the Torah source for the *machatzeet haShekel* funds? God commanded *B'nei Yisrael* to donate a *machatzeet haShekel* of pure silver to the Beit HaMikdash. The *mitzvah* of *machatzeet haShekel* applies every year. The annual *machatzeet haShekel* contribution was to be donated before *Rosh Chodesh Nissan*.

Since the Beit HaMikdash was destroyed, it is impossible to fulfill this *mitzvah*. In *Masechet Shekalim*, we learn various laws regarding the *mitzvah* of the *machatzeet haShekel* donation.

**Daf 3: מִי חַיִּיב בְּמַחְצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל – TO WHOM DOES THE  
OBLIGATION OF THE HALF-SHEKEL APPLY**



On this daf, we learn about which who must fulfill *mitzvah machatzeet haShekel* on this daf. The Mishnah states that men were required to donate the *machatzeet haShekel*, but women were exempt. Minors were also exempt from the *mitzvah* of *machatzeet haShekel*. However, if a child had money and wanted to contribute, the child's donation was accepted.

Who is not able to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *machatzeet haShekel*? Non-Jews. The Mishnah also teaches that the *kohanim* who served in the Beit HaMikdash did not donate because they thought they were exempt from this *mitzvah*. However, Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai asserted that the *kohanim* were mistaken and were obligated to fulfill this *mitzvah*. Nevertheless, out of respect for the *kohanim*, the *beit din* (court) did not force them to donate the *machatzeet haShekel*.

**Daf 4: הָאֲרִיּוֹת הַטּוֹדֵפִים – PREDATORY LIONS**

On this daf, the Talmud relates that God taught Moshe how to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *machatzeet haShekel*. The *Gemara* recounts that God miraculously had a coin emerge from fire and showed it to Moshe, and said: "*B'nei Yisrael* must contribute a coin like this each year."

The *Gemara* also teaches about the *Kutim*. Who were the *Kutim*? The *Kutim* were exiled to *Eretz Yisrael* by King Shalmaneser of Assyria, who decided they must reside in Shomron. According to tradition, because the *Kutim* did not fear and worship Hashem, He did not protect them, and predatory lions suddenly arrived in their neighborhoods. The *Kutim* got very scared and subsequently chose to convert to Judaism. [Cont'd on p. 3]



**Dvar Torah  
L'PESACH**

The famous "**ARBA LESHONOT GEULAH**" / "**FOUR EXPRESSIONS OF REDEMPTION**" on which Chazal based the *mitzvah* to drink four cups of wine at the Pesach Seder are found in *Parashat Va'era* (*Shemot* 6:6-8). Rabbi Ya'akov Sikily z"l (Spain; 14th century) views these expressions as a prophecy concerning several events in Jewish history. In his *Torat HaMinchah* commentary, Rav Sikily explains:

"**I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt**" — refers to exactly what it says.

"**I shall rescue you from their service**" — refers to the splitting of the sea. Before the Exodus, *B'nei Yisrael* were slaves to Pharaoh alone. To encourage people to accompany him in chasing the escaped slaves, Pharaoh promised *B'nei Yisrael* would serve all Egyptian people.

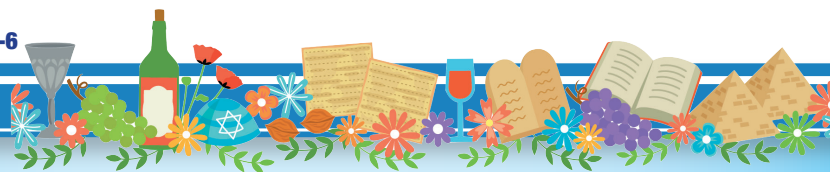
"**I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments**" — refers to the battle with Amalek at Refidim, which was won when Moshe climbed to the top of a hill and stretched out his arms. (Rabbi Sikily adds, it was obviously the hand of Hashem that saved *B'nei Yisrael*.)

"**I shall take you to Me for a people**" — refers to events following the sin of the Golden Calf. God decreed destruction upon *B'nei Yisrael*, but Moshe spoke on their behalf, and Hashem took them back as His nation.

Finally, "I shall bring you to the land about which I raised My hand" — refers to the sin of the *meraglim* (spies). God decreed destruction upon *B'nei Yisrael*, once again, but Moshe spoke on their behalf, and the younger generation was spared. Moshe did not ask God to reverse the decree entirely and let the older generation live, because God hinted to him with the words "about which I raised My hand" that He had taken an irreversible oath.







[Cont'd from p.2] Some *tannaim* asserted the *Kutim* are not Jews because they converted out of fearful terror of the lions and not out of a genuine desire to change their beliefs.

## Daf 5: קפוט מחצית השקל בכל ארץ ישראל – HALF-SHEKEL TREASURIES THROUGHOUT ERETZ YISRAEL



How was the *machatzeet haShekel* (half-Shekel) collected from all Jews? The *Mishnah* states that in the middle of the month of *Adar*, *kupot* (treasury collection repositories) were placed throughout *Eretz Yisrael*. People would contribute their *machatzeet haShekel*, and then the treasuries were brought to the *Beit HaMikdash* in Jerusalem.

These *kupot* looked like a shofar, with a narrow top and a wide bottom. Why were the *kupot* crafted that way? They were designed this way in case a person became overpowered by *yetzer harah* (evil inclination) thought to take the money for themselves. It would be impossible to insert a hand inside the *kupah* — because the opening at the top was too narrow.

In this *mishnah* we also learn that when an abundance of silver *machatzeet haShekel* coins accumulated, and the *kupah* became quite heavy, it would endanger the *shaliach* (designated messenger) who needed to transport the donations to Jerusalem. In such a case, they would substitute the multitude of silver coins with one gold coin. One gold coin is worth many silver coins, which made the mission much easier for the *shaliach*.

## Daf 6: מתי נתנו יותר ממחצית השקל? – WHEN WAS MORE THAN A HALF-SHEKEL DONATED?



Following the destruction of the First *Beit HaMikdash*, *B'nei Yisrael* were exiled to *Bavel* (Babylonia). After 70 years, some of the nation returned to *Eretz Yisrael* with Ezra Ha-Sofer (Ezra the Scribe) and rebuilt the Second *Beit HaMikdash* anew.

The *Mishnah* relates that during the early Second Temple period, the Jews contributed more than the obligatory *machatzeet haShekel* (half-Shekel) because there were not many

Jews in *Eretz Yisrael*. If everyone in the community had donated just one *machatzeet haShekel* (half-Shekel), there would not have been enough money to support the *Beit HaMikdash*.

The *tannaim* believed that fulfillment of *machatzeet haShekel* atoned for the transgressions perpetrated by *B'nei Yisrael*. One of the *tannaim* said that it was because *B'nei Yisrael* worshipped the *egel zahav* (Golden Calf) at *chatzot hayom* (noon), the halfway point of the day, correspondingly, they were directed to donate a half-Shekel.

Rabbi Levi said that when the ten tribes sold the righteous Yosef, they each received a *machatzeet haShekel*, and the mitzvah of *machatzeet haShekel* atones for the *aveirah* (transgression) of selling Yosef.



## FROM THE HAGGADAH

# ואילו

לא הוציא הקב"ה  
את אבותינו ממצרים,  
הרי אננו

ובנינו ובני בנינו משועבדים  
היינו לפרעה במצרים

"If God did not take our ancestors out from Egypt, then we and our children and our children's children would still be enslaved by Pharaoh in Egypt."

One could ask: How do we know this would have happened? Perhaps a king would reign who might have emancipated *B'nei Yisrael*? Alternatively, it is possible there could have been some sort of revolution. The answer can be found in a well-known saying: It is easier to take the Jews out of the Diaspora than it is to take the Diaspora out of the Jews. If *B'nei Yisrael* had departed from Egypt in some natural way, their spirit and mindset would still be enslaved to Egyptian culture. They would not have merited being a people who bring blessings to the world. It was only because God took us out of Egypt and removed Egypt from within us, that we became the Jewish people, who preserve a unique identity and character.





## IN EVERY GENERATION A PERSON MUST SEE THEMSELVES AS IF THEY CAME OUT OF EGYPT.

The Haggadah calls matzah, *lechem oni*, poor person's bread. The rabbis said, "Just as a poor person eats 'in pieces', so too do we eat 'in pieces'" (Masechet Pesachim 115b). People who live with a sense of scarcity, who never know when their next meal might be, are used to rationing resources. *Matzah* connects us to our ancestors in Egypt, who lived in a time of great scarcity.

We are commanded in the Seder to see ourselves as if we personally left Egypt. The act of breaking the matzah and setting some aside for later (*yachatz*), reenacts this Talmudic teaching. The "poor man's bread" is not matzah, but a *cracked* matzah of rationed resources.

On Masechet Pesachim, daf 109a, the rabbis teach: "We snatch matzah [the *afikoman*] on the night of Passover so that the children should not fall asleep." However, the *afikoman* also represents something much deeper; it symbolizes our redemption and liberation from slavery in Egypt. Beginning with *yachatz* and ending with consumption of the *afikoman*, we journey at the seder from *avdut* (slavery) to *cherut* (freedom).



## JEWISH PEOPLE'S MEMORY & THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT

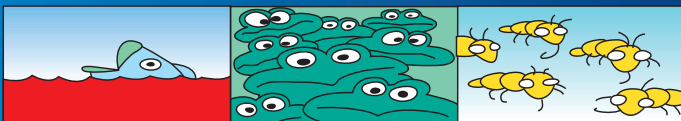
300 years ago, a ship called the Mayflower set sail to the New World. This was a great event in the history of England. Yet, I wonder if there is one Englishman who knows at what time the ship set sail? Do

the English know how many people embarked on this voyage? What quality of bread did they eat? Yet more than 3300 years ago, before the Mayflower set sail, the Jews left Egypt. Every Jew in the world, even in America or Soviet Russia, knows on exactly what day they left – the 15th of the month of *Nisan*; everyone knows what kind of bread the Jews ate – *Matzah*. Even today the Jews worldwide eat *matzah* on the 15th of *Nisan*. They retell the story of the exodus from Egypt and all the troubles Jews have endured since being exiled, saying: "This year slaves. Next year, free. This year here. Next year in Jerusalem, in *Zion*, in *Eretz Yisrael*! That is the nature of the Jews." — David Ben-Gurion in his 1947 speech before the Investigative Committee of the United Nations.

## Rabbi Yehudah has a mnemonic device for the plagues

## דע'ך עד'ש באח'ב

Rabbi Yehudah noted that the acronym for the ten plagues was **D'TZACH ADASH B'ACHAV**. Why did he offer this mnemonic device? Is it difficult to remember the plagues without such assistance? He wanted to teach us that the plagues can be divided into three different groupings:



The first category of plagues (blood, frogs and lice) come up from underground and strike the water and the earth's soil.



The second grouping of plagues (flying insects, cattle disease and boils) affect the face of the earth, harming humans and the cattle that roam the land.



The third grouping of plagues (hail, locusts, darkness and smiting of the first-born) rain down from the heavens.

**In this manner, God showed the Egyptians that He controls the entire world — the earth and water, humans and animals, as well as the things that fall from the sky.**