



# ישיבת הר עציון

## Yeshivat Har Etzion – Israel Koschitzky VBM Parsha Digest, Year IV, #34 Pesach Issue – Chag Rishon 5782

Selected and Adapted by Rabbi Dov Karoll

### Quote from the Rosh Yeshiva

There are two parties that are “deprived” [of their due credit] at the Seder – Moshe Rabbeinu and the Jewish people. Moshe Rabbeinu[s credit being shirked] can be explained easily – we need to emphasize the Almighty’s role in the redemption, to the exclusion of all others who were involved in the process. Thus, we cannot act to offset this. However, the commitment and love displayed by the Jewish people in following Hashem out of Egypt into the desert – לכתך אחרי במדבר בארץ לא זרועה (Yirmeyahu 2:2), is an aspect deserving of our attention and focus at the Seder! -HaRav Yehuda Amital zt”l, Leil HaSeder 5761

### Pesach: Iyun The Mitzva to Eat Maror

Based on a Shiur by Harav Aharon Lichtenstein zt”l

Based on: <https://etzion.org.il/en/holidays/pesach/mitzva-eat-maror>



The Torah states (Shemot 12:8; Bemidbar 9:11):

And they shall eat the meat on that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.

On the fourteenth day of the second month at evening they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

Before we begin to deal with the details of the mitzva of eating maror, we must ask: Is there a mitzva to eat maror? Put differently, is the obligation to eat maror counted as a separate mitzva in the count of the 613 biblically ordained mitzvot? The Rishonim disagree on this issue. The Rambam (Sefer Ha-Mitzvot, asef no. 56) does not count this obligation as a separate mitzva, whereas R. Sa’adya Gaon and the Yere’im (no. 94), who represents the school of the Tosafot, count it as an independent mitzva.

The question of whether eating maror is a separate mitzva touches upon the very root and essence of the mitzva of maror. We learn in Pesachim (120a):

Rava said: [The eating of] matza nowadays is a biblical obligation, whereas [that of] maror is rabbinic. Why is maror different? Because it is written, “They shall eat it [the Pesach-offering] with unleavened bread and bitter herbs” (Bemidbar 9:11) – at a time when there is a Pesach offering, there is maror, but at a time when there is no Pesach offering, there is no maror! Then in the case of matza, too, surely it is written, “They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs”? Scripture indeed repeated [the precept] in the case of matza: “At evening you shall eat unleavened bread” (Shemot 12:18). But R. Acha bar Ya’akov said: Both the one and the other are [only] rabbinic.

We must clarify what the gemara means when it says, “at a time when there is a Pesach offering.” It may be argued that this refers to different historical periods: when the Temple is standing as opposed to when it lies in ruins. Alternatively, it may be suggested that it refers to a time when the Pesach offering is actually eaten. On the second understanding, Rava and R. Acha disagree whether there is an independent mitzva to eat matza, or the eating of matza merely accompanies the mitzva of eating the Pesach-offering; when a person is not eating the Pesach offering, there is also no need to eat matza. As for eating maror, both Amora’im agree that there is no independent mitzva, so it applies only when one actually eats the Pesach offering.

There is a practical ramification between the 2 understandings of “the time when there is a Pesach offering,” for one who does not eat the Pesach offering when the Temple stands. According to R. Acha bar Ya’akov, is such a person duty-bound to eat matza? If matza & maror are independent obligations when the Temple stands, such a person should be obligated (to eat them). On this line of thought, each obligation should be counted as a separate mitzva. This seems to be the understanding of R. Sa’adya Gaon & Tosafot.

The Rambam, on the other hand, did not view these obligations as dependent on the existence of the Temple, but rather on the actual sacrifice of the Pesach offering. He therefore connects these mitzvot to the time that the Pesach offering is brought. According to him, one who fails to bring the Pesach offering would not be obligated to eat maror according to all opinions, and he would not be obligated to eat matza according to R. Acha. It follows from the Rambam's position that the obligation to eat maror should not be counted as an independent mitzva, for it merely accompanies the eating of the Pesach offering (see *Hilkhos Chametz U-Matza* 7:12). Let us now note several practical ramifications emerging from this discussion.

### The Identity of Maror

We learn in consecutive mishnayot in *Pesachim* (2:5-6) the lists of species which are appropriate for matza and maror, respectively. It is possible to understand that these 2 mishnayot are parallel, each one listing 5 species with which one can fulfill the respective obligations of matza or maror. Indeed, the Rambam (*Hilkhos Chametz U-Matza* 7:13) understands that these 5 species are defined as "maror." In contrast, Rashi writes (*Shemot* 12:8): "Every bitter herb is called 'maror.' He commanded them to eat something bitter as a reminder of, 'And they made their lives bitter.'" In general, Rashi does not cite the reasons for the commandments; why does he do so here? It may be suggested that Rashi wishes to exclude the Rambam's understanding that there is a precise definition of maror. He argues that what is essential is the bitterness, so he discusses the mitzva's underlying reason.

This disagreement connects to the question raised earlier. If the obligation to eat maror is a separate mitzva, it stands to reason that we should relate to it as any other mitzva of eating found in the Torah. Accordingly, we must precisely define the object with which the mitzva must be fulfilled. But if the obligation is only auxiliary to another mitzva of eating and it constitutes an aspect of the mitzva of the Pesach offering, it is reasonable to assume that there is no specific definition of the mitzva; the main thing is that the Pesach offering be eaten with something bitter. In other words, if we don't require a specific species for maror, it may be proposed that eating maror is not an independent mitzva. The reverse, however, is not necessarily true, for it may be that it is not an independent mitzva, but yet we require a specific, defined species, and this is the view of the Rambam.

### "Food"

The Gemara in *Sukka* 13b, states that the foods (herbs) which can be used to fulfill the mitzva of maror does not serve as an interposition (*chatzitzta*) for the ritual impurity imparted by foods. The Gemara explains: "What is the reason? Because when they wither they crumble and fall, they are regarded as though they were not there." Rashi (*ad loc.*) gives a novel explanation for this:

Herbs concerning which the Sages said that a man fulfills with them his obligation on Pesach – lettuce, endives, and the rest of them... However, while they are still fresh, they act as an interposition by Torah law because they do not contract ritual impurity, since they are not human food. For if they would contract ritual impurity, they would not interpose before ritual impurity. And when they are dry, their interposition is not an interposition, as is explained: "They crumble and fall."

Regarding mitzvot and prohibitions, we generally invoke the criterion of "human food." Why is this not true regarding the mitzva of maror, according to Rashi here? As we wrote above, Rashi maintains that there is no independent mitzva to "eat" maror, and thus Rashi also says that there is no need for the maror to be defined as a "food." Rashi's position is novel and radical and, as we argued above, the reverse is not necessarily true. In other words, if we do not require "food," it stands to reason that this is not an independent mitzva. But even if we say that there is no independent mitzva to eat maror and that it is a mere accompaniment to the eating of the Pesach sacrifice, we do not have to say that there is no requirement of "food."

### Quantity

As is well-known, there is no "eating" of less than the measure of an olive, whether because an olive's-bulk defines the act of eating or because it defines the significance of the food that is eaten. We would expect to find the same law regarding maror, as is indeed the case. The *Rosh* (10:25), however, writes that one must eat an olive's-bulk of maror, because we recite the blessing "for the eating of maror" over it, and this is the minimal measure for a blessing. The *Sha'agat Aryeh* (no. 20) has a novel understanding of the *Rosh's* words, that since the Sages enacted a blessing, they accordingly required the eating an olive's-bulk. But the requirement of eating an olive's-bulk does not stem from the mitzva of maror itself.

The very raising of the possibility that strictly speaking one need not eat an olive's-bulk brings us back to our first question – is the

eating of maror an independent mitzva? If there is an independent fulfillment to eat maror, then we should require an olive's-bulk, but if maror is merely an aspect of the eating the Pesach sacrifice, then there is room to discuss whether an olive's bulk of maror must be eaten with the Pesach sacrifice or if it suffices to eat any amount of maror to accompany the Pesach sacrifice to give a bitter taste.

### The Obligation in Our Time

In the gemara cited above, we saw that the obligation to eat maror in our time is rabbinic according to all opinions. According to the Tosafot, during the time of the Temple there was an independent mitzva, whereas today, when there is no sacrifice, we fulfill the mitzva in the same manner that it was fulfilled during the time of the Temple, only that now it is rabbinic in nature. What, however, is the law according to the Rambam? How is it possible to eat the maror detached from the Pesach sacrifice, when the essence of the maror is to accompany the eating of that sacrifice? It is like eating butter without the toast! Two possible answers may be proposed.

1) Indeed, this is a revolutionary change. By Torah law, maror is merely an accompaniment to the Pesach sacrifice. The Sages, however, turned the eating of maror into an independent mitzva, similar to other novel rabbinic mitzvot, like Chanuka and Purim.

2) The nature of the consumption is the same, and we relate to it as if there were a "virtual" Pesach sacrifice. Namely, we eat the matza and maror as if they accompanied the Pesach sacrifice. This would best be explained as an example of "zekher le-Mikdash," a reminder of the Temple practice. This approach requires a fertile imagination.

Before concluding, let us note 2 additional points that may be connected to this issue.

A) In Pesachim 115a, Hillel & the Rabbis disagree whether one must make a sandwich out of the Pesach sacrifice, matza & maror. At first glance, it seems possible to link this disagreement to our question, but this is not the case. Even if we maintain that eating maror involves an independent fulfillment, it does not negate the fact that there is an additional fulfillment of eating the maror together with the Pesach sacrifice. Similarly, it may be argued that eating maror does not involve an independent fulfillment, but merely accompanies the eating of the Pesach sacrifice, yet there is no need to make a sandwich out of them, but only to eat them both within the period of akhilat peras (the time it takes to eat 3 or 4 egg-measures of bread) so that it can be regarded as a single act of eating.

B) If we compare the te'amim (cantillation) on the verse in Shemot with those on the verse in Bemidbar (cited above), we see an interesting difference. In the verse in Shemot, "And they shall eat the meat in that night, roast with fire (tzeli esh), and unleavened bread (u-matzot); and with bitter herbs (merorim) they shall eat it," the cantillation mark under the words "tzeli esh" links them to the word "u-matzot," while separating them from the term "merorim." In contrast, in the verse in Bemidbar, "On the fourteenth day of the second month at evening they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread (matzot) and bitter herbs (u-merorim)," the accent links the word "matzot" to the word "u-merorim," whereas the word "pesach" (i.e., the pronominal suffix "it") is separated from them. What is the meaning of this difference? It may be proposed, according to Rava and the Rambam, that on regular Pesach (Pesach Rishon), which is discussed in Shemot, the Pesach sacrifice and the matza have equal standing, each constituting an independent mitzva, and the maror is exceptional in that it merely accompanies the Pesach sacrifice. On Pesach Sheni, which is discussed in Bemidbar, the matza and maror have equal standing, with each coming to accompany the Pesach sacrifice. They are therefore joined together with the cantillation marks. (This shiur was delivered on Thursday, 3 Nissan 5764, a day devoted to father-son learning in the Yeshiva.)

## Iyun: Pesach Offering and Seder Night

### "And They Shall Eat of the Meat on That Night"

By Harav Baruch Gigi

Based on: <https://etzion.org.il/en/holidays/pesach/and-they-shall-eat-meat-night>



The sacrifices offered in the Temple include individual and communal offerings. The communal offerings consist primarily of the daily offerings and the additional ones brought on special days, while the individual offerings include those brought for sins, guilt, peace, and burnt-offerings.

What type of offering is the Pesach offering? The Pesach offering is clearly an individual offering, as every member of Israel must bring it from his own money. To be more precise, the Pesach offering is a joint offering, halakhically identical to an individual offering, as it is brought in the framework of a chabura, a group consisting of a family or several families that join to share its consumption. But if, indeed, the Pesach offering is an individual offering, why does it override Shabbat, and why is it offered even in a state of ritual

impurity? These laws are usually reserved for communal offerings, and not individual offerings!

### The Blood of the Pesach Offering and the Blood of Circumcision

There are only 2 positive mitzvot whose violation carries liability for the punishment of karet (excision): the Pesach offering and circumcision. We find in the midrash (Pesikta De-Rabbi Kahana 7:4) that it was by virtue of these 2 mitzvot that the people of Israel left Egypt, citing the verse (Yechezkel 16:6), “In your blood [damayikh – plural form], live” – deriving that this refers to the blood of the Pesach offering and circumcision.

The mitzva of circumcision was given to Avraham & his descendants as a sign of the covenant that God entered into with every member of Israel for all generations (see Ber. 17:7). One who does not enter this covenant is liable to karet (see 17:14). One’s bond to the people of Israel, God’s people, & his belonging to it begins by imprinting the seal of his master on his flesh (see Seforno, Ber. 17:11).

The mitzva of bringing the Pesach offering was given to the people of Israel on the eve of their exodus from Egypt, and it became the sign of the covenant between God and His people for all time. At that very moment when God was smiting Pharaoh with the plague of the firstborn, God asked of His firstborn son – the people of Israel – to collectively enter into a covenant with Him, by placing the blood of the Pesach offering on the lintel and the 2 side-posts. As is the case with circumcision, one who does not enter into the covenant of the Pesach offering is liable for karet (see Bemidbar 9:13). The Torah even introduced the possibility of Pesach Sheni, the second Passover – an additional chance for one who is on a far off journey on the fourteenth of Nissan and cannot bring the Pesach offering in its appointed time – in order to allow him to enter into the covenant along with his brothers.

The bloods of circumcision and the Pesach offering are interconnected, for with regard to the Pesach offering it is stated: “No uncircumcised person shall eat thereof” (Shemot 12:48). A person may not enter the collective covenant – that of the Pesach offering – unless it was preceded by the individual covenant – that of circumcision. As we saw in the midrash on, “In your blood, live,” Chazal emphasize that these 2 mitzvot are the foundation of the covenant. The blood of circumcision is the common denominator of all people of Israel; the blood of the Pesach offering unifies the people, and by bringing the offering, the individuals transform into a collective. Therefore, the Torah assigned this offering – despite it being an individual offering – some characteristics of a communal offering, obligating that it be brought even on Shabbat and even in a state of ritual impurity.

Since the Pesach offering transforms individuals into a collective, it is brought in a family framework: “A lamb, according to their fathers’ houses, a lamb for a household” (Shemot 12:3). The family is the community in miniature, the path leading from the individual to the collective. By bringing the Pesach offering, the entire house of Israel turns into 1 large family – the people of God. As Chazal expounded: “And the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at dusk’ (12:6) – this teaches that all of Israel can fulfill their obligation with 1 Pesach offering” (Pesachim 78b).

### The Pesach Offering Brought in Egypt: The House as an Altar

Was the Pesach offering brought in Egypt actually a sacrificial offering? The answer to this question is not simple, for in contrast to all other offerings, the Pesach was not brought on an altar. Yet, many of the laws governing that Pesach offering correspond with the laws of sacrifices: The Pesach offering is a “lamb without blemish, a male of the first year... from the sheep, or from the goats” (12:5), and the Torah commands that one may not leave over from it until the morning (12:10).

It appears that the Pesach offering brought in Egypt was a sacrificial offering with unique characteristics, the most striking of which is the fact that it is slaughtered at the entrance to one’s house rather than brought to the altar. Chazal determined that the house of each individual in Egypt turned at that time into an altar: “R. Yosef taught: There were 3 altars there – on the lintel and on the 2 side-posts” (Pesachim 96a). The house is the altar, and the 2 side-posts and the lintel are like the horns of the altar upon which the blood must be placed.

The side-posts of the house, upon which the blood of the Pesach offering was placed, later became consecrated through the mitzva of mezuzah. The truth is that these 2 mitzvot – the Pesach offering in Egypt and the mezuzah – are linked by the protection they provide for the house. The blood that was placed on the side-posts protected the house from the Destroyer that smote the firstborns of Egypt, and the mezuzah is similarly a sign that God protects the house. As Chazal said: “A person sleeps in his house, and the Holy One, blessed be He, protects him from the outside” (Devarim Rabba, Va’etchanan). One who affixes a mezuzah to the entrance of his house turns the house into a Temple and the gates of his house into an altar, and thus his house is protected. This might be the

essence of the Pesach offering – an offering of a covenant, through which man and God dwell in the same house, like the lover and his beloved who live together in their bridal home.

#### The Pesach Offering Brought in Later Generations: The Eating as Sacrifice

The mitzva of the Pesach offering in later generations is fulfilled in the Temple. There they would slaughter the Pesach offering, put of its blood on the altar, and burn on the altar those parts that are due it. What is the nature of the Pesach offering in later generations?

All offerings brought in the Temple require the placing of blood on the horns of the altar. For sin-offerings, there must be 4 applications of blood on the 4 corners of the altar. For most other offerings, there must be 2 applications on 2 of the altar's corners. The Pesach offering is unusual (along with the firstborn and the tithe-offering) in that it does not require application of blood on the horns of the altar; 1 application at the base of the altar suffices (see Rambam, Hilkhhot Korban Pesach 1:6). Unlike most sacrifices, the blood of the Pesach offering does not touch the horns of the altar, nor does it encompass the altar. Rather, it is merely poured out against it so that it reaches it.

The 4 main services relating to every sacrifice are connected to the blood: slaughtering the animal, receiving its blood in a receptacle, bringing the blood to the altar, and sprinkling the blood on it. The difference between the Pesach offering and other sacrifices teaches that as opposed to the other sacrifices, the essence of the Pesach offering is not the service of its blood.

It appears that the Pesach offering brought in later generations was also intended to be a family sacrifice, offered at the entrance of each person's house. However, after the Torah was given, the law prohibited bringing sacrifices in any place except for the place chosen by God, so the Pesach offering could only be brought on Mount Moriya. Yet, even the Pesach offering brought to the Temple had its blood poured in a merely symbolic manner against the altar. After the blood is poured on the base of the altar and those parts of the offering that may not be eaten are offered on the altar, the members of the party associated with the Pesach offering take the offering home and eat it there (see Rambam, Hilkhhot Korban Pesach 1:6).

As a substitute for the blood service, the essence of the Pesach offering is the meat service that is performed in each person's house in the company of his family and friends. For this reason, the Torah established the special mitzva to eat of the Pesach offering: "And they shall eat the flesh on that night" (Shemot 12:8). The Pesach offering is also the only individual offering regarding which one must recite the Hallel at the time it is slaughtered and when it is eaten, and if it was slaughtered for the sake of people who were not assigned to it, it is disqualified. The focus of the Pesach offering is on the consumption, and the essence of its preparation is on the skewer of the family that gathered to eat it together. In this way, the connection of the Pesach offering to a household framework that marked the offering when it was brought in Egypt is preserved even in later generations.

#### Eating at God's Table

In halakhic categories, the Pesach offering is grouped with the peace-offerings, the offerings of lesser sanctity. Like a peace-offering, the Pesach offering is eaten by its owners, in contrast to a burnt-offering, which is entirely for God. However, there are significant similarities between the Pesach offering and the burnt-offering: both are brought exclusively from males, and both are offered "its head with its legs and with the inwards thereof" (Shemot 12:9).

It is thus possible to view the Pesach offering as a special kind of burnt-offering. Instead of the offering being eaten by the altar, it is eaten by its owners. If the house is the Temple and if the skewer upon which the meat is roasted is the altar, then like a burnt-offering, the flesh of the Pesach-offering is eaten in its entirety on the altar. Regarding all the other sacrifices, the person may eat only those parts of the offering that are not burnt on the altar, and even the priests eat only those parts that are not burnt there. In the case of the Pesach offering, however, each person is invited to eat of the flesh of the offering itself. The Pesach meal is the covenantal meal, and the 2 parties to the covenant – God and man – share this meal, as it were. In the case of a Pesach offering, each person is invited to eat with God at His table.

On the night of Passover in Egypt, God appeared to smite the firstborns of Egypt and to save His firstborn son and take him out of Egypt. On the night of Passover in later generations, every member of Israel merits achieving great intimacy with God and eating at His table. The Pesach offering is eaten only at night, as it may be eaten only at the time when the lover and His beloved meet – when God appears to take the children of Israel as His people.

We can now once again compare the covenant of circumcision to the covenant of the Pesach offering. The covenant of circumcision, as we noted, is the seal of the master on his servants. The covenant of the Pesach offering is the covenant between a father and his children.

After God redeemed us from Egypt and chose us from among all the nations, we are His children, and we are therefore invited on the night of Passover to enter His palace and eat from His table. Translated by David Strauss

## Meaning of Pesach: Tanakh

### Lot's "Pesach" and Its Significance

By Rav Yoel Bin-Nun



Based on: <https://etzion.org.il/en/holidays/pesach/lots-pesach-and-its-significance>

Anyone who has studied Sefer Bereishit with Rashi has come across the verse describing Lot's hospitality towards the angels in Sedom: "And he prepared a banquet for them, and baked matzot, and they ate" (Bereishit 19:2), and Rashi's laconic comment: "It was Pesach."

Rashi's explanation is most surprising, for several reasons:

1. Does the mere fact that matza was baked and eaten indicate that it was Pesach? Why does Rashi not deduce that Lot baked matza because it took less time to prepare than bread? (Indeed, this is the explanation offered by Radak, who regards the verse as an important lesson in hospitality: guests should not have to wait long to be offered food.)
2. What significance could there be to Pesach before there was a nation called Am Yisrael & before it left Egypt? Does Rashi's explanation not undermine the special character of the festival of Pesach commemorating the miracle of Am Yisrael's departure from Egypt?

In my youth, I spent much time pondering the reason that Rashi reached this conclusion, whose textual basis seemed so weak. Admittedly, the idea that "it was Pesach" has its source in a midrash of Chazal (Rosh Ha-Shana 11a; Bereishit Rabba 50:22), but Rashi does not always interpret a verse in accordance with such midrashim. Why, then, does he choose in this instance to rely on a midrash whose encounter with the literal text gives rise to such serious questions?

At some stage, after rereading the chapter, I was suddenly struck by the depths of the insight possessed by Chazal & by Rashi. When one reads the text itself directly – rather than through the eyes of the commentaries – Chazal's view can emanate from the words of the verses.

The narrative in Bereishit 19 describes a house that is closed up, in which the family and the guests have just completed a meal with matzot. At the doorway to the house, the angels save the family members, strike the people of the city (Sedom), and then bring Lot's family out of the city, by virtue of the hospitality shown to them.

The following table presents a comparison between the expressions in this chapter and the description of Pesach in Egypt:

#### Bereishit 19

- (6) And Lot went out to them at the entrance, and shut the door after him.
- (11) And they struck the men that were at the entrance to the house with blindness... and they wearied themselves to find the entrance.
- (3) And he made them a feast, and baked matzot, and they ate.
- (13) For we will destroy this place, for their cry has grown great before God, and God has sent us to destroy it.
- (14) ...Get up; get out of this place, for God is going to destroy the city...
- (15) And when the dawn came...
- (12) ...whatever you have in the city, bring it out of this place.
- (16) And he lingered... so they brought him out...

#### Shemot 12

- (39) And they baked the dough which they had brought out of Egypt to make cakes of matzot, for it was not leavened...
- (22) And none of you shall go out from the entrance of his house until morning.
- (23) ...God will pass over the entrance and will not allow the destroyer to come into your houses, to smite you.
- (8) And they shall eat the meat on that night, roasted with fire, with matzot; they shall eat it with bitter herbs.
- (27) It is the sacrifice of Pesach unto God, Who passed over the houses of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt, when He smote Egypt, and delivered our houses.
- (12) I shall smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt...
- (13) ... when I smite the land of Egypt
- (29) ... God smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt
- (31) And he called for Moshe and Aharon by night, and said: Get up; get out from among my nation – you & Bnei Yisrael...
- (51) And it was, on that same day, that God brought Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt by their hosts.
- (39) And they could not linger...

(24) And God rained down upon Sedom and Amora  
brimstone and fire from God out of the heavens.

(25) And He overthrew those cities, and all of the plain, and all  
the inhabitants of the cities, and the vegetation on the land.

Duration: All night until the morning

Lot's family is saved, producing 2 nations: Moav and Ammon.

The many parallels between the overturning of Sedom and the plagues on Egypt practically shout out, "Pesach!" There is the closed house, the angels of destruction/ deliverance, and the events that continue "all night until the morning," when the day dawns and the sun rises (which is the same timetable followed in the Exodus). Most specifically, there is the command, "Get up, get out," and the word "linger;" these are expressions that are intrinsically bound up with the Exodus. Bnei Yisrael "could not linger – because they were driven out of Egypt." Similarly, in leaving Sedom, Lot could not linger because the angels held firmly (perhaps forcibly) onto his hand, and his wife's hand, and the hands of his 2 daughters, "and they brought him out and left him outside of the city" (19:16).

Chazal had all these parallels in mind when they drew their conclusion in the midrash. The "literal school" of commentators, on the other hand, did not see all of this. Their approach is generally to read a verse within its local context, not to offer a synchronic reading of "biblical parallels." In this respect, as in certain others, the midrash offers more than the literal interpretation does. In this manner we are able to draw a distinction of depth between the literal text and the midrash. The midrash recognizes expressions characteristic of the Exodus from Egypt, within the story of Lot's exodus from Sedom. Indeed, "it was Pesach."

Does this mean that the scene took place in the "month of spring," the season of Pesach? A study of the chapter from all angles offers no reason to assume this, so we must conclude that the midrash also comprises 2 levels. The "literal level of the midrash" is the idea, or concept, of "Pesach:" the salvation of a lone family from the chaos, by virtue of their hospitality, which is the characteristic of the household of Avraham. This idea or concept preceded the Exodus from Egypt, and it produced 2 nations, descendants of Lot: Amon and Moav. These 2 nations are prohibited from joining Bnei Yisrael for all time because they did not observe and maintain the custom set down by Lot, their father, by virtue of which he had been saved from Sedom. They did not welcome Bnei Yisrael "with bread and with water, on your way as you came out of Egypt, and they hired Bilam... to curse you" (Devarim 23:4-7).

The deeper level, the "midrash of the midrash," introduces into the story the date of "Pesach," not only the idea of it. This is the source of the midrash recorded in the gemara: "Yitzchak was born on Pesach" (Rosh ha-Shana 11a). On the basis of the "literal level of the midrash," all of the difficulties recorded in the sugya there fall away.

This obligates us to re-examine the "Pesach of Egypt" experienced by Bnei Yisrael, which had been preceded by the "Pesach" experienced by Lot (together with his wife, daughters, and sons-in-law). It becomes immediately clear that the unique character of the "Pesach of Egypt" lies not in the fact that it was the first such occasion, but rather in that it was a "Pesach" of salvation and redemption for an entire nation. The entire nation was "at home" – each family in its own home with its own Pesach sacrifice, and all of Israel was saved, family by family, and continues to celebrate, family by family, to this day.

Even though "Pesach for all generations" is the commemoration of the deliverance and redemption of all of Israel for all generations, it retains its fundamentally family-orientated foundation and character from the family of Lot, from the household of Avraham. Even when the "Pesach for all generations" was established as a "communal sacrifice," such that it is offered even on Shabbat (Yerushalmi, Pesachim 6:1), it never ceased being a "family offering" – albeit of all the families together. The Talmud Yerushalmi (ad. loc.) regards the Pesach as a communal sacrifice (as does the Tosefta, Pesachim chapter 4), while the Bavli (Pesachim 66a) omits the deduction by Hillel the Elder concerning the communal sacrifice.

Pesach is a unique sacrifice in that it is offered by all of Am Yisrael – by its families.

Finally, the "hospitality" of the Seder night, which is formulated in the Haggada in Aramaic (with its source in the Talmud Bavli) in "Ha lachma anya" has its true source in the very first Pesach in the Torah – the Pesach of Lot, whose essence was the hospitality of Avraham's household. It was by virtue of this quality of hospitality that Sara received the news that her son Yitzchak would be born, and by virtue of this same quality Lot was saved from Sedom. We thus learn that hospitality (both monetary and physical) is a central element of Pesach, and the secret of the deliverance and salvation.

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