

KRIAT SHEMA 1:03

by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

3. Even though the Mitzva of Tzitzit is not practiced at night, we read it at night because it includes the commemoration of "Yetzi'at Mitzrayim" (the Exodus from Egypt) and it is a Mitzva to mention Yetzi'at Mitzrayim by day and at night, as it says: "In order that you may remember the day of your leaving the land of Egypt all the days of your life" (Devarim 16:3). The reading of these three parashiot in this order is called K'riat Sh'ma.

Q1: In Halakha 2, Rambam gives one reason for the reading of the Parasha of Tzitzit (remembering all of the Mitzvot) - why does he offer another reason here?

YF: Because the remembering of all Mitzvot comes from seeing the Tzitzit which is not practiced at night.

YE: In addition, in Halakha 2, he is not explaining why we read this Parasha, rather, why it is read last - as opposed to commanding us to do specific Mitzvot, it contains the command to remember the Mitzvot (which takes a back seat to actual action).

Q2: If mentioning Yetzi'at Mitzrayim is a Mitzva, why doesn't Rambam include it in his introduction to these Halakhot? Indeed, Rambam doesn't even reckon it among his count of the 613 Mitzvot - why not?

YF: First, Kriyat Shma is not the only way to fulfill remembering Yetzi'at Mitzrayim so Rambam doesn't bring it down previously. Secondly, a possible reason for Rambam not bringing it down in Sefer Ha-Mitzvot can be because it is really not a Mitzvah in itself but it is connected with eating Matzah and maybe not be a Mitzvah by itself.

Q3: Why does Rambam have to add to "The reading of these three parashiot is called K'riat Sh'ma" the phrase "in this order"?

Q4: It seems as if Rambam considers all three parashiot to comprise the D'Orayta (Torah) level of obligation of K'riat Sh'ma - what is his reasoning? (see the Introductory Shiur, which presents the major approaches to the question of "how much of K'riat Sh'ma does the Torah obligate us to read?")

Additional Question:

HH ([Howard Herskine](#)):

Q5: When Rambam says

... and it is a Mitzva to mention Yetzi'at Mitzrayim by day and at night, as it says: "In order that you may remember the day of your leaving the land of Egypt all the days of your life"....

he doesn't quote the well known Mishnah (included in the Pesach Haggadah) which explains how the verse implies 'day & night'. Without such explanation, the quotation doesn't explain that aspect of the Mitzva at all.

Why does he not include the full explanation?]

YE: [This shiur on K'riat Sh'ma and Zekher liY'Tzi'at Mitzrayim is dedicated to the memory of Abraham L. Butler (Avraham Aryeh b. Shraga Feivel haLevi). May his memory be a blessing to us all and may the legacy of his dedication to Torah and the Jewish community serve as a source of comfort and inspiration to all who mourn his loss.]

Zekhirat Y'tzi'at Mitzrayim & K'riat Sh'ma

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The Mishna in Berakhot (1:5 - mentioned by Howard Herskine above) relates a dispute between R. Elazar b. Azariah with Ben Zoma against the sages - as to whether Y'tzi'at Mitzrayim must be mentioned/remembered every night. Their debate revolves around the implication of the extra word "Kol" (All) in the verse: "...in order that you remember the day of your leaving Egypt ALL the days of your life" (Devarim [Deuteronomy] 16:3). Whereas the sages inferred from "all" that the Exodus will be remembered after the coming of Mashiach, R. Elazar b. Azariah/Ben Zoma felt that "all" indicates that the Exodus should be remembered at night, as well as during the day.

Everyone is in agreement, however, that the Exodus must be mentioned every day. Why is the day a more obvious time for this remembrance than the night?

Two possible answers come to mind:

(a) The word "Y'mei hayyekha" - lit. "Days of your life" indicates "daytime" first. This answer is weak, inasmuch as the phrase "y'mei hayyei..." throughout T'nakh has no "daytime" implication - it simply means "length/duration of the life of...". Even "yom" alone, which is sometimes understood as daytime (e.g. "B'yom Tzavoto" - "On the day in which He commanded him" (Vayyikra [Leviticus] 7:38) - which is the source for not bringing offerings at night), in its generic usage means both day and night - as evidenced in the beginning of Beresheet - and it was evening and morning "yom echad" - one day.

(b) The daytime somehow is a more "significant" time for remembering the Exodus. This is not only difficult to prove, but from the first half of our verse, the opposite is more likely. The entire verse reads: "You must not eat with it anything leavened. For seven days you shall eat Matza with it Qthe bread of affliction Qbecause you came out of the land of Egypt in great haste, so that all the days of your life you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt." The one Mitzva

associated with remembering the Exodus in this context is Matza - and the only obligation we have to eat Matza is specifically at night!

A third answer can be found in an earlier sugya in Berakhot (4b). The Gemara records a dispute between R. Yehoshua b. Levi and R. Yohanan about the order of the evening service. R. Yohanan maintains that, just like in the morning, we first read K'riat Sh'ma and then immediately move to Tefilla (prayer) (we will discuss this "immediation" in Hilkhot Tefilla). R. Yehoshua b. Levi, on the other hand, holds that there is no need to "attach" K'riat Sh'ma to Tefilla at night, and we say Tefilla first and then K'riat Sh'ma. (The Halakha follows R. Yohanan). One of the possible bases for this dispute, as reconstructed by the Gemara, is based on the relative significance of the Exodus at night. According to R. Yohanan, although he admits that B'nei Yisra'el left Egypt in the morning, since they experienced part of the redemption at night, it is important enough to merit "attaching" that redemption to Tefilla. R. Yehoshua b. Levi holds that since the main redemption did not take place until morning, the nighttime needs no "redemption-Tefilla attachment."

This Gemara begs explanation: Why should the time of day of the Exodus affect the order of prayers today (and tonight?). It must be that we are not merely "mentioning" the Exodus - we are attempting to reexperience it - at the time it happened! Therefore, if the nighttime component of the historic Exodus was significant, then, when we mention the Exodus at night, it becomes a revival of that great historic moment - and demands the proper attachment to prayer. If, on the other hand, it is not bringing us back to our last night in Egyptian slavery - but is merely a mention "in-order-not-to-forget" - then it lacks the personal impact via the connection with the historic Exodus which would necessitate attaching it to prayer.

We can now explain why "daytime" is a more obvious time for remembering the Exodus and why the Sages and R. Elazar b. Azariah/Ben Zomah only disagree about nighttime - because the daily mentioning of the Exodus is a "reliving" of the event - which took place in all its glory and power in the morning.

II

The Gemara in Berakhot (12b) states that the Sages requested to include the section of "Balak" (Bamidbar [Numbers] 22-24) in K'riat Sh'mat, on account of its mention of the Exodus (and it's poetic tie with the first two paragraphs - see Rashi s.v. Kara) - but they did not do so because it is too long and a burden on the community. The Gemara then suggests that they should just read the verse in question (not the whole Parasha) - and responds "Any Parasha that Moshe did not mark off, we do not mark off". >From this Gemara we see three principles about the (twice) daily Zekhirat Y'tzi'at Mitzrayim:

(a) Although we are obligated to remember the Exodus daily - and this obligation may be "D'orayta" (of Torahic origin), the specific text used is not D'orayta - rather, the rabbis had the right to select which text to use;

(b) the "commemoration" should occur within the context of an entire Parasha and not just a phrase, verse or group of verses.

(c) the "commemoration" should occur within the context of K'riat Sh'ma.

The first and third points are further supported by the report about R. Yehuda haNasi, whose K'riat Sh'ma (if the time for K'riat Sh'ma came while he was teaching) consisted of reciting the first verse. It is further reported that in the context of his teaching, he would always find something to teach which mentions the Exodus. When asked whether or not he would, after finishing his teaching, complete the reading of K'riat Sh'ma - there were two opposing reports. According to the report that he would read the entire Sh'ma later on, why did he try to incorporate some Torah which included the Exodus? The response is that he wanted to "mention the Exodus in its time". Why was it so important to mention it in "its time"? If it is a daytime-Mitzva, its time should be all day, as the Mishna in Megilla (2:6) indicates: "Anything which is a Mitzva during the day is valid all day". In addition, when is "its time"?

It must be that remembering the Exodus must be done within the context of K'riat Sh'ma and therefore within the time parameters of K'riat Sh'ma. In addition, it is clear that no one particular text is mandated, which is why R. Yehuda haNasi could select various texts, as long as they each mentioned the Exodus. This Gemara also supports the idea that although it is proper to remember the Exodus within the context of a Parasha, that isn't the "bottom line" of the obligation, which is why R. Yehuda haNasi could utilize any text (even Rabbinic) to fulfill this obligation. (Unless we posit that he taught and read a complete Parasha from the Torah which includes the Exodus - the simple reading of the Gemara does not indicate that.)

III

Why is Zekhirat Y'tzi'at Mitzrayim so closely bound with K'riat Sh'ma?

We have already seen that the remembrance of the Exodus is, to some degree, an attempt at recreating the experience. Not only are the times directed by that concern, but the verse which holds the command of daily remembrance indicates this: "You must not eat with it anything leavened. For seven days you shall eat Matza with it Qthe bread of affliction Qbecause you came out of the land of Egypt in great haste, so that all the days of your life you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt." Why do we eat Matza? In order to remember the Exodus - remembering by reliving what B'nei Yisra'el experienced at that time! (This notion is greatly expanded and intensified at the Seder - but even our everyday/night remembering is somewhat tempered by this attempt at reliving).

K'riat Sh'ma shares this orientation: Sh'ma Yisra'el...You shall love...And these words which I command you HAYOM (today)..."

Rashi (Devarim 6:6, 26:16, 27:9) comments that the use of "Hayom" teaches that every day we should

regard the commandments and the covenant as having just happened - to approach them with the excitement and zeal appropriate as if they had just been revealed and decreed. Following this, K'riat Sh'ma is a re-creation of the Giving of the Torah at Sinai (which explains the comment of the Shulchan Arukh regarding K'riat Sh'ma: "One should read K'riat Sh'ma with fear, awe, trepidation and dread - the source of this is the Gemara in Berakhot 22a, which relates that that is what we experienced at Sinai). As Ramban points out (commentary to Exodus 20:2), this declaration and reexperience is called "Kabbalat Ol Malkhut Shamayim" - acceptance of God's rule.

The first words which we heard from God at Sinai were: "I am God, your God, who took you out of Mitzrayim, the house of slavery." Many of the Rishonim question this introduction - would it not have been more appropriate to introduce with "I am God, your God, who created the heavens and the earth"? R. Yehuda haLevi (Kuzari 1:25) answers that the Exodus was something which they had directly experienced and which was a greater "proof" to them of God's existence and power.

Rashi, following the Mekhilta, presents another perspective: "The Exodus is enough to cause you to be subservient to Me." In other words - "I am God (of the entire world), your God (with a special relationship to you - on account of the Exodus) - who took you out..." The Exodus is more than an introduction or even a justification/explanation for the covenant - it is the very *raison d'être* of the special relationship between B'nai Yisra'el and God which was confirmed and sealed at Sinai.

Since the original Kabbalat Ol at Sinai was presented in the context of the Exodus, it follows that any recreation of that event will follow that model:

"I am God" - the existence, power, unity of God; "Your God" - obligation of Mitzvot - following that which He commands; "Who took you out of the land of Mitzrayim" - historical context for the relationship.

In the same manner, our twice-daily reaffirmation and re-creation of Sinai follows this order:

Sh'ma - God's existence, unity, our obligation to love Him and be "consumed" with His words;

VeHaya Im Shamo'a' - the special relationship, defined by reward and punishment and fulfilling the Mitzvot;

Vayomer (or any other Parasha which includes the Exodus) - historical context for the relationship.

IV

Since the elemental experience of Sinai was Talmud Torah (the Sages suggest this is many places; e.g. Megilla 21a, where our body language during study is modeled after Moshe's stature at Sinai), we are commanded to re-create Sinai, using Torah as the vehicle. Therefore, we read entire Parashiot (modular units) of the Torah which reflect the different components of the experience. (Nevertheless, this requirement is not a *sine qua non* - "bottom line" - as we see with R. Yehuda haNassi, who only read the first verse of Sh'ma and then found some teaching about the Exodus to

relate during the time of K'riat Sh'ma.)

Now to the responses:

Q2: It follows that the twice-daily remembrance of the Exodus is not an independent Mitzva, with its own time parameters; rather, it is part and parcel of K'riat Sh'ma.

Q3: Only by reading these Parashiot in this particular order are we able to accurately follow the Sinai model - which is why Rambam adds "In this order" to his definition of K'riat Sh'ma.

Q4: All three Parashiot make up the D'orayta command of K'riat Sh'ma - for we cannot re-create the Sinai experience without all three components - but the particular text of the third Parasha is not commanded by the Torah.

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