

HEDGED WITH ROSES

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Bo

Hedged With Roses

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Harold and Gilla Saltzman
on the marriage of
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Today's Learning:
Eduyot 4:2-3
O.C. 63:4-6
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Nedarim 22
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Chagigah 1

R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l (1903-1993) observes: The most amazing thing about the Exodus, far greater than the signs and the wonders, is the transformation that occurred to a nation of slaves. Slaves do not understand the idea of obeying laws when no taskmaster threatens them. But why would one obey the commands in our parashah such as matzah, such as korban Pesach, such as "*You shall not break a bone of it,*" or such as "*You may not leave over any of it until morning*" if no taskmaster is threatening?

The Sages applied to the generation of the Exodus the verse (Yechezkel 16:7), "*You have increased and grown great . . . yet you are naked and bare.*" The midrash explains: The generation was naked of commandments. [R' Soloveitchik continues:] Their life was a naked one, controlled by lusts and desires. And then there occurred the greatest miracle of all: "*Bnei Yisrael went and did as Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon, so did they do.*" The slaves suddenly felt the duty of commandments, the power of a life devoted to higher ideas and goals. They understood what it

means to possess spiritual ideals and what it means to enter into a covenant with the Almighty. Suddenly, they stood "hedged with roses" [a term used by the Sages to refer to the laws of family purity, which are kept in private and which no authority could possibly enforce. These laws are in contrast to the lust-filled life of a person who recognizes no laws]. No one threatened them with batons, no taskmasters ran around shouting at them. They could have trampled everything, the roses and the glorious flower bed. But, suddenly, they beheld the power and beauty of the roses. This transformation was a hidden miracle of great import. The Jews were able to distinguish between sacred and profane. (Festival of Freedom p. 72-73)

"Pharaoh summoned Moshe and said, 'Go, serve Hashem, only your flock and cattle shall remain behind; even your children may go with you'." (Shmot 10:24)

In this verse, which follows the plague of darkness, Pharaoh does not say, "Go, serve Hashem your G-d." Why?

R' Moshe Botarel z"l (Spain; late 14th-early 15th centuries) explains in the name of R' Sa'adiah Gaon: Ancient Egyptians worshipped the sun. According to their belief, Hashem was "also" a god, but he was the god of Bnei Yisrael only and not the most powerful deity. That is why, on earlier occasions, Pharaoh, when speaking to Moshe, referred to Hashem as "your G-d."

The plague of darkness shattered that false belief. Clearly, Hashem's powers are superior to any perceived powers of the sun. Thus, Pharaoh now acknowledges Hashem and no longer thinks of him as the G-d of Bnei Yisrael only. (Peirush L'Sefer Yetzirah)

"Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon in the land of Egypt . . ." (Shmot 12:1)

This verse introduces the mitzvah of sanctifying the new moon. However, we already know that Moshe and Aharon were in Egypt. Why, then, does the Torah highlight at this point that Hashem spoke to them in Egypt?

R' Yaakov Kaminetsky z"l (rabbi in Lithuania, Seattle and Toronto; rosh yeshiva in Brooklyn and Monsey, N.Y.; died 1986) explains: The midrash compares G-d's going down to Egypt to redeem Bnei Yisrael to a kohen who enters a cemetery to recover terumah that had fallen into the cemetery. The kohen reasons, "Let me become impure one time, as I can purify myself later, and let the terumah not remain in an impure place forever." [Ed. note: Commentaries on the midrash observe that the kohen's actions were not, in fact, correct unless two conditions are met: (1) the terumah has not become impure; otherwise, there is no point in saving it, and (2) the cemetery is a gentile one so that the kohen does not transgress a Torah prohibition by going there.]

R' Kaminetsky continues: When we sanctify the new moon, we always do so based on the appearance of the new moon in Yerushalayim. [Likewise, when we announce the molad /"birth" of

the new moon in shul on the Shabbat preceding Rosh Chodesh, we are in fact announcing the time of the new moon in Yerushalayim.] The one rosh chodesh which was calculated based on the occurrence of the molad somewhere else was the one referred to in our verse. On that occasion, Hashem degraded Himself, so to speak, and allowed the molad in Egypt to govern, for that was when Hashem (who is referred to in midrashim as a kohen) entered Egypt (the cemetery) to save the Jewish People (his terumah). (Quoted in Be'mechitzat Rabbeinu p.204)

"On the previous day, you shall eliminate leaven from your homes . . ." (12:15)

Rabbi Yehuda, one of the sages of the Mishnah, maintains that chametz must be destroyed by fire and not by any other means. He derives this from the law of "notar" / leftovers of sacrificial offerings, which also must be destroyed by fire.

R' Zvi Elimelech Shapira z"l (the Bnei Yissaschar; died 1841) is quoted as stating that whenever the Talmud derives one law from another law, there must be some intrinsic connection between them. What is the connection between chametz and notar?

R' Yaakov Yichizkiyah Gruenwald z"l (Hungarian rabbi; died 1941) explains: Why would a person leave leftovers from a sacrificial offering rather than eat it all within the allotted time? Often, this would occur because he lacks bitachon / trust in G-d and is afraid he will have no food for tomorrow. Chametz alludes to a similar lack of bitachon. What is the difference between chametz and matzah? Matzah does not expand. The way it is made is the way it remains. Chametz does not share this trait. Chametz rises as if it is afraid there won't be enough for tomorrow. Thus, chametz also alludes to a lack of bitachon. (Va'yagged Yaakov)

"It shall come to pass, when Hashem will bring you to Eretz Canaan, as He swore to you and your forefathers, and He will have given it to you." (Shmot 13:11)

R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) writes: Eretz Yisrael is where one finds the greatest holiness that is revealed in this world. That holiness has the power to turn the degenerate content within a person or thing into something good and blessed. This is why the Land is repeatedly referred to in the Torah as Eretz Canaan. Canaan is among the most despicable and accursed people mentioned in the entire Torah. [See Rashi z"l to Bereishit 9:22 for a description of Canaan's deeds.] And, in truth, the depraved attributes that Canaan exhibited were put in mankind precisely because of mankind's ability to elevate and sanctify himself, and to change bad to good. The greatest hope for the realization of that potential is through the combined holiness of the Holy Land, on the one hand, and the descendants of the Patriarchs, on the other hand. This is why our verse pairs the land and the promise to our forefathers with a reference to refers to the depravity of Canaan. These are the tools that Hashem has given us to work with.

(Eretz Cheifetz)

Shemittah

This week we address the rabbinic prohibition known as "sefichin." The halachot below are taken from Sefer Ha'shemittah (chapter 6) by R' Yechiel Michel Tikochinski z"l and from Ha'aretz U'mitzvotah by R' Avraham Hillel Goldberg shlita.

The term "sefichin" refers to any produce that grew on its own, either from seeds that were inadvertently dropped during the sixth year (i.e., the year preceding shemittah) or from roots or stumps that were left in the ground after the harvest of the sixth year. According to Torah law, such produce may be picked in the seventh year and eaten. However, the Sages prohibited eating sefichin because of a proliferation of dishonest individuals who planted in secret during the shemittah year and then claimed that their produce was sefichin and was permitted.

Because the decree against eating sefichin was made in order to counteract cheating, it does not apply in situations where cheating is either unlikely or impossible. Specifically, the prohibition is not applicable to the following:

1. Types of produce that are not commonly planted;
2. Produce that grew in fields that are not suitable for cultivation;
3. All fruits that grow on trees;
4. Vegetables and flowers which in fact grew in the sixth year, even if they were picked in the seventh year;
5. Grain that was planted in the sixth year after the regular season ended;
6. Grains and legumes that reached one-third of their adult growth before the shemittah;
7. Produce of a gentile;
8. Flowers of varieties that are not usually raised commercially.

Sefichin that grew in the seventh year remain prohibited after the shemittah. One may plow over them (to prepare the field for the eighth year) and one need not stop his animals from eating them. Sefichin that remain in/on the ground until the harvest of the eighth year begins are permitted.

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Torah.org](https://torah.org) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](https://torah.org) page.

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