

פרשת ויקהל פיקודי- פסח

It is written in the Gemarah thirty days before a holiday we are to start analyzing and learning the laws of the holiday. We begin with analyzing the Hagadah that we recite on the night of Pesach. There is a tradition that the Hagadah was written by Eliyahu Hanavi. This is alluded to in the opening words of Magid (the portion of the Seder when we start to speak about our exodus from Egypt). The Hagadah begins: הא - לחמא עניא - the word הא stands for אליהו הנביא, we also notice similarities between the Tana Devei Eliyahu- written by Eliyahu Hanavi and the Hagadah.

On the night of Pesach there is an amazing spiritual boost that the entire Jewish nation receives. We are lifted up to the highest levels, instantly! Normally when studying Torah the system is פרדס which stands for פשוט רמז דרש סוד (simple understanding, hints, interpretation and exegesis, secrets) this is ascending in order. We begin with the simple understanding of the Torah on a basic level, and then we gradually progress until we reach the secrets of the Torah. On the night of Pesach, Hashem “catapults” us straight to the סוד, we are on the level to understand the secrets of the Torah without the gradual progression! This is hinted to in the word סדר. The word that the night is referred to, סדר stands for סוד דרש רמז we go in the **reverse** order beginning with סוד. This shows us the great heights we are lifted to on this night and the great opportunity that we have to understand the secrets of the Torah and to use them to grow stronger in our spirituality!

והיא שעמדה

והיא שעמדה is one of the most important moments of the Seder. It is when we lift our cups of wine and declare that over the course of time many nations had tried to destroy us but Hashem has saved us from their hands. והיא שעמדה; “it is this that stood for us”- what is the word “**this**” referring to? What was it that insured our existence and protected us from the evil plans of the nations?? One explanation is that it is referring to the Torah, the Torah is what protects us and as long as we are connected to the Torah no harm can befall us. King David had requested of Hashem to tell him the day he was destined to pass on from this world. Hashem told him: I cannot tell you the exact day but I will tell you the day of the week and that is a Shabbat. David Hamelech would learn nonstop from beginning to the end of Shabbat since he knew that it is

impossible for the angel of death to take him while he is learning. When it came to the Shabbat that he was destined to die the angel of death could not take him until he caused a noise in the yard. When David Hamelech went to see what the noise was, he tripped on a step and for a moment he lost his concentration, it was at that second that the angel of death took him.

There is a story of the Brisker Rav, who during the war in Jerusalem remained in his bedroom studying Torah. His students had begged him to come down to the bomb shelter since there were bombs falling “everywhere”! He refused. The students insisted, saying that it was "סכנת נפשות" –“life threatening” to stay in his room! He finally acquiesced to them and went down to the shelter. As soon as he got into the shelter, a bomb landed in the bedroom he had been studying in and destroyed the entire room. The Brisker Rav turned to his students and exclaimed, you are “Mazikim” (damagers)! You owe me the money to fix my room! As long as I was in the room studying I knew nothing could happen to me and no bomb would fall. As soon as I left the protection was gone and the bomb hit, why did you force me to leave?!

There is a story told of Rav Moshe Feinstein who was studying Torah in his apartment on the east side of Manhattan. Suddenly some of his students knocked on his door and in a panic told Rav Moshe about an accident that had just occurred outside his building in which a young Jewish boy had been struck by a car! Impossible, responded Rav Moshe, the boy could not have been Jewish. His students explained that the boy must have been Jewish, since the witnesses saw a Yarmulke flying in the air as the boy got hit! Rav Moshe told his students to go investigate and you will see that the boy was not Jewish. Sure enough, they found out that it was a non Jewish boy that got hit and the Yarmulke was from a Jewish boy nearby that was running to escape the speeding car. How did you know? They asked Rav Moshe. Rav Moshe explained that he had been learning Torah at the time and it was **impossible** that a Jew could be harmed in his vicinity or neighborhood while he was learning. We see from these stories that the Torah is our protection and guarantees our safety and security. This is hinted in the word וְהָיָא which stands for:

ו' is for the 6 books of the Mishnah.

ה' is for the 5 books of the Torah.

י' is 10 for the 10 commandments in which the entire Torah is hidden

(There are 620 letters in the 10 commandments corresponding to the 613 Misvot and the 7 Misvot added by the Rabbis)

א' is 1 for the oneness of Hashem

וְהָיָא שְׁעֵמְדָה - the Torah is what stood for us throughout our history.

Another explanation of **והיא שעמדה** is that we have a guarantee from Hashem that we will always survive **as a nation**. Therefore if someone tries to destroy us all he will not be successful. However the Goyim unfortunately did have some success in destroying **part** of our nation as we see in various periods in our history. The devious ones of the Goyim knew this secret and therefore only focused on destroying part of the nation.

This explains why right after **והיא שעמדה** we read about what Lavan tried to do to us by destroying us all **לעקר את הכל** - and by contrast Pharaoh who only tried to kill the male babies. Why would we put Pharaoh in a “good” light in comparing him with Lavan? The night of Pesach is when we discuss the evilness of Pharaoh? We now understand that it is actually more devious and evil to focus on destroying only part of the Jews, as Pharaoh did, rather than to try and annihilate them all. Lavan tried to kill all the Jews and was not successful in killing one. Pharaoh went for the boys but not the girls, as the Pasuk says **"וכל הבת תחיון"**, and he did have some success. So in the end we are not looking at Pharaoh as more righteous than Lavan.

The Megillah begins with the words **ויהי בימי אחשוורוש** -“it was in the days of Ahashverosh”. It says that every time it says **ויהי בימי** it is a **לשון צער** -a terminology of unfortunate events for the Jews. What is the **צער** in the beginning of the Megillah? This Pasuk is referring to the third year of Ahashverosh’s kingdom and Haman did not come along until the twelfth year! What was the problem? The problem was in what the Pasuk tells us next- that Ahashverosh ruled from Hodu to Kush, 127 countries. These countries comprised the entire world and therefore right away even before anything happened; the Jews were not in a good predicament. Since in the event that the king got angry with them they had nowhere to run! Hence **ויהי בימי**. Ultimately however this turned out to be a good thing for the Jews since we have this guarantee that we will never be totally annihilated. This is why Haman was unsuccessful in his attempt to destroy us.

והיא שעמדה it is this guarantee from Hashem of our continued survival as a nation that stood for us throughout the years to save us.

Another explanation of **והיא שעמדה** is that we are referring to the concept of anti Semitism. There is a Halacha that **עשו שונה את יעקב** - Eisav (the Goyim) hate and will always hate Yaakob (the Jews). No matter if we are close with them or if we stay to ourselves. We cannot get them to stop hating us. This is a blessing in disguise, since if they were to embrace us the odds are that we would mingle and intermarry with them **ו'נ** and completely lose our identity as a nation. When the Goyim sense that we are

getting too close to them they push us away, as one great Sadik said: “if we don’t make Kiddush than the Goyim make Havdallah”. Meaning if we are not מקדש ourselves and sanctify ourselves to be different than the goyim instead we try and mix with them and become like them, than the Goyim will make “Havdallah”-a separation, between us and that will be discord between us and the Goyim, in order to remind us that we must not become too close and learn from their ways.

There is a story of the Klozenberger Rebbe in the concentration camp in the time of the holocaust. There was forty two people in the camp and forty were killed by the Nazis ימ"ש, the only 2 left were the Rebbe and another man. The Rebbe turned to the man and asked; are you Jewish? Yes: he responded. The Rebbe asked again: are you Jewish? No; he responded this time. Which one is it, asked the Rebbe? The man explained that he was technically Jewish but has not practiced the religion in many years. He was from Hungary and there he married a non Jewish woman and had non Jewish children. What did you do in Hungary? Asked the Rebbe. I, was the minister of finance, my face was on every bill in Hungary! The Rebbe asked the man; what happened to your wife? How did she let them take you without trying to stop them? What about your children, you gave everything for them, where are they? Why weren’t they fighting to try and get you out?! What about your country Hungary?! Where was the country you did so much for by strengthening their entire economy?! Was there no one to lobby on your behalf for your release?! Finally the man broke down and explained that all his life he was trying to fit in with the Goyim and telling himself that if anything happened to the Jews he would be safe with his non Jewish family. However he finally realized that we can never run from Hashem and that no matter what we do we can never be accepted as one of the Goyim! With this he broke down and repented whole heartedly. The Rebbe said the ודוי with the man and the next day the man was killed. The Rebbe said “this man is going to Olam Haba, and had I been put through this holocaust only to save this one Jew, it was well worth it!” We see that the hatred of the Goyim actually helps to keep us together as a nation, והיא שעמדה, and this is what enabled us to stay together as one nation throughout history.

Another explanation of והיא שעמדה is through a Pasuk that says "אלקים יבקש את הנהרדף" - "Hashem seeks out the one being chased", which refers to the “underdog”. Hashem always sides with the weak and the ones being oppressed, and the Jewish nation has been oppressed many times throughout our history. Therefore Hashem is always with us. It is the concept learnt from this Pasuk that we refer to when we say והיא שעמדה.

Another explanation of **והיא שעמדה** is that there were several laws that the Rabbis instituted in order to help us keep our distance with the Goyim. Laws such as **פת עכום** and **יין נסך** is the law that forbids us from partaking in the bread baked by a Goy in his home. The reason for this decree is to prevent us from “breaking bread” with the Goyim, and to prevent intermarriage (we see that breaking bread leads to intermarriage as illustrated in the story of Moshe when he helped the daughters of Yitro by the well, Yitro told his daughters to call him to “eat bread” which led to Moshe marrying Siporah, the daughter of Yitro). Another decree was the **יין נסך** - which forbids us to drink wine with the Goyim. This too was instituted to prevent us from getting too close and “mixing in” with the Goyim, which would jeopardize our existence as a nation. We lift our cup of **wine** by **והיא שעמדה** to show that it is decrees such as this regarding wine- **יין נסך** that keeps us intact as a nation and insures our continued existence in the Galut.

One more explanation in **והיא שעמדה** is that it is referring to a very special and lofty goal that we have on the night of the Seder and that is to “lift up” the **שכינה** of Hashem.

The **שכינה** of Hashem is like a connector between us and Hashem. It is like a “representative” of Hashem that remains with us constantly in our exile. (This is what Hashem was showing Moshe Rabeinu when he showed himself in a thorn bush – the thorn bush representing the Galut – that he is with the Jews even in Galut-exile).

The Shechinah is referred to with several names, such as:

כנסת ישראל, אם, רחל, צפור, כוס

כנסת ישראל literally means the “collective Jewish nation”. The Shechinah is referred to as this, since every Jewish person has a “piece” of Hashem inside of them and the Jewish people is the reason for the existence of the world. When we combine all of the “pieces” of Hashem that we all contain, we form one collective soul and through the unity of our collective soul we receive **שפע** and blessing. The Shechinah is the connector between us and Hashem through which we receive our blessing and sustenance to our souls. Therefore it is referred to as **כנסת ישראל**.

It is also referred to as **אם**, literally- mother. Since it is like a father who sends away his child and sends away the mother with the child in order to care for it. The father is Hashem and we are the child. The Shechinah is the mother that is sent into exile with us in order to care for us and when the exile ends she will be **אם הבנים שמחה**.

The Shechinah is also referred to as **רחל**, like it says “**רחל מבכה על בניה**” - “Rachel cries for her children”. This refers to the Shechinah crying out for us in our long and bitter exile. This is why the **תקון חצות** that we recite at midnight to mourn the loss of the

Beit Hamikdash is called **רחל** תקון. This is why there is an extra special holiness to קבר רחל since that is a spot of great concentration of Hashem's Shechinah.

The Shechinah is also called **צפור**-a bird [this is hinted to in the Misvah of שילוח הקן (the Misvah to rid a bird's nest of the mother bird and take the baby birds or eggs away)]. The Pasuk says "שלח תשלח את האם ואת הבנים תקח לך"- "send away the mother bird and keep the children". The deeper meaning of this Misvah is, we are to send the "mother bird", the Shechinah back up **to Hashem** and when that happens **ואת הבנים** "ואת הבנים" תקח, than the children will be taken by Hashem and redeemed! This is "acting out" the end of the Galut and this is the reason for the great significance of the Misvah! The Shechinah is like a bird that goes from nest to nest, never settled since it is in Galut.

It is written in the Petihat Eliyahu that Hashem says "you thought that from the time the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed that I left you?! It is not so!" The סימן for this is the Pasuk in Shir Hashirim that says: "שראשי נמלא טל"- "my head is filled with dew". How does this Pasuk show that Hashem is **with us** in Galut?

There is ten Sefirot ("modes or attributes") they are:

כתר-חכמה-בינה-דעת-חסד-גבורה-תפארת-נצח-הוד-יסוד-מלכות

These are all hinted in the name of Hashem of הויה.

The **קוצו של יוד** (crown of the יוד) corresponds to the **כתר**- the יוד itself corresponds to the **חכמה**. The **ה'** corresponds to the **בינה**. The **ו'** equals six and refers to the next six Sefirot. The final **ה'** corresponds to the bottom Sefirah which is **מלכות**. The **מלכות** is like the final "pipe" that the Berachah comes down from. All the other pipes empty into this one and from this pipe it comes to us. It is the Sefirah that is closest to us and we draw all of the goodness and **שפע**-abundance through this Sefirah. Since this Sefirah is the furthest from the **כתר** (the highest Sefirah) - it is closest to us and therefore associated with the Shechinah that resides with us. The result of this is that the final **ה'** of Hashem's name- which corresponds to the Shechinah is with us in this Galut-exile and is to a degree "separated" from the rest of the letters of Hashem's name. We are currently in Galut –in exile and it is as if we are lying in the dust and the Shechinah is in the dust with us. Even if we do not feel the exile and we get comfortable in the exile the Shechinah still remains in the dust and it is our job to **lift up** the Shechinah and send it up towards Hashem.

This is hinted to in several places in the Torah starting with Hashem commanding **לעבדה** not to eat from the **עדן** and to remain in the Garden of Eden: **ולשמרה** "to word and to guard Gan Eden". The words can also read **לעבדה ולשמרה** to work and guard the **ה'**, meaning to watch over the **ה'**, the Shechinah that it should not separated from the rest of Hashem's name. Adam sinned and caused a separation of the **ה'**. That is why the first thing Hashem told Adam after the sin is **איכה**-"where are

you?" which can also be read איך-ה, where is the 'ה?! What happened to the 'ה-the Shechinah?! You separated it by sinning!!! (We also read תשעה באב on איכה also is איך-ה where is the 'ה because of the destruction of the temple!). Our job is to reconnect the 'ה to Hashem's name and to lift it up from the עפר-dirt. This is hinted to in what it says to do Misvot לשמה the word לשמה can also be read לשמ-ה; meaning to reconnect the ה to Hashem's name. This is also hinted to in the word תרומה, which can be read תרום-ה-lift up the 'ה. As Rashi explains לי לשמי -for my name sake (literally means to give charity for my name sake). Now we understand another interpretation that we need to lift up the 'ה for the sake of Hashem's name, to reunite the 'ה with the rest of the letters of Hashem's name! One may think, who am I to lift up the 'ה-the Shechinah?! The Pasuk continues "מאת כל איש אשר ידבנו לבו"- "anyone whose heart motivates him" **anyone**, each and every Jew no matter now big or small can lift up the Shechinah of Hashem, and can end the Galut. All he needs is to act from his heart with sincerity! (this concept is illustrated in a story with R' Zushia from Anipoli, who was once walking down the street and saw a non Jew struggling to place his hay stack onto the back of his horse. The Goy asked R' Zushia to help him get the hay up on his horse, R' Zushia answered "I can't", the Goy answered him you can but you just **don't want** to! Upon hearing the words of the Goy R' Zushia started to cry. He thought of the message from שמים that was being transmitted through this Goy. We see the hay, which is like the 'ה- on the ground- and we say we **can't** lift it -but really we **can** lift it. We **do** have the ability to end this exile and to lift up the Shechinah-the 'ה, we just **don't want** to! We don't want it strongly enough, if we really wanted to lift the Shechinah **nothing** would stop us!!)

We say לשם יחוד קודשא before we do Misvot and in the לשם יחוד we say לשם יחוד קודשא "לשם יחוד קודשא" "we are doing the Misvah to "connect" the Shechinah to Hashem". Our whole goal is to "לאקמא שכינתא מעפרא"- "to lift the Shechinah from the dirt". This is why it says that we should do Misvot לשם שמים- the word לשם stands for שכינתא **מעפרא**.

This answers the question of what the Petihat Eliyahu was referring to when it said the sign that the Shechinah is with us in Galut is the Pasuk of "שראשי נמלא טל", since the numerical value of the first three letters of Hashem's name (without the final 'ה) spelled out is ואו=39. The final 'ה is "missing" since it is **with us** in the Galut. Therefore, the word טל-which equals 39, shows us that Hashem only equals טל-39 and awaits the final 'ה- the Shechinah, to be reunited with him.

This is the depth behind what our intentions are by lifting the cup by והיא שעמדה. כוס as mentioned refers to the Shechinah. A כוס - cup – is something that is empty until you fill it , and depending on what you pour into the cup is what it will contain, likewise

the Shechinah, it is like an empty receptacle that we need to fill up (by doing Misvot etc.) and only when we “fill it” will it dispense Berachah.

כוס is numerically 86, which is also the numerical value of אלקים-86. We lift up our כוס and have the intention of lifting up the Shechinah! This is the entire focus of the Seder night to lift up the ה' - the Shechinah (we begin the Seder by saying לחמא לה' by addressing the ה'). The Shechinah “shouldered the burden” with us and thereby took off some of the years of our exile as we say: "הקדוש ברוך הוא חשב את הקץ" (literally: Hashem calculated the end)- Hashem took of 190 years off of the 410 that we were supposed to work by being with us in the Galut and “working” with us. As the Pasuk in Tehilim says: "עמו אנכי בצרה" - "I am with you in your suffering".

We lift the cup with both hands, the right hand signifies חסד-kindness, and the left hand signifies דין-judgment. We then transfer the cup into our right hand to signify the דין turning into חסד [this is one of the meaning of the Pasuk 'כוס ישועות אשא ובשם ה' "כוס-first it is (which equals אלקים)]. When we lift it with both hands then we transfer it to the right hand-the hand of חסד. That's why the Pasuk finishes "ובשם יהוה יהוה" "אקרא, we end up calling only in the name of Hashem of kindness.

We lift the כוס by והיא שעמדה with the intent מעפרא שכינתא -to lift the Shechinah that has been with us throughout the exile and has enabled us to endure this long Galut. May we be Zocheh to lift the ה', to lift up the Shechinah from the ground, to reunite it with קודשא בריך הוא and to **believe in ourselves** that we indeed can end this exile and bring the משיח.

במהרה בימנו אמן!