



Mitigating the Force of “Din” with “YAchasz”

In anticipation of Chag HaPesach, which approaches auspiciously, we wish to examine the fourth of the fifteen “simanim” of the Seder--“יחץ”. The Shulchan Aruch explains “yAchasz” as follows (O.C. 473, 6): **“He should take the middle matzah and break it in two.”** The source for this practice comes from parshas Re’eh. There, it is written (Devarim 16, 3): **“שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תֹּאכַל עָלֶיךָ מִצּוֹת לֶחֶם: עֲנִי—”**—**for seven days, you shall eat matzos because of it, bread of affliction.**

There is a discrepancy between how this passuk is read and how it is written. We read the phrase as **“לחם עני”**—**“lechem oni”**—although it is written as **“לחם עני”**—**“lechem ani.”** The Gemara expounds on this passuk (Pesachim 115b): **“לחם עוני, לחם שעונין עליו דברים הרבה. דבר אחר לחם עוני, Lechem oni”** מה עני שדרכו בפרוסה אף כאן בפרוסה. **“Lechem oni”** (the way it is read) **signifies that it is bread over which we pronounce many things. Another interpretation: Although we read it as “lechem oni,” it is written as “ani,”** signifying that it should be eaten like a poor man eats his bread. **Just as a poor man usually eats broken pieces, so, too, here, we fulfill the mitzvah with a broken piece.** (Translator’s note: In Hebrew, “onim” is derived from the verb to answer; “ani” is a poor man.)

The Reason We Break the Matzah before Reciting “Ha Lachma Anya”

Nevertheless, we still have a difficulty. This opening passage of the Haggadah—**“Ha Lachma Anya”**—refers to the **“bread of the poor man”** and the words: **“Let all who**

are hungry come and partake”—refer to the meal. So, why is **“Ha Lachma Anya”** recited prior to the mitzvah of recounting the story of “yetzias Mitzrayim”? Seemingly, it would have been more appropriate to recite this passage after the berachah **“נאל ישראל”**—after completing the story of the exodus. Then, prior to the meal, just like we eat the “maror,” we could also break the middle matzah--“יחץ”—and recite **“Ha Lachma Anya.”**

We find a wonderful explanation in the teachings of the author of the Tanya in Shulchan Aruch HaRav (473, 36): We found two elucidations in the Gemara. Since we read the words as **“lechem oni,”** we recite the Haggadah over this matzah. However, since the words are written as **“lechem ani,”** we require that the matzah resemble a poor man’s bread. By breaking the middle matzah and performing the step of **“yAchasz”** at the beginning of the Seder, we accomplish both goals. Furthermore, this explains very nicely why we recite **“Ha Lachma Anya”** before recounting the events of “yetzias Mitzrayim,” instead of waiting to recite it right before the meal.

By Combining the “Ktiv” and the “Kri” We Unite Torah She’b’chsav with Torah She’b’al Peh

There is a very sound reason for combining the “ktiv”—the way the words **“לחם עני”** are written—and the “kri”—the way they are actually read—**“לחם עוני”**—at the very beginning of the Haggadah. Thus, we fulfill the mitzvah of recounting the events of “yetzias Mitzrayim” over matzah that has two distinct roles. Firstly, it is **“lechem**

oni—bread over which we have much to say. Secondly, it is **“lechem ani”**—the type of bread consumed by a poor person. According to halachah, it would be permissible to recite the Haggadah over whole matzos—fulfilling the interpretation of **“lechem oni.”** Then, before eating the matzos, the matzah could be divided to fulfill the interpretation of **“lechem ani.”** Furthermore, according to the opinion of Rabeinu Manoach, even a whole matzah qualifies as **“poor man’s bread,”** since it was not allowed to leaven.

It appears that we can explain the matter as follows: The purpose of the exile in Mitzrayim was to purify and prepare the neshamos of Yisrael for receiving the Torah—comprised of Torah she’b’chsav and Torah she’b’al peh. This is evident from the following passuk (Devarim 4, 20): **“ואתכם לקח ה' ויוציא אתכם מכור הברזל ממצרים להיות לו לעם נחלה כיום”**—**but Hashem has taken you and withdrawn you from the iron crucible, from Mitzrayim, to be a nation of heritage for Him, as this very day.** Rashi explains that an **“iron crucible”** (כור הברזל) is a vessel in which they refine gold. In other words, just like the impurities adherent to the gold need to be removed by means of melting in an iron crucible, so, too, it was necessary to purify and refine the neshamos of Yisrael from their adherent impurities, by means of the suffering and hard labor in Mitzrayim.

Also, this is the implication of what HKB”H says to Moshe (Shemos 3, 12): **“בהוציאך את העם ממצרים תעבדון את האלקים על ההר הזה”**—**when you take the people out of Mitzrayim, you will worship G-d on this mountain.** Rashi comments: **In answer to that which you asked, “What merit does Yisrael have that they should depart from Mitzrayim?” I have a great matter dependent on this departure. For, they are destined to receive the Torah upon this mountain three months after they leave Mitzrayim.** Thus, it makes perfect sense that the entire Haggadah with which we fulfill the mitzvah of “sipur yetzias Mitzrayim,” is comprised of pesukim from Torah she’b’chsav and their associated elucidations from Chazal in Torah she’b’al peh.

Additionally, the Megaleh Amukos on Va’etchanan and the Bnei Yissaschar (Nissan 11, 1)—citing the great Rabbi

Pinchas of Koritz, zy”a—assert that whenever we find the phenomenon of a “ktiv” and “kri” in the Torah, the “ktiv”—how tradition dictates that the word should be written—represents Torah she’b’chsav, whereas the “kri”—not how the word is actually written but rather how it is pronounced—represents Torah she’b’al peh.

Based on this premise, we can propose that this is the rationale for dividing the middle matzah prior to fulfilling the mitzvah of “sipur yetzias Mitzrayim.” Thus, we combine the “ktiv”—**“להם עוני”**—with the “kri”—**“להם עוני”**—to reenact the purpose of “yetzias Mitzrayim”—being worthy of the privilege of receiving the magnificent combination of Torah she’b’chsav and Torah she’b’al peh at Har Sinai. After doing so, we proceed to recite the Haggadah which is comprised of Torah she’b’chsav and Torah she’b’al peh.

Mitigating the Force of “Din” in the Impeccable Teachings of the Rabbi of Ropshitz

It is fitting to present at our majestic tables on the seder-night a lofty idea concerning the breaking of the matzah of **“yAchasz.”** In Zera Kodesh (Pesach), the esteemed Rabbi of Ropshitz, zy”a, explains why we break the middle matzah specifically. He refers to a teaching in the Pri Eitz Chaim (Sha’ar Chag HaMatzos, Chapter 6): The three matzos we arrange in front of us at the seder correspond to Kohen, Levi, Yisrael respectively. Thus, the middle matzah corresponds to Levi.

We learn in the Zohar hakadosh and in the writings of the Arizal that Levi is associated with the midah of “gevurah.” According to the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 70), since body-hair is associated with the forces of “din,” this is why the body-hair of the leviim was shaved off (Bamidbar 8, 7): **“והעבירו תער על כל בשרם”**—**and let them pass a razor over their entire flesh.** The Smichat Chachamim (Berachos 35a) writes that this is why the leviim were designated to accompany the korbanos by singing songs. Since they were associated with the harsh forces of “din,” they were able to diminish the forces of “din” at their source.

Based on this understanding, the Zera Kodesh asserts that by breaking the matzah corresponding to Levi, we are symbolically shattering the force of “din” and transforming

it into “rachamim.” He goes on to add a fantastic “remez”: The gematria of the word יח”ץ is 108, which is exactly half of the gematria of גבור”ה (216). So, by breaking the middle matzah, we are symbolically breaking the force of “gevurah” in two.

This concurs magnificently, with a teaching in the Tosafists’ Da’as Zekeinim (Shemos 12, 8): **”נהגו העם לעשות כליל: פסח שלש מצות... זכר לשלשה אבות—the people customarily arrange three matzos on the night of Pesach . . . in honor of the three Avos.** We find a similar teaching in the Archot Chaim (Leil HaSeder 24). According to this scheme, the middle matzah corresponds to Yitzchak Avinu, whose midah was “gevurah.” So, once again, by breaking the middle matzah specifically, we are symbolically shattering the forces of “din” that hang over Yisrael and transferring them to the heads of our enemies.

Mitigating the Forces of “Din” in the Impeccable Teachings of the Esteemed Rabbi of Zidichov

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to latch onto the coattails of the Zera Kodesh and elaborate on this notion—shattering the forces of “din” with the symbolic act of “yAchasz.” We will refer to what the Magen Avraham (473, 21) writes in the name of the Maharil: After breaking the middle matzah in two, the smaller piece is left on the plate to fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzah, while the larger piece is hidden for the Afikoman—to be consumed at the end of the meal when satiated.

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing a precious idea brought down by the Imrei Yosef (Pinchas) in the name of the divine kabbalist, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Zidichov, zy”a. He suggests an allusion to the sweetening of the forces of “din” in the passuk (Tehillim 65, 10): **”פלג אלקים מלא מים”**.

As we know, the name Elokim is associated with “din.” Now, the gematria of אלהי”ם is 86. To mitigate the force of its **“din,”** we must split it in half (**“פלג”**) to arrive at **43**, which is the gematria of טו”ב הוי”ה (17+26), an expression of divine mercy—**“rachamim.”** This is apparent from the passuk (ibid. 145, 9): **”טוב הוי”ה לכל ורחמיו על כל מעשיו”**—**Havaya is good to all; and His “rachamim” extend to all**

of His creations. So, we can interpret the passuk above as follows: **”פלג אלקים”** – if we split the name Elokim, the name of “din,” into two—**”מלא מים”**—the world will fill up with abundant “chesed,” referred to as water.

We can suggest that this is alluded to by the statement from Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi in the Midrash (V.R. 10, 5): **”תפלה עושה מחצה”**—tefilah has the power to mitigate the “din” associated with the name **Elokim (86)**, by cutting its gematria in half to equal **טו”ב הוי”ה (43)**.

There are 43 Words in Mizmor L’Todah

Hashem has illuminated the path for me to find a precious gem in sefer Tehillim (ibid. 100). In Mizmor L’Todah, David HaMelech, a”h, expresses his gratitude to Hashem for all the good and kindness he had received. Upon further scrutiny, we find that this special mizmor employs the propitious formula suggested by the esteemed Rabbi of Zidichov, zy”a, to sweeten the forces of “din.” This mizmor contains precisely **43** words:

”מזמור לתודה הריעו לה’ כל הארץ. עבדו את ה’ בשמחה בואו לפני ברננה. דעו כי ה’ הוא אלקים הוא עשנו ולו אנחנו עמו וצאן מרעיתו. בואו שעריו בתודה חצרותיו בתהלה הודו לו ברכו שמו. כי טוב ה’ לעולם חסדו ועד דור ודור אמונתו”.

I would like to suggest that David HaMelech employs the phrase: **”דעו כי הוי”ה הוא אלקים”**—**know that Havaya is Elokim**—to modify the “din” associated with the name **Elokim** and transform it into the “rachamim” associated with the name **Havaya**. Now, since this can be accomplished by splitting the name **Elokim** in half—to arrive at the gematria of **טו”ב הוי”ה (43)**—he formulated this mizmor with precisely 43 words. Hence, he concludes the mizmor by saying: **”טו”ב הוי”ה—because “כי טוב ה’ לעולם חסדו”**—**His “chesed” endures forever.** By splitting the name **Elokim** in half—**טו”ב הוי”ה (43)**—**His “chesed” endures forever.**

This explains beautifully what we have learned in the Gemara (Menachos 16a). On Yom HaKippurim, the Kohen Gadol was instructed by HKB”H to sprinkle blood **43** times before Hashem in the Beis HaMikdash. Since this holiest of days was the culmination of the Aseres Yimei Teshuvah, this was designed by His divine mercy and kindness to mitigate

the “dinim” associated with the name Elokim, in keeping with the notion of “פלג אלקים מלא מים”—splitting the name **Elokim** in half to arrive at the gematria of **טו"ב הוי"ה**.

The Emunah that Everything Is for the Good Sweetens the Forces of “Din”

Following this line of reasoning, we will proceed to explain the practical significance of this sacred insight from the great Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Zidichov, zy”a. How can we employ this device—mitigating the “din” associated with the name **Elokim** by splitting it in half to arrive at the gematria of **טו"ב הוי"ה**? Let us refer to the Responsa (Shu”t) of the Kol Aryeh. In the introduction Pesach Tov (8), he brings down in the name of the Ba’al Shem Tov hakadosh, zy”a, an interpretation of the passuk (ibid. 136, 1): **הודו לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו**—**give thanks to Hashem for He is good, for His kindness endures forever**.

The Toldos Yaakov Yosef (Noach) presents a fundamental principle from the teachings of the Ba’al Shem Tov. To mitigate and modify the force of “din,” it is necessary to believe wholeheartedly that even that which appears outwardly as absolute “din”—divine judgment—does, indeed, contain tremendous “chesed”—divine kindness. By means of this emunah, the “chesed” is revealed, and the “din” is ameliorated. We find this to be true of Nachum Ish Gam Zu (Ta’anis 21a). Due to his exemplary emunah, no matter what his predicament, he would declare: **גם זו לטובה**—**this, too, is for the good**. For, he believed wholeheartedly that nothing bad comes from Hashem. Thus, he was able to reveal the “chesed” concealed within every circumstance of “din.”

With this understanding, the Ba’al Shem Tov asserts that when “din” prevails in the world, the name **Havaya** only appears in its diminutive form—its “mispar katan”—in which the letter “yud” is valued as one rather than as ten (i.e., zeroes are dropped from tens, hundreds, etc.). Thus, its gematria equals **טו"ב (17)**. This indicates that even at times when “din” prevails, nevertheless, there is always good—**“tov”**—concealed within. So, by acknowledging that even when Hashem’s divine presence is concealed, He is still present with us, and we believe that His good influence is still present, we reveal the actual **“rachamim”**

associated with the full name **Havaya**. This then is the interpretation of the passuk: **הודו לה' כי טוב**—take care to always thank Hashem, even in situations where His presence is concealed—even when the “rachamim” associated with the name **Havaya** is only represented by its “mispar katan” with the gematria of **טו"ב**. For, in the merit of this expression of gratitude **“כי לעולם חסדו”**—the abundant “chesed” of Hashem will be bestowed without any concealment. These are his sacred remarks.

We can now suggest how to use the device of mitigating the “din” associated with the name **Elokim** by splitting it in half to equal **טו"ב הוי"ה (43)**: A person should follow the advice of the Ba’al Shem Tov hakadosh. He should believe wholeheartedly that even when “din” prevails, the true **“tov”** emanating from the name of “rachamim,” **Havaya**, is present albeit concealed. As explained, at those times, it is represented by its “mispar katan,” indicating that it is concealed but waiting in store within the external trouble. Yet, in the merit of wholehearted emunah, a person is able to mitigate the “din” of Elokim by splitting it in half. As a result, both aspects of **טו"ב הוי"ה** as explained by the Ba’al Shem Tov will hold true: If we express our gratitude to Hashem for His “chesed,” even when it is yet concealed in the form of **“tov,”** **“His ‘chesed’ will endure forever”**—**“כי לעולם חסדו”**.

This is hinted to by the attitude adopted by **Nachum Ish Gam Zu**; no matter what predicament or trouble he was in, he always said: **גם זו לטובה**—**this, too, is for the good**. In this manner, he transformed the prevailing “din” into “rachamim,” on account of his constant, steadfast emunah that everything happens for the good, even when things look dire. This is the implication of **טו"ב הוי"ה**. This unwavering emunah mitigates the “din” associated with the name Elokim by splitting it in half to reveal **טו"ב הוי"ה**. Therefore, he always uttered these exact words: **גם זו לטובה**, because the gematria of **ג"ם** is the same as the gematria of **טו"ב הוי"ה**. Thus, he always acknowledged that Hashem’s beneficence is present, albeit concealed, even within apparent “din.”

Galus Mitzrayim Was Actually 215 Years— One Half of Five Times Elokim

Based on what we have discussed, it gives me immense joy and pleasure to justify why HKB”H took Yisrael out of

Mitzrayim before the prescribed time. In parshas Bo, it is written (Shemos 12, 40): **”וּמוֹשֶׁב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יָשְׁבוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם—שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וָאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה—the habitation of Bnei Yisrael during which they dwelled in Mitzrayim was 430 years.** In Sha’ar HaPesukim and Likutei Torah, the Arizal teaches us that the exile in Mitzrayim was supposed to last 430 years, so that their arduous enslavement would mitigate the source of the forces of “din” emanating from the five “Gevuros”—the five aspects of the name **Elokim**, which add up to a gematria of 430 (5x86).

According to the Arizal, it is for this reason that the name Elokim is mentioned five times in the following three pesukim related to Yisrael’s enslavement in Mitzrayim (ibid. 2, 23): **”וַיְהִי בִּימֵי הָרַבִּים הָהֵם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאנְחוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן הָעֲבֹדָה וַיִּזְעֻקוּ וַתַּעַל שׁוֹעַתָם אֶל הָאֱלֹקִים מִן הָעֲבֹדָה וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶת נַאֲקָתָם וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹקִים אֶת בְּרִיתוֹ אֶת אַבְרָהָם אֶת יִצְחָק וְאֶת יַעֲקֹב. וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּדַע אֱלֹקִים.”** And it happened during those many days, that the King of Mitzrayim died, and the Bnei Yisrael groaned because of the work, and they cried out. Their outcry because of the work went up to **Elokim**. **Elokim** heard their moaning, and **Elokim** remembered His covenant with Avraham, with Yitzchak, and with Yaakov. **Elokim** saw the Bnei Yisrael, and **Elokim** knew. This alludes to the fact that the purpose of the enslavement in Mitzrayim was to mitigate the root of the “dinim” emanating from the five “Gevuros” of Elokim.

With this in mind, it appears that we can explain why Yisrael departed Mitzrayim ahead of the scheduled time. We find the following explanation in the Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer (Chapter 48) regarding the calculation of the 430 years that Yisrael dwelled in Mitzrayim. In reality, from the time Yaakov and his children descended into galus in Mitzrayim until the exodus was only 210 years. The galus, however, actually began five years earlier; it began with the birth of Yosef’s two sons and future shevatim, Ephraim and Menashe. All told then, the galus in Mitzrayim spanned 215 years. If we count the days and the nights separately, we arrive at a total of 430 years—two times 215.

I would now like to propose a novel idea. Under normal circumstances, the day and night are viewed as a single

unit. So, why did HKB”H view the day and the night here as separate entities in order to calculate their time in galus as double? It is on account of Yisrael’s outcry and their prayers for salvation from the “din” of the five aspects of Elokim mentioned in the three pesukim cited above, as it says: **“Their outcry went up to Elokim.”**

It was in the merit of their heartfelt tefilah that HKB”H mitigated the influence of the five “Gevuros” of Elokim by splitting them in half, in keeping with the passuk: **”פִּלַּג אֱלֹקִים: מִלֵּא מַיִם.”** Therefore, instead of actually being enslaved 430 years, the equivalent of five times Elokim (86), they were only enslaved for half of that, 215 years, starting from the births of Ephraim and Menashe. Nevertheless, to appease “midas hadin,” HKB”H calculated the days and the nights separately to arrive at a total of 430 years. The true reason, however, for this method of calculation was the mitigation of the “din.”

The Smaller Piece Represents “Tov” and the Larger Piece Represents Havaya

We can now clarify the sacred insight of the Zera Kodesh related to the breaking of the middle matzah corresponding to the levi, whose midah was “din.” Alternatively, it corresponds to Yitzchak Avinu whose midah was “din.” We break that matzah into two pieces for the purpose of breaking the force of “din” associated with the name Elokim. As explained, this is alluded to by the passuk: **”פִּלַּג: אֱלֹקִים מִלֵּא מַיִם.”** By doing so, we mitigate the “din” of the name Elokim, which is one word, by dividing it into the two beneficial words **”טוֹב הוּא”**.

This enlightens us as to why we split the middle, intact matzah into a small piece and a big piece. The small piece symbolizes the word **טוֹב**, whose gematria is **17**; the big piece symbolizes the name **Havaya**, whose gematria is **26**. Additionally, the small piece symbolizes the situation of “hester panim”—divine concealment—when the name **Havaya** is represented by its “mispar katan.” The larger piece, on the other hand, representing the full revelation of **Havaya**, symbolizes the revelation of “rachamim” without any concealment.

This explains beautifully why we recite **הא לחמא עניא די** "אכלו אנהתנא בארעא דמצרים" Mitzrayim," over the smaller piece of the middle matzah corresponding to **"tov."** In this manner, we demonstrate that even in the midst of galus and situations of "hester panim," an inherent **"tov"** exists. For instance, HKB"H watched over Yisrael to ensure that they would not sink to the fiftieth level of tumah and be doomed forever. On the other hand, we hide the larger piece of the middle matzah—corresponding to the name **Havaya**—to be eaten as the Afikoman at the conclusion of the seudah. Thus, we allude to the future geulah when the name **Havaya**, the Tetragrammaton, will be fully revealed with all four of its

letters. Then, the sacred name will be complete and the heavenly Throne will be complete.

This explains fantastically why both pieces of matzah are essential to the seudah. The smaller piece corresponding to **טו"ב** is consumed at the beginning of the meal to fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzah; while the bigger piece corresponding to the name **הוי"ה** is consumed at the conclusion of the meal as the Afikoman. In this manner, we unite the two components of **טו"ב הוי"ה**. Therefore, we conclude the Hallel immediately after the seudah and proclaim: **"הודו לה"** **"הודו לה כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו"**—expressing our gratitude to HKB"H for mitigating the forces of "din" with **טו"ב הוי"ה**.



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