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The Birth of Bne Israel

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[Prologue 1](#_Toc154115162)

[Adam and Chava 2](#_Toc154115163)

[Noach 2](#_Toc154115164)

[Avraham 3](#_Toc154115165)

[The Marriage Process 3](#_Toc154115166)

[Kiddushin (Sanctification) 4](#_Toc154115167)

[Erusin - Betrothal 6](#_Toc154115168)

[Nissuin (Marriage) - The Brit Bein HaBetarim 6](#_Toc154115169)

[Yitzchak’s birth begins the 400 years 10](#_Toc154115170)

[Yaaqob Avinu 10](#_Toc154115171)

[The 12 tribes 20](#_Toc154115172)

[Intercourse 20](#_Toc154115173)

[Foul Odors 24](#_Toc154115174)

[Trimesters 25](#_Toc154115175)

[The Conception 28](#_Toc154115176)

[Yosef HaTzadik, the egg – 1st Trimester 29](#_Toc154115177)

[The Membrum 31](#_Toc154115178)

[The ecstatic moment 31](#_Toc154115179)

[The egg is implanted in the womb 32](#_Toc154115180)

[The Womb 33](#_Toc154115181)

[The Pregnancy 35](#_Toc154115182)

[The 2nd Trimester – Yosef => Moshe 36](#_Toc154115183)

[The Placenta (Afterbirth) 37](#_Toc154115184)

[Fetal Growth 38](#_Toc154115185)

[Umbilical Cord 39](#_Toc154115186)

[The 3rd Trimester 40](#_Toc154115187)

[False Labor 41](#_Toc154115188)

[Mucus Plug 43](#_Toc154115189)

[The Midwife 43](#_Toc154115190)

[Labor 44](#_Toc154115191)

[Breaking of the Water 49](#_Toc154115192)

[The Crowning 52](#_Toc154115193)

[Birth Canal 52](#_Toc154115194)

[Birth 53](#_Toc154115195)

[Leaving Egypt 57](#_Toc154115196)

[The After Birth 62](#_Toc154115197)

[Lactation 64](#_Toc154115198)

[Birth in the Wilderness 65](#_Toc154115199)

[The Birth of Mashiach ben Yosef 65](#_Toc154115200)

[The Birth Pangs of Mashiach 66](#_Toc154115201)

[The Resurrection of the Dead 70](#_Toc154115202)

[Conclusion of the Remez 73](#_Toc154115203)

[The Drash perspective of the Egyptian Exile 74](#_Toc154115204)

[In the Beginning 75](#_Toc154115205)

[On Passover 77](#_Toc154115206)

[Seven Generations 78](#_Toc154115207)

[Tikkun 80](#_Toc154115208)

[The Ten Plagues 80](#_Toc154115209)

[5 parallel 5 82](#_Toc154115210)

[A Sod Perspective 83](#_Toc154115211)

[The Ten Commandments in Creation 83](#_Toc154115212)

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# Prologue

Throughout the Tanach we see multiple periods of 400+ years and 40+ years. The 400 year periods are a birth process at a much higher level than those at a 40 year interval.

For example, we came out of Egypt 430 years and 400 years from when we went in. What began as a courtship between HaShem and Avraham resuted in the birth of Israel as a nation. Thus, we can understand that 400+ relates to a national issue which will affect all of their descendents.

The 40 year period was where the Bne Israel went from slaves to the birth of a free people. From a people within a nation to a people with their own nation. Thus we can understand that 40+ relates to a generational issue that will not carry forward to their descendents.

In this study I am going to learn about the details of the 400 / 430 year period where we went from a single man to the birth of a nation.

A birth process starts with a man looking for a wife…

**The Shidduch**

The process whereby a man (HaShem) and woman (Abraham, AKA Abram) meet, become acquainted with each other and decide whether they are suitable for each other, is not only common sense - it's actually mandated by Jewish law. The Talmud stipulates that it is forbidden for a man to marry a woman until he meets her and she finds favor in his eyes, and a woman is not to be married until she is mature enough to make an intelligent decision with regards to her proposed husband. The prospective bride and groom must meet beforehand and both must be fully comfortable with each other and must give their full consent to the match.

That said, according to Jewish tradition, dating plays a very *specific* role. Dating is viewed as a serious matter and is not intended for entertainment purposes. Dating is reserved for mature men and women who have reached marriageable age and are actively seeking their life mate.

The focus of a date is to determine whether this person one is seeing has the qualities and values which will allow the two of them to live together harmoniously and happily for the rest of their lives. Hence, successful dating is an art; it requires the mind to take control of a domain which traditionally and instinctively belongs to the heart.

## Adam and Chava

The shidduch begins in Bereshit (Genesis) chapter 12 when HaShem requests that Abram come to the promised land so that HaShem and Abram can interact and the bride (Abram) can be tested. After all HaShem has ben trying to find His bashert when He first started with Adam and Chava.

HaShem found that in an ideal setting, Adam and Chava were unable to endure the very simple test He gave them.

The test was simple. HaShem said to Adam and Chava, “if you love me, do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”. Adam and Chava failed the test and HaShem then changed the environment to give man more challenges in order to help men understand that for a relationship to work, there must be mutual trust. Man was given this step-down environment in order that he learn what a fantastic environment he had had and to make men sad because of what they had lost.

Over the next ten generations, HaShem gave men an extremely good environment and waited, ten generations, for them to come back into a relationship. Instead of being sad for what they had lost, men continually sought alternate ways, like technology, to alleviate the burdens imposed on them by this secondary environment. In the end, men became so wicked and had no desire to have a relationship with HaShem, that He decided to destroy this world with its secondary environment. This destruction was going to be so complete that the entire world was going to need to be recreated.

## Noach

HaShem approached Noach because his righteousness was sufficient for him to find grace in HaShem’s eyes.

HaShem brought a terrible flood and destroyed His original creation. He had commanded Noach to build an ark and bring his family and the uncorrupted animals into the ark in order to preserve life.

After the flood, Noach emerged from the ark and discovered a tertiary world that was radically different from the first or second environments. This recreated world was designed to give men less time for wickedness and more time for introspection about what the had lost and what pain and misery could have been avaided if they had obeyed HaShem and depended on Him for their care. The pain and misery should have caused them to be sad about what could have been.

Noach and his family had no sooner left the ark when they fell back into sin. However, this recreated world was designed to provide an environment that could be repaire by the same men who broke it. In the end, Noach and his family had failed and a shidduch was not possible.

## Avraham

Ten generations after Noach, Abram (Abraham) came on the scene. After Avraham found that this world had a Creator, he set his mind to beging seeking Him in order to build a relationship.

HaShem decided to test Avraham, to understand the intensity of his desire to have a relationship with HaShem.

HaShem gave Avraham ten extremely difficult tests that Avraham passed. HaShem proved that Avraham could be His bashert and that they could begin to establish the framework of a relationship.

# The Marriage Process

The process of creating a Jewish marriage has two stages. The first is *kiddushin*, loosely translated as legally binding betrothal. The second step is called nissuin, which is the marriage.

*Kiddushin* is referred to in the Torah as *erusin*, and **nissuin** is referred to as either **kicha**, taking (“Who is the man who has betrothed a woman and not taken her”[[1]](#footnote-1)) or **beulat ba’al**, a woman who has had sex with her husband.[[2]](#footnote-2) The first stage is the formal, legal status of the marriage, with all its halakhic implications to the outside world (she is considered a married woman and the laws of adultery apply), whereas the latter is the actualized reality of the marriage, when the couple begins their lived life together as husband and wife.

Rambam refers to *kiddushin* as a *kinyan,* usually translated as *acquisition* (taking), and as a Torah innovation.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Here is the modern kiddushin process:

*A young man went to the home of his potential bride-to-be. He carried three things with him: a large sum of money (dowry) in order to pay the price for his bride, a betrothal contract called a* ***Shitre Erusin****, and a skin of wine. Of course, anyone arriving with these things would immediately be under suspicion. The man approached the girl’s father and older brothers. The contract was laid out, and the bride-price was discussed. Finally, a glass of wine was poured. If the father approved, then the maiden was called in. If she also approved, then she would drink the wine. In doing so, she committed herself to this man, agreeing to follow the contract that now was a legal document between the two. They would be called husband and wife at this time, and their union could only be dissolved by a divorce. However, their status was that of betrothed, rather than that of fully married.*

In contrast, he describes *nissuin* as predating the Torah.

In a sense, nissuin, marriage, dates back to Creation. God notes that Adam should not be alone, and ultimately creates a match for him. After Adam recognizes Chava as his own flesh and bone, the Torah informs us that their union sets the precedent for couples to come:

***Bereishit (Genesis) 2:18-24*** *And the Lord God said, “It is not good for the Adam to be alone. I will make him a helpmate corresponding to him…And the Lord God built up the rib that he had taken [lakach] from the Adam into a woman and he brought her to the Adam. And the Adam said, “This time is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. This will be called woman [isha], for from man [ish] this was taken [lukacha]. Therefore, a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.*

These verses describe, even prescribe, the formation of a strong bond between man and woman. By cleaving to each other, the couple are no longer lonely. They become “one flesh,” a suggestive phrase often taken to refer to one of three aspects of their bond:

A midrash connects the phrase to sexual relations:

***Midrash Aggada Bereishit 2:24*** *And they become one flesh. In the [physical] place that they become one flesh.*

Rashi views the couple’s progeny as the realization of their becoming “one”.

Rashi on Bereishit (Genesis) 2:24 - ***One flesh*** *– The offspring is formed through the two of them, and there their flesh becomes one.*

According to Ramban, “one flesh” refers to an emotional, even existential, unification of man and wife:

Ramban Bereishit 2:24 - …*For the female of Adam was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, and he cleaved to her, and she was in his bosom like his flesh. And he desired her to be with him always. And as this was with Adam, his nature was placed in his descendants, that the males among them would cleave to their wives, leave their fathers and mothers, and see their wives as though they are with them as one flesh.*

Although Ramban writes from a male perspective, the connection that he describes would presumably be reciprocal. After all, both members of the couple participate in joining to become “as one flesh.”

# Kiddushin (Sanctification)

Kiddushin, sanctification, indicates that someone or something is separated from things or people in order to be used in the service of HaShem. They are now dedicated to serving HaShem.

Avraham and HaShem made kiddushin by separating Avraham from his parents, by going from his birth place to the land of Canaan. This effectivly sets him apart to serve HaShem.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 12:1-5*** *Now HaShem said unto Abram: 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee. 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing. 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' 4 So Abram went, as HaShem had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him; and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.*

The Midrash relates that when HaShem told Avraham to leave Ur, Avraham was nervous that people would criticize him for abandoning his parents just as they were getting old. HaShem told Avraham that he is absolved from the obligation of honoring his parents.

***Midrash Rabbah - Genesis 39:7*** *Now what precedes this passage? And Terah died in Haran (ib. XI, 32), [which is followed by] NOW THE LORD SAID UNTO ABRAM: GET THEE (LEK LEKA). R. Yitzchak said: From the point of view of chronology a period of sixty-five years is still required.[[4]](#footnote-4) But first you may learn that the wicked, even during their lifetime, are called dead.[[5]](#footnote-5) For Abraham was afraid, saying, ' Shall I go out and bring dishonour upon the Divine Name, as people will say, “He left his father in his old age and departed”? ‘Therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, reassured him: ‘I exempt thee (leka) from the duty of honouring thy parents, though I exempt no one else from this duty.[[6]](#footnote-6) Moreover, I will record his death before thy departure.’ Hence, 'And Terah died in Haran’ is stated first, and then, NOW THE LORD SAID UNTO ABRAM, etc.*

HaShem added that Avraham was the only person in all of human history who would ever receive such absolution. But why was Avraham absolved?

The Maharal[[7]](#footnote-7) explains in his work *Gevurat HaShem[[8]](#footnote-8)* that Avraham received this absolution because he was a new beginning. Usually, children inherit their potential, whether physical or spiritual, entirely from their parents. As such, they owe their parents honor and respect as the ultimate source of their beings.

On his own, Avraham climbed to a new pinnacle of spirituality. Avraham did not inherit his spiritual potential from anyone. On his own he climbed to a new pinnacle of spirituality whose potential was innate in all human beings but that no one else had ever actualized since the fall of Adam.

The ability to form the powerful spiritual bond with HaShem which prompted HaShem to finally command Avraham to depart from Ur to go to live in the Holy Land was a heretofore unexploited human resource that Avraham obtained directly from Adam himself, as no human being had ever tapped into it before.

Avraham is described by the Midrash[[9]](#footnote-9) as the very first convert to Judaism:

***Tehillim (Psalms) 47:9*** *The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted.*

The God of Avraham and not the God of Yitzchak and Yaaqov? The God of Avraham who was the very first convert to Judaism. [He is the noble of spirit among the peoples, as it was only Avraham's nobility of spirit that brought him to HaShem. He was not raised to be a Jew by his parents. Yitzchak and Yaakov already had Jewish parents.] The ruling that applies to all new converts to Judaism, stated many times in the Talmud is that the convert is like a new born child.

***Yevamoth 48b*** *R. Jose said: One who has become a proselyte is like a child newly born.[[10]](#footnote-10)*

In the eyes of Jewish Law, he is no longer related to his previous family. On the other hand, all converts are considered the children of Avraham, their predecessor and the very first convert. This is why HaShem did not approach Abraham’s family in order effect the kiddushin.

From this new creature, HaShem was going to start strengthening the relationship by cutting covenants with Avraham and his descendents.

## Erusin - Betrothal

*Erusin, the ancient betrothal ceremony, includes two blessings and the ring ceremony, and is followed by the reading of the marriage contract.*

The first blessing, over wine, is one said at almost all joyous occasions.

The second blessing is unique to this occasion and reads as follows: “Blessed are You, Lord our God, Master of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us regarding forbidden unions, and Who forbad betrothed women to us, and permitted to us those married to us by **chuppah** and **kiddushin**. Praised are You, Lord, Who sanctifies His people Israel with huppah and kiddushin.”

Instead of a ring, it used to be permissible for the groom to give the bride a detailed deed, and he could then recite the phrase “Behold, you are consecrated to me with the deed…. ” As long as the bride accepted the deed with the intention of becoming his wife, the marriage was valid.

The significance of *erusin* is that it defines the committed relationship – and the commitment to the relationship – in terms that are not just about the physical or the lived relationship together. Marriage, to last, requires a commitment to each other that must be prior to and at times must transcend the current emotional and physical relationship.

The Shitre Erusin was HaShem’s word to Avraham which of course was the best promise one could ever hope to receive.

This was the kiddushin between HaShem and Avraham!

# Nissuin (Marriage) - The Brit Bein HaBetarim

When does nissuin (marriage or home-taking) begin? According to the Torah it begins after erusin when the couple has sex together. The Gemara[[11]](#footnote-11) recognizes that this is the primary way it is effected in the Torah, but at the same time asserts that it is also effected Biblically by the chuppah.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Nissuin, marriage, takes place under a chppah, a maariage canopy, with a small ceremony to mark the covenant. The ring is just something a value to solidify the acquistion.

HaShem and Avraham effected nissuin with a most magnificent chuppa:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 15:5****And He brought him forth abroad, and said: 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars, if thou be able to count them'; and He said unto him: 'So shall thy seed be.'* ***6****And he believed in HaShem; and He counted it to him for righteousness.*

Now immediately after HaShem has brought Avraham under the chuppah of stars, Torah begins to describe the the Brit Bein HaBetarim, the covenant of parts. This is the first covenant recorded in the Torah between HaShem and man that is arrived at by a process of negotiation and is recorded in Bereshit:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 15:18*** *On that day HaShem made a covenant with Avraham saying, "To your descendants have I given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates river.*

This covenant constitutes a legal contract between HaShem and man where each takes on obligations and burdens. This covenant is a major cornerstone upon which the Bne Israel, the Children of Israel, stands.

The land and the promised child constituted the dowry.

A Jewish marriage is created in two stages, beginning with kiddushin (halachic betrothal). The marriage process reaches completion with nissuin. The term nissuin encompasses both the formation of a marriage and the ongoing state of marriage.

As a stage in the formation of marriage, nissuin is the point at which the couple form a joint household as husband and wife and become sexually permitted to each other. (As an aside, the goul of sex is to become one. HaShem and Avraham became one when Avraham agreed to HaShem’s marriage proposal – ain od milvado.) As an ongoing state, nissuin describes the couple building on the halachic bond formed through kiddushin, actualizing the marital relationship, and fulfilling their halachic obligations to each other.

The Brit Bein HaBetarim, “The Covenant of Parts,” is one of the most important events in Jewish history. In the covenant, HaShem told Abraham about the destiny of his descendants: They would be strangers in a land where they would become oppressed and enslaved. Ultimately, however, HaShem would redeem them, and they would inherit the Land of Canaan (now called the Land of Israel).

What is marriage? Marriage is a covenant, a sacred agreement. And how do parties arrive at an agreement? Through compromise. How did the ancients make a covenant? They would cut animals in half and walk through them, as detailed in the Brit Bein HaBetarim (the Covenant of the Parts) between Abraham and HaShem. This cutting symbolized the removal of conditions that could not be agreed upon, and the walking in between the animals symbolized the newly shared space formed through the compromise.

Here is the text of the nissuin, the Brit Bein HaBetarim, “The Covenant of Parts”:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 15:8-21****And he said: 'O Lord HaShem, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?' 9 And He said unto him: 'Take Me a heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon.' 10 And he took him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each half over against the other; but the birds divided he not. 11 And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. 12 And it came to pass, that, when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, a dread, even a great darkness, fell upon him. 13 And He said unto Abram: 'Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15 But thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16 And in the fourth generation they shall come back hither; for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full.' 17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and there was thick darkness, behold a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces. 18 In that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: 'Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates; 19 the Kenite, and the Kenizzite, and the Kadmonite, 20 and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Rephaim, 21 and the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Girgashite, and the Jebusite.'*

This covenant implies nissuin, marriage, because Abraham is making a covenent with HaShem to serve HaShem only. Throughout the Tanach we see the worship of other gods is considered adultery.[[13]](#footnote-13) Adultery implies that one or both parties are married. In the context of this covenant we understand that HaShem and Avraham, and his descendents, have marital obligations.

This historic event begins the 430 year ‘birth’ process that will result in the birth of the Bne Israel as a nation. This nation will begin as a nation without a country, but 40 years after the ‘birth’ of the Bne Israel, the nation whill begin to have a country.

The Brit Bein HaBetarim will trigger a 430 'birth' process:

***Shemot (Exodus) 12:40-41*** *Now the time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. 41 And it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the host of HaShem went out from the land of Egypt.*

The 400 year prophecy will be triggered when Yitzchak is born. We can see thin in the opening words: *'Know of a surety that thy seed…’*

Notice that there are two prophecies that will result in ‘birth’ processes:

1. The 430 years begins with the Brit Bein HaBetarim.[[14]](#footnote-14)
2. The 400 years begins with the birth of Yitzchak.

Next came mila, circumcision. The purpose of mila is to be a sign, like a branding on a person to show he is a servant of HaShem. The Gemara discusses the seal of a slave, which, not being an article of clothing, may not be borne in the public domain on Shabbat. Mila is HaShem’s seal upon us, as we say in the Grace after Meals, “Your covenant that You have sealed in our flesh”.

Mila, circumcision, involved a recreation of Avraham and his descendents. On the verse "I will make you a great nation".[[15]](#footnote-15) The midrash commented, "*It is not written 'I shall give you,' or 'set you,' but 'make you;' when I make you a new creature, then you will multiply and reproduce*". This covenant included a name change which effectively changed Avram into Avraham and Sarai into Sarah.

Marriage provides an atonement for one’s sins because marriage makes you into a different creature. You are now male and female together, you have become a different person.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 17:1-27*** *And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, HaShem appeared to Abram, and said unto him: ‘I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be thou wholehearted. 2 And I will make My covenant between Me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.’ 3 And Abram fell on his face; and God talked with him, saying: 4 ‘As for Me, behold, My covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be athe father of a multitude of nations. 5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee. 6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. 7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. 8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.’ 9 And God said unto Abraham: ‘And as for thee, thou shalt keep My covenant, thou, and thy seed after thee throughout their generations. 10 This is My covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and you and thy seed after thee: every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 And ye shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of a covenant betwixt Me and you. 12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any foreigner, that is not of thy seed. 13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised; and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 And the uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken My covenant.’ 15 And God said unto Abraham: ‘As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but bSarah shall her name be. 16 And I will bless her, and moreover I will give thee a son of her; yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be of her.’ 17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart: ‘Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?’ 18 And Abraham said unto God: ‘Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!’ 19 And God said: ‘Nay, but Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son; and thou shalt call his name cIsaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his seed after him. 20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee; behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But My covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.’ 22 And He left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham. 23 And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him. 24 And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. 27 And all the men of his house, those born in the house, and those bought with money of a foreigner, were circumcised with him.*

***Zohar – Punishment***

The Zohar (to Parashat Lech Lecha) makes a striking assertion. It states that Eliyahu HaNavi is punished with having to attend every Brit Milah, since, as recorded in Melachim alef chapter 19, he twice accuses the Bne Israel of having abandoned the Brit (covenant) with HaShem. Indeed, the very well-accepted custom is to set aside a chair for Eliyahu HaNavi at a Brit Milah.[[16]](#footnote-16)

***Extending the Zohar from Brit Milah to Brit Bein HaBetarim***

A very reasonable extension of the Zohar is that Eliyahu HaNavi also attends every Seder. The Seder is fundamentally an expression of fidelity and commitment to the Brit Bein HaBetarim. Thus, it makes eminent sense to extend the Zohar, and assert that Eliyahu HaNavi is assigned by HaShem to attend our Sedarim to witness that Am Yisrael, contrary to Eliyahu HaNavi’s assertion, has not abandoned its deep connection to the Brit with HaShem, as expressed in the Brit Bein HaBetarim.

The extension from Brit Milah to the Brit Bein HaBetarim takes on even more significance when one considers the deep connection between the Korban Pesach, the quintessential expression of the Brit Bein HaBetarim and Brit Milah. According to Pirkei DeRabi Eliezer,[[17]](#footnote-17) it was these two Mitzvot which HaShem assigned to us on the eve of the exodus from Egypt. The merit of our observance of these two Mitzvot, states Pirkei DeRabi Eliezer, earned our redemption from the Egyptian bondage.

In fact, Pirkei DeRabi Eliezer explains that the twice repeated phrase in the Haggadah (taken from Yechezkeil 16) “*BeDamayich Chai*,” “live with your blood,” refers to the blood of the Korban Pesach and the blood of the Brit Milah.

Brit Milah and Korban Pesach may be seen as “twin Mitzvot.” They are, for example, the only positive commandments for which there is a punishment of Karet for one who fails to fulfill them. Karet, excision from the nation, is a most appropriate punishment for not performing these two Mitzvot, in which we pledge, more than any other Mitzvah, our allegiance to our covenant with Hashem. Similarly, in the Haftarah for the first day of Pesach, we read of Yehoshua’s coupling of the Mitzvot of Brit Milah and Korban Pesach after the Bne Israel’s entry into Eretz Yisrael.

# Yitzchak’s birth begins the 400 years

With Yitzchak’s birth Avraham has the son that HaShem promised. HaShem has begun building the family of Avraham and the beginning of the fulfillment of the promises that HaShem made at the Brit Bein HaBetarim.

HaShem now proceeds to build Avraham’s family into a large family. This is the beginning stage of building a nation.

# Yaaqob Avinu

With Yaaqob’s birth, Avraham now has a grandson and can begin to see the further fulfillment of HaShem’s promises. Unfortunately, Avraham will go to sleep in the dust without witnessing the birth of the tribes.

Yaaqob will acquire the rights of the firstborn and begin the process of acquiring all of Esav’s resources that will be used physically provide for the Bne Israel throughout time.

Next Yaaqob will secure the blessings of the firstborn to actualize the rights that that he had earlier acquired.

After the acquisition of the blessings of the firstborn, Yaaqob will acquire the wife destined for Esav. Shortly thereafter, Yaaqob will acquire his beloved wife, Rachel.

Later, Yaaqob will also marry Zilpa and Bilha. With these four wives, Yaqob will father the twelve tribes.

Yaaqob’s time with Lavan mirrors prefigures the exile in Egypt. This suggests that Yaaqob, Israel, with the birth of the twelve tribes, the leadersip of the nation of Israel, will also be a birth process.

I intend to speak about Israel’s, aka Yaaqob’s exodus; and Israel’s, aka the children of Israel’s, exodus. While it is clearly spelled out in the Haggada, it is rarely understood or appreciated that these two events are, in many ways, identical. In this section, I intend to spell out Yaaqob’s story and connect it to Exodus II, the exodus from Egypt.[[18]](#footnote-18) This idea should help you to understand and explain the Haggadah’s[[19]](#footnote-19) maggid, the story that we are to retell on Passover.

The comparisons that I am about to share are a direct consequence of an important Midrashic understanding. The Ramban,[[20]](#footnote-20) commenting on Midrash Tanchuma on Lech Lecha,[[21]](#footnote-21) states that: “Whatever happened to the Patriarchs is a portent for their [future] children.” He believed that all events mentioned in the Torah would affect future generations. One of the themes of Sefer [the book of] Bereshit is "ma'aseh Avot siman l'banim", that *the actions of the forefathers foreshadow similar* events *for their children*.[[22]](#footnote-22) Sefer Bereshit [Genesis] is a virtual blueprint of what will happen to our nation during its history. The experiences of the Avot [Patriarchs] provide us with the strength to endure.

The Maggid section of the Haggada begins with a quote from sefer Yehoshua:

***Yehoshua (Joshua) 24:2*** *And Joshua said unto all the people: 'Thus saith* HaShem*, the God of Israel: Your* fathers *dwelt of old* time *beyond the River, even* Terah*, the father of* Avraham*, and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods.* ***3*** *And I took your father* Avraham *from beyond the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his* seed*, and gave him* Yitzchak*.* ***4*** *And I gave unto* YitzchakYaaqob *and* Esau*; and I gave unto* Esau *mount Seir, to possess it; and* Yaaqob *and his children went down* into Egypt*.*

The question is why? Why do we start with Avraham? (We’ll eventually get a good answer for this, but first we need a bit more background.)

Next, the Haggada speaks of Laban’s plan for Yaaqov: *Go and learn what Laban the Aramean planned to do to our father* Yaaqob…

The Vilna Gaon explains that this is the reason why the Pesach Haggada tells us to “*go out and* study *what Laban wanted to do to* Yaaqob”. In order to understand the story of exodus from Egypt we need to study the *ma’aseh Avot siman l’banim* that preceded it; this was the story of Yaaqob in Laban’s home.

Now, let’s look at the words of the Haggada, in the maggid section, and try to understand their import:

*Blessed be He, who keeps His assurance to Israel, blessed be He! For the Holy* One*, blessed be He, planned the end of their bondage, in order to do as He had said to our father* Avraham *at the* covenant *between the Portions, as it states: "And He said to* Abram*: 'You should* know *for certain that your descendants shall be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they shall serve them, and they shall treat them harshly, for* four *hundred years; but I will also judge the* nation *that they shall serve, and afterwards they shall come out with great wealth'."*

*The* Matzot *are covered, and the cups are lifted.*

*And it is this that has stood by our* fathers *and us; for not only* one *has risen up against us to destroy us, but in all ages they rise up against us to destroy us; and the Holy* One*, blessed be He, rescues us from their* hands*.*

The Haggada begins by telling us the promise given to Avraham at the covenant between the parts, the Brit HaBetarim. Here is the full text of that covenant:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 15:13-16*** *And he said unto* Abram*,* Know *of a surety that thy* seed *shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them* four *hundred years; 14 And also that* nation*, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15 And thou shalt go to thy* fathers *in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16 But in the* fourthgeneration *they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*

Then, the second paragraph, of the Haggada, tells us that this promise *has stood by our* fathers *and us*…

Let’s, for a moment, consider what Yaaqob might have learned from the words of the covenant made with Avraham, when HaShem passed between the animal parts on that fateful day. If Yaaqob believed that those covenantal words applied to his situation, then he would start contemplating, while guarding Laban’s sheep, that he would be in a unique position once his primary, and beloved, wife gave birth to her first son, Joseph. You see, Joseph was the fourth generation from Avraham.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 30:25*** *And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne* Joseph*, that* Yaaqob *said unto Laban: 'Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.*

The Torah comes to teach us that the birth of Joseph, in the above pasuk, was the trigger that caused Yaaqob (Israel) to leave Laban and return to the land of Canaan. Consider what he might have thought: I am a *stranger in a land that is not my own*, just as the promise foretold. Now, Joseph will be the fourth generation since the prophecy was given: Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaaqob, Joseph… The prophecy said that *in the* fourthgeneration *they shall come hither again.* If Joseph is the fourth generation, then it is time for me to return to the land promised to Avraham. Thus, the Torah tells us that Joseph’s birth was the trigger that caused Yaaqob (Israel) to return to the promised land.

The Torah strongly hints that what happened in Yaaqob’s life was the pattern that would follow in the Egyptian exodus. Let’s take a moment and compare Yaaqob’s exodus from Laban with the exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt in the days of Moshe.

There are four particular points of congruence between Yaaqob’s exodus and the exodus of the Children of Israel. These four passages are delineated by the use of the same word in each of the following four passages.

The second of Rabbi Ishmael’s thirteen rules of hermeneutics, says that: **2.** Gezerah shavah: *From a similarity of words.* (Identical with the second rule of Hillel.)

If a similar word or expression occurs in two places in scripture, the rulings of each place may be applied to the other. The Haggada is making this connection for us. Consider that the identical Hebrew words (וישג וירדף ויקח ויגד), in the identical order, are used in all of the following passages:

In Bereshit (Genesis) 31:18ff, the Torah elaborates on Yaaqob's manner of leaving Paddan Aram, because it strikingly portends the departure of his descendants from Egyptian bondage.

Just as Yaaqob left with great wealth, so his descendants left Egypt with great wealth,[[23]](#footnote-23) as God promised Avraham.[[24]](#footnote-24) When Yaaqob left Laban’s home, Laban chased him. Similarly, when the Jewish People left Egypt, Pharaoh and his army chased after them. Furthermore, just like Pharaoh began his chase on the third day (because the Jewish people were supposed to go for just three days) and caught up with them on the seventh, Laban also chased Yaaqob on the third day of his absence and caught up with him on the seventh.[[25]](#footnote-25) Laban pursued Yaaqob, who was saved because of God's intervention; Pharaoh pursued Israel which was saved by the miracle at the Sea of Reeds.[[26]](#footnote-26) Thus, this is another illustration of the principle that the events in the lives of the Patriarchs were forerunners of their children's future history.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Yaaqob worked tirelessly day and night tending to Laban’s sheep, as Yaaqob said regarding his working conditions, “*I was consumed by the heat during the day, and frost by night, and my* sleep *drifted from my* eyes*.*” In Egypt, too, the Jewish People worked day and night under ruthless conditions for Pharaoh.

Laban changed Yaaqob’s wages time and time again, as Yaaqob said to his wives, “*Your father [Laban] mocked me and changed my wage* ten *times, but God did not let him harm me*. In Egypt, Pharaoh also tricked the Jews to work for him by promising wages, but then ordered them to work without compensation.

But wait! There is even more!

In Bereshit (Genesis) 31:18ff, Yaaqob purposely left in a grand manner, leading his flocks, all 600,00 sheep (mirroring the 600,000 men in the exodus[[28]](#footnote-28) [[29]](#footnote-29)), and systematically gathering all his wealth, so as not to arouse the suspicions of Laban's people. Anyone who saw him leaving so openly would assume that he was departing with Laban's full knowledge and consent. Had he gone stealthily, he would have been stamped as a fugitive.[[30]](#footnote-30) In the same way, the Torah tells us that the *Bne Israel went out with a high* hand.[[31]](#footnote-31) Further, we read that the *Bne Israel were armed when they went up* out of Egypt.[[32]](#footnote-32)

As an aside, the Targum tells us clearly that the Bne Israel were in Egypt for thirty weeks of years:

***Targum Pseudo Jonathan for: Shemot 12:40****. And the days of the* dwelling *of the sons of Israel in Egypt were* thirty *weeks of years, (*thirty *times* seven *years,) which is the sum of* two *hundred and* ten *years. But the* number *of* four *hundred and* thirty *years (had passed away since) the LORD* spoke *to* Abraham*, in the hour that He* spoke *with him on the* fifteenth *of* Nisan*, between the divided parts, until the day that they went* out of Egypt*.*

When we compare this to Yaaqob’s time with Laban, we find that he First was aguest of Laban for one month.[[33]](#footnote-33) Then worked seven years for Rachel and received Leah.[[34]](#footnote-34) He then served seven more years to finally receive Rachel.[[35]](#footnote-35) Finally, he served six plus years to acquire his fortune.[[36]](#footnote-36) Thus we find that there were three weeks of years (21 years) that Yaaqob served Laban corresponding to one-tenth the thirty weeks of years (210 years) that we served the Egyptians.

There were four stages to Yaaqob’s exile and his family’s exile:

1. Entering exile
2. Slavery
3. Attempt to leave early
4. Leaving exile

Yaaqob began his exile on Passover after serving Yitzchak the Passover lamb and receiving the blessing of the firstborn. The Bne Israel also went into exile on Passover.

Both Yaaqob and the Children of Israel *served (their enslavers) them; and they shall afflict them*, just as Avraham’s prophecy foretold.

Thus, Yaaqob understood the covenant, made with Avraham, was to be fulfilled in his day, with HIM! (Now how many of you thought that the covenant made with Avraham only applied to the Egyptian exodus in the days of Moshe?)

Yaaqob had thought that the prophecy could be fulfilled in him. However, Chazal teach that the sale of Joseph put an end to that possibility. Again, Joseph is the key to both exodus I and exodus II.

“*ma’aseh avot siman labanim” -* “The actions of the forefathers serve as a portent for their descendants”.[[37]](#footnote-37)

|  | **Yaaqob** | | **Bne Israel** | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Brothers struggle | Yaaqob and Esav are struggling in the womb over the birthright of a firstborn. | | Yoseph is struggling with 10 brothers because of Yoseph’s firstborn elevation. | |
|  |  | |  | |
| The birthright is acquired. | Yaaqob buys the birthright from Esav to become Yitzchak’s **firstborn**. | | Yaaqob gives the double portion of garments to Yoseph who is considered by Yaaqob to be his true **firstborn**. | |
|  |  | |  | |
| Trouble brews when a brother is elevated to become the becor, the **firstborn**. | When Yaaqob revieved Yitzchak’s blessing for the firstborn by bringing a goat meal, wearing, a goat skin, and representing himself to be the **firstborn**, this forced Yaaqob into his exile. | | In the same way, when Joseph’s brothers dipped Joseph’s garment of a **firstborn** into goat blood (a goat and a garment II) and deceived Yaaqob with it. Thus, both went into exile in virtually the same way: with an elevated **firstborn**.. | |
|  |  | |  | |
| Exile began on Passover | Yaaqob left after serving Yitzchak the Passover lamb and receiving the blessing of the firstborn. | | The Bne Israel left Egypt on Passover, the 430 years to the day when they entered.[[38]](#footnote-38) | |
|  |  | |  | |
| Exile | One son’s elevation to **firstborn** by his father, with a goat and a garment, led to 21 years of slavery, for one man. | | Ten son’s deception of their father, with a goat and a **firstborn’s** garment, led to slavery that was ten times longer, 210 years, for an entire nation. | |
|  | |  | |  | |
| No regards for possessions | | Eliphaz stole all of Yaaqob’s belonging.[[39]](#footnote-39) | | Yosef commanded his brothers to have no regard for their stuff. | |
|  | |  | |  | |
| Meet with HaShem on exile journey. | | Yaaqob and the ladder to heaven.[[40]](#footnote-40) | | HaShem speaks to Yaaqob at Beer-Sheba.[[41]](#footnote-41) | |
|  | |  | |  | |
| Both kiss on arrival. | | Yaaqob kisses Rachel.[[42]](#footnote-42) | | Yosef kissed his father.[[43]](#footnote-43) | |
|  |  | |  | |
| The family grows. | Yaaqob acquired four wives and 12 children in exile. | | The Bne Israel grew from 70 people to more that 3 million. | |
|  | |  | |  | |
| Birth Pangs | | Laban Changed Yaaqob’s wages ten times.[[44]](#footnote-44) | | HaShem plagued Egypt with 10 plagues. | |
|  |  | |  | |
| Slavery | Laban decieves and enslaves Yaaqob. | | The Egyptians deceive and enslave the Bne Israel. | |
|  |  | |  | |
| Attempt to leave early | Yaaqob decides to leave when Yosef is born.[[45]](#footnote-45) | | Some Bne Ephraim leave 30 years too early and are all killed.[[46]](#footnote-46) | |
|  |  | |  | |
| The destruction of the Bne Israel. | Laban attempts to kill Yaaqob and all of his family. | | The Egyptian threw baby boys in the Nile.[[47]](#footnote-47) | |
|  |  | |  | |
| Exile begins to end with a firstborn. | When Yoseph, Yaaqob’s **firstborn**, is born - Yaaqob and his family begin leaving exile. | | The Bne Israel are declared to be HaShem’s **firstborn**. This leads directly to the exodus and the end of the Egyptian exile. | |
|  |  | |  | |
| Left at midnight | Yaaqob was free of Laban at midnight. | | The Bne Israel was free of the Ehyptians at midnight. | |
|  |  | |  | |
| Left on Passover | Yaaqob left Laban on Passover.[[48]](#footnote-48) | | The Bne Isreal left Egypt on Passover.[[49]](#footnote-49) | |
|  |  | |  | |
| Leaves with great wealth | Yaaqob leaves exile with Laban’s wealth given to him by HaShem for his 21 years of slavery. | | The Bne Israel leave exile with the wealth of the Egyptian given to them by the Egyptians as wages for their slavery. | |
|  |  | |  | |
| The chase | Laban chases after Yaaqob after 3 days. | | Paro chases after the Bne Israel after 3 days. | |
|  |  | |  | |
| The Torah teaches us that trouble would begin three days into the exodus from Laban and the exodus from Pharaoh. | ***Bereshit (Genesis) 31:22*** *And it was told* (וַיֻּגַּד) *Laban on the* third *day that* Yaaqob *was fled.* | | ***Shemot (***Exodus***) 5:3*** *And they said: 'The God of the* Hebrews *hath met with us. Let us go, we* pray *thee,* three *days'* journey *into the wilderness, and* sacrifice *unto* HaShem *our God; lest He fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.'…*  ***Shemot (***Exodus***) 14:5*** *And it was told* (וַיֻּגַּד) *the king of Egypt that the people fled:* | | |
|  |  | |  | | |
| So, on the third day of fleeing, the bad guys give chase to bring back the good guys. | ***Bereshit (Genesis) 31:23*** *And he (Laban) took* (וַיִּקַּח) *his brethren with him, and pursued after him* seven *days'* journey… | | ***Shemot (***Exodus***) 14:6*** *And he made ready his chariots, and took* (לָקַח ) *his people with him.* | | |
|  |  | |  | | |
| The identical words are used to describe both Laban’s pursuit and Pharaoh’s pursuit. | ***Bereshit (Genesis) 31:23*** *And he (Laban) took his brethren with him, and pursued* (וַיִּרְדֹּף) *after him...* | | ***Shemot (***Exodus***) 14:8*** *And* HaShem *hardened the* heart *of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued* (וַיִּרְדֹּף) *after the children of Israel; for the children of Israel went out with a high* hand*.* | | |
|  |  | |  | | |
| And just as Laban caught up to Yaaqob *after* seven *days*, so also did Pharaoh catch up with the fleeing Israelites *on the seventh day*. | ***Bereshit (Genesis) 31:25*** *And Laban came up* (וַיַּשֵּׂג) *with* Yaaqob*. Now* Yaaqob *had pitched his tent in the mountain; and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountain of Gilead.* | | ***Shemot (***Exodus***) 14:9*** *And the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them* (וַיַּשִּׂיגוּ) *encamping by the sea, beside Pi-Hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.* | | |
|  | |  | |  | |
| Idols insulted | | Rachel sat on Laban’s teraphim while menstruating. | | The 10 plagues defeated the major Egyptian idols.[[50]](#footnote-50) | |
|  |  | |  | |
| The birth-like water crossing. | Yaaqob crosses the Yabbok river and immediately returns. | | The Bne Israel crosses the Reed Sea in a shofar shape and come out on the same side. | |
|  |  | |  | |
| Never to return. | Yaaqob and Laban make a covenant never to cross into the opposite territory, except for business. | | HaShem tells the Bne Israel never to return to Egypt, except for business. | |
|  |  | |  | |
| The birth | Yaaqob is given the additional name of “Israel”. | | The Bne Israel, free of Egyptian control, became a nation.[[51]](#footnote-51) | |
|  |  | |  | |
| Brothers are reconciled | Yaaqob is reconciled with Esav. | | Yoseph is reconciled with his brothers. | |
|  |  | |  | |
| Conflict with Esav and his descendants. | Yaaqob encounters an armed brother with 300 men. | | The Bne Israel encounter an armed Amalek who a descendant of Esav. | |
|  |  | |  | |
| Succoth | Yaaqob builds succoth for his animals, in a place called Succoth soon as his exile ends. He stays there for a year and a half. | | The Bne Israel stay at Succoth in their succoth at their firststop after leaving exile. | |
|  |  | |  | |
| Sexual Immorality | Dina is raped by Shechem. | | Daughters of Moab and Midian seduced some members of the tribe of Simeon, including Zimri the leader. | |
|  |  | |  | |
| Circumcized sinners are killed | The males of the city of Shechem were circumcized and then killed by Simeon and Levi. | | The immoral sinners of the tribe of Simeon are killed by a plague. | |
|  |  | |  | |
| Carrying Yaaqob’s bier | When Yaaqob died, his sons carried his bier to Canaan with the same entouage that we will see in the exodus. | | The Bne Israel were escorted by the Egyptian when they left. They carried the Mishkan in the same tribal order as they carried Yaaqob’s bier. | |

Just as Yaaqob left Laban in the 21st year of his exile, so also did the Children of Israel leave their exile after 210 years, exactly ten times longer.

HaShem did not put us into slavery, rather we sent ourselves into slavery by our own actions. Remember the goats and coats? Notice in the first table below, that the cause of Yaaqob’s problems begin with the actions of people.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Bereshit (Genesis) 15:13-14** | |
|  | |
| **Cause** | **Effect** |
| Your children | Your descendants will be strangers in a strange land. |
| Inhabitants of the land | The inhabitants of the land will enslave them and they will oppress them. |
| HaShem | But, I will exact judgment against that nation and then [your progeny] will leave with great wealth. |

It is possible that we could have avoided the Egyptian exile if we had avoided the second episode of goats and coats. In that case, Yaaqob’s exile with Laban could have sufficed to fulfill the prophecy given to Avraham.

Laban's cruelty is the reason why Yaaqob could not remain in Paddan Aram in fulfillment of God's prophecy to Avraham that his children would endure a long exile.[[52]](#footnote-52) An allusion to this may be found in the verse: *An Aramean was the destroyer of my father, and he went down to Egypt*;[[53]](#footnote-53) because of Laban the Aramean, Yaaqob was forced to undergo his exile in Egypt rather than in Aram.[[54]](#footnote-54)

The passage in the Haggada, from Yehoshua, now begins to make sense:

In the beginning our fathers were worshippers of idols, but now the Ever-Present has brought us to His service, as it is said: "And Joshua spoke to the whole people: Thus, has HaShem, God of Israel spoken: 'Your fathers dwelt in olden times beyond the River (Euphrates), Terach, the father of Avraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. And I took your father Avraham from beyond the River and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and I multiplied his seed and gave him Yitzchak. And I gave to Yitzchak, Yaaqob and Esau; and I gave to Esau Mount Seir, to possess it, and Yaaqob and his sons went down to Egypt'."

Joshua describes a long journey that did not have to be so long. Note the verbs used:

***Yehoshua (Joshua) 24:2*** *And Joshua said unto all the people: 'Thus saith* HaShem*, the God of Israel: Your* fathers *dwelt of old* time *beyond the River, even* Terah*, the father of* Avraham*, and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods.* ***3*** *And I took your father* Avraham *from beyond the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his* seed*, and gave him* Yitzchak*.* ***4*** *And I gave unto* YitzchakYaaqob *and* Esau*; and I gave unto* Esau *mount Seir, to possess it; and* Yaaqob *and his children went down* into Egypt*.*

Notice in the second table below, that the cause of Avraham’s blessing begins, with the actions of HaShem, and ends with the actions of man.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Yehoshua (Joshua) 24: 3-4** | |
| **Cause** | **Effect** |
| HaShem | And then I took your father Avraham from the other side of the river |
| HaShem | and I walked him throughout the land of Canaan |
| HaShem | and I gave him many children. I gave him Yitzchak |
| HaShem | and to Yitzchak, I gave Yaaqob and Esav. |
| HaShem | and I gave Esav the mountain of Seir as an inheritance |
| **Man** (because of goats and coats II) | and Yaaqob and his children went down to Egypt |

In other words, HaShem did not force us into the Egyptian exile, rather we forced ourselves!

Now, we have another question: Why does the Haggada divert our attention to: ***4*** *And I gave unto* YitzchakYaaqob *and* Esau*; and I gave unto* Esau *mount Seir, to possess it?*

Because Avraham was beginning to have progeny and he was in the land. The covenant promise seems to be coming true. The promises to Esav came true while Yaaqob was sent into exile with Laban. Suddenly the covenant promise to Avraham has gone off the rails, so to speak. No sooner does Yaaqob get back from Laban’s land, then he and his family go into exile in Egypt. Never the less, the Haggada tells us that HaShem keeps His promise to Avraham- in EVERY generation!

And it is this that has stood by our fathers and us; for not only one has risen up against us to destroy us, but in all ages, they rise up against us to destroy us; and the Holy One, blessed be He, rescues us from their hands.

This tells us that no matter how bad we mess up the plan, HaShem will always step in and put our train back on the track.

Our survival, in every generation, hinges on the promise given to Avraham at the covenant between the parts. The Haggada makes this point with the next paragraph where it equates the exile with Laban with the exile with Pharaoh.

Go and learn what Laban the Aramean planned to do to our father Yaaqob; for Pharaoh decreed only that the male (children) should be put to death, but Laban had planned to uproot all, as it is said: "**The Aramean sought to destroy my father, and the latter went down to Egypt and sojourned there, with a family few in** number**; and he became there a** nation**, great, mighty, and numerous**."

The Haggada is now, briefly, telling us that there is a direct connection between the two exiles, just as we laid out earlier.

This should bring us great comfort. If HaShem has delivered us at least twice, then **we can count on Him to deliver us in every** generation. That is the point being made by the Haggada. This is the comfort for those of us who are still in an exile of our own making. HaShem will take us out and He will make us wealthy.

Interestingly, when the Chida[[55]](#footnote-55) addresses the connection between the exodus from Egyptand the story of Laban, he quotes the Alshich[[56]](#footnote-56) who says that Laban’s actions directly caused the enslavement in Egypt. The Alshich explains that when Laban switched Leah for Rachel in their marriages with Yaaqob, Yosef - Rachel’s firstborn - was no longer Yaaqob’s firstborn. This being the case, Yaaqob’s favoritism toward Yosef, had Yosef been his firstborn, would have been normal. Since, however, Laban manipulated Yaaqob’s marriage, Yaaqob also married Leah, and she bore him Reuven, his actual firstborn. Thus, the favoritism Yaaqob showed Yosef (the youngest of the brothers at the time) was unfounded, and thus led to their brothers’ jealousy. This jealousy led to Yosef’s sale to Egypt — the eventual cause for Yaaqob’s, and essentially the entire Jewish nation’s, descent to Egypt.[[57]](#footnote-57)

Chida’s answer clearly explains why the story of Laban and Yaaqob is the perfect place to start with. This was the both the root of how it happened, by serving as the *ma’aseh Avot siman l’banim*, and also the direct cause.

**The** futureExodus **III**

The Prophet Micah contains a scary thought that bears directly on what we have just learned.

Rabbi Yose said, “It is written: As in the days of your coming out of the land of Egypt, I will show him wonders”.[[58]](#footnote-58) This refers to the future redemption through Mashiach.[[59]](#footnote-59)

The Mechilta[[60]](#footnote-60) at the end of Chapter11 comments: He did wonders for the fathers and in the future, will do so for the children, as it says “As in the days of your coming out of the land of Egypt, I will show him wondrous deeds”.[[61]](#footnote-61) I will show him what I did not show the fathers.

Perhaps the last 2100 years of exile are nearing an end and we are about to be led back into the wilderness.

# The 12 tribes

The enmity between Yosef and his brothers will result in Yosef being sold into slavery in Egypt. This will be a critical part of the intercourse that will begin the dramatic growth of the descendents of Avraham and of critical stage of the birth of the nation promised to Avraham.

# Intercourse

Why does the Torah record the story of Yehuda and Tamar immediately after the sale of Yosef, and before Yehuda’s confrontation with Yosef? It is reasonable to assume that the story of Yehuda and Tamar is presented as a sort of reaction to what preceded it, namely, the sale of Yosef. It is also reasonable to assume that it is a prelude to Yehuda’s encounter with Yosef. Chazal have noted the literary similarity between the three narratives: "Please recognize", the brothers declare, presenting Yosef's blood-drenched coat to Yaaqob, and "Please recognize," declares Tamar, presenting Yehuda with the items that he had left in her safekeeping. Thus, the story of Yehuda and Tamar also serves as background to the encounter between Yehuda and Yosef. More precisely, two stories serve as background to this encounter: Yehuda and Tamar.

The story of Yosef and his brothers follows a chiastic form:[[62]](#footnote-62)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A. Yaaqob with all his sons in Canaan (17 years) | | |
|  | B. chapter 38: Yehuda and Tamar / chapters 39-41: Yosef in Potiphar’s house, in prison, and in the royal palace | |
|  |  | C. First descent of the brothers to Egypt |
|  |  | c. Second descent of the brothers to Egypt |
|  | b. Yehuda "approaches" Yosef and causes him to reveal his identity | |
| a. Yaaqob with all his sons in Egypt (17 years) | | |

Just as Yehuda’s encounter with Tamar involved *sexual intercourse*, so also did Yehuda’s encounter with Yosef involve *sexual intercourse*. With this background lets return to the birth process.

The first time that Egypt (Mitzrayim) is mentioned, in the Torah, is the creation of the concept of *Egypt*. This first use of the word *Egypt* is found in:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 12:10*** *And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.*

Here we see that Egypt was a place to procure food so that Avraham and his descendants might grow and become an independent nation. The famine produced an urgency to go into Egypt. This is the *arousal*. This arousal leads directly to intecourse.

The repeated forays into Egypt are a picture of the intimacy of intercourse which leads to pregnancy and birth. Israel and his progeny descended into Egypt like a man descends into his wife.

Yosef’s brothers lead by Yehuda, represented the membrum, the penis, which made four thrusts, or trips, into Egypt. (We will examine the idea of the brothers as the membrum a bit later.) Notice that each trip is set in the context of procuring food and a place for growth. Let’s look at these *thrusts* in greater detail:

**1.** **The first *thrust*** was when Yosef HaTzadik’s[[63]](#footnote-63) ten brothers made their *first* trip to purchase food during the famine.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 42:1*** *Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? 2 And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die. 3 And Joseph’s ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt.*

On this first trip of Yosef’s ten brothers,[[64]](#footnote-64) Yosef makes a startling statement:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 42:9*** *And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.*

This nakedness of the land is a clear allusion to the act of sexual intercourse, which requires nakedness, that, metaphorically, we are viewing. This is another strong hint that this was actually the first thrust.

What do the sacks of grain represent?

There are two pleasure centers in the body: The Brit HaLashon (tongue) and the Brit mila (the place of circumcision). They are both called ‘bit’ covenant. Both organs are singular and in the exact center of the body. The grain therefore alludes to pleasure. Note that the grain, the pleasure flowed from the female to the male.

What does the money in their sacks represent?

Money is spiritual. It also represents potential. The money in the sack represents the *spiritual pleasure* and *potential* inherent in the act of marriage. It might also come to represent the *lubricant* as money lubricates many transactions. Curiously, the money flowed from the male to the female and back to the make. This suggests that the spiritual pleasure began with the male and flowed to the female who, in turn, returned that spiritual pleasure back to the male.

What do the donkeys represent?

Chamor is the Hebrew word for donkey and comes from the root chomer, meaning material. The donkeys eased the burden of carrying the grain and the money. This suggests that they too might represent the lubricant that eased the act of marriage. It is also possible that the donkeys represented the physical pleasure as they came from the man and carried both the grain and the money from the female.

**2.** **The second *thrust*** was when Yosef HaTzadik’s ten brothers made their *second* trip to purchase food during the famine.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 43:11*** *And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds: 12 And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight: 13 Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man: 14 And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved. 15 And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.*

**3.** **The third *thrust*** is when the brothers were forced to return to Egypt after being accused of stealing Yosef’s divining cup.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 44:12-13*** *And he searched, beginning at the eldest, and leaving off at the youngest; and the goblet was found in Benjamin's sack. 13 And they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city.*

The brothers used donkeys to transport the grain back to Canaan. In Hebrew, the name of something reveals its essential characteristic. The Midrash tells us that the first man, Adam, looked into the essence of every animal and named it accordingly. The donkey, for example, is characterized by carrying heavy, physical burdens.

The Ba’al Shem Tov explains[[65]](#footnote-65) that Chamor, from the root *Chomer* “material” and *chumriut* “materialism”, refers to a person’s physical body.

The word “chomer” means *physicality* or *material*. “Chomer” can be thought of as raw material, which needs to be fashioned in to some functional object. Doing so requires imposing a certain structure, purpose and direction on this material, something which, conceptually, raw material resists. It would rather remain “undisciplined”, leaving all possibilities open. The animal “Chamor” - donkey, is most representative of this concept of “chomer”. Another dimension of “chomer” is that it can be viewed as physical “matter,” the substance which composes the entire physical world.

A Chamor, a donkey, represents physicality, materialism, and the very word for a completely physical entity is the word ‘*chomer*’. The donkey is a beast of burden that exists for little reason other than to function in this way, and thus symbolize materialism.

**4. The fourth *thrust*** was when Yaaqob and his entire family went to Egypt to sojourn.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 46:5*** *And Jacob rose up from Beersheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. 6 And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him: 7 His sons, and his sons’ sons with him, his daughters, and his sons’ daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt.*

These repeated trips, to procure food during the famines, speak to the intercourse that was to produce the Bne Israel in the womb of Egypt.

Famine: This is a lack of food. Food, by definition, is that which connects the soul to the body (see also Daat). Yosef built the support system in the womb that would support the baby when he stored the grain, the blood supply in the body of Egypt, for seven years.

To help us understand this intimate connection, consider that the tongue, the brit HaLashon (the covenant of the tongue), is used to make spiritual offspring (Talmidim) in the same way that the brit mila, the place of the circumcision, is used to make physical offspring. The mouth which contains the tongue is also used for eating. Food provides the fuel for connecting the soul to the body. If you have trouble visualizing this, consider that if you stop for a few days, you will become weak and faint as the soul starts to leave the body. If you refrain from eating long enough, the soul departs the body and you are dead. Thus, as food connects a soul to a body, so also does marital intimacy have the power to bring down a soul and connect it to a body.

The Torah alludes to the end of the period of intimacy in:

***Shemot (Exodus) 1:8*** *Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew (yu’dah) not Joseph.*

The verse from Ecclesiastes reads: "A poor and wise child is better than an old and foolish king." The Midrash expounds: "The 'poor and wise child' is the Good Inclination. Why is it called 'a child'? Because it only pairs up with a person from the age of thirteen on. And why is it called 'poor'? Because not everyone listens to it. And why is it called 'wise?' Because it teaches people the upright path [in life]. The 'old and foolish king' is the Evil Inclination. Why is it called 'a king?' Because everyone listens to it. And why is it called 'old'? Because it pairs up with a person from birth until his old age. And why is it called 'foolish'? Because it teaches a person the evil path, until he no longer knows how to be careful, and he doesn't know how much pain and suffering come upon him [for following it]."

Thus, relative to an individual's experience of them, the Good Inclination is "younger" than the Evil Inclination.

**"…over Egypt" means when the person is in the womb.**

We thus see that the Arizal teaches that the Good Inclination actually precedes the Evil Inclination in utero. The Evil Inclination, even in utero, is called "a new king [who] arose over Egypt", i.e. who usurped the rulership over the embryo from the Good Inclination, so that at birth, it is the sole conscious source of motivation.

**"…who did not know Joseph." This refers to the Holy One, blessed be He.**

The Evil Inclination is conscious only of the reality of this world.

**"And he said to his people…," i.e. to the powers of impurity –**

**"…'Behold, the people of the children of Israel…," i.e. the faculties of the soul –**

**"…are more numerous and powerful than we are." So what did he do?**[He enslaved them - ]

**"And they built store cities for Pharaoh…," i.e. for the Evil Inclination.**

**The word "*Pharaoh*" is composed of the same letters as is the word for "the neck"**[in Hebrew, "*ha-oref*"].

"*Pharaoh*" is spelled: *pei*-*reish*-*ayin*-*hei*.

"*Ha-oref*" is spelled: [*hei*](https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/757516/jewish/Hey.htm)-*ayin*-[*reish*](https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/936172/jewish/Poor-Resh.htm)-[*pei*](https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/884983/jewish/The-Power-of-Peh.htm).

The "store cities" are the body, [which the evil inclination seeks to orient toward materialism] so that it serve as a means for the Evil Inclination to strengthen itself.

The word *Yu'dah – know*, has a specific meaning when used by the Torah to describe relationships. It denotes knowledge, or Daat, beyond simple information. It describes knowledge gleaned from the intimate and loving dimension of a relationship, usually between a husband and wife. We see this *knowledge*, that is intimacy, most clearly in:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 4:1*** *And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from HaShem.*

From the Garden of Eden, Adam knew Chava and the result was the fruit of the womb, Cain. Knowledge is a connection with someone, or something, which will always bear fruit. Thus we see that the intimacy which began with Yosef’s descent into Egypt, ended when a new king arose in Egypt who did not *know* Yosef.

# Foul Odors

Intimacy brings with it a couple of foul odors. One from the woman and one from the man. The woman’s lubricant releases an odor first, while the man’s semen provides putrid drops later in the intimacy. Now, negative odors only exist where decay and death reside, therefore we need to look for sin as this is the catalyst that leads to decay and death.

Since odors are non-physical, we would expect the metaphor to also be non-physical. Since the woman’s odor comes first, we need to look to the first odor (sin ascribed to Yosef) to originate in Egypt (the womb) and in Yosef (the egg). The following pesukim detail this sin ascribed to Yosef:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 39:7*** *And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said: 'Lie with me.'* ***8*** *But he refused, and said unto his master's wife: 'Behold, my master, having me, knoweth not what is in the house, and he hath put all that he hath into my hand;* ***9*** *he is not greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?'* ***10*** *And it came to pass, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.* ***11*** *And it came to pass on a certain day, when he went into the house to do his work, and there was none of the men of the house there within,* ***12*** *that she caught him by his garment, saying: 'Lie with me.' And he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.* ***13*** *And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth,* ***14*** *that she called unto the men of her house, and spoke unto them, saying: 'See, he hath brought in a Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice.* ***15*** *And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment by me, and fled, and got him out.'* ***16*** *And she laid up his garment by her, until his master came home.* ***17*** *And she spoke unto him according to these words, saying: 'The Hebrew servant, whom thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me.* ***18*** *And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment by me, and fled out.'*

Note that this sin even comes in the context of illicit sexual relations, but it comes before the actual intercourse.

Now that we have seen the woman’s foul odor, let’s look at the man’s putrid drops. In this metaphorical context, the semen surrounds the sperm (Yaaqob Abinu). We, therefore, expect to see this metaphorically as the brothers’ sin. this sin will become apparent to the world[[66]](#footnote-66) in the process of the pelvic thrusts (the brother’s repeated forays into Egypt to procure food). This odor (sin) will also be revealed as something that will preserve life, much as a woman’s lubricant becomes that which smooths the way for a new life to be brought into the world.

Bear in mind that the repeated thrusts are designed to produce friction. Metaphorically this friction is reflected in the accusations that Yosef repeatedly brings against his brothers. So here is the man’s odor (Yosef’s brothers’ sin):

***Bereshit (Genesis) 45:4*** *And Joseph said unto his brethren: 'Come near to me, I pray you.' And they came near. And he said: 'I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.* ***5*** *And now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.*

# Trimesters

The normal gestation period for the sons of Adam is forty weeks.[[67]](#footnote-67) This gestation period is normally broken down into three parts which are called trimesters.

The first trimester is from conception to the end of week thirteen, the second trimester is from week fourteen till the end of week twenty-six, and the third trimester is from week twenty-seven till the end of the pregnancy. Thus, we see that each trimester is thirteen weeks long. Those who wish to explore the meaning and significance of thirteen may wish to examine my study on thirteen. As it relates to the exile in Egypt, each trimester is 70 years long because they spent 210 years in Egypt.

The **first trimester** is defined as the time from conception until the fetus has a functioning placenta and the sex of the fetus has begun to be differentiated. During this time, most women have ceased menstruating. This trimester is also distinguished externally by the changes in the mother’s body including breast changes, tiredness, nausea and vomiting, frequent urination, and many more symptoms. More importantly, the mother will begin to show that she is pregnant from the growth in her womb. The womb will be the size of grapefruit at this stage. Additionally, the midwife can begin to feel abdominal palpitations by placing her hand on the belly of the mother.

The Talmud teaches that at forty days from conception the soul enters the new fetus, and the gender is determined:

***Menachoth 99b*** *R. Johanan and R. Eleazar both said, The Torah was given in forty days and the soul is formed in forty days: Whosoever keeps the Torah his soul is kept, and whosoever does not keep the Torah his soul is not kept.*

Chazal forbid a female from marrying into Bne Israel until she has been without a man for a trimester in order to know for certain whether she is pregnant. Thus, paternity can easily be established.

First Trimester Symptoms

* Missed period.
* Tender or swollen breasts.
* Nausea and vomiting.
* Increase in urination.
* Fatigue.
* Bloating / Cramping.
* Moodiness.
* Implantation bleeding.
* Constipation.
* Food cravings / aversions.
* Nasal congestion.
* Headache.
* Dizziness.
* Shortness of breath.

First trimester growth

* Amniotic sac.
* Placenta.
* Umbilical cord.
* Lungs.
* Heart.
* Ears.
* Arms.
* Legs.
* Mouth.
* Nose.
* Face.
* Toes.
* Fingers.
* Urinary system.
* Digestion system.
* Vagina / Penis.

The **second trimester** is defined as the time from when the sexual organs have begun differentiation, until the fetus looks similar to what he or she will look like at birth.

This trimester will find the mother experiencing sleeping problems and she will begin noticing Braxton Hicks contractions. At the end of the second trimester, the fetus will measure about ten inches and will frequently practice their kicking movements. The fetus at this point can be felt by the mother and by the midwife. The baby has a chance of survival if born during this trimester.

The **third trimester** is defined as the time from when the fetus looks similar to what he or she will look like at birth, until the baby is born.

During this trimester, the mother will need to urinate frequently and her belly will look like it’s ready to explode. Towards the end of this trimester, most babies will have become positioned for birth with their head down.

The *trimesters* used by Chazal and also by doctors and midwives in their description of a pregnancy also speak to the Egyptian exile. Conceptually, we can also view the trimesters of the pregnancy of Bne Israel as follows:

**First trimester:** From the descent into Egypt until the death of Yosef HaTzadik. This trimester begins with the descent of the seventy souls of Yaaqob into Egypt. At this stage their presence can just barely be felt as “palpitations”.

***Shemot (Exodus) 1:6*** *And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. 7 And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.*

**Second trimester:** From the death of Yosef HaTzadik until the hard labor inflicted by Paro on the Bne Israel. At this stage, the growth of Bne Israel is noticeable and begins to come to the attention of a Paro who knew not Yosef:

***Shemot (Exodus) 1:8*** *Now* ***there arose up a new king over Egypt****, which knew not Joseph. 9 And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: 10 Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land. 11 Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh* ***store cities****,* ***Pithom*** *and* ***Ramses****. 12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. 13 And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor: 14 And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigor.*

"And a new king arose over Egypt…"

This refers to the evil inclination, who is the "old and foolish king".[[68]](#footnote-68)

The "store cities" are the body, [which the evil inclination seeks to orient toward materialism] so that it serve as a means for the Evil Inclination to strengthen itself.

If…the child is not educated properly, the manifestation of his or her divine soul will be stunted….

"…Pithom…" refers to the mouth, for it is there that all the sensual lusts of eating and drinking, which strengthen the Evil Inclination, [are expressed]. Thus, the word "Pithom" can be seen as formed of the words for "the mouth of the abyss" [in Hebrew, "pi- tehom"], for [the Evil Inclination] says "Give! Give! [More] to eat and drink!"[[69]](#footnote-69) And the abyss swallows without end.

"…and Raamses" can be seen as formed of the words for "an evil stomach" [in Hebrew, "ra meses"]. The stomach digests the food, and it thus acts as an evil stomach.

The stomach fills the mind with sensations of satiation and complacency, making the person insensitive to spirituality.

***Shemot (Exodus) 1:15*** *And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: 16 And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. 17 But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive. 18 And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive? 19 And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them. 20 Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty. 21 And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses. 22 And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.*

Second Trimester Symptoms

* Abdominal growth.
* Breast growth.
* Braxton Hicks contractions.
* Stretch marks.
* Decreased morning sickness.
* Increased energy.
* Back, hip and pelvic discomfort.
* Backache.
* Braxton-Hicks contractions.
* Easiest time of pregnancy.
* Quickening.
* Weight gain.

Second Trimester Growth

* Open eyes.
* Fetus responds to stimuli.
* Weight gain.
* Lungs.
* Brain.

**Third trimester:** From the hard labor inflicted by Paro on the Bne Israel until the crossing of the Yam Suf.

***Shemot (Exodus) 1:23*** *And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. 24 And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.*

***Shemot (Exodus) 3:7*** *And HaShem said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; 8 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9 Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.*

# The Conception



The gestation of a human being takes forty weeks (or two hundred and eighty days). Since we were in Egypt for 210 years (thirty weeks) we left early, *seventy* years early. Which is very interesting because the conception began when the seventy members of Yaaqob’s family descended into Egypt.

***Shemot (Exodus) 1:5*** *And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt already.*

On a Pshat level, we see that Yaaqob and his family, of seventy, were connecting together for the first time in Egypt. This gives us a superficial understanding of seventy.

Although there were seventy souls in the family of Yaaqob, the singular form of the word “soul” (*nefesh*) is used to describe them, as the Midrash explains:

***Midrash Rabbah - Leviticus IV:6*** *Of Jacob, on the other hand, there were seventy souls, and yet the word used of them in Scripture is "soul", as it is written, And all the nefesh [sing., soul] that came out of the loins of Jacob, etc.[[70]](#footnote-70)*

To understand the conception, we need to go back to where we find the number *forty* in Torah:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 15:12*** *And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. 13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.*

Four hundred is forty times ten. Chazal associate the beginning of this period with the birth of Yitzchak:

***Midrash Rabbah - Genesis XLIV:18*** *AND HE SAID UNTO ABRAM: KNOW, YEA KNOW (XV, 13): Know that I shall disperse thy seed; know that I will gather them together, know that I will give them in pledge, know that I will redeem them; know that I will allow them to be enslaved, know that I will free them. THAT THY SEED SHALL BE A STRANGER IN A LAND THAT IS NOT THEIRS, AND SHALL SERVE THEM, AND THEY SHALL AFFLICT THEM FOUR HUNDRED YEARS: this means, until four hundred years after seed shall be granted to thee.’*

***Midrash Rabbah - The Song of Songs II:20*** *They reckoned that [the four hundred years of bondage began] from the time when the decree was pronounced, when God spoke with Abraham between the pieces, but it really began from when Isaac was born.*

The four hundred years were spent living in places that were not theirs, of which the last two hundred and ten years were spent in Egypt.

The Jewish people spent forty years in the desert, as part of the atonement process for having spoken derogatorily about Eretz Israel. We were supposed to have been in Egypt for 400 years, 10 times 40 years, because 40 always signals the end of a period of development.

## Yosef HaTzadik, the egg – 1st Trimester

When Yosef HaTzadik was sent out by his father - Israel, it was with the expressed intent of finding the status of his brothers, as was indicated by a cryptic conversation which occurs shortly after Yosef HaTzadik was sent by his father:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 37:13*** *And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. 14 And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. 15 And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? 16 And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed.*

The **first trimester** is defined as the time from conception until the fetus has a functioning placenta and the sex of the fetus has begun to be differentiated. During this time, most women have ceased menstruating. This trimester is also distinguished externally by the changes in the mother’s body including breast changes, tiredness, nausea and vomiting, frequent urination, and many more symptoms. More importantly, the mother will begin to show that she is pregnant from the growth in her womb. The womb will be the size of grapefruit at this stage. Additionally, the midwife can begin to feel abdominal palpitations by placing her hand on the belly of the mother.

Yosef’s descent into Egypt begins the first trimester. Yosef will spend about 13 years in Potifer’s house and prison. When he is 30 years old, he will begin to rule Egypt. He will continue to rule until his death, 80 years later. Yosef died when he was 120 years old. This means that Yosef’s rule will span the entire first trimester (each trimester is 70 years) and part of the second trimester.

Yosef HaTzaddik, like an egg, was sent to prepare a place for a child. Just as the release of an ovum, an egg, causes the womb, the uterus, to engorge with blood and prepare for pregnancy, so also did Yosef prepare for the Yaaqob and his descendants by enlarging the food supply during the seven years of plenty as Yosef interpreted Paro’s dream.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 45:4*** *And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. 5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.*

**Yaaqob Abinu, the sperm**

Sperm is *seed*. *Seed* is quintessentially a collection of memories. This sperm contained the memories of Yaaqob. Yosef, the egg, is equated to Yaaqob, the sperm, by the Torah:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 37:2*** *These are the generations of Jacob, Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.*

It is the nature of seed that it must *apparently die* and begin to decompose in secret, before it can sprout and bear fruit. We looked at this in depth in a previous study titled ‘flower’. Thus, we see that Yaaqob Abinu ‘*dies’* (in mourning) first:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 37:31*** *And they took Joseph’s coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; 32 And they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son’s coat or no. 33 And he knew it, and said, It is my son’s coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. 34 And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. 35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him. 36 And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh’s, and captain of the guard.*

Sperm is the *male* seed. By definition, this means that it *gives* to the female egg. The male is primarily a giver as we can see from marriage intimacy.

If Yosef was the egg, then *who* was the sperm? To understand this answer, we must first understand the essential difference between male and female. This is best seen in marital intimacy. During intimacy, we see that the males gives and the female receives. The female is primarily a receiver. This helps us to understand why HaShem is called *male* whilst His people are called *female*. HaShem gives and we receive.

Yosef received life from his father. This makes Yaaqob Abinu the giver. Thus we would say that Yaaqob is the male component, the sperm, if you will.

## The Membrum

The Talmud[[71]](#footnote-71) calls a “son” the “foot of his father”, because as a foot carries us through this world, so a son carries us through time. "The son is like the foot of the father".[[72]](#footnote-72) For the son is absorbed into the will of the father, without reason or knowledge, just like a foot is nullified to the head and has no independent will whatsoever. The membrum is also known as a “third foot”.

The first time that a group of people is called “Bne Israel - בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל” is when the ten brothers of Yosef went down to Egypt to buy grain.[[73]](#footnote-73) On the second trip to Egypt, to buy grain, there were also ten brothers who went down.[[74]](#footnote-74)

It is well known that a minyan is made up of ten men and is called a “congregation”.[[75]](#footnote-75) Thus we understand that ten men is one congregation. The ten become a new entity.

This suggests that the ten brothers are the membrum, the penis, the place of the brit mila.

## The ecstatic moment

When the sperm and the egg meet, we see the ecstatic moment. We see also that this meeting is for the purposes of preserving life:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 45:1*** *Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. 2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. 3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?[[76]](#footnote-76) And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. 4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. 5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. 6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. 9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: 10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children’s children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: 11 And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. 12 And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. 13 And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. 14 And he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. 15 Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.*

After the ecstatic moment, the brothers (the membrum) goes flaccid. They are completely overcome and everything goes out of them.

After the ecstatic moment, the sperm must be transported to the uterus for implantation. This transport is exemplified in the following pasuk:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 45:17*** *And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; 18 And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. 19 Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. 20 Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.*

***Bereshit (Genesis) 45:25*** *And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, 26 And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob’s heart fainted, for he believed them not. 27 And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: 28 And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.*

Yosef, representing the egg, initiates the transport mechanism whereby the sperm is transported to its place of implantation. Yosef provided the wagons, as we saw above.

When the sperm and the egg meet, we see a new life has begun:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 46:29*** *And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. 30 And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.*

The neck is the portion of the anatomy that represents the connection between the higher world (of the head) and the lower world (of the body). The Temple is called the neck because it is the connection between the world we live in and the higher world where HaShem dwells. The neck is synonymous with connection. Now, we see that the sperm (Yaaqob) and the egg (Yosef) have connected. In this connection, the sperm is absorbed into the egg and begins to multiply.

## The egg is implanted in the womb

Now that the sperm and the egg have met, there is yet one more task that must be accomplished: The egg must be implanted in the womb. This implanting of Israel is seen when Israel comes to sojourn in Egypt:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 46:28*** *And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. 29 And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. 30 And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive. 31 And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father’s house, I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father’s house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me; 32 And the men are shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have. 33 And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? 34 That ye shall say, Thy servants’ trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians. 47:1 Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and, behold, they are in the land of Goshen. 2 And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh. 3 And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers. 4 They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks; for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen. 5 And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: 6 The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle. 7 And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. 8 And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? 9 And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. 10 And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh. 11 And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. 12 And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father’s household, with bread, according to their families.*

So we see that the male component, Yaaqob Abinu, is absorbed in the female component, Yosef HaTzadik; and the two components together become embedded in Egypt to begin the pregnancy.

Thus the male component, the seed, sperm, is absorbed in the female component, the egg; and the two components together become embedded in the uterus to begin the pregnancy.

# The Womb

The womb (uterus) is an organ that shelters the fetus and provides for its nourishment. In return, the fetus causes the womb to grow and develop. The womb is the strongest muscle in the human body. At the end of the pregnancy it is at its greatest size and strength.

Egypt, Egypt, is the womb which sheltered the Bne Israel during a critical period of growth and development. The following Torah portion indicates that the womb was the best place for the development of the Bne Israel:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 47:1*** *Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and, behold, they are in the land of Goshen. 2 And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh. 3 And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers. 4 They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks; for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen. 5 And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: 6 The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.*

The womb provides the best environment and nourishment the body has to offer. The developing child need do nothing except study Torah and grow in size and in strength. Thus, we see that Egypt was the perfect womb for the development and growth of Bne Israel.

Our Sages teach that the baby in the womb has a light over his head with an angel teaching him the whole Torah.

***Niddah 30b*** *R. Simlai delivered the following discourse: What does an embryo resemble when it is in the bowels of its mother? Folded writing tablets.[[77]](#footnote-77) Its hands rest on its two temples respectively, its two elbows on its two legs and its two heels against its buttocks. Its head lies between its knees, its mouth is closed and its navel is open, and it eats what its mother eats and drinks what its mother drinks, but produces no excrements because otherwise it might kill its mother. As soon, however, as it sees the light[[78]](#footnote-78) the closed organ[[79]](#footnote-79) opens and the open one[[80]](#footnote-80) closes, for if that had not happened the embryo could not live even one single hour. A light burns above its head and it looks and sees from one end of the world to the other, as it is said, then his lamp shined above my head, and by His light I walked through darkness.[[81]](#footnote-81)*

The light over his head and the Torah study are found when Israel sent Judah to prepare a place of Torah study, ahead of his father.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 46:28*** *And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.*

Rashi quotes the Midrash that says that Yaaqob sent Yehuda ahead to prepare a place of learning. There are a number of hints to this in our verse. For example, the word translated in English as "to prepare", is written in Hebrew as "l'horot", which literally means "to teach", pointing to the explanation that Yehuda went ahead to Egypt to set up a yeshiva for Torah learning. Another hint comes from the Sifrei Chachamim.[[82]](#footnote-82) He points out that the Hebrew spelling of "l'horot", to teach, normally has two vav's whereas in our verse it's written with only one vav. The four Hebrew letters in the word "l'horot", when rearranged, spell the word "Torah", another indication of Yehuda's real mission.

The growth and development of the womb is depleted once the baby is born. Thus, the building up of the womb is transitory. The Bne Israel built up the womb of Egypt even as they grew:

***Shemot (Exodus) 1:11*** *Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Ramses. 12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. 13 And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor: 14 And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigor.*

The Talmud and Midrash indicate that all of the labor of the Bne Israel in the building up of Egypt, did not produce any lasting edifice:

***Sotah 11a*** *Pithom and Ramses — Rab and Samuel differ [in their interpretation]; one said: Its real name was Pithom, and why was it called Ramses? Because one building after another collapsed [mithroses]. The other said that its real name was Ramses, and why was it called Pithom? Because the mouth of the deep [pi tehom] swallowed up one building after another.*

***Midrash Rabbah - Exodus I:10*** *PITHOM AND RAAMSES. Rab and Samuel differed on this also. One said that Pithom was its real name, and the reason why it was called Ramses was because each portion as it was built crashed (mithroses); and the other maintained that its real name was Ramses, and the reason of it being called Pithom was because the mouth of the deep[[83]](#footnote-83) (pi tehom) swallowed them one by one.*

Thus, we learn that the womb which supports the growing child is destined to collapse and return to its former self after the baby is born. The growth of the womb induced by the child, will not last.

Egypt, the epitome of galut, exile, is destined to become a shadow of itself as the Bne Israel are born and leave the womb. The womb has value only whilst it is occupied and nurturing the child within. After the child is born, the womb no longer has value.

History has shown that Egypt rose to its pinnacle of power and influence in the days when the Bne Israel dwelt and grew there. After the Bne Israel left, the greatness of Egypt also departed. Egypt has never again risen to even a shadow of the greatness that it experienced when the Bne Israel dwelt there.

# The Pregnancy

The 400 years of galut, starting with the birth of Yitzchak, promised to Avraham is an allusion to the forty weeks of pregnancy. The actual *pregnancy* in Egypt lasted 210 years, yet the galut, exile, began when Yitzchak, Avraham’s seed, was born:

***Shemot (Exodus) 15:12*** *And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. 13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*

The Torah treats the exile of Avraham and his seed as though it all took place in Egypt. Thus we learn that Egypt is the term that the Torah uses for galut, exile:

***Shemot (Exodus) 12:40*** *Now the sojourning of the Bne Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. 41 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of HaShem went out from the land of Egypt.*

The time spent in Egypt, including the slavery, can be seen as a period of pregnancy; the Bne Israel were growing within the "womb" of another nation, Egypt.

***Shemot (Exodus) 1:7*** *And the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly and multiplied and grew exceedingly great.*

The pregnancy occurred when Yosef HaTzadik met his family in Goshen, as we discussed earlier. This began the first trimester.

## The 2nd Trimester – Yosef => Moshe

When the Bne Israel first descended to Egypt, they were treated with honor as Yosef’s family, and only after Yosef and his brothers died did the slavery begin. Now, Yosef died after ruling Egypt for 80 years. This means that he died shortly after the second trimester began (each timester is 70 years).

Of course, the slavery did not start the day Levi died. The Sages[[84]](#footnote-84) describe Israel’s descent into bondage as a gradual process – in which the Egyptians first pressured the Israelites to volunteer for public works (naturally to show that they’re good, patriotic Egyptians), and ultimately forced them into full slavery.

We do not have a clear tradition how long this process took. Seder Olam Rabbah,[[85]](#footnote-85) a work on the chronology of Biblical events (2nd century), observes that together with the maximum of 116 years, the minimum the slavery could have lasted is 86 years. This is based on another statement in the Midrash (also found in Pesikta Zutrasa, Shemot 15:20) – that Moses’s older sister Miriam was so named because of the bitterness of the slavery (mar = bitter). The Seder Olam assumes Miriam was 6 years older than Moses. And since we know Moses was 80 at the story of the Exodus (Exodus 7:7), the slavery lasted somewhere between 86 and 116 years.

The **second trimester** is defined as the time from when the sexual organs have begun differentiation, until the fetus looks similar to what he or she will look like at birth.

This trimester will find the mother experiencing sleeping problems and she will begin noticing Braxton Hicks contractions. At the end of the second trimester, the fetus will measure about ten inches and will frequently practice their kicking movements. The fetus at this point can be felt by the mother and by the midwife. The baby has a chance of survival if born during this trimester.

Moshe Rabbenu was born 80 years before the Bne Israel left Egypt. The end of the exile was the birth of the Bne Israel and their redemption. This means that Moshe was born at the end of the **second trimester**.

As the fetus grows within the womb, the woman groans and cries in pain and discomfort:

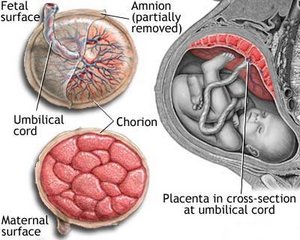
***Shemot (Exodus) 2:23*** *And the children of Israel sighed because of the bondage and they cried out.**24 And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Yitzchak, and with Yaaqob.*

***Shemot (Exodus) 3:7&9*** *And HaShem said: 'I have surely seen the affliction of My people that are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their pains; …* ***9*** *And now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto Me; moreover I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.*

God sees their suffering[[86]](#footnote-86) and remembers them,[[87]](#footnote-87) pakod pakadeti etchem[[88]](#footnote-88), just as God saw[[89]](#footnote-89) and remembered[[90]](#footnote-90) our barren foremothers. God now has “seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them”.[[91]](#footnote-91) The word for oppression here is lachatz, a word that rarely appears elsewhere and which more literally means “pressure”. The pressure is building up, the mother is crying out.[[92]](#footnote-92)

HaShem always provides for the cure before the real problems begin. In this case, Moshe Rabbenu was born just before the serious groaning took place.

# The Placenta (Afterbirth)

The placenta is a temporary organ present only in the woman during gestation. The placenta is composed of two parts, one of which is genetically and biologically part of the fetus, the other part of the mother.

The placenta (also known as afterbirth) is an organ that connects the developing fetus to the uterine wall to providing protection to the fetus trough the transfer of antibodies, to allow nutrient uptake, to provide thermo-regulation to the fetus, waste elimination, and gas exchange via the mother's blood supply, fight against internal infection and produce hormones to support pregnancy. The placenta provides oxygen and nutrients to growing babies and removes waste products from the baby's blood. The placenta attaches to the wall of the uterus, and the baby's umbilical cord develops from the placenta. The umbilical cord is what connects the mother and the baby.

The placenta is an apt description of the guards. There were Egyptian guards / army and Hebrew guards. The Hebrew guards later integrated into the fetus. The Egyptian guards / army formed an interface between the Bne Israel and HaShem. The Egyptians effectively hid the hand of HaShem by seemingly providing the shelter and support that was needed during their stay in Egypt.

The placenta which is expelled from the mother’s body shortly after the birth of the child, is an apt description of the Egyptian army which were washed up on the shore of the Yam Suf.

***Shemot (Exodus) 14:27*** *And Moshe stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and HaShem overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. 28 And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. 29 But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. 30 Thus HaShem saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. 31 And Israel saw that great work which HaShem did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared HaShem, and believed HaShem, and his servant Moshe.*

It is interesting to note that the Bne Israel collected more wealth on the shores of the Yam Suf then they did while they were in Egypt.

***Shemot (Exodus) 15:22*** *Moshe caused Bne Israel to journey from the Yam Suf...they went for a three day period in the wilderness, but they did not find water.*

Moshe had to force the people to leave the Yam Suf. Had it been up to Bne Israel, they would have remained there gathering up the immense spoils of the Egyptian army. Chazal tell us that the Egyptians, assured of their impending victory over the Jews, bedecked their horses with every type of jewelry, gold and silver. After it was all over, the Jews had a "difficult" time coping with the enormous wealth that was now theirs for the taking. As a result, they refused to leave (Rashi). The Midrash tells us a similar story:

***Midrash Rabbah - The Song of Songs I:55*** *WE WILL MAKE THEE CIRCLETS OF GOLD. CIRCLETS OF GOLD signifies the spoil of the Reed Sea. WITH STUDS OF SILVER signifies the spoil of Egypt. As the difference between silver and gold, such was the superiority of the wealth obtained at the Reed Sea over the spoil of Egypt. It is written, And thou camest with ornaments upon ornaments.*

This wealth that was collect from the Egyptians on the shores of the Yam Sum is like the stem cells that are collected from the placenta and umbilical cord. These stem cells can be used to re-grow organs. For example, stem cells have been used to re-grow the spinal cord such that one who was paralyzed is no longer paralyzed. This is a fantastic treasure!

# Fetal Growth

The growth of the fetus is characterized by the descent of the family of Yaaqob to Egypt and their multiplication in the land.

Meam Loez tells us about the growth of the Bne Israel:

*Some calculate that the total original number of Israelites was 9 billion nine hundred sixty-eight million, seven hundred sixty thousand. During the years in Egypt the women had given birth to sextuplets and families with sixty children were not uncommon. The vast majority of these people, however, died during the days of darkness.*

Their phenomenal growth is mentioned several times in the Torah:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 47:27*** *And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly.*

***Shemot (Exodus) 1:7*** *And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.*

Rashi, commenting on the many verbs used to describe the amazing growth of the Bne Israel. In the above pasuk, (which explains how we get from 70 people to a nation of some three million at the time of the exodus), quotes the Midrash that the women would have sextuplets (playing on the six words used here).

***Midrash Rabbah - Exodus I:8*** *THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WERE FRUITFUL AND INCREASED ABUNDANTLY. Another explanation: Each woman bore six at one birth, for it is said: AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WERE FRUITFUL AND INCREASED ABUNDANTLY.*

If so, ten pregnancies per mother would yield sixty offspring, of which only one would be firstborn; half of the children and of the firstborn would be males, with one male *firstborn* for every sixty male births.

An enigma that shows the validity of Rashi’s sextuplets, is that among the twelve tribes there were only 22,273 firstborn males, aged one month and older (Shemot 3:43). Even compared with the adult male population of 603,550, this represents only one out of every thirty males. The ratio to the total population would be extraordinarily low, one firstborn out of sixty.

***Shemot (Exodus) 1:12*** *But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.*

***Shemot (Exodus) 1:20*** *Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty.*

\* \* \*

***The Midrash*** *"How does the embryo lie in its mother's womb? --It is folded up and lying like a writing-tablet. Its head lies between its knees, its two hands rest on its temples, its two heels on its two buttocks; its mouth is closed, but its navel is open; its food is that which its mother eats, its drink is that which its mother drinks, and it does not discharge excrement lest [thereby] it should kill its mother. When it issues forth into the open world, that which had been closed is opened, and that which had been open is closed."*

The paschal lamb sacrificed the eve of the departure from Egypt, was roasted on a spit over the fire, *its head upon its legs*, assuming the classic fetal position. This symbolizes the Bne Israel as a yet unborn fetus.

# Umbilical Cord

The umbilical cord provides a connection between the source of nourishment, the mother, and the developing fetus. This intimate connection explains why our belly buttons are in the center, from left to right, of our bodies. However, the mother is just a façade. HaShem clearly provides the nourishment for both the mother and the developing fetus. Surely, we must conclude that the umbilical cord stretches through the mother to connect to HaShem. The gestation of the Bne Israel is no exception.

What is our connection with HaShem, the ultimate source? Surely, we must say that Torah is our connection. If we examine the record of the Egyptian galut, exile, we surely must find a Torah connection. Chazal have found that connection in the following pasuk:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 46:28*** *And [Yaaqob] sent Yehuda before him to Yosef, to guide before him to Goshen, and they came into the land of Goshen.*

Why did Yaaqob send Yehuda on ahead? The brothers had been down to Egypt and back, twice. Yehuda didn't need to hail a camel driver for directions. So, what, then, did Yehuda need to accomplish in order to prepare the way for Yaaqob? Let’s see what the Midrash Rabbah says about this:

***Midrash Rabbah - Genesis XCV:3*** *AND HE SENT JUDAH BEFORE HIM UNTO JOSEPH, TO TEACH [E.V. SHOW]. What is implied by TO TEACH? Said R. Nehemiah: To prepare an academy for him there where he would teach Torah and where the tribal ancestors would read the Torah. The proof of this lies in the fact that when Joseph departed from him Jacob knew what subject he was studying when he left him, because he used to go over his studies with him. When Joseph's brethren came and said, Joseph is yet alive,... his heart fainted, for he believed them not (Gen. XLV, 26), Jacob recollected at what subject Joseph had left him, and he said to himself, I know that Joseph left me at the passage on the beheaded heifer, and so he said to them: ‘If he gave you a sign at what subject he left me I will believe you.’ Now Joseph too had remembered at what subject he had left him, so what did he do? He gave them wagons, as it says, And Joseph gave them ‘agaloth (ib. 21). This teaches you that wherever he went he studied the Torah, just as did his forbears, though the Torah had not yet been given. For surely it is written, Because that Abraham hearkened to My voice, and kept... My laws-toroth (ib. XXVI, 5).*

The Midrash provides the answer, quoted by Rashi in his commentary: Yehuda went to prepare a House of Study for the brothers and their families. The word *Torah* actually means *guide* or *instruction*, from the same root used in "to guide before him to Goshen." Furthermore, the verse is written with a missing vav in *to guide*, leaving the same four letters as *Torah*, rearranged.

The womb is the first critical environment for formation of the child. The Talmud relates that an angel is dispatched from above to study Torah with the fetus, in utero, for the duration of the forty weeks, to adequately prepare the unborn child for his future existence.

Upon birth, we are told, the angel, with a flick of a finger to the indentation of the lip, causes the child to forget all that has been learned.

Though we may not remember what we have learned, nonetheless at a subconscious level the information is there, programmed into the marrow of our being, waiting to be downloaded and recalled. All it takes is the desire and willingness to put forth the effort, to access the knowledge, and to bring it to a conscious level.

Thus, we see that in the pregnancy of Bne Israel follows the same pattern as normal birth in that Torah study is an essential connection, an umbilical cord, between the Bne Israel and HaShem.

## The 3rd Trimester

***Shemot (Exodus) 1:6*** *Joseph died, and all his brothers, and all that generation.*

**Seder Olam** Joseph, who lived 110 years, was the shortest-lived of the brothers; Levi, who lived 137, was the longest-lived. Hence, the enslavement of Israel, which began after Levi’s death, was no longer than 116 years (the period from Levi's passing to the Exodus), and no shorter than 86, the age of Miriam at the time of the Exodus (Miriam, meaning “bitterness,” was so named on account of the bitterness of the exile).

# False Labor

False labor, known as Braxton Hicks contractions, are sporadic uterine contractions that actually start at about 6 weeks. unlike true labor, during this so-called *false labor* the contractions don't grow consistently longer, stronger, and closer together. Now, we can differentiate between true and false labor.

In Egypt we also have an example of false labor. The Bne Ephraim left Egypt thirty years earlier in an abortive attempt to bring the redemption. The Bne Ephraim were slaughtered by the inhabitants of Gath and their bones left to rot in open fields.

***Sanhedrin 92b*** *Now, who were they whom Ezekiel revived? — Rab said: They were the Ephraimites, who counted [the years] to the end [of the Egyptian bondage], but erred therein[[93]](#footnote-93), as it is written, And the sons of Ephraim; Shuthelah, and Bared his son, and Tahath his son, and Eladah his son, and Tahath his son. And Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezzer, and Elead, whom the men of Gath that were born in that land slew[[94]](#footnote-94). And it is written, And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him[[95]](#footnote-95).*

Rashi in his commentary on the *Gemara* explains: *And erred*: for they should have calculated the edict, “and they shall be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years” (Bereshit 15:13) from the birth of Isaac, … but they [the sons of Ephraim] calculated it from the moment [G-d] spoke to Abraham. It is taught in *Seder Olam* [the reckoning of the universe] that our forefather Abraham was seventy years old when [G-d] spoke to him at the Covenant of the Pieces, and another thirty years passed from the Covenant of the Pieces until the birth of Isaac, for it is written: “Now Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him” (Bereshit 21:5). Thus, it turns out that from the time He spoke to him at the Covenant of the Pieces until they left Egyptthere were four hundred (and thirty) years, and the sons of Ephraim erred by the thirty years from the time He spoke until the birth of Isaac. Whence do we know the sons of Ephraim left too early and were killed? For it is said: “The sons of Ephraim: Shutelah, …, and they were killed by the men of Gath.”

***Sefer HaYashar Chapter 75*** *1 At that time, in the hundred and eightieth year of the Israelites going down into Egypt, there went forth from Egypt valiant men, thirty thousand on foot, from the children of Israel, who were all of the tribe of Joseph, of the children of Ephraim the son of Joseph. 2 For they said the period was completed which the Lord had appointed to the children of Israel in the times of old, which he had spoken to Abraham. 3 And these men girded themselves, and they put each man his sword at his side, and every man his armor upon him, and they trusted to their strength, and they went out together from Egypt with a mighty hand. 4 But they brought no provision for the road, only silver and gold, not even bread for that day did they bring in their hands, for they thought of getting their provision for pay from the Philistines, and if not they would take it by force. 5 And these men were very mighty and valiant men, one man could pursue a thousand and two could rout ten thousand, so they trusted to their strength and went together as they were. 6 And they directed their course toward the land of Gath, and they went down and found the shepherds of Gath feeding the cattle of the children of Gath. 7 And they said to the shepherds, Give us some of the sheep for pay, that we may eat, for we are hungry, for we have eaten no bread this day. 8 And the shepherds said, Are they our sheep or cattle that we should give them to you even for pay? so the children of Ephraim approached to take them by force. 9 And the shepherds of Gath shouted over them that their cry was heard at a distance, so all the children of Gath went out to them. 10 And when the children of Gath saw the evil doings of the children of Ephraim, they returned and assembled the men of Gath, and they put on each man his armor, and came forth to the children of Ephraim for battle. 11 And they engaged with them in the valley of Gath, and the battle was severe, and they smote from each other a great many on that day. 12 And on the second day the children of Gath sent to all the cities of the Philistines that they should come to their help, saying, 13 Come up unto us and help us, that we may smite the children of Ephraim who have come forth from Egypt to take our cattle, and to fight against us without cause. 14 Now the souls of the children of Ephraim were exhausted with hunger and thirst, for they had eaten no bread for three days. And forty thousand men went forth from the cities of the Philistines to the assistance of the men of Gath. 15 And these men were engaged in battle with the children of Ephraim, and the Lord delivered the children of Ephraim into the hands of the Philistines. 16 And they smote all the children of Ephraim, all who had gone forth from Egypt, none were remaining but ten men who had run away from the engagement. 17 For this evil was from the Lord against the children of Ephraim, for they transgressed the word of the Lord in going forth from Egypt, before the period had arrived which the Lord in the days of old had appointed to Israel. 18 And of the Philistines also there fell a great many, about twenty thousand men, and their brethren carried them and buried them in their cities. 19 And the slain of the children of Ephraim remained forsaken in the valley of Gath for many days and years, and were not brought to burial, and the valley was filled with men's bones. 20 And the men who had escaped from the battle came to Egypt, and told all the children of Israel all that had befallen them. 21 And their father Ephraim mourned over them for many days, and his brethren came to console him. 22 And he came unto his wife and she bare a son, and he called his name Beriah, for she was unfortunate in his house.*

It is also interesting and instructive to understand that Chazal[[96]](#footnote-96) connect this incident with Ezekiel’s dry bones in Ezekiel 37. Chazal teach that the bones that are resurrected are the Bne Ephraim that died in Gath.

***Sanhedrin 92b*** *Now, who were they whom Ezekiel revived? — Rab said: They were the Ephraimites, who counted [the years] to the end [of the Egyptian bondage], but erred therein[[97]](#footnote-97), as it is written, And the sons of Ephraim; Shuthelah, and Bared his son, and Tahath his son, and Eladah his son, and Tahath his son. And Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezzer, and Elead, whom the men of Gath that were born in that land slew[[98]](#footnote-98). And it is written, And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him[[99]](#footnote-99).*

The false labor could also be the explanation for Moshe’s action when he returned to Midian for three months after the plague of blood.

# Mucus Plug

From hours, to days, before labor, the small mucus *plug* that has sealed the cervix throughout pregnancy may begin to stretch, then break apart as the cervix shortens and thins out in a process called *effacing*. Once this occurs, pink-tinged mucus, or *bloody show*, may be discharged from the vagina.

Hours before the Bne Israel left Egypt, they put blood on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. This blood marked the opening of a house, a womb if you will, which protected the firstborn.

***Shemot (Exodus) 12:21*** *Then Moshe called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the Passover. 22 And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. 23 For HaShem will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, HaShem will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.*

This blood on the opening of their houses was the bloody show. The mucus plug was represented by the doors of their houses that protected the firstborn during his time of growth in the womb Egypt. After midnight, the door is flung open and the Jews begin to leave. The next morning those in the house will begin moving towards the borders of Egypt in the birth process as they position themselves in the womb of Egypt.

# The Midwife

A midwife is a health care practitioner, who is not a physician, who provides prenatal care to expecting mothers, attends the birth of the infant and provide postpartum care to the mother and infant.

Moshe personified the midwife as he was given the responsibility before HaShem for delivering the Bne Israel:

***Shemot (Exodus) 3:10*** *Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.*

***Shemot (Exodus) 6:13*** *And HaShem spake unto Moshe and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.*

Ibn Ezra asks about the origin of the name *Moshe*; the Hebrew literally means *I draw forth*, the active verb, but in context he should have been named *Mashui*, the one who was drawn forth, in the passive voice. The Netziv and Kassuto both make the point that the word Moshe in Egyptian means *son*, which gives profound meaning to Bitya's, Moshe’s adopted mother, declaration: "she called his name Moshe, son, because (she said) 'I drew him forth from the water.'" She is in effect declaring that she has earned the right to consider him her son since she took him from the water (a double entendre, referring both to the waters of the Nile River and, by allegory, the water or amniotic fluid which *breaks* with the birth of a baby) and saved his life from the Egyptian decree.

Bitya was indeed a second mother for a man whose name would prove prophetic: he, too, would *draw forth* the Hebrew slaves from the waters of the Yam Suf, bringing them from death to life, from slavery to freedom, from darkness to light. Moshewould be the model for the eventual Mashiach, or savior, who will ultimately bring all the nations of the world to peace, freedom and redemption.

The midwife must be close to family of the one being delivered in order to gain their trust. Moshe was of the tribe of Levi and, therefore, close to his tribal brethren.

Moshe was born circumcised[[100]](#footnote-100), suggesting that HaShem had given him a special mission.

The birth of Moshe was painless for Yocheved[[101]](#footnote-101), due to her righteousness, suggesting that the midwife did not need a midwife himself.

Moshe was fit for prophecy at birth[[102]](#footnote-102), suggesting that he was an agent of HaShem who was sent to assist his brothers.

When Moshe was put into the sea, Pharaoh's astrologers told Pharaoh there was no more need to throw children into the sea[[103]](#footnote-103), suggesting that Moshe would save his brothers by delivering them from the water (Yam Suf).

Moshe was put into the sea on the 21st of Nisan, and the angels protested that he shouldn't suffer on the water on the date when he was destined to sing to HaShem by the Sea[[104]](#footnote-104). This suggests that his work was to bring the Bne Israel through the Yam suf.

# Labor

Labor is divided into three stages:

1. The first stage begins with the onset of contractions and ends when the cervix is fully dilated (to ten centimeters).
2. The second stage involves delivery of the baby.
3. The third stage entails delivery of the placenta and membranes, or *afterbirth*.

The purpose of labor is to prepare the womb and the baby for delivery. There are several things that must be accomplished for successful delivery:

1. The baby must be positioned in the womb.
2. The cervix must become dilated to 10 cm.
3. Contractions must become stronger.

The labor and birth pangs are seen in the plagues.

Each of the ten plagues occurred in ten months and lasted four weeks each, for a total of forty weeks.

These are the ten plagues which HaShem brought upon the Egyptians in Egypt:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| דם | Dam | Blood, |
| צפרדע | Tzfardea | Frogs, |
| כנים | Kinim | Lice, |
| ערוב | Arov | Beasts, |
| דבר | Deber | Cattle Pestilence, |
| שחין | Sh'chin | Boils, |
| ברד | Barad | Hail, |
| ארבה | Arbeh | Locusts, |
| חשך | Choshek | Darkness, |
| בכורות מכת | Makat Bechorot | Death of the Firstborn. |

The blue letters in the following table show us the first letter of each of these plagues:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ד | דם | Blood, |
| צ | צפרדע | Frogs, |
| ך **(**כ**)** | כנים | Lice, |
|  |  |  |
| ע | ערוב | Beasts, |
| ד | דבר | Cattle Pestilence, |
| ש | שחין | Boils, |
|  |  |  |
| ב | ברד | Hail, |
| א | ארבה | Locusts, |
| ח | חשך | Darkness, |
| ב | בכורות מכת | Death of the Firstborn. |

At Pesach, during the seder, we read that Rabbi Yehuda referred to these ten plagues by acronyms: Rabbi Yehuda divided these plagues into three groups, or trimesters:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| DeTzaCh  דצ״ך | (blood, frogs, lice); |
| AdaSh  עד״ש | (beasts, pestilence, boils); |
| BeAChaB  באח״ב | (hail, locust, darkness, first-born). |

The letters באח״ב עד״ש דצ״ך are the initials of the names of the ten plagues in Hebrew, according to the acronym given to us by Rabbi Yehuda.

The following ideas come from the teachings of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria; translated and edited by Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky.

The exodus from Egypt is analogous to birth. The ten plagues also have their analogues in this context.

The first plague was that of blood, for the womb cannot open without bleeding first. For if the blood would not come out first, the child would choke and drown in the blood, which correlates to the powers of impurity. Blood issuing from the womb is associated with the powers of impurity since their issuance always causes the woman to focus on herself, and self-awareness is the antithesis of Divine consciousness.

Next was the plague of frogs. The word for “frog” [tzfardea] can be seen as constructed of the words for “a bird of knowledge” [tzipor dei’a]. These are the seventy voices of the woman giving birth, which correspond to the seventy words in Psalm 20, which begins, “May G-d answer you on the day of pain.” [These voices] are thus alluded to by a bird, referring to the [sounds women make like] birdcalls and chirps when giving birth.

[The analogue of] the plague of darkness [is as follows]. It is known that during the first trimester, the fetus is in the lower chamber [of the womb], during the middle trimester, it is in the middle chamber, and during the last trimester, it is in the upper chamber. At birth, it rolls down and dwells in darkness and great pain. Darkness was the ninth plague. The plague of the firstborn corresponds to the subjugation of the [evil inclination’s ancillary] powers of impurity that ruled within the womb. If this would not occur, they would kill the fetus. Even though they made the fetus grow, thus is their way: they descend to entice and ascend to accuse.[[105]](#footnote-105)

***Shemot (Exodus) 14:1-2*** *God spoke to Moshe, saying: "Speak to the Israelites, and let them turn back and camp before Freedom Valley (Pi Hahiroth}, between Tower (Migdal} and the sea, facing Lord-of-the-North (Baal Tzephon}. Camp opposite it, near the sea."*

HaShem wanted the Israelites to turn around purposely and head back toward Egypt. They were to camp between the Tower and Lord-of-the North, right on the seashore.

It is well known that the fetus turns upside down just before birth. This is the perfect picture of what the Bne Israel were doing when they “turned back”. The goal of this turn was to prepare for birth such that the head emerges first. This also seems to be the goal of the Bne Israel when they turned back. The Bne Israel were preparing to become the head, by emerging head first.

Freedom Valley *(Pi Hahiroth)* was a plain between two huge natural pillars. One had the form of a man, while the other looked like a woman, and both seemed to have large eyes. Although they had remarkably human form, they were natural formations[[106]](#footnote-106). This is the perfect picture for a woman in childbirth with her knees bent and her legs raised like two pillars.

There is another interesting question that might be pose: Was the birth of the Bne Israel an *induced* labor? After all, when Moshe and Aharon went to Paro, in effect their going in to Paro was the inducement that brought on the labor pains, the plagues.

The plagues did not unfold suddenly, all at once, nor was there only a single plague. Rather, HaShem brought ten plagues upon the Egyptians, gradually, over the course of a year. HaShem did not begin with the most severe plague, rather, He delivered them slowly, one stage at a time, so that the collapse of Egypt and the birth of Am Israel, the nation of Israel, was gradually manifest. Chazal teach that HaShem will follow the same slow process in the Messianic redemption.

***Shemot (Exodus) 4:21*** *And HaShem said unto Moshe, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go. 22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith HaShem, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: 23 And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.*

The ten plagues are the contractions that a woman experiences in the run up to the birth of the child. In the active phase, contractions occur about 3 minutes apart, last about 45 to 60 seconds.

In the transition phase, contractions occur every two to three minutes and last 60 to 90 seconds. this is the phase where we have a plague that lasts 1 week (1 minute) followed by three weeks (3 minutes) of quiet.

***Midrash Rabbah - Deuteronomy VII:9*** *The plagues deceived them[[107]](#footnote-107). How? The plagues came every thirty days[[108]](#footnote-108) and lasted for seven days and then departed. The Egyptians had thus respite for twenty-three days between one plague and the next.’ This proves that [the plagues] deceived them.*

***Midrash Rabbah - Exodus IX:12*** *AND SEVEN DAYS WERE FULFILLED, AFTER THAT THE LORD HAD SMITTEN THE RIVER (VII, 25). R. Judah and R. Nehemiah discussed this. One of them said that God warned them for twenty-four days prior to bringing the plague upon them, the actual plague lasting seven days; while the other said that for seven days did He warn them, the actual plague lasting twenty-four days. According to the one who maintains that for twenty-four days He warned them, the words AND SEVEN DAYS WERE FULFILLED refer to the actual plague; and according to him who maintains that for seven days He warned them, the words AND SEVEN DAYS WERE FULFILLED, AFTER THAT THE LORD HAD SMITTEN THE RIVER refer to the warning given for another plague.*

The plagues were the forces that caused the Egyptians to expel the Bne Israel:

***Shemot (Exodus) 12:30*** *And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. 31 And he called for Moshe and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve HaShem, as ye have said. 32 Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. 33 And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.*

The ten plagues were designed to kill and torture the Egyptians in order that they should recognize HaShem, while at the same time the plagues were preparing the Bne Israel to leave the womb. The plagues were the catalyst to position and prepare the Bne Israel for the exodus and their birth as a nation.

The plagues, the contractions, began in Iyar and ended in Nisan with a hiatus during Sivan, Tammuz, and Elul.

**Nisan 1**: Egypt was afflicted with the first plague: **Blood**. ***Exodus 7:19*** *Seder Olam 3* (Sapphire staff)

The plague of blood was designed to affect both the fetus and the womb.



**Iyar**: No plague.

**Sivan**: No plague.

**Tammuz**: No Plague.



**Av 1**: Egypt was afflicted with the second plague: **Frogs**. ***Exodus 8:2*** *Seder HaDorot* (Sapphire staff)

**Elul 1**: Egypt was afflicted with the third plague: **Lice**. ***Exodus 8:16*** *Zichron Yemot Olam* (Sapphire staff)

**Tishri 1**: Egypt was afflicted with the fourth plague: **Beasts** ***Exodus 8:24*** *Zichron Yemot Olam* (HaShem)

**Cheshvan 1**: Egypt was afflicted with the fifth plague: **Cattle plague** ***Exodus 9:3*** *Zichron Yemot Olam* (HaShem)

**Kislev 1**: Egypt was afflicted with the sixth plague: **Boils**. ***Exodus 9:9*** *Zichron Yemot Olam* (HaShem)

**Tevet 1**: Egypt was afflicted with the seventh plague: **Hail and fire**.***Exodus 9:24*** *Zichron Yemot Olam* (Sapphire staff)

**Shevat 1**: Egypt was afflicted with the eighth plague: **Locusts**. ***Exodus 10:4*** *Zichron Yemot Olam* (Sapphire staff)

**Adar 1**: Egypt was afflicted with the ninth plague: **Darkness**. ***Exodus 10:21*** *Zichron Yemot Olam*. (Sapphire staff)

**Nisan 15**: Egypt was afflicted with the tenth plague: **Death of the firstborn**. ***Exodus 33:3-4*** (HaShem)

It is well known that a woman is ready to deliver after she reaches ten centimeters of cervix dilation. In the same way, the birth of the Bne Israel was ready to proceed after ten plagues. Thus, the ten plagues alludes to this ten centimeter dilation.

Chazal teach us that the ten plagues were really the tip of the iceberg. The most intense in terms of severity and number occurred at the Yam Suf:

***Midrash Rabbah - Exodus V:14*** *He [Pharaoh] answered them: ‘I do not know who this God of yours is‘; as it is said: WHO IS THE LORD, THAT I SHOULD HEARKEN UNTO HIS VOICE? God then said to him: ' Wretch! "WHO (mi) IS THE LORD? " thou sayest. Well, thou wilt be punished with this word ’’Mi’’.’ The letter mem is forty and yod is ten--indicating the fifty plagues which God brought upon the Egyptians at the sea, as it says: Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh: This is the finger of God (Ex. VIII, 15); and at the sea, what does it say: And Israel saw the great hand (ib. XIV, 31). How many plagues did He inflict with His finger? Ten. Therefore, with the five fingers of His great hand, He smote them with fifty plagues, ten for each of the five fingers.*

***Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XXIII:9*** *Another explanation of THEN SANG MOSHE. It is written, The Lord hath made Himself known, He hath executed judgment (Ps. IX, 17); this refers to the Egyptians on whom God executed judgment in Egypt and also by the Sea. R. Joshua said: The ten plagues with which the Egyptians were smitten in Egypt were wrought with one finger, for it says, Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh: This is the finger of God (Ex. VIII, 15); but at the Sea, they were smitten with fifty plagues, for it says, And Israel saw the great hand [work] (ib. XIV, 31). There are five fingers to one hand, and five times ten are fifty.*

The plagues, the birth pangs, were intended to have an effect on Egypt and also to have an effect on the Bne Israel:

***Shemot (Exodus) 10:1*** *And HaShem said unto Moshe, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him: 2 And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son’s son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am HaShem.*

We see that the plagues are not just a message for the Bne Israel who experienced the exodus from Egypt, but for all generations to strengthen their Emunah and bitachon in HaShem and to realize that even in the most difficult of times, HaShem always remembers the Bne Israel. As HaShem told Moshe when He revealed Himself at the burning bush:

***Shemot (Exodus) 3:7*** *I've seen the affliction of My people in Egypt, I've heard their outcry … and I know their sufferings and I will descend and save them from the hand of the Egyptians and I will bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land …*

A woman in the final stages of childbirth goes through a *death* experience. This is evident from her screams, her pain, and the fact that women do occasionally die in childbirth. We see this same agony in Egypt at the time of the last plague and as the Bne Israel are leaving Egypt:

***Shemot (Exodus) 12:29*** *And it came to pass, that at midnight HaShem smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. 30 And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. 31 And he called for Moshe and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve HaShem, as ye have said. 32 Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. 33 And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.*

# Breaking of the Water

The Maharal explains that the fundamental nature of water is that it’s formless. Water has no form of its own and therefore takes on the shape of its container. Unlike bodies of land which have roads and pathways, bodies of water have no pathways or landmarks, but remain formless. Water therefore represents the first stage of any creation process. Before something has a shape, it resides in a formless and amorphous state. Only afterwards does a physical form emerge. This is why, during the Creation of the world, the Torah tells that originally there was only water; only afterwards did the dry land emerge from the water.[[109]](#footnote-109)

Chazal have taught us that the birth of the Bne Israel took place on Pesach when we left Egypt in the days of Moshe. Birth or rebirth is always associated with water: The fetus is surrounded by amniotic fluids, the mother’s *water breaks* as a sign of imminent birth, and therefore the mikveh required for conversion, features immersion in water. This breaking of the water, for the Bne Israel, is seen on the seventh day of Pesach at the splitting of the Yam Suf, the Reed Sea.

This *breaking* of the water is even more incredible when we realize the enormity of the words of the Bne Israel as they stood on the threshold of the Yam Suf and the breaking of that water:

***Shemot (Exodus) 14:10*** *And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto HaShem. 11 And they said unto Moshe, Because there were no graves* (keverim - *קְבָרִים*) *in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? 12 Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. 13 And Moshe said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of HaShem, which he will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever.*

The Hebrew word for *grave*, in the above pasuk, is also the Hebrew word for *womb*. Kever means *grave* and it also means *womb*. Thus, the Bne Israel can see that they stand at a critical crossroad which will simultaneously represent their birth as a nation, Am Israel, and their rebirth at Techiyat HaMeitim, the resurrection of the dead. Chazal teach us that the emergence of dry land after the gathering of water is both the picture of creation and the picture of the re-creation at Techiyat HaMeitim:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 1:9*** *And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.*

In the above pasuk we can see that it is redundant to speak of the dry land appearing because this appearing will be obvious if the water is gathered together in one place. Thus, Chazal teach that this is allusion to the gathering of water, and the appearance of dry land, at the Yam Suf. Further, Chazal teach us that we learn about Techiyat HaMeitim at the Yam Suf because of this connection.

The dry land makes it possible for a man to have a place to stand. Chazal teach us that this place to stand is also to be understood as being a place for us to exist, or the *possibility of our existence*. Thus, the appearance of the dry land at the Yam Suf presents the possibility of our resurrected existence!

***Shemot (Exodus) 14:15*** *And HaShem said unto Moshe, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: 16 But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.*

HaShem tells Moshe, who represents all of the Bne Israel, to *stop praying (criest)*. This seems to be an allusion to that time, just before birth, when the angel hits the baby on the upper lip (philtrum) and drives his learning inside where it becomes, so to speak, his conscience.[[110]](#footnote-110) Thus the baby knows the Torah, but he cannot speak it out.

***Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XXI:8*** *SPEAK UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, THAT THEY GO FORWARD.’ R. Joshua said: God said to Moshe: ' All that Israel have to do is to go forward. Therefore, Let them go forward! Let their feet step forward from the dry land to the sea, and thou wilt see the miracles which I will perform for them.’ R. Meir said: God said to Moshe: ‘There is no need for Israel to pray before Me. If I made dry land for Adam, who was only one, for it says, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together,[[111]](#footnote-111) how much more ought I to do so on behalf of a holy congregation that will soon say before Me, This is my God, and I will glorify Him?’[[112]](#footnote-112)*

"breaking of the waters":

The parting of the Reed Sea.

The downward pressure of the baby's head against the amniotic sac may cause these membranes to rupture. The breaking of the water can occur as a trickle or a gush of odorless, colorless amniotic fluid. Once the sac has broken, labor is imminent, often beginning spontaneously within 12 to 24 hours. In fact, in many women, the membranes don't rupture until labor is already underway.

As the Jews were standing by shore of the Yam Suf watching their enemy come closer, they did not know what to do. Suddenly, Nachshon ben Aminadab, of the tribe of Judah, jumped into the Yam Suf with full confidence that HaShem would save him. As he touched the water, it parted and allowed the Jews to pass through. It was Nachshon's faith in HaShem that led to Bne Israel's being saved.

***Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XXI:10*** *AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WENT INTO THE MIDST OF THE SEA UPON THE DRY GROUND (XIV, 22). [How is this possible?] If they went into the sea, then why does it say UPON THE DRY GROUND? and if they went UPON THE DRY GROUND, then why does it say INTO THE MIDST OF THE SEA? This is to teach that the sea was divided only after Israel had stepped into it and the waters had reached their noses, only then did it become dry land.*

***Mechilta Beshalach 5*** *“When Israel stood at the Sea, this Tribe (Yehuda) said, ‘I will not be first to go down into the Sea;’ and the other Tribe (Benyamin) said ‘I will not be first to go down into the Sea.’ In the midst of this argument, one individual, Nachshon ben Aminadab, Prince of the Tribe of Yehuda, seized the initiative, and went down first into the Sea, inspiring the rest of his Tribe to follow...At that moment, Moshe was deeply engaged in Prayer. The Holy One, Blessed is He, said to him, ‘My beloved friends are drowning in the Sea, and you stand in Prayer before Me!’ Moshe said, ‘Master of the Universe, What should I do?’ He said to him, ‘Speak to the Children of Israel, and let them move...’ Therefore, Yehuda merited to become king of Israel, as it says, ‘Yehuda sanctified His Name; by this he merited to rule in Israel.’”[[113]](#footnote-113)*

***Sotah 37a*** *What was it that Judah did? — As it has been taught: R. Meir said: When the Israelites stood by the Reed Sea, the tribes strove with one another, each wishing to descend into the sea first. Then sprang forward the tribe of Benjamin and descended first into the sea; as it is said: There is little Benjamin their ruler[[114]](#footnote-114) — read not rodem [their ruler] but rad yam [descended into the sea]. Thereupon the princes of Judah hurled stones at them; as it is said: The princes of Judah their council[[115]](#footnote-115). For that reason the righteous Benjamin was worthy to become the host of the All-Powerful[[116]](#footnote-116), as it is said: He dwelleth between his shoulders[[117]](#footnote-117). R. Judah said to [R. Meir]: That is not what happened; but each tribe was unwilling to be the first to enter the sea. Then sprang forward Nahshon the son of Aminadab[[118]](#footnote-118) and descended first into the sea; as it is said: Ephraim compasseth me about with falsehood, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah yet ruleth with God[[119]](#footnote-119). Concerning him it is stated in Scripture, Save me O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing etc.[[120]](#footnote-120) Let not the waterflood overwhelm me, neither let the deep swallow me up etc.[[121]](#footnote-121) At that time Moshe was engaged for a long while in prayer; so the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, ‘My beloved ones are drowning in the sea and thou prolongest prayer before Me!’ He spake before Him, ‘Lord of the Universe, what is there in my power to do?’ He replied to him, Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward. And lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thy hand etc.[[122]](#footnote-122). For that reason Judah was worthy to be made the ruling power in Israel, as it is said: Judah became His sanctuary, Israel his dominion[[123]](#footnote-123). Why did Judah become His sanctuary and Israel his dominion? Because the sea saw [him] and fled[[124]](#footnote-124).*

As the head (prince) of the tribe of Yehuda, the head (leading) of the tribes of the Bne Israel, jumped into the Yam Suf causing it to break (split), so too does the pressure of the baby’s head cause the breaking of the water of the womb.

# The Crowning

Crowning is the part of the birth process where the baby's head is first seen. For the Bne Israel, the crowning is when the head of the Bne Israel first became visible at Freedom Valley *(Pi Hahiroth)*, the Mouth of Freedom.

***Shemot (Exodus) 14:21*** *And Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea; and HaShem caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. 22 And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.*

On the third day of the Exodus, HaShem told Moshe to inform the Israelites that they were to turn around and camp by Freedom Valley *(Pi Hahiroth*. This was the coastal city of Pithom where the Israelites had previously worked as slaves (1:11). Now, when the Israelites returned there, they renamed the city *Pi Hahiroth,* literally *Mouth of Freedom*. In the same place where they had been slaves, they were now able to celebrate their freedom. (Rashi)

The marching order of the tribes was as follows:

**Yehuda** (Issachar and Zebulon)

Levi – the family of Gershon

Levi – the family of Merari

**Reuben** (Shimeon and Gad)

Levi – the family of Kohath

**Ephraim** (Menashe and Benyamin)

**Dan** (Naphtali and Asher)

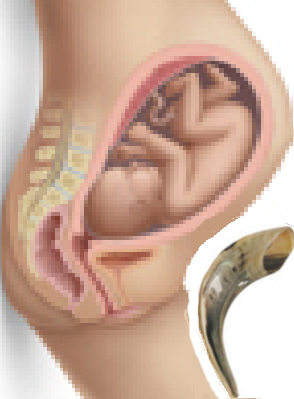
Thus we see that as the head leads the body through the birth canal, so Yehuda led the Bne Israel through the Yam Suf, the birth canal.

As the Bne Israel were standing by shore of the Yam Suf watching their enemy come closer, they did not know what to do. Suddenly, Nachshon ben Aminadab, from the tribe of Yehuda, jumped into the Yam Suf with full confidence that HaShem would save him. As he touched the water, it parted and allowed the Jews to pass through. It was Nachshon's Emunah in HaShem that led to Bne Israel's being saved.

Nachshon ben Aminadab was the prince of the tribe of Yehuda. He was the “top” of the head. Thus it is fitting that he should emerge first.

# Birth Canal

The Hebrew word for Egypt, Mitzrayim, is related to the term meitzar,[[125]](#footnote-125) which refers to boundaries and limitations and comes from the same verb root as *birth canal*. The birth canal is in the shape of a shofar as we can see from the following graphic:



The imagery of shofar and the birth canal is reinforced when we recall that the name of one of the midwives in Egypt was called Shifra (from the same root as shofar).

Seven days after Pesach, the children of Israel crossed the Reed Sea. Keriat Yam Suf, the opening / splitting of the Reed Sea, was the opening of the womb. The opening of the birth canal shaped like a shofar.

A most interesting detail not generally known[[126]](#footnote-126), is that the Bne Israel entered and exited the Yam Suf on the same side! Tosafot tell us that the parting of the waters happened in the shape of a shofar, a semi-circle!

Thus we see that the Bne Israel started from Etham:

***Bamidbar (Numbers) 33:7*** *And they removed from Etham, and turned again unto Pi Hahiroth, which is before Baal Tzephon: and they pitched before Migdal.*

After they were through the sea they were still at Etham:

***Bamidbar (Numbers) 33:8*** *And they departed from before Hahiroth, and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, and went three days’ journey in the wilderness of Etham, and pitched in Marah.*

The Bne Israel had traveled through the shofar shaped birth canal.

When the waters of the Yam Suf formed a wall on their left and right with the Clouds of Glory over them, this became the birth canal through which the Bne Israel were born:

***Shemot (Exodus) 14:29*** *The children of Israel walked upon dry ground in the midst of the sea, and the waters formed for them a wall on their right and on their left.”*

The Nazarean Codicil tells us that this was an immersion in a mikveh:

***I Corinthians 10:1-2*** *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 And were all baptized unto Moshe in the cloud and in the sea;*

Now what is a mikveh (the place of baptism)? Is it not a place where those who are dead are resurrected to life? Is not the birth process a death experience? Surely anyone who has watched a woman in labor would swear that she is dying. The labor is so intense that some do die. Yet, we see that from this death experience we see new life.

This new life also went through a death experience. The fetus lives in water and neither eats nor drinks. The fetus has no respiration nor excretion. Blood does not flow through its lungs and there is a hole in its heart which connects the two upper chambers. The blood in the fetus does not flow in the same direction as one who is born.

When the baby is born, the hole in his heart closes, the lungs expel the water and fill with air. The blood circulation reverses. Suddenly the water breathing creature in the womb is transformed into a baby. A human being that breathes, eats, drinks, and defecates has been brought into the world. That which was “dead”, as a human being, is now alive.

# Birth

Chazal have taught that the birth of the Jewish People, the Bne Israel, was in the leaving of Egypt, Egypt in the days of Moshe. Hoshea the prophet spoke of the birth of the Bne Israel:

***Hoshea (Hosea) 1:1*** *When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.*

This birth of the Bne Israel was possible only through the most intense labor pains which were manifested as plagues:

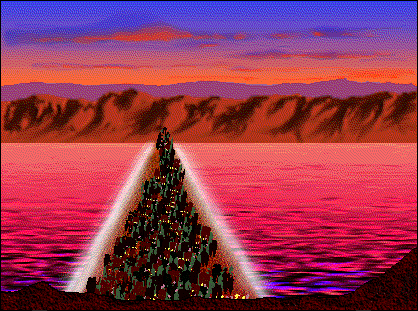
***Shemot (Exodus) 3:19-20*** *And I know that the King of Egypt will not let you go, even with a strong hand. And I will send My Hand and smite Egypt. After that, they will send you away.*

The ten plagues are called the *finger* of God. At the Yam Suf we will see five times this number when we see the *hand* of HaShem which contains five fingers:

***Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XXIII:9*** *R. Joshua said: The ten plagues with which the Egyptians were smitten in Egypt were wrought with one finger, for it says, Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh: This is the finger of God;[[127]](#footnote-127) but at the Sea, they were smitten with fifty plagues, for it says, And Israel saw the great hand [work].[[128]](#footnote-128) There are five fingers to one hand, and five times ten are fifty.*

***Shemot (Exodus) 14:31*** *And Israel saw that great hand which HaShem laid upon the Egyptians: and the people feared HaShem, and believed HaShem, and his servant Moshe.*

In the Haggada, where a comparison is made between the *finger* of God that smote them in Egypt and the *hand* that smote them at the Yam Suf,. "Rabbi Yossi Haglili says: How does one calculate that the Egyptians received ten plagues in Egypt but received fifty plagues on the sea? What does the Torah say concerning Egypt? 'And the magicians said to Pharaoh: It is the finger of God!' And what does it say concerning the sea? 'And Israel saw the great hand which HaShem laid upon the Egyptians' ... Hence, they received ten plagues in Egypt and fifty plagues on the sea."



Yosef was the “bones” that came forth from the womb. These were the memories of Yaaqob Ben Yitzchak. These were the memories of Israel which he gave to his children, the Bne Israel!

When the Bne Israel arrived on the shore, Israel emerged as a nation distinct from the host nation of Egypt. The Bne Israel were born!



One of the first acts of a baby, after birth, is a heartfelt cry from the depth of its soul. Chazal have taught that this cry of the soul will surely move HaShem. Thus, we see that the Bne Israel also uttered a heartfelt cry immediately after crossing the Yam Suf:

***Shemot (Exodus) 15:1*** *Then sang Moshe and the children of Israel this song unto HaShem, and spake, saying, I will sing unto HaShem, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. 2 HaShem is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him. 3 HaShem is a man of war: HaShem is his name. 4 Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Reed sea. 5 The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. 6 Thy right hand, HaShem, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, HaShem, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. 7 And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. 8 And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. 9 The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. 10 Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. 11 Who is like unto thee, HaShem, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? 12 Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. 13 Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. 14 The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. 15 Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. 16 Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, HaShem, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased. 17 Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, HaShem, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. 18 HaShem shall reign forever and ever. 19 For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and HaShem brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.*

As we sang at the Yam Suf, so we will sing the same song when we are redeemed by Mashiach:

***Revelation 15:3*** *And they sing the song of Moshe the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.*

We see also that the words of Hoshea the prophet were also applied to the Mashiach ben Yosef:

***Matityahu (Matthew) 2:15*** *And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.*

Thus, we learn that the Bne Israel, as a united nation, represent the Mashiach Ben Yosef. The Bne Israel are the body of Mashiach.

The Talmud states that when a baby is in the womb, "he is taught the entire Torah. However, as soon as he enters the air of this world, an angel comes and strikes him on his mouth, causing him to forget the entire Torah."

***Niddah 30b*** *R. Simlai delivered the following discourse: What does an embryo resemble when it is in the bowels of its mother? Folded writing tablets. Its hands rest on its two temples respectively, its two elbows on its two legs and its two heels against its buttocks. Its head lies between its knees, its mouth is closed and its navel is open, and it eats what its mother eats and drinks what its mother drinks, but produces no excrements because otherwise it might kill its mother. As soon, however, as it sees the light the closed organ opens and the open one closes, for if that had not happened the embryo could not live even one single hour. A light burns above its head and it looks and sees from one end of the world to the other, as it is said, then his lamp shined above my head, and by His light I walked through darkness[[129]](#footnote-129). And do not be astonished at this, for a person sleeping here might see a dream in Spain. And there is no time in which a man enjoys greater happiness than in those days, for it is said, O that I were as the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me[[130]](#footnote-130); now which are the days’ that make up ‘months’ and do not make up years? The months of pregnancy of course. It is also taught all the Torah from beginning to end, for it is said, And he taught me, and said unto me: ‘Let thy heart hold fast my words, keep my commandments and live’[[131]](#footnote-131), and it is also said, When the converse of God was upon my tent[[132]](#footnote-132). Why the addition of ‘and it is also said’? — In case you might say that it was only the prophet who said that, come and hear ‘when the converse of God was upon my tent. As soon as it, sees the light an angel approaches, slaps it on its mouth and causes it to forget all the Torah completely, as it is said, Sin coucheth at the door[[133]](#footnote-133). It does not emerge from there before it is made to take an oath, as it is said, That unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear[[134]](#footnote-134); ‘That unto Me every knee shall bow’ refers to the day of dying of which it is said All they that go down to the dust shall kneel before Him[[135]](#footnote-135); ‘Every tongue shall swear’ refers to the day of birth of which it is said, He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not taken My name in vain, and hath not sworn deceitfully[[136]](#footnote-136). What is the nature of the oath that it is made to take? Be righteous, and be never wicked; and even if all the world tells you, You are righteous’, consider yourself wicked.*

If the child were not taught the Torah while in the womb, he would not be able to acquire his portion of the Torah, regardless of the extent of effort exerted. If the child was taught the Torah and allowed to remember it, no toil would be needed, and the entire system of reward and punishment, under which the world exists, would be effectively annulled. Therefore, the child is taught the Torah. The child is given the background, the basis needed for the study of Torah. The child is caused to forget the Torah, so that he must strive for excellence during his life and toil to recapture that which he lost, earning Heavenly reward with each iota of effort and accomplishment.

***Yehezchel (Ezekiel) 16:4–6*** *And as for your birth, in the day you were born your navel was not cut, neither were you washed in water to make you supple … No eye pitied you … to have compassion upon you … but you were cast into the open field … on the day that you were born. And when I passed by you, and saw you polluted in your own blood, I said unto you: Live through your blood; I said unto you: Live through your blood.*

Yitzchak

# Leaving Egypt

The Maharal writes that leaving Egypt represents the birth of the Jewish people. Unlike other peoples who slowly develop and then declare independence, the Jewish People emerged whole, in the flash of the moment when we left Egypt.

If one wishes to examine, and understand the **Remez** of the Egyptian exile, this paper should add to your understanding. The **Remez** understanding teaches us about *Yetzirah[[137]](#footnote-137)* (יְצִירָה), the World of Formation. This is a world of feeling. I will be examining the Egyptian exile from this perspective, in this paper. From a Remez perspective, the Egyptian exile appears as a hint to the birth process; from the act of marriage till the birth of the baby.

We will find the entire birth process is hinted at in the text of Shemot (Exodus), with the beginning, of the process, found in the sefer of *beginnings*, Bereshit. This is an exciting process which culminates in the naming of the child, which is found in the sefer of *names*, Shemot.

Having a bit of knowledge of the birth process will greatly aid your understanding. My knowledge is primarily based on the birth of two of my children, which I was able to watch and observe from the *beginning* till the *naming*.

There are four levels of Torah understanding that Chazal use to elucidate the text and provide insights into HaShem’s plans for His world. These four levels are commonly referred to as PaRDeS, on orchard or garden. The four levels are: Pshat, Remez, Drash, and Sod, provide different perspectives which can be used to guide the decisions of the normal man and of his leaders. Each level, of understanding, has applicability to a different level of leadership.

My goal is to *eventually* examine the Egyptian exile at each of the four levels. The bulk of this paper is devoted, so far, to the Remez perspective. When I have completed the Remez perspective, I will next examine the Drash perspective. I will leave the Pshat perspective last, as it is the lowest level, and at the same time it is also the highest level.

If one wishes to understand the **Pshat**, the simple understanding of the Egyptian exile, one can read the Torah text, Shemot (Exodus) chapters one through fifteen, and consult Rashi’s commentary. The Pshat understanding teaches us about the world of *Asiyah*,[[138]](#footnote-138) the World of Action. This a world of ‘doing’. I do not intend to address the Pshat in this paper.

If one wishes to understand the **Drash**, of the Egyptian exile, he can check the end of this paper where I have a very brief look at this amazing world, the World of *Briah[[139]](#footnote-139)* (בְּרִיאָה), the World of Creation. This is a world of thinking.

I would like to add more to the Drash and later add the **Sod** of the Egyptian exile, *Atzilut[[140]](#footnote-140)* (אֲצִילוּת), the World of Emanation, as time goes on. This is a world of existing, or intimacy.

In this study I would like to examine the Egyptian exile and exodus, from a Remez perspective, in order to see the prophetic significance of the birth of the Jewish people, the Bne Israel (Children of Israel). This birth took place on the seventh day of Pesach, Passover. *That means that Nisan 21, the seventh day of Passover, is the birthday of the Bne Israel, the children of Israel*. Not only is it Israel’s birthday, but it is also the birthday of HaShem’s firstborn son!

***Shemot (Exodus) 4:22*** *And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh: Thus saith HaShem: Israel is My son, My first-born.*

HaShem wants a nation who's going to be His firstborn, who's going to stand up and show the other nations what it means to be a model nation.

To go along with our national birthday, HaShem changed His calendar to make the month of our birth into His first month of the year.

***Shemot (Exodus) 12:1-2*** *And HaShem spoke unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying:* ***2*** *'This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.*

This birthday, and the calendar change, is significant because the Nazarean Codicil declares that the festivals are prophetic of things to come.

***Colossians 2:16*** *Let no (PAGAN) man therefore judge you but the body of Messiah (i.e. the Jewish people) concerning (kosher) meat, or (kosher) drink, or in respect to (the celebration of) a (Biblical) holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: 17* ***For these (observance of the laws of kashrut and of Biblical festivals) are a shadow (prophecy) of things yet to come****.*

My teacher, Hakham Dr. Yosef ben Haggai, has made the above comments regarding this amazing passage. From this passage we can see that the seventh day of Pesach contains a prophecy regarding the final Redeemer, The Mashiach.

The Prophet Micah teaches us that the messianic redemption will be just like the redemption in the days of Moshe.[[141]](#footnote-141)

***Micah 7:15*** *As in the days of thy coming forth out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvelous things.*

This connection between the *Mosaic* redemption and the *Messianic* redemption suggests that understanding the details of the Mosaic redemption can provide much understanding of the future.

This study seeks to understand the birth process of the Bne Israel[[142]](#footnote-142) (the Children of Israel) in order to understand the prophetic significance of this birth process. Come with me as we examine this fantastic event and its prophetic significance. The ArtScroll Mesorah series expressed it this way:

The Redemption from Egypt was Israel's birth. As *Maharal* puts it, "When Israel was in Egypt and the Holy One, Blessed is He, took them out, they were surely like a fetus which had been born, as is stated in *Midrash*.[[143]](#footnote-143) Therefore, their redemption could have come about only through God Himself and not through an angel.[[144]](#footnote-144)

A prolonged birth can encounter complications. The birth of the Jewish nation was swift, before the people could sink to the fiftieth level of spiritual impurity, a point of no return. The *revelation of the Divine Presence,* which the Jews experienced on the night of the Exodus was essentially a gift from Heaven, an *awakening initiated from Above,* to rescue the Jews from the morass into which they had sunk.[[145]](#footnote-145)

The children of Israel are trapped in the tightest of places. The Hebrew for Egypt, Mitzrayim, means a very tight place. Taskmasters are set over them. Moses comes before Pharaoh and takes a stick and inserts it into the River Nile. Blood issues forth. There is a first plague, and at the end of each month another, so that the tenth plague brings nine months to full term. The waters of the Reed Sea break. The children come forth out of the tight place. And the taskmasters, who had held the children captive within the tight place all that time, come forth after them, and perish. So, the birth of the children of Israel, and the crossing of the Reed Sea in the World of Formation. We use a metaphor of childbirth. It’s as if we had insemination, pregnancy, labor, breaking of the waters, emergence of the newborn, the death of the placenta. The Reed Sea story in the World of Formation, this is the level of Remez. This is the level of hermeneutic that we will be using in this paper.

There is more. There is no creation without an issuing forth. The very creation described in the first chapter of Genesis is an issuing forth. God says, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. God separates the light from the darkness. God creates the waters, and separates the waters so that the dry land appears. This is the process of creation in Genesis. And here in the book of Exodus? The creation of the people of Israel is described in the same terms. Light and darkness, the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud. The sea, the splitting of the sea, the appearance of dry land. The children of Israel are created in the exodus out of Egypt. There is no creation without an exodus. This is the hermeneutic level of Drash. While we will not be using this level in this study, it is the basis for an understanding that rulers need to use when examining the exodus.

Let’s start by examining Egypt, that womb which bore the Bne Israel.

The Hebrew word for Egypt, *Egypt*, means *a place of confinement*. Egypt is likened to a womb from which the Bne Israel emerged as a single entity. Egypt is a Remez, a hint, of what the Jewish people will go through, just before the final redemption. The womb, the place of nourishment and comfort, will become a place of pain and of certain death. The womb was a place where all of our needs were met, yet somehow it has turned against us. The place of comfort has become the place of torture.

This is not torture for the sake of delivering pain. No, this is torture for the sake of revealing new life. Without this torturous birth process, there would be no way we could ever enter the new and better world. Without dying, we would have no chance at eternal life. Egypt, the womb, is the process that brings us to real life!

The mitzva of the Pesach seder is to tell our children about the *miracles* that HaShem used to deliver us. Yes, we tell the story, but more importantly, we tell the story of the *miracles*! The birth of the Bne Israel is about miracles. It is a prophecy of our final redemption which will also be miraculous.

A normal pregnancy lasts for 40 weeks or 280 days. Thus we see that a normal pregnancy lasts for 4 X 70. When we examine our time in Egypt, we find that we were there for 210 years, or 3 X 70. This teaches us that there is a close connection between the birth process and the number 70.

The nation of Israel was “born prematurely” – after only 210 years, instead of 400 years.

**Rashi’s Commentary for: ‎ Shemot (Exodus) ‎12:40: was four hundred and thirty years-**Altogether, from the time that Isaac was born, until now, were 400 years. From the time that Abraham had seed [i.e., had a child, the prophecy] “that your seed will be strangers”[[146]](#footnote-146) was fulfilled; and there were another 30 years from the decree “between the parts”[[147]](#footnote-147) until Isaac was born. It is impossible, however, to say that [they spent 400 years] in Egypt alone, because Kohath [the grandfather of Moses] was [one] of those who came with Jacob. Go and figure all his years, all the years of his son Amram, and Moses’ 80 years; you will not find them [to be] that many, and perforce, Kohath lived many of his years before he descended to Egypt, and many of Amram’s years are included in the years of Kohath, and many of Moses’ years are included in Amram’s years. Hence, you will not find 400 years counting from their arrival in Egypt. You are compelled, perforce, to say that the other dwellings [which the Patriarchs settled] were also called being “sojournings” and even in Hebron, as it is said: “where Abraham and Isaac sojourned (גָּרוּ)”,[[148]](#footnote-148) and [Scripture] states also “the land of their sojournings in which they sojourned”.[[149]](#footnote-149) Therefore, you must say that [the prophecy] “your seed will be strangers” [commences] when he [Abraham] had offspring. And only when you count 400 years from the time that Isaac was born, you will find 210 years from their entry into Egypt. This is one of the things that [the Sages] changed for King Ptolemy.[[150]](#footnote-150)

From this we understand that each of the trimesters, for our Egyptian stay, was seventy (70) years long.

Also, the ten plagues were apparently HaShem’s means of “inducing birth”.

When we left the womb of Egypt, notice what we do as soon as we are out:

***Shemot (Exodus) 15:1*** *Then sang Moshe and the children of Israel this song unto HaShem, and spake, saying, I will sing unto HaShem, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.*

How do several million people spontaneously sing the exact same words as Moshe? Unless the Bne Israel, the Children of Israel, were a single soul it would be impossible to achieve such a song. When the Bne Israel sang (will sing[[151]](#footnote-151)) this song, they sang it as Am Israel, the ***nation*** of Israel. They sang as only Adam HaRishon could sing, they sang as only Mashiach could sing. This was true unity! Thus, we learn that the forging of the unity of the Bne Israel took place in the womb of Egypt!

The imagery of Egypt, during the time of the sojourning of the Bne Israel, is the imagery of a pregnant woman about to give birth. From the days of Avraham until the beginning of the exodus, HaShem weaves the history of the beginning of the nation of Israel within the imagery of pregnancy and birth.

The imagery of pregnancy and birth is reinforced with the constant refrain of the characters who are involved in pregnancy and birth. Thus, for example, we have the story of Shifra (from the same root as shofar) and Puah, two midwives[[152]](#footnote-152) who are desperate to save the male children. Shifra and Puah were in fact Yocheved and Miriam, the mother and sister of Moshe Rabbenu (Moses our teacher), respectively.

***Shemot (Exodus) 1:15*** *And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shifra, and the name of the other Puah: 16 And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. 17 But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive. 18 And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive? 19 And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them. 20 Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty. 21 And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses. 22 And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.*

Chazal, our Sages, have taught that the names “Shifra” and “Puah” indicate different roles midwives play. “Shifra” stems from the Hebrew verb to *swaddle* or to *clean* a baby, while Puah comes from the Hebrew word to *cry out*, because a midwife tries to calm a new mother’s cries by offering her words of encouragement.

Egypt is the picture of galut, the exile – all exiles. When we see this galut through the imagery of the birth process, then we will begin to understand why Chazal explain that the harshest period of galut started in the year in which Miriam was born. That is why she was called *Miriam*, from the Hebrew word *mar* meaning bitter. She explained that the harsher the subjugation the closer the redemption. She said it was like childbirth, the closer a woman came to giving birth the more painful the labor pains became.

Chazal compare the passage through the Yam Suf, the Sea of Reeds, and our leaving Egypt, to a birth, with similar stages.

In separating the Bne Israel, the Children of Israel, from Egypt, HaShem took one nation from the midst of another nation. This separation is the separation of a baby from the womb. All of us have experienced the process of childbirth in one way or another so we know that during the birthing process, there is a long period of incubation where the two bodies, mother and child, live as one, sharing a common food supply. Suddenly, with HaShem’s help, the fetus leaves the mother’s womb, hurries down the birth canal, and becomes a separate entity, struggling to breathe on its own. And so it was with the Bne Israel; on that night, HaShem created a people. Am Israel was born. Israel became a nation with its own mitzvot and with its own existence. Finally, free of Egypt, in both body and soul, Israel was ready to leave.

The birth process began with plagues, the pains of labor. The divine intervention shook the Bne Israel out of their Egyptian attachment and positioned them for birth.

The birth began when the Bne Israel started leaving Egypt (Egypt), but as long as the Egyptians were alive, and they related to them as their masters, they were not completely detached and the birth was not complete.

As they were going out, the Bne Israel reached a terrible crisis. The Yam Suf, the Reed Sea, was in front of them, the Egyptians were bearing down behind them, and then came the decisive prosecution in Heaven: The Bne Israel worshiped idols just as their oppressors. The birth could not proceed, posing a threat of disaster. The splitting of the Yam Suf was the final, successful birth and that was truly the moment of redemption, and birth. This birth was a picture of creation. Just as the dry land was separated from the waters just before the creation of man, so too were the waters of the Yam Suf separated from the dry land before the resurrection and birth of the Bne Israel.

What makes the birth of Bne Israel in Egypt such a fascinating study is that it is also an accurate picture of the birth of Bne Israel in the days of Mashiach, the Messiah. This suggests that if we carefully study the birth in the days of Moshe, then we will understand the birth pangs of Mashiach. ***History will repeat itself.*** Since these birth pangs will be some of the most difficult times that the world has experienced, it makes sense that we would want to understand what we are getting into.

When history repeats itself, our Emunah (faithful obedience) and bitachon (trust) in HaShem are being tested. We are obligated to believe that HaShem will take us out of this galut, this exile, through Mashiach. The righteous will only be gathered as a reward for their Emunah and bitachon in HaShem. But we are getting a bit ahead of ourselves. Let’s begin our study at the place where all births begin: The intimacy that leads to pregnancy.

# The After Birth

As we mentioned earlier, the Egyptians guards / army were the placenta for the Bne Israel during their gestation in Egypt. After the birth of the Bne Israel, the placenta became the afterbirth, a worn out, useless organ that was now dead.

***Shemot (Exodus) 14:22*** *And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. 23 And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. 24 And it came to pass, that in the morning watch HaShem looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, 25 And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for HaShem fighteth for them against the Egyptians. 26 And HaShem said unto Moshe, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. 27 And Moshe stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and HaShem overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. 28 And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.*

With the collapse of the placenta and its expulsion from the body, comes the realization that with the birth of the Bne Israel, the Egyptian army is no longer needed. The Egyptians are cast out of the womb of Egypt, dead:

***Shemot (Exodus) 14:30*** *Thus HaShem saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.*

The Bne Israel were united into a single body with a single purpose when they were born. The ending of the cycle of pregnancy and birth resulted in a unified song:

***Shemot (Exodus) 15:1*** *Then sang[[153]](#footnote-153) Moshe and the children of Israel this song unto HaShem, and spake, saying, I will sing unto HaShem, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. 2 HaShem is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him. 3 HaShem is a man of war: HaShem is his name. 4 Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Reed sea. 5 The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. 6 Thy right hand, HaShem, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, HaShem, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. 7 And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. 8 And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. 9 The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. 10 Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. 11 Who is like unto thee, HaShem, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? 12 Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. 13 Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. 14 The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. 15 Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. 16 Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, HaShem, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased. 17 Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, HaShem, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. 18 HaShem shall reign forever and ever. 19 For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and HaShem brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea. 20 And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. 21 And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to HaShem, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.*

This song that Moshe and the Bne Israel sang and *will sing[[154]](#footnote-154)*, is a great hint to the future Techiyat HaMeitim, the resurrection of the dead.

*Az Yashir*, the song at the sea,symbolizes the birth of the Jewish people. It marks the first time that the nation, acting as one, recognized both their redemption and their redeemer. One cannot find any other place in Jewish history where, unified, the People of Israel burst spontaneously into song praising HaShem and his miracles.

***Pesachim 117a*** *Rab Judah said in Samuel's name: The Song in the Torah[[155]](#footnote-155) was uttered by Moshe and Israel when they ascended from the [Red] Sea. And who recited this Hallel[[156]](#footnote-156)? The prophets among them ordained that Israel should recite it at every important epoch and at every misfortune — may it not come upon them! and when they are redeemed they recite [in gratitude] for their redemption.*

# Lactation

The Mechilta says that the sefirot HaOmer period was /is a nursing period, and that Matan Torah[[157]](#footnote-157) was when we were weaned.

When the Bne Israel left Egypt they had their matzot, their unleavened bread, that parallels the stored food that an infant is born with.

Immediately after the birth of a baby, the mother begins lactating with a special fluid called colostrum. The colostrum is gradually replaced by milk after three or four, up till twenty days.

What makes this interesting is that we see a similar phenomenon in the wilderness. The Torah records that the Bne Israel ate matza until the fifteenth day of the second month.

***Shemot (Exodus) 16:1*** *And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the Bne Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. 2 And the whole congregation of the Bne Israel murmured against Moshe and Aaron in the wilderness: 3 And the Bne Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of HaShem in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. 4 Then said HaShem unto Moshe, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.*

After they finished the matza, HaShem begin to feed them bread from heaven:

***Shemot (Exodus) 16:35*** *The Israelites would eat the manna for forty years until they came to inhabited territory. They ate the manna until they came to the edge of the land of Canaan.*

The matzot that the Bne Israel brought out of Egypt on Nisan 15, lasted until the 15th of Iyar. This period was counted as part of the forty years that the Bne Israel ate manna. This teaches that the matzot which miraculously lasted so long had the same taste as manna.

***Bamidbar (Numbers) 11:7*** *And the manna was as coriander seed, and the color thereof as the color of bdellium. 8 And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh (leshad) oil.*

Bamidbar (Numbers) 11:8 describes the taste of the manna as "leshad", which Onkelos translates as "kneaded" with oil, from the root "lash". But this term could also be translated as "like a breast", from the root "shad". Thus, the manna is likened to mother's milk, which is a complete food. It is the only food an infant requires, and the only food he craves; and furthermore by eating it, he achieves closeness with his mother. Likewise, the manna was the only food the Jews needed and wanted, and it created a sense of closeness to HaShem.[[158]](#footnote-158)

The manna was a highly spiritual food. When the Bne Israel first left Egypt, their minds were too coarse for them to be able to receive the Torah. HaShem therefore gave them the manna to eat in order to purify and sharpen their minds. They would then be fit to receive the Torah. The Torah was given twenty days after the manna began to fall.

Eating the manna had the effect of increasing the intelligence and spiritual sensitivity of the Bne Israel, so that in time they became known as the "generation of knowledge" (dor de'ah). This was because they were eating the manna that had been made at the twilight of creation.

# Birth in the Wilderness

This birthing allegory can be seen again in much the same way as part of the larger cycle of the forty years in the desert before entering the Land of Israel. These forty years correspond to forty weeks of pregnancy and the desert serves as the womb-like atmosphere conducive to growth. The manna, provided by God in the desert, as well as the clouds of glory which protected them day and night, and the mysterious well that traveled with them, all represent a totally protected environment, much like the womb. Just as crossing the Reed Sea represents the birth of the nation, we can similarly relate to the crossing of the Jordan River and entering the Land of Israel after forty years in the desert in a similar manner. Each of the above birthing allegories works perfectly within its own context. The fact that one can see in so many different ways the same birthing theme shows its great importance.

The "pregnancy" of the forty years in the desert is associated with the forty seah, or measures, needed according to Jewish law for a kosher mikvah, ritual bath. One of the deeper intentions when submerging in a mikvah is to experience the water as a womb-like surrounding energy in which one can be spiritually transformed and "reborn." This idea is best symbolized in the story of the destruction and "rebirth" of the world in the time of the flood, when it rained for forty days and forty nights.

# The Birth of Mashiach ben Yosef

The birth of the Bne Israel was proceeded by the arrival of Moshe, the priest, who announced that it was time for the Bne Israel to come forth. In the same way, the birth of Mashiach ben Yosef was preceded by the arrival of John the Baptist, a priest, who was to announce the time of the coming of Mashiach:

***Luqas (Luke) 3:1*** *Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, 2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. 3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; 4 As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; 6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.*

The birth of the Bne Israel was accompanied by pain and anguish. So, too, was the birth of Mashiach accompanied by pain and anguish:

***Matityahu (Matthew) 2:16*** *Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the Wise–men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the male children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had exactly learned of the Wise–men. 17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, saying, 18 A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; And she would not be comforted, because they are not.*

Both the Bne Israel and Mashiach came out of Egypt:

***Matityahu (Matthew) 2:13*** *Now when they were departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I tell thee: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. 14 And he arose and took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt; 15 and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son.*

# The Birth Pangs of Mashiach

*Torah Ohr*, at the beginning of Parshat Vaera, explains that the exile is compared to pregnancy and redemption, is compared to birth.

The words for the birth pangs. In Hebrew, is the same: Chevlei Mashiach [the birth pangs of the Messiah] is Chevlei laida [pain of childbirth].

The Vilna Gaon said that all the days of exile are like the duration of a pregnancy, and the final stage is comparable to the birth pangs immediately prior to birth.

The Chafetz Chayim, Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan, elucidated this concept in his work *Shem Olam* (the following is a translation by Rabbi Moshe Miller, Targum Press):

*When a woman has a difficult labor and no longer has the strength to bear the pain, the midwife comforts her with the fact that her travails will not continue much longer. She tells the suffering woman that the pain itself is a sure sign of imminent birth. This concept applies in our case, too. For if the hardships were not so overwhelming, we could see ourselves bearing the pain for a prolonged period. Moreover, the fact that these hardships abate from time to time is a part of the "birth process," just as labor pains subside briefly and then resume. However, when the hardships become so overpowering that we can no longer bear them, we can certainly assume that HaShem will reveal the final redemption very soon.*

Solomon declared that we can learn from the past because it is the template for the future:

***Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 1:9*** *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.*

The prophets used the exit from Egypt as the entry point to our past:

***Shoftim (Judges) 2:1*** *And an angel of HaShem came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.*

***Amos 2:10*** *Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.*

Preceding the arrival of Mashiach, we will experience the same procedure. We don't know when Mashiach will come, but we know that we are in the process. Never was a generation so painfully lacking spiritually, which is a reflection of the birth pangs. We are in the situation where we are waiting for the resolution of birth.

In the Midrash we have a similar idea with a bit of elaboration:

**Pesiqta deRab Kahana, Midrashic sermons for Shabbat HaChodesh V:IX** And Rabbis say, In the septenate in which the son of David comes, in the first of the seven year spell, *I shall cause it to rain on one town and not on another*.[[159]](#footnote-159) In the second, the arrows of famine will be sent forth. In the third there will be a great famine, and men, women, and children will die in it, and the Torah will be forgotten in Israel. In the fourth, there will be a famine which is not really a famine, and plenty which is not plentiful. In the fifth year, there will be great plenty, and people will eat and drink and rejoice, and the Torah will again be renewed. In the sixth there will be great thunders. In the seventh there will be wars. And at the end of the seventh year of that septenate, the son of David will come. Said R. Abbaye, How many septenate have there been like this one, and yet he has not come! But matters accord with what R. Yohanan said, In the generation in which the son of David comes, disciples of sages will perish, and those that remain will have faint vision, with suffering and sighing, and terrible troubles will come on the people, and harsh decrees will be renewed. Before the first such decree is carried out, another will be brought along and joined to it. Said R. Abun, In the generation in which the son of David comes, the meeting place will be turned over to prostitution, the Galilee will be destroyed, Gablan will be desolate, and the Galileans will make the rounds from town to town and find no comfort. Truthful men will be gathered up, and the truth will be fenced in and go its way. Where will it go? A member of the household of R. Yannai said, It will go and dwell in small flocks in the wilderness, in line with this verse of Scripture: *Truth will be among bands*.[[160]](#footnote-160) Said R. Nehorai, In the generation in which the son of David comes, youths will humiliate old men, sages will rise before youths, a slave girl will abuse her mistress, a daughter-in-law her mother-in-law, a man’s enemies will be his own householders, a son will not be ashamed for his father, the wisdom of scribes will turn rotten, the vine will give its fruit but wine will be expensive. Said R. Abba bar Kahana, The son of David will come only to a generation which is liable for total extermination. Said R. Yannai, The son of David will come only to a generation the principal leaders of which are like dogs. Said R. Levi, If you see one generation after another blaspheming, look for the footsteps of the messiah-king. What verse of Scripture indicates it? *Remember Lord the taunts hurled at your servant, how I have borne in my heart the calumnies of the Gentiles; so have your enemies taunted us, 0 Lord, taunted the successors of your anointed king*.[[161]](#footnote-161) What follows? *Blessed is the Lord forever, amen, amen*.[[162]](#footnote-162)

What happened at the splitting of the Yam Suf, and how will this repeat itself in our generation? We must analyze and learn what actually split the Sea because that will bring us the final redemption as well.

Now, when a woman is in the midst of a difficult labor, all the comforts the midwife offers her may be of no avail. However, in our case, we can be certain that the moment of birth will arrive. As the verse clearly indicates:

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 66:9*** *‘Will I bring on labor and not open the womb?' says HaShem.*

The Bne Israel have experienced an interminably long and difficult pregnancy and a relentless labor, this exile.

The prophets tell us that the struggle for the land of Israel will herald the coming of the Mashiach and will be very difficult. This period the Talmud calls "the birth pangs of Mashiach."

Pregnant women take courses to learn what to expect helps them to handle the pain. So too, knowing what to expect during the period of "the birth pangs of Mashiach will not change the ordeal, but it will make it less frightening. The fact that certain events were prophesized should make it easier for us to see HaShem's hand in those events.

We know from the Prophets that the Messianic age will advance in two stages: the first is to be led by Mashiach ben Yosef, and the second by Mashiach ben David.

The Gaon of Vilna, the great 18th century sage, in his book *Even Shleima*, writes about the era of Mashiach ben Yosef as the era of the physical return to the Land of Israel. This era precedes the spiritual repentance of the actual Messianic age, that of Mashiach ben David.

There is a hiatus between the period of Mashiach ben Yosef and the revelation of Mashiach ben David. This is the time period we are in now, which is the most difficult of all periods.

The exit from Egypt was also the blueprint for future redemption:

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 11:15*** *And HaShem shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod.*

The exit from Egypt was also the blueprint for a recommitment to HaShem:

***Hoshea 2:14*** *Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. 15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. 16 And it shall be at that day, saith HaShem, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali. 17 For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. 18 And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. 19 And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. 20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know HaShem.*

Just as at the exodus from Egypt, HaShem made wonders and miracles for the Bne Israel and at the same time He punished the Egyptians, history will repeat itself. As the Prophet Micah says In the words of the Prophet Micah, HaShem proclaims:

***Micah 7:15*** *As in the days when you left Egypt, I will show you wonders.*

The Talmud proclaims a similar concept:

***Rosh HaShana 11a*** *In Nisan they were redeemed and in Nisan they will be redeemed in the time to come.*

The Exodus from Egypt is the prototype for the final redemption, when Mashiach will come, and slavery and suffering will be banished forever from the face of the earth.

***Midrash Rabbah - The Song of Songs II:23*** *MY BELOVED IS LIKE A GAZELLE: just as a gazelle leaps from mountain to mountain and from valley to valley, from tree to tree and from thicket to thicket and from fence to fence, so the Holy One, blessed be He, leapt from Egypt to the Reed Sea and from the Reed Sea to Sinai, and from Sinai He leaps to the future redemption.*

Why, our Hakhamim ask, does the verse say, *"As in the days when you left Egypt",* when in fact the Exodus took place on one day?

The answer is that true liberation is an ongoing process. The first steps out of " Egypt" are only the beginning. "In every generation," the Sages tell us, "and on each and every day, one is obligated to see himself as if he had gone out from Egypt that very day." All the lessons of Pesach must be applied daily: we must rid ourselves of arrogance and become humble; we must deepen our awareness of HaShem, as though the Yam Suf has split; and we must strive to improve our conduct, as befits the nation that received the Torah on Mount Sinai. Every step we take toward Torah and mitzvot brings us closer to the revelations of the messianic age.

When Moshe[[163]](#footnote-163) and Aaron came before the ruler of Mitzrayim and then change the Nile into blood. There is a first plague, and at the end of each month another, so that the tenth plague brings nine months to full term. The children come forth out of the tight place by crossing the Reed Sea. And the managers, who had held the children captive within the tight place all that time, come forth after them, and perish. So, the birth of the children of Israel, and the crossing of the Reed Sea.[[164]](#footnote-164)

As horrific as the birth of the Bne Israel was, the birth pangs of the Mashiach will be even greater, as the prophet declares:

***Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) 16:14*** *Days will come, G-d said, that one will no longer say `G-d who brought out the Jewish people from the land of Egypt,' but rather, `G-d who brought out the Jewish people from the north, and from all the lands that they were driven to.'"*

***Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) 23:7*** *Therefore, behold, the days come, saith HaShem, that they shall no more say, HaShem liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; 8 But, HaShem liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.*

Finally, the Prophet Hoshea speaks of the future redemption using the picture of the Egyptian redemption in order to teach us that there is a clear connection between these two:

***Hoshea (Hosea) 2:14*** *Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. 15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.*

Thus the exile in Egypt is the prototype for the future tribulation which the world will experience. This tribulation is called the birth pangs of the Mashiach. As we have learned earlier, Mashiach = Israel. Thus we understand that what happened to the Bne Israel in Egypt will also happen to the Bne Israel in the days of the Mashiach.

The birth pangs of the expectant mother are the strongest just before birth, so too, explain our sages, will the suffering of the Bne Israel be the most severe in the final stage of our galut. This period known as *Chevlai Mashiach*, the “birth pangs of Mashiach”, explains the Vilna Gaon, will last for 70 years and culminate with the coming of Mashiach. No one can say for sure when these 70 years started; however, no doubt, the suffering and affliction the Jewish people went through during the Holocaust is the strongest that we have seen throughout the exile.

The birth pangs of the Mashiach are going to be a very difficult time for the whole world. The Gemara in has two opinions about living at the time of this process:

***Sanhedrin 98b*** *‘Ulla said; Let him [The Messiah] come, but let me not see him.4 Rabbah said likewise: Let him come, but let me not see him. R. Joseph said: Let him come, and may I be worthy of sitting in the shadow of his ass's saddle.5 Abaye enquired of Rabbah: ‘What is your reason [for not wishing to see him]? Shall we say, because of the birth pangs [preceding the advent] of the Messiah?6 But it has been taught, R. Eleazar's disciples asked him: ‘What must a man do to be spared the pangs of the Messiah?’ [He answered,] ‘Let him engage in study and benevolence; and you Master do both.’*

Ullah and Rabbah said “He should come, but I shouldn’t see it” (because of the painful process that would unfold). Rav Yosef said “He should come, and I should just merit to sit in the shade of the dung of his donkey.” (Rav Yosef was willing to subject himself to the most uncomfortable situation, the lowest possible degradation, simply to be able to be part of the process of Mashiach’s arrival.) Then the Gemara asks “What should one do to be saved from the birth pains of Mashiach’s arrival? He should involve himself in Torah [study] and good deeds.”

Our Sages, of the current era, have suggested that the following events may signify that we are experiencing the birth pangs of the Mashiach:

Pogroms in Russia and during World War I.

The Holocaust.

World II.

Terrorist attacks against Israelis in Eretz Israel and elsewhere.

The attack on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center.

We are witnessing on a global level a recurring pattern of unprecedented destruction to life and property.

"What can a person do to be saved from the birth-pangs of Mashiach?" The Gemara asks. "Let him study Torah and perform acts of kindness."

## The Resurrection of the Dead

Maimonides, in his commentary on the Mishna, compiles what he refers to as the שלשה עשר עקרים של אמונת היהודי, shloshah-asar ikkarim shel emunat hayehudi, the Thirteen Articles of Jewish Faith. The Thirteen Articles of Jewish faith are as follows:

1 Belief in the existence of the Creator, be He Blessed, who is perfect in every manner of existence and is the Primary Cause of all that exists.

2. The belief in G-d's absolute and unparalleled unity.

3. The belief in G-d's non-corporeality, nor that He will be affected by any physical occurrences, such as movement, or rest, or dwelling.

4. The belief in G-d's eternity.

5. The imperative to worship Him exclusively and no foreign false gods.

6. The belief that G-d communicates with man through prophecy.

7. The belief that the prophecy of Moshe our teacher has priority.

8. The belief in the divine origin of the Torah.

9. The belief in the immutability of the Torah.

10. The belief in divine omniscience and providence.

11. The belief in divine reward and retribution.

12. The belief in the arrival of the Messiah and the messianic era.

**13. The belief in the resurrection of the dead.**

In his Mishneh Torah, Maimonides concludes that both the one who denies the concept of resurrection of the dead or the one who denies the coming of the Mashiach are among those who have forfeited their share in Olam HaBa[[165]](#footnote-165).

The crossing of the Yam Suf is given by Chazal as the quintessential example of the resurrection of the dead. This birth that we had in the days of Moshe is destined to be repeated in the days of the kinsmen redeemer, the Mashiach. May He come speedily in our days! We derive that this event will be repeated from the words of the Prophet:

***Micah 7:15*** *According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvelous things.*

Now, consider that the birth of the Bne Israel took place on the seventh day of Pesach. If we repeat the process, then we should expect that Techiyat HaMeitim will also take place on the seventh day of Pesach. Thus, we see that the crossing of the Yam Suf is also a prophecy of things to come.

Techiyat HaMeitim will take place after the forty years of Kibbutz Galiyot, and continue until the end of the 210 years[[166]](#footnote-166). Immediately preceding the resurrection period is a forty year period known as Kibbutz Galiyot,[[167]](#footnote-167) the ingathering of the exiles.

Kever is the Hebrew word for womb and also the word for grave. What do a grave and a womb have in common? They are both portals to another world. Nowhere is this more evident than at the birth of the Bne Israel. The crossing of the Yam Suf, the Reed Sea, is also used by Chazal as the quintessential passage for proving Techiyat HaMeitim, the resurrection of the dead. It makes sense from what we have just learned about a Kever that that place which is the birth is also that place wherein the dead are resurrected.

All of the Halachot, D'rashot, and Ma'asim (stories) related during the "first Haggada" relate, solely and exclusively, to the Exodus. It is only after we have completed this obligation that we are able to turn and say: Children, the story you have just heard has happened, in one form or another, many times in our history. It will even happen again when we open the door to welcome Eliyahu, who will bring us the glad tidings of the ultimate Geula (redemption).

After the splitting of the sea, Moshe sang a song of praise and gratitude to HaShem. But in describing that event, the Torah doesn't say, "Moshe sang," (shar) but rather, "Moshe will sing[[168]](#footnote-168)" (Yashir).

***Shemot (Exodus) 15:1*** *Then sang Moshe and the children of Israel this song unto HaShem, and spake, saying, I will sing unto HaShem, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. 2 HaShem is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him. 3 HaShem is a man of war: HaShem is his name. 4 Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Reed sea. 5 The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. 6 Thy right hand, HaShem, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, HaShem, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. 7 And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. 8 And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. 9 The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. 10 Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. 11 Who is like unto thee, HaShem, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? 12 Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. 13 Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. 14 The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. 15 Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. 16 Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, HaShem, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased. 17 Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, HaShem, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. 18 HaShem shall reign forever and ever. 19 For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and HaShem brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea. 20 And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. 21 And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to HaShem, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.*

From here we can see reference in the Torah to the resurrection of the dead which will take place in the time of redemption. At that time, "Moshe will sing", once again, praises to HaShem. The book of Revelation declares, also, that this song will be sung again:

***Revelation 15:3*** *And they sing the song of Moshe the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.*

Furthermore, R. Eliezer says, anyone who recites the song of Moshe now before the redemption, will merit to recite it in the future, in the Messianic Age.

***Yochanan (John) 16:16*** *A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. 17 Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? 18 They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith. 19 Now Yeshua knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? 20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. 21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. 22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*

\* \* \*

The Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman [1720 - 1797] ) refers to the Zohar (a Kabbalistic commentary on the Pentateuch and the 5 Megilot - the 5 scrolls) that explains the phrase in Shir HaShirim (the Song of Songs):

*Kol Dodi Dofek (the sound of my Beloved's knocking).*

The Gaon cites a parable of a Jewish midwife who is helping in the difficult birth of a child. A woman is exhausted from her birth pangs. Her breathing is difficult, she is weary and feels she cannot continue. The midwife, after the last unsuccessful effort, tells the mother that the baby is on its way. Then the midwife shouts, "MAZEL TOV, I see it - don't stop now, you have to push just one more time." The mother who no longer has the strength to continue, gathers deep from within her last bit of strength and successfully overcomes her pain and her exhaustion and gives birth to her child.

It is a recurring theme in the Torah that man must prepare himself to deserve HaShem's blessing and help. If one is passive, he may not be deserving of HaShem's gift even if the gift has been decreed for him. We must be resisting midwives, we must be leaders willing to act decisively for justice, and ultimately, we must cry out and beseech HaShem that He should redeem us, now!

# Conclusion of the Remez

I would like to conclude with a quote from Rabbi Pinchas Winston. His Eminence has captured the essence of the redemption and its connection with the birth of the Bne Israel.

*The Rabbis in a Mishna in Mesechta Shabbat enumerate things that should be asked just before Shabbat comes in, to make sure that nothing for Shabbat is omitted in the midst of the last minute preparations. In some homes that list includes: Is the bag packed?*

*Yet, in spite of the preparations people make in advance of a birth, like figuring out the quickest route to the hospital, and making sure that the woman has all the comforts with her that she will need at that time, time is not always on the couple's or new baby's side. Countless stories abound of women giving birth in taxis, on hospital sidewalks, going up or down in elevators (and on Shabbat to boot), not to mention but a few of the more tense circumstances.*

*Fortunately for one woman on a Motzei Yom Kippur, an ambulance just happened to pull up next to her car as she began to give birth in the back seat on the way to the hospital. They rushed her from one vehicle into the next, where she promptly gave birth with the experts there to help.*

*It's like, one minute you're there enjoying a cup of tea together, and the next, rushing to get out the door and on the way to the hospital. In spite of the nine months of psychological preparation, and the weeks of physical preparation, it always comes as a surprise when the moment of redemption comes. That is why you have to have as much prepared in advance as possible, including the packed suitcase sitting lonely-like by the front door.*

Do you think it is any different when it comes to the redemption of an entire nation? Exile isn't over until it's over, and when it has lasted for so long, it is too hard to believe it is actually ending when it does. Chazal knew that, which is why they compared the Final Redemption to a birth process, and why the Jewish people were asked to conduct their Pesach Sederim with staff in hand, as if they would leave at a moment's notice.

# The Drash perspective of the Egyptian Exile

The Drash speaks to the world of creation. This perspective will be examining the Egyptian exile as another example of creation. Moshe wrote about the Egyptian exile in the second book of the Chumash, [[169]](#footnote-169) Shemot – Exodus.

The Netziv[[170]](#footnote-170) suggests that Sefer Shemot, the sefer of the Egyptian exile, is called Chumash Sheni[[171]](#footnote-171) because it is the second book of Creation. ***It is a creation within a creation***; a creation of people connected and under the guidance of HaShem. This idea from the Netziv emphasizes the centrality of HaShem’s Divine providence to the identity of the Jewish people: the world was created for the purpose of establishing one nation as HaShem’s people, and the process of creating that nation required a lengthy experience of concentrated Divine providence from HaShem.

At the moment of the exodus, the original plan of creation was finally realized. At last, the Creator had a nation that committed itself to carrying out and realizing His goal of creation. In this light, the exodus takes on a cosmic significance, comparable to the *creation of the world*. That is precisely why the Torah calls Pesach “Shabbat”. Just as the first Shabbat celebrated the completion of the creation of the physical world, the exodus from Egypt signified the realization of the *spiritual purpose* of Creation.

There is no creation without an issuing forth. The very creation described in the first chapter of Genesis is an issuing forth. God says, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. God separates the light from the darkness. God creates the waters, and separates the waters so that the dry land appears. This is the process of creation in Genesis. And here in the book of Exodus? The creation of the people of Israel is described in the same terms. Light and darkness, the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud. The sea, the splitting of the sea, the appearance of dry land. The children of Israel are created in the exodus out of Egypt. There is no creation without an exodus.

As long as you are working on a painting, or sculpting a piece of stone, it is attached to you. It is not a creation until it goes into exile from you, until it is separated from you. When it stands apart from you, it is a creation. When it is attached to you, it is only a part of you.

So, the children of Israel are separated from Egypt and become a people. The world is separated from God and becomes a creation. So, we have the framework for beginning to understand the passage through the Reed Sea in terms of the World of Creation. *Drash.*

If the **Pshat** reading of the Reed Sea told us what was happening, and the **Remez** what it feels like, and the **Drash** the model of creation to learn from it, wouldn’t it be nice if the **Sod** reading would bring us into the presence of the Creator Himself?

The Egyptian exile had its beginnings in the sefer of *beginnings*, sefer Bereshit. Our study, will necessarily have to begin in that sefer, though the bulk will be found in the sefer of *names*, Shemot.

## In the Beginning

HaShem’s Torah tells us explicitly that the Egyptian exile began and ended on the same day of the year.

***Shemot (Exodus) 12:41*** *And it came to pass at the end of the* ***four hundred and thirty years****, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of HaShem went out from the land of Egypt.*

This pasuk tells us that the Bne Israel, the Children of Israel, came out of Egypt 430 years to the very day that they went in. How do we reconcile this with the prophesy given to Avraham, at the covenant between the parts, where it was prophesied that it would only last 400 years?

***Bereshit (Genesis) 15:7-16*** *And he said unto him, I am HaShem that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. 8 And he said, Lord HaShem, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? 9 And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. 10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. 11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away. 12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. 13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them* ***four hundred years****; 14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*

Chazal teach that the 430-year period began with the covenant that HaShem made with Avraham when He told Avraham that his descendants would be exiled, in Bereshit 15:13.[[172]](#footnote-172)

***Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XVIII:11*** *AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL JOURNEYED FROM RAMESES (XII, 37). R. Samuel said: As soon as they went out they baked the dough which they had kneaded, for it says: AND THEY BAKED UNLEAVENED CAKES OF THE DOUGH (ib. 39). AND IT CAME TO PASS AT THE END OF* ***FOUR HUNDRED AND THIRTY YEARS*** *(ib. 41);* ***that is from the time when the decree was pronounced****, for they were only two hundred and ten years in Egypt, and on the day that they descended into Egypt they departed there from.*

***Midrash Rabbah - Genesis LXIII:3*** *NOW THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF ISAAC, etc. Abram was called Abraham, as it is written, Abram-the same is Abraham (I Chron. I, 27). Isaac too was called Abraham, for it is written, AND THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF ISAAC, ABRAHAM’S SON: ABRAHAM.4 Jacob was called Israel, as it says, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel (Gen. XXXII, 29). Isaac too was called Israel, as it is written, And these are the names of the children of Israel, who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons (Gen. XLVI, 8). Abraham was called Israel. R. Nathan said: This is a profound teaching [for it explains the verse], Now the time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt (Ex. 12:40) and in the land of Canaan and in the land of Goshen was* ***four hundred and thirty years****).*

This is confirmed in the Nazarean Codicil, when Paul said:

***Galatians 3:16-17*** *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. 17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.*

Paul confirms that the 430 years began with the covenant made with Abraham.

Therefore, the full story of the Exodus really begins with the Covenant Between The Parts, and hence HaShem’s choice of the Patriarch. Recall that the Covenant Between The Parts is not merely a promise of one event, but rather it defines an eternal relationship between HaShem and His people. Therefore, the story of the Exodus is only the initial stage of an everlasting relationship, for which we must thank HaShem for every year on Pesach.

**Thus the 430 years of exile began when Avraham joined the covenant with HaShem when he made the covenant between the parts.**[[173]](#footnote-173)

**The 400 years of exile began at the birth of Yitzchak, thirty years later.**[[174]](#footnote-174)

Let’s see how the covenant between the parts echoes the creation.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Creation** | **The Covenant of Parts** |
| 1:2 darkness was upon the face of the deep | 15:12 great darkness  15:17 thick darkness |
| 1:3 let there be light | 15:17 flaming torch |
| 1:4 divided light and darkness  1:7 divided waters from waters  1:9 land from water  1:14 lights to divide day and night  (five divisions) | 15:10 divided animals: Heifer, she-goat, ram, turtle-dove, pigeon. (five animals) |
| 1:1ff The name Elohim used to denote judgment. | 15:14 judgment of Egyptians |
| 1:12 earth brought forth plants  1:24 earth bring forth animals | 15:14 ‘come out’ |
| 1:14 stars | 15:5 stars |

Man is a metaphor. Indeed, one of several meanings of the Hebrew word adam (“man”) is “I resemble.” For man is a microcosm of creation—in the words of the Talmud, “As the soul fills the body, so HaShem fills the universe.” Thus, Job declares, “From my flesh, I perceive HaShem”, by contemplating the workings of our body and the manner in which it relates to and is animated by our soul, we gain insight into the workings of creation and the manner in which it relates to and is sustained by its source. Man is a microcosm, and so provides analogies for all other worlds which can explain the secrets of reality and the great riddles hidden from our senses”.

According to R. Bachya, our primary duty is to study that which is closest to us: the human being:

*It is our duty to study the origins and birth of the human, the form and structure of his physical frame, how the various body parts are connected and function together, the purpose of each individual part and the need for it to take its present form. Next we should study man’s advantages, his various temperaments, the faculties of his soul, the light of his intellect, his qualities -- those that are essential and those that are accidental; his desires, and the ultimate purpose of his being. When we have arrived at an understanding of the matters noted in regard to man, much of the mystery of this universe will become clear to us, since the one resembles the other... as Job said:[[175]](#footnote-175) “From my flesh I see God.”*

The Rambam states that the only way to love and fear HaShem is through the study of His creation, for only through this study are we able to know HaShem. Our understanding of HaShem can only be achieved by the intellectual investigation of the genius and balance of His creation. Every detail, every remarkable insight and fact is necessary in our attempt to know (Daat) and connect with HaShem.

At the covenant between the parts, Abraham was **recreated** and with this re-creation, this covenant, so also were the Egyptian exile and the exodus created.

## On Passover

The beginning of the creation of the Bne Israel took place on the seventh day of Pesach, Passover. *That means that Nisan 21, the seventh day of Passover, is the beginning of the creation of the Bne Israel, the children of Israel*.

The rabbis saw the seven days of Pesach as corresponding to the seven days of Creation.

***Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XIX:7*** *Warn Israel that just as I, who created the world, commanded them to observe the Sabbath as a memorial of the work of Creation, as it says: Remember the sabbath day,[[176]](#footnote-176) so also do ye remember the miracles I performed for you in Egypt and the anniversary of the day of your departure,’ as it says: Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt.[[177]](#footnote-177) Why? For by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place.[[178]](#footnote-178) And there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, for seven days, corresponding to the seven days which intervened between the redemption and the dividing of the Reed Sea. Just as there were seven days of creation at the beginning, and just as the Sabbath is observed at the end of seven days, so shall these seven days be kept each year, as it says: Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.*

Pesach also contains a strong connection to the theme of creation. It is one of the four new years of the Jewish calendar. Nisan, the time the festival occurs, was traditionally seen as the first month of the Jewish year. Pesach celebrates spring, rebirth, and renewal, symbolized by the green “*karpas*” and the egg on the seder plate. It is also a time of “beginning”, as exemplified by the first grain harvest and the birth or creation of Israel as a nation. As a newborn nation, the Jews began their journey to receive Torah on Mt. Sinai.

Chazal teach that Yitzchak was born on Pesach,[[179]](#footnote-179) four-hundred years before the Bne Israel were redeemed from Egypt, just as HaShem had promised.[[180]](#footnote-180)

Just as the Egyptian exile began and ended on Pesach, so also was Yitzchak born on Pesach and died on Pesach.

## Seven Generations

Amram was one of seven righteous men who helped bring HaShem’s presence back to earth.[[181]](#footnote-181)

***Midrash Rabbah - The Song of Songs V:1*** *I AM COME INTO MY GARDEN. R. Menahem, the son-in-law of R. Eleazar b. Abuna, said in the name of R. Simeon b. Jusna: It does not say here, ‘I am come into the garden, but I AM COME INTO MY GARDEN (GANNI): as if to say, to my bridal-chamber (ginnuni): to the place which was my real home originally; for was not the original home of the Shechinah in the lower realm,[[182]](#footnote-182) as it says, And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden?[[183]](#footnote-183) R. Abba said: The word used here [for, ‘walking ‘] is not mehalek but mithhalek, indicating that it ascended with one leap after another.[[184]](#footnote-184) When Adam sinned, the Shechinah ascended to the first firmament. When Cain sinned, it ascended to the second firmament. When Enosh sinned,[[185]](#footnote-185) it ascended to the third firmament. When the generation of the Flood sinned, it ascended to the fourth firmament. When the generation of the Tower[[186]](#footnote-186) sinned, it ascended to the fifth firmament. When the men of Sodom sinned, it ascended to the sixth firmament. When the Egyptians sinned in the days of Abraham, it ascended to the seventh firmament. Correspondingly seven righteous men arose who brought it down again to the earth.*

***Abraham*** *by his virtues brought it down from the seventh to the sixth firmament.*

***Isaac*** *arose and brought it down from the sixth to the fifth.*

***Jacob*** *arose and brought it down from the fifth to the fourth.*

***Levi*** *arose and brought it down from the* ***fourth*** *to the third.*

***Kohath*** *arose and brought it down from the third to the second.*

***Amram*** *arose and brought it down from the second to the first.*

*Then* ***Moses*** *arose and brought it down to earth.*

When God created the world, His presence, the Shechinah,[[187]](#footnote-187) was revealed. In the seven succeeding generations, the Shechinah departed, rising from one heaven to the next because of humankind’s many sins.

Then, seven generations of righteous men, tzadikim,[[188]](#footnote-188) arose, and caused the Shechinah to descend back into the world:

Abraham

Yitzchak

Yaaqob

Levi

Kohat

Amram

Moshe

***Midrash Rabbah - Genesis LIV:2*** *What was given to Abraham for seven generations was given to Abimelech for three.[[189]](#footnote-189) Why was it that God led them not by the way of the land of the Philistines (Ex. XIII, 17.)? Because his [Abimelech's] grandson was. still alive then.6 BUT ACCORDING TO THE KINDNESS THAT I HAVE DONE UNTO THEE (ib.). What kindness then had he shown him? By saying to him, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee (ib. XX, 15). Yet even so, Abraham had not accepted this offer.7*

“And HaShem descended onto Mount Sinai,” means that the Shechinah finally returned to this lowest of worlds.

With the sin of the golden calf, however, God’s relationship with man reverted to its previous remoteness. To dispel this estrangement, Moshe set up and dismantled the Mishkan for seven consecutive days, thus completing the spiritual repair of the seven generations that started with Abraham.

On the eighth day, his work was complete. He set up the Mishkan without dismantling it. This is the understanding of the statement that “God’s happiness on that day was equivalent to the day on which the heavens and the earth were created. ” For on that day, God’s original purpose in the creation, that He should have a dwelling in this netherworld was finally actualized.[[190]](#footnote-190)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| One Day  God created light.  Maximal Male | Abraham | **Bereshit Rabbah 2:3** God said, “Until when will the world languish in darkness. Let the light come.” God said, “Let there be light,” – this is Avraham. Of this it says, “Who inspired the one from the east [i.e. Avraham], at whose [every] footstep righteousness attended …” – do not read “inspired,” but rather “shone.” | **Berachot 13a** Avram, he is Avraham: Initially, he became the father of Aram; finally, he became the father of the entire world. |
| A Second Day  God separated **waters** **above** from **waters** **below**. | Yitzchak | ‘Waters of separation’: Yitzchak re-digs Avraham's wells and calls them the identical names that his father called them. (26:18)  Isaac's servants digging in the Wadi, found a well of water. The herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying: 'The water is ours!' He named the well Esek (Controversy) because they contended with him. And they dug another well. They disputed over this one also; so he named it Sitna (Enmity.) He moved from there and dug yet another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he called it Rechovot (Expanse), saying: 'Now at last the Lord has granted us ample space and we have been fruitful in the land." |  |
| A Third Day  God created dry **land**  [Yaaqob]  God created **plants.**  [Israel] | Yaaqob |  |  |
| A Fourth Day  God created the **sun**, **moon**, and **stars**. | Levi | **Bereshit (Genesis) 37:9** And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brethren, and said: 'Behold, I have dreamed yet a dream: and, behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to me.' |  |
| A Fifth Day  God created **birds** and **fishes**. | Kohat | **Bamidbar (Numbers) 4:15** And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohat shall come to bear [it]: but they shall not touch [any] holy thing, lest they die. These [things are] the burden of the sons of Kohat in the tabernacle of the congregation. |  |
| The Sixth Day  God created **animals**.  God created **Adam**. | Amram | **Divrei HaYamim (1 Chronicles) 23:13** The sons of Amram; Aaron and Moses: and Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons forever, to burn incense before HaShem, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name forever. |  |
| The Seventh Day  God **Rest**ed.  Maximal Female | Moshe | Mishkan |  |

## Tikkun

The Egyptian exile is the vehicle that HaShem used to correct the ten sons of Israel after they had hated and sold Yosef. Everything that occurred, was meant to provide the exact correction that was needed to purge this terrible sin and bring their souls close to HaShem. We / they had, through their actions, put distance between ourselves and our Creator. The Creator, therefore ‘re-created’ His people by working backwards through creation as His restorative process.

10 brothers of Joseph sold him into slavery.

Bereshit (Genesis) 22:1-2

## The Ten Plagues

The 10 plagues which punished Pharaoh and the Egyptians:

1. Water into blood
2. Frogs
3. Lice
4. Wild beasts
5. Pestilence
6. Boils
7. Hail
8. Locust
9. Darkness
10. Death of the firstborn

The Zohar finds a connection between an apparently random set of events that occurred in series of tens. The world was created with ten declarations, the Torah was given with Ten Commandments, and G-d sent ten plagues to force the Egyptians to release the Jewish people. According to the Zohar, these events are related in the following way: The ten declarations of creation were transformed into the Ten Commandments by the ten plagues.

The Maharal of Prague explains the first part of the connection in his book *Gevurot HaShem:[[191]](#footnote-191)*

*The way to approach the ten plagues is to look at each plague as turning off one of G-d's ten declarations of creation. By the culmination of the plagues all of them had been shut down one by one. Thus, His first speech ’let there be light' was shut down by the plague of darkness; His tenth speech ’let us make man' was shut down by the plague of the first born; His creation of vegetation by the plague of locusts that consumed all vegetation; and so on through them all.*

Ramban, on Shemot 20:13, gives us a tremendous insight:

*With reference to the writing on the Tablets of Law, it would appear that the first five commandments were on one Tablet, for they are for the glory of the Creator, as I have mentioned, and the second five commandments were on another Tablet. Thus, there were five opposite five, something like the Rabbis mentioned in the Book of Creation:[[192]](#footnote-192) "With ten emanations,[[193]](#footnote-193) intangible, as is the number of ten fingers, five opposite five, and the Covenant of the Unity placed directly in the middle." From this it will be made clear to you why there were two Tablets, for up to* ***Honor your father****, it corresponds to the Written Torah, and from there on it corresponds to the Oral Torah. It would appear that it is this that our Rabbis, of blessed memory, have alluded to in saying[[194]](#footnote-194) that the two Tablets correspond to heaven and earth,[[195]](#footnote-195) to a groom and bride,[[196]](#footnote-196) to the two friends [of the groom and bride], and to the two worlds [this world and the World to Come]. All these constitute one allusion, and the person learned in the mystic lore of the Kabbala will understand the secret.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sayings of creation** | **Plagues** |
| **1) In the beginning** | **10) killing of firstborn** |
| Here we see an obvious parallel theme which is that of firstness. | |
| **2) Let there be light** | **9) Darkness** |
| The opposite of light is darkness | |
| **3) Firmament (the Heavens)** | **7) Hail** |
| HaShem made the firmament and now commanded that Hail rain down from it. | |
| **4) Waters gather so Earth appear** | **3) Lice** |
| HaShem revealed the earth and now by the plague we know that the dust of earth transformed into lice (as we see that Aharon threw up dust and it turned into lice) | |
| **5) Vegetation appear** | **8) Locust** |
| Locusts ate the vegetation. | |
| **6) Luminaries (sun, moon etc.)** | **5) Epidemic** |
| The idea here is a little deeper but the simple meaning is that the sun has healing powers as mentioned in the Gemara and without the powers of it epidemic became possible. | |
| **7) Let water sprout forth living creatures** | **2) Frogs** |
| HaShem created creatures that came from water, now frogs came in excess out of water. | |
| **8) Let earth bring forth living creatures** | **4) Wild animals** |
| HaShem created living creatures on earth and now those animals came and attacked. | |
| **9) Man** | **6) Boils** |
| The plague of boils was the only one that affected man’s body so directly and so they correspond to each other here. | |
| **10) I have given food to eat** | **1) Water turned to blood** |
| Food of Egypt depended on Nile and nutrients of food are transported through blood. | |

## 5 parallel 5

We can see other parallels within the 10 plagues as well. If we look at them as two separate sets of 5 we see that again they parallel each other exactly! The first five affected things in the lower world while the last five did so in the higher world.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1) Water turned to blood** | **6) Boils** |
| Both related to disease. Blood affected inanimate waters while boils affected humans. | |
| **2) Frogs** | **7) Hail** |
| Both are related to water as it says, “atmosphere is upper water and the seas are lower waters”.[[197]](#footnote-197) Frogs came from lower waters while Hail came from upper waters. | |
| **3) Lice** | **8) Locusts** |
| Lice crawl on lower earth while locusts fly in upper heaven. | |
| **4) Wild animals** | **9) Darkness** |
| As it says,[[198]](#footnote-198) wild animals appear at night “You create darkness and it is night when all the wild beasts of the forest creep forth.” Also, the Hebrew word for wild animals “orev” is linguistically related to the Hebrew word for night “erev”. | |
| **5) Epidemic** | **10) plague of firstborn** |
| Epidemic affected lower animals while plague of firstborn affected higher beings namely humans. This is why Pharaoh was able to withstand the first 5 plagues without HaShem’s hardening of his heart; because they were on the lower level while the last five were on the higher level. | |

# A Sod Perspective

The creation of the cosmos can be seen in the allegorical context of God giving birth to the world. According to Kabbalah, the prerequisite for creation was the primordial act of tzimtzum, or "contraction". This action is reflected in the physical reality of a woman making place within herself for the seed to enter and the fetus to grow and be nurtured. Before the actual birth, a woman goes through a period of birth pangs and the breaking of the water bag containing the life-giving amniotic fluids.

In creation, this corresponds to the primordial "breaking of the vessels", which occurred when the initial flow of light was too great for the still "immature vessels" of creation. The "breaking of the vessels" ended the world of tohu, or "chaos", thus paving the way for our present state of reality referred to in Kabbalah as olam hatikun, the "world of fixing". In the birth scenario, the "breaking of the vessels" refer to the birth pangs and the breaking of the water bag, which are necessary stages in the actual birth of the child.

The dynamics of Divine creation, mirrored in the intimate act and process of human beings creating new life, connects the soul to its source in God, thus revealing in a very deep way the understanding and realization of man being created "in the image and likeness of God".

An ancient book of Kabbalah, the Tikkunei Zohar, expounds upon the first word in the Torah (bereishit, "in the beginning"), by explaining its different permutations in seventy different ways. This corresponds to the statement of the Sages that there are seventy "faces" to the Torah.[[199]](#footnote-199) As a crystal with many faces reflects light differently according to various angles, so too, the Torah reveals myriads of interpretations and gives birth to new insight according to the ever-changing perspective and spiritual level of the individual.

# The Ten Commandments in Creation

In Pesiqta Rabbati 21.18-19[[200]](#footnote-200) it is said that the ten commandments should be paired off with the ten words [va-yomer, “and (G-d) said,” occurs ten times in the story of creation] whereby the world was created.

**1.** “I HaShem am your G-d”, is paired with, “And G-d said: Let there be light”, Bereshit (Genesis) 1:3, and of light Scripture says elsewhere: “The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light”.[[201]](#footnote-201)

**2.** “You shall have no other gods beside Me”, is paired with: “And G-d said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, that it may separate water from water” - Bereshit (Genesis) 1:6. The Holy One, blessed be He, said, “Make a separation between Me and between idolatry, which in the verse: “They have forsaken Me, the fountain of Living waters, and hewed them out cisterns”[[202]](#footnote-202) is implied to be stored and stagnant [waters].”

**3.** “You shall not swear by the name of HaShem your G-d”, is paired with, “G-d said, Let the water ... be gathered into one area” - Bereshit (Genesis) 1:9. The Holy One, blessed be He, said, “The waters accord Me honor and restrain themselves; and will you not accord Me honor in not swearing by My name falsely?”

**4.** “Remember the Sabbath day”, is paired with, “And G-d said, let the earth sprout vegetation” - Bereshit (Genesis) 1:11. For the Holy One, blessed be He, stated that however little you feast on the Sabbath you will still be regarded as one who honors it. Remember that the world was created in the hope that man would not sin; and men can live without sinning because they can subsist if necessary, only on grasses and herbs that the earth puts forth.

**5.** “Honor your father”, is paired with, “G-d said, Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky” - Bereshit (Genesis) 1:14. The Holy One, blessed be He, said, “Behold, for thee I created two lights, thy father and thy mother. Take care in the honor due them.”

**6.** “You shall not murder”, is paired with, “G-d said, Let the waters bring forth swarms”, - Bereshit (Genesis) 1:20. The Holy One, blessed be He, said, “Be not like those fish, the big ones that swallow the little ones, as is intimated in the verse, “Wherefore ... holdest Thou Thy peace ... and makest men as the fishes of the sea?”[[203]](#footnote-203)

**7.** “You shall not commit adultery”, is paired with, “G-d said, Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature” - Bereshit (Genesis) 1:24. The Holy One, blessed be He, said, “Behold I created for thee thy mate. Each and every one should cleave to his mate, to his own kind.”

**8.** “You shall not steal”, is paired with, “G-d said, See I give you every seed bearing plant” - Bereshit (Genesis) 1:29. The Holy One, blessed be He, said, “Not one of you shall put forth his hand in theft of the property or the money of his neighbor, you may take only ownerless property, such as seed-yielding herbs.” R. Hiyya taught, That which is guarded within a garden it is forbidden to take, the taking would be robbery; but that which is not guarded in a garden may be taken, and the taking is not robbery.

**9.** “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor, etc.”, is paired with, “And G-d said, Let us make man in our image” - Bereshit (Genesis) 1:26. The Holy One, blessed be He, said, “Behold for thee I created thy neighbor in My likeness. And thou, by such acts as call for punishment, wouldst swallow and make an end of thy neighbor. Do not then bear false witness against thy neighbor.”

**10.** “You shall not covet”, is paired with, “G-d said, It is not good for man to be alone, I will make a fitting helper for him” - Bereshit (Genesis) 2:18. The Holy One, blessed be He, said, “Behold, I created a mate for thee. Let each and every one of you cling to his mate. Let not a man of you covet the wife of his neighbor.”

**\* \* \***

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1. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 20:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 22:22-23 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Rambam, Laws of Marriage 1:1-2 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. To bring the narrative to the death of Terah. For Terah was seventy years old at Abram's birth (Gen. XI, 26), whilst Abram departed from Haran at the age of seventy-five (ib. XlI, 4); hence Terah, whose age at death was two hundred and five (ib. XI, 32), died sixty-five years after this command, and yet it is narrated before. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Hence Terah is already in his lifetime called dead. (Though it is stated supra, 38:12, that he repented, presumably this was much later.) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This is deduced from the emphasis GET THEE (LEK LEKA), where lek (‘go’) alone would have sufficed. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Hakham Judah Loew ben Bezalel [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Chapter 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Tehilim 47:10 Rashi D”H Am & Malbim D”H Am; Yalkut Shimoni Tehilim Remez 754; Yalkut Shimoni Shir Hashirim Remez 992 and Machzor Vitri siman 287. See also Bava Batra 15A that identifies Eisan HaEzrachi as Avraham Avinu. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. All his previous sins are forgiven. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ketuvot 48b [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. see also Arukh HaShulkhan Even Ha’Ezer 55:13-14 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. e.g. Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) 3:8-9; Yehezchel (Ezekiel) 23:37; Hosea 4:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. It is stated in Exodus 12:41, that the Exodus took place at the end of 430 years, which can be proved, by comparing various figures mentioned in the Bible, to mean 430 years after the Covenant with Abraham; and this figure can be right only if Abraham was then 70 years old. Thus it precedes his departure from Haran, though it is recorded later. (The 400 years mentioned in the Covenant are calculated from Isaac's birth, 30 years later.) Therefore the Midrash states that God made him fly from the Covenant of the parts to Haran. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Midrash Rabbah Genesis 39:11 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 265:11 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Pirkei DeRabi Eliezer 29 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. I heard this idea from Rabbi David Fohrman who ascribed the idea to Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903-1993). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The Haggada ("telling") is a Jewish text that sets forth the order of the Passover Seder. Reading the Haggada at the Seder table is a fulfillment of the Scriptural commandment to each Jew to "tell your son" of the Jewish liberation from slavery in Egypt as described in the Book of Exodus in the Torah ("And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying: It is because of that which HaShem did for me when I came forth out of Egypt." Ex. 13:8). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Rabbi Moses ben Nachman (1194–1270), commonly known as Nachmanides, and also referred to by the acronym Ramban, was a leading medieval Jewish scholar, Sephardic rabbi, philosopher, physician, kabbalist, and biblical commentator. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Lech-Lecha (לֶךְ-לְךָ‎ Hebrew for "go!" or "leave!", literally "go for you") is the third weekly Torah portion (פָּרָשָׁה‎, parashah) in the annual Jewish cycle of Torah reading. It constitutes Genesis 12:1–17:27. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Midrash Tanchuma (Lech Lecha 9); Sotah 34a [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. בך־כש גדול [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Bereshit (Genesis) 15:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Shemot (Exodus) 14:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. The events in Yaaqob's life were a prognostication for his descendants (Rimzei HaTorah, Torah Shelemah 31:50). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Hoffman; cf. Tanchuma Lech-Lecha 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. R. Tsadok haKohen, Tsidkat HaTsadik, 91, 197.  Also see: R. Shlomo Elyashuv, Chelek haBiurim, Shaat HaAkudim 1:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. According to the Yismach Moshe, his first gilgul was as one of the sheep in the flock of Yaakov Avinu, when he worked as one of Lavan’s shepherds: “As is known in many sources, Yaakov Avinu, who was one of the ‘seven shepherds,’ had 600,000 sheep, which included all 600,000 Jewish souls. I remember myself as one of those sheep, and I even remember the tune that Yaakov Avinu would play with his flute before the flock, when the time came to gather them together...” On the second occasion, he was among the 600,000 children of Israel who left Egypt. He recalled their time in the wilderness, and all the trials and hardships they endured, particularly the story of Korach’s rebellion. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Abarbanel [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Shemot (Exodus) 14:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Shemot (Exodus) 13:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Bereshit (Genesis) 29:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Bereshit (Genesis) 29:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Bereshit (Genesis) 29:27 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Bereshit (Genesis) 31:38 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. See Midrash Tanchuma, Lech Lecha section 9, and Ramban, Bereishit 12:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Shemot (Exodus) 12:41 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Rashi to 29:11 and from Bereshit Rabbathi by Rabbi Moshe Hadarshan. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Bereshit (Genesis) 28:11-17 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Bereshit (Genesis) 46:1-4 [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Bereshit (Genesis) 29:11 [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Bereshit (Genesis) 46:29 [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Bereshit (Genesis) 31:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Bereshit (Genesis) 30:25 [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Sanhedrin 92b [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Shemot (Exodus) 1:22 [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. The Haggada [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Shemot (Exodus) 12:27-41 [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Bamidbar (Numbers) 33:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. The Maharal explains that Yetzias Mitzrayim was not merely a *physical* process, in which the Jewish People departed from the land of Egypt and traveled to a different physical location. It was a *spiritual* metamorphosis, an existential transition, the birth of a people. Prior to leaving Mitzrayim, Bnei Yisrael were a collective of individuals, but upon leaving, we became a nation, a single people, a unified whole.  [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Bereshit (Genesis) 15:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 26:5; When Laban set out in pursuit of Yaaqob he intended to kill him, and the Torah accordingly speaks of Laban as if he had actually done so, as it says: An Aramean, was the destroyer of my father [Deut. 26:5]. For the gentile nations, God equates evil intentions with actions [because their general performance justifies the assumption that they would indeed do so if they had the opportunity] (Rashi, Deut. ibid.). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. R' Munk [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Haim Yosef David Azulai ben Yitzhak Zerachia (1724 – 1 March 1806), commonly known as the Chida (the acronym of his name, חיד"א‎), was a Jerusalem born rabbinical scholar, a noted bibliophile, and a pioneer in the publication of Jewish religious writings. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Moshe Alshich (1508–1593), known as the Alshich Hakadosh (the Holy), was a prominent rabbi, preacher, and biblical commentator in the latter part of the 16th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. see the Chida’s *Geulat Olam* and the Alshich’s *Torat Moshe*on *Debarim* 26:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. As in the days of your coming out... In this verse from Micah 7:15, the Exodus serves as a paradigm for Israel’s future restoration and salvation. On this theme, sec Mekhiha, Shirta 8; Tanchuma, Eqev 7; Tanchuma (Buber), Toledot 17; Shemot Rabbah 15:11. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Mashiach = Messiah [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Mechilta (a collection of rules of interpretation) is a halakhic midrash to the Book of Exodus. The name "Mechilta", corresponds to the Hebrew "middah" ("measure", "rule"), and is used to denote a compilation of Scriptural exegesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Micah 7:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Yonatan Grossman presented this chiastic connection. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Pharaoh called Yosef's name “Tzafenat-pa'neach – one who reveals secrets”, or “the explainer of hidden things”. Bereshit (Genesis) 41:45. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Bereshit (Genesis) 42:3 we see the ten sons of Israel referred to as “Yosef’s brothers”. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. HaYom Yom, Shevat 28; Keter Shem Tov (Kehot) addendum, sec. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. It has existed in secret in the brothers’ hearts, but it has not yet been exposed to the world. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. The unborn baby spends around 37 weeks in the uterus (womb), but the average length of pregnancy, or gestation, is calculated as 40 weeks. This is because pregnancy is counted from the first day of the woman’s last period, not the date of conception which generally occurs two weeks later, followed by five to seven days before it settles in the uterus. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 4:13; Kohelet Rabba 4:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Mishle (Proverbs) 30:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Shemot (Exodus) 1:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Eruvin 70b – (lit. an inheritor is the foot of his father) a son takes the place of his father. HaRav Yitzchak Hutner (*Igros U’Kesavim* 242) beautifully uses this concept to elucidate the *Gemara*’s teaching (*Eruvin* 70b) that children are considered extensions of their parents. The specific expression used by the *Gemara* is “*be’ra kara d’avuha* — a son is the foot of his father.” Why did *Chazal* specifically compare a child to a parent’s foot as opposed to any other part of the body? Rav Hutner explains that when a child performs *mitzvot* after his parent’s death, he transforms his dead parent from a stagnant *omeid* into a vibrant *holeich*, and because the child enables his parent to continue to walk posthumously, it is appropriate to describe him as his father’s feet. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Eitz Chayim [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Bereshit (Genesis) 42:5. Talmud Yerushalmi [Berachot 7:3] derives from our verse that matters of holiness [e.g. Kaddish, Kedushah, Barchu, Reading of the Torah, Priestly Benediction, etc.] may not be recited in a quorum of less than ten men: It is written here: The sons [lit. children] of Israel, and in Vayikra (Leviticus) 22:32 it is written be hallowed among the children of Israel. Just as children of Israel written here refers to ten, so does children of Israel written there refer to ten. From this analogy we learn that holiness may not be recited in a group of less than ten. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. The first return trip saw Shimon imprisoned so only nine brothers returned to Canaan. On the second return trip, both Binyamin and Shimon returned so there were eleven who returned. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Bamidbar (Numbers) 14:27 speaking of the ten spies who brought back an evil report about the land. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Yosef, the egg, introduces himself to his brothers, the penis. Then, metaphorically, the egg wants to know if the sperm is still alive. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Pinchas, cf. \*\*. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Lit., ‘went out to the air space of the world’. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Its mouth. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Navel. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Iyov (Job) 29:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Shabbethai ben Joseph Bass (1641–1718) (Hebrew: שבתי בן יוסף), born at Kalisz, was the father of Jewish bibliography, and author of the Siftei Chachamim super commentary on Rashi's commentary on the Pentateuch. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Both maintain that these are not two separate names, but that one is the real name and the other explanatory. They were purposely told to build on sandy soil, so as to have perpetually to repair the ravages of insecure foundations and to be working continually. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Talmud Sotah 11 and elsewhere [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Seder Olam Rabbah Ch. 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. 2:25 [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Shemot (Exodus) 2:24 [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Shemot (Exodus) 3:16 - pakod pakadeti - פָּקֹד פָּקַדְתִּי (I have surely remembered) are the keywords used to identify the redeemer. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Bereshit (Genesis) 29:31-32 [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Bereshit (Genesis) 21:1; 30:22 [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Shemot (Exodus) 3:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 26:17 [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. They counted the four hundred years foretold by God to Abraham (Gen. XV, 13) as commencing there and then, whereas in reality they dated from Isaac's birth, which according to tradition took place thirty years later. As a result, they left Egypt thirty years before the rest of Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Divrei HaYamin alef (I Chronicles) 7:20f. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Divrei HaYamin alef (I Chronicles) 7:22f. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Sanhedrin 92b [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. They counted the four hundred years foretold by God to Abraham (Gen. XV, 13) as commencing there and then, whereas in reality they dated from Isaac's birth, which according to tradition took place thirty years later. As a result, they left Egypt thirty years before the rest of Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Divrei HaYamin alef (I Chronicles) 7:20f. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Divrei HaYamin alef (I Chronicles) 7:22f. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Sotah 12a [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Sotah 12a [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Sotah 12a [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Sotah 12b [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Sotah 12b [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. par. Bava Batra 16a. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Mechilta; Targum Yonatan; Rashi [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Connecting the word mofethim (‘wonders’) with the root pathah to deceive, and reading ha-mefathim. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Cf. Exodus Rabbah 9:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. By Shmuel Reichman [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Niddah 30 [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Bereshit (Genesis) 1:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Shemot (Exodus) 15:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Tehillim (Psalms) 114:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Tehillim (Psalms) 68:28, E.V. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Ibid. The word for council has the same root as the verb ‘to stone’; so it is here understood as ‘their stoners’. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. The Temple was erected on the territory of Benjamin, v. Yoma 12a. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 33:12, i.e., God dwells in the land of Benjamin. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. He was the prince of the tribe of Judah (Num. VII, 12). [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Hoshea (Hosea) 12:1. The last words are rod ‘im el, which are interpreted: he descended (into the sea because his trust was) with God. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Tehillim (Psalms) 69:2f. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Ibid. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Shemot (Exodus) 14:15f. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Tehillim (Psalms) 114:2. The Temple was in the kingdom of Judah. ‘His dominion’ is understood as Judah's rule over Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Ibid. 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. See Torah Or, Vaera 57b ff, Beshalach 64a-b; Yitro 71c, et al. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Tosafot in [Gemara](file:///D:\Word\Body\orallaw.html) Arachin 15a [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Shemot (Exodus) 8:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Shemot (exodus) 14:31 [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Iyov (Job) 29:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Iyov (Job) 29:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Mishle (Proverbs) 4:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Iyov (Job) 29:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Bereshit (Genesis) 4:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 45:23 [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Tehillim (Psalms) 22:30 [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Tehillim (Psalms) 24:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. YETZIRAH the "World of Formation" from the word tzura -- form or formation. Yetzirah is the third of the four immanent worlds, between Briah, above it, and Asiyah below it. The “worlds” are level of consciousness or thought. The primordial matter of Briah is endowed with generic form in Yetzirah. It is the spiritual abode of the category of angels called chayot, it corresponds to Ruach in the soul of man. The sefirot of Zeir Anpin predominate in Yetzirah. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. ASIYAH "The World (level of consciousness or thought) of Substance and Action." At this level you are valued for what you do rather than what you are. As long as man is “busy” it is difficult to be thoughtful. Asiyah is the lowest of the five worlds (consciousness), below Yetzirah. The generic form with which matter is endowed in the world of Yetzirah is particularized by the specific dimensions and limitations of the world of Asiyah. and corresponds to nefesh in the soul of man. The sefira of malchut predominates in Asiyah. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. BRIAH "the World of Creation." This is the world (level of consciousness or thought) below Atzilut. Briah is the first world created from nothing; its "substance" is unformed primordial matter. Briah corresponds to Neshama in the soul of man. The sefira of binah predominates in Briah. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. ATZILUT "the World of Emanations". Atzilut is the highest of the four worlds (levels of consciousness or thought). The name "Atzilut" comes from the word "etzel" ("close to") for it is close to Infinite Light, and from the verse "He imparted (vayatzel) of the spirit upon Moses" (Bamidbar11:25). Atzilut corresponds to Chaya (life) and yechida (together – oneness) in the soul of man. The sefira of chachma predominates in Atzilut. At this level we can achieve intimacy with HaShem and man and experience the utmost heights of life. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Mechilta - Mekhiha, Shirta 8; Tanchuma, Eqev 7; Tanchuma (Buber), Toledot 17; Shemot Rabbah 15:11 [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Yehezchel (Ezekiel) chapter 16 speaks of this birth process. And see Torah Ohr beginning of ParshasVayeira. Torat Chaim ibid 96b ff. Sefer Hamitzvot by the Tzemach Tzedek, end of 77b ff. And more. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Midrash Shochar Tov, Psalms 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Gevurot HaShem Ch. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. L**AG BA'OMER — ITS OBSERVANCE, LAWS AND SIGNIFICANCE /** A PRESENTATION BASED ON TALMUDIC AND TRADITIONAL SOURCES, by Rabbi Nosson Scherman / Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz general editors, compiled by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman, overview by Rabbi Nosson Scherman. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Bereshit (Genesis) 15:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Bereshit (Genesis)15:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Bereshit (Genesis) 35:27 [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Shemot (Exodus) 6:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. from Mechilta, Meg. 9a [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Revelation 15:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. According to Chizkuni on Shemot 1:20, this verse essentially says, “Yes, it matters, and there were *only two* midwives.” It is impossible for two women alone to assist at all the births, Pharaoh reasoned, so their claim, that the Hebrew women do not need midwives, is plausible. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. See also Revelation 15:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Revelation 15:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. ‘Torah’ bears here its narrower connotation of Pentateuch. The ‘Song’ referred to is that contained in Ex. XV. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Tehillim (Psalms) 113-118. [MS.M. (gloss) inserts: Moshe and Israel recited it]. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. The Giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Rashi based on Yoma 75a [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Amos 4:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 59:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Tehillim (Psalms) 89:51 [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Tehillim (Psalms) 89:52 [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Moshe = Moses [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. The Maharal explains that the fundamental nature of water is that it is formless. Water has no form of its own, rather it takes on the shape of its container. (It is pure physical matter, without any form.) The ocean is completely shapeless, and unlike dry land which has paved paths, it has no pathways or landmarks. This characteristic of water is indicative of its essence. Water represents the initial stage in every creative process. Before something becomes expressed and takes on form, it remains in a formless and amorphous state. Through the creative process, physical form emerges from this amorphous beginning. This is why the Torah states that during the original creation of the world, there was initially only water. Only afterwards did dry land emerge from the water. - Shmuel Reichman [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Mishneh Torah Hilchot Teshuva 3:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Remember that the Bne Israel were in Egypt for a total of 210 years. You can prove this by adding the years of Levi and his descendants until Moshe. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Zohar, Toldot 139a [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. See also Revelation 15:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Chumash means ‘five’, as in the 5 Books of Moshe. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (20 November 1816 in Mir, Russia – 10 August 1893 in Warsaw, Poland), also known as Reb Hirsch Leib Berlin, and commonly known by the acronym Netziv, was an Orthodox rabbi, dean of the Volozhin Yeshiva and author of several works of rabbinic literature in Lithuania. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Sheni means ‘second’. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Seder Olam [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Bereshit (Genesis) 15:7-16 [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Bereshit (Genesis) 21:1-7 [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Iyov (Job) 19:26 [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Shemot (Exodus) 20:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Shemot (Exodus) 13:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. I.e. the liberation from Egypt, too, displays God's strength, just as the Creation did (Radal). [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Shemot (Exodus) 12:40-41, Genesis 18, 19, Rosh Hashanah 10b [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Bereshit (Genesis) 15:7-16 [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Midrash Song of Songs Rabbah 5:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Cf. Genesis Rabbah III, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. Bereshit (Genesis) 3:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. V. Genesis Rabbah XIX, 7; Numbers Rabbah XIII, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. V. Bereshit (Genesis) 4:26 which the Rabbis translate: then did men profane the name of the Lord, v Genesis Rabbah 23:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Bereshit (Genesis) 11:1-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. The Shechinah (Biblical Hebrew: שכינה‎) is the English transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning "dwelling" or "settling" and denotes the dwelling or settling of the divine presence of HaShem. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Tzadikim = ‘Righteous men’. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. ' Rashi ' and M.K.: Seven generations of Abraham had passed by the time the Israelites entered the Promised Land, viz.: Abraham, Isaac Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram, and Moses, whereas there were only four generations of Abimelech's seed, as it says, And in the fourth generation they shall come back hither (Gen. XV, 16 ‘fourth’ must refer to the Canaanites). [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. Based on Chessed L’Avraham [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Chapter 57 [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Sefer Yetzirah 1:3. This is one of the earliest books on the Cabala. Saadia Gaon was among the first great scholars to write a commentary on it. It is written in profound symbolic language. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. In our version of Sefer Yetzirah: "Ten Emanations"; the word "with" is not present. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Shemot Rabbah 41:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Since **the Torah was the instrument with which the world was created, the first Tablet containing our duties towards G-d thus corresponds to heaven, while the second Tablet which states our duties to man corresponds to earth** (Etz Yosef, ibid.) [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. The symbol is that of the bestower and the bestowed. Heaven is the bestower and earth is the bestowed. So also, is the relationship between G-d and man. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. Taanit 8b; Bereshit Rabbah Chapter 12 [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Tehillim (Psalms) 104:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. Bamidbar Rabbah 13:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Braude, Pesiqta Rabbati 1:443-46 [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. Isaiah 60:19 [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Jeremiah 2:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Habakkuk 1:13-14 [↑](#footnote-ref-203)