
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

"Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue" doesn't only apply to a bride's wedding apparel. It applies to my LSIDS Bulletin editorial philosophy as well.

SOMETHING OLD: I'd like to include something from our Biblical, Talmudic, and other ancient literature in each issue of the Bulletin. I would also like to use the Bulletin as a means of communicating capsule lessons in Jewish history to its readers. The Bulletin is yet another vehicle, along with the activities organized by our Education Committee and the Divrei Torah (sermonettes) delivered each Shabbat, to enlighten our congregants about Judaism. And so I welcome contributors who are interested in writing about "something old" for our Bulletin.

SOMETHING NEW: This Bulletin should be "newsy." Certainly we will keep everyone abreast of Smachot and misfortunes as they befall our congregants. And we will keep everyone abreast of future events scheduled by our Education and Social Committees. We might even have a "roving reporter" encapsulating the colorful action at the LSIDS Board meetings. But beyond that, I would like the Bulletin to contain Op-Ed pieces by our members on significant current events and issues that impact us as members of the Jewish community. And so I also welcome contributors who are interested in writing about "something new" for our Bulletin.

SOMETHING BORROWED: It's not just that I'll reprint something good from anywhere, but that in doing so I will be fulfilling a Mitzvah. In Megilla 15a Rabbi Elezar ben Pedat said: כָּל הַאֹמֵר דְּבַר בְּשֵׁם אֹמְרוֹ מְבִיא גְאוּלָּה לְעוֹלָם "Whoever repeats a saying in the name of its originator brings deliverance to the world." So as long as I give appropriate attribution (and of course get prior permission for publication) I will not only not be guilty of plagiarism but will help bring on the Messianic age. Perhaps a noteworthy D'var Torah or item from the Internet would be a candidate for inclusion in the Bulletin. And so I welcome suggestions for "something borrowed" to be included in our Bulletin from all of you.

SOMETHING BLUE: The Bulletin does not have to be as dry as dust, as grey as the New York Times, as sterile as an academic journal. We need not take ourselves that seriously. And we all can enjoy a bit of Jewish humor. Lots of it is being circulated on the Internet. Let's use the Bulletin to share these with all our LSIDS friends. (But, lest we offend the sensibilities of some, maybe I'll modify that "something blue" to "something wry"...or else write a piece about the recent discovery in Israel of the source of the original blue dye which colored the Tsitsit just so that I can say I wrote "something blue" for the Bulletin!) And so I welcome contributions for the new "something wry" column of our Bulletin.

ALBERT MADANSKY

GIVE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

Postscript from September 1999 Bulletin

In my first Bulletin, I noted that in Megilla 15a there is a saying by Rabbi Elazar¹, a second generation (circa 290 CE) amora, in the name of Rabbi Chanina, a first generation (circa 220 CE) amora, "Whoever repeats a saying in the name of its originator brings deliverance to the world." The proof-text offered is from Esther 2:22, "and Esther told the king thereof in Mordecai's name." How strange it is, then, that when this is quoted in Pirkei Avot 6:6 it is quoted without attribution! (I would be remiss in following this dictum if I did not credit Rabbi David Rosenberg of the University of Chicago Hillel for having pointed out this oddity to me.)

This dictum is further expanded on in Midrash Mishlei 19:1 (a 10th or 11th century work), where "Whoever repeats a saying in the name of its originator ... he has hope and a future" (יש לו תקוה ואחרית).. The proof-text offered is from Proverbs 19:18, "chasten thy son for there is hope."

This concept turns negative in Midrash Panim Acherim leEsther Nosah B Chapter B Keta 18 (a volume redacted not earlier than the 12th century), "Whoever does not repeat a saying in the name of its originator is a killer of souls" (כל שאינו אומר בשם אומרו הורג נפשות).

In Tanhuma Bamidbar 22 (Warsaw edition of this anonymous work, which dates back to 1522) Rabbi Hizkiyah says, "Whoever does not repeat a saying in the name of its originator of him the Torah says 'Rob not the weak'" (כל שאינו אומר דבר בשם אומרו עליו הכתוב אמור אף תגזול דף). The proof-text cited is from Proverbs 22:22, "rob not the weak." In making this statement Rabbi Hizkiyah, a fourth generation amora and student of Rabbi Yirmiyahu, shows that he has learned this lesson well: he credits this statement to Rabbi Yirmiyahu bar Abba (a third generation amora) in the name of Rabbi Yohanan bar Nappacha (a second generation amora).

This negative statement evolves into a more general, negative statement in Shelah Sha'ar HaOthiyoth Ot 100 Kedusha 17 (Shelah is an acronym for Shnei Luchot Habrit, written by Isaiah ben Abraham haLevi Horowitz, 1560-1632). There the statement, (כל שאינו אומר דבר בשם אומרו עובר בלאו) "Whoever does not repeat a saying in the name of its originator commits a transgression of a negative commandment" is made in the name of Rabbi Hiya. The proof-text offered is again Proverbs 22:22, "rob not the weak."

So attribution has devolved from an activity that brings "deliverance to the world" to "hope and a future (for the attributor)" to an activity that, if not done, makes the non-attributor "a killer of souls," a "robber of the weak," and "a transgressor of a negative commandment." With all this background, you see why attribution is such an important ingredient in Jewish scholarship.

¹ This Rabbi Elazar usually is cited without patronym, but it is known that he is Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat. It was said of him in the Jerusalem Talmud that he quoted so many decisions and sayings in the name of Rabbi Chanina that "everywhere Rabbi Elazar relies on Rabbi Chanina." This was most likely Rabbi Chanina bar Chama, a first generation amora, in whose name almost sixty amoraim transmit dicta.

“WHAT IS CHANUKAH?”

The festival of Chanukah is brought up tangentially in the Talmud amidst the discussion of the laws of candle lighting on Shabbat. Therein is recorded the famous debate between Hillel and Shammai as to what is the appropriate order of candle lighting on Chanukah, upward from 1 to 8 or downward from 8 to 1. A few reasons are given for the acceptance of Hillel's view, and the one I like best is the argument: דמעלין בקדש ואין מורידין, "we promote in matters of sanctity and do not reduce."

In the midst of this discussion of the rules of Chanukah candle lighting the Talmud suddenly interjects "מאי הנוכה?", "What is Chanukah?," a question that Rashi interprets as meaning "On what miracle is this holiday based?" The Talmud's answer is succinct enough to repeat here: "On the 25th of Kislev commences the days of Chanukah, which are eight, for when the Greeks entered the Temple they defiled all the oils therein, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against and defeated them they made search and found only one cruse of oil which lay with the seal of the High Priest but which contained sufficient for one day's lighting only; yet a miracle was wrought therein and they lit the lamp therewith for eight days. The following year these days were appointed a festival with the recital of Hallel and thanksgiving."

To set the record straight, it wasn't the Greeks but rather the Syrians who entered the temple. The Syrians had won control of the Holy Land at the end of the third century BCE, and Antiochus ascended to the throne in 176 BCE. His rampage against the Temple was in 168 BCE, and it was three years later that the Maccabees reclaimed the Temple and the events described in the Talmud took place. So why did the Talmud refer to "Greeks?" Because the authors of the Talmud were not so much concerned with "who" entered the Temple as with "what ideas" they brought with them. What the Syrians insisted on was the imposition of Greek culture onto the Israelites, and it was this culture, pervasive even at the time of the compilation of the Mishnah (second century CE), that the authors of the Talmud wished to suppress. (For a very readable account of pernicious influence of Hellenism in the days of the founders of the Mishnah, I recommend Milton Steinberg's novel As A Driven Leaf, a fictionalized biography of Elisha ben Abuyah, who stepped out of the Rabbinic world into that of Greek culture.)

Unmentioned also in the Talmud are the Maccabees and the armed revolt against the Syrians which led to the reclamation of the Temple. Why was this the case? Partly this was because the successors to the Maccabees, the Hasmoneans, declared themselves kings and ruled corruptly for 103 years until the Romans conquered the Holy Land and Herod killed the last of them. During that period Chanukah came to be largely ignored, due to the unpopularity of its founders, and so to mention the Maccabees might bring back negative feelings about the holiday. And partly this was a political decision: not to mention that revolt so as not to antagonize the Romans who at the time of the creation of the Talmud ruled over the Holy Land.

Finally, there is no mention of the miracle in The First Book of Maccabees, the Apochryphal account of the Jewish war of independence. That book merely recounts that the Israelites "celebrated the rededication of the altar for eight days and offered burnt offerings of joy, and offered a sacrifice of deliverance and praise." What the Talmud did was reestablish the holiday, by defining the kindling of lights ceremony, as well as by institutionalizing the custom of reciting Hallel and a prayer of thanksgiving (the Ahl Hanisim paragraph interpolated into the Amidah and the Birkat Ha-Mazon). The Chanukah of the Maccabees was a celebration of their victory over the Syrians; the Chanukah of the Talmud was defined only as a celebration of a miracle. In the Chanukah of today we celebrate both.

Lake Shore Drive Synagogue

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Shomrei Israel

במ"ד

January 1998

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WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT THIS MONTH? A JEWISH ANSWER

Except for the month of Cheshvan every month of the Jewish calendar contains some event which we commemorate. Some are joyous, others are sad commemorations. This month is the month of Tevet, and its special day is **Asarah B'Tevet**. Unlike other notable days such as last month's Chanukah, which can be explained on its own, to understand the significance of Asarah B'Tevet one must see it in the context of other significant days in our calendar.

Aside from the Fast of Esther and that of Yom Kippur, the Jewish calendar is marked by four other fast days: **Asarah B'Tevet**, **Shivah Asar B'Tammuz**, **Tisha B'Av**, and **Tsom Gedaliah**. This quartet of fast days mark different stages of the first exile of the Jewish people from the land of Israel. The first of these, commemorated this year on January, is **Asarah B'Tevet (the fast of the 10th day of Tevet)**, which marks the day on which the siege of Jerusalem and the first Temple by the Babylonians commenced in 587 BCE. The second of these was originally Tisha B'Tammuz (the fast of the 9th day of Tammuz), commemorating the day the Babylonians broke through the walls of Jerusalem after six months of siege. This fast day was replaced by **Shivah Asar B'Tammuz (the fast of the 17th day of Tammuz)**, the day the Romans broke through the walls of Jerusalem in the siege of the second Temple in 69 CE, because the Rabbis deemed this to be a more significant calamity. The third of these is **Tisha B'Av (the fast of the 9th day of Av)**, which tradition tells us is the date of the actual destruction of both the first and second Temples. Finally there is **Tsom Gedaliah (the fast of the 3rd day of Tishrei)**, commemorating the beginning of the exile following the murder of Gedaliah, the last Jewish governor of Israel before the Babylonian conquest.

These four fasts were instituted almost immediately, as is seen in the book of the prophet Zechariah, written in 518 BCE. In Zechariah 8:19 he prophesized "Thus saith the Lord of hosts: The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful seasons; therefore love ye truth and peace." (Note that Nissan was traditionally the first month, and so, counting from Nissan, we see that the fourth month is Tammuz, the fifth month is Av, the seventh month is Tishrei, and the tenth is Tevet.)

HAPPY NEW YEAR- JEWISH STYLE

To most of the Western world January 1 is New Year's Day. We Jews, though, have not one but four New Year's days of our own.

The first Mishnah of the Talmud tractate Rosh Hashanah reads (in the main): "There are four New Year days: on the first of Nissan is the New Year for kings and feasts; on the first of Elul is the New Year for the Tithe of Cattle; on the first day of Tishrei is the New Year for the reckoning of the years of foreign kings, of the years of release, and the Jubilee years, for the planting of trees and for vegetables; and the first day of Shevat is the New Year for fruit trees." With regard to the last of these, this is the view of the School of Shammai. The School of Hillel says: "on the 15th thereof. "

We all know of the New Year celebrated on the first day of Tishrei--Rosh Hashanah. But the biblical reference to Rosh Hashanah (Leviticus 23:4) places it in the seventh month ("In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall be a solemn rest unto you, a memorial proclaimed with the blast of horns.")

The tradition of the first day of Nissan being the beginning of a New Year is based on Exodus 12:2 "This month (Nissan) shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you."

What about those other two New Year's days? The tithing of cattle is referred to (but no date for offering the tithe is given) in Leviticus 27:32. And the tithing of fruit is referred to (but again no date for offering the tithe is given) in Leviticus 19:24. Given the destruction of the Temple, these tithes are things of the past, and so the first of Elul as a New Year's day has become an item for the history books.

But the New Year for fruit trees, celebrated on the 15th of Shevat (this year falling on February 11), is today a significant Jewish holiday, known as **Tu B'Shevat** (ט"ו בשבט). (The "Tu" is a literal reading of the Hebrew number (ט"ו), i.e., 15, and the "B" (ב) is the Hebrew prefix meaning "of".) What made it so?

It owes its significance today to the tree planting campaign of the Jewish National Fund which began in 1901. Needing an event upon which to "key" the campaign, the JNF seized upon the day already proclaimed the New Year for Trees as the focal point for the campaign, arranging significant tree planting ceremonies in Palestine on that day. The "little blue box" wherein families collected money for JNF (or *Keren Kayemet LeYisrael*, as it was known in Hebrew) was ceremoniously opened on that day and its contents delivered to JNF to help plant trees in Palestine.

This modern event is, though, the second revival of this holiday. The holiday was revived by the kabbalists in the sixteenth century. Around 1670 Nathan of Gaza, a noted mystic and lieutenant of the notorious False Messiah Sabbetai Zevi, compiled a Seder for Tu B'Shevat which included reading passages from the Bible, the Talmud, and the Zohar, interspersed with the eating of various fruit (with appropriate unique blessings) and the drinking of four cups of wine (ranging from white to red). From that time on various customs became associated with Tu B'Shevat. The Sephardic community adopted the tradition of the Tu B'Shevat Seder. The Ashkenazic communities in Europe did not quite do this, but it was customary for them to eat 15 different kinds of fruits on the 15th of Shevat, with special preference given to the kinds of fruit grown in Palestine (such as dates, figs, and St. John's bread, aka "bokser"). Though not done in a Seder setting, this eating of fruits was accompanied by the recital of Psalm 104 and of the 15 "ascending" Psalms 120-34.

PURIM MUSINGS

משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה "When we reach the month of Adar our joy increases" (Taanit 29a)
Why? Because it's a sign that Purim is coming. And Purim is the holiday where it is commanded that each person is obligated to drink on Purim until he doesn't know the difference between the phrases "cursed is Haman" and "blessed is Mordecai" (Megillah 7b). Consequently Purim gave rise to "adloyada" parties, so called because the Hebrew for "until he doesn't know" is עד לא ידע, "ad lo yada." (Some of us remember fondly those annual "adloyada" parties held at the old College of Jewish Studies at 72 E. 11.)

Some Rabbis in the Talmud had a hard time with this concept. One concern is that Adar 7 is the date of the yahrzeit of Moses, so how can we have a party in the month in which such a sad event occurred? Others raise another issue. In the tractate Rosh Hashana (page 7a) one is instructed to study the laws of Passover for thirty days prior to the holiday. Since Passover occurs on the 15th of Nissan and Purim occurs on the 15th of Adar, the study of the laws of Passover must begin on Purim. But how can one study the laws of Passover when one has fulfilled the "adloyada" obligation?

Notwithstanding these objections, and I'm sure by popular demand, the "adloyada" concept has remained with us. There is no community mourning of the passing of Moses (though some Jews recite special Psalms on his yahrzeit). In the tractate Megillah (4a) it is decreed that one is to study the laws of each holiday on the day of the holiday (perhaps abrogating the thirty day rule laid down in Rosh Hashana 7a).

Women are specifically instructed to hear the reading of the Megillah. The reason given in Megillah 4a is that women were an integral part of the Purim miracle. I might add that if anyone needs the "adloyada" on Purim it is those of us (mostly women) who, once Purim is over, have to face a task greater than that of studying the laws of Passover -- that of preparing for Passover.

THE WEEKLY READER

As you may have noticed, during the month of Adar something extra has been added to the Shabbat service, namely the reading from an additional Torah. The schedule of extra readings is:

FEB 20	Sabbath of Shekalim - Parshat Shekalim (פרשת שקלים)
MAR 6	Sabbath of Remembrance - Parshat Zachor (פרשת זכור)
MAR 20	Sabbath of the Heifer - Parshat Parah (פרשת פרה)
MAR 27	Sabbath of the Month - Parshat Hachodesh (פרשת החדש)

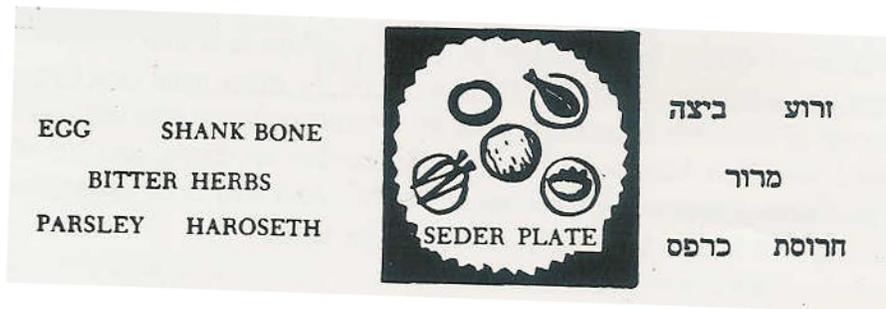
The first of these is a reminder of the tradition of contributing half a shekel toward the maintenance of the Temple by the first of Nissan. Though the Temple is long gone, the tradition to read Exodus 30:11-16 remains, and has been put to another use. Since attendance is high on Purim, it became a tradition for synagogues to provide a platter in the entry to the synagogue into which congregants would contribute so-called "megilla gelt," reminiscent of the half shekel, which would be used to support the synagogue and other charities.

The second of these is read on the Shabbat preceding Purim. On this day we read from Deuteronomy 25:17-19 the passages reminding us to remember the evil that the tribe of Amalek perpetrated on the Israelites as they left Egypt. Tradition has it that Haman was a descendent of the Amalekites, and, since the passage read includes the phrase "blot out Amalek" the Rabbis have interpreted it to mean that every time Haman's name is read in the Megilla it should be "blotted out," by foot stamping, greggers, or, as is done in Israel, with the shooting of cap pistols.

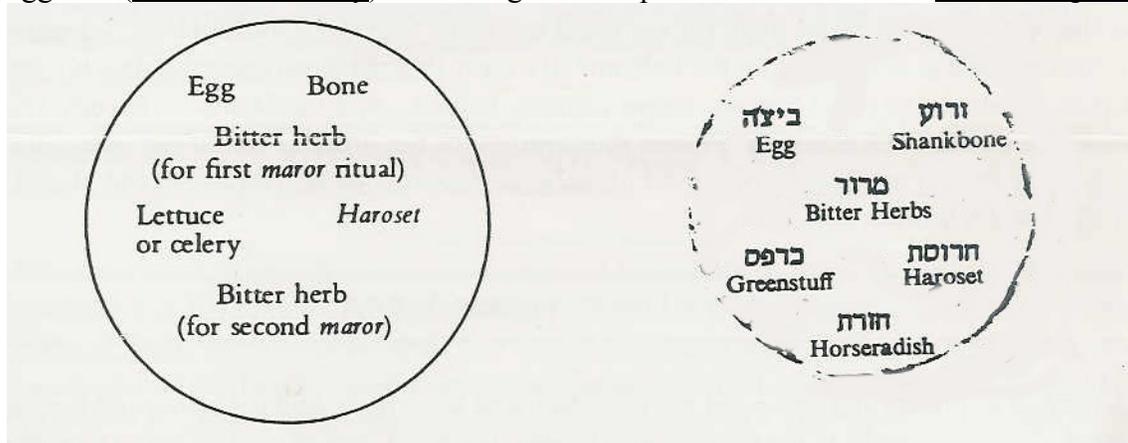
Having completed a prelude to Purim, we go on in the succeeding Shabbatot (or, in Yiddish, *shabosim*) to get prompted to prepare for Pesach. On the third of these Shabbatot we read in Numbers 19:1-22 of the red heifer purification ceremony. This is a reminder of the purification process required of each household with the advent of Pesach. And the fourth of these introduces us to the laws of Pesach by the reading of Exodus 12:1-20.

WILL THE REAL SEDER PLATE PLEASE STAND UP?

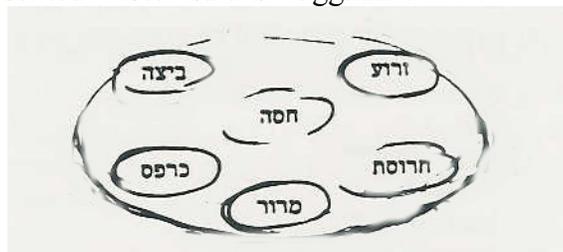
The Haggadah that my family used, the Gutstein/Goldberg Haggadah published by Ktav, has this picture of the Seder Plate layout, containing five items:



So it came as a surprise to me when I saw the following six-item layouts, the left one as given in Chaim Raphael's Haggadah (A Feast of History) and the right one copied from Cecil Roth's Archaeological Haggadah:



And finally, here is the layout presented in Steinsaltz's Haggadah:



Which leads to the questions: What are the differences between these Seder Plate layouts? Why are there these differences? Which layout should we use?

First let's look at the similarities. Each has an egg (ביצה) in the upper-left corner, a shankbone (זרוע) in the upper-right corner, greens (lettuce/celery/parsley) (כרפס) in the lower-left corner, and haroset (חרוסת) in the lower-right corner.

Where they differ is in the treatment of the bitter herb(s). The five-item layout calls for *maror* (מרור) in the middle, as does the Roth six-item layout. The Steinsaltz layout has *maror* at the bottom and instead has *chasah* (חסה) in the middle. And the Roth layout has *chazeret* (חזרת), labeled "Horseradish" in English, at its bottom. There is more to this tale of Seder Plate layout differences. The Gaon of Vilna, based on an interpretation of Maimonides's description of the Seder Plate, only required four items on the plate, eliminating the greens from the five-item layout. Perhaps this is because the step in the Seder (כרפס) in which the greens are employed water does not have a deeply religious significance. We eat some food (the greens) in an unusual way (dipped in salt water) even before we make the *motzie*, the prayer over the matzo. This step is merely designed, according to the Talmud, to stimulate the curiosity of the children at the Seder as to what is going on at the meal. It was the Ashkenazic tradition to use the Vilna Gaon four-item layout, and that tradition evolved into the five-item layout depicted in the Gutstein/Goldberg Haggadah.

The Sephardic tradition incorporated six items, including two kinds of bitter herbs. This has its basis in a conflict of interpretation of the Mishnah. Mishnah 5 of Chapter 2 of Pesachim lists the items that qualify as "bitter herbs": חזרת: (romaine lettuce), עולשין (endive), תמכה (chicory), הרחבינה (pepperwort), and מרור (horseradish). In the Jerusalem Talmud discussion of this Mishnah we find the statement that the only member of this list that counts is *chazeret* (romaine lettuce), because "just as romaine lettuce is at first sweet and later of bitter taste, so did the Egyptians treat our fathers in Egypt." Maimonides on the other hand (see Chapter 7 of Hilchot Chametz uMatzo) says "Each one of these five types of greens we call *maror*." So you see why the Ashkenazim have only one item on their Seder Plate labeled מרור and the Sephardim have two, one literally for מרור and the other for what the Jerusalem Talmud says is required, namely חזרת. And why does Steinsaltz label his second bitter herb item חסה? Because חסה is the modern Hebrew word for lettuce.

Which one of these bitter herbs do you dip into the *charoset* and which one is used to make the Hillel sandwich (at the כורך juncture of the Seder)? If you are an Ashkenazi, you have no choice; you use the same *maror* Seder Plate item for both. If you are a Sephardi, you use what's in the middle of the plate for dipping into the *charoset* and what's at the bottom of the Seder Plate for the Hillel sandwich (see the Raphael Haggadah excerpt). But what goes in the middle and what goes on the bottom? It's clear that the Roth excerpt got it wrong: מרור literally means horseradish and חזרת literally means romaine lettuce. And the Steinsaltz excerpt tells you what goes with what if you take the Raphael Haggadah prescription for the order of use of the two items: lettuce gets dipped into *charoset* for the first *maror* ritual and horseradish gets dipped into *charoset* and placed in a matzo sandwich for the second *maror* ritual.

THE SEVEN WEEK COUNTDOWN

וספרתם לכם ממחרת השבת מיום הביאכם את עמר התנופה שבע שבתות תמימת תהינה.
עד ממחרת השבת השביעת תספרו חמישים יום והקרבתם מנחה חדשה לה'.

"And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the day of rest, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the waving; seven weeks shall there be complete. Even unto the morrow after the seventh week shall ye number fifty days, and ye shall present a new meal-offering unto the Lord." (Leviticus 23:15-16)

These sentences require a bit of interpretation. The "day of rest" referred to is the first day of Pesach. The "sheaf of the waving" (*omer hatnufah*, in Hebrew) refers to the sheaf of first fruits of the wheat harvest which were to be brought to the Temple on the first day of Pesach and which, in a ceremony on the second day of Pesach (not a day of rest in Temple times, nor to this day in Israel), the priest waved before the Lord. And the "new meal-offering" refers to a cereal offering made from the produce of the new wheat harvest, which offering was not offered upon the altar but merely waved by the priests before the Lord. Thus the sheaf (*omer*) plays a direct role at the beginning and an indirect role at the end of the countdown, and so the countdown is referred to not as a counting of days but as **Sefirat Ha'Omer** ("counting of the sheaf").

The countdown period is usually referred to as **Sefirah** ("counting") for short. Though the period was intended to be a joyous period, coupling the celebration of the Exodus with the celebration of the receipt of the Torah, and overlaid with a celebration of the first harvest, this period instead was declared by the Rabbis as a mourning period. Weddings, haircuts, and listening to music were prohibited (except on the first day of the months of Iyar and of Sivan, both of which fall into the countdown period, and on the thirty-third day of Sefirah (ל"ג בעומר), **Lag BaOmer**, where ל"ג, *Lag*, is the Hebrew for 33). This mourning period commemorates the death of 24,000 Yeshivah students of Rabbi Akiva in the second century CE who, tradition has it, perished in a plague which swept his Yeshivah. Only on Lag BaOmer did the plague cease, and so in commemoration of that day the Rabbis declared a one-day respite from the mourning period.

We see that the countdown begins on the second day of Passover (toward the end of the second Seder, in our Diaspora tradition) and continues for fifty days, concluding with the eve preceding Shavuot. Our tradition ties the two holidays together, with Pesach marking the beginning and Shavuot marking the ending of the seven week countdown period. Indeed, though the name Shavuot is used in the Torah in reference to this holiday (Deuteronomy 16:10), it is not so named in Leviticus, where the countdown is commanded. And almost exclusively in the Talmud the holiday of Shavuot is referred to as an Atzeret (concluding festival) to Pesach and not by its own name (see Temurah 18b and Rosh Hashanah 5a).

Whether we view it as a completely separate holiday (one of the Three Festivals enumerated in the Torah) or as the culmination of a seven week Pesach-to-Shavuot countdown, the holiday of Shavuot has special significance. We prepare for Pesach by kashering our household. We prepare for Succot by building a sukkah. As Shavuot commemorates the day on which the Ten Commandments were pronounced on Sinai, Shavuot requires more than a mere countdown as its preparation. It requires a mental and spiritual preparation. A special text, the *Tikkun Lail Shavuot*, comprised of a selection of a minimum of three verses from each book of the Tanach and each tractate of the Talmud, was assembled by kabbalists as the required text for an all-night study vigil on the eve of Shavuot. The spirit of that tradition, though not necessarily its detail, carries forward to this day.

THE DAILY PSALM

As many of you have noted, in each of the monthly bulletins to date I have written about the keynote Jewish calendar event of that month. Unfortunately, the Jewish calendar has no highlights to write about in June. So what am I to write about this month?

Building on Rabbi Paul Vishny's recent dvar torah, I thought it would be interesting to focus on the day, rather than the month --- more specifically, on the Psalm of the Day. The Psalm of the Day (to be found on page 139 of the Birnbaum siddur, page 162 of the Art Scroll siddur, and page 76 of the Russian siddur) is of great antiquity, having been recited by the Levites in the Temple. Not only is the list of Psalms of the Day mentioned in the Mishnah, more precisely in *Tamid* 7:4, written in about 200 CE, but also is referred to in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Bible written in about 250 BCE. The Septuagint annotated two of the Psalms as having been sung by the Levites in the Temple on appropriate days, and by 200 BCE Greek Psalters referred to all but the Tuesday and Thursday Psalms in like manner.

There is no Gemara associated with the latter Mishnahs of *Tamid*, but fortunately on page 31a of *Rosh Hashanah* there is an explanation given, or at least a rationalization for, each of the selected Psalms of the Day, tying each one in with the days of the Creation. Sunday's Psalm 24 contains the phrase "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" and the Talmud says that this Psalm was selected for Day 1 because "He took possession and gave possession and was ruler in His universe." And the connections for the other days are equally cryptic. Each explanation selects a phrase from the Psalm of the Day and presents a tie-in with the day in the Creation. Here's the list of phrases, followed by their Talmudic tie-in:

Monday	Psalm 48	Great is the Lord and highly to be praised He divided his works and reigned over them like a king
Tuesday	Psalm 82	God standeth in the congregation of God He revealed the earth in his wisdom and established the world for his community
Wednesday	Psalm 94	O Lord, Thou God, to whom vengeance belongeth He created the sun and the moon and will one day punish those who serve them
Thursday	Psalm 81	Sing aloud to the God of our strength He created fish and birds to praise His name
Friday	Psalm 93	The Lord reigneth, He is clothed in majesty He completed his work and reigned over His creatures
Saturday	Psalm 92	A Psalm, a song for the Sabbath day For the day which will be all Sabbath

Now you see why I used the adjective "cryptic," eh? On the lighter side, those of you who saw *The Frisco Kid*, the movie starring Gene Wilder as the Polish Rabbi traveling across the USA to get to San Francisco, will remember the scene in a field in Pennsylvania Amish country when Gene Wilder finished his morning prayers, saw some Amish men in the distance, and ran toward them yelling "Landsmen!" Now here's a movie trivia question to stump your friends. On what day of the week did this event occur? Answer: Thursday. How do I know? Because the phrase on the sound track was ויאכיליהו מהלב הטה ומצור דבש אשביעך, which is the last line of the Psalm for Thursday.

THE THREE WEEKS AND THE NINE DAYS

Back in January I pointed out that, aside from the Fast of Esther and that of Yom Kippur, the Jewish calendar is marked by four other fast days: **Asarah B'Tevet**, **Shivah Asar B'Tammuz**, **Tisha B'Av**, and **Tsom Gedaliah**. In that Bulletin I concentrated on the Asarah B'Tevet, as it was being observed in that month. Well, time marches on and we are in the midst of the period between Shiva Asar B'Tammuz (observed on the 17th day of Tammuz, this year occurring on July 12) and Tisha B'Av (observed on the 9th day of Av, this year to be observed on August 2, since August 1, the day on which the 9th day of Av actually falls, is a Shabbat, and except for Yom Kippur there are no fasts on a Shabbat). The span between these two fast days is called "the three weeks," and the span between the first day of Av (Rosh Chodesh Av) and Tisha B'Av is called "the nine days." This three week span, and especially this nine day span, is observed as a period of mourning. No weddings are performed during this period, music is avoided, one tries to avoid haircuts and shaves, and in particular during the nine days no meat is eaten.

Why are we mournful? The Mishnah (Taanit 4:6) tells us that "five things befell our fathers on the 17th of Tammuz, and five on the 9th of Av." On the 17th of Tammuz the tablets of the Ten Commandments were broken, the daily whole sacrificial offering in the Temple ceased, the walls of Jerusalem were breached, the Syrian general Apostumus burnt the scrolls of the law, and an idol was set up in the sanctuary. On the 9th of Av it was decreed that our forefathers should not enter the land of Israel (Numbers 14:19), both the First and Second Temple were destroyed, Bethar was captured (ending the Bar Kochba rebellion against the Romans), and the city of Jerusalem was plowed up. And the Midrash adds many more tragic events that were imputed to have occurred on the 9th of Av.

Tisha B'Av is the only fast day that is observed in the same manner as is Yom Kippur, i.e., from sunset to sunset. (All other Jewish fast days begin in the morning.) In his weekly sermon on the Internet, Rabbi Ismar Schorsch provided an interesting insight into this coupling: Yom Kippur is a personal fast day, where one introspects upon one's own activities and what has befallen himself or herself, whereas Tisha B'Av is a communal fast day, where one introspects upon the Jewish community's activities and what has befallen it. It is thus fitting to treat these two fast days alike in their mode of observance.

THE DAY THAT TRULY LIVED ON IN INFAMY

In last month's Bulletin I quoted from the Mishnah Taanit 4:6 delineating the list of calamities that befell the Jews on Tisha B' Av. In his Dvar Torah Jerry Kantor concentrated on the first of these calamities, the episode in which the spies came back from Canaan and issued a negative report about the land to which the Israelites were being led. But from where did the tradition that this occurred on Tisha B'Av ensue?

Well, the march from Sinai to Transjordan is marked in Numbers 10:11 as beginning on the 20th day of the second month, i.e., 20 Iyar. In Numbers 10:33 it is announced that three days had elapsed, thus taking us to 23 Iyar. In Numbers 11:20 we are told that the Israelites will be sitting put for a whole month, while they receive enough meat that it comes out of their nostrils and is loathsome to them. Next, they set out from Kibroth-Hataavah to Hazeroth (Numbers 11:35), and upon their arrival Miriam and Aaron spoke out against Moses, resulting in Miriam being smitten with leprosy for seven days, and the Israelites did not march for seven days (Numbers 12:15). The Rabbis interpret this span of events as taking us to 29 Sivan (23 Iyar +1 month = 22 Sivan; 22 Sivan + 7 days = 29 Sivan, is how the math is done in Taanit 29a.).

At this point (Numbers 13) the spies are sent to Canaan, and returned at the end of forty days (Numbers 13:25). How does this get us to 9 Av? Sivan has 30 days, so we count 29 and 30 Sivan as two days; Tammuz has 29 days, but the Rabbis claim that in that year it had 30 days, and so the 40 days ended on 8 Av. We see in Numbers 14:1 that "the whole community broke into loud cries, and the people wept that night." What night was that? The night of 8 Av, i.e., the eve of Tisha B'Av.

The Talmud (in both Taanit 29a and Sotah 35a) cites a comment by Rabbah (290-320 CE) in the name of Rabbi Yochanan (250-290 CE), namely that God heard these cries and said, "You have wept without cause, therefore I will set this day aside for a weeping through the generations to come." But this tradition is much older. Rabbis who preceded the redaction of the Mishnah (which occurred in 200 CE) had engaged in three major translation projects. The most famous of these were the translation of the Chumash into Greek by Aquilas, a Greek proselyte, under the guidance of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua (100-130 CE) (Megillah 3a) and into Aramaic by Onkelos, a Roman proselyte (perhaps also under the guidance of Rabbis Eliezer and Yehoshua (see Jerusalem Talmud Megillah 1:11)). But prior to that Yonathan ben Uziel, who lived during the century preceding the destruction in 70 CE of the second Temple, published Targum Yonathan, an Aramaic paraphrase of both the Chumash and the Prophets. Since this was a paraphrase, not merely a translation, Yonathan took liberties to interpolate other material into the text, and one of the items that he interpolated into his Aramaic version of Numbers 14:1 was a paraphrase of this reaction of God to the weeping of the Israelites.

It intrigued me that Rashi, clearly knowledgeable about this lore, did not mention it at all in his comments on Numbers 14: 1. Rashi does cite this quote, but in a different context. Psalm 106 contains a summary of the sojourns of the Israelites, and when it reaches the episode of the spies it says (Psalms 106:25:27) "And they murmured in their tents, they hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord. Therefore He swore concerning them that He would overthrow them in the wilderness. And that He would cast out their seed among the nations and scatter them in the lands." As this is a foreshadowing of the Diaspora which ensued after the destruction of the second Temple (see also Ezekiel 22:23), it is here that Rashi sees fit to mention God's pronouncement about the 9th day of Av.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ADAM

The phrase היום הרת עולם, "today the world was created," that appears a number of times in the Rosh Hashanah liturgy leads one to the false impression that Rosh Hashanah marks the first day of creation. Our midrash says otherwise -- Rosh Hashanah marks the day of Adam's birth. Moreover, it recounts that the entire story of Adam in Eden took place in a span of twelve hours. Here's the hour-by-hour countdown, as taken from the midrash:

1. God conceived the idea of creating man
2. God consults with the angels
3. God gathers the dust for the body of man
4. God forms Adam
5. God clothes him with skin
6. Adam's soulless shape was complete so that he could stand up
7. God breathes a soul into Adam
8. Adam was led into Eden
9. Adam was commanded not to eat of the fruit of the tree
10. Adam transgressed and ate the fruit
11. Adam was judged
12. Adam was cast out of Eden in atonement for his sin.

At this point God spoke to Adam, "Thou shalt be the prototype of thy children. As thou hast been judged by Me on this day and absolved, so thy children Israel shall be judged by Me on this New Year's Day, and they shall be absolved. "

If the first day of Tishrei marks the birth of Adam, then the birth of the world is on the 25th day of Elul. But the 25th day of Elul does not always fall on a Sunday, yet it is a Sunday that marks the anniversary of the first day of creation. In recognition of this, the custom arose of having the first Selichot service occur on a Sunday (which explains why some wait until midnight of the Saturday night of the first Selichot service to begin the service, even though "Sunday" technically begins after Havdalah).

The minimum number of days before Rosh Hashanah for saying Selichot prayers, prayers of penitence, is four. This is based on the halachic ruling that animals to be offered as sacrifices on Rosh Hashanah had to pass a four-day examination period for blemishes and so man, too, must go through a period of four days in which he eliminates his character flaws so as to be prepared for Rosh Hashanah. Consequently this year, since Rosh Hashanah occurs on Monday, September 21, the first Selichot prayers were held after Shabbat on September 12 and not on September 19. Given this and other restrictions about what days of the week are appropriate for the High Holy Days, the 25th of Elul (this year falling on September 16) is always part of the Selichot period.

Despite its penitential antecedents and overtones, Rosh Hashanah should be viewed as a day of rejoicing. The spirit of Rosh Hashanah is well summarized by a comment by Rabbi Hanina and Rabbi Joshua in the Jerusalem Rosh Hashanah 1:3, "What other nation is like unto this one people who knows the ways of its God! Other people facing a day in court will put on black garments, and shroud themselves in black and allow their beards and fingernails to go untrimmed because they do not know what the outcome of the trial will be. But Israel is not so; we don white garments, trim our beards and cut our nails, and on Rosh Hashanah we eat and drink to our heart's content, because we know that the Holy One, blessed be He, will perform a miracle for the Jewish people."

PIYYUTIM: HIGH HOLY DAY LITURGICAL POETRY

The synagogue liturgy consists not only of the standard prayers prescribed by the Talmud and the traditional codes of law but also of poetic pieces inserted at various points of the service. These pieces are called *piyyutim*; each individual piece is called a *piyyut* (פִּיּוּט), a Hebrew word derived from the same Greek root ποιητής from which "poet" and "poem" are derived. Some of these poems, such as *Yigdal*, *L'cha Dodi*, and *An'im Zemirot*, are familiar old standards, because of their use in the weekday or Sabbath liturgy. Some, such as *Brach Dodi* (a Passover *piyyut*) and the various *yotzrot* for the various special Shabbatot (e.g., Shabbat Shekalim), are less familiar, because in recent years they have been eliminated from the standard liturgy (and even deleted from recent editions of the Siddur and Machzor). Fortunately, this is not the case for the *piyyutim* composed for the High Holy Day services.

What is the origin of these *piyyutim*? A twelfth century account by Rabbi Yehuda ben Barzilai of Barcelona was that "(a)ccording to information left by competent authorities" the *piyyutim*, which it is customary to insert into the prayer service" were ordained only for times of persecution. Since Jews were forbidden to study the Torah, "the Sages instituted prayers of thanksgiving" hymns, *piyyutim*, and so forth, to be recited at certain points in the service, which would present to the unlearned, within the framework of the *Tefillah*, the precepts which they should know pertaining to the festival, and specific information concerning the appropriate Mitzvot." Some scholars associate this prohibition with the ban on Hebrew imposed in 553 CE by the Byzantine emperor Justinian. Others associate this with the 450-589 CE persecution of the Jews by the Persians, especially given another twelfth century report of Samuel ben Yahya: "The Persians forbade them the practice of circumcision and likewise prayer...they composed new prayers into which they inserted passages of the customary prayer. They called those new prayers *al-hizana* ... and when the obligatory prayer was permitted to them again the *hizana* had become for the Jews a meritorious exercise on festivals and holy days." And to this day *piyyutim* are referred to as *hizana* in the Arabic-speaking world-

Much of the recent elimination of the *piyyutim* is the result of an attempt to streamline the service. But there were many earlier proponents of their elimination, including the Shulchan Aruch, the code compiled by Rabbi Joseph Caro in 1565, and Maimonides (1135-1204). The criticism took many forms: *piyyutim* were claimed to be a disruption of the proper continuity and coherence of the service; *piyyutim* contained changes in the wording of prayers that had been set down in the Talmud; the profusion of attributes of God in the *piyyutim* were claimed to be a forbidden form of adulation; the appeals to angels and other intermediaries in the *piyyutim* were deemed improper, many of the *piyyutim* cited points of view that were contrary to those in the Talmud; the language of the *piyyutim* was unintelligible; the Aggadic quotations contained in the *piyyutim* were obscene; the *piyyutim* contained grammatical errors; the *piyyutim* contained imitations of non-Jewish forms of rhyme and meter, arbitrary word formations and admixtures of foreignisms. Ibn Ezra (1089-1164) said that *piyyutim* gave rise to "situations which are detrimental to reverence and to the dignity of the Divine service." Wow!!

Nonetheless, due to their popular appeal the *piyyutim* took hold, halachic specifications for "proper" *piyyutim* were laid down (even as early as the ninth century) to mollify the antagonists, and the result was the generation of such an immense number of *piyyutim* that a mere bibliographical listing of them in Israel Davidson's 1970 Thesaurus of Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry takes up 2,060 pages.

Perhaps during the Yom Kippur service you might pay special attention to the second *piyyut* in the repetition of the *Shacharit Amidah*, beginning with the words אֲנֹשׁ מִזֶּה יִזְכֶּה, as it typifies the structure of the *piyyutim*. First of all, it consists of 22 verses, with the first letters of the verses comprising the Hebrew alphabet. (Such a *piyyut* is referred to as an acrostic.) Secondly, it uses a number of puns in its various sentences, the best being verse 7 where the three words יִצֵר (creature), יִצַר (impulse), and יִצְרָא (Creator) are interwoven. Third, note the placement of this somber *piyyut*, at the point in the Amidah dealing with the resurrection, thereby giving the reader of this *piyyut* a ray of hope, further underscored by the sentence that both precedes and follows the *piyyut*. Finally, though some Machzorim attribute this *piyyut* to the tenth century Roman *payyeta*n (composer of *piyuttim*) Meshulam ben Kalonymos, modern scholars believe that it antedates him, and may even antedate Eleazar Kallir (of the fifth or sixth century). So in studying this *piyyut* you will be scrutinizing one of the more ancient of this genre of our liturgy.

THE FOUR SPECIES

One of the high points of the Succot service is the ceremonies associated with the so-called "four species," namely the *etrog* or citron, and branches of palm, myrtle, and willow trees bound together. We bless them and use them in the Hallel service and in the special Hoshanah parade performed daily during Succot. But what's the basis for the selection and use of the "four species"?

Leviticus 23:40 says: וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרֵי עֵץ הַדָּר עֵץ הַדֶּרֶךְ כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים וְעֵנָף עֵץ עֵבֶת וְעֵרְבֵי נָחַל which is translated by Professor Baruch Levine, author of the Jewish Publication Society Commentary on Leviticus, as "On the first day you shall take the product of *hadar* trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook." (He purposely translates פְּרֵי not as "fruit" but as "product.") The "leafy trees" are undefined, and even the word *hadar*, meaning "beautiful," is undefined. This is literally not quite the "four species" as they are known today. Indeed, some scholars even repunctuate the sentence to read "On the first day you shall take the product of *hadar* trees: branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook," that is, there are three *hadar* trees, the palm, the willow, and some (unspecified) leafy tree. The verse goes on to tell us what to do with them, namely "and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days." But there is no explanation of how one uses these items to "rejoice."

The celebration of Succot, circa 335 BCE, is also described in Nehemiah 8, and there (verse 15) Nehemiah says that one should gather עֵצֵי זֵית וְעֵצֵי שִׁמּוֹן וְעֵצֵי הָדָס וְעֵצֵי תְּמָרִים וְעֵצֵי עֵבֶת, "olive branches, and branches of wild olive, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees" (Jewish Publication Society translation). And what should one do with these items? There is no mention of "rejoicing;" the verse merely concludes that these are to be used "to make booths."

There is no explicit mention of the *etrog* in either source. The word *etrog* is itself of Persian origin, and makes its appearance in the Aramaic translation of Leviticus 23:43 by Onkelos (in 81 CE), namely:

פִּירֵי אֵילָנָא אֶתְרוּגִין וְלִילָבִין וְהַדְסִין וְעֵרְבִין דְנָחַל Here "product of *hadar* trees" is translated as "fruit of an *etrog* tree," "branches of palm trees" is translated as "*lulavin*," "boughs of leafy trees" is translated as "*hadasin*" or myrtle boughs, and "willows of the brook" remains unchanged. So we can at least date the "four species" that we use today back to Tannaitic times.

But why were these particular four species selected for the *lulav* ritual? There are many fanciful imputations of reasons for their selection, both in the Talmud and in later Midrashic works. One such associates the palm with the spine, the myrtle with the eye, the willow with the mouth, and the *etrog* with the heart, and argues that the four together symbolize the complete person.

For me, though, such associations are not compelling. In sections 108-110 of his great anthropological compendium, The Golden Bough, Sir James Frazer points out a fascinating parallel between the *lulav* celebration and similar celebrations in other cultures, in particular the Greek *eiresione*, the Roman use of the pine log, and the Hittite *eyan* (or sacred pole). The lesson I learn from this source is that the *lulav* ceremony was the Jewish ritual way of fulfilling man's universal need to celebrate the *Chag Haasif*, the Festival of the Ingathering. Whether the ritual was immutably commanded and carried out by our people from the time of Moses or evolved into the ritual as it performed today, this is one of the folkways of our people, to be celebrated as our fathers did before us.

THE RODNEY DANGERFIELD OF JEWISH MONTHS

Though the month of Kislev is knocking on our door, with its *Rosh Chodesh* being celebrated on November 19-20, I'd like to focus our attention onto the month that is departing, poor little *Cheshvan*, which I've dubbed the Rodney Dangerfield of Jewish months. Why so? Because it, too, gets no respect. *Cheshvan* is unlike every other month; no significant event, neither holiday nor fast day, is remembered in that month. In her book, *Celebrate*, Lesli Koppelman Ross says, "*Kheshvan* is often called *Markheshvan* (*Mar* meaning bitter or mister, because it is a month that contains no special occasions - therefore bitter - and because in compensation the rabbis wanted to give it an air of importance: *Mr. Kheshvan*)."

This latter is a nice tale, but in fact *Cheshvan* never appears in the Talmud, yet *Marcheshvan* appears three times in the Babylonian Talmud (as determined by searching my Judaic Classics Library CD). The two word usage, *Mar Cheshvan*, doesn't appear until the time of the *Shulchan Aruch* (around 1560 CE). The *Mar* seems to have been dropped from *Marcheshvan* much later, e.g., in *Ba'er Heitev* (written around 1723 CE).

Where did the names of the Hebrew months as we use them today come from? They certainly don't sound like Hebrew names. *Cheshvan* is the eighth month of the year (if one begins counting from *Nissan*), and we know from *I Kings* 6:38 that this month was in ancient times known by the name *Bul* ("flooding"). *I Kings* 6:1 tells us that the second month, now called *Iyar*, was known as *Ziv* ("brightness"), *I Kings* 8:2 tells us that the seventh month, now called *Tishrei*, was called *Ethanim* ("steadily flowing wadis"), and *Exodus* 12:2 (among other sources) tells us that the first month, now called *Nissan*, was called *Aviv* ("green ear of grain" or "when the ears of barley ripen"). And an inscription found in an archaeological dig in Arad refers to a month called *Tsach* ("clear"). Now these names sound like Hebrew names! Unfortunately, this is all the record we have of the ancient Hebrew names for the months.

Actually, these ancient Hebrew names of months, as they have been preserved for us, are Canaanite in origin. But the names we use today have an even more ancient vintage. A seven line inscription in limestone found in the archaeological excavations in Gezer in 1908, called the Gezer calendar, lists the months as we know them today and has been dated as being from the 10th century BCE. These names also appear on a calendar found in Nippur (in Mesopotamia) which we know antedates Hammurabi (a contemporary of Abraham). And yes, *Marcheshvan* is on the list. These Babylonian names for the months were brought back to Israel when the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile toward the end of the sixth century BCE. Early scriptural references to these Babylonian names of months are found in *Zechariah* 1:7 and 7:1 (circa 520 BCE). And the Jerusalem Talmud *Rosh Hashanah* 6:1 announces that "the names of the months came up in their hands from Babylonia" (שמת חדשים עלו בידם מבבל).

This bit of historiography sets straight that myth about poor little *Cheshvan* - that it had the adjective *Mar* added to its name out of pity. Indeed the month started out as *Bul*, then became known as *Marcheshvan*, which got changed typographically to *Mar Cheshvan*, then the *Mar* got dropped for convenience, and finally folklore added the *Mar* back as an adjective. Those of you who are "yom tov-ed out" by the string of holidays and Shabbatot in *Tishrei* (as well as *Tsom Gedaliah*) -- aren't you glad that *Cheshvan* is "Mar"?

HOW MANY MACCABEES ARE THERE?

The canon of the *Tanach* was closed during the second century CE, well after the events associated with Chanukah occurred. Yet none of the accounts associated with Chanukah made it into the canon. Two of them, called *The First Book of the Maccabees* and *The Second Book of the Maccabees* (sometimes *1 Maccabees* and *2 Maccabees*) are included in a collection of works which didn't make it into the canon called the **Apocrypha**, a Greek word literally meaning "hidden". A readable version of this work is *The Apocrypha: An American Translation* by Edgar Goodspeed, published in paperback by Vintage Books. There are yet two more books with the title *Maccabees*, unoriginally dubbed *3 Maccabees* and *4 Maccabees*, that did not even make it to the Apocrypha, but instead made it to the next level of religious text collections, the **Pseudepigrapha**, a Greek word denoting writings "with false superscription," i.e., falsely attributed to figures in the Bible. There is nothing spurious about the documents, only about their purported authorship. The complete Pseudepigrapha can be found in a two volume work edited by James H. Charlesworth published by Doubleday in 1983 entitled *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*.

1 Maccabees was written in Hebrew, covers the years 167-134 BCE, and is an eyewitness account of the war of the Maccabees against the Syrians. *2 Maccabees*, also written in Hebrew, purports to be an abridgment of a five volume work in Greek by Jason of Cyrene, covering the years 175-160 BCE. *3 Maccabees* was written in Greek, possibly as early as 217 BCE, takes place in Egypt, and depicts a Jewish revolt against Ptolemy because of acts similar to those which (later) were promulgated by Antiochus on the Jews of Israel. *4 Maccabees* was written in Greek sometime between 63 BCE and 120 CE, covers in greater detail the martyrdoms depicted in *2 Maccabees*, and was designed to provide a moral lesson (perhaps even a sermon) to the Jewish people based on the story of these martyrs.

One set of martyrs described in both *2 Maccabees* and *4 Maccabees* is a mother (unnamed in both texts) and her seven sons. Each of the sons was asked to eat unclean food or die by torture, each chose the latter and died, and "last of all, the mother met her end, after her sons" (*2 Maccabees* 7:41), while "some of the guards declared that when she, too, was about to be seized and put to death, she threw itself into the fire so that no one would touch her body" (*4 Maccabees* 17:1).

In both these versions the persecutor is Antiochus Epiphanes. In the Talmud, on the other hand, the martyrdom of "the woman and her seven sons" is attributed to the much later Roman (Hadrianic) persecution (see *Gittin* 57b). And in all these sources the woman is unnamed. *Lamentations Rabbah* 1:50 relates a tale of Miriam bat Nachtum and her seven sons who were forced by a Roman "caesar" (קיסר) to either bow down to an idol or die, and each son died with a different Biblical quote on his lips relating to the injunction not to worship idols. Here is another instance of the Rabbis of the Talmud transforming a story of Hasmonean times into a more contemporary tale.

So why do we call this the story of Hannah and her seven sons? The name Hannah did not get attached to the story until a 15th century Spanish reviser of *Sefer Jossipon* (a Hebrew history of Israel up to the fall of Masada, itself written in 953 CE) associated the unnamed woman of the Maccabees story with Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel, undoubtedly based on Hannah's prayer (*1 Samuel* 2:5): "The barren woman bears sevenfold, but the mother of many is desolate." From that point on the tragic heroine of the story had a name, and became the subject of a number of operas, oratorios, and paintings, both in the Christian and Jewish worlds. And here's a tip for those who want to read the full story without plunging into any of the four Maccabees books- try Howard Fast's *My Glorious Brothers*.

AND WHAT ABOUT TWEETY?

A few years ago the Israeli rabbinate threatened to take away the Kashrut certification from one of Jerusalem's large hotels because that hotel advertised that it was going to use its dining room on the evening of December 31 for a New Year's Eve party. What was their problem? Well, you see, Israel's New Year's Eve is Erev Rosh Hashanah, and so, to avoid confusion, Israelis refer to the secular calendar's New Year's Eve as "Sylvester." (For example, in its recent coverage of all the New Year's Eve parties, the gossip column in Maariv, a leading Israeli newspaper, referred to the parties as Sylvester celebrations.) And who is this Sylvester? None other than a Catholic priest who was Pope from 314 to 335. So the rabbis were upset because in their mind this hotel was using a kosher facility to cater a party celebrating a holiday named after a Catholic Pope---surely grounds for them to take action!

How did New Year's Eve get tagged with the name "Sylvester"?" Sometime after his death Sylvester was awarded sainthood. We in Chicago all know that March 17 is Saint Patrick's Day. Some of us even know February 14 as Saint Valentine's Day. Well, the Catholic calendar has assigned almost every day of the year as a day commemorating a different saint. (There's still an opening on November 19!) And December 31 is Saint Sylvester Day. Perhaps somewhere in Europe New Year's Eve parties were referred to as Saint Sylvester parties, or Sylvester parties, for short, and that appellation was brought to Israel by European emigres and it became part of Israeli parlance.

Just as our Hebrew Day Schools do not allow the sending of valentines on February 14 (and some rabbis have sermonized against this practice occurring in the public schools) because of the "religious" connotation of the exchange of cards, so too have the Israeli rabbinate come out against New Year's Eve parties because of the "religious" connotation of these parties. What's next? I'm sure some rabbi will declare the drinking of green beer as forbidden on March 17.

HOW HIGH THE *MECHITZAH*?

The prophet Zechariah (520 BCE) envisioned a siege of Jerusalem, during which the enemies of Jerusalem will panic and Israel would triumph, after which there would be a mourning over the Jews who fell in defence of their city. In verses 12: 12-13 he says, "And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart. The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of the Shimeites apart, and their wives apart. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." It is this set of verses that led the rabbinic authority Rabbi Moshe Feinstein to infer in his responsum of 1957 that the institution of the *mechitzah*, the separation of men and women in the prayer service, was of Biblical origin, not merely because of its mention in this passage but because the phrasing in this passage was indicative of such a separation being a pre-existing fact.

The Talmud (Sukkah 51a) speaks of a balcony erected in the women's court of the Temple for the eve of the second day of the Succot festival so that the women would be in the upper level and the men in the lower level as they watched the "festivity of drawing water" (to be described in a future bulletin). The Mishnah Middot 2:5 elucidates this further, explaining that this was so "that they should not mingle together" (כדי שלא יהו מערביין) which is interpreted to mean "and this would bring them to levity (קלות ראש)." Since there is no explicit mention of the separation of men and women in the Torah, some authorities take these references to convey on the *mechitzah* Rabbinic, though not Biblical, authority.

In the post-World War II period the Traditional movement originated in the Chicago Orthodox community. Congregations belonging to this movement had as its rabbis men who had Orthodox ordination, and the main feature differentiating Traditional from Orthodox congregations was the elimination of the *mechitzah* from these congregations. How could these rabbis make should a radical move and still be considered Orthodox? They relied on an opinion rendered by Rabbi David Regensberg of the Hebrew Theological College, in which he analyzed the origin of the *mechitzah* and concluded that it was something with neither Biblical nor Rabbinic authority, but merely a *minhag*, a custom. And so the Traditional rabbis, by community demand, abrogated the custom of the *mechitzah*. (Much later Rabbi Regensberg, in a turnaround, wrote that a custom has the same status as a law, and further that the *mechitzah* is a *seyag*, a measure which prevents other acts which are in violation of Jewish law, and cited Maimonides as saying that a *seyag* could not be abolished by even a more authoritative court.)

So, whether the *mechitzah* is a *minhag* or a *seyag*, Biblical or Rabbinic in origin, it is one of the elements of Lake Shore Drive Synagogue. But what should its height be? Back in 1970 Rabbi Shlomo Riskin was offered the pulpit in the Lincoln Square Synagogue in New York, a formerly Conservative synagogue with no *mechitzah*. He took the job with the understanding that a *mechitzah* would be instituted, consulted Rabbi Joseph Soloveichik of Yeshiva University on the proper height of the *mechitzah*, and was told that the minimum height was 40 inches. But in 1964 Rabbi Joseph Soloveichik advised Rabbi David Lehrfield of Kneseth Israel of Miami Beach that the minimum height was 48 inches. And in 1979 he advised Rabbi Milton Polin that the appropriate height was 55 inches. In no case did Rabbi Soloveichik render a written opinion, or disclose the basis for these various rulings.

In 1968 Rabbi Moshe Feinstein issued a written ruling, complete with his basis for this ruling, that the *mechitzah* should be above shoulder level, at least 16 2/3 *tefachim* high, which Rabbi Feinstein converted (using a lenient conversion factor) to a minimum height of 60 inches. It is this ruling that appears to be the accepted standard in the Orthodox community. Though not formally part of the Traditional movement, our synagogue calls itself a Traditional synagogue, and as such need not be bound to Rabbi Feinstein's ruling. Yet the Lake Shore Drive

Synagogue ritual committee and its Board of Directors elected to alter the height of our *mechitzah* to conform with this ruling. This was not meant to mark a first step in a "march to the right." We all sincerely hope that the added height of the *mechitzah* will in no way affect the ambiance and respect for individual style of religious observance that has been the hallmark of our congregation

PASSOVER: ONE HOLIDAY OR TWO?

We are about to celebrate a single eight day holiday that is called Pesach (Exodus 12:11, Leviticus 23:5, Numbers 9:6 and 28: 11, Deuteronomy 16: 1), a name referring to the activity of the *korban pesach*, the Paschal lamb sacrifice, and *Chag HaMatzot*, (Exodus 23:15, Leviticus 23:6), the Holiday of the Matzot, a name referring to the eating of the matzah. But are we celebrating one holiday or two?

This is an especially vexing question if one looks carefully at Leviticus 23, where one sees that the 14th of Nissan is referred to as Pesach and that *Chag HaMatzot* begins on the 15th of Nissan. And Exodus 12 breaks up naturally into two sections, verses 1-14 which refer to the *korban pesach* and verses 15-20 which refer to the *Chag HaMatzot*.

Moreover, *Pesach* refers to the thanksgiving celebration for the deliverance from the tenth plague, the slaughter of the first borns. *Chag HaMatzot* refers to the celebration for the exodus from Egypt. So it is fair to ask, "Were there really two separate holidays, designed for two separate celebrations on separate dates, that got coalesced into one?"

This puzzle gets even more convoluted. The first mention of *Chag HaMatzot* is in Exodus 12:15, at a chronological point in the Torah preceding the time that the Israelites left Egypt. After all, the event upon which *Chag HaMatzot* is based, namely the fleeing of the Israelites from Egypt when they didn't have enough time to bake leavened bread, doesn't occur until Exodus 12:39. Scholars (foremost among them being Ibn Ezra) believe that the holiday called *Chag HaMatzot* was instituted after the exodus from Egypt, and that its reference early in Exodus 12, as well as the laws of Pesach in Exodus 12:43-50, are misplaced.

But even if one mentally rearranges the Torah one is still left with the question of whether there are one or two holidays. The key sentence is the bridge sentence, Exodus 12:15, "Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; howbeit the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses..." The Rabbis have interpreted "the first day" as referencing the 14th of Nissan, and not the 15th, and so have ruled that there is only one holiday with dual names and dual commemorations.

Rabbi Menachem Leibtag of the Tanach Study Center in Efrat justifies this ruling by pointing out a thematic connection between the *korban pesach* and the *matzot*. He does so by finding a use of the word *chametz* in the Torah in a nonPassover context and applying its usage to the Passover context. The injunctions of Exodus 23:18 and 34:25 ("Thou shalt not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread [*chametz*"]") indicate that in order to offer a sacrifice one has to be spiritually pure (i.e., the antithesis of *chametz*). Thus the eating of the matzo on Passover is a way of cleansing oneself to prepare for the bringing of the Paschal sacrifice. The two celebrations are seen as a unit, and should be celebrated as one.

With this as background one can interpret the two things one is instructed to tell one's children, "Because of that which the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt" (Exodus 13:8) and "We were Pharaoh's bondsmen in the land of Egypt and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand...And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes..." (Deuteronomy 6:21-24) as not merely a command to remember the deliverance from Egypt but also the purpose of this deliverance, the service of the Lord, as exemplified by the *korban pesach*.

FOUR MODERN DAYS OF NOTE

On the fifth day of Iyar 5708 (1948) David Ben-Gurion read from the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel of "the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz Israel, to be known as the State of Israel." One year later the Knesset (parliament of Israel) established 5 Iyar as a national holiday, to be known as *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, Independence Day.

There was some ambivalence as to how to celebrate this day, in that some wanted to use the day as a memorial for those who died in the process of the establishment of the State of Israel. That such a memorial was necessary was never argued. The issue was one of how to both conduct such a memorial and celebrate Independence Day. The Israelis decided not to emulate the Americans, who have a separation between Memorial Day and Independence Day. Rather, they declared 4 Iyar as a national day of mourning, *Yom Hazikaron*, Martyr and Heroes' Memorial Day.

On April 12, 1951 the Knesset established 27 Nissan as a national day of remembrance of the Holocaust, to be known as *Yom Hashoah*, Day of Devastation. The Rabbis were troubled by this date, as it introduced a sadness into the festive month of Nissan, but compromised by dubbing the day *Yom Hashoah u'Mered Hagetaot*, (Day of Devastation and Ghetto Revolt Remembrance Day). Today 27 Nissan has been given a slightly more general (and still slightly upbeat) spin by being renamed *Yom Hashoah v'Hagevurah* (Day of Devastation and Heroism).

A few years after Jerusalem was recaptured in the Six-Day War the Israelis established that, to commemorate that historic day, 28 Iyar be declared *Yom Yerushalayim*, Day of Jerusalem.

For those living in Israel these special days are part of the rhythm of life, blending in with the religious holidays established of old. On *Yom Hashoah* all theatres are closed, and at 11:00 AM a siren blast resounds throughout the land, the radio and TV go silent, traffic halts, drivers leave their cars, and all of Israel stands in silence for two minutes. On *Yom Hazikaron* the whole country goes into mourning. Flags are flown at half mast, memorial candles are lit, *Yizkor* is conducted in the synagogues, special Psalms are recited, and, as on *Yom Hashoah*, a siren signals for all of Israel to stand silent for two minutes. At nightfall a siren declares the beginning of *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, and the country transforms from sadness to joy. The speaker of the Knesset lights a torch at the grave of Theodor Herzl, twelve other torches are lit to symbolize the twelve tribes, and a gun salute with salvos equal to the number of years of Israel's independence mark the beginning of the celebration. And the bustle of Israelis in Jerusalem on *Yom Yerushalayim*, especially those hiking across the walls of the old City, is a sight to behold.

Unlike the religious holidays that are (more or less) uniformly observed by Jews throughout the world, these special days have not taken on the same significance to Jews in the United States as they do in Israel. We obviously do not have the 11:00 AM sirens to punctuate the sad days, nor do we have the ability to celebrate *Yom Yerushalayim* on-site or experience the joy of *Yom Ha'atzmaut* as it is done in Israel. As these are not religious holidays, it is not the mandate of the synagogue *qua* house of worship to initiate, develop, and establish observances for these special days. It is the mandate of the Jewish communal establishment to do so. However, if a synagogue sees itself as more than merely a provider of a place for people to come and worship, but rather as a place that seeks to create a sense of community for Jews in a broad variety of ways, then it should begin to take a leadership role in defining how these four special days can take on a greater significance in the life of the Jewish community in the United States.

A MARRIAGE MADE IN HEAVEN

The Shavuot service is punctuated by the reading of special hymns. The most famous of these is the *Akdamut*, (אקדמות) is an Aramaic word meaning "introduction") which precedes the Torah reading of the first day of Shavuot. This poem, written in Aramaic by "Meir, son of Rabbi Yitzhak, " as seen from the first letters of the last 46 verses (regrouped into words מאיר ביד רבי יגדל בתורה ובמעשים טובים אמן וחזק ואמץ) has been dated as an eleventh century work and attributed to Meir Nehorai, the cantor of Worms, Germany. The first 44 verses are paired verses, each pair beginning with a successive letter of the alef-bet.

The poem begins with praise of God as Creator of the world, but underscores that man is incapable of uttering such praise, "Were the sky of parchment made, a quill each reed, each twig and blade, could we with ink the oceans fill, were everyone a scribe of skill, the marvelous story of God's great glory would still remain untold." It moves on to praises of God by groups of angels and other heavenly hosts, The poem then proclaims that the praise of the people of Israel is far more precious to God because of their unique relationship to Him. It concludes with the observation that all of Israel will be able to enjoy the splendor of God's Presence by fulfilling the Ten Commandments. The Hebrew appellation of "Ten Commandments" is *aseret ha'dibrot*, literally translated as "Ten Words." As they are read as part of the Torah service on the first day of Shavuot, *Akdamut* is sometimes referred to by its first two words, *Akdamut Milin*, to connote that it is an "introduction to the words," i.e., to the reading of the Ten Commandments.

On the second day of Shavuot the Haftorah is interrupted after the first verse with a reading of another poem, *Y'tsiv Pitgam* (יצייב פתגם) written in Aramaic by "Jacob ben Meir Levi," as seen from the first letters of the verse (regrouped into words as יעקב ברבי מאיר לוי). The author is assumed to be Rabbenu Tam of Troyes, France, the grandson of Rashi, who was captured by Crusaders on the second day of Shavuot in 1148 (and escaped the next day). This poem begins with an awesome description of the power of God, followed by a plea for protection and blessings for His people

The tradition in the Sephardic synagogues is different. Neither of these poems are part of the service. In their place are a group of poems called *azhar'ot* (אזהרות, literally "warnings," with the numerical value of the word being 613), composed in the 11th century by Sholomo ibn Gabirol of Spain. The poems summarize the 613 commandments, and the portion dealing with the 248 positive commandments are read on the first day and that dealing with the 365 negative commandments are read on the second day, usually during the Musaf service,

Another tradition in the Sephardic service is the replacement of the *akdamut* with a reading of a betrothal document (*tenaim*: תנעים) between Mr. Israel (מר ישראל) with Ms. Tushiah (מרת תושיה). A poetic device used in many of these readings is the anthropomorphism of God. In *Akdamut* we find a reference to God wearing tefillin. In the *tenaim* God is again anthropomorphized, playing the role of the Father of the bride (named Elimelech), with Moses playing the role of the father of the groom. The witnesses are listed as Heaven and Earth, borrowing from Deuteronomy 32:1 (האזינו השמים... ותשמע הארץ). The document states that the Father of the bride gives his daughter as a dowry the 613 commandments, as well as the Rabbinic commandments, garments for Sabbath, clothes for weekdays, a pair of tefillin, and food for a lifetime, while the father of the groom gives his son the written and oral Torah, including the six orders of the Mishnah, and as lesser gifts the Sifrah and Tosefta. The wedding is announced to take place on the sixth day of the third month of Israel's departure from Egypt (the month of Sivan) on Mount Sinai. As you can see, both the Ashkenazic and Sephardic Shavuot services are well enhanced by these colorful additions.

SO WHO IS MS. TUSHIA?

In last month's Bulletin I referred to a Shavuot tradition of the reading of a betrothal document (*tenaim*: תנאים) between Mr. Israel (מר ישראל) with Ms. Tushiah (מרת תושיה). At the Shavuot *mishmar* I read from an Ashkenazic version of such a betrothal document and answered the headlined question. So those who attended the *mishmar* can skip right to Wry Bread, as can those whose curiosity wasn't piqued by my offhand reference to Ms. Tushiah.

We begin with a quote from Isaiah 28:29 תושיה הגדיל תושיה "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts: Wonderful is His counsel and great His wisdom." This last word, *tushiah*, appears also in Proverbs (2:7 יצפן לישרים תושיה "He layeth up sound wisdom," 3:21 נצר תושיה ומזמה "Keep sound wisdom and discretion," and 18:1 בקל תושיה תגלע "And snarleth against all sound wisdom") and Job (5:12 תושיה תעשי ינה ידיהם תשיה "So that their hands can perform nothing substantial" and 30:22 ותמ'גני תשיה "And Thou dissolvest my substance").

The translations I have selected are those of the Soncino Books of the Bible. Notice that in Proverbs *tushiah* is translated as "sound wisdom," whereas in Job *tushiah* is translated as "substantial," derived from the Hebrew word *תושיה*, connoting "existence" or "substance." Scholars have from these two sources concluded that the wisdom to which *tushiah* refers is "practical wisdom," the wisdom required to accomplish what is planned.

Somehow between the time of the Wisdom literature and the time of the Talmud the word *tushiah* became a euphemism for the Torah. In Sanhedrin 26b Rabbi Hanan asks, למה נקרא שמה תושיה, literally, "Why is she called by the name *tushiah*?", where the "she" being referred to is understood to be the Torah. This query arose because at this juncture the Gemara was inquiring into the meaning of the word השתות ("foundations"), and someone noted the resemblance of that word to the word *tushiah* as used in Isaiah.

The Gemara then tries to answer the question of why the Torah is referred to as *tushiah*. One response is that the proper study of Torah weakens (מתשת) one's strength, and that the Hebrew word for "weakens" resembles the word. Another response is that the Torah was given in secrecy (שנתנת בהשאי) on account of Satan, and that is a partial anagram of the Hebrew words for "given in secrecy." A third response is that *tushiah* is a partial anagram of two words, תוהו ("emptiness") and מושתת ("is founded"), i.e., *tushiah* represents nonmaterial words upon which the world is founded.

The Gemara even goes on to interpret Job 5:12, which states in full "He frustrateth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands can perform nothing substantial," as meaning 'thoughts (i.e., worries) succeed in causing one to forget even the words of the Torah.' In this interpretation, too, "substantial" is taken as synonymous with "Torah." But never fear... the Gemara comes to the rescue by parrying this interpretation with a quotation from Proverbs 19:21, "Many are the thoughts in the heart of man, yet the counsel of the Lord shall prevail." This is interpreted to mean that if individuals engage in the study of Torah for its own sake, then worries will not succeed in causing them to forget the Torah.

As we have no continuous written record of word usage between the time of the Tanach and the time of the Talmud, we have nothing more than the Talmudic speculation quoted above to explain how *tushiah*, "practical wisdom," evolved into a synonym for Torah. But this usage stuck, as evidenced by its usage in the Shavuot betrothal document, a document assumed to be accessible to and understandable by all.

ONE MORE SUMMER COW

You're all aware of the proliferation of unusual cows visiting Chicago this summer. But are you aware of the unusual Jewish cow that we read about every summer? I'm referring to the Red Cow (פרה אדומה) that is the opening subject of the Torah portion Chukat (חוקת, Numbers 19:1-21) read on June 26 (as well as on the special Shabbat of Parshat Parah, which occurred this year on March 6).

Pesik'ta de Rab Kahana (4:7) recounts that a heathen questioned Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai about the Red Cow. He said, '(The things you Jews do appear to be a kind of sorcery. A cow is brought, it is burned, it is pounded into ash, and its ash is gathered up. Then, when one of you gets defiled by contact with a corpse two or three drops of the ash mixed with water are sprinkled upon him and he is told 'you are cleansed'.' To him ben Zakkai replied that this is similar to the kind of treatment applied to cure madness, "Roots are brought, the smoke of their burning is made to rise about him, and water is sprinkled upon him until the spirit of madness flees." His disciples, though, felt that Rabbi Yochanan had merely put off the heathen, and provided him an unsatisfactory answer. His reply to the student is the basis for the classic rabbinic explanation of the Red Cow, "The truth is that the purifying power of the Red Cow is a decree of the Holy One." In other words, don't question it; the functionality of the Red Cow is God's decree, period.

The functionality of the Red Cow goes beyond that of purifying the impure who are defiled by a corpse. It also defiles the "pure," i.e., anyone who prepares, handles, and sprinkles the ashes of the Red Cow. When read as a standalone portion, the properties of the Red Cow appear strange, indeed paradoxical. How can something that purifies the defiled simultaneously defile the pure?

The Torah gives us a clue for the resolution of this. Paradox, when it refers to the Red Cow as a "burnt sin offering" (שרפת ההטאת). If we look back to the general discussion of the sin offering in Leviticus (4:6-7, 11-12, 6:23, 10:18) we find a number of parallels with that of the Red Cow. The major parallels are: (1) the blood of the sin offering is the "decontaminant" (see Leviticus 4:5- 7, 17-18, 25, 30-34, 16:14) and (2) the defilement of one who handles the sin offering (see Leviticus 16:28) is identical with that of one who burns the Red Cow (see Numbers 21:8). There are only two major distinctions between the Red Cow and the generic sin offering. One is that the Red Cow is used for a specific contamination, namely that through contact with a corpse (a contamination mentioned in Leviticus 2:1-4, 10, 22:4-7 but for which no decontaminant is provided therein). The other is the specific command that for this purpose is the requirement that the cow be red...

Indeed, was there ever really a red cow? In his 1982 book, Colour Terms the Old Testament, Professor Athalya Brenner opines that the Hebrew word for "red" was used in place of the word for "brown" because there was no Hebrew word for "brown" in the days of the Old Testament. (The Hebrew word for "brown" (חום) is a modern Hebrew word.) The "red" cow, along with its blood, the crimson yarn (שני תולעת) and red cedar wood are burned together to create the ashes used in the purification ritual. Thus, the theory goes, the multiple use of "red" is symbolic of sin, as in Isaiah 1:18 "though your sins be as scarlet." And the search for the "extinct red cow" is chimerical, as such an animal never really existed in the first place.

HOW NOW, BROWN COW

Thanks to all of you who, by your best wishes, calls, and visits cheered me up while I was physically incapacitated in the hospital. Though I adopted a "the show must go on" attitude toward getting out the July Bulletin, I must have been mentally incapacitated as well, for in my piece on the red cow I said "there was no Hebrew word for "brown" in the days of the Old Testament. (The Hebrew word for "brown" (חום) is a modern Hebrew word.)"

I know better than that! As I read the printed Bulletin I remembered that the word חום appears three times in Genesis 30:32-34. Hertz translates this word as "dark colored;" only in today's Hebrew does it explicitly mean "brown." Rashi explains that חום is related to the Aramaic word שחום (which is its translation in Targum Onkelos), and he says this color is similar to אדום ("red") and in Old French it would be translated as רוזו i.e., "rouge." The translation of חום has provoked quite a controversy in Rabbinic literature. Ibn Ezra and Radak translate it as "black," and Ramban takes it to mean "reddish brown, " with the word related to חמה, "sun," which has a reddish cast.

My source for my comment on the "red" cow was Jacob Milgrom's Commentary on Numbers, one of the volumes of the mostly-superb five volume Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary. Milgrom says "Hebrew 'adom, usually rendered "red," probably means "brown" (for which there is no Hebrew word)." I interpreted him to mean that there is no ancient Hebrew word for "brown," and thus, in my mentally addled state, forgot that the modern Hebrew word for "brown" does appear in the Old Testament, though its translation is a subject of dispute.

DOMINUS ILLUMINATIO MEA

From 1 Elul (which, by the way, is the second day of Rosh Chodesh Elul, this year August 13) up through Shmini Atzeret (October 2) we end the Shacharit and Maariv services with an additional prayer, a reading of Psalm 27 (familarly known in Hebrew as *לְדוּד ה' אֱוֹרִי*, "the Lord is my light"). In the weekday Shacharit service the reading of this Psalm is preceded by a blast of the shofar. One would imagine that if a Psalm were to be selected as an additional reading to provide a spiritual awakening prior to the *יָמֵי נוֹרָאִים*, the Days of Awe, it would be truly majestic. A quick reading of this Psalm would then be quite disappointing.

The Psalm opens simply with the word *לְדוּד* "[A Psalm] of David." The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, completed by the First Century CE, appends to this the words "before he was anointed," and so dates the Psalm at the time of the beginning of King Saul's persecution of David. This helps explain the context of the Psalm, for in verse 12 David says, "Deliver me not over unto the will of mine adversaries, for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breath out violence," i.e., David is the victim of a campaign of slander designed to further fan King Saul's jealousy of David (see 1 Samuel 24:10).

The Psalm is not at all penitential, but instead starts out on an upbeat note. Indeed, its opening phrase is the motto of Oxford University, rendered in Latin as *Dominus illuminatio mea*. It continues to refer to the Lord as "my salvation" and "the stronghold of my life." It seeks God's protection, using that so-familiar phrase (verse 4) "(t)hat I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life," quite reminiscent of the more famous phrase from Psalm 23:6, "(a)nd I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." And it even tenders a promissory note, namely (verse 6) "(a)nd I will offer in His tabernacle sacrifices with trumpet sound," (i.e., the sound of the shofar).

Facing the reality of his situation, David uses the next set of verses of the Psalm, verses 7-12, to issue a call for help. The opening verse in this half of the Psalm is what sets the mood for Rosh Hashanah: "Hear, O Lord, when I call with my voice, and be gracious unto me, and answer me." This is followed by "Hide not Thy face from me," "Put not Thy servant away in anger," "Cast me not off, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation," "Teach me Thy way, O Lord and lead me in an even path."

The Psalm ends on a note of calm and patience. Verse 13 read literally is an incomplete sentence, "If I had not believed to look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living," and so some prayer books rectify this by interpolating a parenthetic lead-in to this sentence in their translation. For example, the Authorized Daily Prayer Book of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth of Nations translates this sentence as follows: "(I should despair) unless I believed to see the greatness of the Lord in the land of the living."

Finally verse 14 presents the main message, twice repeating the advice "(w)ait for the Lord," along with a repeat of the message Moses gave to Joshua (Deuteronomy 31:8), "be strong and resolute," (*חֲזֹק וְאִמָּץ*). The appropriate preparation for the Days of Awe is to recognize that, though one seeks God as an ally and helper, one must muster one's own inner strength and courage and not despair because Divine help tarries.

A MATCHED SET

There are two Haftorot during the holiday of Succot that are worth special attention, namely that on the second day of Succot and that of the seventh day, Shmini Atzeret. Both are from Chapter 8 of I Kings, the first encompassing verses 2-21 and the second being verses 54-66. Each is read because there is a connection between the Haftorah and the particular holiday being celebrated. The chapter itself describes King Solomon's dedication of the Temple. In verse 2 it is said that all the people of Israel (liberally interpreting the phrase כָּל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל) assembled themselves at the festival (הַחַג) in the seventh month, known to us now as Tishrei. What is that festival? Succot, which begins on the fifteenth of the month.

The holiday of Succot is defined to last seven days (Leviticus 23:36), of which the first day is a non-work day. The eighth day is designated as another non-work day, named Atzeret ("solemn assembly"). Verse 66 of I Kings 8 begins with the words בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי, "on the eighth day," signifying that it references Shmini Atzeret, and so verses 54-66 are read on that day. Hertz comments that Solomon's culminating blessing, verses 56-61 "makes an appropriate prayer with which to take leave of the holy days of this season." This is more so the case today, as the holiday of Succot is delineated differently, with the day before Shmini Atzeret given the special name Hoshanah Rabbah. That day was dubbed in the Middle Ages as Yom Kippur Katan (little Yom Kippur), for tradition has it that on this day the annual judgment verdict is said to be delivered. Thus Shmini Atzeret truly is a separate holiday, a day of rejoicing on the heels of the extended days of awe. And it is followed today by an even more joyous holiday, Simchat Torah.

There is one verse of this Haftorah that is quite intriguing. Verse 65 says that the festival lasted "seven days and seven days, even fourteen days." The Sukkot holiday encompassed seven days, from the fifteenth to the twenty-first of Tishrei. The other seven days referenced were therefore from the eighth to the fourteenth, thus encompassing Yom Kippur (which falls on the tenth of Tishrei). So during that period the penitential fast of Yom Kippur was abandoned. The Talmud (Moed Katan 9a) says on this that "a heavenly voice announced that you are all invited to life in the world to come" (כֹּלְכֶם מְזוּמָנִין לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא). Not only were they all are forgiven for their festivities on Yom Kippur, but the Israelites "went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had shown unto David His servant and to Israel His people.". As we read these Haftorot let us hope that we too leave our Succot services with the same blessed feeling.

ASHKENAZ AND SEPHARAD: A NOTE ON THEIR ORIGINS

This month Paula and I, along with Toby and Jerry Mann and a hardy band of 40, participated in a ten day Jewish Historical Seminars study tour, primarily of the Alsace region of Franco-Germany, led by Professor Yom Tov Assis of Hebrew University. This tour, entitled The Rise of Ashkenazi Jewry, acquainted us with the origin of this mode of Jewish observance, as it evolved from the tenth century in this region. There are a number of theories of why this divergence from the prevailing Sephardic linguistic pattern and religious practice originated. For after all, the earliest of these Jewish immigrants to this region came from Italy, where, as in the rest of the Jewish world, the Sephardic pronunciation and ritual prevailed.

One of these theories, not widely accepted by scholars, is that the Ashkenazic/Sephardic split has its origin in the split of the people of Israel into two kingdoms upon the death of King Solomon, one called Judah (centered around Jerusalem), consisting of the tribe of Judah and the Levites who lived within the borders of that tribes territory and the other called Israel, consisting of the other ten tribes. It was unclear to me from the lectures by Professor Assis as to how one could make the connection between the Israel/Judah split in 797 BCE and the Ashkenazic/Sephardic split which occurred in the tenth century of the Common Era. This is especially puzzling since the ten tribes were exiled from the land of Israel, with Tiglath Pileser, the then king of Assyria, exiling the transJordan tribes (Gad, Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasse) in 744 BCE, and Shalmanassar, the next king of Assyria, exiling the tribes Zevulun and Naftali in 723 BCE, and the remaining 5 1/2 tribes in 722 BCE. These so-called Ten Lost Tribes of Israel were never to be heard from again as an identifiable community. So how could scholars link the emergence of the Ashkenazic pronunciation, let alone their ritual variations, back to these lost tribes?

I haven't had time to do a study of the literature underlying this theory, but can report on one bit of research I did upon my return. There is a curious passage in Obadiah, namely verse 20. (I don't have to cite chapter here; because Obadiah is the smallest book of the Bible, containing only 21 verses. Scholars date this book as written soon after the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE, though many believe that verses 19-21 were added later. The entire book is read as the Haftorah of Vayishlach, this year on November 27.) The verse reads in literal translation, "And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel that are among the Canaanites even unto Tsarefat, and the captivity of Jerusalem that is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the South."

וְגֵלְתֵי הַחַל הַזֶּה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר כְּנַעֲנִים עַד צָרְפַת וְגֵלְתֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם אֲשֶׁר בְּסַפְרַד יִרְשׁוּ אֶת עָרֵי הַנֶּגֶב

One should note in the verse the use of both the name Tsarefat, which is now the Hebrew name for France, and Sepharad, which is now the Hebrew name for Spain. Note also that it is the tribes of Israel that are prophesized to be exiled all the way to Tsarefat, and that the exile of the tribe of Judah (synonymous with Jerusalem) is prophesized to be Sepharad. So if one takes Obadiah's words as true prophesy and imposes today's meanings onto the two words Tsarefat and Sepharad then one can conclude that indeed the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel were somehow dispersed to France to become the origin of the Ashkenazim.

Unfortunately for these literalists, scholars today identify the Tsarefat referenced in Obadiah with a Phoenician town on the coast of the Mediterranean between Tyre and Sidon. And no one knows exactly where is the location of Sepharad. An inscription of the Assyrian king Sargon mentions a Sepharda in southwest Media, near Babylonia. The identification of Sepharad with Spain originated with Targum Jonathan, an Aramaic translation of the Prophets written by Jonathan ben Uzziel (who lived in the century preceding the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE).

THANKSGIVING, JEWISH STYLE

לך אזבח זבח תודה

"I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving" are words familiar to us, taken from Psalms 116:17, as they appear in the Hallel service which is part of all our festivals (except for Rosh Hashanah) and our celebration of the first day of each month (ראש חודש). Chapter 7 of Leviticus delineates the rules for the thanksgiving sacrifice. The most noteworthy of these (not necessarily explicit in Leviticus but clearly in place in Talmudic times) are: (1) it is not to be brought to the temple on the Sabbath or on any of the festivals (which is why Psalm 100, מזמור לתודה, "a psalm of thanksgiving," read daily in the morning service, is omitted on those days), (2) unlike the treatment of other sacrifices, this sacrifice must be eaten on the day that it is made (akin to the paschal sacrifice, where leftovers are not allowed), and (3) it must be accompanied by matzot with oil mixed in, matzot spread with oil, cakes of choice flour well soaked in oil, and cakes of leavened bread. Though Leviticus tells us that four different kinds of cakes are required, it is only from Mishnah 7.1 of the Talmudic tractate Menachot that we learn that the thanksgiving offering consisted of ten of each variety. In summary, a thanksgiving offering consisted of an animal (ox, sheep, or goat) and forty cakes, all to be eaten in one day.

The use of *chametz* as part of the thanksgiving offering is in sharp contrast to the injunction associated with the *minhah*, or grain offering (Leviticus 2:11), "No *minhah* that you offer to the Lord shall be made with *chametz*." And the evolution of *chametz* as the central part of the thanksgiving offering is evident from Amos 4:5 "And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened" (וקטר מהמין תודה).

In Leviticus 7 the thanksgiving sacrifice is subsumed under a more general category, the sacrifice of *shelamim*. The word *shelamim* (שלמים) has been variously interpreted/translated as "peace offering" (from the Hebrew *shalom*), "complete" (from the Hebrew *shaleim*), and "greeting" (from the Akkadian *shulmanu*, the Ugaritic *shalamuma*, and the Hebrew greeting *shalom*). [Though Hertz and Art Scroll use the "peace offering" translation, the Jewish Publication Society (Orlinsky) translation is "well being" and the JPS Torah Commentary (Levine) expresses a preference for "greeting."] But in Leviticus 22 we see that the thanksgiving offering was granted an independent character. There rules for *shelamim* are given, and these are followed (verses 29-30) by rules for the *todah*, the thanksgiving sacrifice. The concept of the *todah* was so special in the Jewish tradition that, even though the sacrificial system was abandoned with the destruction of the Temple, and even though it was not to be reinstated in the messianic age, the *todah* was singled out as a sacrifice that would be continued (see Midrash Rabbah Leviticus 9:7).

Nowhere in Leviticus is there any mention of singing to go along with the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Yet we have in our liturgy the aforementioned Psalm 100, a short (5 verse) Psalm sung as an accompaniment to the bringing of the thanksgiving sacrifice. The coupling of singing and thanksgiving is most strikingly articulated by Isaiah 51:3 "thanksgiving and the voice of melody" (תודה וקול זמרה). And so we learn from all these sources what constitutes Thanksgiving, Jewish style, in our post-sacrificial world: we give thanks in song as we partake of a feast of meat and cakes.

To add a pun to all this, what Psalm is called the Psalm of National Thanksgiving? Psalm 118. What is the first word of that Psalm? הודו ("give thanks"). And what is the Hebrew word for turkey? הודו. So guess what I deduce from this is the appropriate meat for Thanksgiving?

MILLENNIUM, JEWISH STYLE

In January 1999 I wrote a piece, entitled "And What About Tweety?," commenting on the fact that, because January 1 is St. Sylvester's Day in the Catholic calendar, the rabbis have prohibited New Year's Eve celebrations so that they should not be construed as celebrating "Sylvester." Well, this year the controversy rages on. Dr. Mandell Ganchrow, the President of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, has said that he is not against synagogues having Sabbath dinners that will happen to fall on December 31, but is only against linking Sabbath celebration to New Year's celebration. "New Year's eve is really a Christian holiday. ...If a [year 2000] event is going to be an oneg with Torah, that's nice. If an event goes to 1 a.m. and is a New Year's eve party in disguise, that's a different thing." Mendy Merel, proprietor of the kosher restaurant Mendy's in New York (made famous by Seinfeld) cancelled his New Year's eve Shabbaton at the restaurant, saying "I'm not happy, but I have to obey by those rules. I'm not going to switch certification because of that. I'm very pleased with the O.U." Meanwhile, Rabbi Adam Mintz of the Lincoln Square Synagogue, a modern Orthodox institution, is going full speed ahead with its own "Shabbat 2000" dinner saying, "I couldn't disagree with the Orthodox Union more. Modern Orthodoxy says we live in the world, and that we don't cut ourselves off from living in the world. To ignore the millennium is naive." And at its recent convention the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism resolved to make New Year's eve into "Shabbat of the Centuries...to create, develop, plan, and execute meaningful Shabbat experiences which coincide with a 'turn of the century' on the secular calendar."

The word millennium, Latin for 1000 years, is rendered in Hebrew as *elef shanim* (אלף שנים). This expression is found in Psalms 90:4, "For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night," i.e., time has no meaning for God. And two millennia? Koheleth speaks of this (Ecclesiastes 6:6), "Yea though he live a thousand years twice told (אלף שנים פעמים) and enjoy no good, do not all go to one place?"

The thousand year cycle is most prominent in the pronouncement of an anonymous Tanna from the academy of Eliyahu (Sanhedrin 97a), who taught: *שני אלפים תהוה שני אלפים תורה שני אלפים ימות המשיח* "The world is to exist six thousand years. In the first two thousand there was desolation; two thousand years the Torah flourished; and the next two thousand years is the Messianic era." Rashi interprets the first two thousand years as from the time of Adam to the time when Abraham was 52 years old (imputed as his age at Genesis 14 (ל"ד)). The next two thousand years takes us to 240 CE, the time of the first Amoraim, the era of Rav and Samuel. A literal reading of the promise associated with the final two thousand years would lead one to infer that the Messiah would arrive at the beginning of the Jewish year 4001, else how would the next two thousand years be the Messianic era. So the Tanna adds an afterword, "but through our many iniquities all these years have been lost" (ובעונותינו שרבו יצאו מהם מה שיצאו). Further Rabbi Hanan ben Tahlifa (a second generation Amora) says that he once came across a scroll which said that in year 4291 (some versions of the Talmud say 4231) the world will be orphaned, some of the following years will be spent in the war of the great sea monsters, some in the war of Gog and Magog, and the remaining period will be the Messianic era, and the world will be renewed after seven thousand years, which Rabbi Acha bar Rava (a sixth generation Amora) corrects to read "five thousand years."

Meanwhile, if you'd like a take on Jews at the last secular millennium, [A Journey to the End of the Millennium](#), by the Israeli novelist A.B. Yehoshua is a must read. This is a historical saga of a Jewish family that moves from Tangiers to Paris in the late 900's, and sheds light on the Sefardim/Ashkenazim contrast at a time when the Ashkenazim began to emerge in Europe.

CALENDS AND THE CALENDAR

The Psalmist's (Psalms 104: 19) "Who appointest the moon for the season" (עֲשֵׂה יָרֵחַ לְמוֹעֲדִים) serves as the textual basis for the continued Jewish use of the calendar based on the lunar year. The announcement of the new month was made by the Jewish Bet Din, based on monthly moon sightings. In 351 CE the Romans prohibited this practice, and Hillel II, who became Nassi of the remnant of the Jewish community in Eretz Israel in 359 CE, recognized that a calendar reform was necessary, and so in 361 CE developed the basis for the continuous lunar calendar system that we still use today.

In order to synchronize the lunar year with the solar year, a schedule of "leap years" was created, with years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, and 19 in a cycle of 19 years designated as years in which a thirteenth month is added to the calendar. The months of Tevet, Adar (aka Adar II in leap years), Iyar, Tammuz, and Elul are to have 29 days; the months of Tishrei, Shvat, Adar I (in a leap year), Nisan, Sivan, and Av are to have 30 days; the months of Kislev and Cheshvan will vary from having 29 to having 30 days, the circumstances depending on a complex arrangement to insure that certain of the Jewish holidays do not fall on certain prohibited days of the week. Thus the non-leap lunar year can be 353, 354, or even 355 days long, and the leap lunar year can be 383, 384, or even 385 days long. (This year 5760 is a leap year, with both Kislev and Cheshvan having 30 days, as was the case last year as well. In 5757 both Kislev and Cheshvan had 29 days; in 5758 Kislev had 30 days and Cheshvan had 29 days. And you thought people who had birthdays on February 29 had problems!)

The rabbis were nonetheless aware of the solar cycle. They established four *tekufot* (periods) based on the position of the sun. Though there is some debate as to the dating of these periods, they are commonly thought of as coincident with the beginnings of zodiac periods. Tekufat Nisan begins at the vernal equinox, March 21 (encompassing Aries, Taurus, and Gemini); Tekufat Tammuz begins at the summer solstice, June 22 (encompassing Cancer, Leo, and Virgo); Tekufat Tishrei begins at the autumnal equinox, September 23 (encompassing Libra, Scorpio, and Sagittarius); and Tekufat Tevet begins at the winter solstice, December 22 (encompassing Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces).

In the Talmud tractate Avodah Zarah the first mishnah says, "For three days before the festivals of the gentiles it is forbidden to have business with them." One reason presented in the Talmud for this edict is that the benefits gained by the gentiles will be used by them to procure offerings to idols. The third mishnah says, "And these are the festivals of the gentiles: the Calends (קלנדרא), the Saturnalia, the Kratesis, the Genusia, the birthday of the emperor, and the day of the death of the emperor" (the latter celebrated throughout the lifetime of his son). What are these festivals? The Genusia is the date of accession to the throne of the Roman emperor; the Kratesis is the day on which Rome achieved world sovereignty by their conquest of Alexandria in Egypt; the Saturnalia is a well-known orgiastic pagan festival, celebrated eight days before the winter solstice; the Calends is the first day of the year, celebrated eight days after the winter solstice.

To actually date the Calends and Saturnalia one needs to fix the date of the winter solstice. Commentators on the Mishnah date the Saturnalia as December 17, marking the winter solstice as on December 24 (not December 22), and thus marking the Roman New Year's day as on January 1. (As the Jewish Star pointed out recently, there's no need to invoke the Catholic St. Sylvester Day as a reason for banning New Year's celebrations by Jews. The precedent for banning such celebrations may even be pre-Christian!)

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING *NUN*

On page 4 of the Talmud Tractate Berachot there is a discussion about why Psalm 145, familiarly known to us as *ashrei* (אשרי), is recited three times a day in the liturgy (once in the introductory prayers of the shacharit, once in the closing prayers of the shacharit, and once in the mincha service). After that discussion, Rabbi Yochanan asks, "Why is there no *nun* in *ashrei*?" This question relates to the structure of that psalm. Stripping away both the introductory two sentences (which are not part of Psalm 145--the first sentence is Psalms 84:5 and the second sentence is the last verse of Psalm 144) and the introductory words "A psalm of praise of David" (תהלה לדוד), Psalm 145 consists of 21 verses in an alphabetic acrostic (i.e., the first letters of the verses are in the order of the Hebrew alphabet), except that there is no verse beginning with the Hebrew letter *nun* (נ).

Rabbi Yochanan, who died in 279 CE, was a prolific contributor to the Babylonian Talmud, being mentioned therein over 1700 times. His explanation was that the Hebrew word for "fallen," נפלה, begins with a *nun*, and so a verse beginning with a *nun* would have been of ill omen. He cites Amos 5:2 as his exemplar, "Fallen is the virgin of Israel, she shall no more rise," as if to say that David had the prescience to know what Amos would say, and so decided to omit a sentence beginning with the letter *nun*. Rabbi Nachman ben Isaac, a fourth generation amora (circa 338 CE), comments on this by saying, "Even so, David refers to it by inspiration and promises them an uplifting" (אפילו הכי חזר דוד וממכן ברוח הקודש) in verse 14, the verse following the missing *nun* verse, "The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that are bowed down."

Even as a child studying Berachot this explanation troubled me. It's quite a stretch to say that just because נפלה begins with a *nun* a verse beginning with the letter *nun* would be omitted by David. I can think of many more horrible words, such as *shoah*, and yet the verse beginning with the letter *shin* was included. A more plausible explanation to me at the time was simply that there was a *nun* verse, but that it was lost.

Well, it seems that my youthful scepticism may have been correct. Part of the Dead Sea Scrolls collection discovered in 1956 was the Psalms Scroll of Cave 11. Among others, this scroll contains verses 1-7 and 13-21 of Psalm 145. The text differs from our version in two ways. One of the differences is that after each verse there is a refrain, very much like that of Psalm 136 which we read every Sabbath morning, כי לעולם חסדו. The refrain of Psalm 145 is "Blessed be the Lord and blessed be His name forever and ever" (ברוך ה' וברוך שמו לעולם ועד). But the outstanding difference is that the verse beginning with *nun* appears. It reads "'Faithful is the Lord in his words, and gracious in all his works," נאמן אלהים בדבריו וחסיד בכול מעשיו, somewhat parallel to verse 17.

The Psalms Scroll includes some noncanonical psalms, including three of the so-called Syriac Psalms (which until their discovery only existed in a Syriac translation of the Psalms). Thus some take the Psalms Scroll to be a sectarian canon selection. Others take it to be a liturgical, rather than authentic, rendition of the Psalms. Those advocates of the latter two positions would then take no issue with Rabbi Yochanan. According to them, there was no verse with a *nun* in the Davidic Psalms (nor was there a refrain). The refrain and verse with the *nun* were added, possibly for liturgical reasons, by the Qumran sect.

The editing of the Psalms into its final form was probably done in the time of the Scribes who succeeded Ezra and Nehemiah (post 335 BCE), and the final form was canonized sometime between 70 CE and 135 CE... with Psalm 145 lacking a *nun* verse. By 279 CE the verse beginning with *nun* had there been one in the first place, was totally purged from the collective memory of the rabbis. Meanwhile, the Dead Sea Scrolls manuscripts date from as far

back as the third century BCE to as late as the second half of the first century BCE. If our current form of Psalm 145 was frozen back in the fourth century BCE, the Psalms Scroll version is probably a manifestation of someone's "unofficial" memory of the content of Psalm 145, recorded for the Qumran sect.

You can take the "official" view that the verse with the nun never existed (and, as a topper, Rabbi Yochanan's rationale for its absence) and that the Psalm Scroll's nun verse is a sectarian filler. Or you can couple my childhood opinion that the verse with the nun was "lost" with a view that it was "found" again in the Psalm Scroll. But however you come down on this question, isn't it interesting to see how modern discoveries can stimulate one's reconsideration of issues put to rest by the rabbis in the third century.

AS EASY AS PI

The double Torah portion *Vayyakhel-Pekudey* is only separated into two readings during a leap year, as was done this year. When these portions are read together, the Ashkenazic Jews read as the Haftorah from I Kings 7:51-8:21, whereas the Sephardic Jews read from I Kings 7:40-50. When read separately, the above readings are designated as the respective Haftorot for *Pekudey*. But the designated Haftorot for *Vayyakhel* take on a different pattern. The Ashkenazic Jews read from I Kings 7:40-50 (i.e., they read the Sephardic Haftorah for *Pekudey*), whereas the Sephardic Jews read from I Kings 7:13-26, a portion never read by Ashkenazic Jews. It is to a fascinating item in this latter portion that I would like to focus.

I Kings 7:23 describes an enormous circular vessel (called a ים and literally translated as a “sea”), five cubits (about 9 feet) in depth and ten cubits (about 18 feet) in diameter. The verse ends with the phrase “and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about.” Clearly this is a statement about the circumference of the vessel. But we all know from elementary school arithmetic that the circumference of a circle is determined as π times its diameter. Based on this verse, then, the value of π should be determined to be $30 \div 10$, or 3. And it is this reasoning that is the basis for the story (perhaps apocryphal, as I cannot track down a citation) that an American state legislature considered a bill legislating that π be valued at 3, because “the Bible says so.”

We all know that $\pi=3.14159$ (to 5 decimal places), so that if the diameter was 10 cubits then the circumference should be 31.4159 cubits, and not the 30 cubits as cited in I Kings 7:23. The value of π was reasonably well known by 200 BCE, when Archimedes had determined that π was between $3 \frac{10}{71}$ and $3 \frac{1}{7}$, i.e., $3.14084 < \pi < 3.14286$. A Hebrew mathematics text written in Palestine by a Rabbi Nehemiah in about 150 CE gave the value of π as $3 \frac{1}{7}$. He was troubled by the “ $\pi=3$ ” implied by I Kings 7:23, and so added a paragraph to his textbook explaining that one should “take off that one seventh for the thickness of the walls of the sea on the two brims,” i.e., the diameter 10 is that used to determine the outer circumference, whereas the circumference 30 is that of the inner circumference. That was mighty clever, except that I Kings 7:26 gives the thickness of the vessel as “one hand breadth thick,” and a hand breadth is about 3 inches. I won’t go through the math to show that this doesn’t jibe with Rabbi Nehemiah’s explanation.

The Vilna Gaon (1720-1797) was also troubled by this discrepancy, and resolved it using the following reasoning. The Hebrew word for circumference as given in I Kings 7:23 is קוה, where the final ה is a superfluous unpronounced letter, one of many such that somehow got into the canonized text, and readers are told by footnote that this word should be read as קו (for those who have studied this phenomenon, קוה is the כתיב and קו is the קרי). Now the word קוה has a numeric equivalent of 111, while קו has a numeric equivalent of 106. The ratio of 111 to 106 is 1.04717, and if one multiplies 30 by 1.04717 the result is 31.4151. Thus the Vilna Gaon theorizes that the ה is not really superfluous, but is there to lead us to a “correction factor” to apply to the circumference (30) given in the text. (By the way, the Vilna Gaon need not have invoked the כתיב/קרי argument. He could have referred to 2 Chronicles 4:2, where the same statement is made and קו is spelled correctly.)

The value $\pi=3$ is also propagated in the Talmud. The fifth Mishnah of chapter 1 of Eruvin (page 14a) contains the statement טפח טפח יש בו רחב טפח (“whatsoever is three handbreadths in circumference is one handbreadth in width”), and in the Gemara on this Mishnah Rabbi Yochanan explains that this is based on I Kings 7:23. Maimonides (1135-1204) says right out that any circle’s circumference is $3 \frac{1}{7}$ times its diameter, and that the Mishnah in Eruvin just rounded it to whole numbers (and, by implication, so did I Kings). That statement, though, didn’t deter further pilpul on this matter.

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PESACH EATING CUSTOMS

One of the great aphorisms of Jewish law is that “the custom abrogates the law” (והמנהג מבטל את ההלכה); Jerusalem Yevamot 66a). Indeed, the major code of Jewish law, the Shulchan Aruch, says that “to trespass on a custom requires rabbinic approval” (לעבור על מנהג צריך התרה) (Yorah De’ah 214). Yet it is custom that influences one’s personal practices in deeming items Kosher for Pesach and “chametz.”

Basically, everyone agrees that all foods or drinks made from wheat, barley, spelt (buckwheat), oats, or rye are chametz, because these grains can leaven. But there is a divergence on whether rice, mustard, and a variety of items known collectively as “kitniyot” (קטניות) are “chametz” or not. Kitniyot is loosely translated as “legumes,” and under its rubric comes peas, beans, peanuts, corn, sunflower seeds, and millet. Though rice, mustard, and kitniyot are not grains and do not leaven, they may be ground into flour and thus resemble chametz. The Ashkenazic rabbis therefore forbade their use during Pesach, even in non-ground up state, though they allowed the use of corn oil and peanut oil, and did not require their sale. But the Sephardic Jews never adopted this practice, and so the custom of the Sephardic Jews allows for the eating of rice, mustard, and kitniyot during Pesach. And so this is an instance of a custom that prevails over a broad group of Jews. (Though the cRc points out that “even within Sephardic communities there are divergent practices.”)

There is a Pesach eating custom that varied from community to community within Ashkenzic Jewry, namely the practice of not eating “gebrochts.” There is fear that if a matzo product is mixed with a leavening agent it will turn to chametz. A simple example of this is matzo farfel in soup. Perhaps the contact of the farfel with the boiling water will cause the farfel to leaven, thus rendering it chametz. Another is matzo brei, where the mixture of matzo with eggs and the cooking process will cause the matzo to leaven, thus rendering it chametz. Each community made its own decision about whether or not to be super-careful about this problem, and the decision was binding as a custom of the community. I know of a few marriages between couples where the husband’s family observed “gebrochts” and the wife’s family did not, and the decision as to which practice the married couple should follow was negotiated as part of a prenuptial agreement.

Two other eating customs are worth noting. Though there is no prohibition against it, there are some whose custom it is not to eat garlic on Pesach. And there are some who eat eggs at the Seder (with or without accompanying salt water), a custom designed in memory of the destruction of the Temple. These customs are even more localized, i.e., they are family customs. (You do it this way because your zaide did it this way!)

PESACH MINIMA

There are two concepts that dictate the minima in drinking wine or eating matzo. A wine cup must contain a “reviit,” which according to cRc is 3.3 fluid ounces (some say 90 milliliters is sufficient). You must drink “rov kos,” i.e., a majority of the cup, at each of the four appointed times, or at least 6.6 fluid ounces over the course of the Seder, or 27.5% of a standard 750 ml bottle of wine. When eating matzo ritually (i.e., when reciting the blessing over matzo, when using it for the Hillel sandwich, or when eating the afikomen) one must eat a “kazayit,” something the size of an olive (interpreted by some as 29 grams or 1.02 oz.). The cRc guide says that this is met by eating a 6" by 4" piece of matzo for each of these occasions (though 6" by 3" is OK for the Hillel sandwich). Sounds like a mighty big olive to me! As for the maror, your horseradish should when compacted fit into a vessel measuring 1.1 fluid ounces (29 grams), and the karpas should be 25 grams. You’ll certainly need a good deal of libation to wash it all this down.

THE FIFTH CUP (AND MORE)

The classic reason for having four cups of wine at the Seder is to remind us of God's four promises to the Jewish people in Egypt (Exodus 6:6-7), "and I will free you (והוצאתי)... and deliver you (והצלתי)... I will redeem you (וגאלתי)...and I will take you...(ולקחתי)." This reason is the first of a variety of reasons for having four cups given in the Jerusalem Talmud Pesachim. As the Babylonian Talmud itself includes no reasons for the four cups, Rashi's commentary on the Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 99b cites it as the reason for the four cups, and so it has been perpetuated to this day as a quartet symbolizing the redemption (גאולה, *geulah*) of the Israelites.

It struck me, though, that the sentence following these two, Exodus 6:8, contains two more promises, "I will bring you (והבאתי)...and I will give it to you (ונתתי)," so that two more cups of wine are called for if one is to drink to all six of the God's promises to the Jewish people. Moreover, as these last two promises in their entirety read "I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession," the appropriate point in the Seder for these cups of wine is when we say "Next year in Jerusalem." And so I offered this observation as a sermonette on the Shabbat of Pesach.

I have to announce, though, that I was "scooped." There was indeed a tradition for a fifth cup, precisely to remind us of the fifth of these promises. In Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 118a we are told "for the fourth cup one finishes the Hallel and recites the Great Hallel (Psalm); these are the words of Rabbi Tarfon." (רביעי אומר עליו את ההלל ואומר הלל הגדול דברי ר' טרפון). Yet there are manuscripts of the Babylonian Talmud (one found in Egypt, one found in Yemen and now at the Jewish Theological Seminary, one in the Vatican collection, and one at Columbia University's library) that have the word חמישי (fifth) in place of the word רביעי (fourth) in this text.

Reference to a fifth cup is also made in the writings of Rabbi Sherira Gaon (968-997), the Rif (1013-1103), the Ravad (1120-1198), and even Maimonides (1135-1204), who, in Chapter 8 of his Laws of Chametz and Matzo says, "ויש לו למזוג כוס חמישי ולומר עליו הלל הגדול... וכוס זה אינו חובה כמו ארבעה כוסות" ("and there are those who join with a fifth cup and recite on it the Great Hallel...and this cup is not obligatory as are the four cups"). In their commentary on the quote from Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 118a, the Tosafists (1105-1290) explicitly argue that the reading is "fourth" and not "fifth," so obviously this variant was known to them. And the Maharal of Prague (1512-1609) details the function of the fifth cup (Gevurot Hashem page 304, chapter 65), referring to it as the cup of sustenance (פרנסה, *parnasah*), saying, "after the four cups for redemption were established, a fifth cup was established for sustenance, because it is more important than redemption"

(כי אחר שתקנו ארבע כוסות של גאולה תקני כוס חמישי נגד הפרנסה שהיא יותר מן הגאולה).

There is a hitch, though. The Code of Law (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim, item 471), written in 1563, rules that (אחר ארבע כוסות אינו רשאי לשותות יין אלא מים) "after the four cups of wine, one isn't permitted to drink wine, only water". This unequivocal statement is followed by a loophole: "anyone who is refined (איסמנים) or has a great craving (תאב הרבה) to drink wine can drink a fifth cup, and he recites over it the Great Hallel." Note that even here we see a tie-in to the (disputed) fifth cup of Rabbi Tarfon. So whether it's for refinement, great craving, *parnasah*, or to celebrate והבאתי, a fifth cup is in order. Now how's about a sixth cup for ונתתי and to celebrate in advance לשנה הבאה בירושלים, next year in Jerusalem?

HOW TO COUNT TO SEVENTY

Every year as we read the Hagaddah we intone the verse from Deuteronomy 10:22, “Your ancestors went down to Egypt seventy persons in all” (בשבעים נפש ירדו אבתך מצרימה). If one stops to think about this passage, though, one finds it fraught with difficulties. First of all, this purports to be a count only of males. The origin of this count is Genesis 46, in which 56 grandsons, 2 great grandsons, and only one granddaughter of Jacob (Serah, daughter of Asher) are listed. Adding the 12 sons of Jacob to the list of 58 males brings the count to 70.

But is this what the passage means? Not quite. There are three problems with this computation. First of all, two of the grandsons (Er and Onan, sons of Judah) died in Canaan. Secondly, two of the grandsons (Ephraim and Manasseh, sons of Joseph) were born in Egypt. Finally, though this is not stated in the text, it is an easy computation to determine that the two great grandsons (Hezron and Hamul, grandsons of Judah) could only have been born in Egypt.

Moreover, Genesis 46:26 says “All the persons belonging to Jacob who came to Egypt - his own issue, aside from the wives of Jacob’s sons - all these persons numbered 66.” If one excludes Er, Onan, Ephraim, and Manasseh from this count (but includes Hezron and Hamul), one obtains the count in this verse. But now what does one make of the following verse, Genesis 46:27, “And Joseph’s sons who were born to him in Egypt were two in number; thus the total of Jacob’s household who came to Egypt was 70 persons.”? How does one go from 66 to 70? Adding Ephraim and Manasseh only gets us to 68!

First of all, we mustn’t forget Jacob as part of the count. That brings the count to 69. Who is number 70? The rabbis speculate at length about this. One source says that Dinah, Jacob’s daughter should be included in the count. Another speculates that Serah is the one to be included. A third mentions that Yocheved, the mother of Moses, was born just when the family entered Egypt, and so should be counted as the seventieth. A fourth excludes all three of these women from the count and instead says that the seventieth was a son of Dan whose name is not given in the Bible. Finally, one rabbi argues that the Divine Presence (the *Shechinah*) accompanied Jacob into Egypt and thus should be counted as the seventieth.

It is interesting to juxtapose the list of grandsons (and great grandsons) of Jacob given in Genesis with that of the clans of Israel given in Numbers 26. The lists don’t always jibe, the most notable being the absence of three of Benjamin’s sons from that list. But of more importance here is the presence of two additional great grandsons of Jacob in the list of clans, namely Ard and Naaman, grandsons of Benjamin. Rashi, citing Rabbi Moshe Hadarshan as his source, says that these two were mentioned and made heads of clans because they (along with the other two cited great grandsons, Hezron and Hamul) accompanied Jacob into Egypt. If that is the case, then one can eliminate Jacob from the count and add these two great grandsons to bring to count to 70. But I find no mention of this in any commentaries, primarily because Ard and Naaman are not mentioned in Genesis, where the “70” count first appears.

A modern view is that the use of the number 70 in the Torah is akin to the use of the number 40. The number 40 usually refers to a span of time (the days of the great flood, the days Moses spent at Sinai, the years of wandering in the desert, to name the most familiar), and should not be taken literally but instead figuratively to connote “a long time.” Similarly the number 70 usually refers to a count of people (the seventy nations of the world, the seventy elders, Ahab’s sons (2 Kings 10:1), Gideon’s sons (Judges 8:30), Abdon’s sons (Judges 12:14)) and should not be taken literally but rather “typologically,” i.e., connoting “a large number.”

KING SAUL'S REIGN

Chapter 13 of First Samuel opens **על ישראל מלך עץ** which is translated in the Soncino edition as "Saul was __ years old when he began to reign; and two years he reigned over Israel." The literal translation of this verse is "Saul was one year old when he began to reign; and two years he reigned over Israel," but the Soncino translator did not want to render such a translation in the text, hence the blank in the translation. Indeed, when the authors of the Septuagint, the translation of the Jewish Bible into Greek produced in 246 BCE, came to this passage they skipped over it altogether! (And here's the Gideon Bible "interpretive" translation: "Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel," where the connective ו which we translate as "and" is translated as "and when", leading to an incomplete sentence.)

The Jewish Time Line Encyclopedia, a *frummie* publication, is consistent with the literal reading of 1 Samuel 13:1. It dates Saul's appointment as king in 879 BCE and David's appointment as king in 877 BCE. This book uses as its basis a book written in Minsk in 1711 entitled Seder Hadorot. This in turn was probably based on a second century work by Rabbi Yose ben Halafta, Seder Olam Rabba. This latter work is quite erroneous, in that it sets the rebuilding of the temple (which, according to historians, was in 516 BCE) at 370 BCE, and has Malachi, Ezra, and Nehemiah as contemporaries of Simeon the Just (335 BCE). Thus do dating errors propagate in the world of *frummie* texts.

The Talmud is silent on the two year reign, but (Yoma 22b) interprets the "one year old" reference as meaning that "Saul was as sinless as a one year old child when he began to reign," because "he had not tasted sin" (שלא טעם טעם חמא). This is not to say that the rabbis left this text unquestioned. The Ralbag (Gersonides, 1338 CE) said in his commentary, "It is difficult to believe that all the events of Saul's reign could have been crowded into two years." But they give no answers to this conundrum, merely accepting the written text as correct.

The question of how long Saul really did reign was brought to my attention by Jerry Mann. My immediate response was a glance at the Hertz Chumash, which gives the years of King Saul's reign as 1028-1013 BCE, a total of 16 years. Encyclopedia Judaica dates Saul's reign as 1029-1005 BCE, a total of 25 years. The Jewish historian Eupolemus wrote a history in 168 BCE entitled On the Kings of Judah, a fragment of which is quoted by Eusebius, archbishop of Caesarea in 260-339 CE, in his Praeparatio Evangelica in which he says, "Then by the will of God Saul was chosen by Samuel to be king and died after ruling twenty-one years." The first century CE Jewish historian Josephus (Antiquities of the Jews, Book VI, Chapter XIV) says "Saul, when he had reigned eighteen years while Samuel was alive, and after his death two [and twenty]..." thus giving his reign as either 20 years, if you exclude the bracketed interpolation which appears in some versions of Josephus, or 40 years if the additional twenty is included. It may be that this interpolation occurred because of the verse Acts 13:21 (New Testament), "And afterward they desired a king; and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years."

One way to look at this passage is that it is formulaic. Each mention of a new king is heralded in the Prophets in an identical form. 2 Samuel 2: 10 reads "Ish-bosheth Saul's son was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years." 2 Samuel 5:4 reads "David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years." 1 Kings 14:21 reads "Rehoboam was forty and one years when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem." 1 Kings 22:42 reads "Jehoshaphat was thirty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem." Etc... Get the pattern? And 1 Samuel 13:1 was configured to fit the pattern, but, since the figures were unavailable to the author of 1 Samuel, he left them blank, meaning for the text to be "Saul was __ years old when he began to reign; and __ years he reigned over Israel."

That is, one should treat the first phrase not as “one year old” but that there is a word missing between **בן** and **שנה** . Similarly, one should treat the word **ושתי** (“and two”) as a space filler before **שנים** (“years”). Thus the Soncino translation was correct in introducing the first blank. As to the second blank, Wellhausen (the “villain” that Hertz excoriates in his Chumash) theorizes that **ושתי** is a corrupt duplication of the next word, **שנים**, by an incompetent scribe to replace the (correct) blank in that line.

Where do I come out? I discount the 40 years count, simply because I suspect any biblical count of 40 as being a euphemism for “a long time.” As between the four candidates 16, 20, 21, and 25, I would go with the 20, not just because it’s close to the result of Encyclopedia Judaica research or because it jibes with Josephus’s 20 (after eliminating the interpolation). My own view is based on the following theory. The scribe filled in the second blank with the Hebrew word for “and 20,” **ועשרים** Wellhausen’s “incompetent scribe” missed the second letter (**ע**), mistook the fourth letter (**ר**) for a **ת**, and dropped the last letter (**ם**), thus turning **ועשרים** into **ושתי**.

LIEBERMAN'S THANKS

In his Nashville acceptance speech, Senator Lieberman said, "I ask you to allow me to let the spirit move me, as it does, to remember the words from Chronicles, which are to give thanks to God, to give thanks to God and declare his name and make his acts known to the people; to be glad of spirit; to sing to God and make music to God, and most of all, to give glory and gratitude to God from whom all blessings truly do flow."

As thrilled as I was to hear this, my immediate reaction was, "Chronicles? Who ever quotes from Chronicles? How many people even heard of Chronicles, the last book of the Tanach? And doesn't this sound more like something from Psalms?" So, as is my style, I checked it, and sure enough this is from I Chronicles 16:8-10.

Let me render it in the Hebrew: הודו לד' קראו בשמו הודיעו בעמים עלילתיו. שירו לו זמרו לו. Those who pray regularly will recognize this as the opening of one of the introductory hymns of the morning service (page 60 in the Art Scroll Siddur). So Joe Lieberman was familiar with this passage from his everyday *davening*, and not because he was an expert on Tanach.

Except for the last passage of this hymn (which is taken from Psalms 99: 5 and 9), the entire hymn is taken from I Chronicles 16:8-36. But this hymn is a pastiche of a number of Psalms. Verses 8-22 are identical with verses 1-15 of Psalm 105 (with some minor alterations, which I leave to the interested reader to track down). So Joe Lieberman could just as well have said "to remember the words from Psalms." But he didn't, because his source was not the Tanach but the Siddur, which labels this hymn (and thus this verse) as being from I Chronicles.

Moving right along, verses 23-33 of I Chronicles 16 are almost identical with Psalm 96, a psalm we read every Friday night (page 308 in the Art Scroll Siddur). Again, the reader is invited to track down the differences. Finally, verses 34-36 of I Chronicles 16 are a slight variant of Psalm 106: 1, 47, and 48. Clearly, the Chronicler utilized the Psalms when he wrote this hymn and attributed it to David.

But what of Lieberman's "to give glory and gratitude to God from whom all blessings truly do flow?" This was not part of the Chronicles hymn. Though there are strains of these concepts in the prayer book, my research finds the phrase "praise God from whom all blessings flow" to be part of a Christian Doxology written in 1709 by Thomas Ken. This phrase is so entrenched in the literature that the OED cites an 1894 London Times article as calling this phrase "well known" and Funk & Wagnall's New International Dictionary of the English Language says that a doxology is "specifically applied to a stanza beginning 'Praise God, from whom all blessing flow'." (By contrast, each of the five books of Psalms ends with a doxology, a blessing of God, which you can find when you read Psalms 41:14, 72:18-19, 89:53, 106:48 and the entire Psalm 150.)

His final invocation, "Dear Lord, maker of all miracles, I thank you for bringing me to this extraordinary moment in my life" evokes an amalgam of אודן הנפלאות and the closing phrase of the שהחינו, namely הזה.

But the one blessing that we did not hear was the one which the Art Scroll Siddur (page 230) refers to as appropriate "upon hearing unusually good news which benefits both oneself and others," namely הטוב והמטיב, "Who is good and does good." Perhaps this is one that Joe Lieberman said silently and privately when he got the call offering him the Vice-Presidential candidacy. May his candidacy be one that is מטוב לכל, of benefit to all.

SELICHOT

For those fascinated with the Psalms, Psalm 119 is one worth studying. It is 176 verses long, and is broken up into 22 sections, each with 8 verses beginning with the same letter, and with the letters defining the sections being the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The Soncino commentary attributes this psalm to someone who lived in the fifth century BCE and was a disciple of the school of Ezra the Scribe. Verse 62 begins *לַיְלָה אֶקוּם לְהוֹדוֹת לָךְ*, “At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee.” It is this phrase that justified the tradition that the *Selichot*, the penitential prayers that usher in the Rosh Hashanah period, should first be chanted at midnight. It became customary to begin the recital of *Selichot* at midnight on the Saturday night that falls at least four days before Rosh Hashanah.

The focal point of the *Selichot* service is the recital of the listing of the thirteen attributes of God as proclaimed by God in Exodus 34:6-7. Why is this part of the service? Rabbi Yochanan says (Rosh Hashanah 17b) that “we learn [from the context of Exodus 34:6-7] that God is wrapping himself up like a cantor, and is illustrating to Moses the order of the prayer service,” and that “whenever Israel sins they should follow this prayer service, and I will forgive them.”

מלמד שנתעטף הקדוש ברוך הוא כשליח צבור, והראה לו למשה סדר תפלה. כל זמן שישראל חוטאין יעשו לפני כסדר הזה, ואני מודה להם

Thus we recite these passages not only in the *Selichot* service but in all the High Holiday services, as well as during the Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot service when we open the ark. These two passages are so venerable that they were probably used in the service even before the Second Temple. An abridged version of this listing appears as early as Numbers 14:18-20. (See also Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2, Nahum 1:3, Jeremiah 32:18, Nehemiah 9:17 and 9:31, 2 Chronicles 30:9 for other abridgements of these passages.)

This is followed by Moses’s response (Exodus 34:9) “Pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Your own.” The concluding passage of this part of the service is, “Our father, forgive us, for we have sinned; our King, pardon us, for we have transgressed. Thou, O Lord, art truly kind, forgiving and merciful to all who call upon Thee.” This series of passages is repeated four times during the course of the *Selichot* service.

Each of the four repetitions of this series of passages is followed by a unique paragraph. The first of these unique paragraphs asks God to hear our plea; the second asks that He not enter into judgment with us; the third asks the God hearken to the cry and to the prayer (*וְאֵל הַתְּפִלָּה* ואל הרנה אל לשמע I Kings 8:28); and the fourth asks God to remember His mercy and kindness and his servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

All of these are closed by the passage: “Have mercy on us, O Lord, as a father has mercy upon his children. Deliverance comes from the Lord; may thy blessing be upon thy people. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold. Lord of hosts, happy is the man who trusts in Thee. O Lord, save us; may the King answer us when we call.” And finally, the punch line, from Numbers 14:19-20, “O pardon the sin of this people, according to thy abundant kindness, as Thou hast forgiven this people ever since they left Egypt. The Lord said: I pardon them as you have asked.”

The *Selichot* service ends on an upbeat note with the singing of the hymn Yigdal, a 14th century versification of the thirteen principles of faith as formulated by Maimonides. Perhaps the message is that with faith, forgiveness will follow. May the year 5761 (תשס"א) be a year of blessing for all of us. שנה טובה

THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The Thirteen Attributes of God, a portion of the verses Exodus 34:6-7, are recited before we take the Torah out of the ark on the festivals, and are invoked on fast days, in the Selichot services, and a multitude of times during the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services. The verses are, as translated in the Art Scroll Siddur, reads, "Hashem, Hashem, God, Compassionate and Gracious, Slow to anger, and Abundant in Kindness and Truth. Preserver of kindness for thousands of generations, Forgiver of iniquity, willful sin, and error, and Who cleanses." The Jewish Publication Society edition of the Chumash for the most part parallels this translation, reading "The Lord! the Lord! a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." But the last clause, "and Who cleanses," is absent. The reason is that the word וְנָקָה, translated by the Art Scroll Siddur as "and Who cleanses," is not a stand-alone word/attribute. It is actually part of a full phrase, וְנָקָה לֹא יִנָּקֶה, which is translated by JPS as "yet He does not remit all punishment." By contrast, Hertz translates the phrase as "and that will by no means clear the guilty." What confusion!

The verb נָקָה has three meanings: "to clean," "to declare innocent," and "to destroy." A similar phrase in Jeremiah 30:11, וְנָקָה לֹא אֲנַקֶּךָ, is translated variously as "and I will not utterly destroy you" and "and I will not leave you altogether unpunished." Note that there the translation does not use the "to clean" meaning of וְנָקָה. Literally, the construction וְנָקָה לֹא יִנָּקֶה is translated almost as a Yiddishism, "and destroy, He will not destroy." So why is the "to clean" meaning used here?

The full phrase got truncated in the delineation of the Thirteen Attributes. The reason is given in Yoma 86a, which interprets the phrase to mean "He remits punishment for the penitent, but not for the impenitent." Recognizing that it is only the penitent who will be invoking the Thirteen Attributes of God in the liturgy, the rabbis decided to truncate the phrase and end the list with וְנָקָה. A proper replacement for the Art Scroll translation, "Who cleanses," should be "Who remits punishment for the penitent." One of the attributes, then, is the ability to put punishment into remission.

This sentence is referred to in the Talmud as the Thirteen Attributes (י"ג מידות), but was never delineated into thirteen elements. The parsing of this sentence into Thirteen Attributes has been a subject of discussion through the ages. The enumeration commonly used today is that found in the Tosafot in Rosh Hashanah 17b attributed to Rabbeinu Tam (12th Century CE), as follows:

1 'ה Merciful before a person sins; 2 'ה Merciful after a person sins; 3 אֵל Powerful; 4 רַחוּם Compassionate; 5 וְחַנוּן Gracious; 6 אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם Slow to anger; 7 וְרַב חַסֵּד Abundant in kindness; 8 וְאִמְתָּ Abundant in truth; 9 נֹצֵר חַסֵּד לְאַלְפִים; Preserver of kindness for thousands of generations; 10 נֹשֵׂא עֲוֹן Forgiver of iniquity; 11 וּפֹשֵׁעַ Forgiver of willful sin; 12 וְחַטָּאתָה Forgiver of error; 13 וְנָקָה Remitter of punishment for the penitent.

Clearly there were other enumerations. Luzzato's Commentary to the Pentateuch presents several different enumerations of the thirteen. The Hartom/Cassuto Commentary on the Tanach, for example, presents only one grouping, not that of Rabbeinu Tam, but instead groups 1 and 2 together as God's name, repeated for emphasis, and breaks 9 up into two attributes, נֹצֵר חַסֵּד Preserver of kindness in general, and לְאַלְפִים Preserver of kindness for thousands of generations.

The point of invoking these Thirteen Attributes though, is not as a petition to God. Rather, it is pedagogic, to inculcate into the penitent God's moral qualities of compassion, graciousness, forbearance, kindness, fealty, and forgiveness.

THREE FORMS OF "IT"

"Our God and God of fathers, be pleased with our rest. Sanctify us with Thy commandments and grant us a share in Thy Torah; satisfy us with Thy goodness and gladden us with Thy help; purify our heart to serve Thee sincerely. In Thy gracious love, Lord our God, grant that we keep Thy holy Sabbath as a heritage; may Israel who sanctifies Thy name rest on it. Blessed are thou, O Lord, who hallowest the Sabbath."

This is the Birnbaum Siddur translation of the prayer read in the Friday night *maariv* service (p. 275), the Saturday morning *shacharit* service (p. 353), the Saturday morning *musaf* service (p. 395), and the Saturday afternoon *mincha* service (p. 453). In each instance, the penultimate phrase "may rest on it" is given as **וַיְנַחֲמוּ בָהּ**. This is also the usage in the classic synagogue Bar Mitzvah present Siddur, the Authorized Daily Prayer Book of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth of Nations, first published in 1890 under the authorization of the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Nathan Marcus Adler and reprinted in the United States in 1915 by New York's Bloch Publishing Company as The Standard Prayer Book.

What a surprise when I first opened the Art Scroll Siddur. In the Friday night *maariv* service the phrase is rendered **וַיְנַחֲמוּ בָהּ** (p. 341), yet it is rendered **וַיְנַחֲמוּ בּוֹ** in the Saturday morning *shacharit* service (p. 425) and in the Saturday morning *musaf* service (p. 469), and finally is rendered **וַיְנַחֲמוּ בָּם** in the Saturday afternoon *mincha* service (p. 519). In further checking, I found this multiplicity in the 1941 Book of Prayer edited by Rabbi David de Sola Pool and published by the Union of Sephardic Congregations, a Siddur organized "according to the custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews."

A look at Israeli siddurs on my shelf reveals the same disparity. Siddur Avodat Israel contains the Adler/Birnbaum usage; Siddur Hashalem and Rinat Israel, both Ashkenzaic, and the Israeli Army Siddur contain the Art Scroll/de Sola Pool multiplicity.

On page 341 the Art Scroll Siddur "explains" this multiplicity of pronouns as follows: Since Sabbath is feminine, the word for "it" should be the feminine **בָּהּ**. On Friday night this form is used because the newly arrived Sabbath is "like a lonely woman without a husband." On Saturday morning the masculine word for "it," **בּוֹ**, is used to "allude to Israel's acceptance of the Torah." Finally at *mincha* the prayer represents the Sabbath of the future, "where all the days will have the serenity and holiness of the Sabbath," and so the plural form of "it," **בָּם**, is used. The Art Scroll Siddur cites Magen Avraham, the 17th century Polish halachist Rabbi Avraham Halevi, as the authority for this multiple usage, referring to it as a custom, and cites Avodat Israel as the authority for the alternate (Adler/Birnbaum) usage.

Whenever I see something like this, my immediate reaction is that typographic errors crept into the development of the Siddur, which were then institutionalized, and subsequently rationalized by succeeding commentators. The oldest complete Siddur committed to writing was the Seder Rab Amram Gaon, compiled by the head of the Sura academy in the mid ninth century. In it the phrase "וַיְנַחֲמוּ בָהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מְקַדְּשֵׁי שְׁמֶךָ" is instead "וַיְנַחֲמוּ בְךָ כָּל אוֹהְבֵי שְׁמֶךָ" ("and all the lovers of Thy name will rejoice in Thee"). Machzor Vitry, the authoritative compilation of the Siddur at the end of the eleventh century by a disciple of Rashi, records this phrase as "וַיְנַחֲמוּ בְךָ כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל מְקַדְּשֵׁי שְׁמֶךָ" ("and all of Israel who sanctifies Thy name will rejoice in Thee"). Note that this is very close to the phrase used in the holiday version of this prayer, namely "וַיְנַחֲמוּ בְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל מְקַדְּשֵׁי שְׁמֶךָ" ("and Israel, who sanctifies Thy name, will rejoice in Thee"). So my search of old Siddur texts continues, narrowed down to the period between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries.

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HEBREW AS THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE OF THE USA

There is a widespread story that at the close of the Revolutionary War some members of Congress proposed that the use of English be formally prohibited in the United States and that Hebrew be the national language. In his The American Language, H.L. Mencken tracks down the origin of this story. The first place where this surfaced was in a French monograph by Marquis de Chastellux, who served as a major-general under Rochambeau during the Revolutionary War. He published an account of his observations in America in 1786 under the title Voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale dans les années 1780, 1781 et 1782. In it he wrote:

“Nay, they have carried it [their national pride] even so far as seriously to propose introducing a new language, and some persons were desirous, for the convenience of the public, that the Hebrew should be substituted for the English. The proposal was that it should be taught in the schools and made use of in all public acts. We may imagine that this project went no further, but we may conclude from the mere suggestion that the Americans could not express in a more energetic manner their aversion for the English.”

In 1810 Charles Jared Ingersoll, son of one of the framers of the Constitution, published a monograph with the formidable title, “Inchiquen, the Jesuit’s Letters,... Containing a Favorable View of the Manners, Literature and State of Society of the United States.” This was reviewed by William Gifford in the January 1814 issue of the Quarterly Review, in which he said:

“Nor have there been wanting projects...for getting rid of the English language, not merely by barbarizing it...but by abolishing the use of English altogether, and substituting a new language of their own. One person indeed had recommended the adoption of Hebrew, as being ready made to their hands, and considering the Americans, no doubt, as the “chosen people” of the new world.”

In a subsequent issue in 1815 Timothy Dwight published an article, “Remarks on the Review of Inchiquen’s Letters,” in which he denied that such a proposal had ever been made.

The American revolutionaries equated their rebellion against England with the struggle of the Israelites against Pharaoh in Egypt. When the official seal for the United States was being created, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams submitted a design in which the Israelites were crossing the Red Sea with Pharaoh in pursuit and Moses on the other side. This picture is reproduced from Oscar S. Straus’s The Origin of Republican Form of Government in the United States of America, published in 1901.



Now I ask you, which would you prefer, this one or the chosen seal depicted on the back of the \$1 bill?