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Bikkurim and Haggadah

Parashas Ki Savo begins with the laws of the "first fruits." Farmers were to take the first ripened fruits to the Beis Hamikdash in a ceremony that included a declaration of gratitude to Hashem (*Mikra Bikkurim*).

The declaration discusses Yetzias Mitzraim and is the template for the Haggadah recited on Leil Haseder. The Haggadah elaborates on every section of these *pessukim*, uncovering many hidden meanings. The question is: Why are the *pessukim* found in *Ki Savo* chosen to be recited at the Seder as opposed to the words from the Torah from Chumash Shemos which details the narrative of the enslavement and redemption in "live" form as they occurred?

There is an inherent connection between this *mitzvah* and the night of Pesach.

Rav Aryeh Leib Heiman (*Chayei Levav Ki Savo*) adds to this connection. He notes the concept that the Haggadah is to be recited in a question-and-answer form is derived from the wording found here by *Bikkurim*—עָנִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ, Although Chazal interpret this phrase to mean that *Mikra Bikkurim* should be recited aloud (Rashi), the primary meaning of "respond" (וְעָנִיתָ) is to answer a question. And because there are no questions by *Mikra Bikkurim* this obligation is transferred to the Seder night. Rav Heiman writes, "It amazes me that I have not found anyone before me making these observations."

Rav Aryeh Leib notes that the connection is sourced to the Torah using the same words regarding the mitzvah of *Mikra Bikkurim* and the mitzvah of discussing Yetzias Mitzraim. Regarding *Mikra Bikkurim*, the *passuk* states, הִגַּדְתִּי הַיּוֹם לַה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ (*Devarim* 26:3) and regarding the mitzvah of discussing Yetzias Mitzraim on the night of the 14th of Nisan, we are commanded, וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ (*Shemos* 13:8). He notes that undoubtedly, Chazal used this connection to establish that the "Haggadah" referred to in the Seder is the one found in the section of *Ki Savo*.

Nonetheless, Rav Aryeh Leib adds that despite their shared themes, there are two differences between these two recitations: one in *content* and the other in *form*:

1. *Mikra Bikkurim* begins with the history of Yaakov Avinu descending to Egypt, while the Haggadah begins with the history of Avraham (*Yehoshua* 24:3).

2. The Haggadah is intentionally recited as a *story* told by a father to his son—וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ. In contrast, *Mikra Bikkurim* is a private, individual declaration made by every Jew.

Rav Aryeh Leib creates an incredible and original idea that he uses together with an overview of our nation's history to explain these differences. He begins by noting that Hashem promised Avraham two distinct rewards (*Bereishis* 17:7):

1. To be a God to him and his descendants—namely, the promise that his descendants would be the chosen nation of Hashem.

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2. To give Avraham and his descendants Eretz Yisrael as an eternal inheritance.

During Leil Haseder we recount Yetzias Mitzraim to explain how and why we became the chosen nation—עם ה'. A nation (עם) signifies a group united around a fundamental principle that binds all its members. This could refer to being from the same family, living in the same land, sharing a common ideology or legal system—or sometimes all of these combined.

During Leil Haseder, every Jewish father points out to his son the unifying element of the Jewish people. The father explains that the tradition he is passing down stretches back to Avraham Avinu. Hashem chose Avraham and we, his descendants, are also chosen by Him by virtue of His choosing Avraham. We are one nation because our lineage traces back to Avraham, the father of our nation. Thus, the Haggadah begins its history from Avraham Avinu, the initiator of our nation, and even starts with the shameful past of Terach and his idolatry. This highlights the contrast that sharpens the reason for Hashem's covenant with Avraham—to proclaim the oneness of Hashem.

Yetzias Mitzraim was the moment when Hashem revealed His special relationship with us. It was also when the covenant with Avraham Avinu was realized. Therefore, הלילה הזה is the appropriate time to recount this story in full.

Mikra Bikkurim relates to the second promise made by Hashem to Avraham – to give us the land of Eretz Yisrael. When the farmer brings his first fruits, he recounts the story of Yetzias Mitzraim, emphasizing how Hashem brought us into Eretz Yisrael —the very land that produced these fruits. Only first fruits from Eretz Yisrael are obligated in the mitzvah of Bikkurim, not first fruits from anywhere else.

This covenant of Eretz Yisrael is not eternal and unconditional; it depends on our actions and righteousness. When we act in another way, we are kicked out of the land. Thus, the declaration includes the acknowledgment that we have fulfilled the mitzvah, and in doing so, we express hope to continue meriting the land.

Unlike the Haggadah, which recounts the covenant that Hashem chose Avraham Avinu, *Mikra Bikkurim* focuses on the conditional promise of the land as we have not lived in Eretz Yisrael uninterruptedly (although we are always עם ה'). Therefore, we begin with Yaakov Avinu who is the one who leaves the land to go to Egypt.

With this introduction Rav Aryeh Leib explains why during *Mikra Bikkurim* one states: "הִגַּדְתִּי הַיּוֹם I will tell you ***today***," Usually this word is coming to exclude a different day. Why would the person bringing first fruits to the Beis Hamikdash be excluding another day? What day is he hinting at?

He explains that this is because *Mikra Bikkurim* is the fulfillment of what began on Leil Haseder.

Leil Haseder is based on the four expressions of redemption, but there is a fifth expression that we leave out. The fifth expression "והבאתי I will bring you to Eretz Yisrael," is not discussed or celebrated on Leil Haseder. It is as if the story is not completed during Leil Haseder.

This is because on Leil Haseder, we focus on the first promise to Avraham Avinu and then a few weeks later when we bring the first fruits, we discuss the second promise to Avraham Avinu and therefore we recite the words, "I came to the land."

The two narratives complement each other: the Haggadah on Leil Haseder emphasizes our eternal status as Hashem's chosen nation, while *Mikra Bikkurim* highlights the conditional promise of the land, which depends on our observance of Hashem's mitzvos.

Mikra Bikkurim is the ending of what we began Leil Haseder.

We can add that we sing עם ישראל חי which represents the first promise to Avraham Avinu –which is eternal and unconditional, and we hope our actions and righteousness help us achieve the second promise to Avraham Avinu of fulfilling the mitzvos in Eretz Yisrael.

ר' אריה לייב ב"ר נחום איסר היימן

R. Aryeh Leib Heiman (1931- 29 Sivan 2011). Born in Baltimore. As a child, he attended the local T. A. Starting in 1948, he studied in Lakewood for 10 years. In 1953, he married Chaya Adams (d. 2018), daughter of R. Chaim Meir Dovid (1898-1950), and a first cousin of the sisters Tzipora and Yaffa (Sheindel) Kreiser, the spouses of (respectively) R. Dovid Povarsky (1902-1999) and R. Leib Malin (1906-1962). In 1959, R. Aharon Kotler recommended him to lead Boston Rabbinical Seminary. In 1969, the Heimans emigrated to Bayit Vegan. Following the passing of R. Yechezkel Abramsky (1886-1976), R. Heiman was selected as Rav of Beis Haknesses HaGra, thus beginning a tenure that would span the next 35 years. His Torah is published in *Chikrei Lev* and *Chayei Levav*.