

and prevents the “Destroyer” sent by God from entering their homes.<sup>84</sup> This facet of the Passover sacrifice is reflected in the *Mekhilta*, which provides an alternative rendering of the term *וּפָסַחְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם* in Exodus 12:13; instead of the usual “and I will pass over you,” the Midrash suggests reading “and I will protect you” on the basis of a verse from Isaiah:

אין פסיחה אלא חייס, שנאמר: כְּצִפְרִים עֹפוֹת בֵּן יֶגֶן יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת עַל יְרוּשָׁלַם  
גִּנוֹן וְהִצִּיל פְּסַח וְהִמְלִיט.

*Pesihah* means nothing other than protection, as it is said: *Like the birds that fly, even so will the LORD of Hosts shield Jerusalem, shielding and saving, protecting and rescuing* (Isa. 31:5). (*Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael*, Bo 7 and 11)

Comparison with the pivotal sacrifice in Genesis—the ram that Abraham offers on the altar he had prepared for Isaac—highlights this protective aspect of the *korban Pesah*. Both the ram and the *korban Pesah* serve as proxies for those who should have been sacrificed: Isaac and the firstborn of the Israelites. Genesis emphasizes that Abraham offered the ram *tahat beno*, in lieu of his son (Gen. 22:13). Similarly, the blood of the Passover offering displayed on the doorposts is not merely a flag indicating that the house is an Israelite one: it is a sacrifice that is offered in place of the person who should have been taken. But the ram and the *korban Pesah* also mediate the linking of generations: the ram allows Abraham to connect with Isaac and pass God’s covenant to him, and, as we will see, the Passover sacrifice similarly underscores the bond between parents and children.

## Linking of Generations

As noted, Exodus 12 emphasizes the role of the Passover sacrifice in protecting the Israelite homes from the destructive forces let loose upon Egypt during the Plague of the Firstborn. Ostensibly, the blood that the Israelites smeared on their lintels and doorposts as a sign to God to pass over their

<sup>84</sup>For analysis of the Rabbinic texts that refer to the sacrifice’s function as a “guardian” or protector of Israel, see Aharon Shemesh, “*Pesah zeh ‘al shum mah?*,” *AJS Review* 21, no. 2 (1996): 1–17.



houses served to protect those individuals who were in immediate danger: their own firstborn children. The Torah celebrates this particular deliverance with the commandment to consecrate every firstborn human and animal to God (Exod. 13:1–2). However, the language of Exodus 12 seems to indicate that it was actually the homes that were in peril and that the blood of the sacrifice was intended primarily to safeguard them:

וְהָיָה כִּי יֹאמְרוּ אֵלֵיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם מָה הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם: וְאָמַרְתֶּם זִכַּח פֶּסַח הוּא לַיהוָה אֲשֶׁר פָּסַח עַל בְּתֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּנֹגְפוֹ אֶת מִצְרַיִם וְאֶת בְּתֵינוּ הִצִּיל...<sup>85</sup>

*And so should your sons ask you, “What is this service to you?” you shall say, “A Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when He scourged Egypt and our houses<sup>85</sup> He rescued” . . . (Exod. 12:26–27)*

As argued earlier, the “homes” in this narrative are primarily symbolic edifices that represent the family. But why this emphasis?

The opening lines of Exodus imply that the beginning of the persecution in Egypt coincided with the death of Joseph and his generation (1:6–14). If the Egyptian enslavement is calculated from this juncture, then Moses and most of the adults whom he led out of Egypt were third-generation slaves.<sup>86</sup> God’s promise to Abraham at the Covenant between the Pieces (Gen. 15:13–16) was that the fourth generation would return to the Land; thus, the fulfillment of God’s covenant hinges on the children of those who experienced the Exodus.<sup>87</sup> At stake, then, during the Plague of the Firstborn are not only individual children but the inheritors of the covenant: the next generation. The collective as well as the personal fate of the people who leave Egypt is wholly dependent on their descendants. This may explain the Torah’s focus on educational interaction between parent and child in

<sup>85</sup> Translation has been emended; the original reads “households.”

<sup>86</sup> Moses was the son of Amram; Amram was the son of Kehat; Kehat was the son of Levi, brother of Joseph.

<sup>87</sup> For an extensive analysis of the terms of God’s covenant with Abraham and his descendants, see essay 2.



## ★ Hashem's Eternal Love

רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל הֵיזָה אוֹמֵר כָּל מִי שֶׁלֹּא אָמַר שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים אֵלָיו בְּפֶסַח  
לֹא יִיָּאָר וְיִי חוֹבְתוֹ וְאֵלָיו הֵיוּ: פֶּסַח, מַצֵּה, וּמַרְרוֹר

*Rabban Gamliel used to say: Whoever has not discussed (said) these three things on Pesah has not fulfilled his duty, namely, Pesah, Matzoh, and Marzor.*

Certainly, Rabban Gamliel's intention was not for us to simply "say" these three words. His point is that we should explain the implications and lessons to be derived from these three symbols to the best of our ability. The first symbol we introduce for discussion is the *Korban Pesah*. Why did we eat the *Korban Pesah*? What special miracle did it commemorate? It recalls the "passing over" by Hashem of the Jewish homes during *makat bechorot*, the killing of the firstborn. If we think about it, would it ever enter anyone's mind that Hashem would kill the Jewish firstborn? After all, the purpose of the plagues was to effect the release of the Jews from Egypt, not to kill them.

Ostensibly, the goal of the *makot* was to rescue the Jews from exile. Which Jews are we actually discussing? After two hundred and ten years of exposure to Egyptian culture, with its immorality and degenerate behavior, were the Jews really that distinct from the Egyptians? Was the *Jewish neshamah* that apparent, or was it hidden under years and years and layers and layers of repulsive spiritual degeneration? Indeed, the *Baalei Kabbalah* write that had the Jews remained a bit longer, they would never have been worthy of redemption. This is the stinging criticism that the *Sar shel Mitzrayim*, Egypt's guardian angel, rained upon the Jews as they stood by the shore of the Red Sea. "These are idol worshippers (referring to the Egyptians) and those (referring to the Jews) are also idol worshippers." What distinguished the Jew from the Egyptian, so that the Jew should live while the Egyptian should perish?

It is specifically for this reason that we emphasize the miracle of "passing over" the Jewish homes. We were not spared as a result of overt righteousness and virtue. It was not our positive deeds and devotion to the Almighty that earned us liberation. It was Hashem's eternal love for us that gained us salvation. Externally, according to our actions and behavior, we may appear to have a strong similarity with the Egyptians, their culture and lifestyle. Inwardly, however, there is something, a spark, a non-extinguishable ember, that makes it impossible for this bond of love to be severed. The most significant miracle is that Hashem demonstrated His love for us. This is the foundation for all of the miracles of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. Is it any wonder that Rabban Gamliel insists that we publicize and explain it?

*(Peninim Haggadah)*

**NOTE:** *Where necessary, we have changed (with the author's permission) the transliterated Hebrew to reflect the Sephardic pronunciation in the material reprinted from The Peninim Haggadah.*



*Everyone is obligated to recite (or hear) this section of the Haggadah. The leader must explain the passage of רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל in a way that everyone will understand.*

Rabbi Gamliel used to say: Anyone who has not discussed these three things on Passover has not fulfilled his duty, namely:

**Pesah**, the Passover Offering;

**Matzah**, the Unleavened Bread;

**Marzor**, the Bitter Herbs.

*We look at the זְרֵעַל (shank bone) and recite:*

### Pesah

Why did our fathers eat the Passover Offering during the period of the Bet Hamikdash? It is because the Holy One, Blessed is He, passed over the houses of our fathers in Egypt, as it says: "You shall say: It is the Passover offering for Hashem, who passed over the houses of the Children of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians and spared our houses. The people knelt and bowed down."

*Some recite this song.*

וְאִמְרוּתָם זָכַר פֶּסַח הוּא לֵי:

וְאִמְרוּתָם זָכַר פֶּסַח הוּא לֵי:

וְאִמְרוּתָם זָכַר פֶּסַח הוּא לֵי:

וְאִמְרוּתָם זָכַר פֶּסַח הוּא לֵי:

וְאִמְרוּתָם זָכַר פֶּסַח הוּא לֵי:

וְאִמְרוּתָם זָכַר פֶּסַח הוּא לֵי:

וְאִמְרוּתָם זָכַר פֶּסַח הוּא לֵי:

רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל הֵיזָה אוֹמֵר: כָּל מִי שֶׁלֹּא אָמַר  
שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים אֵלָיו בְּפֶסַח לֹא יִיָּאָר וְיִי  
חוֹבְתוֹ וְאֵלָיו הֵיוּ:

## פֶּסַח. מַצֵּה. וּמַרְרוֹר:

### פֶּסַח

פֶּסַח שְׂחִיזוֹ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אוֹרְלִים בְּנוֹן שְׂבִית  
דְּמִקְדָּשׁ קָדְשׁ עַל שׁוֹם מִדָּה עַל שׁוֹם שְׁפִסַח  
דְּקָדָשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל פֶּתִי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִצְוֹת  
שְׁעִמְרוּ: וְאִמְרוּתָם זָכַר פֶּסַח הוּא לֵי אֲשֶׁר  
פֶּסַח עַל פֶּתִי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְוֹת בְּנִגְפוֹ  
אֶת-מִצְרַיִם וְאֶת-בְּתִינֵנוּ דִּמְצִיל וְיִסְדֵּךְ דְּעַם  
יִשְׂרָאֵל.

אֲמוֹנוֹתָם עָרְכוּ שְׂבִית, לְאֵל וְטָבָחוּ טָבַח  
דְּרִימֵנוּ קוֹל שְׂחִיזִים, שְׂמִחוּ כָּלֵל שְׂמִחוּרִים.  
עַל מִצְוֹת וּמְרוֹרוֹת, אֲכִלֵּה וְשִׁוְתֵנוּ יִי:

רִאשִׁיזוֹ לְכָל רִאשׁוֹנוֹתָם, עַל יַד צִיר אֲמוֹנוֹתָם.  
מִיֵּד כָּל מַעֲשֵׂים, דִּמְצִיל כָּל הַבְּלוּתֵי:  
נִסֵּי אֵל זָכְרֵנוּ, וְחִסְדֵּנוּ סִפְרוּנוּ.

כְּבוֹכְבֵי דְשְׂמִינִים, מְנַשֵּׂה וְאֶפְרוֹם, יָצֵאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם.  
כָּל עֲבָאוֹת יִי:

דְּהִקְדָּל חוֹרְתֵנוּ, לְעִמּוֹ וְעִדְרֵנוּ, שׁוֹמְרֵי מִצְוֹתֵנוּ.  
עִם נוֹשְׁעֵי בְּיָי:

נִפְלְאוֹת מַעֲשֵׂיךָ, וְעֲצוּמוֹת נִסְיֵךָ, יִאֲמָרוּ כָּל-חוֹסְרֵךָ  
טוֹב לְחִסּוֹת בְּיָי:



## וְיִמְרְרוּ אֶת חַיֵּיהֶם אֶ\*

“And they embittered their lives”

When it had been decreed in the *Brit Bein HaBetarim* that the Jewish People would be enslaved “in a land not their own” (*Bereishit* 15:13), one may ask, why did they specifically go down to Egypt, a place of impurity and abomination? There they were destined to be enslaved, physically and spiritually, and suffer beyond imagining.

A parable will help us understand why. A rich man had a capable son who caused his father much grief. He constantly disobeyed his father until the father was at his wit's end. The father decided to sell his son into slavery to teach him a lesson. At the marketplace, a kind wealthy man and a mean ill-mannered farmer both offered identical amounts to purchase the son. Everyone was surprised when the father sold him to the farmer. They all felt that the wealthy man would have treated him much better.

The father explained that he purposely sold his son to the peasant because it was his greatest hope that after a short time in such a place, the son would learn his lesson. He hoped that his son would realize the error of his ways and finally appreciate everything that his father had done for him over the years. If he would have sent him to the rich man's home, he never would have learned his lesson. “When he will finally ask for my forgiveness and promise to change, I will be happy to bring him home,” the father told them.

So, too, with the Jewish People — they had to go through the Egyptian exile in order to be worthy of becoming Hashem's nation. Egypt was the *only* country where this process could take place. After suffering at the hands of the Egyptians, the Jewish People cried out to Hashem and were prepared to serve Him. Hashem saw that they were indeed sincere and redeemed them. (*Ben Ish Hai*)

## \* Miracles Eternal

**בְּכֹל דְּוִר וְדוֹר חַיֵּב אֱדָם לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלוֹ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם.**

*In every generation it is man's duty to regard himself as though he (personally) had come out of Egypt.*

One may ask what is the sense of remembering the Exodus of Egypt, if we are still in Exile? The answer lies in answering another question. In presenting the historical significance of the Exodus, the *Haggadah* dramatically declares, “Had not the Holy One, Blessed is He, taken our fathers out of Egypt, then we, our children and grandchildren would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.” Many commentaries throughout the ages have questioned this seemingly exaggerated presumption. After all, history is replete with powerful nations who have come and gone, kingdoms which have risen and collapsed. Why must we assume that without Divine intervention in Egypt, the Jewish People would still be slaves in Egypt to this very day?



*The leader raises the broken matzah and shows it to everyone.*

## Matzah

Why do we eat this matzah? It is because the dough of our fathers did not have time to ferment before the King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed is He, revealed Himself to them and redeemed them at once, as it says: “They baked the dough which they had brought out of Egypt into unleavened cakes, because it did not ferment; for they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay, nor had they prepared any provision for their journey.”

*The leader raises the marmor and shows it to everyone.*

## Marmor

Why do we eat this bitter herb? It is because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our fathers in Egypt, as it says: “They made life bitter for them with hard labor, with clay and bricks, and with all kinds of labor in the field, whatever work tasks they performed were oppressive.”

In every generation it is man's duty to regard himself as though he personally had come out of Egypt, as it says: “You shall tell your son on that day: This is on account of what Hashem did for me when I came out of Egypt.” It was not only our fathers whom the Holy One, Blessed is He, redeemed from slavery; we, too, were redeemed with them, as it says: “He took us out from there so that He might take us and give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers.”

*The matzot are covered and everyone raises their cup of wine until the end of the festival.* Therefore it is our duty to thank and praise, pay tribute and glorify, exalt and honor, and acclaim the One Who performed all these miracles for our fathers and for us. He took us from slavery to freedom, from bondage to redemption, from grief to joy, from mourning to a festival, and from darkness to a great light. We will recite before Him, Halleluyah!

## מִצְדָּה

מִצְדָּה זוֹ שְׂאֵמְרָנוּ אוֹכְלִים עַל שׁוּם מִדָּה עַל שׁוּם שְׂלֵא הִסְפִּיק בְּעַמְּקֵי שַׁל אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לְהִדְמִיק עַר שְׁנֹגְלָה עֲלֵיהֶם מְלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא וְנֹאֲלֵם מִמֶּה. שְׂאֵמְרָנוּ: וְלֵאפוּ אֶת־הַבֶּצֶק אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵיאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם עֲגַת מַצּוֹת כִּי לֹא נִמְצָא בִּי נוֹדָשׁ מִמִּצְרַיִם וְלֹא יָכֹל לְהִתְמַדְּמָה וְגַם עֲרֵדָה לֹא עָשׂוּ: לְהֵם.

## מָרֹרֶר

מָרֹרֶר זֶה שְׂאֵמְרָנוּ אוֹכְלִים עַל שׁוּם מִדָּה עַל שׁוּם שְׂמִרְרוֹ הַמִּצְרַיִם אֶת־חַיֵּינוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם שְׂאֵמְרָנוּ: וְיִמְרְרוּ אֶת־חַיֵּיהֶם בְּעַבְדוּת קָשָׁה בְּחֹמֶר וּבְלִבְנִים וּבְכָל־עַבְדוּת בְּשִׂדָּה: אֶת כָּל־עַבְדוּתָם אֲשֶׁר עֲבָדוּ בְּרַם בְּפִרְיָהּ.

בְּכָל־דְּוִר וְדוֹר חַיֵּב אֱדָם לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת־ עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלוֹ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם שְׂאֵמְרָנוּ: וְהִמְרַת לִבְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְהוּא לֵאמֹר: בְּעַבְדוּת זֶה עָשִׂיתָ יי לִי בְּצִמְרָתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם. שְׂלֵא אֶת־ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ בְּלִבְךָ גָּאֵל הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֵלֵינוּ אִתָּה אִתָּנוּ גָּאֵל עַמְּקֹתֵם שְׂאֵמְרָנוּ: וְאוֹרְנוּ הוֹצֵיאוּ מִשָּׁם לְמַעַן תִּבְרֵא אֵתֵנוּ לְתֵר לְנוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁפַּע לְאַבְרָהָם.

גַּאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַד לְעֵת הַסֵּוֹף יִשְׂאֵמְרָנוּ חַיֵּבִים לְהוֹדוֹת. לְהֵלֵל. לְשַׁבֵּחַ לְפָאֵר. לְרוֹמֵם לְהַדְרֵה. וּלְקַלֵּס. לְמַר שְׂעִישָׁה לְאַבְתְּרֵינוּ וְלֵנוּ אֶת־כָּל־הַנִּסִּים וְהַמִּוִּפְאֵוֹת הַיְחִידִים הַקְדוֹשִׁים וְהַמְשֻׁבָּחִים לְנֹאֲלָה. וּמִעוֹן לְשִׁמְחָה. וּמֵאֲבֵל לְיוֹם טוֹב: וּמֵאֲפֵלָה לְאוֹר גְּדוֹל. וְנֵאמַר לְפָנוּי תְּלִלוּתָהּ:

## Mishna Pesachim: Chapter 10

1

On the eve of Passover [from] close to [the time of] the afternoon offering, no one must eat until nightfall. Even the poorest person in Israel must not eat [on the night of Passover] unless he reclines. And they must give him no fewer than four cups of wine, even [if he receives relief] from the charity plate.

2

They pour the first cup [of wine] for [the leader of the seder]. The House of Shammai say: He recites a blessing for the day [first], and then recites a blessing over the wine. But the House of Hillel say: He recites a blessing over the wine [first], and then recites a blessing for the day.

3

[Then] they set [food] before him. He dips the lettuce before he reaches the course following the [unleavened] bread. [Then] they set before him unleavened bread, lettuce, and a mixture of apples, nuts, and wine, and two dishes, although the mixture of apples, nuts, and wine is not compulsory. Rabbi Eliezer bar Tzadok says: It is compulsory. And in the Temple they used to bring before him the body of the Passover-offering.

4

They pour a second cup [of wine] for him. And here the son questions his father. And if the son has insufficient understanding [to question], his father teaches him [to ask]: Why is this night different from all [other] nights? On all [other] nights, we eat leavened and unleavened bread, [but] on this night, [we eat] only unleavened bread. On all [other] nights, we eat all kinds of vegetables, [but] on this night, [we eat only] bitter herbs. On all [other] nights, we eat meat roasted, stewed or boiled, [but] on this night, [we eat] only roasted [meat]. On all [other] nights, we dip [vegetables] once, [but] on this night, we dip [vegetables] twice. And according to the son's intelligence, his father instructs him. He begins [answering the questions] with [the account of Israel's] shame and concludes with [Israel's] glory, and expounds from "My father was a wandering Aramean" until he completes the whole passage.

5

Rabban Gamliel used to say: Whoever does not mention these three things on Passover does not discharge his duty, and these are they: the Passover-offering, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. [The] Passover-offering [is offered] because the Omnipresent One passed over the houses of our ancestors in Egypt. Unleavened bread [is eaten] because our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt. [The] bitter herb is [eaten] because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our ancestors in Egypt. In every generation a person must regard himself as though he personally had gone out of Egypt, as it is said: "And you shall tell your son in that day, saying: 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt.'" Therefore it is our duty to thank, praise, laud, glorify, exalt, honor, bless, extol, and adore Him Who performed all these miracles for our ancestors and us; He brought us forth from bondage into freedom, from sorrow into joy, from mourning into festivity, from darkness into great light, and from servitude into redemption. Therefore let us say before Him, Hallelujah!

6

Up until which point should he recite? The House of Shammai says: Up to 'as a happy mother of children'. The House of Hillel says: Up to 'flint stone into a water-spring', and conclude with the blessing of redemption. Rabbi Tarfon says: 'who redeemed us and our ancestors from Egypt', but without a concluding blessing. Rabbi Akiva says: 'O YHVH our God and God of our ancestors-- may we come to reach other seasons and festivals in peace, joyful in the rebuilding of your city, and jubilant in your Temple service, where we will eat from the offerings and Passover sacrifices etc.' until 'Bless you YHVH, Redeemer of Israel.

7

They mix a second cup; he blesses his meal. [The] fourth [cup] is concluded with Hallel, which he says with the [concluding] blessing. Between these cups, if he wishes to drink, he may drink. Between the third and the fourth [cups], he may not drink.

8

They may not add an afikoman after the Pesach offering. If a few of them changed [locations], they may eat. If all of them [changed locations], they may not eat. Rabbi Yossi says: if they nod off, they may eat. If they fall asleep, they may not eat.

9

The Pesach offering: after midnight, it impurifies the hands. The disposed or the leftover [Pesach offering] impurify the hands. [If] he recites a blessing over the Pesach offering, he exempts the [blessing] for [another] sacrifice. If he recites a blessing over a sacrifice, he has not exempted [the blessing] for the Pesach offering, according to opinion of Rabbi Yishmael. Rabbi Akiva says: neither this or that [blessing] exempts the other.

1) Ex. 12:8-9

“And they shall eat the meat in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat it not raw, nor boil with water, but roast it with fire; its head with its legs, and with its inner parts.”

2) Pesach 10:3

“MISHNAH. THEY THEN SET [IT] BEFORE HIM. HE DIPS THE LETTUCE BEFORE YET HE HAS REACHED THE AFTERCOURSE OF THE BREAD. THEY SET BEFORE HIM MAZZAH, LETTUCE [HAZERETH], AND HAROSETH AND TWO DISHES,

3) Talmud 115b

“Why do we remove the table? — The School of R. Jannai said: So that the children may perceive [the unusual proceeding] and enquire [its reasons]. Abaye was sitting before Rabbah, [when] he saw the tray taken up from before him. Said he to them: We have not yet eaten, and they have [already] come [and] removed the tray from before us! Said Rabbah to him: You have exempted us from reciting, ‘Why [is this night] different?’<sup>17</sup>

4) Dt. 16:2

“You shall therefore sacrifice the Passover to the Lord your God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the Lord shall choose to place his name there.”

5) 2 Ch. 35:13

“And they roasted the paschal lamb with fire according to the ordinance; but the other holy offerings they boiled in pots, and in cauldrons, and in pans, and carried them speedily to all the people.”

6) Talmud Pes. 114b

“What are the two dishes?-Said R. Huna: Beet and rice.....Hezekiah said: Even a fish and the egg on it.R. Joseph said: Two kinds of meat are necessary, one in memory of the Passover-offering and the second in memory of the hagigah.<sup>17</sup> Rabina said: Even a bone and [its] broth.”

7) Ex. 6:6

בִּזְרוֹעַ נְטִיף                      Shank bone - זרוע

8) Micah 6:4

“For I brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.”

9) Lev. 7:12

“If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mixed with oil, of fine flour, fried.

10) Pes. 2:6

“MISHNAH. AND THESE ARE THE HERBS WITH WHICH A MAN DISCHARGES HIS OBLIGATION ON PASSOVER:<sup>1</sup> WITH LETTUCE [HAZARETH]. WITH TAMKA, [a kind of Cheveril-Chervil is a delicate culinary herb used frequently in French cuisine. A member of the parsley family, chervil has a mild flavor with hints of liquorice] WITH H A R H A B I N A, [a kind of creeper-- a plant, such as the ivy or periwinkle, that grows by creeping:] WITH ENDIVES [‘ULSHIN--Endive is a leafy green in the chicory family] AND WITH MAROR. [literally bitter,] THE LAW IS COMPLIED WITH BY [EATING THEM] BOTH MOIST [FRESH] AND DRY, BUT NOT PRESERVED [IN VINEGAR], NOR STEWED NOR BOILED. AND THEY COMBINE TO THE SIZE OF AN OLIVE.

11) Pesah 10:3

THOUGH THE HAROSETH IS NOT COMPULSORY. R. ELEAZAR SON OF R. ZADOK SAID: IT IS COMPULSORY.”

12) **Pesachim 116a**

“Why is it a religious requirement? R. Levi said: In memory of the apple-tree; [Under which the Israelite women in Egypt gave birth to their children] R. Johanan said: In memory of the day. [Wit which they made bricks.] Abaye observed: Therefore one must make it acrid and thicken it: make it acrid, in memory of the apple-tree; and thicken it, in memory of the day. It was taught in accordance with R. Johanan: The condiments [Which are mixed in the haroseth.] are in memory of the straw; [Just as the straw was kneaded into the clay. and] the haroseth [itself] is a reminder of the day. R. Eleazar son of R. Zadok said: Thus did the grocers<sup>10</sup> cry, ‘Come and buy ingredients for your religious requirements.’”



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## Gamaliel—He Taught Saul of Tarsus

THE crowd stood in hushed silence. Just moments earlier, they had almost killed the apostle Paul. Also known as Saul of Tarsus, he had been rescued by Roman troops and now faced the people from a stairway near the temple in Jerusalem.

Motioning with his hand for silence, Paul began to speak in Hebrew, saying: “Men, brothers and fathers, hear my defense to you now. . . . I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but educated in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strictness of the ancestral Law, being zealous for God just as all of you are this day.”—Acts 22:1-3.

With his life in danger, why did Paul open his defense by saying that he had been educated by Gamaliel? Who was Gamaliel, and what was involved in being taught by him? Did this training influence Saul even after he became the Christian apostle Paul?

### Who Was Gamaliel?

Gamaliel was a well-known Pharisee. He was the grandson of Hillel the Elder, who had founded one of the two great schools of thought within Pharisaic Judaism.\* Hillel's approach was considered more tolerant than that of his rival, Shammai. After the destruction of Jerusalem's temple in 70 C.E., Bet Hillel (the House of Hillel) was preferred to Bet Shammai (the House of Shammai). The House of Hillel became the official expression of Judaism, since all other sects disappeared with the temple's destruction. The decisions of Bet Hillel are often the basis for Jewish law in the Mishnah, which became the foundation of the Talmud, and Gamaliel's influence apparently was a major factor in its dominance.

Gamaliel was so esteemed that he was the first to be called rabban, a title higher than that of rabbi. In fact, Gamaliel became such a highly respected individual that the Mishnah says of him: “When Rabban Gamaliel the elder died the glory of the Torah ceased, and purity and saintliness [lit. “separation”] perished.”—Sotah 9:15.

### Taught by Gamaliel—How?

When the apostle Paul told the crowd in Jerusalem that he was ‘educated at the feet of Gamaliel (what did he mean? What was involved in being a disciple of a

feet of Gamaliel, what did he mean? What was involved in being a disciple of a teacher like Gamaliel?

Regarding such training, Professor Dov Zlotnick of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America writes: “The accuracy of the oral law, hence its reliability, depends almost entirely on the master-disciple relationship: the care taken by the master in teaching the law and the intentness of the disciple in learning it. . . . Disciples were, therefore, urged to sit at the feet of the scholars . . . ‘and drink their words with thirst.’”—Avot 1:4, the Mishnah.

In his book *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, Emil Schürer sheds light on the methods of first-century rabbinic teachers. He writes: “The more famous Rabbis often assembled about them in great numbers, youths desirous of instruction, for the purpose of making them thoroughly acquainted with the much ramified and copious ‘oral law.’ . . . The instruction consisted of an indefatigable continuous exercise of the memory. . . . The teacher brought before his pupils several legal questions for their decision and let them answer them or answered them himself. The pupils were also allowed to propose questions to the teacher.”

In the view of the rabbis, the stakes for the pupils were much higher than merely receiving a passing grade. Those studying under such teachers were warned: “Whoever forgets a single thing from what he has learned—Scripture reckons it to him as if he has become liable for his life.” (Avot 3:8) The greatest praise was bestowed upon a student who was like “a plastered well, which does not lose a drop of water.” (Avot 2:8) Such was the sort of training that Paul, then known by his Hebrew name, Saul of Tarsus, received from Gamaliel.

## The Spirit of Gamaliel’s Teachings

In keeping with Pharisaic teaching, Gamaliel promoted belief in the oral law. He thus placed greater emphasis on the traditions of the rabbis than on inspired Scripture. (Matthew 15:3-9) The Mishnah quotes Gamaliel as saying: “Provide yourself with a teacher [a rabbi] and free yourself of doubt, for you must not give an excess tithe through guesswork.” (Avot 1:16) This meant that when the Hebrew Scriptures did not explicitly say what to do, a person was not to use his own reasoning or follow his conscience to make a decision. Instead, he was to find a qualified rabbi who would make the decision for him. According to Gamaliel, only in this way would an individual avoid sinning.—Compare Romans 14:1-12.

However, Gamaliel was generally noted for a more tolerant, liberal attitude in his religious legal rulings. For example, he showed consideration for women when he ruled that he would “permit a wife to remarry on the testimony of a single witness [to her husband’s death].” (Yevamot 16:7, the Mishnah) Additionally, to protect a divorcée, Gamaliel introduced a number of restrictions into the issue of a letter of divorce.

This spirit is also seen in Gamaliel's dealings with the early followers of Jesus Christ. The book of Acts relates that when other Jewish leaders sought to kill Jesus' apostles whom they had arrested for preaching, "a certain man rose in the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a Law teacher esteemed by all the people, and gave the command to put the men outside for a little while. And he said to them: 'Men of Israel, pay attention to yourselves as to what you intend to do respecting these men. . . . I say to you, Do not meddle with these men, but let them alone; . . . otherwise, you may perhaps be found fighting actually against God.'" Gamaliel's advice was heeded, and the apostles were released.—Acts 5:34-40.

## What Did It Mean for Paul?

Paul had been trained and educated by one of the greatest rabbinic teachers of the first century C.E. No doubt the apostle's reference to Gamaliel caused the crowd in Jerusalem to pay special attention to his speech. But he spoke to them about a Teacher far superior to Gamaliel—Jesus, the Messiah. It was now as a disciple of Jesus, not of Gamaliel, that Paul addressed the crowd.—Acts 22:4-21.

Did training by Gamaliel influence Paul's teaching as a Christian? Likely, the stringent instruction in Scripture and Jewish law proved useful to Paul as a Christian teacher. Yet, Paul's divinely inspired letters found in the Bible clearly show that he rejected the essence of Gamaliel's Pharisaic belief. Paul directed his fellow Jews and all others, not to the rabbis of Judaism or to man-made traditions, but to Jesus Christ.—Romans 10:1-4.

If Paul had continued to be a disciple of Gamaliel, he would have enjoyed great prestige. Others from Gamaliel's circle helped to shape the future of Judaism. For instance, Gamaliel's son Simeon, perhaps a fellow student of Paul, played a major role in the Jewish revolt against Rome. After the destruction of the temple, Gamaliel's grandson Gamaliel II restored the authority of the Sanhedrin, moving it to Yavneh. Gamaliel II's grandson Judah Ha-Nasi was the compiler of the Mishnah, which has become the foundation stone of Jewish thought until our day.

As a student of Gamaliel, Saul of Tarsus might have become very prominent in Judaism. Yet, concerning such a career, Paul wrote: "What things were gains to me, these I have considered loss on account of the Christ. Why, for that matter, I do indeed also consider all things to be loss on account of the excelling value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. On account of him I have taken the loss of all things and I consider them as a lot of refuse, that I may gain Christ."—Philippians 3:7, 8.

By putting his career as a Pharisee behind him and becoming a follower of

Jesus Christ, Paul was making practical application of his former teacher's advice to guard against being "found fighting actually against God." By ceasing

his persecution of Jesus' disciples, Paul stopped fighting against God. Instead, by becoming a follower of Christ, he became one of "God's fellow workers."— 1 Corinthians 3:9.

The message of true Christianity continues to be proclaimed by zealous Witnesses of Jehovah in our day. Like Paul, many of these have made dramatic changes in their lives. Some have even given up promising careers in order to have a greater share in the Kingdom-preaching activity, truly a work "from God." (Acts 5:39) How happy they are that they have followed Paul's example rather than that of his former teacher, Gamaliel!

**[Footnote]**

Some sources say that Gamaliel was the son of Hillel. The Talmud is unclear on this matter.

**[Picture on page 28]**

As the apostle Paul, Saul of Tarsus proclaimed the good news to people of the nations