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# DAF KESHER

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## DVAR TORAH THE DONKEY AND THE DOG

Two non-kosher animals get special mention in our Parshah, the donkey and the dog.

There is a mitzvah to redeem a first-born donkey (Shemot 13:13). Through a number of mitzvot involving the first-borns we express our thanks to Hashem for sparing the first-born Jews and for saving us by striking down the first-born Egyptians. First born cattle and sheep are to be offered as sacrifices; first born children are to be redeemed with money; and first born donkeys are to be redeemed with sheep. Why is the donkey singled out among the impure animals for this mitzvah? One of Rashi's answers is that when the Jews left Egypt, the silver and gold of Egypt was carried out on donkeys.

The dog is also singled out in our Parshah. On the night of the plague of the first-born the contrast between the Children of Israel and the Egyptians was heightened. No Egyptian house escaped death, and, as Moshe told Pharaoh, "There would be a great scream that never was and never would be" (Shemot 11:6). That was in Egyptian areas, but where the Jews lived there was total silence. "No dog will whet its tongue against man or animal so you should know that Hashem discriminates between Egypt and Israel" (Shemot 11:7). No dog barked on the night of the plague of the first-born.

In Parshat Mishpatim we find that Hashem rewarded the dog's silence. Hashem says, "Meat in the field, torn [by a wild animal], do not eat, לִכְלָב תְּשַׁלְּכֶנּוּ אוֹתוֹ – throw it to the dog" (Shemot 22:30). Rashi on that verse comments: "The Torah teaches us that Hashem does not withhold the reward of any creature. For it says, 'No dog will whet its tongue against man or animal,' and Hashem said, 'Give it its reward.'" The dog was rewarded with non-kosher meat.

There is a contrast with the "rewards" that these two animals receive. The donkey merits a positive mitzvah, to redeem the first-born donkey with a sheep; whereas the dog benefits from a negative mitzvah, not eating a treifah, one of the types of prohibited meat. Each of these rewards parallels the animal's participation in the Exodus. The donkey helped out by carrying the gold and silver and merited a positive mitzvah; the dog did not interfere with the silence of the Jewish midnight on the night of the Exodus, so he merited the benefits of a negative mitzvah.

Not only do these midrashim resolve difficulties in the Chumash – explaining why the dog was singled out for treifah meat and the donkey for the mitzvah of redeeming the first born – they also teach us two types of praiseworthy behavior. We learn from the dog not to interfere, even inadvertently, with something great, not to break the silence. We find ourselves in a similar position when others around us need silence (for davening or singing or concentration) and we must refrain from speaking. The donkey teaches us to go a step further. When others around us are involved in great things we should try in some way to help out. Even if it means just carrying something, we should find our way to participate, even tangentially, in something great.

Also in this week's Daf Kesher: Source Guide – "A Bundle of Hyssop" · "Magnetic Attraction," by Rabbi Fyvel Shuster

## SOURCE GUIDE: A BUNDLE OF HYSSOP

The Children of Israel were told by Hashem to sprinkle the blood of the first Pesach sacrifice on the two sideposts and the lintel of the doors of their homes using a bundle of eizov. Eizov is usually translated as hyssop. Why were they to use hyssop and why was it to be bundled? This source guide is based on the answers that appear in an essay in the Shem Mishmuel on Parshat Bo.

### A. Bundle of Hyssop

Hashem commanded the Children of Israel to sprinkle the blood of the Pesach sacrifice using hyssop:

<p><b>1. Shemot 12:21-22</b>                  (21) Moshe called to the elders of Israel and said to them:                  “Pull and take for yourselves a sheep for each family and slaughter the Pesach.                  (22) And take a bundle of hyssop and dip it in the blood in the container and reach with it to the lintel and the two doorposts from the blood in the container and as for you, no man should leave the door of his house until the morning.”</p>	<p><b>שמות יב: כא-כב</b>                  (כא) ויקרא משה לכל זקני ישראל ויאמר אליהם משכו וקחו לכם צאן למשפחתיכם וישחטו הפסח.                  (כב) ולקחתם אגדת אזוב וטבלתם בדם אשר בסף והגעתם אל המשקוף ואל שתי המזוזות מן הדם אשר בסף ואתם לא תצאו איש מפתח ביתו עד בקר.</p>
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Why did Hashem command to dip the blood in hyssop? The Zohar offers an answer:

<p><b>2. Zohar Part II 35b</b>                  Why a bundle of hyssop? It was in order to destroy the spirit of impurity from within them.</p>	<p><b>זוהר חלק ב' לה:</b>                  אגודת אזוב למה? בגין לבער רוח מסאבא מבינייהו.</p>
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The Zohar's answer leaves the author of the Shem Mishmuel with two questions:

- Why was hyssop effective in destroying the spirit of impurity?
- Why was a bundle of hyssop needed?

He says: Even though there might be a mystical explanation, he wants to offer a straightforward explanation based on verses and midrashim.

### B. Why Hyssop?

Hyssop appears in conjunction with two other mitzvot. Hyssop is part of the purification process for a person who came in contact with the dead. This reinforces the Zohar's approach that hyssop is a purifying agent:

<p><b>3. Bamidbar 19:18</b>                  A pure person should take hyssop and dip it in water and sprinkle it on the tent and the vessels and the people who were there and on one who touched a bone or a murdered corpse or a dead body or a grave.</p>	<p><b>במדבר יט: יח</b>                  ולקח אזוב וטבל במים איש טהור והנה על האהל ועל כל הכלים ועל הנפשות אשר היו שם ועל הנגע בעצם או בחלל או במת או בקבר.</p>
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The metzora – one struck with a kind plague that the Torah defines with very specific detail in Parshiot Tazria and Metzora – must also use hyssop as part of his purification process:

<p><b>4. Vayikra 14:6</b>                  He should take the live bird and the cedar wood and the red thread and the hyssop and dip them and the live bird in the blood of the slaughtered bird along with the living (spring) water.</p>	<p><b>ויקרא יד: ו</b>                  את הצפר החיה יקח אתה ואת עץ הארז ואת שני התולעת ואת האזוב וטבל אותם ואת הצפר החיה בדם הצפר השחטה על המים החיים.</p>
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Chazal explain the significance of hyssop for the metzora, whose plague was brought about most often through speaking negatively about others:

<p><b>5. Rashi on Vayikra 14:4</b>                  “Cedar wood” – because the plagues come about because of arrogance.                  “A red thread and hyssop” – What is his remedy so he gets</p>	<p><b>רש"י על ויקרא יד: ד</b>                  “ועץ ארז” – לפי שהנגעים באין על גסות הרוח.                  “ושני תולעת ואזוב” – מה תקנתו ויתרפא?</p>
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healed? He should lower himself from his arrogance like a worm (תולעת, the word for red, is also the word for worm, as in Tehillim 22:7) and hyssop.	ישפיל עצמו מגאותו כתולעת וכאזוב.
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Cedar and hyssop are the two edges of the spectrum in the world of trees, highest and lowest:

<b>6. I Melachim 5:13</b> He (King Shlomo) spoke about the trees, from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop coming out of the wall.	<b>מלכים א' ה:יג</b> וַיְדַבֵּר עַל הָעֵצִים מִן הָאֶרֶז אֲשֶׁר בְּלִבְנוֹן וְעַד הָאֲזוֹב אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא בְקִיר ...
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Impurity, says the author of the Shem Mishmuel, is the result of Divine hiddenness. If the Divine light was revealed and shone brightly there would be no place for impurity. It would “run away and melt like wax before a fire.” Arrogance hides the Divine revelation:

<b>7. Sotah 5a</b> Rav Chisda said – and according to some it was Mar Ukva: Any person who has within him arrogance – the Holy One, blessed be He, says, “He and I cannot live together in the world.”	<b>טושה ה.</b> אמר רב חסדא ואיתימא מר עוקבא: כל אדם שיש בו גסות הרוח – אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא “אין אני והוא יכולין לדור בעולם.”
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This is what happened in Egypt. There was a great Divine revelation at the time of the redemption from Egypt. The Jews, nullified before Hashem’s Presence, experienced great humility. This was reflected by the hyssop they used to place the blood on their doorposts and lintel.

**C. Why a Bundle of Hyssop?**

For the other two types of purification, hyssop alone is sufficient. Why, asks the author of the Shem Mishmuel, was there a need on the eve of the Exodus for a **bundle** of hyssop, an **אגודת אזוב**?

The starting point of his answer is the assertion that unity was necessary for Israel to receive the Torah, and humility was necessary for them to be united:

<b>8. Rashi on Shemot 19:2</b> “They traveled from Refidim” – Why did the Torah need to repeat the name of where they traveled from? Was it not already written that they encamped in Refidim? Rather, it was to connect their traveling from Refidim to their coming to the Sinai Desert. Just like at their coming they were in a state of repentance, so when they traveled from Refidim they were in a state of repentance (Mechilta). “Israel encamped there” – [The shift to a singular verb indicates that Israel was] like one person with one heart. But all of their other encampments were with complaining and dissent (Mechilta).	<b>רש"י על שמות יט:ב</b> “ויסעו מרפידים” – למה הוצרך לחזור ולפרש מהיכן נסעו והלא כבר כתב שברפידים היו חונים? בידוע שמשם נסעו. אלא, להקיש נסיעתן מרפידים לביאתן למדבר סיני. מה ביאתן למדבר סיני בתשובה אף נסיעתן מרפידים בתשובה (מכילתא). “ויחן שם ישראל” – כאיש אחד בלב אחד, אבל שאר כל החניות בתרעומות ובמחלוקת (מכילתא).
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However, as much as Israel’s humility was essential for Israel to be unified, they also needed loftiness. Receiving the Torah demanded not only self-negation but an appreciation of the greatness of being a Jew. Israel, quotes the author of the Shem Mishmuel, is even greater than the ministering angels.

How were they able to hold on to both of these qualities? How could they be both humble and lofty? Each person needed to be individually humble, negating himself to Klal Yisrael and to Hashem. But each Jew’s connection to Klal Yisrael then made him lofty. Israel as a collective is lofty, elevated, and creates a dwelling place for the Divine Presence in this world. This duality is illustrated through bundling the hyssop. We as individuals are as lowly as hyssop, but we join ourselves to Klal Yisrael and our loftiness leads us to great things. This is how Israel, already on the eve of the Exodus, prepared for the Giving of the Torah, through the combination of individual lowliness and collective elevation.

## MAGNETIC ATTRACTION BY RABBI FYVEL SHUSTER

When Hashem commanded the Jewish People to take a sheep for the Korban Pesach (the Pesach Sacrifice) He used two terms: “משכו וקחו”, pull and take” (Shemos 12:21). Rashi (on Shemos 12:6), drawing on the Medresh, explains that each of these verbs refers to a different action: “משכו ידיכם מאלילים – pull back your hands from idolatry – וקחו לכם צאן של מצוה – and take the sheep of the mitzvah.”

The original text of the Medresh (Shemos Rabbah 16:2) goes into greater detail. It says that the Jewish People found it very difficult to separate from avodah zarah (idolatry). “When I wanted to take them out of Egypt,” said Hashem, “I told them, ‘Every man should cast away the disgusting idols from before his eyes, and you should not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt’ (Yechezkel 20:6-7). Hashem sent Moshe to tell them that they must separate from avodah zarah in order to be redeemed.

The state of Am Yisrael, even right before leaving Egypt, seems to have been extremely low; they were not able to break away from avodah zarah. So it seems incongruous, asks the Gerrer Rebbe (Harav Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter, דצ״ל, 1847-1905, in the Sfas Emes on Parshas Bo 5639), that the Jewish People transformed so quickly immediately after the Exodus. How did they shift from being so attached to idolatry, to running after Hakadosh Baruch Hu with such zeal that “וגם צידה לא עשו להם” – they didn’t even prepare food for the trip” (Shemos 12:39)?

He answers that this tells us something essential about the nature of the Jew. The Jew is really constantly drawn to Hashem. Interference may cause this to disappear. But when the interference is gone they return to their natural attracted state.

This can be compared to the image used by the Ramchal (Harav Moshe Chaim Luzzato, דצ״ל, 1707-1746) at the end of the first chapter of Mesilas Yesharim. He describes a Jew who, through his avodah, reaches a state where he’s drawn to Hashem like metal is drawn to a magnet. But the connection between metal and a magnet can be interfered with by a non-magnetic barrier. Nonetheless when the interference is removed and they are allowed to return to their natural state they immediately cling together.

This was what happened to Am Yisrael and Hakadosh Baruch Hu immediately after the Jews left Egypt. Even though they were artificially separated in Egypt, and Israel found it difficult to separate from avodah zarah; when they actually pulled away from idolatry and offered the Korban Pesach the interference was removed and the magnetic attraction returned. Then, Israel clung to Hashem and ran after Him into the desert.

### שבת שלום ומבורך

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The following digital Torah resources have been extremely helpful in researching and preparing the Shapell's Daf Keshet:  
DBS – Hataklitor Hatorani, Otzar Hachochmah, the Bar Ilan Responsa Project, Hebrewbooks.org, and the Tanach section of Chabad.org.

**We continue to pray for a refuah shleimah, a complete healing, for all those wounded in the attacks against our People.**