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# DAF KESHER

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## DVAR TORAH THE CONVERT'S PESACH SACRIFICE

The Torah not only commands the convert to offer the Pesach sacrifice, it makes a special point of equating the convert with the native born Jew. "When a convert will live among you and make a Pesach sacrifice to Hashem he must circumcise all males [in his household] and then approach to make it. He is like the native in the land ..." (Shemot 12:48). Why does the Torah add the seemingly repetitive "He is like the native in the land"?

Rashi explains: "Perhaps one might have thought that anyone who converts should immediately offer a Pesach sacrifice. The Torah therefore teaches us, 'He is like the native in the land.' Just like the native born brings it on the fourteenth, so the convert brings it on the fourteenth."

Rashi's comment is surprising. Had the Torah not told us that a convert's Pesach sacrifice is identical to a native Jew's, why would we have thought that every convert should offer a Pesach sacrifice immediately upon conversion?

In order to understand Rashi's comment, Harav Yaakov Kamenetsky, *אמת ליעקב פרשת בא זצ"ל*, collects a number of observations about the Pesach sacrifice:

1. Anyone who is a habitual idol worshipper is forbidden to eat of it (Rashi on Shemot 12:43, quoting the Mechilta).
2. In the times of King Chizkiyahu, the first sacrifice the nation offered after they refrained from idol worship was the Pesach (Divrei Hayamim II 30:81). The Gemara tells us to what lengths they went to make sure that the Pesach sacrifice would follow closely after their national repentance (see Pesachim 56a).
3. Similarly, the nation's repentance in the time of King Yoshiahu was expressed through offering the Pesach sacrifice (Divrei Hayamim II 35:1). Immediately preceding this Pesach sacrifice King Yoshiahu removed all idolatry from any lands where the People of Israel dwelled (Divrei Hayamim II 34:33).
4. In the book of Ezra, when the nation separated from the impurity of the foreign nations, they offered the Pesach sacrifice (Ezra 6:19). "... Anyone who separated from the defilement of the nations of the land ..." ate of the Pesach sacrifice (Ezra 6:21).

Rav Yaakov suggests that the Pesach is a sacrifice offered for pulling away from idolatry. This has its origins in the first Pesach sacrifice, as the Torah says, "Pull and take for yourselves a sheep" (Shemot 12:21), and the Sages explain – "Pull your hands away from idolatry" (Mekhilta on the verse). This explains Rashi's comment. One might therefore have thought that anyone who converts – anyone who distances himself from idolatry – must bring a Pesach sacrifice immediately upon conversion. The Torah therefore tells us that the convert's Pesach sacrifice is brought along with everyone else's. But the assumption might not be rejected. Perhaps everyone's Pesach sacrifice on the fifteenth of Nisan celebrates distancing ourselves from idolatry – even subtle forms of it. Perhaps on Pesach night everyone goes through a yearly conversion (the Chatam Sofer is quoted as saying this): "We were at first idolaters ... And now G-d has brought us close to His service."

Also in this week's Daf Keshet: [Source Guide – The Splitting of the Rivers](#) · ["Spring Is upon Us," by Rabbi Yitzchak Hirshfeld](#)

## SOURCE GUIDE: THE SPLITTING OF THE RIVERS

Kriat Yam Suf, the splitting of the Sea, is considered one of our greatest miracles. It was a miracle of grand proportions. The entire Jewish People was saved from the great Egyptian army; and the Sea split before our greatest prophet Moshe Rabbeinu, saving the Jews and destroying their enemies. Rav Yosef (Chullin 7a) therefore voices his surprise at how a river split before Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair. He was an individual, living about thirty generations after Moshe, no one was pursuing him; yet he managed to get the river split for himself and two other people, one of them a gentile. The author of the Noam Elimelech discusses this anecdote and shows how it follows a principle of how miracles work.

### A. Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair and the Ginai River; Eliahu, Elisha, and the Yarden

Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair was on the way to do a mitzvah, redeeming captives, but a river got in the way:

<p><b>1. Chullin 7a</b></p> <p>... Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair was going to fulfill the mitzvah of redeeming captives. He encountered the Ginai River, and said to it: "Ginai, split your waters and I will pass through you!" The river replied: "You are going to do the will of your Master and I am going to do the will of my Master. You might or might not be successful, whereas I will definitely do my Master's Will." Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair replied: "If you do not split I'll decree that no water will ever pass through you, forever." The river split for him. There was a man there who was carrying wheat for Pesach matzot. Rabbi Pinchas said: "Split for him also, for he is involved in a mitzvah." The river split for him. There was a travelling merchant who had accompanied them. Rabbi Pinchas said: "Split for him also so he should not say, 'That is the way they treat a fellow traveler?'"</p> <p>Rav Yosef said: How much greater is that man, greater than Moshe and six-hundred thousand; for the Sea split once and here the river split three times." Perhaps (asks the narrator of the Gemara) here also it only split once (and Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair just asked for the river to stay split). Rather, "[he was as great] as Moshe and the six-hundred thousand."</p>	<p><b>חולין ז.</b></p> <p>... רבי פנחס בן יאיר הוה קאזיל לפדיון שבוין. פגע ביה בגינאי נהרא. אמר ליה: "גינאי, חלוק לי מימך ואעבור בך!" אמר ליה: "אתה הולך לעשות רצון קונך ואני הולך לעשות רצון קוני. אתה ספק עושה ספק אי אתה עושה, אני ודאי עושה." אמר ליה: "אם אי אתה חולק גוזרני עליך שלא יעברו בך מים לעולם." חלק ליה. הוה ההוא גברא דהוה דארי חיטי לפיסחא. אמר ליה: "חלוק ליה נמי להאי, דבמצוה עסיק." חלק ליה. הוה ההוא טייעא דלווה בהדיהו. אמר ליה: "חלוק ליה נמי להאי דלא לימא 'כך עושים לבני לוייה?'" חלק ליה.</p> <p>אמר רב יוסף: "כמה נפיש גברא ממשא ושתין רבוון. דאילו התם חד זימנא והכא תלתא זימנין." ודלמא הכא נמי חדא זימנא, אלא "... כמה ושתין רבוון."</p>
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Even after the Gemara clarifies the correct version of Rav Yosef's exclamation – he was not greater than but as great as Moshe – the river splitting before Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair is still an extremely surprising miracle.

### B. Opening the Gates

The author of the Noam Elimelech, Harav Elimelech of Lizhensk, זצ"ל (1717-1787, Poland) asks a simple question about Rav Yosef's suggestion, that Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair was in some way greater than Moshe because he had the Ginai River split three times whereas Moshe only split the Sea once. Why does that indicate Rabbi Pinchas's greatness? Maybe Moshe only needed to split the Sea once and Rabbi Pinchas needed to split the Ginai River three times. Moshe might also have split the Ginai three times if needed.

He answers by explaining a principle about miracles and the people G-d chose to bring them about:

<p><b>6. Noam Elimelech – Likutei Shoshanah</b></p> <p>For the beginning stage of doing a miracle is extremely difficult. But after it was done once later tsaddikim (righteous people) can do it even a number of times – once the gate has been opened.</p>	<p><b>נועם אלימלך - ליקוטי שושנה</b></p> <p>שכל דבר ודבר בתחילתו לפעול איזה נס הוא קשה מאד. אבל כיון שכבר נעשה פעם אחת כבר יכולים הצדיקים שיהיו אחר כך לעשות כזאת אפילו כמה פעמים כיון שנפתח השער.</p>
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After Moshe Rabbeinu opened a miraculous gate through splitting the Sea, other tzaddikim like Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair were able to split rivers even a number of times. This is a new twist of the concept **מעשה** "מעשה" אבות סימן לבנים, "the forefathers' actions are a sign for their descendants." The forefathers pave the way for their descendants to accomplish the same things they did themselves. Based on this, the Noam Elimelech has an innovative reading of Rav Yosef's exclamation in the Gemara. How was Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair able to split the River Ginai three times? Once Moshe Rabbeinu split the Sea once, Rabbi Pinchas was able to do it many times. Moshe led the way for subsequent tzaddikim.

This is expressed through a verse in Tehillim that is the headline of the Noam Elimelech's comment:

<p><b>5. Tehillim 66:6</b> He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through a river by foot; there we will rejoice in You.</p>	<p><b>תהילים סו:ו</b> הַפֶּן יִם לְיַפְשָׁה בְּנִהָר יַעֲבְרוּ בְּרִגְלֵ שֶׁם נִשְׂמְחָה בּוֹ.</p>
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It can be read as follows, he says: When Moshe was G-d's agent to turn the sea into dry land; many (like Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair and the two men accompanying him) were able to pass through a river.

### C. Overcoming Obstacles

Perhaps we can suggest a corollary of the Noam Elimelech's principle. Perhaps the original splitting of the Sea not only opened the gates to miraculously splitting bodies of water, but also to the human will that evoked the miracle. The splitting of the Sea also had a human component: Moshe and Israel trusted that G-d loves them and will save them; Nachshon ben Aminadav entered the sea and started walking across it until the water reached his nostrils. Kriat Yam Suf opened up the gates for subsequent generations to model that belief and perseverance:

<p><b>5. Midrash Tehillim Psalm 76</b> Said Rabbi Yehudah bar Ilay: When Israel was standing at the Sea, they were arguing with each other. One said "I will go down first" and another said "I will go down first." In the meantime Nachshon ben Aminadav jumped into the waves of the sea. It is about him that the verse says, "Save me G-d for the water has reached my soul" (Tehillim 68:2).</p>	<p><b>מדרש תהילים מזמור עו</b> א"ר יהודה בר אלעי: בשעה שהיו ישראל עומדין על הים היו עומדין ומדיינין זה עם זה, זה אומר "אני ארד תחלה" וזה אומר "אני ארד תחלה". מתוך כך קפץ נחשון בן עמינדב לתוך גלי הים. ועליו הוא אומר, "הושיעני אלקים כי באו מים עד נפש" (תהלים סח:ב).</p>
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Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair was on the way to redeem captives, but an obstacle stood in the way, the Ginai River; with no bridge or boat available to cross it. When he persevered and didn't give up his mission, Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair opened up for us the gates of perseverance. Once he managed to triumph in his struggle with the river, it is now easier for us to model his conduct and not let obstacles get in the way of serving Hashem.

### For Further Learning:

- A. See Midrash Tanchuma Vayeira Chapter 22, where the Satan makes himself into a river, blocking Avraham's way to the Akeidah, and Avraham calls out to Hashem to dry it up so he can proceed.
- B. See two passages in Tanach where rivers split, with literary ties to the splitting of the Sea. In the third and fourth chapters of Yehoshua, the Children of Israel cross the Yarden on dry land as they enter the Land of Israel (four days before Pesach); and in the second chapter of Melachim II, Eliahu splits the Yarden right before he ascends to Heaven in a fiery chariot. Elisha soon afterwards crosses in the opposite direction.

## SPRING IS UPON US BY RABBI YITZCHAK HIRSHFELD

Spring is upon us! The season of Freedom and Redemption!

Autumn is planting, and winter shows no visible signs of life. Spring brings blossoms and the joy of knowing that there is continuity of life.

Looking at the world from a winter point of view we see decay, the end of life. And from that perspective we sense, perhaps, that our own lives are winter lives. The fleetingly beautiful flowers of summer seem to come to a final and rather ignoble end.

And then comes spring, and we just know that the seeds of our life too will sprout and produce fruit, that the winter decay was but a prelude to a grander, more elevated existence.

The exodus from Egypt, which began on the 15th of Nisan, wasn't completed until seven days later with the splitting of the Red Sea accompanied by its majestic song. "אז ישיר משה" – "Then (at some future time) Moshe and Bnei Yisrael will sing" a song transcending any song conceivable in this world. Chazal teach that that song of the future is the song of תחיית המתים, the resurrection of the dead.

"ה' ימלך לעולם ועד" – "Hashem will reign for all eternity." With these crowning words of the שירה, we proclaim that our this-worldly lives, relative to a glorious spring of rebirth, are in essence winter seeds which are intended to live on and on into eternity. Death is but a winter illusion – G-d's Creation is infinite and unending.

Pesach is soon upon us and the Jewish neshamah yearns to taste the sweet nectar of freedom. But to do so we must know that our redemption is much more than moving from the bonds of slavery to the finitude of a winter existence in עולם הזה. Our very lives are seeds, which will come to a fuller, more spiritualized existence. Seeds, however, do not sprout automatically, without effort. Seeds require sun, water, and nutrients. If we wish to experience the joy of unending blissful communion with Hashem, we need the light of Torah, the nutrients embedded in the 613 commandments.

Pesach is all about belief, אמונה. For many the belief in תחיית המתים is vague, and we may have difficulty relating to the concept. However, the pinnacle of our redemptive experience was reached when our forefathers saw so clearly that this redemption must ultimately lead to an "אז", when we will know that ה' ימלך לעולם ועד.

Pesach is all about אביב, the spring, which brings with it the promise that every well-tended seed will, with G-d's help, turn into a celebration of our being part of Hashem's eternal world of growth.

(Adapted from Hagaon Rav Moshe Shapiro, שליט"א's sefer רעה אמונה.)

שבת שלום ומבורך וחג כשר ושמח !

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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, and Hebrewbooks.org.

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

Our next Daf Keshet will be sent out, בעזרת ה', for Shabbat the 29th of Nisan, May 7th.