



## Taking The Fifth Cup By Hand

*By Rabbi Yoni Mandelstam*

As the school year gets closer to winter break, many students and teachers alike feel themselves asking, "Are we there yet?" Similarly, during the days of vacation, many will experience long car rides, and hear the infamous question from the backseat of the car, "Are we there yet?" In a similar vein, one can imagine a member of Klal Yisrael asking Moshe Rabbeinu in Egypt, "Are we there yet? Isn't it time to leave Egypt already?" These questions stem from the fact that many things in life, including the school year, long car rides, and the redemption process, don't happen immediately, but rather take place in stages. Just as the original redemption process from Egypt took place in stages, so too, the final Geulah, would appear to be taking place in stages.

Parashat Va'Eira includes the four languages of "Geulah<sup>1</sup>," which the Gemara Yerushalmi<sup>2</sup> famously lists as one the sources for the four cups of wine at the Pesach seder. The Torah Temimah<sup>3</sup> in this week's parsha asks as to why we don't drink a fifth cup at the seder in light of the fact that the word "והבאתי" also represents the geulah process, and should therefore warrant a fifth cup of wine at the seder. The Torah Temimah himself explains that we cannot drink the fifth cup, "because we are in the Galut, and the land of Israel is not in our hands. We therefore look at the cup of Eliyahu and hope for the Geulah." The approach of the Torah Temimah would suggest that, nowadays, the fifth cup should indeed be drunk in light of our control over the land of Israel. In fact, Rav Menachem Kasher<sup>4</sup> was of the opinion that, "It is good and proper to drink the fifth cup and recite Hallel over it in light of the fact that we have seen Hashem's miracles in bringing us back to the land." Similarly, Rav Moshe Tzuriel, former Mashgaich of Yeshivat Sha'alvim, also writes that, "Particularly those who live in Israel should drink the fifth cup and thank Hashem for bringing us

back to Israel.<sup>5</sup>" While these contemporary opinions might seem a bit "untraditional," the discussion about drinking a fifth cup at the seder has been taking place since the days of the rishonim.

The Rambam<sup>6</sup> writes that, "The fifth cup is optional but not a requirement." The Ra'avad<sup>7</sup> also presents the opinion that one "Has the permission to drink a fifth cup at the seder corresponding to the word "והבאתי". In the Shulchan Aruch, the Rama<sup>8</sup> writes that, "One may have a fifth cup at the seder, and recite Hallel over it." We see from these sources that the concept of drinking a fifth cup at the seder over some words of Hallel is very much within the Halachic framework. This being said, it is certain that the minhag in America is to only drink four cups, and only pour the fifth cup for Eliyahu without drinking it. The Mishna Berurah<sup>9</sup> records this practice, and writes that, "We pour the fifth cup for Eliyahu, and believe that Hashem will bring the Geulah just as He freed us from Egypt." Although we might passively stare at the fifth cup, perhaps we can now appreciate those who are actively taking the fifth cup into their own hands.

Both the Ramban and Rabeinu Bachya explain the different stages of Geulah from Egypt in their commentaries on this week's parsha as they explain the four distinct words of Geulah. Interestingly, Rabeinu Bachya<sup>10</sup> comments on the word "והבאתי," that, "Just as Hashem took us out of Egypt with miracles, He was going to instantly bring us into Israel if not for our sins in the desert." This comment alludes to the Gemara in Masechet Sanhedrin<sup>11</sup> which states that final redemption can either come, "ahead of time if we are worthy, or slowly if we are unworthy." In a word, it is up to us to bring the Geulah. The more worthy we are, the more likely it is that Mashiach will arrive at a sooner date. At the present time, there are those looking at the fifth cup from their seat at the table as they wait

<sup>1</sup> שמות ו:ו-ח

<sup>2</sup> ירושלמים פסחים י"א

<sup>3</sup> שמות ו:ו

<sup>4</sup> הגדת פסח ארץ-ישראלית עמ' 179

<sup>5</sup> Yeshiva.org

<sup>6</sup> הלכות חמץ ומצה ח"י

<sup>7</sup> שו"ת תמים דעים סימן ל

<sup>8</sup> שו"ע או"ח תפ"א:א

<sup>9</sup> תפ"ס ק"י

<sup>10</sup> שמות ו:ח

<sup>11</sup> צט.

for the Geulah. This is a very praiseworthy level to be on. However, I raise my glass to those individuals living in Israel who are fighting to defend our borders. They are not waiting for the Geulah passively, but are attempting to hasten the Geulah actively. According to many, they are the ones who even have the Halachic right to drink the fifth cup at the seder. We should all be Zocheh to join them soon and usher in Mashiach as soon as possible.

## Gratituted Unveiled: Unraveling The Middah Of

### Hakarat Hatov In Parshat Vaera

*By Rafi Lubetski ('25)*

This week's Parashah, Parashat Va'Eira, focuses on the battle between Moshe and Paroh. Moshe asks Paroh to free the Jews yet Paroh would not relent even after Moshe's insistence that Egypt would be ravaged by plagues if Paroh didn't concede. This can be boiled down to a key difference in their characters, the Middah of Hakarat HaTov. This Middah can be traced all the way back to Adam HaRishon. Adam allowed himself to be persuaded by his wife Chava to eat from the Eitz Hada'at. However when confronted by Hashem, Adam tried to deny his fault, blaming it all on Chava, saying that she was the one who led him astray. This demonstrates a complete lack of Hakarat HaTov. Instead of thanking Hashem for providing him with a wife, Adam blamed Hashem for giving him a wife who led him to sin. We can see from here that the lack of Hakarat HaTov is evident in all human beings and something we all need to work on. Someone who chose not to work on this was Paroh.

Paroh was indebted to the Jews. In Parashat Mikeitz, it was Yosef who interpreted Paroh's dream that Egypt would be ravaged by famine and it was Yosef who set up a system for the Egyptians to survive while simultaneously helping Paroh accumulate all the wealth in Egypt. Furthermore, in Parashat VaYigash, it was Yaakov who blessed Paroh and Rashi adds the Nile, which irrigated all the Egyptian fields, and allowed Paroh and Egypt not only to survive but to prosper. It was two Jewish people who prevented Egypt's demise. Nevertheless, Paroh's complete lack of Hakarat HaTov is evident not even one generation later when the Jewish people are forced into crushing servitude.

Conversely, Moshe is the paradigm of Hakarat HaTov. Moshe didn't hit the water to turn it into blood or create frogs because that water had saved him. Nor did he hit the earth by the

plague of lice, because it was the earth who hid the body of the Egyptian he had killed. Moshe was so careful as to repay an eighty year old debt to an inanimate object. The key difference between Paroh and Moshe is that Paroh felt everything was owed to him while Moshe was the humblest of people and never expected anything from anyone.

Especially in these trying times with the conflict going on in Israel, we should all take a moment to step back and look at our lives so we can realize how much we have to be thankful for and recognize how much we owe to Hashem and the people around us.

## Think Good And It Will Be Good

*By David Bitton ('24)*

This week's Parasha we see Moshe really begin to blossom as the leader of the Jewish people. Ever since he was born, Moshe was always set to be a leader; sources say he was tall, when he was born he had a glowing light as a result of his spiritual greatness, and he was raised in the house of royalty yet still showed concern for his people. The only thing Moshe didn't have going for him was his speech. Why did Hashem have to make Moshe struggle in this area? According to the *Ran* this is so we know that *Bnei Yisrael* wasn't taken out of Mitzrayim because they had a perfect leader. Rather, a leader lacking the most important leadership trait, speech. Despite this, Moshe still manages to give the most famous speech in all of *Tanach* in *Sefer Devarim* when he addresses the Jews before he dies as they prepare to enter *Eretz Yisrael*. Regardless of everything Hashem does for us, we still find ourselves looking for the little things that aren't perfect in our lives and focusing on these minor imperfections. However, if we let go of our shortcomings and revert our focus to the good that Hashem has to offer, not only will we be able to find great success like Moshe Rabbeinu but our previous imperfections will be irrelevant.

## We Will Never Entirely Forget the Torah

*By Rabbi Chaim Jachter*

### A Striking Pasuk!

Devarim 31:21 is a potent Pasuk we ignore at a great loss. This Pasuk stunningly guarantees the Jewish people will not forget

the Torah. Rashi explains, “This is a promise that the Jewish People will never forget the Torah entirely<sup>12</sup>.”

## Torah Predictions

There are multiple reasons why this Pasuk is of monumental importance. First, it is one of many Torah predictions (many of which appear in Sefer Devarim) of entirely unexpected events but has nonetheless materialized. Examples include Hashem’s promise to Avraham Avinu (Bereishit 12:3) that his descendants will bring blessings to the world. The Jewish people have fulfilled it as a whole and as individuals. Yet the Torah (Devarim 4:27) predicts that Jewish people will remain small in number during their Exile. In addition, the Torah (Devarim 4:32-33) prods later generations to consider whether there has ever been a nation that even claims revelation before an entire nation and an entire nation removed from the midst of another nation with great miracles. Indeed, no other nation makes this claim. The Torah (BeMidbar 23:9 and Devarim 33:28) describes the Jewish people as “dwelling alone.” This phrase accurately portrays our destiny as always being somewhat isolated from the rest of humanity. The Torah correctly predicts the land of Israel being desolate after our Exile from the land (Vayikra 26:32-35, Devarim 29:13 and 24). Finally, the Torah forecasts our Exile (Devarim 4:37) and our eventual return (Devarim 30:3-4).

The Torah’s guarantee (in Devarim 31:21) that there will always be some Jews learning Torah and its fulfillment adds to the list of fulfilled predictions. These fulfilled predictions add yet another reason to believe in the Torah as Hashem’s revealed word. How else could the author have accurately predicted these events? The counter-argument that it is a self-fulfilling prophecy is fallacious. These predictions include the harsh pronouncements of the Tochacha (Devarim Perek 28), which we have painfully experienced throughout our Exile, and especially during the Holocaust, very much against our will.

## Torah Observance and Torah Learning Miraculous Survival – The Chanuka Model

The second marvelous impact of Devarim 31:21 is heralding our miraculous spiritual survival. Many note the miracle of the physical survival of the Jewish people. Even an avowed secularist such as David Ben Gurion said, “In Israel, to be a realist, you must believe in miracles.” Implicit in Israel’s declaring independence under the threat of invasion by several

Arab armies was the understanding that Hashem would intervene to ensure Am Yisrael’s eternity.

However, Ben-Gurion did not recognize that Hashem also guarantees the spiritual survival of the Jewish People. It is said that Ben Gurion exempted yeshiva students from army service only because he expected in short order for there to be no more Yeshiva students. Ben Gurion was hardly alone in this expectation. Sociologists of the time (as I heard reported by Rav Aharon Lichtenstein) predicted the end of Orthodox Jewry. Powerful cross-cultural forces worldwide were driving mass abandonment of Torah learning and observance. Orthodox Judaism, as during the time of Chanuka, seemed not to stand a chance!

However, Ben Gurion and the sociologists did not grasp the eternal bond between Am Yisrael and the Torah. They would never have believed what has happened in our times - more than a hundred thousand full time-Yeshiva students. Orthodox Jews are the only Jewish community growing in numbers. The non-Orthodox versions of Judaism are marching headlong into oblivion.

Torah is flourishing once more, with the great yeshivas of Europe re-established in Israel, America, and all over the world; the great pre-war European Yeshivot of Ponivezh, Mir, and Gur are alive and thriving once again. The Sephardic Torah world, which in the post-World War Two era was tiny and centered only on Jerusalem’s Yeshivat Porat Yosef (then a very small and struggling institution), is now flourishing and growing by leaps and bounds. Yeshiva University’s president, Rav Dr. Ari Berman, told me in September 2022 that record enrollment at Yeshiva University required adding massive amounts of new chairs to its Batei Midrash.

On Purim, we celebrate the miracle of the physical survival of Am Yisrael. On Chanuka, by contrast, we celebrate the realization of Devarim 31:21 promise, the equally extraordinary wonder of the spiritual survival of Am Yisrael, its Torah.

Rav Saadia Gaon famously teaches “Ein Umateinu Umah Ela B’Torata,” we are a people only by our Torah. Our people’s eternity is inextricably bound with its commitment to Torah. While we are not guaranteed that every Jew will follow the Torah, the Torah does ensure that some Jews will always observe it. Moreover, Jews who do not obey the Torah, in a matter of a few generations, typically no longer identify as Jews. Thus, Jewish long-term physical survival is linked to Jewish long-term spiritual survival.

## A Response to Secular Academics

---

<sup>12</sup> Megillat Esther (9:28) states that it will be forever remembered and practiced by the Jewish People. This is a stunning prophecy to record in Megillat Esther, given that the Jews had just narrowly escaped total annihilation by Haman. The Gemara (Megillah 7a) writes that the fulfillment of this passage proves that Megillat Esther was written with Divine inspiration.

A third powerful aspect of Devarim 31:21 is its powerful response to secular explanations of the origin of the traditional Jewish belief in the divine origin of the Torah. Secularists typically claim that a charismatic personality arose who convinced our people that our ancestors experienced a national revelation. They claim the Torah had been forgotten due to a catastrophic event. The charismatic leader, in turn, has come to restore our heritage of a divinely revealed document to our nation.

The Torah's prediction that it will never be forgotten precludes the possibility of its fraudulent introduction as a lost document. Devarim 31:21 defeats the secularists' claim. We would summarily reject a charlatan claim of a forgotten tradition of the Torah as a divine document. We would have responded to such a charlatan - how can you claim it is a divinely revealed document if it says our people will never forget it?

### **Sephardic Selichot**

Sephardic and Yemenite Jews often mention our Pasuk. In the Sephardic Selichot, said in the forty days leading to Yom Kippur (including Yom Kippur), as well as on Mondays and Thursdays, state the following phrase - זכור נאמת עדות לא תשכח מפי זרעו (Ashkenazim mention during Mussaf on Yom Kippur – after the recounting of the Avoda). We ask Hashem to recall His testimony that all Jews will not forget the Torah. Sepharadim invoke Devarim 31:21 in a most appropriate context – in the section asking Hashem אל תעש עמנו כלה to refrain from destroying us even if we deserve it (as we did in theory for worshipping the Eigel HaZahav). We argue to Hashem that since He promised we would survive forever, we cannot be destroyed since we are needed to execute the promise of at least a portion of Am Yisrael observing and studying Torah.

### **Conclusion – An Authenticity Test: Standing the Test of Time**

When people ask me how we can tell if a style of Torah observance is authentic, I respond that a crucial test is whether it stands the test of time. Torah, as taught by Devarim 31:21, lasts the test of time. The Samaritans, Sadducees, and Karaites each rose and made much noise for a time. However, each deviationist form of Judaism became extinct or near extinct. Devarim 31:21 teaches that a true form of Torah lasts forever. It is not an authentic expression of Hashem's will for His special nation if it does not.

Devarim 31:21 has emerged not only as a beacon of hope and confidence in Am Yisrael and Torat Yisrael but also as a powerful pillar of Emuna that fortifies our faith in the divine origin of the Torah and Orthodox Judaism!

**Editors-In-Chief:** Micah Cyrulnik and Azarya Tiger  
**Chief Distribution Officer:** Ari Herman  
**Format Administrator:** Gavi Kilimnick  
**Publication Editors:** Amichai Dresdner, Daniel Kurz, Eytan Goldstein, Yonatan Farkas, Eli Hochberg  
**In-House Counsel:** Micky Cyrulnik  
**Rabbinic Advisor:** Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Questions, comments? Contact us at:

Phone: (201) 837-7696

[webmasters@koltorah.org](mailto:webmasters@koltorah.org)