

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XVI: Beshalach (Ex. 13:17–17:16)

Essay 11. Haggadah: The obligation to eat four olive bulks of matzah

פְּסוּק "אמר אויב ארדף אשיג אחקק שלל". יש לתת טעם למה נרמזו חמש אלפיי"ן בראש התיבות. ונודע פי בגלות של מצרים הנה לנו להתעפב ת"ל שנים, כמנן חמש פעמים אלהים, והמה כתובים בשלושה פסוקים, "ויהי בימים הרבים" וכו' "ויאנחו בני ישראל" וכו'. ולא הנה להם במצרים קושי השעבוד אלא פ"ו שנים, אחר שנולדה מרים עד שיצאו, ונמצא שלא ישבו שם אלא חלק חמישי מן הראוי להם.

There is a verse: **Said the enemy: ‘I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them’**” (Ex. 15:9). **We need to give a sense of what is hinted at by the five *alephs* at the beginning of the words**, i.e., the first five words of the verse each begin with an *aleph* (i.e., “said,” “the enemy,” “I will pursue,” “I will overtake,” “I will divide”).

It is known that for the Egyptian exile we had to linger 430 years,¹ a number five times 86, which is the Gematria of *Elohim* (אלהים) (G-d),² with the word *Elohim* beginning with an aleph. These five appearances of the word *Elohim* are written in three verses: “A long time after that, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites were groaning under the bondage and cried out; and their cry for help from the bondage rose up to G-d. G-d heard their moaning, and G-d remembered His covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. G-d looked upon the Israelites, and G-d took notice of them.” (Ex. 2:23–25). They had a difficult bondage in Egypt only for 86 years, after Miriam was born until they went out, and it is found that they only stayed there in the difficult bondage for a fifth of the time that they deserved.

ומשום הכי כתב התורת חיים בפרק גיד הנשה בחוליו שפנגד זה נגזר עליהם ארבע גלויות אחרות למשלוש אלו הקמש עינויים, אלא שויתר להם באותו הפעם כדי לחזור למשכנו, לפי שנכנסו במ"ט שיערי טומאה וחס ושלום היו נטמעים שם, ולכן הוציאום בחפזון. וכמו שנפרש הטעם לקמן בעזרת השם בפרשת ראה על פסוק "כי בחפזון" וכו' ועיי"ש.

Because of this, the Torat Chaim³ wrote on the seventh chapter, “The Sciatic Nerve,” of tractate Chullin that even though they were decreed four other exiles to complete these five torments, He instead gave permission to them at that time to return to their abode, the Holy

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¹ Ex. 12:40–41: “The length of time that the Israelites lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. At the end of the four hundred and thirtieth year, to the very day, all the ranks of the L-rd departed from the land of Egypt.”

² *Elohim* has a Gematria of 86.

³ Rabbi Avraham Chaim Shor, Torat Chaim (Lublin 1624).

Land, because they had entered the 49th gate of impurity, and G-d forbid they be absorbed there, which would have happened if they had fallen any further in impurity.⁴ Therefore He took them out quickly. We will explain this reason later, G-d willing, in parshat Re'eh (note 5), on the verse, “You shall not eat anything leavened with it; for seven days thereafter you shall eat unleavened bread, bread of distress—for you departed from the land of Egypt in haste” (Deut. 16:3), and see there.

וכנגד זה יש לנו חובה לאכול ארבעה זיתים מצה בליל פסח, שהם ארבע מצות, דהיינו המוציא, ואכילת מצה, פורך, ואפיקומן, שפיון שמיהר הקץ ארבעה חלקים יש לנו לאכול ארבעה חתיכות, רמז לארבעה חלקי מהירות שלא הספיק בצקן של אבותינו להתמייץ עד שנגלה עליהם הקב"ה וגאלם. ועתה שפרעה רצה לרדוף אחריהם אמר בלבן עדיין לא נשלמו התמשה אלהים, והתמש אלפיון רומזים לתמשה שמות אלו.

Because of this, we have an obligation to eat four olive bulks of matzahs on Passover night, which are divided into four olive-bulk portions of three matzahs. That is, the Passover seder begins with a stack of three matzahs. The middle matzah is broken in half, with one of the pieces taken away to be used later for the Afikoman. When the time arrives to begin eating the matzah, two blessings are said, **Who brings forth bread from the ground,” and “Who has commanded us on the eating of matzah.”** One eats a first olive-bulk portion from the top matzah, bearing in mind the first blessing, and eats a second olive-bulk portion from the broken middle matzah, bearing in mind the second blessing. One then makes a blessing over bitter herbs and eats those, and then, without making a blessing, takes a third olive-bulk portion from the bottom matzah, eating it as a **wrap** with more bitter herbs. Finally, after the main meal, one eats a fourth olive-bulk portion of the **Afikoman. Since [G-d] hastened the end of the four remaining parts of exile, we need to eat four slices, as a hint to the four parts of speed by which “the dough of our forefathers was not able to rise, ‘before the King of the kings of kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He, revealed [Himself] to them and redeemed them.’ ”**⁵

Now that Pharaoh wanted to pursue them, he said in his heart that the five appearances of the word *Elohim* had not yet been completed, i.e.: “A long time after that, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites were groaning under the bondage and cried out; and their cry for help from the bondage rose up to G-d. G-d heard their moaning, and G-d remembered His covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. G-d looked upon the Israelites, and G-d took notice of them.” (Ex. 2:23–25).

Thus, Scripture said about Pharaoh: “Said the enemy: ‘I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide’” (Ex. 15:9), and the five *alephs* of the first words of that verse **hinted at these five names** of G-d that appear in Ex. 2:23–25, in addition to the fact that the Gematria of five times *Elohim* is 430, the number of years the Egyptian exile was to last.

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⁴ There are 50 levels of holiness and 50 levels of impurity. Zohar Chadash, at the beginning of Yitro, explains that Israel had already fallen to the 49th level of impurity in Egypt, and G-d had to rescue us before we fell to the 50th level of impurity, from which there is no return. Therefore, He therefore cut short our time in Egypt.

⁵ Passover Haggadah, Magid, Rabban Gamliel's Three Things.