

1. **The halachic ramifications of dawn vs. sunrise.** We ended the last page with Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai quoting Rabbi Akiva that saying Shema before sunrise can fulfill your obligation for the evening Shema, even though that time is technically already morning. Rabbi Joseph Ber Soloveitchik teaches that halachically, we can define two stages of the day. When you wake up at dawn and it's still dark outside, and you can't even tell that it's already daytime, that's the first stage. It's like quasi-day, called *cheftza shel yom*. Later, the sun rises and you become aware that the day has begun. That's the second stage, called *zmano shel yom*. The quasi-day period between dawn and sunrise is an interesting time, because you can do things that contradict each other. It is daytime, so you can already say the morning Shema. But if you've been awake all night, perhaps engaged in a mitzvah and unable to stop and daven Maariv, you can also daven Maariv during this time, until sunrise. So while the day does officially begin at dawn, we often treat this time like night and avoid doing many daytime mitzvot.
2. **Majority and minority in Rabbinic disputes.** Everything we just said about saying the evening Shema at dawn was based on the opinion of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. This opinion was not accepted as the halacha, because the majority of the sages disagreed. However, the gemara goes on to relate a story about some people who returned very late from a wedding and asked Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi what to do about the Shema. He told them they could say it, because you can rely on Rabbi Shimon in extenuating circumstances. This is not the only situation where Rabbi Shimon disagrees with the sages and the ruling is that his opinion can be followed in extenuating circumstances. Why is that? Usually the halacha goes according to the majority. It could be that these are exceptions to the rule because these are Rabbinic disputes. However, the Taz says that even for Biblical disputes it would be ok to rely on Rabbi Shimon in extenuating circumstances. It's important to keep in mind that there are several principles involved in making halachic decisions. There are two principles at play here: the principle that we follow the majority, and the principle that in a Rabbinic dispute you can follow the lenient opinion. The way the different principles interact is not always so clear-cut, but it seems that in some cases, such as these cases involving the Shema, the rabbis decided we can rely on a minority opinion when necessary.
3. **What happens at midnight at the Seder?** Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah and Rabbi Akiva debate the time of the Pesach offering. Earlier, the Mishna had quoted Rabban Gamliel saying that whenever the rabbis say the time for a mitzvah is only until chatzot, you really have until dawn to do that mitzvah. Several examples were given of mitzvot that should be done before chatzot but actually can be done until dawn, but the Pesach offering was not one of those examples. So what is the latest time to eat the offering? Is it chatzot or dawn? Rabbi Akiva says that, just like the other examples, this mitzvah can be performed until dawn. Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah says this mitzvah is different, because the passuk says "*halayla hazeh*" - this night. Just like Moses warned Pharaoh that the plague would come at midnight and it did, so too the offering had to be eaten during the night, before chatzot. Based on this, many Rishonim say that it's best to finish the Seder, or at least the afikomen, by chatzot. Most of us do follow that custom, though some are more careful on the first night than the second. According to the Avnei Nezer, there's a way to work around this. If you're in the middle of your Seder and chatzot is approaching, and you realize there is no way you will finish in time, you should eat matzah conditionally. If the law really is like Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah and you have to eat the afikomen by chatzot, that's your afikomen. If the law follows Rabbi Akiva, there's no need to rush and that matzah is just part of your meal.
4. **The Haggadah story at odds with this gemara.** Five rabbis, including Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah and Rabbi Akiva, were having a Seder together. They were recounting the Exodus all night, until their students told them it was time for the morning Shema. How can that be, when we just said

it's best to finish the Seder by chatzot? One explanation is that the story does not say they were eating, just that they were talking about the Exodus. Perhaps they did finish the afikomen before midnight and then they all stayed and kept telling stories. Usually the storytelling is part of the Seder, but in fact we have two mitzvot. The mitzvah of the Seder is until midnight, and the separate mitzvah of recounting the Exodus lasts all night. Another explanation is that Rabbi Akiva was the rabbi of that community, and it is appropriate to follow the ruling of the rabbi of the community. Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah might have made sure to eat his own afikomen before chatzot, since he believed that was necessary, but he would not have imposed his view on the others and he would not have left the Seder early.

5. **Nighttime redemption vs. daytime redemption.** The Torah tells us, "It was at the end of 430 years, and it was on that very day that all the legions of Hashem left the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:41). Yet the verses surrounding this one mention "*leyl shimurim*" - a night of being guarded. Was it day or night? In fact, there were two redemptions. The plague of the firstborn happened at midnight, and Pharaoh ran to Moses then and insisted that the Jews leave Egypt. In the morning, they actually did leave Egypt. Since the Exodus is meant to be seen as something that connects to our lives today, these two redemptions teach us something important. The nighttime redemption was achieved through trickery. Moses let Pharaoh think that they were only going to be going into the desert for a few days and would then return to Egypt. Though it seems incredible that Moses lied, the truth is that redemption usually requires trickery of some kind. We all have our own personal "Egypt" from which we need to be redeemed, our own yetzer hara that we need to overcome. Perhaps it's an addiction that controls our lives. Just as Pharaoh would never have agreed to let the Jews go if he'd known they were never planning to return, our yetzer hara will never give up its grip on us without a bit of trickery. Deceiving the yetzer hara is the necessary first step to redemption. After that comes the second step, the daytime redemption. That second step means being able to go out in daylight and be completely free, with no trickery involved. This was a two-step process in Egypt, and it must also be a two-step process for each of us today.
6. **What does someone in jail want?** R' Yannai says: "*Dabeyr na be'aznei ha'am*" - the term "*na*" implies asking, or even begging. G-d told Moses to beg the Jews to ask the Egyptians for their gold and silver. Why would he need to beg them? You'd think the people would have been eager to go around collecting gold and silver from their oppressors. But that wasn't the case. Imagine somebody stuck in jail who is told that tomorrow he can go free, and he'll be getting a lot of money when that happens. What's his response? He'd rather get out of jail today with no money. The Jews had been slaves in Egypt for so long. They didn't care about riches. They didn't want to spend extra time in Egypt collecting gold and silver, they just wanted to get out. But hundreds of years earlier G-d had given Avraham Avinu a prophecy that his descendants would be slaves and would eventually go free with massive wealth. G-d didn't want only the bad part of that prophecy to be true, so He told Moses to beg the people to collect the wealth they deserved. It was sort of a favor to G-d, so that the good part of His prophecy to Avraham Avinu would also come true. Kabbalistic commentaries explain that the gold and silver weren't just physical gifts. The Jews had to extract sparks of holiness from Egypt, and to finish that job they had to stay just until the 15th of Nissan.
7. **Moses teaching G-d a lesson.** G-d appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and Moses said to Him, "When I go to the people of Israel to redeem them and they ask me for Your name, what should I tell them?" G-d answered, "I Shall Be as I Shall Be. So shall you say to the children of Israel: I Shall Be has sent me to you" (Exodus 3:13-14). These verses are explained thus: I Shall Be is actually a name of G-d. All the names of G-d refer in some way to His relationship with us. He was saying, "I shall be with you in this exile as I shall be with you in future exiles." But Moses

responded, "Master of the World, it's enough to have this hardship now. The people don't need to hear about future exiles at this moment." And G-d conceded that Moses was right, and He told him to tell the people, "I Shall Be has sent me to you." On some level, Moses "taught" G-d a better way to relate to the people. The idea that Moses could influence G-d is very basic not just in the Zohar, but in the gemara and in the Torah itself. But G-d is all-knowing and infinite. How could a human being ever teach Him anything? It's difficult to understand, but the root of the answer is a concept brought down in the Ramban and other sources: All the words in the Torah are names of G-d, and all the names of G-d are communicating with one another. Moses himself was an aspect of the Divine, and he was able to interface with other aspects of the Divine to influence them. There's a kind of reciprocity between Moses and G-d.

8. **When can you read the morning Shema?** When you can tell the difference between *techeiles* (blue) and white. The gemara ultimately decides this is talking about the blue fringe and the white fringe on the *tzitzit*. You can say the Shema when there is enough light to tell the difference between the blue fringe and the white fringe, which is sometime between dawn and sunrise. And you should complete it at sunrise. Rabbi Yehoshua says you have until three hours into the day, because that's when kings wake up. When is it considered daytime? The halacha is that if you see an acquaintance from four *amos* (about six feet) away and you can tell who it is, it is daytime and you can say the Shema. Abaya says that we follow that opinion for putting on tefillin, but for the Shema we use *vasikin*. *Vasikin* means that you should conclude the blessings after the Shema right before the sun rises and say Shemonah Esrei immediately at sunrise. This is based on Psalms 72:5: "They shall fear you with the sun and before the moon for all generations." The halacha actually follows Rabbi Yehoshua, not Abaya, but most people understand that Abaya's way is the ideal. It is best to daven *vasikin* and say Shema right before sunrise, but if you don't you still have the first three hours of the day to say it.
9. **It's worth paying money to see the king.** The gemara says that whoever connects redemption to tefillah, nothing bad will happen to him. But one rabbi disagreed. He said he did connect redemption to tefillah one day, but then he had a terrible day because he had to go see the king and it cost him a lot of money. The other rabbis responded that even though it cost him money, that was a good day because he saw the king. It is worth spending a lot of money to see the king. Even a non-Jewish king is worth seeing, because this allows one to see the unique quality of a Jewish king. A Jewish king should not just be an imitation of other kings, but needs to be dedicated to Torah in a way that truly differentiates him.
10. **One time, someone connected redemption to tefillah and he didn't stop laughing all day.** Reb Tzadok, a follower of the Mei Hashiloach, says that when you connect redemption to tefillah, it's on the level of "*az yimaleh schok pinu*" - then [when Mashiach comes], our mouths will be filled with laughter. Doing mitzvot today makes us happy, but only a mitzvah that connects to the coming of Mashiach makes us outrageously happy. This mitzvah of the Shema, of connecting the mention of redemption to tefillah - imagine how much joy that can cause.