YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

GEOGRAPHY IN THE PARASHA

***PARASHAT VAYELEKH***

***Sukka*, Redemption and the Talmudic Principle “You Shall Make But Not From That Which is Already Made”: A *Derasha* for Shabbat Shuva**

**By Prof. Yoel Elitzur**

In honor of Shabbat Shuva, we will deviate from our usual framework and delve into the world of Jewish thought and homiletics.

**Background**

Long ago in the annals of Jewish history, it was customary that every Shabbat afternoon, members of the congregation would gather in the *beit midrash* and the local sage would deliver his weekly *derasha* (Torah lecture). This *derasha* would integrate halakha, aggada and current events, weaving these subjects together with verses from that week’s *parasha*. *Chazal* denounced those who would schedule a meal at the same time as the *derasha* (*Gittin* 38b), and even prohibited reading certain parts of the *Tanakh* on Shabbat “because of the neglect of the *beit midrash*” (*Shabbat* 115a).[[1]](#footnote-1) These *derashot* had a set format, more or less. One such *derasha* was preserved in the Talmud in its entirety (*Shabbat* 30a-b). In another case, two Talmudic statements were presented together in the series of passages on Chanuka, both attributed to the famous *darshan* Rabbi Tanhum: “If a Chanuka lamp is placed above twenty cubits [from the ground] it is unfit, like a *sukka* and a crossbeam over [the entrance of] an alley”; and “‘And the pit was empty; there was no water in it’… There was no water, but there were snakes and scorpions in it” (21b-22a). These statements appear to be an abridged version or a skeleton of a *derasha* that was delivered on the Shabbat preceding Chanuka, and which was connected to the story of Joseph and his brothers in that week’s *parasha*. The Midrash Tanhuma and Midrash Yelamdenu on the one hand and the *She’iltot* of Rav Aha of Shabha (from Babylonia in the early Gaonic period) on the other are collections of dozens of such eclectic *derashot*.

Over time, the custom gradually fell into near-disuse, and is still observed today on only two *Shabbatot* each year: on Shabbat Ha-gadol immediately preceding Pesach; and on Shabbat Shuva between Rosh Ha-shana and Yom Kippur. The months of Nissan and Tishrei are the two focal points of Jewish life, both in halakha and in Jewish thought. It is the *darshan*’s task to deliver successfully a *derasha* that incorporates both elements of practical halakha regarding the festivals as well as elements that inspire repentance and improving one’s behavior in Tishrei and spiritual freedom in Nissan. I will attempt to adhere to this model in the following discussion.

I conceived the idea at the basis of this *derasha* during the period between Rosh Ha-shana and Yom Kippur in 1984, writing it down in a book margin at the time. I shared the idea with friends on a few occasions, including on Shabbat Shuva in 1996 at the ancient Shalom Al Yisrael Synagogue in Jericho.[[2]](#footnote-2) An abridged version of this *derasha* was published in the Shabbat insert of *Makor Rishon* in Tishrei 5773, and it seems that the time is right to publish the *derasha* here in its full form.

**The Dispute between Rav and Shmuel Regarding the *Sukka***

We read in the Mishna, in *Sukka* 1:4:

If a man trained upon it [a *sukka*] vine, or a gourd or ivy, and he covered [it with a valid covering], it is invalid. But if the valid covering exceeded these in quantity, or if one cut them, it is valid.

**Rav** interprets the *mishna* according to the simple reading, explaining that one who has already draped a vine, gourd or ivy over his *sukka* can render his *sukka* valid by cutting these creepers, thus disconnecting them from the ground. **Shmuel** disagrees, maintaining that it is impossible to render such a *sukka* valid by simply cutting the material, since the Torah states, “You shall hold (*ta’aseh*, literally ‘you shall make’)the Feast of Booths” (Deuteronomy 16:13) – implying that one must make a *sukka*, but not from materials that were already made. Thus, Shmuel is forced to interpret the *mishna* against its simple meaning and tack on an additional requirement for validating the *sukka*: “He must shake them.” Rav responds, insisting that “their cutting is their [valid] preparation.”

This dispute between Rav and Shmuel carries over to cases of *tzitzit* and *lulav* as well. In the case of *tzitzit*, the Torah uses the same verb *la’asot*: “To make (*ve-asu*)for themselves fringes” (Numbers 15:38). Thus, according to Rav, if one attaches *tzitzit* to the corners of his garment before the fringes have been separated from one another, and then proceeds to separate them, the *tzitzit* is valid. Shmuel, however, maintains that the *tzitzit* is invalid in such a situation. The same is true for the Four Species[[3]](#footnote-3): If the *hadas* (myrtle) is bound together with the *lulav* and the *arava* (willow) and the berries of the *hadas* are more numerous than its leaves (a condition that invalidates it), according to Rav one may pick the berries in order to reduce their number and validate the *hadas*. However, according to Shmuel one must first take apart the entire binding before picking the berries, and then bind the species anew, in order to validate the *hadas*.

What is at the root of this dispute? According to Shmuel, when one needs to “make” something in order to fulfill a mitzva, one’s action must be directly focused upon the object in question; an action that affects the state of the object indirectly is not considered “making.” By contrast, Rav maintains that even an indirect action can be considered “making.”

Despite the general halakhic principle that we follow Rav’s position in cases of disputes over ritual law between him and Shmuel, and despite the fact that Rav’s position here seems to fit more smoothly with the simple reading of the *mishna*, the *poskim* ruled in accordance with Shmuel in this case. The reason for this is that a *baraita* supporting Shmuel’s position was cited in the Gemara, constituting an unanswered challenge to Rav’s position.

**The Dispute between Rav and Shmuel (and between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua before Them) Regarding *Ge’ula* (Redemption) and *Teshuva* (Repentance)**

Let us move now to another Talmudic dispute with a different character entirely from the last one. It is a famous case, found in the tenth chapter of *Sanhedrin* (97b-98a), dealing with redemption and repentance, and with end times and calculating end times: “**Rav** said: All the predestined dates [for redemption] have passed, and the matter [now] depends on repentance and good deeds. But **Shmuel** maintained: It is sufficient for a mourner to keep his [period of] mourning.” Rashi offers two different interpretations of Shmuel’s position. Let us open with the second: “‘It is sufficient for a mourner’ – The pain of the exile is sufficient for Israel; they are redeemed even without repentance.” In Rashi’s first interpretation, he boldly and shockingly maintains that the “mourner” is a metaphor for God Himself:

It is sufficient that God waits for numerous days [i.e., a long period of time] with His right hand withdrawn [i.e., without coming to Israel’s aid]. That is to say, if they do not repent, He does not keep his mourning forever, but certainly puts an end to it.

The Talmud posits that this dispute is parallel to a tannaitic dispute:

This matter is disputed by Tannaim: Rabbi Eliezer said: If Israel repent, they will be redeemed; if not, they will not be redeemed. Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: If he does not repent, will they not be redeemed?! Rather, the Holy One, blessed be He, will set up a king over them whose decrees shall be as cruel as Haman’s, whereby Israel shall engage in repentance.

The Talmud then cites an additional *baraita* in which Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua quote verses supporting their respective positions in an argument resembling a back-and-forth ping pong match:

Rabbi Eliezer said: If Israel repent, they will be redeemed, as it is written, “Turn back, O rebellious children, I will heal your afflictions” (Jeremiah 3:22). Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: But is it not written, “You were sold for no price” – for idolatry – “and shall be redeemed without money” (Isaiah 52:3) – without repentance and good deeds? Rabbi Eliezer retorted to Rabbi Yehoshua: But is it not written, “Turn back to Me, and I will turn back to you” (Malachi 3:7)? Rabbi Yehoshua rejoined: But is it not written: “Since I have espoused you, I will take you, one from a town and two from a clan, and bring you to Zion” (Jeremiah 3:14)? Rabbi Eliezer replied: But it is written, “In returning (*shuva*; Rabbi Eliezer interprets this to mean ‘repentance’) and rest will be your salvation” (Isaiah 30:15). Rabbi Yehoshua replied: But is it not written, “Thus said the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, his Holy One, to the despised one, to the abhorred nation, to the slave of rulers: Kings shall see and stand up; nobles, and they shall prostrate themselves” (Isaiah 49:7)? Rabbi Eliezer countered: But is it not written, “If you return, O Israel – declares the Lord – if you return to Me” (Jeremiah 4:1)? Rabbi Yehoshua answered: But it is elsewhere written: “Then I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the water of the river, swear by the Ever-Living One as he lifted his right hand and left hand to heaven: ‘For a time, times and half a time; and when the breaking of the power of the holy people comes to an end, then shall all these things be fulfilled’” (Daniel 12:7). At this Rabbi Eliezer remained silent.

**A Dispute Within the *Tanakh*?**

This passage raises a few questions:

1. Rabbi Eliezer quoted four verses supporting his position and Rabbi Yehoshua countered with four verses supporting his own position. In every other dispute of this nature, the Gemara requires that each disputant explain why the verses cited by his opponent do not adequately prove the latter’s position or refute his own. By contrast, in this case it seems that each side is merely tallying its supporting verses, as if they were tallying votes in an election. Where is the logic in such an approach?
2. The Gemara transitions from the dispute between Rav and Shmuel to that between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua with the word *ke-tana’ei* (“This matter is disputed by Tannaim”). But is this really the case? Indeed, Rav’s position is identical to that of Rabbi Eliezer – that Israel must repent in order to be redeemed – but Shmuel’s position contains a key difference from that of Rabbi Yehoshua. According to Rabbi Yehoshua, the redemption will come through, and in the wake of, harsh decrees as well as repentance, whereas Shmuel maintained that God will “give in” and redeem Israel even if they have not taken any steps in the direction of repentance![[4]](#footnote-4)
3. At the conclusion of the *baraita*, Rabbi Yehoshua emerges victorious, as Rabbi Eliezer accepted his position in the end, having had no answer for the final verse that Rabbi Yehoshua quoted. If so, why would Rav, who followed Rabbi Eliezer chronologically, take up his predecessor’s position? This position had already been removed from the table, and what is more, it is to the detriment of the nation of Israel, since it demands repentance while Shmuel’s position ultimately does not.

The “verse-quoting contest” between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua demonstrates that this is no ordinary argument, where each side attempts to establish the truth of the matter by presenting support for its own position and by resolving apparent contradictions. Rather, it seems that this is a case of a dispute within the *Tanakh* itself. To state what Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua would not permit themselves to state: Each side to this question seems to have a clear measure of support from the Torah, meaning that there exists an internal dispute between the Torah and itself.

In *Parashat Nitzavim*, which we read before Rosh Ha-shana, redemption is portrayed as the clear result of repentance:

When all these things befall you – the blessing and the curse that I have set before you – and you take them to heart amidst the various nations to which the Lord your God has banished you, and you return to the Lord your God, and you and your children heed His command with all your heart and soul, just as I enjoin upon you this day, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and take you back in love. He will bring you together again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. (Deuteronomy 30:1-4)

In contrast, a different impression arises from the Song of Ha’azinu that appears shortly thereafter:

To be My vengeance and recompense, at the time that their foot falters. Yea, their day of disaster is near, and destiny rushes upon them. For the Lord will vindicate His people and take revenge for His servants, when He sees that their might is gone, and neither bond nor free is left… O nations, acclaim His people! For He’ll avenge the blood of His servants, wreak vengeance on His foes, and cleanse the land of His people. (32:35-43)

Ramban correctly notes here:

Behold, this song contains no condition on repentance and worship. Rather, it is a bill of testimony that we will experience disaster but we will survive, and that God will send us furious admonitions but will never eliminate His memory of us. He will return and be consoled, and will exact vengeance upon our enemies with his great, harsh and powerful sword.

If so, the Song of Ha’azinu truly supports Shmuel’s position (according to both interpretations): “It is sufficient for a mourner to keep his mourning”!

The truth is that support for even the intermediate position of Rabbi Yehoshua can be found in the Torah: “When I, in turn, have been hostile to them and have removed them into the land of their enemies, then at last shall their obdurate heart humble itself, and they shall atone for their iniquity” (Leviticus 26:41).

God Himself, in all His glory, stands, as it were, at the heart of this debate. The issue touches on a fundamental paradox, and on the question of Israel’s role as the chosen people. From a logical perspective, redemption without repentance is, of course, impossible and unjust; God forged a covenant with us stating what will befall us “If you follow My laws” and “If you reject my laws.” When we reject God’s laws, He casts us out of the land, scattering us across the world amid foreign people and places, bringing upon us all the curse that is found in the Torah. Can it possibly be that the Torah would suddenly forgo its principles and return us to our land if we do not first mend our ways? And if that is indeed God’s intention, why did He put Jewish people throughout the generations through torture and suffering – if He could have restored us to our homeland at any such point in our history.

All of this amounts to a theological “system malfunction.” God created the entire world for the sake of Israel – “He fixed the boundaries of peoples in relation to Israel’s numbers” (Deuteronomy 32:8). God also gave Israel the sole responsibility to validate the power of His kingship:

You have affirmed this day that the Lord is your God, that you will walk in His ways, that you will observe His laws and commandments and rules, and that you will obey Him. And the Lord has affirmed this day that you are, as He promised you, His treasured people who shall observe all His commandments, and that He will set you, in fame and renown and glory, high above all the nations that He has made; and that you shall be, as He promised, a holy people to the Lord your God. (26:17-19)

On the other hand, the principle of the freedom of choice looms like an impassable boulder. God is not willing to engage in a chess match with himself, so to speak; He is unable to choose life and prosperity in our stead. The only thing that He can do is request of us, perhaps even beg of us: “Choose life – so that you and your offspring would live” (30:19). As history moves forward and the nation takes itself spiritually from bad to worse, this problem only deepens. If it is indeed true that the world was created with the innate goal of placing Israel at its heart and at its essence, how many more generations can the realization of this program be postponed?

**Returning to the Passage in *Sanhedrin***

It seems that when the Gemara says *ke-tana’ei*, it does not mean that Rav and Shmuel are rehashing the dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua verbatim. Rav and Shmuel accepted the conclusion of the *baraita* – Rabbi Eliezer remained silent and Rabbi Yehoshua won the debate. Instead of reiterating what was already said, they sharpened the dispute itself, taking its conclusion to the maximum extent.

When I was in elementary school, the principal once visited our classroom on a day when class was cancelled for one reason or another. He posed the following question. Let us say that you are walking in the desert with your good friend, and you are holding a bottle of water in your hands containing only enough water to allow one person to survive. If you attempt to divide the water between the two of you, you will both die. What would you do? The principal paused to allow us to ponder this dilemma for a little while, and then the students began to share their opinions. Since that day in my childhood many years have passed, but if I recall correctly, not one student in our class put forth Rabbi Akiva’s opinion on this case, that “your life takes precedence over your fellow’s life.” It seems to me, as well, that Ben Patura’s opinion – “It is better that both should drink and die” (*Bava Metzi’a* 62a) – did not have very many supporters either. Some students suggested that one should give the entire quantity of water to his friend, but most proposed various practical solutions to the dilemma: The two friends should each take a few sips of water every half-hour, thus conserving the water effectively and enabling both people to survive; or they should find a cave or a lonely tree and rest in the shade until nightfall, then travel all night so that the cool nighttime air allows them to reach civilization before perishing. The principal happily seized on the opportunity to explain to us the concept of a question that has no easy solution. The case is a thought experiment, he explained. The conditions of the case are absolute and one cannot alter them or maneuver around them: Two people will not come out of this scenario alive – either you will survive, or your friend, or neither of you. The task of the student is to provide an answer to the question in all its nakedness.

In our case, Rabbi Yehoshua provides an answer that is analogous to the answers given by my classmates to the principal. The question is if God will redeem Israel without their repentance, and Rabbi Yehoshua answers by rejecting the premise of the question: Someway, somehow, the repentance will come.

Rav and Shmuel are not willing to suffice with such an ambiguous response, and thus demand a clear answer to a very weighty question, which in our generation is alarmingly relevant:

Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: If he does not repent, will they not be redeemed?! Rather, the Holy One, blessed be He, will set up a king over them whose decrees shall be as cruel as Haman’s, whereby Israel shall engage in repentance.

Rav and Shmuel then ask: What if an oppressive enemy arises whose decrees are even crueler than Haman’s, an enemy for whom the goal of “to destroy, massacre and exterminate all the Jews” (Esther 3:13) moves beyond the planning stage? What if the cruelty, torture and degradation that the nation of Israel suffers at this enemy’s hands exceed every imaginable extent? If, after all this, the nation still does not mend its ways, what will happen then? Will they be redeemed or not?

Rav and Shmuel analyze Rabbi Yehoshua’s opinion, each according to his own style and methodology. Redemption and repentance are essentially similar concepts, both implying a return to a previous state. The key difference between the two is the repentance is a return that a person undertakes on his own. This can be seen in several Biblical verses that feature the word *teshuva* (repentance) or words that share its root: “Then he would return (*teshuvato*) to Ramah, for his home was there” (I Samuel 7:17); “He shall return (*ve-shav*)to his holding” (Leviticus 25:27-28); “He shall go back (*ve-shav*)to his family and return (*yashuv*)to his ancestral holding” (25:41). *Ge’ula* (redemption), on the other hand, is the same action done by others, as in: “He shall come and redeem (*ve-ga’al*) what his kinsman has sold” (25:25); “Or his uncle or his uncle’s son shall redeem him (*yig’alennu*)” (25:49). Since repentance is a person’s independent choice, done of his own free will, Rav and Shmuel disputed whether a repentance that comes as a result of oppression and enslavement can be considered an act of true repentance. For Rav, who maintains that “their cutting is their [valid] preparation,” even a coerced repentance that results from the trauma of oppression and enslavement is, in the end, still considered a person’s own act. Consequently according to **Rav**, then, Rabbi Yehoshua agrees with Rabbi Eliezer fundamentally that the requirement of repentance can never be waived; a bare minimum of repentance must occur for the redemption to take place. Thus, if Israel does not repent on even the minutest level, they will not be redeemed. However, according to **Shmuel**, repentance that is induced by coercion, through the oppression of a cruel enemy, is invalid, as it falls under the category of “‘You shall make’ – but not from that which is made.” According to Shmuel’s position, Rabbi Yehoshua actually does maintain that the redemption can come in the absence of repentance. When he says in the end that Israel will indeed engage in repentance, he is merely expressing his hope that a unilateral redemption will never be necessary – that neither Israel’s intransigence nor God’s willingness to overlook this intransigence will reach extreme levels. It follows from this that if somehow, despite everything, Israel does not repent even after experiencing the harshest oppression, God will still redeem them unconditionally. It is clear that this kind redemption is “bought on credit.” God certainly does not wish to forgo His principles, as the Talmud states, “If a man says that the Holy One, blessed be He, is lax [in the execution of justice], his life shall be outlawed” (*Bava Kama* 50a). God redeems His people, and it is as if He says: I cannot talk to dry bones and worn-out rags. First I will resuscitate you, help you regain your health, return you to your land and your language, teach you to carry arms and work the land – and let us both hope that this time you do not let me down again.

Allow me to interrupt the discussion here for a moment and refer the reader to two of Israel’s great sages who each presented the two conflicting interpretations of Rabbi Yehoshua’s opinion – albeit only through clever hidden clues. The first is Rabbi Saadia Gaon in *The Book of Doctrines and Beliefs* 8:2 (trans. Alexander Altmann):

When the fixed time is come, and we have not yet repented of our sins, **it would not be fitting that salvation should come to us whilst we are still entangled in our sins**. God exiled us because of our sins, and should He restore us merely because our stay in exile has been prolonged even though we have not returned to him, and we have not bettered our ways? That would make no sense. Our ancient prophets have, however, handed down to us a tradition, according to which hardships and sufferings will, at the fixed time, come upon us in such overwhelming measure that under their impact we shall be forced to choose the way of repentance, and thus become worthy of redemption. This is what our ancestors said: “If Israel will do penitence, they will be redeemed; if not, The Holy One (blessed be He) will appoint a king whose harsh decrees will be more terrible than those of Haman, whereupon they will do penitence, and then they will be redeemed.”

It seems from here that Rabbi Saadia Gaon sided with Rav’s interpretation, that the redemption cannot come if Israel does not first repent.

However, there is another edition of Rabbi Saadia’s original Arabic text, which Rabbi Yosef Qafiḥ used in his Hebrew translation of the work, in which a few key changes turn this conclusion on its head. First, in the line stating that “it would not be fitting that salvation should come to us while we are still entangled in our sins,” the Arabic word meaning “not” was omitted. This omission yields the sentence, “It would be possible that salvation should come to us while we are still entangled in our sins,” a complete reversal of the position espoused in the other edition. Second, a reversal of two letters in the original text changes the sentence reading, “That would make no sense” to “That would be with the appearance of the Redeemer.” Interestingly, Rabbi Qafiḥ speculated that both editions of Rabbi Saadia’s text were written by the Gaon himself.

The second source that contains hints of both Rav and Shmuel’s interpretations is Rashi. My good friend Michael Cohen of Ofra drew my attention (after hearing a lecture given by Rabbi Uri Sherki) to Rashi’s commentary on the verse, “When I, in turn, have been hostile to them and have removed them into the land of their enemies, then at last (*o az*)shall their obdurate heart humble itself, and they shall atone for their iniquity” (Leviticus 26:41). As we noted above, this verse expresses Rabbi Yehoshua’s position almost precisely: God will set up a king over them whose decrees shall be as cruel as Haman’s, whereby Israel shall engage in repentance. Rashi interprets the unusual phrase *o az* in two ways:

It is similar to [the verse] “If, however, it is known (*o noda*)that the ox was in the habit of goring.” [Thus, the meaning of this verse is:] **If**, then,[their obdurate heart] shall humble itself. Another meaning is: Perhaps. [Thus, the verse means:] **Perhaps**, then, their obdurate heart shall humble itself.

From a syntactical perspective, according to Rashi’s first interpretation the verse contains a conditional statement whose conclusion is found in the following verse: “If, then, their obdurate heart shall humble itself… I will remember in their favor the covenant with the ancients.” According to the second interpretation, however, the sentence ends at the end of verse 41, while verse 42 begins an entirely new statement. In light of this, Rashi’s first interpretation of this verse follows **Rav**’s interpretation of Rabbi Yehoshua’s position: When I have removed them into the land of their enemies, and **if** – and only if – then, their obdurate heart shall humble itself – then I will remember in their favor the covenant with the ancients. But Rashi’s second interpretation of the verse follows **Shmuel**’s interpretation of Rabbi Yehoshua’s position: I will remove them into the land of their enemies, and I hope that **perhaps**, then, their obdurate heart shall humble itself. But whatever the case may be – “I will remember in their favor the covenant.”

**What is the Halakha Regarding Redemption and Repentance?**

The answer to this question is both fascinating and utterly complicated on a fundamental level. The essence of Rav’s very being was the way in which he related to the world of ritual law. Shmuel, on the other hand, was an expert judge; the world of civil law was eminently central in his life. Because of this dichotomy, the unique principle was established that “the halakhafollows Rav in ritual law and Shmuel in civil law.” But is redemption considered ritual law or civil law?

When relating the story of the redemption from Egypt on Pesach, we are instructed to “commence with shame and end with praise,” and Rav and Shmuel argue over what is meant by “commence with shame.” According to Rav, we begin with, “In the beginning our ancestors were idol worshipers”; and according to Shmuel we begin with, “We were slaves” (*Pesachim* 116a). In other words, Rav maintained that the primary shame of Egypt was idol worship, which is in the realm of ritual law, while Shmuel maintained that the shame was the physical enslavement, which is in the realm of civil law. What is the accepted halakhic ruling in this case? Since both Rav and Shmuel insist that we follow their respective positions, when relating the Haggada on Pesach today we follow *both* positions, reciting both “In the beginning our ancestors were idol worshipers” and “We were slaves.”

It seems that Rav and Shmuel are similarly divided over the true essence of the ultimate redemption as well. In fact, this is spelled out in the Talmud almost explicitly. “Shmuel said: There is no difference between this world and the days of the Messiah except [that in the latter there will be no] bondage of foreign powers” (*Berakhot* 34b and others). Rav did not express his view on this matter explicitly, but in the section of the *Musaf* service on Rosh Ha-shana known as the *Teki’ata de-vei Rav* (“*shofar* service of Rav”), the emphasis is undoubtedly on the spiritual: “Therefore, we place our hope in You, Lord our God, that we may soon see the glory of Your power, when You will remove abominations from the earth… when all humanity will call on Your name.” Here there is no simple solution as in the question of how to begin the Haggada. It is impossible to both redeem and not redeem simultaneously. God must render a definitive halakhic ruling here and now. Fortunately – perhaps miraculously – we learned that the halakha follows Shmuel’s position in the case of “‘You shall make’ – but not from that which is made” with respect to building a *sukka*. Based on what we have established here, if the halakha follows Shmuel’s position in that case, it necessarily follows his position in the case of redemption as well. In truth, when God set up a king over us whose decrees were crueler than Haman’s, it effectively fit both Rav’s and Shmuel’s interpretations. When we were redeemed without having repented after undergoing such terrible suffering, it was in accordance with Shmuel: “It is sufficient for a mourner to keep his mourning – it is sufficient that God waits for a few days with His right hand withdrawn.” The prophet Ezekiel had prophesied this thousands of years earlier:

Therefore I am concerned for My holy name, which the House of Israel have caused to be profaned among the nations to which they have come. Say to the House of Israel: Thus said the Lord God: Not for your sake will I act, O House of Israel, but for My holy name, which you have caused to be profaned among the nations to which you have come. I will sanctify My great name which has been profaned among the nations – among whom you have caused it to be profaned. And the nations shall know that I am the Lord – declares the Lord God – when I manifest My holiness before their eyes through you. I will take you from among the nations and gather you from all the countries, and I will bring you back to your own land. (Ezekiel 36:21-24)

**For further study:**

Y. Sofer, “*Da’at Rasag Be-inyan Telut Ha-ge’ula Bi-teshuva*,” *Morashteinu* 7 (1993), 88-92 [Hebrew].

L. Zunz, *Ha-derashot Be-Yisrael*, ed. and rev. H. Albeck, Jerusalem 1974, 163-197 [Hebrew].

Translated by Daniel Landman

1. Rashi explains: “On Shabbat they would deliver a lecture to the laymen, who were preoccupied with their labor throughout the week. Through the lecture, they would teach them the laws of what is prohibited and what is permitted, and it was better for them to listen [to the *derasha*] than to read the sacred writings.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This was apparently the only Shabbat that Jews have spent in Jericho since the Oslo Accords until today. The week following this Shabbat marked the beginning of the “Western Wall Tunnel riots” of September 1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This is only according to the opinion that a *lulav* must be bound, and that the laws of *lulav* can be derived from the laws of *sukka*. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See Maharsha; the *Yerushalmi* takes this issue in another direction, but for our purposes we will remain with the *Bavli*. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)