

TALMUDIC METHODOLOGY
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Shiur #11: The Method of Eating Marror

A previous *shiur* discussed the types of species that can be used to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *marror*. Is the bitter taste merely meant to identify the valid species or is the taste the essential element of the *mitzvah*? Perhaps the Chazon Ish's question best highlights the role of the bitter taste: Can *marror* be used if it is the halakhic species but does not yet taste bitter?

There are several *gemarot* which discuss another relevant topic - the manner of eating *marror* – which may also demonstrate the role of the bitter taste in fulfilling the *mitzva*:

- 1) The *gemara* in *Pesachim* (115b), at least according to the version of the Rashbam, claims that *matzah* can be swallowed, whereas *marror* cannot. Presumably, this stresses the need to actually TASTE the *marror*. The contrast between *marror* and *matzah* is notable. The *gemara* in *Pesachim* (39a) compared the two in trying to identify the species of *marror*, just as *matzah* must be an edible item that grows, *marror* must be as well. Evidently, they are comparable regarding their MAKEUP but dissimilar regarding the MANNER OF INGESTION. *Marror*, unlike *matzah*, must be tasted; mere eating (in this instance, through swallowing) would be insufficient.
- 2) A second *gemara* highlighting the need to actually taste the bitterness of *marror* is the statement in *Pesachim* (116b) that although *marror* should be dipped in *charoset*, it should not be immersed for too long. Too much immersion in *charoset* would cancel the FLAVOR of *marror* and the taste of bitterness. This *gemara* also demonstrates the need to actually taste the bitterness of the *marror*.

Presumably, the Peri Chadash, who disagrees with the Chazon Ish and allows ingestion of a bitter species which has yet to turn bitter (such as lettuce), would distinguish between the two above cases and his scenario of not-yet-bitter vegetables. The actual

bitterness doesn't have to be tasted; thus, currently sweet vegetables are permissible. The METHOD of eating, however, must be capable of extracting a bitter flavor. Excessive immersion in another food or swallowing without tasting would not qualify as a halakhic act of eating *marror* since it subdues or avoids the flavor of *marror*.

Another possible indication of the importance of the bitter flavor may be found in an interesting *gemara* in *Pesachim* (115a) regarding someone who must use *marror* for *karpas* as well since he was unable to procure *karpas-suitable* vegetables. Since he will effectively eat *marror* twice, when should he recite the *birchat ha-mitzvah* on eating *marror*, "*al achilat marror*"? Logic would mandate reciting the *berakha* during the second ingestion of *marror*, during the time that he is actually performing the *mitzvah* of *marror*, rather than during the first ingestion, when he is performing the *mitzvah* of *karpas* (with a *marror* vegetable). Yet R. Chisda disputes this logic, demanding that the *berakha* on the *mitzvah* be recited upon the VERY FIRST ingestion of *marror*. He questions how a person fill his stomach with *marror* during the *karpas* slot and then subsequently recite the *berakha* at a later and secondary stage of eating *marror*. On the surface, his claim is itself questionable. What would be wrong with eating *marror* the first time for *karpas* – WITHOUT INTENDING TO FULFILL THE MITZVAH OF MARROR - and at a later stage eating *marror* again – this time for the *mitzvah* of *marror* - and reciting the appropriate *berakha*? Perhaps R. Chisda is highlighting the role of the bitter taste. Since the *mitzvah* of *marror* depends upon experiencing the bitter flavor, the *mitzvah* cannot be fulfilled once the bitter flavor has already been tasted; physiologically, that flavor will no longer be as pungent or as sharp.

Interestingly, this question may have already been addressed by Rashi in explaining a *mishna* in *Pesachim* (39a) which invalidates "pickled" or "soaked" lettuce for *marror* use. The *mishna* describes "*kavush*," which usually refers to any item that has been distilled in a liquid for over 24 hours, including water. But Rashi comments that the *mishna* only invalidates lettuce that had been distilled (pickled) in vinegar. Although many question Rashi's leniency (effectively allowing water-soaked lettuce), the *Netivot* (in *Chok Ya'akov*) defends Rashi: only pickling in vinegar will compromise the bitter flavor. Rashi's comments may argue for the sufficiency of bitter flavor. By allowing water-distilled lettuce and disqualifying vinegar-pickled, Rashi may be claiming that as long as the original flavor has been maintained - even though the actual texture and fiber of the *marror* has been compromised - the *mitzvah* can be executed.

An interesting comment of the *Rosh* may further indicate the absence of classic models for the performance of this *mitzvah*; ALL that the *mitzvah* of *marror* requires is experiencing the flavor. The *Rosh* claims that a *kezayit* of *marror* must be ingested, since the *berakha* mentions the term "*akhilah*." In most instances, the performance of

a *mitzvah* with food requires eating a *kezayit* INDEPENDENT of the syntax of the *berakhah*. Without consuming a *kezayit*, an act of *akhilah* has not been performed. In this instance, the Rosh believes that an act of *akhilah* is not absolutely necessary and, fundamentally, no *kezayit* is necessary. The only reason a *kezayit* volume is required is to reflect the LANGUAGE of the *berakhah*. As the Sha'agat Aryeh (100) comments, according to the Rosh, the *marror* used for *korekh* would not require a *kezayit*. The only *kezayit* requirement for *marror* results from the wording of the *berakhah*, and since *korekh* does not require a *berakhah*, no *kezayit* is necessary.

Viewing the *mitzva* of *marror* as structurally different from most halakhic acts of eating may explain an interesting *beraita* in *Pesachim* (114b), which allows the *kezayit* of maror to be ingested in different stages as long as the stages are not separated by a "*kedei akhilat peras*" (the time it would take to consume a *peras* measure of bread). This time frame is fairly STANDARD; any halakhic act of *akhilah* can be divided as long as all the eating segments occur within this time frame. It seems odd that the *gemara* iterated this requirement specifically in the situation of *marror*.

Presumably, *marror* is such a different form of a *mitzvah* that we may not have applied the *kedei akhilat peras* qualification. *Marror* does not require a formal act of eating and, at least according to the Rosh, does not even require the standard measurement of *kezayit* on fundamental grounds (but rather merely to reflect the language of the *berakha*). We therefore should not demand that the entire volume of *marror* be consumed within the time of *akhilat peras*. It is particularly in the situation of *marror* that the *gemara* must reiterate that, despite the lack of any prescribed act of eating, it all must occur with an *akhilat peras*.