

So Rav Shimi bar Chiyya asked Rav: "Maybe this refers to just the seven categories or mitzvos (bnei Noach are commanded)?"

"Aha", I thought. "My position exactly!"

Rav replies: "But here is miloh as well!"

"Ok," says Rav Shimi. "Seven categories of mitzvos and miloh." Nice and easy solution.

Rav asks him: "Then why does the posuk continue to say מצותי ותורתי – my mitzvos and my Toros?" The implication being from the word ותורתי that there are at least two Torahs.

The gemoroh concludes by quoting a statement of either Rav or Rav Ashi: "קיים אברהם אבינו אפילו עירובי תבשילין שנאמר תורתך אחת תורה" – Avrohom Ovinu kept the entire Torah including eruv Tavshilin, since the posuk says: 'Torosei – my Torahs' one written and one oral (in this case the oral Torah refers to the gezeiros d'Rabonon, even though that is not usually the case).

Oh well, I had to concede that nice as my theory was, the Rov was, after all, quite correct.

Hang on for a moment though, but what about my earlier question? How could have Avrohom actually kept the entire Torah without being a Cohen, Levi, Yisroel, man and woman simultaneously? This is not easily dismissed. And there is Bernard's question: Pesach without an Exodus?

A small digression is required at this point in order to make head or tail out of this.

We are – boruch Hashem – fortunate to live in the most technologically advanced age since the dawn of mankind and one of the benefits of this is that we can apply our knowledge from this sphere to help us understand the Torah. So, bear with me for a couple of minutes and all will be revealed, and hopefully make some sense as well, which would be jolly useful.

There are few people left today who do not use computers on a daily basis, and therefore this next bit will be a bit obscure; let us forge on nonetheless. Now, when you see all those pretty icons on your desktop, or shiny buttons that you can click away to your heart's delight on your smartphone or your dryer sings to you every time it has done something or has spent half an hour doing nothing or would like to be doing something for you but can only express its poetic longings in song (you think I'm kidding – I've been hunting the intervesh to try to find a way to silence my dryer's musical paens without voiding the warranty), how do these things get there?

Well, if you look closely at your screen, you will notice that the pretty pictures, icons and buttons are actually made out of dots. Lots of dots, sure, but still dots. When you move your mouse across the screen and click on a button, it's just animated dots.

Those dots come about because a programmer somewhere wrote some computer code, which usually reads like a foreign language crossed with algebra. The "brains" of your computer – the processor – has no understanding of this code, so it needs something to interpret it. What usually happens is that this high-level language – it might be C++, Python or Lua or any of the 2500+ programming languages floating around today – will be translated by a special program called a compiler into a lower-level language called Assembler or Assembly Language. The processor still cannot read this, so yet another program is used to convert this assembler to binary. Now we have something the processor can "read", even though it's all ones and zeros.

Now, when you next show your bubbe a photo of your adorable little baby on your smartphone, whilst she thinks it's a picture of a sweet child (OK, never mind what she's thinking, at least she tells you the child is gorgeous, even if it is one only a mother could love; that's what bubbes are for), the programmer thinks of it in terms of lines of code, the compiler "thinks" of the photo in terms of assembler and the processor "thinks" of the photo in binary. To you and your bubbe, it's a photo. To the programmer, it's a data buffer, not a photo. To the compiler, it's a memory register, not a buffer. To the processor, it's a string of ones and zeros, not a memory register.

It depends at what level one observes the whole thing, and more importantly, what interpretation one assigns it.

So it is with the Torah.

Odom horishon was given the Torah in its entirety (see the Ohr Hachaim Bereishis 49:3 for a lengthy treatment on the subject). In what form, we do not know, but all the mitzvos were already extant in a guise we would not necessarily recognize today. He passed on the Torah to his sons, where it eventually reached Noach, Shem and Ever and eventually Avrohom.

If we return to Yoma 28b, we read the statement of Rav Chomoh bar Chaninah who brings proofs from various verses in the Torah that each one of the Ovos were Yeshivah regulars, and that even Eliezer, the servant of Avrohom, also studied in Yeshivah!

It is not such a great stretch, therefore, to understand that they, too, had all the mitzvos we have today, but perhaps in a different form, but certainly with different reasons behind them.

Just as we saw that the same code running on a computer can be interpreted at many levels, so too is it with the Torah: as events evolved, different mitzvos took on new forms.

Given all this, how did Avrohom serve milk and meat together, and Yaakov marry two sisters and what about all the other apparent anomalies in the behaviour of our forefathers?

The consensus amongst the meforshim is that prior to mattan Torah, there were only seven obligatory mitzvos that were incumbent on every individual to adhere to, whereas the rest of the mitzvos were optional; one could choose to keep on or more of these, as one saw fit.

Avrohom kept all of the mitzvos in whatever form he had then, therefore we have to interpret the incident with the malochim accordingly. Yaakov, who married two sisters, did not keep that particular mitzvoh. One could argue that since he was outside of Eretz Yisroel he did not feel it necessary to keep the Torah in its entirety, but that makes little sense. Since when did this particular mitzvah only apply in Eretz Yisroel? Hence one must conclude that he himself did not keep the entire Torah.

This explains the argument between Yosef and his brothers with regards to eiver min hachai. He felt that they were required to keep the mitzvoh of shechita in which case the animal would be considered dead immediately after shechita, whereas the brothers did not feel there was any requirement as such for shechita and therefore the animal was only halachically dead once all movement had ceased, which could last for some time post mortem. Perhaps Yosef felt this way because Yaakov might have been particular about it, whereas his brothers were obviously not of the same opinion.

Which brings us back to Bernard's question. Matzah? Pesach? Why?

The Rov explained that quite simply, Lot – who was no great tzadik – was nonetheless a ben bayis of Avrohom Ovinu, and was heavily influenced by him. Lot was the prototype of the "Traditional" Jew.

Whilst he himself kept very few mitzvos, he was nonetheless sensitive to the tradition he had imbibed upon in the house of his uncle, and therefore when Pesach came around, even in the heart of sin-city, he baked matzos.

Exactly what his rationalisation of the situation was is beyond comprehension, but then again, so is "traditional" Judaism, let alone the sheer hypocrisy that is Reform, Liberal or Masorti "Judaism".

The upshot of all this boils down (lovely mixed metaphors there) to this: the Torah is no longer a mix-and-match affair. It is now fully "compiled", in its ultimate form.

There are infinite facets to the Torah, and we are not supposed to be sheeple, following the crowd "wisdom". With the guide of a Talmid Chocho, steeped in Torah inherited from his rebbes, one can carve one's own unique path through Yiddishkeit **within the bounds of the Torah**.

Prior to mattan Torah, keeping mitzvos were by and large a freestyle affair. Today, this is obviously not the case. Through the constant study of gemoroh, halocho and Tenach, however, these restrictions should not and must not prevent us from discovering our own individualistic approaches and styles of Yiddishkeit that will allow us to elevate our avodas Hashem from rote practice to sublime service.