

CHAPTER 5, VERSES 10 □ 11

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel

(5, 10)

"And the Jewish people camped at Gilgal and offered the Pascal sacrifice on the fourteenth of the month (Nissan) towards evening in the plains of Yericho." The Jewish people completed their crucial three days of healing and then immediately offered the Pascal sacrifice. The Scriptures stress that the sacrificial site was at Gilgal in the plains of Yericho. Many questions come to mind. First, why is it important to stress the location? Second, don't we already know that the Jewish people were in Gilgal? The previous passage (verse 8) states that they camped in Gilgal until they were totally healed, which obviously means longer than a three day stay. Third, why is Gilgal identified now to be in the plains of Yericho, instead of earlier when Gilgal was introduced? All of these suggest a direct corrolary between Gilgal, Yericho and the Pascal sacrifice.

In truth this particular sacrifice occupied a prominent position in Jewish history. For one, it was the first Pascal offering in the Promised Land. In addition, this was only the third time it was ever brought. Our Sages(see P'sachim 6b) point out that no Pascal sacrifice was offered in the desert save one on the first anniversary of their exodus. According to many (see Rashi to Sh'mos 13:5), this was because the Jewish people were not obligated in this sacrifice prior to entering Eretz Yisroel. Apparently, the Pascal sacrifice which commemorates our Jewish exodus is directly linked to our presence in Eretz Yisroel.

If we review the master plan of our Egyptian exile and exodus, we discover that it concludes with the inheritance of Eretz Yisroel. In truth, inheriting Eretz Yisroel was much more than a concluding dimension; it was the essence and purpose of the entire Egyptian experience. The related passages in Breishis indicate that Avrohom Avinu expressed concern over his children's guarantee to the Promised Land. Hashem responded with the master plan of the Egyptian experience which would refine and prepare the Jews for the Promised Land (see Breishis 15:8, 13-16).

The upshot of this is that Eretz Yisroel is exclusive for a relationship between Hashem and His people. Our Egyptian experience - exile and exodus - produced that relationship in major proportions. It was developed through a series of Hashem's revelations in the desert and reached its conclusion in Eretz Yisroel. Through the inheritance of the land, the Jewish people would develop an eternal relationship with Hashem, bringing Him into every aspect of their lives.

The new dimension of their relationship was best reflected through the recently added dimension in

the circumcision process. We previously noted that this new dimension, the exposure of the covenant, represented a sense of permanence in their relationship with Hashem. In general, circumcision reflected the bond between Hashem and His people as well as His commitment to give us His land. The added dimension represented, in particular, the permanence of this relationship with Hashem best expressed through our experiences in His land Eretz Yisroel.

We now understand the significance of Gilgal and the plains of Yericho as the sacrificial site. This Pascal sacrifice differed from all previous ones because it included the dimension of Eretz Yisroel. Finally their exodus reached completion through their entry to the land. The said purpose of their Egyptian experience was fulfilled, calling for a heightened celebration. Appropriately, they offered this sacrifice at Gilgal with their sights on Yericho. Gilgal, where their circumcision was completed, represented their complete relationship with Hashem. Yericho marked their first step to inheriting the land. In effect, this momentous site served as the link between the past (Egypt) and their future (Eretz Yisroel). This sacrifice celebrated their past experience of hundreds of years now having served their purpose. After hundreds of years of anticipation, their dream came true and they now celebrated this perfect relationship with Hashem.

(5, 11)

"And they ate matzos and parched grain from the produce of the land since the essence of the second day of Passover. And the manna ceased to be....." Rashi quotes our Sages who explain that the manna actually ceased to fall the day Moshe Rabbeinu passed away on the seventh of Adar. However, the manna miraculously remained intact and sustained them for over one month until the Omer sacrifice on the sixteenth of Nissan. This understanding resolves the conflicting implications of the Torah passage about whether manna was eaten until entering Eretz Yisroel or arriving at its borders (see Shemos 16:35). The Sages explain that the manna ceased to fall upon their arrival to Eretz Yisroel's borders. Yet, it continued to be eaten until their entry to Eretz Yisroel proper.

Rashi (ibid.) adds that a similar occurrence transpired before the introduction of the manna. The Torah (ad loc) records that the Jewish people ate manna for forty years although technically they fell short by one month. Our Sages respond that the matzah which the Jewish people brought from Egypt tasted like manna (which tasted like honey-flavored cake).

It is interesting to note the similarity between the introductory and the concluding phases of the manna. In both, the manna did not actually fall from the heavens, yet the Jewish people's sustenance somehow related to the manna. It seems that the miraculous pouring down from the heavens was limited to their desert experience. The manna began to fall in the Sinai desert and ceased to fall at the borders of Eretz Yisroel. Yet the Jews were miraculously sustained the moment they left Egyptian borders until they were inside Eretz Yisroel. Although miracles are miracles a vast difference exists between raining food and preserving it. Why did they sometimes deserve the full manna experience and at other times deserve only a partial experience?

The Jewish people's miracles were based on their level of faith and trust in Hashem. Our Sages in Mesichta Yoma (83b) present the manna experience as a powerful vehicle of eliciting perfect faith in Hashem. The Jewish people were in the midst of a barren desert without any conceivable source of sustenance. This undoubtedly produced total focus on Hashem, the only One who could provide for them then. Sensing Hashem's total involvement in their sustenance, they merited receiving it in that exact form - food raining from Hashem. However, until they reached the desert, they were in close proximity of inhabited areas. Although the Jewish people trusted in Hashem and brought no provisions along they knew that, if necessary, other avenues could be pursued. This level of faith produced a limited miracle, the preservation of the remnants of Matza they had brought. Similarly, when exiting the desert, their sights were on the produce of Eretz Yisroel, an ample source of sustenance. Although they were forbidden to partake of it until the Omer was offered, in life threatening circumstances they could eat it. With this semi-level of faith they no longer merited manna falling from heaven and were sustained through its miraculous preservation.

How often do we turn to Hashem for assistance? The real key is the extent of His involvement. The more we include Him, the more He gets involved. This is so important in the stressful stages of the pending Middle-East Crisis. Our only foreseeable salvation is Hashem's intervention, but we must ask. The more we ask, the more we will get.

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